

Names and prayers: Expressions of self in the medieval inscriptions of the Nidaros Cathedral walls

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My aim with this article has been to discuss what kinds of selves are displayed in the medieval runic and Roman alphabet inscriptions of the Nidaros Cathedral walls and pillars. I have sorted the inscriptions into five categories based on their contents and structure, and analysed them using insights from cognitive theory in order to see how the selves of the agents behind the inscriptions are portrayed. I argue that the inscriptions must be interpreted within the context they belong to, and that this indicates that most of the inscriptions should be interpreted as religious. We also have a few indications in the inscription material that this was how the inscriptions were perceived in the Middle Ages. This tells us that the carvers, by carving in the cathedral, implicitly expressed a religious sense of self. At the same time, some carvers clearly wanted to express something more, or something else, showing that carving in a church did not necessarily only express a religious identity.

Introduction

Hidden in plain sight on the walls and pillars of the Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim, a medieval treasure can be found. Our treasure is not gold; it is of a different quality. It is the remnants of people of different social standings interacting with a cathedral which for a long time functioned as an archiepiscopal see and a major centre of pilgrimage. The treasure in question is the body of formal inscriptions and graffiti found on the walls and other constructional parts of the cathedral, about 50–60 of which can be identified as medieval.¹ In contrast to manuscripts, written by the social elite, the inscriptions were carved by people of a variety of social backgrounds. Therefore,

¹ An inscription is here defined as a text on materials other than parchment or paper, consisting of Roman alphabet letters or runes. Other marks, such as mason's marks, are not included. The term graffiti can be problematic when used in historical contexts, but I have nevertheless chosen to use it as a neutral term to cover any inscription which is not clearly formal, in accordance with Blindheim (1985), Champion (2016), Lovata and Olton (2015) and Zilmer (2016).

they can give us unique insights into the medieval mind and the sense of self among the broader layers of medieval society.

Several scholars have discussed the social standing, gender and nationality of those carving in churches. Recent examples include Kristel Zilmer (2016), who, in an article on runic church inscriptions in Norway, discusses social indicators such as the gender and vocation of the carvers, and Dag-Øyvind Engtrø (2010), discussing, among other things, whether stonemasons, the clergy and pilgrims might have been among the carvers in the Nidaros Cathedral. Such discussions help us in understanding the identity of the carver, in terms of gender, social standing or occupation, but they nevertheless tell us little about how the carvers understood and portrayed themselves and what that can tell us about their self-perception. The medieval sense of self has, however, been discussed by other scholars. Notable examples include Kathryn A. Smith (2012), discussing the formation and expression of self based on a study of a medieval illuminated manuscript, and David Gary Shaw (2005), discussing the social self in the medieval city of Wells, based on court and other historical records.² None has yet combined the two perspectives to study the self as expressed in the medieval Scandinavian inscriptions. I aim to fill this gap by discussing the selves expressed by the carvers in the Nidaros Cathedral inscriptions.

A 'self' is here defined as the image of the agent, i.e. the carver or the commissioner and anyone else involved in the shaping of formal inscriptions, as it emerges in the inscription. There is a duality to this definition: On the one hand, we have the image which the agent himself³ sought to create. On the other, we have the image of the agent's self as seen by later readers, including other agents and, inevitably, modern readers such as myself. I will use both of these definitions. The agent's intention is rarely possible to establish with certainty today, but it is nevertheless important to keep it in mind. After all, it is the agent's self that I will discuss. Another important

² Moreover, the present article is part of the project *The Self in Social Spaces: Conceptualizations and Representations in the Textual and Material Culture of Medieval Scandinavia*, which will discuss the self as it appears in various textual and material sources from medieval Scandinavia. For more information, see <https://niku.no/prosjekter/the-self-in-social-spaces/>.

³ For practical reasons, I refer to the carver and agent as "he" throughout the article. As far as the evidence goes, there are mostly male carvers – only three female names occur in my material. One of these is carved together with a male name (N 491), and whether the carver is the female or male is impossible to say. The second name (Syrett 10) stands out from the rest in its layout, but this inscription might be produced by a female carver carving her own name. The third name (NC 9) stands alone, and is similar in form to the male names carved with runes. Here, a female carver is likely. Of course, there might have been other female carvers choosing to carve other things than their names, but that we will never know.

aspect of the self is its fluidity and flexibility.⁴ The self in the inscriptions appears fixed. Although our interpretation of it may change, the expression in itself is, quite literally, set in stone. The image of the agent that we see in the inscription captures the agent's self in the moment of carving; it is but a petrified glimpse into the agent's complex cognitive processes, and if we had been allowed to follow the carver after the moment of carving, we would have seen how his self was, in fact, much more complex than what the epigraphic material reveals.

The objective of this article is to discuss the following question: What kinds of selves can be found in the inscriptions in the Nidaros Cathedral? I will discuss whether the carver's signatures⁵ in the Nidaros Cathedral all have a religious purpose, and thus display a religious self. And if so, is there room for individuality and other selves than the religious one in the cathedral? I will answer these questions by looking at the interplay between the agent and his surroundings. This will give us new knowledge about the expressions and representations of self in the medieval North and give us a deeper understanding of the medieval individual.

Situated cognition

As a theoretical foundation I will use the insight from cognitive theory that our cognition is situated in a context. Where we are and who we interact with affect how we think. This means that if we know the context in which the agent was situated at the moment of creating an inscription, we will also know something about what he thought. Thus, we will also be able to say something about how he looked at himself and who he wanted to be or felt that he was at the moment of carving. As the inscriptions are mostly very short, they give little room for tracking individual cognitive changes over time. However, when looking at all the inscriptions together and as a context for one another, it is possible to see how the inscriptions influence each other. Here, the term *situated cognition* is central, as it gives a theoretical framework for discussing how the agents' cognitive processes are influenced by their surroundings when creating inscriptions.

The term *situated cognition* is used to cover a broad range of concepts (see Robbins & Aydede 2009 for a brief overview); in common for all of these is the study of how context and cognition is intertwined. Here, I will focus on how cognition is dependent on social interaction and on where the agent is physically situated. This could

⁴ For further discussions on this, see Turner (2014: ch. 4).

⁵ These will be called name and agent inscriptions throughout the article; for a definition, see the section on method and empirical data.

be termed embedded and distributed cognition (cf. Robbins & Aydede 2009; Smith & Conrey 2009), but presently I will only use the broader term situated cognition.

Social interaction includes, but is not restricted to, talking. For instance, an agent could interact with others by reading and responding to inscriptions. Two very concrete examples of this are the inscriptions N 493 and N 494,⁶ which will be further discussed in the section on the religious self. Here, two carvers originally carved two names in the octagon. Later, other carvers have added a prayer to each of the inscriptions. An agent may also relate to another inscription by imitating it, commenting on it or distancing oneself from it. When carving or planning an inscription, the agent is likely to be aware of other inscriptions in the vicinity, and through the inscription he creates, he takes a stand towards his surroundings. He has the choice to either follow the norms established in other inscriptions or break with them. Following the norms will strengthen them; breaking with the norms will weaken them. The point here is that the agency belongs to the agent; it is up to him to either follow or transgress the norms. And whatever he chooses, his choice is made in relation to the context in which he is situated.

Situated cognition shows us how the materiality, the social space and surrounding inscriptions all form part of the context in which each agent orients himself. The context will influence his cognitive processes, although he has a choice in how to react to it: Will he conform or choose to carve out his own path? Through the agent's reactions to his surroundings, it is possible to find traces of his self. The self can be defined as a "cognitive process of self-awareness".⁷ This definition underlines how the sense of self is a cognitive process – it exists in the agents' thoughts. At the same time, the cognitive processes creating a sense of self are not situated in a vacuum; rather, they are dependent upon the material and social context. Looking at the context in conjunction with the agents' utterances, it is therefore possible to find glimpses of the agents' senses of self in the moment of carving.

Finally, it should be noted that situated cognition first and foremost provides me with a broad approach to the inscriptions and a framework for analysing them as a corpus in relation to the context in which they are found. As a result, I have put weight on the context of the inscriptions. This context may be the cathedral, the socio-political context, or the social context as seen in the interaction between dif-

⁶ N + number refers to the numbers ascribed to runic inscriptions in *NIyR*. Syrett + number refers to the numbers given to alphabetic inscriptions in Syrett (2002). NC + number refers to inscriptions I have found and added to the appendix, but which are not in any of the corpus editions. See the section on the Nidaros Cathedral inscriptions for further details.

⁷ This is the definition used in the project *The Self in Social Spaces: Conceptualizations and Representations in the Textual and Material Culture of Medieval Scandinavia*.

ferent agents through the inscriptions. This approach is overarching for the article, and I have only to a lesser extent related individual inscriptions to the theoretical framework.

The context

There has been a church at the site of the cathedral since c. 1090. The first church, known as Olaf Kyrre's Christ Church, was built by King Olaf Kyrre as a bishopric church, and it was intended as the burial church for the royal family. Most importantly, however, the church was built to house the shrine of St Olaf (Ekroll 1997: 149). Later, the church has been expanded, restored, and rebuilt in several phases from the twelfth to the twentieth century. The expansions began in c. 1150, at the same time as the cathedral became an archiepiscopal see. The old church became the chancel in the new cathedral. The western tower of the old church became the mid-tower between the transepts, and a nave west of this tower was also planned (Ekroll 1997: 152). The first part to be built was the transepts, the lower parts of which must have been finalised by 1161, when the dedication inscription in this chapel was carved.⁸ Work on the octagon probably began c. 1200 (Ekroll 2015: 351). After the building of the octagon, the expansions of the chancel began, before, finally, the nave was built. The beginning of the work on the western wall is dated in *Hákon Hákonarson's saga* to the year 1248, while the building of the northern and southern walls was probably begun prior to this (Ekroll 1997: 155). The nave was completed c. 1300 (Ekroll 1997: 156). Today, the oldest visible parts of the cathedral are from the expansions begun in c. 1150; Olaf Kyrre's church is almost completely gone. Accordingly, the earliest possible date for any of the inscriptions is also 1150, and several of them cannot be earlier than c. 1250–1300.

A major reason for the Nidaros Cathedral's importance was that it held the shrine of St Olaf. He died in 1030 in the Battle of Stiklestad, and rumours of his sanctity was spread shortly after. Only a year later, his body was exhumed. When Olaf Kyrre's church (i.e. the later Nidaros Cathedral) was built, the relics were brought there, where they stayed until 1531 (Ekroll 2007: 169–171, 195). Several miracles, described in *Passio et miracula Beati Olavi*, were reported in connection to his shrine, and the cathedral gradually became a major destination for pilgrims. The earliest report of pilgrims is from c. 1070–1075 (Ekroll 2007: 157–158). Particularly popular was the St Olaf's vigil (*Ólafsvaka*), celebrated each year on the anniversary of

⁸ Ekroll 2015: 104. The inscription in question is Syrett 2. See the section on the powerful self for further discussion.

the saint's death, 29th July. On this day, pilgrims came from afar, and large groups of people kept vigil for the saint, as described in *Passio Olavi*.

Nidaros was made an archiepiscopal see in 1152 or 1153. This increased the general importance of the city of Trondheim and the Nidaros Cathedral, and there was regular contact between the ecclesiastical authorities in Nidaros and Rome. We know, for instance, that Eysteinn Erlendsson, archbishop from 1161 to 1188, had an extensive correspondence with the Pope (Bagge 2003: 69). In addition, it became increasingly common among the lay elite to send their sons abroad for education, amongst other things to qualify them for ecclesiastical positions (*ibid.*: 53), which must have further strengthened the contact between the Norwegian and the international ecclesiastical elite.

The inscriptions carved on the cathedral walls are by no means the only medieval inscriptions found in Trondheim, nor are they the only wall inscriptions in Trondheim. Three runic inscriptions are found on the Archbishop's Palace, all of which are unfortunately short and difficult to interpret. In addition, a dedication inscription with Roman alphabet letters is found on Vår Frue kirke (the Church of Our Lady). The bulk of the Roman alphabet inscriptions, however, are found on gravestones. In fact, out of the 119 Roman alphabet inscriptions Martin Syrett has compiled from medieval Trondheim, 93 are gravestone inscriptions; 87 of these were found close to the Nidaros Cathedral. In comparison, we have only one runic gravestone from Trondheim (N 508), dated to the late eleventh century. On other artefacts, the distribution is the opposite. We have 14 such inscriptions with Roman alphabet letters (Syrett 2002: 106–119), compared to well over 100 runic inscriptions on loose artefacts including rune sticks. Only one of the runic objects (a lead amulet) is found in the Nidaros Cathedral. In comparison, five of the fourteen Roman alphabet inscriptions on loose artefacts are from the Nidaros Cathedral or other medieval churches (Vår Frue kirke, Hospitalskirka). This tells us that the non-ecclesiastical epigraphical tradition in Trondheim was mainly runic.

It is clear from the summary above that the inscriptions in the Nidaros Cathedral belong to a larger urban epigraphical tradition. If the distribution outlined above is at all representative, it seems that the inscriptions are mainly distributed according to script type: While objects found in the city mainly carry runic inscriptions, formal inscriptions found in connection to churches (i.e. dedications and gravestones) are mainly Roman alphabet inscriptions. Still, this division is not absolute, as the occasional Roman alphabet inscription appears in the city while some of the runic wall inscriptions are possibly formal. And looking at the graffiti inscriptions on the Nidaros Cathedral, we find inscriptions both in the Roman alphabet and runes.

There is also a clear distribution in time. Most of the runic inscriptions can be dated to the tenth to mid-fourteenth century, with a peak in the twelfth and thirteenth century. The datings of the Roman alphabet inscriptions are in general quite vague, but among the inscriptions listed in Syrett (2002), the earliest inscriptions are dated to the second half of the twelfth century, while most of them can be dated to the thirteenth and fourteenth century, with a peak around the turn of the fourteenth century. This distribution is heavily influenced by the fact that most of Syrett's inscriptions are gravestone inscriptions, and some of the inscriptions on the Nidaros Cathedral walls are older. The dedications, for instance, are among the earliest recorded medieval Roman alphabet inscriptions from Trondheim. Still, most of the inscriptions here studied were carved in a time where runic script is likely to have dominated the wider epigraphical culture of Trondheim. In the epigraphical surroundings of the Nidaros cathedral, this picture is slightly eschewed, particularly when we enter the second half of the thirteenth century. At this point in time, a considerable number of monumental gravestones with Roman alphabet inscriptions must have surrounded the cathedral, making this area particularly rich in highly visible Roman alphabet inscriptions.

Method and empirical data

In working with the present article, I have visited the Nidaros Cathedral to see all the extant inscriptions in their original context, and to look for more inscriptions. When analysing the inscriptions, I have looked at the graphic, linguistic, and stylistic features of all the inscriptions (i.e. language, word choice, orthography, use of separation marks, script type, graph types, and layout). The aim here was to investigate whether inscriptions close to each other employ the same features, as this could be an indication that carvers are affected by the inscriptions surrounding them, or that the inscriptions were carved by the same group of people (e.g. Swedes or Norwegians) or at roughly the same point in time. This investigation has yielded few interesting results, as close to all the runic inscriptions employ a fairly similar set of graph types from the medieval Norwegian mixed *fupark*. Most similarities which I have found could be incidental. Furthermore, when looking at the visual impression of the inscriptions, they are not strikingly similar. On the southern nave wall, for example, shallow and deeply cut inscriptions, and inscriptions with small and large characters, intermingle. Neither is there any common standard for rune-shapes employed: For example, we have both open and closed, and angular and round-shaped r-runes, and possibly also what is known as a Greenlandic r-rune. This variation might be a

simple indication that the carvers, after all, did not look very closely at the inscriptions surrounding them. However, it might also signify that the carvers were more concerned with the contents of the inscriptions than with graphics and layout. As a result of this, the investigation into graphic, linguistic and stylistic features is rarely visible in the article, and my main focus will be on the contents of the inscriptions.

I have distinguished between the structure and contents of the inscriptions on the one hand, and the selves they express on the other. Based on the structure and contents, I have grouped the inscriptions into six broad categories, as seen in the appendix. In the discussions below, I will discuss how these categories relate to different expressed selves in the inscriptions. As they are all found in a cathedral, one may argue that all the inscriptions are religious expressions regardless of category, a hypothesis I will discuss further below. In addition, I will also discuss other interpretations.

The inscription categories found in the cathedral are name inscriptions, agent inscriptions, (explicitly) religious inscriptions, dedication inscriptions, other inscriptions, and uncertain inscriptions. The name inscriptions are inscriptions which only consist of a name. Agent inscriptions are inscriptions following a given formula: subject (usually the name of the carver) + verb (+ complement(s)). The action typically concerns carving, making, or being in a place (i.e. the cathedral). Religious inscriptions form a broad, and highly diverse, group of inscriptions with explicit religious references, expressing everything from saint names to deep, personal devotion. The dedication inscriptions could be termed a sub-group of the religious inscriptions, but are nevertheless treated separately, as they stand out in the corpus as a mainly formal inscription type and are often easily defined. The “other” category encompasses all inscriptions which do not belong to the categories listed above, and which have a fairly certain interpretation. These inscriptions typically stand out from the rest, and most of them will be discussed in the section on “other selves” below.

Finally, there are the uncertain inscriptions. These could be uninterpreted, or they are simply too fragmentary and damaged for us to say anything certain about what the inscription might once have been. Some inscriptions are labelled as uncertain, but with a plausible guess added in parentheses. These guesses are mostly done on the basis of the context of the inscription. This means that they should only be used with the utmost care in discussions, as they can easily lead to circular argumentation. Many of the fragmentary inscriptions are, for instance, interpreted as religious due to their location in a church. With some goodwill, several corrupted or fragmentary inscriptions can be interpreted as religious utterances. For instance, **(p)ilal-**⁹

⁹ When discussing inscriptions, I use bold type to render my reading of the inscription in

(N 483) has been suggested to be a corrupted spelling of *pīlagrímur* 'pilgrim', a suggestion which seems plausible given that the inscription is carved on a major pilgrim church, but which would seem a stretch in any other context. Although such interpretations are often likely to be correct, it is impossible to use them as an indication that most inscriptions on churches are religious.

The Nidaros Cathedral inscriptions

In total, 51 inscriptions on the walls of the Nidaros Cathedral have been described as medieval in one of the two existing corpus editions which include inscriptions from the cathedral. The editions are Syrett (2002), which describes Roman alphabet inscriptions, and *Norges innskifter med de yngre runer* (NIyR V, 1960), which describes the runic inscriptions.¹⁰ Of these, eleven inscriptions are written with Roman alphabet letters and 40 are written with runes. All the inscriptions are listed in the appendix according to their location in the cathedral; the runic inscriptions are given the signum used in NIyR (e.g. N 491), while the Roman alphabet inscriptions are given as Syrett [the number given to it by Syrett] (e.g. Syrett 1). The interpretations of the Roman alphabet inscriptions are based on Syrett (2002), while the interpretations of the runic inscriptions mostly correspond to those found in NIyR. I have, however, also consulted *Samnordisk runtextdatabas*. The database follows NIyR, but it is slightly more up-to-date and slightly more conservative, and I have followed these interpretations in some cases when I have judged them better than those presented in NIyR.

In addition to the 51 inscriptions from the corpus editions, I have added ten more inscriptions to the appendix which are not described by Syrett or in NIyR. These are listed with the signum NC 1–10. There are numerous other inscriptions on the walls as well, and a challenge in delimiting the material is that the medieval inscriptions of the Nidaros Cathedral, with one exception (Syrett 2), are all undated. This seems to be the trend until the seventeenth century. Therefore, I have limited the number of new inscriptions given in the appendix according to linguistic criteria: All (undated) Latin inscriptions I have found are added.¹¹ Moreover, I have added an

transliterated form. Interpretations of the inscriptions are given in italics, and the translation of the interpretation into English is given in normal type.

¹⁰ There is, moreover, an additional forthcoming volume which will treat several runic finds from the excavations which have been carried out in later years. The volume includes two inscriptions from the cathedral. A draft of this volume (Hagland unpublished) is available online: <http://www.hf.ntnu.no/nor/Publik/RUNER/RUNER.doc>.

¹¹ This is no guarantee that the inscription is medieval, as several Latin inscriptions in the cathedral are dated to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There was a Latin school in

Old Norse inscription (NC 8: *Pétr*). If this is not simply an unfinished Petrus,¹² this inscription must be medieval.¹³ In addition to the Roman alphabet inscriptions, I have added two new runic inscriptions I have discovered. One is likely to be a name; in the other, only a single rune is discernible. Had it been a Roman alphabet inscription, I would not have added it. But as it is runic, it is in all likelihood medieval and it is added on that ground. In addition to these inscriptions, there can be found numerous dated (always post-Reformation) and undated names and other inscriptions carved with Roman alphabet letters, a few inscriptions consisting of letter combinations which do not make sense, and a vast number of inscriptions consisting of two to three letters, presumably initials.

The listed Roman alphabet inscriptions could be medieval, but as medieval and post-Reformation inscriptions often have much the same features, they could just as well be post-medieval. After all, the Reformation did not lead to an abrupt change in the epigraphical tradition.¹⁴ Although we have no guarantee that these inscriptions are medieval, it is likely that at least some of them are. But medieval or not, they attest that people had (and still have) a particular fondness for carving names, most likely their own. Thus, the inscriptions serve as a bridge between the inscriptions described in the corpus editions and the myriad other inscriptions on the cathedral, which all attest interaction of various kinds and at various times between individuals and the cathedral.

the area, and pupils from this school could very well be the carvers of all or most of the inscriptions in Latin given here. However, language is the best objective criterium I have been able to find. Although Latin is not necessarily a proof that the inscription is medieval, at least it gives an indication of the inscription's age. Moreover, the bulk of the inscriptions added are names, and in that respect, the inscriptions may illustrate how the cathedral walls continued to tempt carvers wanting to make their presence at the cathedral visible for posterity, even after the Middle Ages.

¹² There are so many seemingly unfinished inscriptions on the cathedral that this cannot be completely ruled out.

¹³ The recordings of the name found in Lind (1905: cols. 830–833) show that the spelling varied greatly, although the earliest recordings of the name, from the thirteenth century, are all spelled without the svarabhakti vowel. A dating to the thirteenth or fourteenth century is likely, although the inscription could also be later.

¹⁴ An ongoing project at the University of Oslo, *Between Runes and Manuscripts*, aims to map medieval Roman alphabetic inscriptions in order to, among other things, develop a typology to be able to date such inscriptions more precisely. See the project website for more information: <http://www.hf.uio.no/iln/english/research/projects/between-runes-and-manuscripts/>.

In addition to names and initials, the walls are filled with other scribbles such as monograms, single Roman alphabet letters and other non-alphabetic marks (e.g. owner's marks, mason's marks, and a range of symbols like arrows and crosses). Indeed, some areas on the outside walls, particularly the northern wall of the north tower on the western wall, are so heavily inscribed with such marks that it is at times difficult to discern individual inscriptions. Although some of these marks are undoubtedly medieval and could qualify as inscriptions, they are not listed in the appendix. The reason for this is simple: There are so many such marks that the appendix would have been close to never-ending should they all be added.

Inscriptions are found in most parts of the church, both inside and on accessible walls outside. However, some walls have more inscriptions than others. The most heavily inscribed outside walls are found on the octagon, the western wall, including the northern and southern tower walls, and on the wall just east of the entrance on the southern wall of the nave. Inside, the most heavily inscribed walls are the walls of the chancel and triforium, particularly the northern part of it, where the Maria chapel is found. In addition, a fair number of inscriptions are found in and near the octagon.

One should, however, be careful when looking at the distribution of the inscriptions in the Nidaros Cathedral, as this is a very complex building which has been built, rebuilt and restored over the centuries. The octagon, where many inscriptions are found, is one of the oldest parts of the cathedral, and has been available to carvers for a very long time. This could be a simple explanation for the density of inscriptions here. Other walls which may once have been filled with inscriptions have now been destroyed by fires, human actions, weathering or the passing of time, and they have been demolished altogether or rebuilt and restored with new stones in more recent times. Moreover, an old restoration technique has been to remove the outer layer of the wall (up to c. 2 cm), and this technique has been used on several walls both in the chancel and the octagon.¹⁵ Any inscription on a wall where this technique has been used, would be lost today. Although the chancel and octagon walls still have a fair number of medieval inscriptions, chances are they once had even more. What is beyond doubt, however, is that the distribution of inscriptions, even in the Middle Ages, cannot have been completely even in the church. For instance, the outside part of the northern nave wall is, to a large extent, still medieval. There are probably some medieval inscriptions here, but neither I nor anyone who has looked before me has been able to find any certainly medieval inscriptions (e.g. runic inscriptions). Mostly, the

¹⁵ Thanks to Kjersti Kristoffersen at the Nidaros Cathedral Restoration Workshop for making me aware of this, and for discussing other aspects of the restoration process and the conditions of the walls with me.

inscriptions here are either initials or names dated to after the Reformation. Therefore, it seems to be no coincidence that none of the inscriptions in my appendix are from these walls. Although we will never know exactly how the distribution of inscriptions was in the Middle Ages, we may assume that significant places in the cathedral attracted more inscriptions, and that many carvers chose their carving location with care.

My study is limited to textual carvings on the Nidaros Cathedral, but this was not the only way of leaving a trace of oneself on the cathedral. As noted above, the church is filled to the brim with different sorts of personal marks such as masons' mark, and other personal marks; drawings, patterns and crosses can also be found. In England, personal marks such as coats of arms and merchant's marks are found in churches (cf. Champion 2016), and it is not unlikely that non-alphabetic carvings were used by people in Norway as well to attest to their presence in the church (see for instance Blindheim 1977; Blindheim 1985 for an overview of the (primarily figurative) graffiti in Norwegian stave churches).

The selves in the inscriptions

Several approaches can be taken towards the inscriptions in the Nidaros Cathedral and what they tell us about the carvers' sense of self. Below, I will discuss different ways of interpreting the inscriptions, and what these approaches might tell us about the selves expressed there. I aim to show that inscriptions were used by the carvers to express power, belief in one's own skills, religious affiliation, creativity, belonging or distance to the community, and – perhaps – boredom. My hypothesis, which I investigate in my article-based PhD-project, is that the main body of the church inscriptions can be interpreted as religious, while bragging and self-affirming inscriptions mostly belong to a different context. I see the context, i.e. a church, as a room for expressions of self, where the expressions are both shaped by and shaping the context.

In the following discussion, I will refer to the categories found in the appendix and discussed in the section on method above. One of these categories, the religious inscriptions, is clearly linked to an expression of religious self-identification, as discussed below. The other categories, however, are not as clearly connected to any specific expression of self. In the following, therefore, I will examine whether the concept of situated cognition could aid in understanding how the agents portray themselves in these inscriptions.

A scribbling self?

A simple solution to the question of the carvers' sense of self is to suggest that the inscriptions were carved as simple scribbles with no deeper meaning than to pass the time, for instance during services. This suggestion is inspired by personal experience: Few today can claim that they have never doodled (on a sheet of paper, their hand, or a clean desk). As parchment was extremely expensive, other materials suggest themselves more readily, such as pieces of wood or an available cathedral wall. The cathedral inscriptions could simply be an accumulation of doodles created through the centuries. However, it is hard to argue that any one inscription has been created solely for the purpose of making the time pass. Most likely, some inscriptions have, but it is difficult to later decide which inscriptions this applies to. Possible candidates could be found among the name inscriptions, which have a plethora of parallels in the present day in public toilets, on school desks, and on school camps. Another inscription which (at least to me) seems fairly meaningless, and which could have been the first thing coming to mind to a bored carver, is the list of syllables (N 492) found in the chancel, on the pillar bordering the octagon. However, this seems an unlikely place to stand during mass, for instance. Thus, the inscription's location makes this explanation less likely. I will come back to this inscription with other suggested interpretations in the section on other selves.

My aim here is not to claim that any specific inscription is only a doodle. Neither do I want to claim that a carver of such an inscription cannot express other aspects of his self than a need to scribble. Rather, I want to underline that we are in grave danger of overinterpretation if we believe that every inscription has an explicit meaning and purpose. With this in mind, let us proceed to the religious self.

The religious self

As mentioned, a number of the inscriptions explicitly express some sort of religious affection or belonging to the religious community. This is expressed in a number of ways in the inscriptions, and it would, perhaps, be more precise to divide this category further into groups such as devotional inscriptions and prayers. I have, however, chosen to use the overarching categories "religious inscriptions" and "religious self" as analytical tools encompassing all inscriptions which could be said to be part of religious practice in one way or another. In the appendix, eight inscriptions are listed as explicitly religious.¹⁶ In addition to these, we have three dedication inscriptions. As the dedications are made to Jesus, Mary and a range of saints, these inscriptions must also be regarded as religious. Furthermore, we have two commemorative inscriptions

¹⁶ One of which (Syrett 11) is also listed as a potential dedication.

(N 489 and N 497), and their location in a cathedral gives them strong religious connotations, even though the texts are not explicitly calling upon God or any of the saints. In these estimates I have erred on the side of caution; the largest category is that of the uncertain inscriptions (26), and at least six of these are possibly religious while one is a possible dedication inscription. Some of the uncertain interpretations are little more than educated guesses partly based upon the fact that the inscriptions are found in a religious environment. I will therefore keep the uncertain inscriptions out of the argument to avoid circular argumentation.

The religious inscriptions form a diverse group. We find an expression of devotion: *Guð á mik* 'God owns me' (N 475), two calls to the Virgin Mary (N 477, N 484), and an inscription which probably asks God to take the soul (N 504). Whose soul God should take is unclear, but as nothing else is specified, it is probably the carver's. Other inscriptions ask for God's blessing or intercession: *Ámundi hann risti mik. Guð signi hann* 'Ámundi, he carved me. May God bless him' (N 506) and *Guð ok hinn helgi Ólafr konungr hjalpi þeim manni, er þessar rúnar reist með sínu heilagu árnaðarorði* 'May God and the holy King Ólafr with their holy intercessions help the man who carved these runes' (N 478). In addition to these, we have two inscriptions which are likely to have been carved in two steps. First, the inscriptions were name inscriptions; later, someone else has added more text to the names, making the inscriptions wishes for well-being in the present or the afterlife. I will come back to these inscriptions later.

The carvers of the explicitly religious inscriptions show a clear awareness of the space in which they are carving. Their cognition is situated in the cathedral, and this is visible in what they choose to carve. The religious inscriptions are found on all the church walls where inscriptions are found, but they are slightly more prevalent on the octagon walls. This is perhaps not surprising, as the octagon was the most holy place in the church, and where the shrine of St Olaf was located. If you wanted divine intervention, this must have seemed like a good spot for carving the prayer. The fact that religious inscriptions are found on other walls as well is also important; this indicates that the entire church was used for religious inscriptions. In addition, it might tell us something about the inscriptions which are not explicitly religious.

Looking at the name and agent inscriptions, we see that these are also fairly evenly distributed on the church, and several of them are found very close to explicitly religious inscriptions. Counting both certain (20) and uncertain (6) name and agent inscriptions, and including the inscriptions which are also counted as religious (4), we have eleven inscriptions on the outside walls and thirteen on the inside of the cathedral. Ten are found on the inside and outside walls of the octagon or very close

to it. This is a large number given that the octagon is such a small part of the building, but the distribution here is more even than for the explicitly religious inscriptions.

The transitions between the name, agent and religious inscriptions are not altogether clear. The inscription N 497, for instance, which lists the names of several persons who “sank in the fjord” during a shipwreck in 1316, is fairly similar to the name and agent inscriptions. The reason why it is listed as a religious inscription, is that the deceased cannot have carved the inscription themselves, and it seems to be understood in the inscription that the reader should pray for them.¹⁷ Neither is it far from *Ámundi hann risti mik. Guð signi hann* ‘Ámundi, he carved me. May God bless him’ (N 506) to *Þorvaldr Sigurðr ristit rúnar þessar* ‘Þorvaldr (and) Sigurðr carved these runes’ (N 471). The request for prayers, made explicit in the first inscription, seems to be implied in the second. As all the inscriptions belong to the same environment, and are found on the same walls, the meaning transmits between them. The carver did not need to add a “pray for me” phrase even though that was his likely objective. Given his choice of a church as carving material, this is inferred.

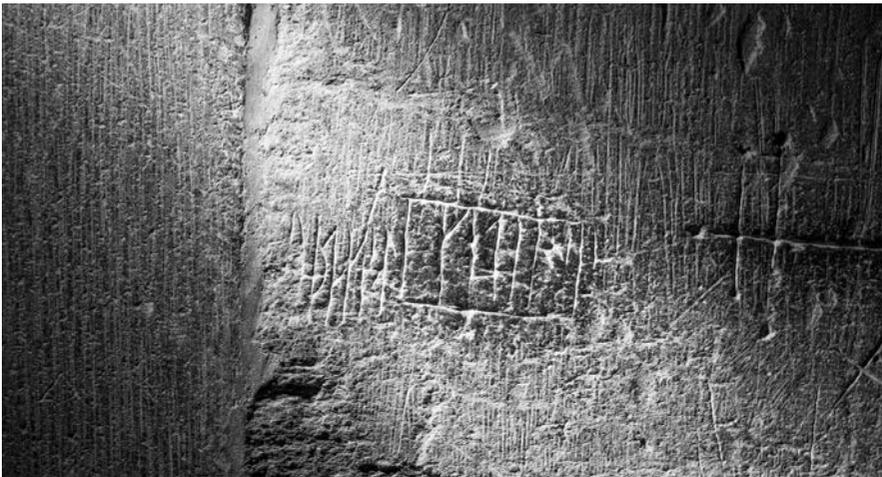


Fig. 1: N 493. Photo taken 28.11.2017 by the author.

¹⁷ This is possibly also made explicit in the final line, which might spell pater noster, see *NIyR V*: 61.

that the name inscriptions give the name of the carver, as the inscriptions are often seen as a shorter version of the “X carved” inscriptions. As there is no verb phrase here, we will never know whether Ketill and Erlingr actually carved their own names, but in general, it is likely that while some carvers chose to write their own names, others carved the names of deceased friends and relatives in the hope that someone would pray for their souls.

The inscriptions form two very concrete examples of how the carver’s cognition is connected to his surroundings. The name inscriptions evoke a response from the carver: He knows that the carver of the name wants people to pray for the named person, and he does. Not only does our carver pray orally, he also carves the prayer into the wall. This reaction shows us how the carver’s cognition is dependent on the space in which he stands. Had he found Ketill’s name on a tavern wall, he would probably have had a completely different reaction. We do not know which inscription came first of the two – Ketill’s blessing or Erlingr’s. They might also have been carved at the same time. It is likely, however, that it is no coincidence that the inscriptions are found so close to each other. One has inspired the other. If we assume that we have more than one carver, this illustrates how the cognition of the second carver is affected by the first carver’s idea to extend the inscription. He has noticed this and chosen to do the same with the other name inscription close by.

These two inscriptions are witnesses of how an inscription may lead to a cognitive response in the reader, which again may lead to the reader becoming a carver. At the same time, these name inscriptions and their prayer extensions are examples of different ways in which an individual may participate in the religious community through inscriptions. While some carvers, such as Ámundi (N 506), and perhaps also Erlingr and Ketill, carve to receive prayers for themselves, others turn to carving in the hope that God or a saint will aid one of their loved ones. Others again, such as the carver of N 484: *María*, carve inscriptions simply to express devotion without explicitly asking for prayers or aid. In sum, these inscriptions show that there are several ways in which an inscription could be part of the religious practice, but in common to them is the fact that the carver, by setting his knife to the stone to carve, uses the inscription as a way to communicate with God or the saints and expresses his religious affiliations. Some carvers explicitly express a religious self-awareness (N 475: *Guð á mik*), while others are content with expressing their religious belonging without connecting this explicitly to their self (N 484: *María*). In common, however, is the expressed belonging to the Christian community. Thus, they also, albeit indirectly, express a religious self.

To carve your name, or a personal mark or monogram, is to carve yourself into a religious community. According to Champion (2017: 11), carving a church inscrip-

tion could be “an act of faith”. Zilmer (2016: 221) terms the church inscriptions “expressions of religious devotion and social practice”, stating that “they can be read as performative acts, during which one wrote oneself into a community and also expressed closeness to God” (ibid.). When a name is carved into a church, that person’s self is connected to the religious community. Carving one’s own name into the church wall thus becomes a way for an individual to partake in religious practice and show that one belongs to the community. Carving another person’s name, or an inscription like *Guð á mik* ‘God owns me’ (N 475) does not seem to tie the carver’s self as intrinsically to the religious community after the moment of carving. Still, they are also a sort of participation and a display of devotion.

We have seen here how the carver’s choice of inscription is influenced by the space in which he carves. This must, in the least, be the case for the religious inscriptions, and, I have argued, for the name and agent inscriptions as well. These inscriptions form a tradition or canon, and every new inscription adds to it. When a new carver enters the church, he is likely to observe some of the other inscriptions found there,¹⁹ and these will form part of his cognition when carving a new inscription. The carvers create a joint understanding through the inscriptions. Here, it seems that the understanding is related to religious practice: To carve an inscription in a church means participating in the religious community. As such, the inscriptions are also part of the carver’s social interactions. This is also seen in that several inscriptions mention more than one name, and it seems that many carvers carved the inscriptions in company of others. Finally, most inscriptions on the cathedral are clustered together in different spots on the walls; they are not spread evenly out.²⁰ The carvers wanted to conform, not only in content, but also in their choice of location.

It is possible, however, that the inscriptions were more than a means of participation in the religious community in the here and now. Jill Hamilton Clements (2017) has argued that carving or writing the name of a deceased in Anglo-Saxon England, for instance on gravestones, donated objects used during Mass – the church

¹⁹ Note, however, that few of the inscriptions are visible from afar, and some are fairly inaccessible, such as the inscriptions in the triforium and cleristorium. One should, therefore, be careful in speculating exactly which inscriptions each carver has seen, not least because we seldom know which inscriptions came first, and which came later.

²⁰ This might seem to contradict what I wrote earlier about distribution and the preservation of the walls of the cathedral. However, although it is difficult today to say anything about the general distribution of inscriptions on the cathedral, it seems like inscriptions were often clustered together in small spots. If a building stone has one inscription, more inscriptions are likely to appear beside the first one. As a result of this, it is possible to find walls where one well-preserved medieval stone is filled with inscriptions and marks while the neighbouring stones, while just as well preserved, are free of such inscriptions and marks.

building included – or in a memorial list or books, has a symbolic function, “serving as an earthly imitation of the divine writing that is a metaphor for the individual’s salvation” (2017: 11). Clements connects the practice of writing down the names of the dead to the *liber vitae*, the book of life, originally a divine book where the names of the dead were written down in heaven, and later also used for a physical book wherein the names of the benefactors of the Church were written (Ariès 1991: 103). According to Clements, in the Anglo-Saxon imagination, having one’s name written down was connected to remembrance, not only by posterity, but also by God: “to be written among the saved on earth was to anticipate being fully present and counted among the saved at Judgement” (Clements 2017: 12). The physical and the celestial *liber vitae* were tied to each other. Therefore, Anglo-Saxon inscriptions²¹ can be interpreted as attempts to ensure that the soul, was remembered by God and admitted to heaven at the Day of Judgement; it was a prayer for eternal life for the soul, and perhaps also for the self.

It does not seem like the same view was as prevalent in the Norwegian Middle Ages. We have a few lists of names from Norway in *calendaria* and *psalteria*, the oldest is a fragment of a *calendarium* from the *urbarium* of Jonskirken in Nidaros (DN XIII: 1). The fragment is from the middle of the twelfth century, while the names are added later.²² These lists were registers of church benefactors for whom the clergy prayed and held masses. However, what was important here was not to have your name written down in itself, but being remembered by people who could intercede on your behalf, so that Christ would judge in your favour on the day of judgement.

Philippe Ariès (1991: 101) and Arned Nedkvitne (1997: 67) claim that the conceptions of eschatology changed during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Where earlier all believers were thought to be saved, now you had to be worthy of heaven. In the new understanding of the eschatology, we see an increased focus on the individual. It no longer sufficed to belong to the Christian community; each individual was made responsible for his own salvation. With this shift came an increase in gifts given to ensure the salvation of one’s soul. In Norway, such gifts appear in wills in

²¹ It should be noted that the inscriptions Clements discusses are inscriptions on gravestones and liturgical objects and in churches with names of church benefactors. Graffiti inscriptions are not discussed by her, although it would not be hard to extend the argument and argue that such inscriptions could be personal attempts by the less privileged at carving one’s own name, or the name of a relative, into the *liber vitae*.

²² Lilli Gjerløw, “Dødebøger”, KLN III: 425–426. According to KLN III, the names are added around 1200. In DN, however, it is stated that “Hænderne i disse Tilføielser variere formentlig mellem c. 1250 og 1350” (“The scribal hands in these additions probably vary between c. 1250 and 1350”).

the thirteenth century, and in return it was asked for candles, prayers and requiems (*sálumessur*). The first documented request for requiems in Norway is from 1217 (Nedkvitne 1997: 69); other instances are found sporadically through the thirteenth century and become increasingly more common in the fourteenth century (Nedkvitne 1997: 69–70, 81). Nedkvitne sees this growth in indulgences in relation to the increased focus on purgatory in liturgy.²³ The church put increased emphasis on purgatory from the thirteenth century, and it appears for the first time in the Norse area in a saga about John the Bishop (“Jóns saga helga eptir Gunnlaugr munk” in *Biskupa sögur*), written c. 1201–1210. It does not appear in the contemporary Old Norwegian Homily Book, however (Nedkvitne 1997: 68).

The first instances of indulgences in wills are from the royal family and other members of the upper classes. Nevertheless, Nedkvitne (1997: 120–121) argues that the shift towards a focus on individual salvation was spread not only in the upper levels of society, but also amongst the broader layers. Firstly, this is seen in that confession once a year became mandatory according to church law (*kristinn réttir*) in Norway from 1268 (Nedkvitne 1997: 114, 120). Secondly, it can be seen in the rise of the mendicant orders in Norway. Nedkvitne refers to a study of the mendicant orders in medieval Norway by Inger-Johanne Ullern (1997). The mendicant orders emphasised the connection between homilies and confession, and sought to make the individual aware of his sins and move him to confess (*ibid.*: 72). It seems that they primarily targeted the upper levels of society. However, according to Ullern (1997: 94), the size of the mendicant churches indicates that they were also targeting the wider public with their sermons and pastoral work. If Ullern is correct, it is likely that the increased attention to the individual’s personal responsibility for his own salvation reached broad layers of urban society during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Thus, we see an increased focus on the individual’s responsibility for his own salvation both in Norway and in Europe.²⁴ The religious inscriptions, as well as the agent and name inscriptions, seem to be part of this pattern. While some explicitly ask for prayers, benediction or intercession, others implicitly do the same. The wills requesting requiems and the inscriptions mentioning names furthermore demonstrate the importance of being remembered and prayed for within the church.²⁵ And if you

²³ Nedkvitne 1997: 69. Note, however, that according to Ariès (1991: 107, 201), the belief in purgatory did not truly catch on until the mid-17th century. I will leave that discussion here, and simply note that purgatory or not, the 12th and 13th century will-writers seem anxious for their afterlife and salvation.

²⁴ In addition to Ariès and Nedkvitne, this view is stressed by for instance Colin Morris (1972, see particularly chapter 7).

²⁵ This point is also stressed by Eamon Duffy (2005: 328, 332). He does not advocate as

wanted to be remembered but did not have the means to pay for requiems or a prestigious gravestone within or close to the church, carving your own name on the church wall could be a way to utter this wish for free. As such, the inscriptions belong to a trend in which the individual is increasingly concerned with being remembered.

Moreover, we also see a focus on the individual on the expense of community in the inscriptions from the Nidaros Cathedral. We find, for instance, Ámundi asking for God's blessing (N 506): *Ámundi hann risti mik. Guð signi hann.* 'Ámundi he carved me. God bless him'. No inscription asks for blessings or intercession on behalf of the whole community. The closest we come to that are inscriptions mentioning more than one name, such as N 491: *Heðinn, Rannveig*. In fact, this seems to be a general trend in Norwegian churches. Although some ask for benedictions for the reader or others (e.g. N 227 from Klepp Church in Rogaland: *Ártið er Ingibjargar Káradóttur þrim nóttum eptir krossmessu um várit. Hverr sá maðr rúnar þessar sér, þá syngi Pater noster fyrir sál hennar. Hjalpi Guð þeim er svá gerir.* 'Ingibjörg Kári's daughter's anniversary-of-death is three nights after Cross-mass in spring. Whoever the man who sees these runes may be, may he sing Our Father for her soul. May God help him who does thus.), requests for benediction for the community or congregation as a whole are rare. Thus, the inscriptions from the Nidaros Cathedral seem to confirm the focus on the individual commented upon by Nedkvitne (1997), Ariès (1991) and Morris (1972).²⁶

That the individual is in focus does not mean that the community had no role in the inscriptions. Often, the prayers are directed directly at God or a saint, such as in N 506, cited above, where Ámundi asks God to bless him. However, in the case of the name inscriptions, such as the examples of Erlingr and Ketill mentioned above (N 493 and N 494), the community as a whole is apparently tasked with the intercession. This is also apparent in the example from Klepp Church cited above (N 227). Although the individual is the object of the inscriptions, the community still has a

abrupt a shift towards increased individuality as Nedkvitne and Ariès (cf. Duffy 2005: 131–141), but he still underlines the late medieval fear of purgatory and the importance of being prayed for.

²⁶ Nedkvitne, Ariès and Morris do not only claim that the individual was emphasised in the late Middle Ages; they also claim that this emphasis increased, and that there was a process of individualisation in medieval society. The church inscriptions seem to confirm that the individual rather than society is the centre of attention in the inscriptions. However, most of these inscriptions are from well into the Middle Ages, and it is therefore not possible to use them to confirm (or contradict) claims about a trend of increased individualisation in the period c. 1050–1200. For a further discussion on the claims of individualisation in the Middle Ages, see Melve (2006).

role. As such, these inscriptions exemplify the interdependence of individual and community.

A final note on the trend of individualisation commented upon above, is that although individual sin and the feeling of guilt were supposedly more emphasised in high medieval society, this shift cannot be traced in the inscriptions. All the religious inscriptions focus on personal devotion, such as *Guð á mik* 'God owns me' (N 475), the fate of the soul (N 493: *Guð taki sál Ketils*. 'May God take Ketill's soul') and requests for prayers, intercession or God's protection: *Guð ok hinn helgi Ólafr konungr hjalpi þeim manni, er þessar rúnar reist með sínu heilagu árnaðarorði* 'May God and the holy King Ólafr with their holy intercessions help the man who carved these runes.' (N 478).²⁷ As mentioned, confession was emphasised by the church from the thirteenth century, and even became mandatory from 1268. That this is not at all present in the inscriptions could be an indication that it was seen as less important by lay people than by the church officials. Alternatively, it might also demonstrate how the carvers were conscious of the medium in which they carved. While confessions were private, the inscriptions were meant for an audience and ask for a response. With this in mind, the carvers may have chosen to emphasise their belonging in a religious community rather than their guilt, even though the latter was seen as a precondition for salvation.

In conclusion, we have seen that a large portion of the inscriptions in the cathedral can in one way or another be seen as religious. The material documents how carving an inscription is a social act. By carving a religious inscription, you not only express your devotion, you also carve yourself into the church and religious community. Thus, the inscriptions become expressions of a religious self. This conclusion cannot apply to all the inscriptions found on the cathedral walls, however. As already mentioned, some inscriptions might be the result of scribbling carvers who did not seek any higher meaning through their inscription. In other instances, the carvers and agents seem highly conscious of how they form and use their inscriptions – but it is not for a religious purpose. That is the topic for the following sections.

²⁷ There is one possible exception, N 469: *sakumr*, which is perhaps the word *sokum* which can be translated to something along the lines of 'guilt' or 'for the reason that'. This inscription is, however, difficult to interpret, and we lack sufficient information about the context to give a satisfactory and secure interpretation. Looking outside Norway, we also find some inscriptions from Gotland which thematise sin and guilt, the most explicit of which reads *Ek er ein arm, syndig manneskja...* 'I am a poor, sinful person...' (G 104 E, line d. See *Gotlands runinskripter* vol. 11, no. 1: 178, Gustavsson 1991: 556).

Self-affirming inscriptions

A question worth asking is whether some inscriptions in the cathedral are carved with the aim of displaying the carver's own carving skills or his achievements as a pilgrim. As the cathedral was an important location for pilgrims, it is not inconceivable that some of the name inscriptions were carved by pilgrims upon reaching their destination. Why a pilgrim would choose to carve his name is probably a complex matter; he might have had a religious intention, carving the inscription in the hope that someone saw it and prayed for his soul. At the same time, many pilgrims came from afar, and it is not impossible that they carved their names to attest that they had reached their destination, and so that friends and relatives doing a pilgrimage at a later point in time could see their inscription. If not explicitly bragging, such inscriptions could at least be termed self-affirming in that their purpose is to assert the achievements of the carver.

Moreover, we have several examples of runic inscriptions from outside Nidaros Cathedral where the carver appears to have carved an inscription with the sole purpose of displaying his own carving skills. For instance, some inscriptions challenge the reader to interpret the inscription.²⁸ There is one potential such inscription from the cathedral as well (N 485: *Ráð þú rúnar.* '(Interpret the runes.)'). This inscription was first discovered in June 1888, but the authors of *NIyR* could not find it in 1956, and neither have I found it. The information given in *NIyR* is very brief, and mostly a repetition of Undset (1888), who first published it. We therefore have very little to go on to judge the inscription, except for the reconstructed reading [-**þurun**], and the suggested interpretation. Although not without parallel,²⁹ I therefore judge this interpretation to be uncertain. Nevertheless, we should not rule out that the cathedral walls have once been used for proving one's skills. This also applies to the name inscriptions; some carvers may have carved their name simply to prove to the world that they were able to do so.

²⁸ See Nordby 2013; 2015; 2018 for advanced variants. Other key examples of bragging inscriptions are found in the Maeshowe corpus (see Barnes 1994), where we for instance find a carver bragging that he has carved runes high up on the wall, and another claiming to be the most skilled in runes west of the ocean. Among the church inscriptions, a prominent example can be found painted with tar 7.8 metres up on the wall inside Lom stave church (N 49). Here, the carver proclaims that he has been in the corner, and the inscription is, indeed, painted in a corner (see *NIyR* I: 94–99).

²⁹ For two close parallels, see N 352 from the stave church in Borgund, Sogn of Fjordane (*NIyR* IV: 150–151) and N 575 from the stave church from Gol (*NIyR* V: 186).

The powerful self

Two inscriptions in the cathedral, a formal dedication inscription and a slander inscription, stand out in the corpus as rather different from the rest. Common to both is that they can be connected to events at the archiepiscopal see. Moreover, one of the inscriptions is a formal dedication inscription, and, as the sender was the church authorities, it is pertinent to ask whether such inscriptions were used not only to inform, but also to impress and establish authority.

The dedication inscription in question, Syrett 2, is found in the chapel of Saint John in the southern transept. This inscription dates itself to 1161, and is thus by far the earliest dated inscription, all the other dated inscriptions being post-reformation. This inscription could perhaps have been treated in the passage above, under the self-affirming inscriptions. I have, however, singled it out, as the power-aspect is more prominent than the bragging. There are most likely many agents involved in the creation of this inscription, but the most prominent of them is archbishop Eysteinn:

+ ALTARE HOC DEDICATVM EST AB AVGVSTINO ARCH(IE)PIS-
COPO : ANNO PRIMO EPISCOPATVS EIVS AD LAVDEM // DÑI //
NRI IHV XPI IN HONORE : SĀI IOHANNI S BAPTISTE ET SĀI VIN-
CENTII MĀRIS ET SĀI SILVESTRI // AN // NO AB INCARNATIONE
DÑI MILLESIMO CENTESIMO LXI SEXTO KALENDAS : DECEM-
BRIUM

Altare hoc dedicatum est ab Augustino archiepiscopo anno primo episcopatus eius ad laudem domini nostri Iesu Christi in honore sancti Iohannis baptiste et sancti Vincentii martyris et sancti Silvestri anno ab incarnatione domini millesimo centesimo lxi sexto kalendas decembrium.

This altar was dedicated by Archbishop Eysteinn in the first year of his episcopal office in praise of our Lord Jesus Christ, in honour of Saint John the Baptist and Saint Vincentius the martyr and Saint Silvester, in the year of our Lord 1161 on the 26th November.

The archbishop receives considerable attention; the inscription runs along three walls, and an entire wall is reserved for him alone. He is also mentioned first, although this might be to allow the middle part of the inscription, mentioning Jesus and the dedi-

cation to the saints, to appear on the most prominent wall, facing out of the chapel. This part would be visible to people standing in the transept.³⁰

The mentioning of Archbishop Eysteinn is probably a conscious choice, ordered by the archbishop himself. A possible explanation of why can be found in the historical records. In *A Speech Against the Bishops*, a propaganda pamphlet in favour of King Sverrir, it is stated that when King Ingi *krokbryggr* ('the hunchback') Haraldsson elected Eysteinn as archbishop "he did not ask any learned man who was in Trondheim, neither any canons nor anyone else".³¹ In 1161, the same year that Eysteinn returned from Rome where he had received his pallium, King Ingi died. Given that the claim from *A Speech Against the Bishops* is correct, and that Eysteinn was elected without any support from the Nidaros canons, it is no wonder if he felt a need to strengthen his authority during his first year as archbishop.

It is also worth discussing briefly the layout and placement of the inscription, as this is perhaps the most prominent inscription in the cathedral. It is found in one of the side-chapels in the south transept on the ground floor, and it would therefore have been visible to many people. Moreover, the letters are large and very visible compared to most of the other inscriptions in the cathedral. Nevertheless, compared to many of the inscriptions found in Rome, from where the archbishop had just returned, this inscription must be termed modest. Although the most visible inscription in the cathedral – at least as the cathedral stands today – it is only visible for people standing at the southern end of the south transept, and the letters are too small to be read if you are not standing close to or inside the chapel. Thus, it was not necessarily meant to be an imposing inscription. Furthermore, the archbishop's name is placed on the north wall of the chapel, and it is not very visible unless you are standing inside the chapel itself. It is nonetheless a fact that the archbishop's name is mentioned in this inscription, and however modest the inscription was meant to be, the name is there for a reason. The inscription is not only a declaration of who has dedicated an altar to whom, it is also a declaration of power. Through the inscription, the archbishop imposes himself on the church building, and he establishes himself as a powerful figure by showing that he has the means to dedicate an altar. Seen in the context of 1161, when Eysteinn was a new and perhaps unpopular archbishop, this inscription

³⁰ But note that the readability of this inscription from a distance is heavily influenced by its appearance in the Middle Ages. I had trouble reading it from the transept in the present light, and in candle light, it cannot have been easier. It may however have been made more visible with paint or inlaid metal.

³¹ "hann spurði engan lærðan mann at er i var Þrónðheimi ok eigi heldr korsbróðr en aðra" (normalised from Holtsmark 1931: 15); my translation.

might have been a means to improve his status within the ecclesiastical community in Trondheim.

The two other dedication inscriptions found in the cathedral, Syrett 3 and 4, are more modest in that no dedicator is mentioned. The two inscriptions are found on the triforium level, in chapels in the southern and northern transepts respectively, i.e. in the floor above Syrett 2. As the work on the triforium level of the transepts followed directly after the completion of the ground level, and as the dedications were likely carved shortly after the completion of the chapels, Syrett 3 and 4 are most likely only a couple of decades younger than Syrett 2. In layout and formula, however, the inscriptions are very different from the Saint John's Chapel dedication, and it seems that Syrett 2 did not set precedence for the other dedication inscriptions in the cathedral. If Syrett 3 and 4 were commissioned by Archbishop Eysteinn, it would have been in his older days, and he might not have felt the same need to establish himself through the inscriptions. Eysteinn was also in exile for a period at about the time when the inscriptions were carved, and this might be a simple explanation for why he was not mentioned. Alternatively, the inscriptions might have been commissioned by Eysteinn's successor, Eiríkr Ivarsson (archbishop 1188–1205). Whoever commissioned these inscriptions, however, has clearly decided not to use Syrett 2 as a template even though that inscription set some precedence for the commissioner to emphasise himself in the inscription.

The slander inscription, Syrett 9, is found outside on the southern nave wall, in proximity to several runic inscriptions. The letters are deeply cut, making them more visible than the average inscription on the cathedral. In daylight, particularly when the sunlight hits the inscription from the right angle, the inscription must have been possible to spot even from some distance:

() -- VS // LAVREN // GELV (-) // A(NV)S // PEÞRI
 (Laurentius *geluanus anus Petri*)
 (Laurentius the Icelander the anus of Pétr)

The interpretation given here is the one favoured by Syrett (2002: 162). It requires that one part of the inscription, A(NV)S, has to be read twice, and it includes an uncommon spelling of a name. Syrett (2002: 158–162) mentions other possible interpretations as well, but prefers the one above. Particularly favouring an interpretation of the inscription as slander is the fact that the word *anus* is left standing alone on one line. This must undoubtedly have led the thoughts of many readers in an unfor-

tunate direction no matter what the original intention of the inscription may have been.

Syrett (2002: 158–159) suggests, with reference to Macody Lund, that the characters figuring in the inscription are Laurentius Kálfsson and Pétur Guðleiksson, known from *Lárentíus saga biskups*. The Laurentius in question was an Icelander, travelling to Norway in 1293 in company with Pétur. He stayed with both Pétur and the king in Bergen before leaving for Trondheim the next year, where he, according to the saga, became involved in the conflicts which had already taken place between the archbishop, Jorunðr, and the members of the cathedral chapter. Laurentius became a favourite with the archbishop, and received many favours from him, which in turn gave him enemies among the chapter members. The saga narrates various episodes escalating the conflict, and Laurentius' stay in Norway ends abruptly after a power shift in the archbishopric see. In 1309, he was sent back to Iceland in disgrace, where he was later elected as Bishop of Hólar.

The inscription has several interesting aspects. First, it is quite similar in content to many of the name inscriptions found on the cathedral. It seems that the carver has used these inscriptions as a template and added a scathing twist. Thus, we see the cognitive process of the carver in the way he uses previous inscriptions on the cathedral and mimics them. Moreover, he shows that he is highly aware of the space in which he carves, as well as the typical inscriptions found in this space, and he uses this to suit his own ends. If the identification of Laurentius with the saga character is correct, the awareness of the location is important in more than one respect: The carver chose to carve on the building where Laurentius held a high position, and this would, undoubtedly, have added insult to the injury.

We can trace the carver's self in his choice of Roman alphabet letters and Latin language: This is a learned carver aiming his inscription at the upper layers of society. Furthermore, the way he mimics other name inscriptions tells us that he is familiar with the tradition of carving names and experiments with it. The contents of the inscription, moreover, tells us that the carver is in opposition to the present authorities. The most prominent feature of this inscription is nevertheless the carver's attempt at diminishing another person's self. Thus, the inscription becomes a rare example of how epigraphy is not only used for establishing or proclaiming power but may also be used for undermining the power of others.

What is noteworthy about these inscriptions, in addition to their content, is that they are carved in Latin and with the Roman alphabet. This makes them stand out in the corpus of medieval cathedral inscriptions, as most of these were carved with runes. In addition to the three dedication inscriptions and the slander inscription

mentioned here, the remaining Roman alphabet inscriptions in the Latin language are the phrase *inest ea propter* (NC 1), the triplet SVAVE, EVAVS, VE (Syrett 5–7) and a few name inscriptions, most of which are probably later than the bulk of the runic inscriptions. Given that Roman alphabet literacy was probably considerably lower than runic literacy in the high Middle Ages in Norway, this tells us that the intended readership of these inscriptions were primarily members of the ecclesiastical orders and the lay elite. At the same time, Latin Roman alphabet inscriptions could still be read symbolically by people who could not read Roman alphabet letters.³² For them, these inscriptions underlined the elevated style of the church, but also the inaccessibility of the church’s teachings. Whether the choice of script and language was conscious or simply a way of conforming to conventions for formal cathedral inscriptions found throughout Europe, these inscriptions dissociate themselves from the rest of the inscriptions in the cathedral. In other words, the agents behind these inscriptions relate, consciously or subconsciously, to the other inscriptions on the cathedral by distancing themselves from them.

Other selves

I have argued that agents may have used the cathedral walls to express their religious affiliations, their skills and achievements, and power. Here, I will turn to six inscriptions which do not fit to any of those categories. In the appendix, I have categorised four inscriptions as certainly “other” and the same number as uncertain “other”, and these are the inscriptions I will discuss here. As will be seen from the discussion below, this group is very diverse, unified only by their negative associations, as neither names, agents, explicitly religious statements nor dedications. Therefore, the selves expressed in these inscriptions are correspondingly diverse. Two of them have been mentioned already: Syrett 9 in connection to the powerful self and N 485 in connection to the self-affirming inscriptions. The remaining six I will discuss below.

The first inscriptions to be discussed are N 480: **alabrum** and Syrett 5–7: SVAVE, EVAVS, VE.³³ The interpretations of these inscriptions are very uncertain. In *NIyR* (V: 49), the interpretation *árla brum* (‘early in spring/budding’) is suggested

³² This claim is not uncommon in discussions of literacy in medieval and Viking Age Scandinavia. Annika Ström (2002: 124), for instance, states that, although the few could read Latin inscriptions carved with Roman letters, they still carry a message of impressiveness. Discussing gravestones, she comments that “the reader could perceive the status of the receiver of the monument, and the text could be ‘understood’ through the length of the inscription.”

³³ Syrett 5–7 are generally considered to be three separate inscriptions, as they are found in three separate places (although not very far from each other). I treat them as one inscription here as they are clearly related, and it seems meaningless to try to interpret them separately.

for N 480, and it is noted that the inscription could seem like a poetic outburst. The interpretation is aided by the inscription's location outside on the southern nave wall. Unless this landscape has changed completely since the Middle Ages, the south-facing wall, the closeness to the river and the nearby trees and flowers would make this a spot where the spring may show itself in all its splendour. In such a context the interpretation is plausible, but we have no guarantee that this was the intended meaning of the carver. It could, for instance, be a highly corrupted attempt by a carver at carving his own name.



Fig. 2: Syrett 5. The letters are fitted into the arcs, and thus become part of the decoration. This suggests that the carver had, at least in part, aesthetic intentions with the inscription. Photo taken 27.11.2017 by the author.

The possible interpretations of SVAVE, EVAVS and VE are no less varied. The three inscriptions can be found in the triforium; SVAVE and VE are found on smaller pillars, while EVAVS is located on the outside of a main pillar. SVAVE and VE are fitted into the arcs of the Romanesque decoration of the pillar, and this makes them quite decorative (see fig. 2). In addition, SVAVE and EVAVS mirror each other. What

the meaning of the texts is, is harder to say. Syrett (2002: 155) lists several possible interpretations, such as a name, a form of mason's mark, a corrupted Christ monogram, or a Latin exclamation over the rich architecture (n. of *suavis* 'sweet'). *Suavis*, moreover, is commonly found in medieval texts to describe the taste of God.³⁴ Thus, the inscriptions can be read as a praise of God's sweetness, an interpretation which also fits well with the aesthetic dimension of the inscriptions. I personally favour this interpretation, although the other possible interpretations cannot be completely ruled out. But whatever the meaning of the text, the inscriptions have an aesthetic dimension. One could tentatively give both N 480 and Syrett 5–7 a religious interpretation by stating that they are poetic praises of God and his creations. But religious or not, they clearly diverge from the bulk of the inscriptions, and show that there was room for a more creative self in the cathedral.

Secondly, we have two curious inscriptions which could be connected to carvers practicing, N 492: **r(e)rurir(e)rærøry** and N 498: **fuirkul/fpirkþl** (cf. Knirk 1994; Seim 1991). N 498 is found on a pillar in the triforium. It is interpreted in *NIyR* as a corrupted beginning of the *fupark*, and as the inscription has seven runes (not the ordinary six), Magnus Olsen suggests that the inscription could be connected to the seven days in the runic calendar (*NIyR* V: 62). Whether the inscription is meant to be a futhark or a calendar, it would seem an odd thing to carve in a cathedral, although it is not without parallel in other churches (see Seim 1998: 313–314). N 492 is no easier to explain. Magnus Olsen refers to Sophus Bugge's notes, where it is suggested that the inscription is a spelling exercise. Olsen, however, prefers to interpret the inscription as a melody (*NIyR* V: 55–56). There is little to support Olsen's interpretation. Nevertheless, it seems a more likely interpretation than the spelling exercise suggested by Bugge. The inscription is located very close to the octagon, which in itself is an odd place to practice runes. Moreover, the inscription is vertical, and it seems strange for an untrained carver to choose a vertical direction; carving horizontally must be much easier. In sum, therefore, it is unlikely that a beginner would choose such a place to practice when he had more suitable walls close by.

Our fifth inscription, N 470: **lafransa**, is easier to interpret than the above: *Lafrans á* 'Lafrans owns'. Nevertheless, the context to which this inscription belongs is uncertain. It might be another slander inscription connected to the Lafrans mentioned in connection to Syrett 9 above, insinuating that Lafrans acts as though he owns the entire cathedral (cf. Engtrø 2010: 21). Alternatively, it might be a dedication to St Lafrans. Aslak Liestøl notes in *NIyR* (V: 40) that St Lafrans is known to have

³⁴ Cf. Fulton 2006. For a local example of the use of *suavis* from the Nidaros cathedral, see *Passio et Miracula Beati Olavi*, where the term is used both to describe the taste of the Lord (71) and the heavenly smell of St Olaf's newly opened shrine (103).

had an altar in the cathedral, although the location of this altar is unknown. However, there are remnants of an altar directly underneath the inscription which could be the altar in question (Engtrø 2010: 21). In that case, the inscription could be a dedication, indicating that the altar belonged to St Lafrans. Alternatively, it could be a devotional inscription comparable to N 475: *Guð á mik* (God owns me), where the final pronoun, *mik*, is inferred. Finally, it is possible to interpret the inscription as an actual owner's inscription, telling the world that the carver, Lafrans, actually owns the cathedral or the altar. Although this is the standard interpretation of such inscriptions when they are found on smaller objects, the interpretation seems somewhat farfetched in the present context. In sum, therefore, I favour an interpretation of the inscription as a dedication to St Lafrans as this interpretation fits very well with the remnants of the altar found on the same wall.

The final inscription I will mention, NC 4: VELLUM, is, as stated in footnote 40 in the appendix, probably post-medieval. I have, however, been unable to leave it out. The inscription is found high up on a wall filled with post-medieval name graffiti, and it seems that the inscription takes an ironic approach to the entire graffiti tradition, commenting that the cathedral walls are used as though they were a sheet of vellum. The inscription stands out in the corpus of inscriptions from the cathedral – not only in the medieval corpus, but also in the post-medieval, which mainly consists of names and initials. It displays a freshness not often seen in the inscriptions and shows that some carvers dared to think along other lines than most of their peers.

The discussion in *NIyR* of N 480 (**alabrum**) is concluded by the question: “Men hvad kan bakgrunnen være for noget sådant?”³⁵ The question touches the core of the problem with the interpretation of all of the inscriptions treated in this section. They do not fit nicely into the category of church inscriptions, and this makes them problematic to interpret. The inscriptions are short, and we know very little about their context, other than the fact that they are found in a church. When the inscriptions fail to fit this context, and very few refer to persons or events known from other sources, we are struggling to give a good interpretation of them. As seen in the discussions above, most can be interpreted as religious, although these interpretations do, at times, seem slightly strained (such as the interpretations of N 480, N 492 and Syrett 5–7 as poetic exclamations in praise of God).

Praising of God or not, these inscriptions show us that the carver has agency. There is room to make a choice in what to carve, and there is room to transgress norms. The carvers might not break with all norms for inscriptions, but they creatively explore and play with the norms for and the situatedness of the church in-

³⁵ ‘But what could be the background for something like that?’ (*NIyR* V: 49)

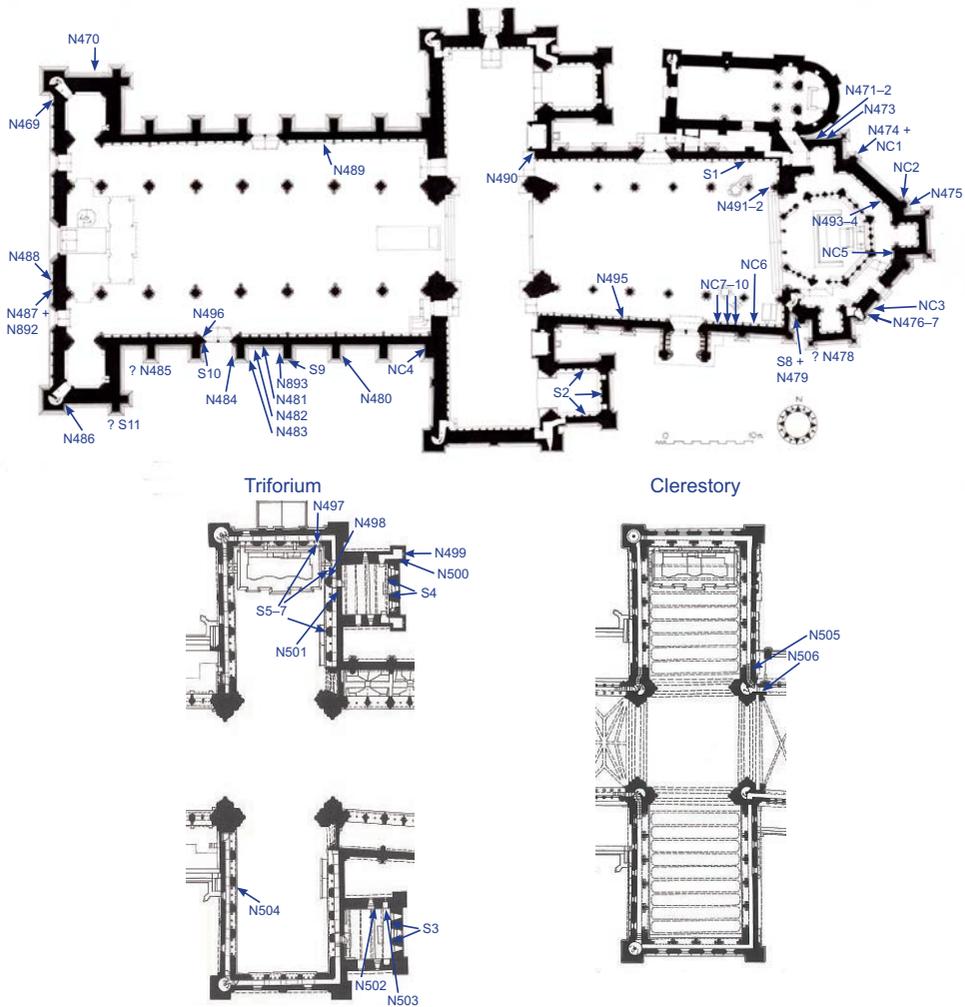
scriptions. Thus, they expand the notion of what a cathedral inscription might be, and what it was possible to express on such a wall. The carvers relate to their peers and the inscriptions surrounding them not by blindly following their lead, but through showing them other possibilities for carving. In that, they also display, indirectly, an independent and creative sense of self.

Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to discuss what kinds of selves can be found in the inscriptions in the Nidaros Cathedral. Very few agents make explicit statements about themselves in the inscriptions. When taking as a starting-point the view that the agent's cognition is situated in the social surroundings and the location in which he carves, it is nevertheless possible to say something about how he wanted to be perceived by his peers and how he used the inscriptions to shape the self he expresses. This I have done by interpreting the inscriptions in relation to other inscriptions and the material, cultural, and socio-political context. I have argued that the name and agent inscriptions should be understood in relation to the material on which they are carved (i.e. the fabric of the cathedral) and the religious inscriptions surrounding them. This context suggests that the name and agent inscriptions had an implicit religious purpose or were at least interpreted as such by other carvers and members of medieval society. Thus, carving an inscription in a cathedral could in itself be a way of expressing a sense of belonging to the religious community. Simply by choosing the cathedral as your place of carving, you express a religious sense of self.

At the same time, some carvers clearly intended to express something else, or something more, in their inscriptions. These carvers are few and far between, but they exist. Among these, we have carvers using the inscriptions to enhance their own self, to devalue others' selves and to express creativity and a will to carve out a more independent and artistic self. What these "other" inscriptions show, is that the carver has agency – the capacity to make a choice. The norms are there, but the carver can choose how to relate to them. At the same time, it is important to stress that all carvers have agency, not only those who choose to do something different from the rest. To follow the crowd is also a choice.

In sum, the Nidaros corpus gives us insights into the carvers' cognition and the norms governing the selves these carvers express, and it shows us how the carvers related to these norms. While most carvers express a belonging to the social and religious community, there was also room for the more individualistic and creative selves, even in the cathedral.



S = inscription from Syrett (2002)
 N = inscription from NlyR
 NC = inscription which is not mentioned by any of the above

Fig. 3: Floor plan indicating where all the inscriptions in the tables below are found. The figure is adapted from a floor plan made by the Nidaros Cathedral Restoration Workshop and used with their permission.

Appendix: The inscriptions sorted according to distribution

In an attempt to show which inscriptions are found in closest proximity to each other, the inscriptions are grouped according to the wall or area they are found in and given in the order that they occur clockwise in the cathedral, beginning with the inscriptions found in the east (outside and inside at ground level) or north (triforium and clerestory). I have followed Syrett (2002) in the transliteration, normalisation and translation of the Roman alphabet inscriptions. The runic inscriptions are mostly given as they appear in *NIyR*, but I have also considered the transliterations, normalisations and translations in *Samnordisk runtextdatabas*, as these are, at times, more up to date with recent research, and the interpretations tend to be slightly more conservative. The transliterations and normalisations of the runic inscriptions are adapted to common runological and orthographical standards. Some inscriptions (given the signum NC 1–10) are not described in any corpus edition, but they are transliterated and normalised according to the same standards as the other inscriptions. In addition, enough information is given in footnotes for the reader to be able to locate these inscriptions.

In the rare cases where a dating is given in one of the corpus editions, that dating is given here. Note that such datings are often followed by long discussions which is here condensed down to a time span. All datings should be regarded as more or less tentative, and the corpus editions (Syrett 2002 and *NIyR*) should be consulted whenever relevant. Where no dating is suggested, a terminus post quem is given based on the age of the given part of the building. A general overview of these architectural datings are found in Ekroll (1997: 149–156), while recent research has slightly altered some of these datings (see Ekroll 2015).

ABBREVIATIONS AND SPECIAL SIGNS

Tpq = *termini post quem*

E = early

M = mid

L = late

C = century

bold = runic inscription

CAPITALS = Roman alphabet inscription written with majuscules

minuscules = Roman alphabet inscription written with minuscules

italics = interpretation in normalised Old Norse/Latin

// = line break or any other break in the inscription
 - = countable but uninterpretable rune/Roman alphabet letter
 ... = in transliteration: uncountable runes/Roman alphabet letters; in interpretation: some or all of the inscription is left uninterpreted
 \overline{a} , \overline{TR} = ligature
 (a), (E) = uncertain rune/Roman alphabet letter
 (ok), (and) = uncertain interpretation
 · : + = separation/interpunction/diacritical marks. : is used for two or more dots.
 [inscription], [INSCRIPTION] = inscription (or part of inscription) which was lost by the time *NIyR* and Syrett (2002) was written, and which has been reconstructed based on notes by earlier scholars.
 a/o = alternative readings of a character
Bergþórr/Berdor, *Bergþórr/Berdor* = alternative interpretations

Spaces to separate words are only used when this is also used by the carver.

OUTSIDE:

*Octacon walls*³⁶

<i>Signum</i>	<i>Inscription</i>	<i>Dating</i>	<i>Inscription type</i>
N 471	[þorualr (: sigurþr (: ristit (: ru(--a)r þ(i)s(i) (:)] <i>Þorvaldr Sigurðr ristit rúnar þessar.</i> Þorvaldr (and) Sigurðr carved these runes.	<i>Tpq</i> c. 1200– 1215	Agent
N 472	[þ--æ--þæ(u)ru--r--] <i>...(þessar runar)...</i> <i>...(these runes)...</i>	<i>Tpq</i> c. 1200– 1215	Uncertain
N 473	ion : (o)- · ---(ar :) uatu(o)la(su)--u-(o)-h(e)r : rsim--n : ame(n) -- <i>Jón (ok) (Ívarr) vøktu (Ólafsvøkunótt) hér. (Réð Simon)</i> <i>amen ...</i> <i>Jón (and) (Ívarr) kept vigil here (on the eve of Ólafr's vigil). (Simon interpreted). Amen ...</i>	<i>Tpq</i> c. 1200– 1215	Uncertain (agent)
N 474	ifiu	<i>Tpq</i> c. 1200– 1215	Uncertain (religious) ³⁶

³⁶ A cross rises up from the stave of the *u*-rune. Although the interpretation of *ifiu* is uncertain, this would suggest a religious inscription of some kind.

NC 1	INEST EA PROPTER ³⁷ <i>Inest ea propter</i> ... [the inscription is too dependent upon an unknown context to be given a meaningful interpretation]	T _{pq} c. 1200– 1215	Uncertain
NC 2	PETRI IS ... ³⁸ <i>Petri is ...</i> (son of) Peter you go/he...	T _{pq} c. 1200– 1215	Uncertain (agent)
N 475	guþamik <i>Guð á mik.</i> God owns me.	T _{pq} c. 1200– 1215	Religious
NC 3	CHRISTOPHORI ³⁹ <i>Christophori</i> (son of) Kristofer	T _{pq} c. 1200– 1215	Name
N 476	tr	T _{pq} c. 1200– 1215	Uncertain

³⁷ The letters are approximately 1 cm tall, and the inscription is 20 cm long. The inscription is located on the same wall as N 474, approximately 80 cm above the plinth. Before and after the inscription, the surface is very uneven. It looks like this could be due to the quality of the stone, and it might be that the surface has always been uneven. However, just after the final <R> of the inscription, there seems to follow something more, perhaps an <O>. The carver might have attempted to continue on the uneven surface, but given up, or, alternatively, the surface became damaged after the inscription was carved. Much of the surface below is also damaged, and the damage might obscure a continuation of the inscription.

³⁸ The letters are c. 1.5 cm tall, and the part of the inscription given above is 7 cm long. The inscription is found on the same pillar as N 475, on the surface facing north. It is located 99 cm above the plinth. It seems that the inscription continues, as there are more marks on the wall, but wear and tear has made the marks too shallow to be read. There are many such shallow marks on the wall below <PETRI IS>, so the inscription could potentially have continued for several lines, but as the marks are no longer possible to interpret, this remains uncertain. The year 1659 is inscribed underneath, but this seems to belong to another inscription nearby.

³⁹ The inscription is located close to N 476 and N 477, but not on the same surface as them. It is found on a wall on the octogon facing south-east, just left of a door in the wall. It is located 15 cm above the plinth and 59 cm to the right of a gutter. The letters are 3 cm tall, and the inscription is 23.5 cm long. Although the inscription seems to lack a given name, there is no trace of further letters which could belong to the inscription. The name Kristofer is attested in various forms from Iceland from the twelfth century onwards, but seems to have been less commonly used in Norway before 1500 (Lind 1905: cols. 720–721).

N 477	i(o)-i(sky)---...(o)n : res // mek · maña ... (reist) mik. María. ... (carved) me. Mary.	<i>Tpq</i> c. 1200– 1215	Uncertain (agent) religious	+
N 478	gub · ok : hin : hialgi : olaftr : kongr (:) hialpe (:) þæim (:) mane (:) er : þesar : runar : ræist : meþr : sinu : hæilahu : arnabar : orþe <i>Guð ok hinn helgi Ólaftr konungr hjalpi þeim manni, er þessar rúnar reist með sínu heilagu árnaðarorði.</i> May God and the holy King Ólaftr with their holy intercessions help the man who carved these runes.	<i>Tpq</i> c. 1200– 1215	Religious	
N 479	fae	<i>Tpq</i> c. 1200– 1215	Uncertain (religious)	
Syrett 8	FI(B)...	<i>Tpq</i> c. 1200– 1215	Uncertain	

Southern nave wall

NC 4	VELLUM ⁴⁰ (<i>Vellum</i>) (<i>Vellum</i>)	<i>Tpq</i> c. 1240– 1300	Other	
N 480	alabrum (<i>árila brum</i>) (early in spring/budding)	<i>Tpq</i> c. 1240– 1300	Uncertain (other)	
Syrett 9	() -- VS // LAVREN // GELV (-) // A(NV)S // PEÞRI (<i>Laurentius geluanus anus Petri</i>) ⁴¹ (Laurentius the Icelander the anus of Pétr)	C. 1300?	Other	

⁴⁰ This inscription is found 114 cm above the plinth on the west face of a pillar in the corner where the southern nave wall meets the transept walls. The inscription is 8 cm long and the letters are 1.5 cm tall. The word *vellum* as we know it today was borrowed into Late Middle English from Middle French *velin*, and is derived from Old French *vel*, *veel* (Eng. *veal*). According to *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Simpson and Weiner 1989) the word is first recorded in English c. 1430; the spelling in this record is *velym*. In 1474, the spelling *velume* appears, while *velum* is found in a record from 1499. The spelling *vellum* is first recorded in 1636, however. I do not know whether the word has ever been used in Norwegian; there is no indication of this in any of the sources I have consulted. Rather, the French *velin* seems to be the preferred variant both in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. It is likely, therefore, that the inscription is carved after the Middle Ages, and most likely by an Englishman.

⁴¹ This interpretation requires line 4, A(NU)S, to be read twice.

N 893/ NA 337	i(r) ...	<i>Tpq</i>	c. Uncertain
	...	1240–	
	...	1300	
N 481	-uar - (:) - l(l)-(-) (<i>Ívarr</i>) ... (<i>Ívarr</i>) ...	<i>Tpq</i>	c. Uncertain (name/agent)
	...	1240–	
	...	1300	
N 482	huriag ...	<i>Tpq</i>	c. Uncertain (name/agent)
	...	1240–	
	...	1300	
N 483	(p)ilaf- (<i>pilagrímur/pilárr</i>) (<i>pilgrim/pillar</i>)	<i>Tpq</i>	c. Uncertain (religious)
	...	1240–	
	...	1300	
N 484	maria <i>Maria</i> Mary	<i>Tpq</i>	c. Religious
	...	1240–	
	...	1300	
N 485	[-þurun] (<i>Ráð þú rúnar.</i>) (Interpret the runes.)	<i>Tpq</i>	c. Uncertain (other)
	...	1240–	
	...	1300	
Syrett 10	gvrid gi... d(o)ft <i>Gyriðr (Gísla) dóttir</i> Gyriðr the daughter (of Gíslí)	<i>Tpq</i>	c. Uncertain (other)
	...	14 th	or Name
	...	15 th	C

Western wall

Syrett 11	[+ HALVARDVS : SÍ + // III] <i>Halvardus (sanctus)</i> (Saint) Hallvarðr	13 th or 14 th C?	Religious/dedication
N 486	[(i)æk · hiækhæl] (<i>Ek hjø hell.</i>) (I cut the rock-slab.)	<i>Tpq</i> c. 1248–1300	Agent
N 487	sigurþrar <i>Sigurðr ...</i> Sigurðr ...	<i>Tpq</i> c. 1248–1300	Name/agent
N 892/ N A329	birdor <i>Bergþórr/Berdor</i> Bergþórr/Berdor	M 14 th C	Name
N 488	-i(un)skm(m)oiþr (<i>himnesk móðir</i>) (heavenly mother)	<i>Tpq</i> c. 1248–1300	Uncertain (religious)
N 469	sakumr <i>sokum ...</i> guilt/for the reason that ...	<i>Tpq</i> c. 1248–1300	Uncertain (religious)
N 470	lafransa <i>Lafranz á</i> Lavrans owns	<i>Tpq</i> c. 1248–1300	Uncertain (dedication/other/ agent)

INSIDE:

Chancel and octagon

Syrett 1	OLAVS HALVARDI <i>Olavus Halvardi</i> Oláfr son of Hallvarðr	C. 1225– L 14 th C?	Name	
N 491	heþenranæih <i>Heðinn, Rannveig</i> Heðinn, Rannveig	<i>Tpq</i> 1250– 1300 ⁴²	c. Name	
N 492	r(e)rurir(e)rærøry ...	<i>Tpq</i> 1250– 1300 ⁴³	c. Other	
N 493	(k)uþtaKisaΓketills s <i>Guð taki sál Ketils.</i> May God take Ketill's soul.	<i>Tpq</i> 1200– 1215	c. Name religious	+
N 494	kuþkætiþinærlingrsikmuntarsonnuoKiafnañ <i>Guð gæti þín, Erlingr Sigmundarsonr, nú ok jafnan.</i> May God protect you, Erlingr Sigmundr's son, now and always.	<i>Tpq</i> 1200– 1215	c. Name religious	+
NC 5	PETRUS CANUti ⁴⁴ <i>Petrus Canuti</i> Pétr son of Knútr	<i>Tpq</i> 1200– 1215	c. Name	
NC 6	PETRUS DANIELIS ⁴⁵ <i>Petrus Danielis</i> Pétr son of Daniel	<i>Tpq</i> 1210– 1240	c. Name	

⁴² This *terminus post quem* is based on Fischer (1965: 341–344) and personal communication with Øystein Ekroll.

⁴³ This *terminus post quem* is based on Fischer (1965: 341–344) and personal communication with Øystein Ekroll.

⁴⁴ The inscription is located on the eastern wall in the octagon to the right of the little chapel. The inscription is 87 cm above the plinth. It is 18 cm long, and the letters are 1.5–2.5 cm tall.

⁴⁵ The inscription is found on the southern chancel wall in the fourth blind arcade from the left, 125 cm above the plinth. The letters are 1.5 cm tall and the inscription is 19 cm long. There are a few attestations of the name Daniel in Norway from the mid-fourteenth century onwards, although none with the spelling *Daniel* (cf. Lind 1905: col. 197). This spelling is most likely either a mistake or the result of an (admittedly deep) accidental cut.

NC 7	ANNO : d ⁴⁶ <i>Anno (domini)</i> In the year (of the Lord)	<i>Tp̄q</i> 1210– 1240	c. Uncertain
NC 8	PETR ⁴⁷ <i>Pétr</i> Pétr	<i>Tp̄q</i> 1210– 1240	c. Name
NC 9	(ra)hn(-) ⁴⁸ <i>(Ragna)</i> (Ragna)	<i>Tp̄q</i> 1210– 1240	c. Name
NC 10	m ⁴⁹	<i>Tp̄q</i> 1210– 1240	c. Uncertain
N 495	amu(nti) <i>Ámundi</i> Ámundi	<i>Tp̄q</i> 1210– 1240	c. Name

⁴⁶ The inscription is found on the southern chancel wall in the fourth blind arcade from the left, 7 cm below NC 6. It seems the inscription is unfinished as the final <d> is carved more weakly, as if the carver did not have time to complete the inscription. The letters are 1.5 cm tall, and the inscription is 5.5 cm long.

⁴⁷ The inscription is found on the southern chancel wall in the seventh blind arcade from the left, 50 cm above the plinth. The letters are 1 cm tall, and the inscription is 3.5 cm long.

⁴⁸ The inscription is found on the southern chancel wall in the eighth blind arcade from the left, 77 cm above the plinth. The runes are 4 cm tall, and the inscription is 5.5 cm long. The inscription is likely to spell a name, most likely a female one (*Ragna*), but it could also be an unfinished male name (*Ragnarr*). There might be a final *a* in the inscription, but this is very difficult to judge as the stone is uneven in this area, and there are several vertical lines in the stone. There is no trace of an *r* after the potential *a*-rune, however, so if it is a male name, the last rune is missing. Both *Ragna* and *Ragnarr* are used throughout the medieval period in Norway (cf. Lind 1905: cols. 837–838).

⁴⁹ The inscription is found on the southern chancel wall in the ninth blind arcade from the left, 98 cm above the plinth. The inscription consists of a clear *m*-rune followed by some scratches which seem to have been made with the same implement. There is some damage here, and the scratches could have been proper runes once, but to me, it looks more like they were unsuccessful attempts to carve runes by someone only half-literate. In that case, the *m* is likely to be the beginning of *María* or of the carver's own name. The *m* is 4 cm tall, and the inscription is 1.8 cm long in total, counting from the first branch of *m* and including the scratches after the *m*.

Nave and transept

N	[--- þors : dag̃ -----]	<i>Trq</i>	c.	Uncertain
490	... þórsdag ...	1150–		
	... Thursday ...	1180		
Syrett 2	+ ALTARE HOC DEDICATVM EST AB AVGVSTINO ARCH(IE)PISCOPO : ANNO PRIMO EPISCOPATVS EIVS AD LAVDEM // DN̄I // NR̄I IH̄V XPI IN HONORE : SC̄I IOHANNI S BAPTIST E ET SC̄I VINCENTII MR̄IS ET SC̄I SILVESTRI // AN // NO AB INCARNATIONE DN̄I MILLESIMO CENTESIMO LXI SEXTO KALENDAS : DECEMBRIUM ⁵⁰	1161		Dedication
	<i>Altare hoc dedicatum est ab Augustino archiepiscopo anno primo episcopatus eius ad laudem domini nostri Iesu Christi in honore sancti Iohannis baptiste et sancti Vincentii martyris et sancti Silvestri anno ab incarnatione domini millesimo centesimo lxi sexto kalendas decembrium.</i>			
	This altar was dedicated by Archbishop Eysteinn in the first year of his episcopal office in praise of our Lord Jesus Christ, in honour of Saint John the Baptist and Saint Vincentius the Martyr and Saint Silvester, in the year of our Lord 1161 on the 26 th November.			
N	[seikþam̃]	<i>Trq</i>	c.	Uncertain
496	(Sé Guð á mik.)	1240–		(religious)
	(God, see over me.)	1300		
N	heř : huilir :	<i>Trq</i>	c.	(Religious)
489	hér hvilir	1240–		
	here rests	1300		

⁵⁰ The spaces between both characters and words in the inscription vary greatly, and tend to increase at the end of each line. It therefore seems as if the carver has attempted to use spaces to distribute the inscription evenly along the wall. However, the spaces between words tend to be larger than the spaces between characters, and I have, accordingly, chosen to insert spaces between all words and ignore the spaces between individual letters of a word.

Triforium north

N 497	þess(i)r : sukuifi // orþ : // ioanæirikr // loþennbkb // 1317	(Religious)
	kāpālæin // p-(r) : ---ār <i>Þessir sukku í fjörð Jóhan, Eiríkr Loðimm (biskup) kapaleimm ...</i> These sunk in the fjord: Jóhan, Eiríkr, Loðinn the (bishop), chaplain ...	
Syrett	SVAVE	<i>Tpq</i> c. Uncertain
5-7	EVAVS VE (<i>suave ...</i>) (sweet ...)	1160- (other) 1180
N 498	fuirkul/fþirkþl	<i>Tpq</i> c. Uncertain
	...	1160- (other)
	...	1180
N 501	----r	<i>Tpq</i> c. Uncertain
	...	1160-
	...	1180
N 500	kætil <i>Ketill</i> Ketill	<i>Tpq</i> c. Name 1160- 1180
N 499	-----þkb--n---þ...r--lgu(þ)...	<i>Tpq</i> c. Uncertain
	...	1160-
	...	1180
Syrett	VI : KĪL : AVĠTI : DEDICĀ CIO HĪ (-)TARIS : //	L 12 th C
4	INHONORE : BEATE MARIE : VIRGINIS : // 7SCI : YPOLITI : MRĪS CVĪ : RELIŪIE: Ī : ALTĀRI // HABĒTVR <i>vi calendis augusti dedicatio huius altaris in honore beatae Mariae virginis et sancti Hippolyti martyris cuius reliquiae in altari habentur.</i> On the 27 th July the consecration of this altar in honour of the blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Hippolytus the Martyr whose relics are in the altar.	Dedication

Triforium south

N 502	niku(las)uār̄h(e)rin(ee)r---(r) <i>Nikulás var bér inni, er (hann fór).</i> Nikulás was inside here, before (he travelled).	<i>Tpq</i> c. Agent 1160– 1180
N 503	grjótgarþr <i>Grjótgarðr</i> Grjótgarðr	<i>Tpq</i> c. Name 1160– 1180
Syrett 3	+ NONAS : IANUARIĪ C̄SECTIO : H̄ALTARIS // Ī : HONORESCISTEP̄HĪ P̄THOMRIS : ET̄SCIOLAVI // DEQ̄ORV̄RELIQ̄ISHABĒT ĪNALTARIĀCORP̄EDNĪ <i>Nonas ianuarii consecratio huius altaris in honore sancti Stephani protomartyris et sancti Olavi de quorum reliquiis habetur in altari cum corpore domini.</i> On the 5th of January the consecration of this altar in honour of Saint Stephen the Protomartyr and of Saint Ólafr, [some] of whose relics are in the altar along with the body of the Lord [ie. the host].	L 12 th Dedication C
N 504	kuþ : ha : s(e)tu <i>Guð (hafi) (sálu).</i> May God (have) (the soul).	<i>Tpq</i> c. Religious ⁵¹ 1160– 1180

Clerestory

N 505	stæin <i>Steinn</i> Steinn	<i>Tpq</i> c. 1160–1180	Name
N 506	amutehanristimik guþsihni (han) <i>Amundi hann risti mik. Guð signi hann.</i> Amundi, he carved me. May God bless him.	<i>Tpq</i> c. 1160–1180	Agent + religious

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⁵¹ The exact interpretation of the inscription is uncertain, but the reference to God is clear.

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