

# THE ØSTERLARS CHURCH





By nature Bornholm distinguishes itself from the rest of Denmark. The same thing applies to some of its churches: The four round-churches in Østerlars, Olsker, Nylars and Nyker. They are all built within the period from 1150-1250. The oldest one of them is Østerlars Church (Sct. Laurenti church). Bornholm's roundchurches are characterised by their all four of them being built around

a solid center pillar which makes its way up through all the above-lying stories. In Østerlars the pillar is a hollow cylindrical brick construction, its outer diameter 6 meters, which continues up through the top stories. The loft of the nave and the second storey consists of a ringshaped barrel-dome.

The round-church has a triple function to fulfil: As a church, to serve as protection and shelter for women and children in war and against fiendish assaults in general. Its second storey as a fortress, signs of which can still be seen. Admittance to the two upper stories was only possible through a small built-in stoneway in the thick outer-wall; cumbersome to well-nigh impossible for an attacking foe to gain entrance by.

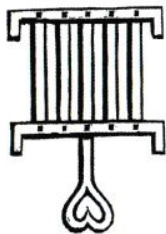
The present day cone-shaped roofs are not the original, but have replaced the originally built flat roofs. The outer watching gallery encircling the church had no roof.

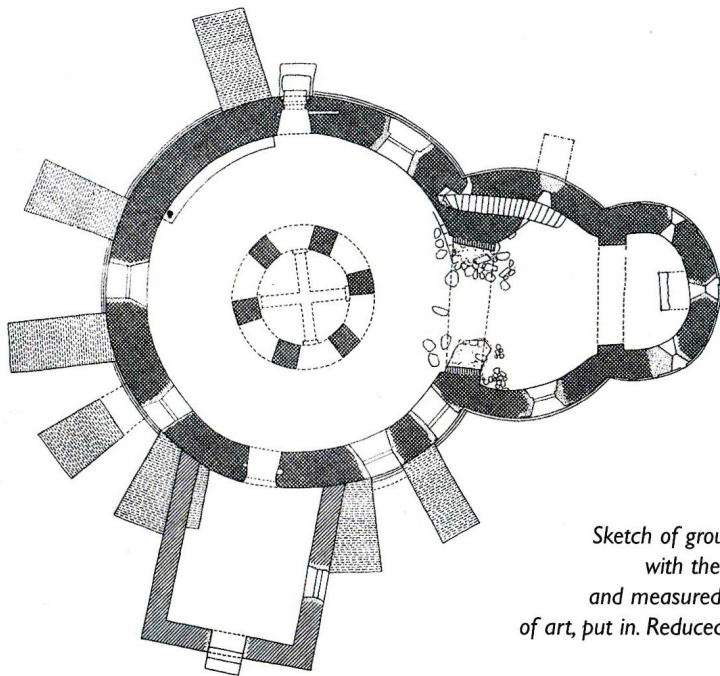
INTERIOR of Østerlars Church: The altar is still its original stone-altar. Its altar-table from ca. 1600 was for a long time deposited at the Danish National Museum but was

later returned to the church in connection with its being repaired by Paul Høm in 1956. Paul Høm is also represented by his paintings of Christ our Savior. The pulpit dates back to year 1595. The roman baptismal font originally belonged to Rø Church. Around the larg center pillar there is a frieze with medieval frescoes, presumably from the 14th cetury. They express cardinal points in the life of Christ, beginning with the Annunciation, that of the incarnation, made by the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, finishing up with the last judgement on doomsday. They have in the years following the reformation been subjected to being covered and were not detected till 1889 by professor Kornerup. In 1958 they were restored and brought back to their present and original state by the National Museum conservator.

THE RUNIC STONES: Outside the porch (ca. 1070) with the inscription: "Tykel raised stone...son..." In the porch: "Brother and Emund let raise this stone efter their father Sigmund. Christ and Sct. Michael and Saint Maria help his soul". Inside the church: on cross-piece at the north-door (found in 1956): "...rnils and Fuluge (they let raise) this stone after Thormar their brother".

In the bellfry at the side of the church hang two bells, the larger of the two from 1640, the smaller one is from 1684.





*Sketch of groundwork of the present day church  
with the old foundations as found in 1955  
and measured up by students from the Academy  
of art, put in. Reduced scale. Corrected by C. G. S. 1957.*

