Athenanea

Publication series
Schriftenreihe
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Ex Oriente Lux

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Volume | Band | Numéro 4

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2nd edition, January 2026

Athenanea, volume 4

Publisher
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Digital publication (E-Book)
ISBN 978-3-911792-03-5
DOI 10.5281/zenodo.18324933
URN urn:nbn:de:101:1-2601211204145.269129017002

Athenanea publication series
ISSN 2944-0629
URL www.athenanea.net

Preface

The research of this volume was motivated by a previous study on Bamberg cathedral published as the first volume of Athenanea. In this earlier study, a novel semi-statistical approach was employed to identify the likely models of the late Romanesque parts of Bamberg cathedral. The method applied led to the surprising finding that most of the potential models of Bamberg are located on a specific section of the extended *Via Podiensis* ranging from Cluny to Moissac, with Conques as its culmination.

Based on the unexpected success of the method, it was a natural conclusion to also apply it to the identification of potential models of the abbey church of Sainte-Foy in Conques. Again, the results went beyond what was expected. In this study, it is shown that the abbey church of Conques has an unusual "Byzantine" character, in the sense of exhibiting many differentiating elements with probable models from the Eastern Mediterranean. With this caveat, one can call the abbey church of Conques a medieval „Neo-Byzantine" project. In contrast, its famous tympanum of the Last Judgment turns out to be a Neo-Carolingian project. While not entirely being a new finding, the identified Neo-Carolingian character goes far beyond the inclusion of the figure of Charlemagne. Both findings combined illustrate the bold ambition of the builders of Conques that can still be felt in this extraordinary building today.

The author thanks Adrien Palladino and the other organizers of the "Conques in the Global World" project for their kind hospitality at their conferences in Conques and Rome. In particular, the author is very grateful for the opportunity to publish his findings on the artistic relationships between Bamberg, Conques, and Sélestat in the proceedings of their 2023 conference.

The author also thanks Adrien Palladino and Lei Huang for several valuable discussions on the architecture and historical context of Conques. A short exchange with Andreas Hartmann-Virnich motivated the systematic description of the method applied (appendix) to outline its potential but also to remind readers of its inherent limitations. The fact that the new method led to surprising new results twice holds the promise of more potential use cases in the future.

Two short remarks are needed regarding the employed nomenclature. Throughout the document, the historically questionable term Byzantine is used to refer to Late Roman/Early Byzantine or Middle Byzantine buildings from the Eastern Mediterranean. This established art historical convention is used despite its historical imprecision, since the historically often more appropriate terms Late Roman or Early Christian would too easily obscure that the identified artistic inspirations came from the Eastern Mediterranean rather than from the city of Rome.

Traditionally, the term fascia, meaning ribbon, is used to refer to the group of three ribbons that constitute the architrave of the Ionic order. Here instead, the singular form of fascia is used to denote an individual of the three ribbons while the plural form of fasciae is used for the group of (three) ribbons. This convention is introduced to more precisely describe situations where an architrave or an archivolt features a different number of ribbons than the traditional three.

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Summary

The study presented employs a novel semi-statistical method, inspired by the methods of Artificial Intelligence, to identify potential models of the abbey church of Sainte-Foy in Conques. In a nutshell, a large number of statistically weak traces can result in a strong overall trace if the individual traces are well aligned but individually so uncommon that a coincidental joint occurrence is highly unlikely. Thereby, it is shown that the abbey church of Conques has a distinctive "Neo-Byzantine" character that distinguishes it from most of its Romanesque predecessors. Nearly all identified potential models were built in the 4th to 6th centuries in areas strongly influenced by Constantinople. Hence, they are commonly denoted as Early Byzantine.

To prove such a „Neo-Byzantine" character of Conques, twenty-five unique or nearly unique elements of its architecture, decoration or iconography were analyzed. It is shown that all of them had prominent precursors on a prototypical pilgrimage route from Conques to the Holy Land. The most important Byzantine churches on this route seem to have left characteristic traces in Conques. In contrast, hardly any precursor was found in the West. While the analysis does not permit us to draw firm conclusions about the model role of individual buildings, the overall impression of Eastern Mediterranean influences is quite consistent. Only in the case of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qalʿat Simʿān, the evidence is so compelling that it can be considered the likely direct model for the ornamental decoration of the external façades of Conques. Overall, the analysis seems to suggest that the builders of Conques, who aspired to establish themselves as a pre-eminent pilgrimage destination, may have imitated the three most important pilgrimage sites of the Eastern Mediterranean, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qal ʿat Sim ʿān, and the Basilica of St. John the Apostle in Ephesus, or alternatively the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople.

In contrast, the famous tympanum of the Last Judgment turns out to be a Neo-Carolingian project. From a short review of the histories of the written sources and the iconography of the Last Judgment, it is derived that the iconography of the tympanum can best be understood as a reflection of the Carolingian spirituality of the afterlife. The latter matured in the cultural space of Reichenau Abbey which included St. Gall and Müstair. The main sources of this spirituality, Matthew 24-25, Reichenau's *Visio Wettini*, and Augustine's *Enchiridion* 29:109-111, provide a surprisingly detailed blueprint of the iconography of the tympanum of Conques. It is verified that Conques had unusual historical connections to the abbeys of Reichenau and St. Gall. The most characteristic theme of the *Visio Wettini* is its focus on the ideas of proto-purgatory and intercessions at scale by saints and martyrs as well as by prayers for the dead. The *Visio Wettini* also demonstrates prominent concern for the soul of Charlemagne and introduces the new concept of intercessions by the Holy Virgins. These unique elements are prominently represented in the tympanum of Conques. Thereby, the tympanum can also be read as a monumental act of intercession by the abbey of Conques for its legendary founder Charlemagne.

The Eastern Models of the Abbey Church of Sainte-Foy in Conques

Models of the abbey church of Conques from Latin Europe

The abbey church of Sainte-Foy in Conques from about 1040-1125 (Figure 1) is widely considered one of the most extraordinary churches of French Romanesque architecture.[1] It is located at the north end of Aveyron, successor of the medieval Rouergue, in the southern Massif Central. Situated on the slopes of a steep pristine valley and surrounded by a small village in equally pristine, late-medieval conditions, it makes a first-rate tourist destination.[2] Many of the tourists are hikers on a section of the popular Ways of St. James. Conques played an important role in the development of French Romanesque architecture, with major influence on the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

The dating of the abbey church has considerable uncertainty. Only a few historical sources exist that provide insight into the progress of its construction. The following dating model, albeit still somewhat speculative, reflects the latest insights from Huang's extensive building research.[3] Here, his findings are structured along the offices of the abbots of Conques:

- Odolric (1042/51–1065): Ambulatory with radial chapels and lower parts of ground level of transepts and nave, including the portals of the transepts and the walled-up south portal
- Étienne II (1065–1087): Completion of ground level
- Bégon III (1087–1107): Gallery level with its sculpture (except for the two western bays of the nave), apse, tympanum of the Last Judgment, and cloister
- Boniface (1107–1125): Western part of gallery level (two bays of nave), upper portion of west façade, including the northwestern turret, crossing tower (first level), and barrel vaults

Before we turn our attention to the innovative elements of the abbey church, it is discussed which of its elements had natural models in the West (Table 4).

Early Christian buildings of Rome and Ravenna do not seem to have played a noticeable model role for Conques. Their plain basilicas with columns in the nave, extensive wall paintings or mosaics, crypts, and transept-like annexes are far from the elaborate architecture of Conques with its rich sculpture.

[1] For more details see: Éliane Vergnolle et al., "Conques, Sainte-Foy. L'abbatiale romane," in *Congrès archéologique de France. 167e session, 2009, Aveyron* (Société française d'archéologie, 2011); Lei Huang, "L'abbatiale Sainte-Foy de Conques (XIe - XIIe siècles)" (Thèse de doctorat, Paris 1 Sorbonne, 2018); Ivan Foletti and Adrien Palladino, eds., *Conques Across Time: Inventions and Reinventions (9th-21st Centuries)*, with Martin Lesák, Convivia 6 (Viella, Masaryk University Press, 2025).

[2] Thunø recently argued that the outstanding natural beauty of its site may have played an important role in the medieval development of Conques to become a frequented pilgrimage destination. Erik Thunø, "Localism and Sainte Foy at Conques," in *Entangled Histories at Conques. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on a Unique Site of Medieval Heritage*, ed. Adrien Palladino, Convivium Supplementum 15 (Brepols Publishers, 2024).

[3] Lei Huang, "Memory between Tradition and Modernity. Odolric's Historicism and Bégon's Promotion of Image in Romanesque Conques," in *Contextualizing Conques. Imaginaries, Narratives & Geographies*, ed. Ivan Foletti et al., with Jasmin Richardson and Tomas Shannon, Convivium Supplementum 13 (2023), 66 f., 72, 74.

Potential Lombard, Merovingian or Visigothic models

The situation is only slightly different when it comes to potential architectural models from Lombard Italy, Merovingian France or Visigothic Spain.

Conques does not exhibit the characteristic Lombard bands and pilaster strips that became so emblematic for the Salian and Hohenstaufen churches of the empire, such as Speyer or Bamberg, or for many churches in medieval Catalonia, such as Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa.

However, for the sculpture and interior decoration, Lombard models may have played a certain role. For example, the monumental reliefs of the scene of the Annunciation in Conques, accompanied by John the Baptist and the prophet Isaiah, constitute the earliest known examples of monumental Romanesque sculpture within the church interior. The only known European precursors existed in or close to Lombard Italy, near Cividale and in Disentis.[4] Another specialty of Conques are the capitals with three-stranded wickerwork or interlace of its chevet.[5] Similar capitals from Sant Pere de Rodes in Catalonia may be slightly older. After Conques, more of these capitals were created in the Massif Central. Their overall structure points to the basket capitals with wickerwork that were a hallmark of the Holy Land, Constantinople, and Egypt.[6] However, three-stranded interlace also was a hallmark element of Lombard reliefs and later Carolingian art. In contrast, Merovingian art does not seem to have had any noticeable influence on Conques.

Visigothic architecture already knew the cruciform floor plan with a lantern tower over the crossing.[7] However, these rather simple churches have little to do with the sophisticated architecture of Conques. The only noticeable exception may be the figured and historiated capitals of the crossing of San Pedro de la Nave. The culture of Visigothic Spain was heavily influenced by the Byzantine culture of Carthago, North Africa, and Constantinople.[8] Only few figured or historiated capitals from Roman times are still extant today. Two prominent capitals of San Lorenzo fuori le mura in Rome, spolia showing *tropaia* in armor, prove that figured capitals were already known in the classical Roman Empire.[9] Several figured capitals with animals are known from Constantinople and Ravenna.[10] A few more examples, also with human figures, are preserved form Coptic Egypt.[11]

It is noteworthy that the capitals from San Pedro de la Nave are combined with richly decorated imposts. Such richly decorated imposts are widely known from Constantinople, but not from Ravenna or Rome. The combination of decorated imposts and figured capitals became emblematic for Conques and for many other Romanesque churches of Southern France or Northern Spain. In contrast, the ground-breaking figured and historiated capitals of Saint-Germain-des-Prés and Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire do not feature decorated imposts. Overall, the situation remains inconclusive. It would geographically be plausible, if the figured and historiated capitals with decorated imposts of Conques were influenced by models from Visigothic Spain. But eventually, this combination rather points to the Eastern Mediterranean.

Potential Asturian and Carolingian models

The Asturian architecture of the 9th century exhibits a few characteristic elements that became hallmark elements

[4] Lombard monumental sculpture still exists in Santa Mara in Valle near Cividale. Archaeological findings have provided evidence for the earlier existence of monumental reliefs in Disentis. Walter Studer, *Byzanz in Disentis: Die Reste einer plastisch unterlegten Monumentalmalerei byzantinischer Provenienz des 8. Jahrhunderts aus dem Kloster Disentis. Schlüsselergebnisse der Forschung.* (Vdf Hochschulverlag, 2007).

[5] Marcel Durliat, *La sculpture romane de la route de Saint-Jacques: De Conques à Compostelle* (Comité d'Etudes sur l'Histoire et l'Art de la Gascogne, 2007), 52–56.

[6] Svetlana Tarkhanova, "Early Byzantine 'Basket' Capitals in Churches and Monasteries of the Holy Land: Stylistic and Morphological Synthesis," *Liber Annuus* 72 (2022): 529–71.

[7] Matthias Untermann, *Architektur im frühen Mittelalter* (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006), 65–70.

[8] Roger Collins, *Visigothic Spain 409-711* (Blackwell, 2006), 147–66.

[9] Hugo Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen in Rom: vom 4. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert. Der Beginn der abendländischen Kirchenbaukunst*, 3rd ed. (Schnell & Steiner, 2013), 265.

[10] For Ravenna see: Carola Jäggi, *Ravenna. Kunst und Kultur einer spätantiken Residenzstadt*, 2nd ed. (Schnell & Steiner, 2016), 64 f.

[11] A particularly rich fragment of a figured capital exists in the Coptic Museum in Cairo.

of French Romanesque architecture in general and of Conques in particular. These elements can prominently be seen in Santa María del Naranco and San Miguel de Lillo near Oviedo. Their groundbreaking architectural elements include barrel vaults with transverse arches, blind arcades at the inner walls of the building, medallions in the spandrels of arcades, mullioned windows with outer columns, and oculi above mullioned or double windows.[12] These elements became highly relevant for Conques. Most of them have no precedence in the architecture of Rome, Ravenna or Constantinople and were likely influenced by the Early Christian architecture of Syria or Alexandria. At least, precursors for some of them are known from the so-called dead cities of Syria and from the Holy Land. Given the prominence of Oviedo for the early development of the pilgrimage of St. James, it is more likely that Asturian rather than Syrian precursors were the models for Conques. However, a combined influence cannot be excluded in view of the popular pilgrimage to the Holy Land during the first half of the 11th century.

In general, Carolingian architecture had a quite significant influence on the European architecture of the 10th and 11th century. Its most important innovations include the introduction of the so-called westwork, the double-choir basilica with one or two transepts between nave and apse(s), the hall crypt, presumably the twin-towered façade, and the mullioned window with discharging arch.

It was recently re-confirmed that the concept of westwork was a genuine Carolingian invention that emerged in the 760s. Skalecki showed in his extensive study that the first proven westwork was built in Saint-Denis.[13] According to his analysis, the initial motivation for the construction of westworks was the burial of non-canonized family members *ante ecclesiam* or *ante limina*, as in the case of Pepin the Short in Saint-Denis.[14] The gallery of the upper floor served the *laus perennis* of the buried.[15] Later, westworks were used for the veneration of relics, such as the Salian westwork of the abbey church of Reichenau, or for chapels of St. Michael in the upper floor. After the death of Charlemagne, the veneration of relics in the westwork often led to their transformation into a second choir, such as in Fulda or Cologne.[16] Early westworks, but not the earliest, were built at Saint-Riquier and the Palatine Chapel in Aachen. The latter was derived from the narthex of San Vitale in Ravenna. San Vitale introduced the attachment of round staircase towers to the narthex rather than integrating staircases in the core of the building, as in Roman architecture. The double-choir basilica of St. Boniface in Fulda introduced one of the first hall crypts.

Although the origins of the twin-towered façade are somewhat uncertain, it appears that it also was introduced in the West by Saint-Denis.[17] Finally, the discharging arches over mullioned windows, albeit derived from the mullioned windows of San Vitale in Ravenna or comparable churches in Constantinople, became an autochthonous architectural element in Carolingian times. The earliest extant windows of this kind seem to exist in the westwork of Corvey, followed by the early Ottonian examples of Gernrode. Mullioned windows with discharging arches do not seem to have existed in Byzantine architecture before the Katholikon of Hosios Loukas from 1011.[18]

However, hardly any of these elements have become relevant for Conques. Its narthex is fully opened to the nave, as in most Byzantine or Early Christian churches. A westwork function of the narthex, such as the burial of clerics or the veneration of relics, has no historical indication. The cruciform floor plan of Conques with its deep sanctuary has Carolingian precursors in Saint-

[12] Untermann, *Architektur im frühen Mittelalter*, 124–32; Hans Erich Kubach, *Romanik*, Weltgeschichte der Architektur (Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1986), 29–32.

[13] Georg Skalecki, "Turris occidentalis. Das Phänomen des Westbaus in der karolingischen Architektur. Teil 1: Die Anfänge unter Karl dem Großen.," *INSITU. Zeitschrift für Architekturgeschichte* 16 (2024): 5–44.

[14] The use of westworks for the burial of kings, abbots or other persons of high nobility can be proven at least until 888. Georg Skalecki, "Turris occidentalis. Das Phänomen des Westbaues in der karolingischen Architektur. Teil 2: Von Ludwig dem Frommen bis zur endgültigen Reichsteilung 888.," *INSITU. Zeitschrift für Architekturgeschichte* 17 (2025): 9.

[15] Skalecki, "Turris occidentalis. Das Phänomen des Westbaus in der karolingischen Architektur. Teil 1," 11.

[16] Skalecki, "Turris occidentalis. Das Phänomen des Westbaus in der karolingischen Architektur. Teil 1," 23.

[17] Martin Naraschewski, *Der Bamberger Dom aus kunst- und kulturhistorischer Sicht: Kaiserdom mit Blick nach Frankreich und Italien*, 4th ed., Athenanea 1 (Martin Naraschewski, 2023), 29–35.

[18] Pavlos Lazarides, *Das Kloster Hosios Lukas - kurzer bebildeter archäologischer Führer* (Hannibal, 2008).

Denis, Saint-Riquier, and Reichenau. But in the case of Reichenau, the cross-shape can be traced back to models from Constantinople. Most likely, the cruciform floor plan of Saint-Denis and Saint-Riquier goes back to Santa Croce in Ravenna, transmitted by the Merovingian church of Sainte-Croix-et-Saint-Vincent (later Saint-Germain-des-Prés) in Paris.[19] Hence, the cruciform floor plan of Conques is not a Carolingian invention. It also has little in common with the T-shaped floor plans of Fulda and later Ottonian churches. Nor does Conques have a crypt. Perhaps, the small original turret of Conques at the northwestern corner of its nave (Figure 56) can be seen as an approximation of the twin-towered façade of Saint-Denis. However, we do not even know whether a second turret was planned. There is no evidence that it ever existed. Finally, the significant elongation of Carolingian towers, visible at the westwork of Aachen, at the crossing tower of Germigny-des-Prés, and at many subsequent Carolingian or early Romanesque churches, has no parallel in Conques.

The minimal references of Conques to Carolingian architecture include the abandoned early plan of a westwork, manifested by reinforced substructures, the attached staircase tower of the southern transept as well as the discharging arches above the gallery windows. At some capitals of Conques, the wickerwork merges with palmettes. Such hybrid ornaments have precedents in illuminated manuscripts from, e.g., Saint-Denis, Limoges, and Catalonia.[20] To conclude, there is hardly anything Carolingian in the architecture of Conques. The story is different when it comes to the style of the sculpture and to the iconography of the tympanum of the Last Judgment, as will be discussed later.[21]

Romanesque models from the Loire, Burgundy, and Auvergne

Instead, the architecture of Conques was deeply influenced by the emerging French Romanesque architecture of the 11th century. One of its most significant innovations was the introduction of a more complex chevet with ambulatory and radial chapels. Before the construction of the ambulatory of Conques, prominent precursors already existed at Tours, Limoges, Orléans, Chartres, and several other places in northern and central France. It is believed that Saint-Martin in Tours or Saint-Martial in Limoges were the relevant models for Conques.[22] In the early 11th century, Tours was the most important pilgrimage site in France. Limoges and Conques clearly aspired to follow its example.

A direct copy of the five radial chapels and the two apsidioles of each transept of Tours could not be realized in Conques due to topographic constraints. Instead, the outer radial chapels and the inner apsidioles of Tours were merged into two relatively large inner apsidioles, one at each transept. This modification allowed the builders of Conques to create a staggered chevet, very much in line with the famous model of Cluny II.[23] Thereby, the new chevet of Conques referred not only to Tours, as the most relevant pilgrimage site in France, but also to Cluny, as the most relevant mother church of a large monastic network. Around 1100, Conques seems to have achieved both ambitions, being a pre-eminent pilgrimage site and being the mother church of an extended and influential monastic network. While the chevet of Conques was no longer groundbreaking at its time in France, it was at least the earliest chevet with ambulatory south of the Massif Central.[24]

[19] Alain Erlande-Brandenburg and Anne-Bénédicte Mérel-Brandenburg, *Saint-Germain-des-Prés. An mil* (Picard, 2011), 12–15; Stéphane Büttner et al., "Nouveaux apports à la connaissance du chantier de construction roman de l'abbatiale Saint-Germain-des-Prés. Premier bilan du Projet collectif de recherches (2016-2017)," *Bulletin du Centre d'études médiévales d'Auxerre*, no. 22.2 (December 2018): 2 f., https://doi.org/10.4000/cem.15892.

[20] Huang, "Memory between Tradition and Modernity," 70 f.

[21] Térence Le Deschault De Monredon, "The Influence of Carolingian Art on Some Great Romanesque Sculpture Masters in Auvergne and Rouergue," *Locus Amoenus* 13 (2015): 15–28, https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/locus.20.

[22] Éric Sparhubert, "The Chevet of Sainte-Foy of Conques and Its Models: Materializing Sanctity and Promotional Strategies in Romanesque Architecture," in *Entangled Histories at Conques. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on a Unique Site of Medieval Heritage*, Convivium Supplementum 15 (Brepols Publishers, 2024); Charles Lelong, *La basilique Saint-Martin de Tours* (CLD, 1986); Éliane Vergnolle, "Saint-Martial de Limoges, l'abbatiale du Sauveur: Le chevet roman d'après les textes et la documentation graphique," in *Saint-Martial de Limoges: Millénaire de l'abbatiale romane (1018-2018) sous la direction d'Éliane Vergnolle*, vol. 1, Bulletin monumental 178 (Société française d'archéologie, 2020).

[23] Sparhubert, "The Chevet of Sainte-Foy of Conques and Its Models," 74 f.

[24] Sparhubert, "The Chevet of Sainte-Foy of Conques and Its Models," 75 f.

The nave and transepts of Conques have barrel vaults, like its earlier or contemporary equivalents. Such advanced construction required strong buttresses to counterweigh the lateral pressure of the vaults. In Conques and its models, the function of buttresses was assumed by the vaults of the galleries. The existence of galleries has no relevant precedence in Rome or Ravenna.[25] The earliest extant examples of Latin Europe were introduced in the second half of the 10th century in Gernrode and Jumièges. In the first half of the 11th century, further examples followed in Dijon, Limoges, and Mont-Saint-Michel, to name a few. Presumably, galleries also existed in Tours. It is worth noting that the earliest examples of such galleries were restricted to the naves. These galleries had no supportive function since the respective churches were not vaulted. Galleries of transepts are assumed to have already existed in Tours and Limoges as well as at the cathedral of Orléans. But there is no certainty since these churches no longer exist. At least, excavations have shown that the transepts of Tours, Limoges, and Orléans had already side aisles. The existence of such wide transepts with side aisles and galleries distinguishes Conques from most other Romanesque churches. Tours, Limoges, Conques, Toulouse, and Santiago de Compostela therefore form a distinctive group, the formerly so-called churches of the "Pilgrimage type."[26]

Another significant innovation of French Romanesque architecture was the introduction of compound piers with engaged half columns and pilaster strips. The engaged half columns aim to emulate the columns of the arcades of early Christian basilicas in a more economical and statically more solid way. Apparently, compound piers were invented in or near the royal cities of the Capetian dynasty, Paris and Orléans. Early extant examples include Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris and Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire near Orléans, but also Auxerre in Burgundy and Bernay in Normandy among others. Compound piers very quickly became a hallmark of French Romanesque architecture.[27]

Likewise, the pervasive use of figured or historiated capitals seems to have emerged at Saint-Germain-des-Prés and Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire. The famous porch tower of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire became a model for French Romanesque architecture, both with respect to its compound piers and its rich figured and historiated capitals.[28] The adoption of figured and historiated capitals largely remained limited to the region south of the Loire. Most likely, Conques was indirectly influenced by models in Auvergne, most notably by the sculpture of Mozac.[29]

In the first half of the 12th century, four decorative elements were developed in central France that rapidly spread from the Loire to Burgundy and to Auvergne where they became signature elements of the respective Romanesque churches (Figure 2). These include single-rowed round billet moldings and square billet moldings. They were used at various cornices, in particular at the roof cornices. There, they were accompanied by shaving consoles or consoles with masks of animals or humans.[30]

Apparently, the earliest extant realization of square billet moldings exists at an impost of the *gazofilatium* (treasury) of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire from 1004.[31] Like most of its successors, it has three rows of square billets. Simplified precursors with only two rows of billets are known from Egypt, Syria, and Armenia.[32] A fragment of the rotunda of Saint-Bénigne in Dijon from 1018 proves that they were used in Burgundy only shortly later.[33] Subsequently, square billet moldings became a hallmark decorative element of the churches of Auvergne, from

[25] The galleries of San Lorenzo fuori le mura and of Sant'Agnese fuori le mura in Rome responded to very specific topographic constraints and cannot be considered relevant models for the galleries of Romanesque architecture. Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen in Rom*, 260, 266 f.

[26] Kenneth John Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture: 800 to 1200*, 3rd ed., The Pelican History of Art (Penguin Books, 1990), 157–62.

[27] Éliane Vergnolle, *L'Art roman en France: architecture - sculpture - peinture* (Flammarion, 2005), 105–8.

[28] Vergnolle, *L'Art roman en France*, 88–90, 135–39; Éliane Vergnolle, *Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire: L'abbatiale romane*, Bibliothèque de la Société Française d'Archéologie (Société Française d'Archéologie, 2018), 81–177.

[29] Lei Huang, "Quand les pierres se mettent à parler: le chantier roman de l'abbatiale Sainte-Foy de Conques," in *De Saint-Gilles à Saint-Jacques. Recherches archéologiques sur l'art roman*, ed. Andreas Hartmann-Virnich, Collection Ligne de Mire (Marion Charlet, 2021), 178–82.

[30] Naraschewski, *Der Bamberger Dom aus kunst- und kulturhistorischer Sicht*, 61–63.

[31] Vergnolle, *Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire*, 27, 34.

[32] Further details will be provided in a later section on the Church of St. Simeon Stylites.

[33] Éliane Vergnolle, *Saint-Bénigne de Dijon: cinquante ans de recherches sur l'abbatiale de l'an mil*, Bulletin monumental 174 (Société française d'archéologie, 2016), 2:138 f.

where they were eventually adopted at the radial chapels of Conques. The pervasive use of square billet moldings at the chancel screens of the abbey church of Cluny III also made them a signature decoration of monastery churches that adhered to the reform of Hirsau.[34] Closely associated with the square billet moldings was the development of single-rowed round billet moldings, an evolution of Graeco-Roman dentils.

Apparently, it was a special innovation of Conques to combine several of such single-rowed billet moldings, separated by fine lines, into a combined element. One can see initial attempts with two rows of round billets at the interior pedestal of the ambulatory of Conques. A more refined version with three rows of round billets and separating lines exists at the roof cornice of the ambulatory (Figure 3). This characteristic decoration element of Conques found further adoption at the Upper Rhine, presumably introduced by its priory in Sélestat.[35]

In a next development step, that may have happened at Saint-Sernin in Toulouse or in Frómista, the fine separating lines were removed. As a result, the square billet moldings and the single-rowed round billet moldings of the Loire, Burgundy, and Auvergne merged into multi-row round billet moldings. In Conques, such round billet moldings exist at the roof cornice of the apse and at several other places. Due to the lighthouse character of Conques and Toulouse, round billet moldings became a hallmark element of the southern Ways of St. James (*Via Podiensis*, *Via Tolosana*, *Camino francés*).[36] In the second half of the 12th century, they also became a hallmark element of buildings of the empire that were closely associated with the Hohenstaufen dynasty.[37]

Often, square billet moldings were used to decorate the roof cornices of the chevet, supported by two types of consoles. The earlier type seems to be the so-called shaving consoles. One of the earliest fragments of such a console was found at the former rotunda of Saint-Bénigne in Dijon.[38] Shaving consoles go back to Graeco-Roman voluted consoles but may have been derived more directly from Islamic architecture. At least, simplified precursors from the 10th century can be found at some gargoyles of the Great Mosque of Córdoba and at some Mozarabic churches of Spain.[39] Early on, shaving consoles were complemented and eventually replaced by consoles with masks showing the heads of animals or of humans. One can find both types of consoles at the older parts of Conques, such as the ambulatory and the west portals of the transepts. After their use in Conques, the consoles with masks entirely replaced the shaving consoles, at least south of the Massif Central.

Eventually, the combination of round billet moldings and consoles with masks became a signature decoration of the churches of the southern Ways of St. James.[40] Both elements were also central elements of the later "Hohenstaufen decoration" of the empire.[41]

The discussed billet moldings and consoles show how Conques took a pivotal position between the earlier Romanesque architecture of the Loire, Burgundy, and Auvergne and their successors of the southern Ways of St. James. Presumably, Conques played a crucial role in the transformation between both styles.

As a preliminary conclusion, it can be stated that Conques readily adopted the advanced concepts and decorative elements of early Romanesque architecture from the Loire, Burgundy, and Auvergne. Apparently, the builders of Conques aspired to imitate the architecture of leading churches whose spiritual or institutional models they followed. This approach is most visible in their combined adoption of the chevets of Tours and Cluny II. Earlier Lombard, Merovingian or Carolingian influences appear to be minimal at best. Only some potential influences of Asturian and Visigothic architecture can be identified. However, most of them also have parallels in

[34] Naraschewski, *Der Bamberger Dom aus kunst- und kulturhistorischer Sicht*, 153 f.

[35] Martin Naraschewski, "Bamberg, Conques, and the Hohenstaufen Dynasty: A Model of Transregional Dynamics," in *Entangled Histories at Conques. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on a Unique Site of Medieval Heritage*, ed. Adrien Palladino, Convivium Supplementum 15 (Brepols Publishers, 2024), 67–69. Prominent examples can be found in Lorraine or at the cathedrals of Worms and Strasbourg.

[36] Naraschewski, *Der Bamberger Dom aus kunst- und kulturhistorischer Sicht*, 63–65.

[37] Naraschewski, *Der Bamberger Dom aus kunst- und kulturhistorischer Sicht*, 45–48.

[38] Vergnolle, *Saint-Bénigne de Dijon*, 2:138 f.

[39] Some examples exist in San Miguel de Escalda or in Santiago de Peñalba.

[40] Naraschewski, *Der Bamberger Dom aus kunst- und kulturhistorischer Sicht*, 63–65.

[41] Naraschewski, *Der Bamberger Dom aus kunst- und kulturhistorischer Sicht*, 45–48.

the Eastern Mediterranean. In this somewhat restricted picture, the most innovative role of Conques would have been to help proliferate the new Romanesque concepts from the Loire in southern France and northern Spain. Only the evolution from square billet moldings to round billet moldings seems to be a unique contribution of Conques. But of course, Conques would not have become as famous as it is today if it had not introduced significant innovations that go beyond the picture described. The potential origins of these innovations will be analyzed in the next two chapters.

Potential Byzantine models of the abbey church of Conques

In the 19th century, the abbey church of Sainte-Foy in Conques was the subject of a highly intrusive Neo-Byzantine reconstruction project that was fortunately not executed. The Neo-Byzantine nature of this project responded to historicist tendencies of its time, often equating Romanesque with Byzantine by default. As far as we know, the style of the reconstruction project was not the consequence of a perceived specific Byzantine character of the medieval abbey church of Conques. This observation led Palladino to conclude a paper on this reconstruction project with the provocative question: "Is there, indeed, anything "Byzantine" in Conques?"[42] This chapter aims to provide an answer to his question. Surprisingly, a distinctive "Byzantine" character or flavor of Conques can be proven when applying a novel semi-statistical method.

The previous chapter has shown that, at the time of its construction, the abbey church of Sainte-Foy in Conques was a rather advanced building that adopted recent architectural innovations from central France. Its chevet suggests that the monks of Conques imitated the designs of Tours and Cluny to prominently display their ambition of becoming a pre-eminent pilgrimage destination and the center of an extended and influential monastic network. Beyond that, the abbey church of Conques features several highly innovative architectural or decorative elements that did not have any relevant precedence in Latin Europe. Some have not found any succession either. These innovative elements established the art-historical fame of Conques and gave it a unique character.

In the following, it is shown that these elements had relevant precursors on a prototypical pilgrimage route from Conques to the Holy Land (Figure 4). In fact, it seems that the half-dozen most important Byzantine churches along this route have left characteristic traces in Conques (Table 1 and Table 2). While the available data are not sufficient to prove the model role of the individual churches beyond doubt, a new overall picture emerges: The entirety of its innovative elements provides Conques with a consistent "Byzantine" character, distinguishing it from most other Romanesque churches in France or Spain (Table 3). Some of these elements have contemporarily or later found adoption at Saint-Sernin in Toulouse, San Martín in Frómista, and the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela as well as some smaller churches along the southern Ways of St. James. However, none of these churches is as consistently "Byzantine" as Conques.

A short history of the pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Before the individual decorative elements of Conques are analyzed, the importance of the pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the time of its construction is briefly outlined. Due to repeated violent conflicts with the Islamic inhabitants of the Holy Land, the European pilgrimage to

[42] Adrien Palladino, "Byzance à Conques? An Unrealized Dream of 'Neo-Byzantine' Architecture in Nineteenth-Century France," in *Contextualizing Conques. Imaginaries, Narratives & Geographies*, ed. Ivan Foletti et al., with Jasmin Richardson and Tomas Shannon, Convivium Supplementum 13 (2023), 40.

its Holy Places saw several phases of "boom" and "bust".[43] A 7th century pilgrimage report from the Gallic bishop Arculf already included a detailed floor plan of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (Figure 5). His report is preserved in a 9th century copy from Reichenau Abbey.[44] The renewed exchange between emperor Otto I and his Byzantine counterparts led to an increased interest in the pilgrimage to the Holy Land as well as to significant cultural imports from the Byzantine world to the empire. For example, it is known that abbot Gausmarus of Savigny, count Guillermus of Vienne, the monk Adalpertus of St. Emmeram in Regensburg, Hidda of Eastphalia, sister of the close confidant of emperor Otto I who founded Gernrode, duchess Judith of Bavaria, grandmother of emperor Henry II, bishop Conrad of Constance, and Guarin de Lézat, abbot of Cuxa, undertook successful pilgrimages to the Holy Land in the two decades from 960 to 980. At least some of these pilgrimages must have occurred under difficult circumstances. Anti-Christian riots destroyed the dome of the Anastasis in 966 killing patriarch John VII.

Fatimid domination of the Holy Land from 979-1009 temporarily impeded pilgrimages, but did not stop them. The Jubilee year 1000 revitalized western interest in the Holy Land. The known pilgrims of this period include abbot Gunterius of Angers near Tours, bishop Radulf of Périgueux, bishop Alduin of Limoges, abbot Gauzlin of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, and bishop Stephen II of Apt. This prominent list is quite remarkable since groundbreaking Romanesque buildings were erected shortly thereafter in Tours, Limoges, Benoît-sur-Loire, and Périgueux. At least in Tours, Limoges, and Périgueux, influences from the Byzantine world are quite likely, as will be discussed below. It is no less remarkable that the groundbreaking innovations of the porch tower of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, compound piers and figured or historiated capitals, were preceded by a pilgrimage of its builder to Jerusalem. This short boom phase lasted until 1009, when the far-reaching destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre under caliph Al-Hakim also led to a temporary ban of Christian pilgrimages.

Pilgrimages resumed in 1027, for example by archbishop Poppo of Trier and larger groups of pilgrims from Aquitaine, Normandy, and Germany. The millennial anniversary of the passion of Christ in 1033 triggered another wave of pilgrims, as documented by Rodulfus Glaber. The most prominent of them included abbot Wino of Helmarshausen, bishop Berengar of Elne, and duke Robert I of Normandy. Monks of Reichenau Abbey embarked on pilgrimages to the Holy Land at least three times in the years from 1038 to 1053.[45] Eventually, the Anastasis of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was reconstructed in 1048, financed by the Byzantine emperor Constantine IX Monomachos.

The well-publicized near failure of the prominent pilgrimage under the leadership of the bishops Gunther of Bamberg and Siegfried I of Mainz in 1064/65, with many fatalities due to a raid by Bedouins, certainly reduced the western propensity for the pilgrimage to the Holy Land.[46] With reported participants in the order of 7,000-12,000, this pilgrimage is considered the largest of the 11th century.[47] Eventually, the conquest of Jerusalem by the Turkish Seljuks in 1071 inhibited further pilgrimages and preempted the era of the Crusades. At the same time, it sparked European interest in the pilgrimage of St. James. After the Christian reconquest of Jerusalem, pilgrimages to the Holy Land resumed in the years of 1099-1187.

For the purposes of our analysis, it can be concluded that the nearly four decades of 1027-65 were a phase of

[43] The following summary is mainly based on: Max Ritter, "A Desire against All Odds and Difficulties? The Presence of Christian Pilgrims in Early Muslim Jerusalem, Seventh to Tenth Century," in *Pilgrimage to Jerusalem: Journeys, Destinations, Experiences across Times and Cultures. Proceedings of the Conference Held in Jerusalem, 5th to 7th December 2017*, ed. Falko Daim et al., Byzanz Zwischen Orient Und Okzident 19 (Mainz, 2020); David Jacoby, "Bishop Gunther of Bamberg, Byzantium and Christian Pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the Eleventh Century.," in *Zwischen Polis, Provinz Und Peripherie: Beiträge Zur Byzantinischen Geschichte Und Kultur*, ed. Anuscha Monchizadeh and Lars Martin Hoffmann, Mainzer Veröffentlichungen Zur Byzantinistik 7 (Harrassowitz, 2005).

[44] Matthias Untermann, "Ein Kloster, sieben Kirchen: Einführung in die Baugeschichte der Reichenau," in *Die Klosterinsel Reichenau im Mittelalter: Geschichte - Kunst - Architektur*, ed. Wolfgang Zimmermann et al. (Schnell & Steiner, 2024), 125 f.

[45] Michael Borgolte, "Die Abtei Reichenau in der Globalgeschichte des Mittelalters: Eine zögernde Öffnung von der Insel zur Welt," in *Welterbe des Mittelalters: 1300 Jahre Klosterinsel Reichenau*, ed. Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe (Schnell & Steiner, 2024), 57.

[46] Other co-leaders of this pilgrimage included bishop William of Utrecht and bishop Otto of Regensburg.

[47] Likely these numbers were inflated. They nevertheless attest how large the pilgrimage movement had become by that time.

high European interest in the pilgrimage to the Holy Land with its culmination around 1047-65. This time frame perfectly coincides with the construction of the ambulatory and the lower parts of the abbey church of Conques under abbot Odolric. It is noteworthy that many pilgrims from Aquitaine are recorded for this period. The period after the resumption of the pilgrimages in 1099 coincides with the completion of the construction of Conques, including the cloister, the portal of the Last Judgment, the vaulting, and the octagonal crossing tower. In contrast, the years in which the gallery level of Conques was built, fell into the period of inhibited pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Byzantine churches along the pilgrimage route to the Holy Land

Most likely, a prototypical mid-11th century pilgrim from the abbey of Conques would have taken the following travel route to the Holy Land (Figure 4). First, he would have crossed the Alps and northern Italy to reach the Adriatic Sea. While the lagoon of Venice and Ravenna had long ceased to be part of the Byzantine Empire, the cultural influence of Constantinople could still be felt, as is visible at the Basilica of San Marco in Venice from the second half of the 11th century. Most likely, our pilgrim would have boarded a ship in the lagoon of Venice and sailed along the Croatian coast to Dyrrhachium (Durrës) in today's Albania. Alternatively, he could have taken the land route to Bari or Brindisi and crossed the Adriatic Sea from there. Then, he would have followed the *Via Egnatia* to Thessaloniki and to Constantinople. The capital of the Byzantine empire was a worthy travel destination of its own. From Constantinople, he could have taken different land or sea routes through or around Asia Minor to reach Antioch or another port city in today's Syria or Lebanon. From there, he would have taken the land route to Jerusalem.

Given the extended duration of such a pilgrimage, our traveler would have made extended stops to visit the many other memorable sites along his route. Undoubtedly, the most frequented independent pilgrimage destinations in the Eastern Mediterranean were the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qal ʿat Sim ʿān near Antioch, and the Basilica of St. John the Apostle in Ephesus. All three of them had architecturally important buildings and could be visited with only minor detours from the described pilgrimage route.

While it is not very likely that our pilgrim would have visited the Ummayad mosque in Damascus, we add it to the list of investigated buildings. As the former Basilica of St. John the Baptist, it still had importance for Christians. But more importantly, it can be considered a Byzantine building from an architectural perspective. As the primary mosque of the Ummayad dynasty, it had a cultural influence that reached from Syria via North Africa to the caliphate of Córdoba in Spain, even including Toledo. Thereby, it may also have influenced the vanished Islamic architecture of the Holy Land.

Certainly, our pilgrim would have spent considerable time in Constantinople. Its most extraordinary churches included the Hagia Sophia and the Church of the Holy Apostles. But the city also offered a significant number of other important churches. We only mention the monastery of Stoudios, as a prominent example of an Early Byzantine basilica, and the Myrelaion, as one of the earliest Byzantine churches of the cross-in-square type. The presumed earliest church of this type, the *Nea Ekklesia*, also existed in Constantinople but is no longer extant.

On the *Via Egnatia*, the pilgrim would have made an extended stop in Thessaloniki, the second most important city of the Byzantine empire. The basilica Hagios Demetrios is another example of a typical Early Byzantine church. The relatively small church Panagia Chalkeon represents the latest innovations of Middle Byzantine architecture. At that time, it was one of the most recent Byzantine churches and it featured several decorative innovations that would dominate the style of Byzantine architecture for the rest of the 11th and 12th centuries.

While sailing across the Adriatic Sea, the Euphrasian basilica in Poreč would have provided an attractive harbor stop. Finally, the pilgrim could have gained first impressions of Byzantine art and architecture in the lagoon of Venice before boarding his ship. In the first half of the 11th century, the Basilica of San Marco in Venice was yet to be built. At this time, Torcello with its churches

of Santa Maria Assunta and Santa Fosca would have been a more relevant place to be visited. But the Basilica of San Marco in Venice might have been relevant for the later construction phases of Conques. It will be briefly touched as well.

In the following sections, we will demonstrate how each of the mentioned churches may have influenced the architecture of the abbey church of Conques. The list of investigated buildings does not only include most of the leading buildings of Byzantine architecture. One can even show that each of them had at least one characteristic element that also exists in Conques, but hardly anywhere else in Romanesque architecture. In some cases, like the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or the Church of Simeon Stylites, some of the elements investigated were unique. In most others, the analyzed buildings were chosen as leading representatives of common characteristics of Byzantine architecture. To summarize, the list of the Byzantine buildings to be investigated includes:

- Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem
- Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qalʿat Simʿān
- Ummayad mosque in Damascus, successor of the Basilica of St. John the Baptist
- Basilica of St. John the Apostle in Ephesus
- Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople
- Hagia Sophia in Constantinople
- Myrelaion in Constantinople
- Monastery of Stoudios in Constantinople
- Hagios Demetrios in Thessaloniki
- Panagia Chalkeon in Thessaloniki
- Euphrasian basilica in Poreč
- Santa Fosca in Torcello
- San Marco in Venice

The itinerary described was one of the major traffic routes of the medieval world. It was not only driven by the pilgrimage to the Holy Land but also by economic and political exchanges with Constantinople. In medieval times, ideas travelled with people. Hence, major traffic routes must have played a critical role in the dissemination of cultural innovations.

Differentiating building elements of the abbey church of Conques

The abbey church of Sainte-Foy in Conques possesses a significant number of architectural, decorative or iconographic elements that were unusual if not unique at the time of its construction. Some of these elements can also be found at Saint-Sernin in Toulouse, San Martín in Frómista or the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela which were built in close conjunction with Conques. While the construction site of Conques was opened first, some of the other construction sites may have progressed faster, at least temporarily. Unfortunately, the relative dating of the construction phases of these buildings is still subject of debate.[48] Hence, any mention of an innovative or groundbreaking feature of Conques tacitly includes the possibility that it was rather introduced in Toulouse, Frómista or Compostela and adopted shortly thereafter in Conques.

To provide a complete picture, the following analysis includes four architectural and three ornamental elements that already existed in few prominent places like Tours, Dijon, and Limoges or in the Ottonian architecture of the empire. They are included here since they presumably had models from the East as well:

- Chevet with ambulatory and radial chapels
- Galleries of the nave
- Cruciform floor plan with wide transepts, featuring side aisles and galleries
- Alternating supports of the arcades of the nave
- Eyebrow-shaped/Syrian cornices of the windows of the radial chapels
- Square billet moldings
- Consoles with masks under the roof cornice

The list of building elements that are characteristic of Conques, without likely Romanesque models, includes

[48] Lei Huang and Éric Sparhubert, "Building the Abbey Church," in *Conques Across Time: Inventions and Reinventions (9th-21st Centuries)*, ed. Ivan Foletti and Adrien Palladino, with Martin F. Lešák, Convivia 6 (Viella, Masaryk University Press, 2025), 145.

eighteen elements or sets of elements, as follows. The tympanum of the Last Judgment has a more complex background and will be discussed in the next chapter.

- Stacked, engaged half columns on pedestals of the radial chapels
- Blind arcade of the apse (external façade)
- Round-arched portals, supported by columns
- Tori/rolls and scotiae of the archivolts of the portals
- Oculi in the spandrels of the cloister portal and of the double windows (west façade)
- Stepped profiles of windows and portals
- Framed group of windows of the west façade
- Basket capitals with wickerwork
- Coupled columns of gallery and cloister windows
- Sculptures of angels in the squinches of the crossing tower
- Octagonal crossing tower with squinches
- Single-story crossing tower as lantern tower
- Personifications of curiosity in the archivolt of the tympanum of the Last Judgment
- Byzantine iconographic elements of the tympanum of the Last Judgment
- Absence of Carolingian westwork and of prominent west tower(s)
- Absence of a crypt, permitting veneration of Sainte-Foy in the sanctuary
- The Majesty of Sainte-Foy as a three-dimensional icon
- Traces of the treasury to the Byzantine world

In total, 25 characteristic elements or sets of elements of Conques will be analyzed. Most of them are architectural or decorative elements of the abbey church. By applying a method of Analytical Humanities, as described in the appendix, it will be shown that the entirety of these elements provides the abbey church of Conques with a distinctive „Neo-Byzantine“ character, relative to the usual elements of Romanesque architecture described in the previous chapter.

As a caveat, it needs to be noted that the semi-statistical method applied only allows conclusions to be drawn regarding the overall style of the abbey church in Conques. Neither can it be derived that the chosen Byzantine precursor buildings were the actual models of Conques, nor can it be assumed that the adoption of these elements was the result of a real pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Due to their prominence, they may have influenced other buildings that may have been more accessible but may be lost by now. Only in case of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qal ʿat Sim ʿān, there is sufficient evidence to assume that the church itself, or nearby Antioch, must have had a direct influence on Conques.

Also, knowledge about the identified building elements may have spread to Conques in a more complex way combining information from several sources or from several journeys to the Eastern Mediterranean. Selected building elements may even have been invented in Conques autonomously or may have been a result of the topographic constraints of the site. Nevertheless, the overall impression of the known medieval building is very consistent. It has a more distinctive and consistent „Neo-Byzantine“ character than its other Romanesque peers.

Byzantine precursors of the differentiating elements

In order to take the perspective of a medieval traveler, the differentiating building elements of Conques will be discussed in conjunction with the Byzantine buildings that feature them. The focus will be on the three most important pilgrimage sites of the Eastern Mediterranean, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the Basilica of St. John in Ephesus, and the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qalʿat Simʿān. The Basilica of St. John also serves as a substitute for the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople which no longer exists. In Constantinople, the focus will also be on Hagia Sophia. Panagia Chalkeon in Thessaloniki represents the latest trends in Byzantine architecture. The unusual crossing tower of Conques is discussed in conjunction with the Ummayad mosque in Damascus and the Myrelaion in Constantinople. The Euphrasian basilica in Poreč adds an interesting iconographic detail. The other churches investigated have overlapping elements with the

churches just mentioned. They will be introduced in the context of these major churches.

Church of the Holy Sepulchre as potential model for the chevet and nave

The basic architecture of the abbey church of Conques, including the ambulatory with radial chapels, the transepts, and the nave with galleries, bears a significant structural resemblance to the Constantinian Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Even some decorative elements of Conques point in this direction. The Constantinian Church of the Holy Sepulchre consisted of the Anastasis, a rotunda with the presumed tomb of Jesus at its center, and a large basilica with galleries (Figure 6).[49] Both buildings were connected by an atrium. Recent research on the potential origins of Romanesque chevets with ambulatory and radial chapels by Vergnolle and others suggests that the Romanesque ambulatories may have been intended as a reference to the Anastasis.[50] The existence of three radial chapels at some of the earliest ambulatories would speak for this hypothesis. An important supportive indication is the lost but highly influential abbey church of Saint-Bénigne in Dijon from 1001-18. It consisted of a rotunda that was directly attached to a cruciform basilica with galleries.[51] Apart from the missing atrium, Saint-Bénigne must have been a rather close approximation of the overall disposition of the Constantinian Church of the Holy Sepulchre. If one interprets the transepts of Sainte-Foy as a vaulted copy of the atrium of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the analogy becomes even closer.

On the other hand, the architecture of the Anastasis corresponded to the standard type of Roman mausoleum. Mausoleums of that type also existed in Rome, such as the Mausoleum of Helena, Santa Constanza or Sant'Andrea of Old-St. Peter. All of them were connected to larger churches. Another very prominent example must have been the Mausoleum of Constantine that was attached to the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople.[52] There are indications that it may also have had three apsidioles. Therefore, the identification of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or the Church of the Holy Apostles as a potential model of Conques is somewhat interchangeable. The Holy Apostles will be addressed in more detail in the next section providing indications that it may have been the even more relevant model.

Ambulatories also existed in Rome at some circiform funerary basilicas from the Early Christian period. However, these buildings were lacking radial chapels and served a different liturgical purpose. In the Eastern Mediterranean and Caucasus, ambulatories existed in several centralized churches of the tetraconch type, including the cathedral of Bostra, the tetraconch of Seleucia-Pieria near Antioch, the tetraconch of the Syrian pilgrimage complex in Resafa, the cathedral of Zwartnots in Armenia, and possibly even the Golden Octagon of Constantine in Antioch.[53] A particularly interesting example is the tetraconch of Pelusium (Tell el-Farama) at the border between ancient Palestine and Egypt, that even had a cruciform floor plan.[54] San Lorenzo in Milan is the only known early tetraconch in the West.[55] Eventually, various influences from the Eastern Mediterranean and from Italy may have played a combined role in the invention of the Romanesque ambulatory with radial chapels.

Galleries of the nave were a common feature of many early Byzantine basilicas, such as the monastery of Stoudios in Constantinople or Hagios Demetrios in

[49] Jürgen Krüger, *Die Grabeskirche zu Jerusalem: Geschichte, Gestalt, Bedeutung*, with Dinu Mendrea and Garo Nalbandian (Schnell & Steiner, 2000), 39–60; Robert G. Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture: The Building Traditions of Byzantium and Neighboring Lands*, Onassis Series in Hellenic Culture (Oxford University Press, 2019), 28–34.

[50] Éliane Vergnolle, "Les tribunes de chevet dans l'architecture romane du début du XIe siècle," in *Saint-Martial de Limoges: Millénaire de l'abbatiale romane (1018-2018) sous la direction d'Éliane Vergnolle*, vol. 1, Bulletin monumental 178 (Société française d'archéologie, 2020).

[51] Vergnolle, *Saint-Bénigne de Dijon*, vol. 2.

[52] Mark J. Johnson, "Constantine's Apostoleion: A Reappraisal," in *The Holy Apostles: A Lost Monument, a Forgotten Project, and the Presentness of the Past*, ed. Margaret Mullett and Robert G. Ousterhout, Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Symposia and Colloquia (Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2020).

[53] Rowland J. Mainstone, *Hagia Sophia: Architecture, Structure and Liturgy of Justinian's Great Church* (Thames & Hudson, 1988), 151; For the Golden Octagon see: Richard Krautheimer and Slobodan Ćurčić, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 4th ed., Pelican History of Art (Yale University Press, 1986), 76–79.

[54] Charles Bonnet, "Topographie Chrétienne de l'Antique Péluse (Farama) en Égypte," in *Architecture paléochrétienne*, ed. Jean-Michel Spieser, Collection Grèce-Rome-Byzance. Études fribourgeoises d'Histoire, d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Art (Infolio, 2011), 68 f.

[55] Mainstone, *Hagia Sophia*, 151.

Thessaloniki, to name a few prominent examples. There are no known precursors in the Early Christian architecture of the West. The galleries of San Lorenzo fuori le mura and Sant'Agnese fuori le mura in Rome have a very specific topographic background and are no suitable counterexamples.[56] Hence, the galleries of Conques are a rather strong indicator of Byzantine influence, albeit only indirectly via the earlier churches in Tours and Limoges.

A significant architectural innovation of the decades around 1100 was the addition of blind arcades with engaged half columns to the external façades of apses. Conques counts among the earliest of them (Figure 42). Other contemporary examples include Pisa cathedral, Speyer cathedral, and Saint-Eutrope in Saintes. A rare historical source suggests that these blind arcades were deliberate references to the arcade of the Anastasis. The apse of the cathedral of Elne in medieval Catalonia from around 1040 (Figure 99) has such a blind arcade as well, albeit realized in a simplified way with undecorated pilaster strips and cornices as capitals. A historical source claims that it was modeled after the Holy Sepulchre following the return of bishop Berenguer from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.[57]

To conclude, the combination of an ambulatory with radial chapels, transepts, galleries in the nave, and a blind arcade at the exterior wall of the apse has a highly significant parallel in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. However, it will be shown in the next section that the latter was not the only potential model in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Before we continue this discussion, we need to turn our attention to a particular ornamental element. It was already mentioned that some capitals of the chevet of Conques, adorned with wickerwork, are one of its special characteristics (Figure 7). The sheer existence of wickerwork or interlace as a decorative element cannot be considered an indication of Byzantine influence. In fact, excavations of the 1970s have shown that interlace was already employed as a decorative element at the earlier abbey church of Conques.[58] Only the use of three-stranded rather than two-stranded interlace might be an indication of inspirations from the east. But the view to Lombard Italy would already be sufficient to find potential models. Further examples existed in Carolingian art. It is the way in which interlace is used in Conques which points beyond Lombard Italy.

The capitals of Conques are reminiscent of the finely crafted basket capitals of the Byzantine empire, as documented for Egypt (Figure 7) and the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.[59] Recent research has shown that basket capitals with wickerwork also exist at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and were rather frequent in the Holy Land.[60] It is not secured that the basket capitals of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre go back to the days of Constantine. But similar basket capitals from the basilica of St. Stephen in Jerusalem can confidently be dated to 460. Apparently, they are even older than the preserved examples from Constantinople or Egypt. Hence, the basket capitals with wickerwork of Conques need to be considered explicit references to the Byzantine empire, if not to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre itself. The basket capitals of the Holy Land also provide a natural explanation for the fusion of wickerwork and palmettes at Conques. Many of the corresponding capitals of the Holy Land literally showed wickerwork baskets with plants and sometimes animals in them. The fusion of wickerwork and palmettes of Conques only required the omission of the edge of the baskets from the earlier capitals in the Holy Land. In any case, palmettes were more widespread in ancient Greek than in ancient Roman architecture. For the sake of completeness, it shall be mentioned that a 6th century basket capital with wickerwork of Constantinopolitan origin has later been reused in San Clemente in Rome.[61] It is assumed to originate from the former ciborium of the church. But in contrast to the situation in the Holy Land and other regions of the Eastern Mediterranean, basket capitals with wickerwork did not have any notable adoption in Rome.

[56] Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen in Rom*, 260–73.
[57] André Escarra, *L'abside majeure de la cathédrale d'Elna*, Les cahiers de Saint-Michel de Cuxa, vol. 32 (2001): 46 f.
[58] Huang, "Memory between Tradition and Modernity," 70.
[59] Tarkhanova, "Early Byzantine 'Basket' Capitals in Churches and Monasteries of the Holy Land," 533.
[60] Tarkhanova, "Early Byzantine 'Basket' Capitals in Churches and Monasteries of the Holy Land."
[61] Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen in Rom*, 155.

The Church of the Holy Apostles and St. John in Ephesus as potential models for the floor plan

The floor plan of Conques also has significant structural similarities with the Basilica of St. John the Apostle in Ephesus and, as far as we still can tell, with the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. Leaving the ambulatory and radial chapels of the chevet aside for a moment, the floor plan of Conques has the shape of a Latin cross (Figure 10). In contrast to nearly all other cruciform churches of the West from before 1100, the transepts of Conques have the same width as the nave which provides the floor plan with a rather ideal shape of a cross. The unusual width of the transepts is caused by the addition of side aisles and galleries. It is commonly assumed that the galleries were structurally needed to absorb the lateral pressure of the massive barrel vaults, both in the nave and in the transepts. Transepts with galleries were characteristic features of the five churches of the formerly so-called 'Pilgrimage type'.[62]

Similarly, transepts with side aisles and galleries were a characteristic feature of the Basilica of St. John the Apostle in Ephesus, where they absorbed the lateral pressure of its large domes (Figure 8).[63] A 6th century source saw in the Basilica of St. John a close copy of the lost Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople.[64] According to recent research, St. John may even have been the earlier of the two churches.[65] San Marco in Venice (Figure 9) from the second half of the 11th century was reported to be another near-copy of the Holy Apostles.[66] For the purposes of our discussion, St. John, the Holy Apostles and, for the later construction phases of Conques, San Marco form a rather homogeneous group of potential models. In contrast to widespread misconceptions, all three of them were built on the floor plan of a Latin Cross.[67] Given the higher similarity with the floor plan of Conques and the better archaeological documentation, the following analysis will focus on St. John in Ephesus.

Ephesus was the most important pilgrimage destination in Asia Minor and one of the most important of all Christianity. It received a significant imperial donation at the end of the 8th century and attracted pilgrims until the 15th century.[68] Apart from the tomb of St. John the Apostle, it offered several further attractions, such as the tomb of Maria Magdalena and the tomb of the apostle Timothy. Ephesus gained particular importance as a pilgrimage destination during the Crusades. For example, it is known that in 1147, the German and French kings Conrad III and Louis VII celebrated Christmas in Ephesus.[69] Ephesus also had significant importance for the propaganda of the pilgrimage of St. James. According to the *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, which promoted the biased perspective of Compostela, the three apostolic burial sites of Santiago de Compostela, Rome, and Ephesus represented all Christianity.[70] Compostela stood for the evangelization of the West, Ephesus for the evangelization of the East, while Rome only presided over them without significant impact on the ground. We cannot necessarily assume that the monks of Conques shared this perspective. The *Liber Sancti Jacobi* was only written in the 12th century anyway. Nevertheless, this prominent mention proves the importance and visibility of Ephesus in the High Middle Ages in southern France and northern Spain.

Apart from the existence of side aisles and galleries in the transepts, it is another analogy between Ephesus

[62] Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture*, 157–62. These include Saint-Martin in Tours, Saint-Martial in Limoges, Sainte-Foy in Conques, Saint-Sernin in Toulouse, and the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. The earlier cathedral of Sainte-Croix in Orléans is lost.

[63] Originally, the burial site in Ephesus referred to St. John the Theologian, the presumed author of the Apocalypse. However, due to earlier confusion with St. John the Evangelist, the medieval connotation of Ephesus was with St. John the Apostle in a broader sense. Andreas Thiel, *Die Johanneskirche in Ephesos*, Spätantike, frühes Christentum, Byzanz / B 16 (Reichert, 2005), 100.

[64] Nikolaos Karydis, "Justinian's Church of the Holy Apostles: A New Reconstruction Proposal," in *The Holy Apostles: A Lost Monument, a Forgotten Project, and the Presentness of the Past*, ed. Margaret Mullett and Robert G. Ousterhout, Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Symposia and Colloquia (Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2020), 103.

[65] Karydis, "Justinian's Church of the Holy Apostles," 104; Robert G. Ousterhout, "The Church of the Holy Apostles and Its Place in Later Byzantine Architecture," in *The Holy Apostles: A Lost Monument, a Forgotten Project, and the Presentness of the Past*, ed. Margaret Mullett and Robert G. Ousterhout, Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Symposia and Colloquia (Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2020), 215.

[66] Karydis, "Justinian's Church of the Holy Apostles," 112.

[67] Karydis, "Justinian's Church of the Holy Apostles," 113–19.

[68] Clive Foss, "Pilgrimage in Medieval Asia Minor," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 56 (2002): 130, https://doi.org/10.2307/1291859.

[69] Thiel, *Die Johanneskirche in Ephesos*, 106.

[70] Klaus Herbers, "Codex Calixtinus. The Book of the Church of Compostela," in *Compostela and Europe: The Story of Diego Gelmírez* (Skira, 2010), 125.

and Conques that the nave without narthex has about twice the length of the transepts.[71] These harmonic proportions of the floor plan are accentuated by the fact that both churches had alternating supports in the nave.

In the case of St. John, the nave consisted of two modules of equal size each carrying a dome (Figure 8). The arcades of the nave were restricted to the respective modules with a piece of wall at their juncture. Modules of similar size also formed the crossing, the transepts, and the eastern arm. In total, St. John was composed of six modules of somewhat equal size each carrying a dome. The Holy Apostles and San Marco only had five domes necessitating the domes of the nave and the crossing to be larger to form a Latin Cross.[72]

Conques also has alternating supports in its nave, a fact which has attracted little attention in recent literature. But in contrast to St. John, these are not the result of its underlying architecture but of a decorative nature. In Conques, the central pier of the arcade of the nave is lacking engaged half columns. The same applies to the outer piers. If one reads the engaged half columns as mimicry of a classic column, the arcade of Conques has the pseudo-sequence of pier – column – pier – column – pier, starting from the pier of the narthex (Figure 12). In the Ottonian architecture of the empire, such a sequence is known as Rhenish alternating supports. In contrast to the Ottonian architecture, alternating supports were very infrequent in French Romanesque architecture. The only prominent examples exist at Notre-Dame in Jumièges and at Saint-Hilaire in Poitiers.

On a side note, the alternating supports of Conques are limited to the ground floor. At gallery level, there is no alternation (Figure 12 and Figure 13). In contrast, the alternating supports of Gernrode, Hagios Demetrios in Thessaloniki, and presumably St. John also existed at gallery level. This could be an indication that the imitation of Byzantine models may have had particular importance under abbot Odolric but maybe less under Étienne II and in the initial years of Bégon III., when the pilgrimage to the Holy Land was suppressed by Islamic opposition.

At first glance, alternating supports may rather point towards models in the German empire than to Byzantine models. However, the genesis of the alternating supports in the German empire conveys a different picture. The earliest known example of alternating supports in the West existed at the Carolingian abbey church of Reichenau, the *Heito Münster*.[73] The latter was a highly innovative building that introduced the cruciform floor plan, alternating supports, and the separated crossing to the East Frankish kingdom. In contrast to Conques, the transepts did not have side aisles and there are no indications for the existence of galleries. In addition to the alternating supports of its nave, the *Heito Münster* had the same harmonious proportions between east arm, transepts, and nave as St. John in Ephesus or Conques, leading to a rather short nave compared to other Carolingian or Romanesque churches.[74] Abbot Heito dedicated the abbey church in 816, five years after he had returned from an envoy mission to Constantinople on behalf of Charlemagne.[75] His successor added a separate westwork, in line with Carolingian practices. The unusual characteristics of the *Heito Münster* point to models in the Byzantine empire. In fact, some believe that the Münster was built according to the model of the Church of the Holy Apostles.[76] At this early period, no other large cross-shaped church from Constantinople is known that could have served as alternative model.[77] The *Nea Ekklesia* of Basil I, the assumed prototype of the cross-in-square churches, was yet to be built. The same applies to the Carolingian precursor of San Marco in Venice which potentially also followed the model of the Holy

[71] This statement refers to the external dimensions of the two churches. In Ephesus, the two modules of the nave are slightly smaller than the ones of the transepts. This reduction in length is largely compensated by a side aisle between narthex and the inner part of the first module. Such an additional aisle does not exist in Conques.

[72] As a consequence of having only one dome in the nave, San Marco has no alternating supports in the nave. The situation of the Holy Apostles with respect to alternating supports is unknown.

[73] Marlene Kleiner, "Keine Gründung auf der grünen Wiese? Neue Thesen und offene Fragen zur Baugeschichte des Reichenauer Münsters," in *Die Klosterinsel Reichenau im Mittelalter: Geschichte - Kunst - Architektur*, ed. Wolfgang Zimmermann et al. (Schnell & Steiner, 2024), 143–47.

[74] This only holds if one measures the dimensions at clerestory level, without the side aisles of the nave.

[75] Untermann, "Ein Kloster, sieben Kirchen," 123.

[76] Untermann, "Ein Kloster, sieben Kirchen," 123.

[77] John Freely and Ahmet Sefik Çakmak, *Byzantine Monuments of Istanbul* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 23–168; Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*, 175–257.

Apostles.[78] The only somewhat close precursor would have been the church of St. Sophia in Sofia from the 6th century. But around 811, Bulgaria did not constitute a safe travel route for Christian pilgrims. Furthermore, St. Sophia does not have the same harmonious proportions between transepts and nave, nor does it have a separated crossing or alternating supports in the nave. It will be shown later that the *Heito Münster* of Reichenau Abbey may have been known in Conques.

The innovative features of the *Heito Münster* did not find any notable succession in the East Frankish kingdom. Only in the early Ottonian period, a similar church was constructed in Gernrode. The collegiate church of St. Cyriac has the same features as described for the *Heito Münster* of Reichenau (Figure 11). In addition, its nave is crowned by galleries. Such galleries were already identified as Byzantine elements in the context of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The church of Gernrode was built in the second half of the 10th century by margrave Gero I, a close confidant of emperor Otto I, in a period of significant Byzantine influences. Emperor Otto I married his son Otto II to the Byzantine princess Theophanu to establish closer ties with the Byzantine empire. Gero's sister Hidda became one of the first pilgrims to the Holy Land who is known by name. Hence, the construction of the collegiate church of Gernrode also has a distinctive Byzantine connotation. The churches of Reichenau and Gernrode later influenced the design of the first cathedral of Bamberg, the much-praised *Heinrichsdom*, a lighthouse building for the adoption of the cruciform floor plan in the empire.[79]

From the very prominent examples of Reichenau and Gernrode, one can conclude that the combination of a cruciform floor plan with a nave twice the length of the transepts and accentuated by alternating supports was considered a reflection of Byzantine architecture in the empire. Presumably, it constituted a copy of the Church of the Holy Apostles. Recent findings even suggest that the larger width of the west arms of Reichenau and Gernrode relative to their transepts, caused by the side aisles of their naves, may have had correspondence at the Holy Apostles too.[80]

Beyond these analogies, alternating supports can be considered an element of Byzantine architecture on their own. One finds them at the arcade of the Anastasis as well as at the arcade of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. They existed at the atrium of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and still exist at its equivalent at the Ummayad mosque in Damascus. Alternating supports can also be found at several early Byzantine basilicas such as Hagios Demetrios in Thessaloniki.

The abbey church of Jumièges, one of only two other prominent examples of alternating supports in France, provides another hint in Byzantine direction. In contrast to virtually all other French Romanesque churches, the mullioned gallery windows of Jumièges have three rather than two window openings. Mullioned windows with three openings are a characteristic feature of Early Christian or Byzantine architecture, as can be seen at San Vitale in Ravenna and many other Byzantine churches.

The other prominent example of alternating supports in French Romanesque architecture is the collegiate church of Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand in Poitiers. It was built before 1049 with significant funding from Agnes of Burgundy, mother-in-law of emperor Henry III. In the 1040s, she had spent several years at his imperial court. These were years in which the creation of copies of the Anastasis or of the Palatine Chapel of Charlemagne was very fashionable, as will be outlined later. Initially, Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand had an ideal cruciform shape without side aisles, similar to Santa Croce in Ravenna.[81] In 1060-80, it was remodeled in a very unusual way. Barrel vaults supported by detached columns were

[78] Ousterhout, "The Church of the Holy Apostles and Its Place in Later Byzantine Architecture," 215.

[79] Naraschewski, *Der Bamberger Dom aus kunst- und kulturhistorischer Sicht*, 22–29.

[80] Ancient foundations of the former Fatih Camii, the successor of the Holy Apostles, suggest that the latter may have had exterior porticoes around its west arm, similar to the corresponding porticoes of San Marco in Venice. See Julian Raby, "From the Founder of Constantinople to the Founder of Istanbul: Mehmed the Conqueror, Fatih Camii, and the Church of the Holy Apostles," in *The Holy Apostles: A Lost Monument, a Forgotten Project, and the Presentness of the Past*, ed. Margaret Mullett and Robert G. Ousterhout, Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Symposia and Colloquia (Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2020), 271–77.

[81] Marie-Thérèse Camus, *La reconstruction de Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand de Poitiers à l'époque romane: la marche des travaux (suite et fin)*, Cahiers de civilisation médiévale, vols. 99–100 (1982): 242.

inserted into the nave. Side aisles were added to it.[82] The openings from the nave to the side aisles had the form of mullioned portals with discharging arches, like the gallery windows of Conques. The use of mullioned portals instead of an arcade introduced alternating supports to the nave (Figure 14). In view of the former contacts of Agnes to the empire, such an approach could have been known from several Ottonian churches, such as St. Vitus in Drübeck near Gernrode. However, at this time, alternating supports were no longer fashionable in the empire. The early Salian dynasty had their cultural view firmly directed towards Burgundy and northern Italy. At Saint-Hilaire, the alternating supports were executed in a peculiar manner. The western walls of the transepts also have side aisles with a fake arcade and fake gallery windows. When viewed from the crossing, the transepts of Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand (Figure 15) look a bit like Conques (Figure 13) or its predecessors in Tours and Limoges. The side aisles of the transepts open themselves to the nave through a separate arch. The sequence of mullioned portals of the nave only starts after this separate arch. This configuration with a singular arch at the crossing is also known from the Basilica of St. John in Ephesus, from San Marco in Venice and from the current reconstruction of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. In the same spirit, the somewhat artificial alternating supports of the nave of Conques have their oriental 'pier' only after a singular arch that connects the nave to the side aisle of the transept (Figure 13).

To complete this discussion of structural similarities, we will turn our attention to one of the most unusual churches of the Eastern Mediterranean, the cathedral of Ishkhani in medieval Georgia (Tao-Klarjeti, today East Turkey).[83] It also has a cruciform floor plan with nearly the same relative proportions of its four cross arms (without their annexes) that were identified in the cases of Reichenau, Gernrode, and Conques (Figure 20). Similarly, a transverse arch separates the nave into two modules of equal length, corresponding to the alternating supports of Reichenau, Gernrode, and Conques. The "apse" of Ishkhani is inscribed into a rectangular cross arm, in line with widespread architectural practices of Georgia, Armenia, and Syria. However, instead of a real apse, it features a two-story ambulatory resembling the ambulatories of Conques or other Romanesque churches in France (Figure 18). With a secured date of construction before 966 (most likely in the 950s/60s), the ambulatory of Ishkhani predates all known Romanesque ambulatories by a few decades, including the ones of Tours, Limoges or Clermont.[84] Hence, it cannot be attributed to influences from the West.

The upper floor of the ambulatory is connected to two pastophoria. As a consequence, the eastern flanks of the transepts have side aisles and galleries with mullioned windows (Figure 19). The internal walls of the transepts are articulated by large blind arches, like the external walls of the palace hall of Constantine in Trier or several churches in Ravenna. Therefore, the mullioned windows of the transepts of Ishkhani have discharging arches resembling the gallery windows of Gernrode or Conques.

Finally, the dome of the crossing does not rest on the walls of the four cross arms. Instead, it is supported by four piers that are separated at ground level from the four cross arms. Since the narrow nave and the western flanks of the transepts have no side aisles, small protruding extensions had to be added to permit the somewhat artificial creation of detached piers. As a result, the view from the nave to the apse and transepts has a striking structural similarity with Conques and the other churches of the so-called "Pilgrimage type" (Figure 19). We even find the same narrow passages next to the piers of the crossing that were previously discussed in the context of Conques (Figure 13) and Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand in Poitiers (Figure 15).

However, in contrast to Conques, there is no structural or liturgical logic behind these unusual and counter-intuitive elements. Ishkhani was not a recognized center of pilgrimage with the relics of an important saint. The ambulatory did not even have significant practical value. On the ground floor, the passage between outer wall and ambulatory is

[82] Camus, *La reconstruction de Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand de Poitiers à l'époque romane (suite et fin)*, 239 f.

[83] Mine Kadiroğlu, *The Architecture of the Georgian Church at İşhan*, vol. 121, European University Studies, XXVIII (Peter Lang, 1991).

[84] Kadiroğlu, *The Architecture of the Georgian Church at İşhan*, 121:11 f., 65–76.

inconveniently narrow. On the upper floor, there is not even a passage that would justify the term ambulatory. Neither is there an obvious access from ground level to the upper "ambulatory" and to the pseudo-galleries. Similarly, the only apparent purpose of the unusual corner aisles around the western piers of the crossing was to pretend the existence of free-standing crossing piers and western side aisles of the transepts. In other words, a lot of effort was made to create a decorative backdrop without any structural or liturgical function.

Not surprisingly, most of the elements described have not found any succession in Georgia or in adjacent regions. The two immediate peers or successors of Iskhkani, Kumurdo cathedral and Oshki monastery (Figure 21), adopted the novel idea of a cruciform floor plan with a central dome on piers but dropped the artificial ambulatory with its pseudo-galleries. Instead, they established a more symmetrical and more logical disposition, with transepts (nearly) mirroring the structure of the chevet with its two pastophoria. As a result, the transepts got closer to the concept of side aisles than in Ishkhani.

These observations naturally raise the question of the potential models of Iskhkani. At the time of its construction, the cruciform floor plan with protruding cross arms was a novelty in Georgia. It also had not found relevant adoption in Armenia or Syria. Its only notable predecessor in Georgia, the monastery church of Opiza from the first half of the 10th century, had a simple cruciform floor plan without side aisles, with an apse inscribed in a rectangular sanctuary, and with pastophoria in the corners between sanctuary and transepts, similar to Santa Croce in Ravenna, albeit with barrel vaults. Admittedly, many of the discussed elements of Ishkhani, such as the ambulatory, galleries, domes on piers, or pastophoria at the upper level, could be found elsewhere in Georgia, Armenia or Syria. But the arrangement of these elements in Ishkhani was new and highly counter-intuitive. A tetraconch ambulatory inserted into a circular or octagonal church has an intrinsic geometric and functional logic, the ambulatory of Ishkhani does not.

Therefore, it is much more plausible to assume that the architecture of Iskhkhani aimed to mimic an important building from an even more remote location. In fact, the construction of Ishkhani (before 966), Kumurdo (before 964) and Oshki (963-973), all located in the province of Tao-Klarjeti, happened at a time when the religious focus of Georgia started to shift from Jerusalem to Constantinople. From the second half of the tenth century, Georgia gradually adopted the Constantinopolitan Liturgical Rite. The ultimate turning point was the establishment of the Georgian Monastery of Iviron on Mount Athos in 983.[85] The latter was supported by emperor Basil II since David III of Tao played a critical role on the side of the emperor in the Byzantine civil war of 976-79.[86] Since that period, the Georgian center of theological and artistic activities shifted from the Holy Land to Constantinople. The novel iconography of Oshki, showing several signs of Byzantine influence, as well as Iskhkani's use of pendentives instead of squinches – another novelty in Tao-Klarjeti – are visible testimonies of this cultural shift.[87]

The development of the post-iconoclastic Constantinopolitan Liturgical Rite went hand in hand with the introduction of the cross-in-square type of church, exemplified by the Myrelaion or the Monastery of the Mother of God of Konstantinos Lips. For our purposes, it is only relevant that the Constantinopolitan Liturgical Rite required additional direct passages from the pastophoria to the sanctuary.[88] Some of the first of such passages were realized in Oshki (Figure 21), but not yet in Opiza, Ishkhani, and Kumurdo. Oshki was an important model for many later Georgian churches.[89] Hence, the ambulatory of Ishkhani was not a convenient solution for this new liturgical requirement, explaining

[85] Irene Giviashvili, "Liturgy and Architecture. Constantinopolitan Rite and Changes in the Architectural Planning of Georgian Churches," in *Georgia as a Bridge between Cultures. Dynamics of Artistic Exchanges*, ed. Manuela Studer-Karlen et al., Convivium Supplementum 6 (Brepols Publishers, 2021), 68–70.

[86] John Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811-1057*, trans. John Wortley, with Jean-Claude Cheynet and Bernard Flusin (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 16, 9 [Thurn: 326]; Manuela Studer-Karlen, "The Monastery of the Transfiguration in Zarzma: At the Intersection of Biblical Narration and Liturgical Relevance," in *Georgia as a Bridge between Cultures. Dynamics of Artistic Exchanges*, ed. Manuela Studer-Karlen et al., Convivium Supplementum 6 (Brepols Publishers, 2021), 142.

[87] Kadiroğlu, *The Architecture of the Georgian Church at İşhan*, 121:58.

[88] Giviashvili, "Liturgy and Architecture," 72.

[89] Giviashvili, "Liturgy and Architecture," 76–78.

why it has not found any succession in Georgia. Later, a small staircase was added to provide access to the sanctuary through the columns of the ambulatory.[90]

In a nutshell, in the first half of the tenth century, Georgians started to adopt Constantinopolitan architectural practices, most notably the cruciform floor plan of the 5th and early 6th centuries. However, shortly after 960 they realized that pre-iconoclastic Justinian architecture was no longer a good fit for the new Liturgical Rite, leading to innovative local adjustments of the copied models.

Coming back to our discussion regarding Conques, we have seen in Ishkhani a very similar pattern, as we have observed earlier in Reichenau and Gernrode. The disruptive arrival of cultural influences from Constantinople went hand in hand with the emergence of a very specific new church architecture, featuring a cruciform floor plan with a nave about twice as long as the other three arms. The nave is subdivided into two modules of equal length by an articulation of its walls. The proportions of these two modules roughly conform to the proportions of the sanctuary and the transepts. The crossing is visibly separated from the four cross arms by four massive piers. In addition, there are galleries with mullioned windows and discharging arches that project at least partially into the transepts. Apart from the galleries that were not yet observed at Reichenau, all these elements must have existed in Constantinople by the beginning of the 9th century, if our conjecture is right. The only known major church of Constantinople that could fit these descriptions is the Church of the Holy Apostles. In fact, piers supporting the crossing with adjacent narrow passages, as we have identified in Ishkhani, Poitiers, and Conques, constituted another distinctive feature of the Holy Apostles.[91] The one major addition of Ishkhani to this list of potential similarities is its ambulatory. In fact, such an ambulatory would have made a lot of sense at the Holy Apostles as well. Its eastern arm did not terminate with an apse, as it did at the Basilica of St. John in Ephesus. Instead, it served as a passageway to a courtyard with the mausoleum of Constantine.[92]

The fact that we can also observe these elements in Conques, but nowhere else in the West, gives some credibility to the assumption that the architecture of Conques may have deliberately referred to the Church of the Holy Apostles or to St. John in Ephesus. But this observation does not yet constitute clear evidence.

The rotunda of the Anastasis is still the most plausible model for the radial chapels of Romanesque ambulatories. Eusebius describes the apse of Constantine's Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre as having twelve columns.[93] Commonly, these columns are interpreted as engaged columns, like in later Romanesque churches. But it cannot be excluded that the columns supported an arcade, as we have seen at the ambulatory of Ishkhani (Figure 18) with its eight columns. After all, the apse of the Constantinian basilica bordered the atrium which led to the Anastasis. According to Eusebius, it also had galleries and arcades with piers.[94] Hence, potential influences from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre are still a valid possibility.

In any case, it is known that Byzantine influences manifested themselves in the vicinity of Conques shortly before the completion of its abbey church. From 1110 on, about sixty Romanesque churches of a new type were built to the west of Conques and further to the north, about half of them in the Perigord.[95] In them, the barrel vaults of Conques and of other Romanesque churches were replaced by a sequence of round domes. It is generally believed that these domes were derived from San Marco, the Holy Apostles, St. John in Ephesus or from some smaller churches in Cyprus or in western Asia Minor.[96] One of the earliest of them, if not the earliest, was erected in Cahors.[97] Cahors was the next major stop on the *Via Podiensis* after Figeac, from the perspective of Conques. In 1112, the bishop of Cahors returned from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land that he had undertaken with

[90] Giviashvili, "Liturgy and Architecture," 83 f.
[91] Karydis, "Justinian's Church of the Holy Apostles," 122–24.
[92] Karydis, "Justinian's Church of the Holy Apostles," 127.
[93] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Vita Constantini et Oratio Ad Coetum Sanctorum* (n.d.), III, 38.
[94] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Vita Constantini*, III, 37.
[95] Tassos Papacostas, "The Medieval Progeny of the Holy Apostles," in *The Byzantine World*, ed. Paul Stehphenson (Routledge, 2010), 389–95.
[96] Ousterhout, "The Church of the Holy Apostles and Its Place in Later Byzantine Architecture," 217–22.
[97] Camille Enlart argued that Cahors was the earliest of the French domed churches. Papacostas, "The Medieval Progeny of the Holy Apostles," 392–94.

the count of Toulouse.[98] He brought with him relics of the headcloth of Christ's burial. The construction site of the cathedral of Cahors was already opened when he departed in 1109. Its two massive domes may have been built around 1140. Roughly at the same time, similar domes were constructed at the (former) cathedrals of Angoulême and Périgueux.[99] From about 1120-70, an even more ambitious project was undertaken in Périgueux. The collegiate church and current cathedral of Saint-Front (Figure 16) was erected as a simplified version of San Marco in Venice or potentially even of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, albeit based on a Greek rather than a Latin Cross.[100] No other Romanesque near-copy of the Church of the Holy Apostles with such proximity is known from the West. Périgueux, about 180 km northwest of Conques, was a prominent stop on the *Via Lemovicensis*, one of the four major Ways of St. James in France. Hence, it was an important competitor of Conques in the "pilgrimage business." When the builders of Saint-Front aspired to build a near-identical copy of San Marco or of the Holy Apostles, not even to talk about the more modest project in neighboring Cahors, why shouldn't the builders of Conques have had the same idea less than a century earlier?[101]

To complete the picture, several domed churches were built in Apulia in the 11th and 12th centuries.[102] Also here, connections to Cyprus or to the Holy Apostles and its two discussed copies are assumed. The most prominent of them is the cathedral of San Sabino in Canosa. Its 11th century floor plan exhibits a Latin Cross with five domes.[103] The distribution of domes mirrors the situation of St. John in Ephesus, albeit without a dome over the apse. The nave of San Sabino also had a very unusual mixture of piers and columns, somewhat resembling the situation of Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand in Poitiers. This is another indication that cruciform churches that were built after the examples of the Holy Apostles or of St. John in Ephesus often exhibited a certain alternation of piers and columns in the nave.

Even the liturgical disposition within the abbey church of Conques seems to have been analogous to the Basilica of St. John in Ephesus. In the latter, the *bema* was located in the crossing, above the sepulchral catacomb (Figure 8).[104] The *bema* was limited at the transition to the eastern arm of the church by the *synthronon*. As a result, no major liturgical use of the eastern arm and of the apse is known. According to a recent reconstruction of the liturgical disposition of Conques from the 11th and 12th centuries, its sanctuary occupied the crossing and the first two bays of the nave.[105] The main altar was positioned at the western end of the eastern arm, comparable to the position of the *synthronon* in Ephesus. An additional altar for Sainte-Foy is assumed in the center of the hemicycle of the ambulatory. Such a position would reflect the typical location of a tomb in Roman mausoleums such as the Holy Sepulchre in the center of the Anastasis. The liturgical disposition of Conques is even closer to the reconstructed disposition of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. According to a historical source, the *bema* of the latter was also located in the crossing.[106] The eastern arm of the church was used as a passageway to the attached mausoleum of Constantine, which is reconstructed as a rotunda. Before Conques, a similarly novel liturgical disposition already existed at Saint-Martin in Tours. Contemporary examples are known from Toulouse and Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe.[107] All of them have an ambulatory with radial chapels, a potential reference to the Anastasis in Jerusalem.

Finally, the floor plans of Conques and Ephesus exhibit another subtle analogy that was unusual in Romanesque architecture. In Ephesus, the central

[98] Mireille Bénéjeam-Lère, "La cathédrale Saint-Étienne de Cahors," in *Congrès archéologique de France. 147e session, 1989, Quercy* (Société Française d'Archéologie, 1993), 10 f.
[99] Vergnolle, *L'Art roman en France*, 217–22.
[100] Palladino, "Byzance à Conques?," 26 f.
[101] The notion of near identity only applies to the general architectural structure of the interior of Saint-Front. The exterior, particularly its roofing, looked quite different in medieval times. The current exterior visibility of the domes is the result of a 19th century reconstruction.
[102] Papacostas, "The Medieval Progeny of the Holy Apostles," 395–402.
[103] Papacostas, "The Medieval Progeny of the Holy Apostles," 397; Ousterhout, "The Church of the Holy Apostles and Its Place in Later Byzantine Architecture," 221.
[104] Thiel, *Die Johanneskirche in Ephesos*, 37, 63, Tafel I, II.
[105] Lei Huang and Éric Sparhubert, "Staging the Sacred: Liturgical Displays and Spatial Devices," in *Conques Across Time: Inventions and Reinventions (9th-21st Centuries)*, ed. Ivan Foletti and Adrien Palladino, with Martin F. Lešák, Convivia 6 (Viella, Masaryk University Press, 2025), 160–68.
[106] Karydis, "Justinian's Church of the Holy Apostles," 115.
[107] Huang and Sparhubert, "Staging the Sacred," 166 f.

portals of the narthex, on its exterior and interior side, are split into three separate bays. The west portal of Conques demonstrates a similar split, albeit into two bays. The separating wall between them is significantly more substantial than the typical trumeau of Romanesque or Gothic churches. During the restoration of 1879, a piece of masonry was found in the ground of the nave which indicates that an equivalent separation into two bays was also planned or even existed at the interior portal from the narthex to the nave.[108] Apparently, this trumeau-like wall was not executed or was removed when the final plans for the tympanum of the Last Judgment altered the internal geometry of the entrance.

To conclude, the considerations above suggest that the floor plan and the core architecture of Conques may have been a deliberate reference to the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople or to the Basilica of St. John in Ephesus with additions from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Certainly, these observations of structural similarities are not yet sufficient to draw conclusions with confidence. The picture will become a lot clearer when we include the decoration of the façades of Conques.

Church of St. Simeon Stylites as potential model for the external façades and portals

The external decorations of Conques and the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qalʿat Simʿān near Antioch in North Syria (Figure 23) exhibit a striking level of similarity. Nearly every external decorative element of Conques can be found in Qalʿat Simʿān or its vicinity, including its earlier prototype in Qalb Loze (Figure 22). The decorative elements even appear in very similar combinations and spatial arrangements. Therefore, the overall decoration of the radial chapels, the portals of the transepts, and the west façade of Conques, including its famous portal without the sculpted tympanum, appear to be close copies of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites. More strikingly, it will be shown that the highly innovative Romanesque portals of Conques with their convex and concave moldings of the archivolts as well as their supporting columns do not have any other realistic model than the Church of St. Simeon Stylites. Some decorative elements of the latter were broadly adopted in North Syria, Armenia, and Georgia, but only in very rare cases in the West. Hence, if the builders of Conques leaned on other prominent models for their external decoration, the Church of St. Simeon Stylites appears to be the only realistic, still extant option. Of course, it cannot be excluded that the decoration of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites had an artistic echo in Justinian Antioch, which is now lost. But for the purposes of our discussion, it does not make a difference whether the actual model of Conques was Qalʿat Simʿān or nearby Antioch.

The Monastery of St. Simeon Stylites was one of the most frequented pilgrimage destinations of the Eastern Mediterranean. Its monastery church was the largest church east of Constantinople, especially after the destruction of the Constantinian Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 1009. The church was constructed on the site of the pillar of St. Simeon Stylites. Due to its location in the *hinterland* of the metropolis of Antioch, it was well connected to important traffic routes including the routes from Constantinople or from the West to Jerusalem. It can be assumed that most of the pilgrims to the Holy Land passed Antioch. The complex of the Monastery of St. Simeon Stylites was built between 476-90.[109] It predated the groundbreaking churches of the Justinian era by nearly a century, such as the Hagia Sophia, the Holy Apostles or St. John in Ephesus. The monastic complex was fortified before 969 due to continued Islamic attacks and seriously attacked by the emir of Aleppo in 985.[110] From 1017-47, it was temporarily under Islamic rule.[111] However, in the same period, Islamic rulership did not prevent Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Qalʿat Simʿān was conquered by the Seljuks in 1084 and became part of the Prinicipality of Antioch, ruled by Normans of Apulia, in 1098. Hence, except for a few episodes of Islamic rule, especially in the last two decades of the 11th century, Qalʿat Simʿān must have been

[108] Huang, "Memory between Tradition and Modernity," 68.
[109] Christine Strube, *Die "Toten Städte": Stadt und Land in Nordsyrien während der Spätantike*, Zaberns Bildbände zur Archäologie (Philipp von Zabern, 1996), 63.
[110] Ignace Peña, *The Christian Art of Byzantine Syria* (Garnet, 1997), 140.
[111] Jacques Jarry, "Trouvailles épigraphiques à Saint-Syméon," *Syria. Archéologie, Art et Histoire* 43, nos. 1–2 (1966): 108–10, https://doi.org/10.3406/syria.1966.5840.

accessible for westerners until the middle of the 13th century.

The Church of St. Simeon Stylites was one of the early prototypes of a Christian martyrium. It consisted of an octagon built around the pillar of St. Simeon with four basilicas attached to it (Figure 17). With its cruciform floor plan, it was a precursor of the Basilica of St. John in Ephesus and of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. The four basilicas forming the cross arms had side aisles, but no galleries. The central octagon was crowned by a crossing tower. The octagon had four corner rooms with apsidioles that can be considered precursors of squinches (Figure 31). Thereby, the church also was an important precursor of later octagonal crossing towers with squinches.

The existence of "transepts" with side aisles and of an octagonal crossing tower with "squinches" constitute first parallels with Conques. Much more significant are the comprehensive parallels of the external decoration, which will be analyzed in the following. The relevant architectural or ornamental elements of Conques are listed below. Not all of them had their earliest western occurrence in Conques. Some had already been used for a few other Romanesque buildings in the first half of the 11th century:

Radial chapels

- Stacked, engaged half columns on pedestals
- Eyebrow-shaped cornices of windows
- Billet moldings in the cornices of windows and roofs
- Consoles with masks under the roof cornices

Transepts

- Round-arched portals, supported by columns
- Tori/rolls and scotiae in the archivolts of the portals

South portal

- Portal with simplified structure relative to the portals of the transepts
- Decorative balls in the scotia of the archivolt

West façade

- Double windows with large oculus in their spandrel
- Decorated frame of the large oculus
- Portal house with pediment, a round arch supported by columns, and two rectangular portals (doors)
- Billet moldings and tori/rolls in the roof cornice of the portal house
- Tori/rolls and scotiae in the archivolt of the round arch and in the frame of the large oculus

The stepped profiles of the windows and portals as well as the decorative frame around the three upper windows of the west façade of Conques will be discussed in a subsequent section. The innovative duplication of columns in the jambs of the portals of the transepts is a consequence of their stepped profiles. They have some art historical parallels only in Georgia which are not considered relevant here. The famous tympanum of the Last Judgment of Conques does not have any relation to Qalʿat Simʿān either and will be analyzed later.

The radial chapels of Conques feature two decorative elements without or with very limited precedence in Romanesque architecture, but with well-known precursors in (late) Roman architecture. The radial chapels are decorated with stacked, engaged half columns standing on pedestals (Figure 24). Stacked engaged columns on pedestals were a characteristic element of nearly all Roman triumphal arches since Augustan times. There, the lower columns framed the portals while the shorter upper columns were attached to a windowless attic, often decorated with figured friezes. Stacked, engaged half columns framing multiple rows of round-arched windows can also be found at various buildings of Rome, such as the Theatre of Marcellus or the Flavian Amphitheater.[112] But the triumphal arches with pedestals and windowless attics appear to be the better fit for Conques.

Shortly after the radial chapels of Conques, stacked half columns were adopted at Saint-Sernin in Toulouse

[112] John B. Ward-Perkins, *Rom*, Weltgeschichte der Architektur (Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1988), 21, 33, 63.

and at San Martín in Frómista. A further evolved adaptation can be found at the central apse of the priory church of Conques in Sélestat and at a few dependent apses in Lorraine.[113] In the Romanesque examples mentioned, the upper row of half columns stands on the eyebrow-shaped cornices of the windows rather than on a separate entablature-like cornice. While Rome would be a natural model location for Conques, the question remains why the builders of Conques would have choosen the decoration of triumphal arches as a model for radial chapels. A more straight-forward answer can be found at the central apse of the east basilica of St. Simeon Stylites in Qal ʿat Sim ʿān (Figure 25). An even earlier model existed at the basilica of Qalb Loze (Figure 22), another pilgrimage site associated with St. Simeon Stylites.[114] Qalb Loze is located half-way between Antioch and Qal ʿat Sim ʿān. Both churches seem to be the only extant precursors of Conques with stacked engaged columns. The potentially relevant case of Trier cathedral will be discussed later.

Furthermore, the central apse of St. Simeon Stylites (Figure 25) has the same eyebrow-shaped cornices around its windows as the radial chapels of Conques (Figure 24) have. The shape of these cornices is also known as Syrian arches. Such cornices are frequently found in Syria, Armenia, and Georgia. However, the other known examples from North Syria do not conform with the shape of the cornices of Conques. In North Syria, most eyebrow-shaped cornices fully framed the jambs and not only the archivolts of the windows. However, eyebrow-shaped cornices with the shapes of Conques can be found at various Roman temples of Syria, as will be discussed in the appendix. The billet moldings of the cornices of the radial chapels of Conques will be analyzed in the context of its west portal.

Romanesque eyebrow-shaped cornices that may predate the cornices of Conques exist only in very few places, scattered across France. For most of them, an earlier date relative to Conques is not even secured. Candidates for earlier Romanesque buildings include the churches of Saint-André-de-Sorède near Perpignan (portal, around 1020), Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris (clerestory, 1018-38), Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand in Poitiers (chevet, before 1049), the cathedral of Nevers (western apse, 1028-58), and Arles-sur-Tech near Perpignan (portal, mid-11th century or later).

In total, the radial chapels of Conques look like a height-compressed and slightly simplified copy of the central apse of the Church of St. Simeon in Qal ʿat Sim ʿān. This combination of two rare elements makes the Church of St. Simeon Stylites a much more likely model than Rome, where Syrian arches have not been found.[115]

The radial chapels of Conques also feature shaving consoles or shaving consoles with masks under their roof cornices (Figure 3). In Romanesque art, such ornaments have been known since the early 11th century (Figure 2). Most likely, shaving consoles are a Romanesque evolution of the voluted consoles under the cornices of Graeco-Roman temples. Some Graeco-Roman cornices have ornaments between their consoles, including masks, e.g., in Baalbek. Masks are also known from the antefixes of Greek temples.[116] Lion masks often served as gargoyles at the sima.[117] However, consoles with masks, especially voluted consoles, do not seem to have a pre-Romanesque tradition. So far, the author has identified only two pre-Romanesque buildings with related consoles. Very prominent are the hybrid consoles with volutes and resting lions or bulls at the Roman Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus in Baalbek (Lebanon), located about 300 km south of Qal ʿat Sim ʿān (Figure 35).[118] These consoles did not support the cornice but were used as decoration of the frieze underneath, effectively replacing Doric triglyphs. Such duplication of voluted consoles and lion masks at the entablature and the sima was very unusual. It required a rather large entablature. In fact, hardly any Graeco-Roman temple was as large as the Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus in Baalbek. The other example of masks at the roof cornice is provided by a

[113] Naraschewski, "Bamberg, Conques, and the Hohenstaufen Dynasty," 67–69.
[114] Strube, *Die "Toten Städte,"* 61–67.
[115] The Syrian arches of Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli have such a different use case that an influence on Conques appears to be highly unlikely.
[116] Patrick Schollmeyer, *Handbuch der antiken Architektur*, 2nd ed. (Philipp von Zabern, 2022), 43.
[117] Schollmeyer, *Handbuch der antiken Architektur*, 43; Roland Martin, *Griechenland*, Weltgeschichte der Architektur (Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1987), 82.
[118] Arthur Segal, *Temples and Sanctuaries in the Roman East. Religious Architecture in Syria, Iudaea/Palaestina and Provincia Arabia* (Oxbow Books, 2013), 130.

small mausoleum in Barekamavan (Armenia) from the 3rd to 5th centuries.[119] Its masks also feature bulls and various other animals, suggesting a potential connection to Baalbek. However, due to its much smaller size, the masks are not supported by voluted consoles. The consoles of Conques are somewhat between Baalbek and Barekamavan. Like in Baalbek, the masks of Conques are applied to voluted consoles. However, like in Barekamavan, Conques only shows masks and not entire figures of resting animals. Very similar Romanesque precursors or contemporaries of Conques exist at the chevet of Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand in Poitiers.

The main portal of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites existed at the façade of its south basilica. Instead of a narthex, it had a porch with three pediments, opened to the outside with three portals at the front and one portal at each side (Figure 27).[120] The three frontal portals of the porch led to four rectangular portals of the basilica. Hence, the central portal of the porch led to two rectangular portals of the nave. The west portal of Conques (Figure 26) has striking similarity with the projected appearance of the central portal of the porch of Qalʿat Simʿān, including a portal house with a pediment, lateral columns, a similarly molded large archivolt, and two rectangular portals under the archivolt. Even the relative position of the two rectangular portals is similar. The portal house of Conques is accompanied by two tall blind arches which may refer to the two side portals of Qalʿat Simʿān.

These multiple similarities are truly remarkable since there are no other known precursors of Conques featuring a round-arched portal supported by columns, except for a few portals in Armenia and Georgia.[121] The latter most likely followed the example of Qalʿat Simʿān. As another rare coincidence, archivolts or jambs with convex and concave moldings only have a longer tradition in the Roman Orient. The churches of Qalb Loze and Qalʿat Simʿān as well as possibly some ruined church windows in Baalbek (Figure 33) seem to be the earliest extant Christian buildings with such ornaments. Hence, the coincidence of several elements without western precedence in a new type of portal in Conques is difficult to explain without referring to Syrian models.

The general structure of the west portal of Conques described also applies to its earlier west portals of the transepts and to its walled-up south portal. One can even show that the detailed sequence of tori/rolls and scotiae of the archivolts of the west portal (Figure 28) and the portal of the northern transept (Figure 30) of Conques can be derived from the archivolt of the central south portal of Qalʿat Simʿān (Figure 29). In a similar way, the sequence of convex and concave moldings in the frame of the oculus of the west façade of Conques (Figure 38) corresponds to the moldings of the triumphal arches of the central octagon of Qalʿat Simʿān (Figure 31), while the archivolt of the south portal of Conques has potential models in the windows of Qalb Loze and Baqirha. In the cases described, the archivolts of Conques are a simplification, mostly achieved by eliminating the three fasciae adopted from the Ionic architrave. The churches of northern Syria provide numerous other examples of cornices with convex and concave moldings. But most of them have simpler structures that do not lend themselves as potential models for the archivolts of Conques. Further details are provided in the appendix.

Many cornices of Conques are decorated with square billet moldings (Figure 28).[122] Such moldings do not exist in Qalʿat Simʿān. Nevertheless, the Church of St. Simeon Stylites is one of very few places where at least a precursor of the Romanesque square billet moldings can be found. Apparently, the earliest known example of square billet moldings with secured date exists in the *gazofilatium* (treasury) of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire (around 1004).[123] Since then, square billet moldings have found widespread adoption in Romanesque architecture, mostly around the Loire, in Burgundy, Auvergne, and from the 12th century in the empire. Several known examples predate Conques. Given the typical use of

[119] Jean-Michel Thierry, *Armenien im Mittelalter*, trans. Hermann Goltz (Schnell & Steiner, 2002), 20 f.

[120] Jean-Pierre Sodini and Jean-Luc Biscop, "Qalʿat Semʿan et Deir Semʿan: naissance et développement d'un lieu de pèlerinage durant l'Antiquité tardive," in *Architecture paléochrétienne*, ed. Jean-Michel Spieser, Collection Grèce-Rome-Byzance. Études fribourgeoises d'Histoire, d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Art (Infolio, 2011), 50.

[121] Known precursors existed for example in Tekor, Woskepar, Aruch (Armenia) as well as in Mtskheta and other 10th/11th century churches of Georgia.

[122] The square billet moldings of the portal house of Conques are modern reconstructions. However, similar square billet moldings of Romanesque origin can be found at the radial chapels.

[123] Vergnolle, *Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire*, 27–36.

square billet moldings at the roof cornices or cornices of windows, it is most likely that these moldings were a Romanesque evolution of the dentils of Graeco-Roman temples. The latter were applied in single rows, in contrast to the multi-row billet moldings of Romanesque buildings.

However, there are a handful of cases, where multi-row dentils existed before Conques. All of them have been found in the Eastern Mediterranean at Early Christian sites. Most of them have alternating dentils. One of the portals of the north basilica of Qalʿat Simʿān has double-row dentils at its lintel (Figure 32). An earlier Egyptian tomb stele from the 3rd or 4th centuries shows a nearly identical portal situation as the one of Qalʿat Simʿān.[124] Further examples include undated ruined window frames in Baalbek (Figure 33), potentially from the early 5th century, and double-row dentils at the roof cornices of the S. Astvatsatsin (Mother of God) chapel of the cathedral of Talin in Armenia (Figure 34) from the 7th century. A portal of Qalb Loze even features triple-row dentils, albeit without alternation (Figure 33). Again, if the billet moldings of Conques had any pre-Romanesque models, they must have existed in Qalʿat Simʿān or its wider vicinity, including Baalbek.

The south portal of Conques, now walled up, has unusual decorative balls (stars) in its scotia (Figure 36). Flowers were already used in Greek architecture to decorate the frames of portals, most notably at the Erechtheion in Athens.[125] Architraves or reliefs with sequences of undecorated disks can be found in Egypt and Petra. But these examples are too different to have served as an obvious model for Conques. Given the rather limited pre-Romanesque adoption of archivolts with scotia, it is no surprise that hardly any relevant precursor of the decorative balls of the south portal of Conques can be found. Only, the West Church of Baqirha (490/500), in short walking distance from Qalb Loze, has comparable balls in the scotia of a window (Figure 37). Strikingly, even the moldings of the archivolt of this window are identical with the south portal of Conques, if we again omit the three fasciae.

The large oculi of the transepts and west façade of Conques (Figure 38) have frames with moldings derived from the archivolts of the portals. What looks like a logical choice from today's perspective, was entirely uncommon in ancient and early Romanesque architecture. Decorated frames or jambs of portals already existed in ancient Greek architecture, for example at the porch portal of the Erechtheion.[126] However, there are only very few examples of decorated frames around windows that predate Conques. A certain tradition of such window frames emerged in the late 10th and 11th centuries in Georgia and Armenia. Possibly, Speyer cathedral and Sant'Abbondio in Como provide earlier Romanesque examples. However, a tomb in Deir Simʿān, the monastery of Qalʿat Simʿān, and the ruined East Church of Qalʿat Kalota (492), some 10 km northeast of Qalʿat Simʿān, possess very rare examples of such decorated window frames (Figure 39), surrounding the entire window including its sole bench.[127] A large oculus with a frame, structurally similar to Conques but less evolved, has been found in Shakka in Hauran.[128] Its dating can only be narrowed down to the 3rd to 6th centuries.

Drawings of the 18th century show that the pediments of the east and west basilica of Qalʿat Simʿān had two arched windows with a large oculus above them (Figure 41), very much like the iconic group of windows at the west façade of Conques (Figure 40).[129] Double windows with oculus had a wider tradition in 5th and 6th century Syria. Unfortunately, most examples are only known from historical photographs or drawings. A prominent extant example crowns the apse of the 6th century church of the Monastery of Catherine on the Sinai. Also, the ruins of the East Church of Qalʿat Kalota had such windows, at least until the end of the 20th century. In contrast to these rather simple oculi, the much larger oculus of Qalʿat Simʿān also had a frame, albeit without any moldings.

[124] The stele is now kept at the Museum of Byzantine Art in Berlin, Inv. 4721.
[125] Schollmeyer, *Handbuch der antiken Architektur*, 29.
[126] Schollmeyer, *Handbuch der antiken Architektur*, 29; For another example, see: Martin, *Griechenland*, 43.
[127] For Deir Simʿān see: Strube, *Die "Toten Städte,"* 22.
[128] Klaus Stefan Freyberger, "Heiligtümer aus römischer Zeit in den Dörfern Südsyriens. Einheimische Religion und imperialer Herrscherkult," *Bonner Jahrbücher* 210/211 (2012): 477.
[129] Sodini and Biscop, "Qalʿat Semʿan et Deir Semʿan: naissance et développement d'un lieu de pèlerinage durant l'Antiquité tardive," 44 f.

To conclude, nearly the entire iconic and distinctive decoration of the external façades of Conques can be understood as an adaptation or evolution of the façades of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qalʿat Simʿān. What did not exist there could be found in its immediate vicinity, including Qalb Loze, and in Baalbek. In contrast, no other, still extant precursor exists that would even come close as a potential model for Conques.

On the other hand, all decorative elements discussed were derived from ancient Graeco-Roman architecture. Hence, one needs to consider the possibility that the builders of Conques may have leveraged the same or related ancient models, as the builders of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites did, to arrive at very similar artistic conclusions. Potential common models include the entablatures of Graeco-Roman temples, Roman triumphal arches, Roman wall niches, the bases of Greek and Roman columns or the rectangular portal frames of some 6th century churches. But how likely is it that these geographically scattered models were coincidentally rearranged in the same complex way, especially in view of the extraordinary prominence of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites along the pilgrimage route to the Holy Land? Why would one want to decorate the radial chapels of a church with the elements of a Roman triumphal arch and why would one use columns to decorate portals when no one else has done so within a time frame of more than 1,500 years, taking Qalʿat Simʿān, Qalb Loze and their likely successors in Armenia and Georgia aside? But then, why did the builders of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites and Qalb Loze make such exceptional choices? The latter question can easily be answered. While a column was an expensive architectural commodity for everyone else, it had a special sanctity in Qalb Loze and Qalʿat Simʿān. These were the two most important sanctuaries for the veneration of St. Simeon Stylites. As mentioned before, the entire Church of St. Simeon Stylites was built around his column. For these two sanctuaries, the column had a similar sacred meaning as the Cross had for the Constantinian basilica in Jerusalem. Adopting local models from the pagan past to decorate the churches of St. Simeon most likely was not an aesthetic choice but the consequence of a very special spiritual situation. For the builders of Conques, such a special spiritual situation cannot be claimed. But then, why did they make the same choices other than by following a highly prestigious model from somewhere else?

Another anecdotal observation points in the direction of St. Simeon Stylites as well. There are hardly any Romanesque precursors or contemporaries of Conques featuring engaged half columns or pilasters at apses or radial chapels, let alone stacked half columns or pilasters. The earliest and most relevant of them is the western apse of Trier cathedral (Figure 43). Its construction commenced in 1037 and was completed in 1047, only a few years earlier than Conques.[130] The decoration of the apse of Trier includes stacked pilasters with capitals and Lombard bands. The two rows of pilasters are separated by a cornice. It is commonly assumed that the rows of stacked pilasters followed the local example of the Porta Nigra. But again, why did archbishop Poppo of Babenberg choose to adopt the decoration of a Roman city gate for his new church? The western part of Trier cathedral was built after an extensive pilgrimage of Poppo to the Holy Land, where he was guided by the Greek hermit Simeon.[131] After their return, the later St. Simeon of Trier enclosed himself in the very Porta Nigra to end his life in the footsteps of his spiritual model St. Simeon Stylites. Later, the Porta Nigra was converted into a church dedicated to St. Simeon of Trier. Hence, the only known Romanesque precursor of the stacked half columns of the radial chapels of Conques had an unusual spiritual link to St. Simeon Stylites. Strikingly, an 18th century drawing of the apse of St. Simeon Stylites (Figure 41) also shows a rudimentary precursor of Lombard bands at the roof cornice. Such Lombard bands do not exist at the Porta Nigra.

This section provided extensive evidence for the comprehensive and highly unusual artistic parallels between Conques and the Church of St. Simeon Stylites

[130] Jochen Zink, "Die Baugeschichte des Trierer Domes von den Anfängen im 4. Jahrhundert bis zur letzten Restaurierung," in *Der Trierer Dom*, ed. Franz J. Ronig and Rheinischer Verein für Denkmalpflege und Landschaftsschutz, Jahrbuch 1978/79 (Gesellschaft für Buchdruckerei AG, 1980), 34–40.

[131] Stephanie Haarländer, "Poppo," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 20, ed. Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Duncker & Humblot, 2001).

in Qalʿat Simʿān with the conclusion that the latter likely was an important model of the former. Nevertheless, the question may remain whether an independent creation of these decorations, derived from common models of ancient Graeco-Roman architecture, may have been a valid alternative. To answer this question, it is useful to better understand the pre-Romanesque development history of the decorative elements discussed. A detailed art-historical study of the pre-Romanesque precursors of the groundbreaking round-arched portals and radial chapels of Conques is provided in the appendix.

In fact, it is possible to follow the development of their decorative elements step-by-step. Starting from standard elements of Graeco-Roman and Egyptian architecture, the artistic evolution followed a clearly identifiable trajectory from Alexandria via the Nabataean Kingdom and the Herodian Hauran to North Syria, and from there to Armenia and Georgia. Most of the elements investigated were independently adopted in very few scattered places in the West. But at no other location than Qalʿat Simʿān, the largest church east of Constantinople, did they converge in a way that would make then a credible model for Conques. In addition, the few earlier occurrences of eyebrow-shaped cornices of windows, square billet moldings, and consoles with masks in the West could easily be explained by models in Baalbek. In contrast to Qalʿat Simʿān, Baalbek was located on the road from Antioch to Jerusalem that was presumably used by most pilgrims to the Holy Land.

When considering how the unique south portal of Qalʿat Simʿān resulted from a gradual, rather logical convergence process that lasted about 500 years, one wonders how the builders of Conques could have achieved the same result in one attempt without any knowledge of the considerations that drove the gradual evolution in the East.

Hagia Sophia as potential model for the gallery windows and some decorations

The famous Hagia Sophia in Constantinople is so differently structured from Conques that there was hardly any room for the adoption of its architecture. However, there were more opportunities when it came to its decorative elements. A few of them have nearly unique parallels with Conques.

One of the characteristic elements of the gallery and cloister windows of Conques are their coupled columns (Figure 44). There are no known direct precursors in the West, other than potentially the contemporary examples of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse and Moissac.[132] According to an 18th century drawing, the gallery windows of Saint-Martial in Limoges still had singular columns.[133] The same applies to other early Romanesque churches with galleries, such as Mont-Saint-Michel, Jumièges or Saint-Étienne in Nevers. Early Christian coupled columns exist at the arcade of the rotunda of Santa Constanza in Rome. But it is not evident why these would have been adopted at the gallery windows of Conques. Free-standing coupled columns were also very rare in the Byzantine world. The only prominent example are the coupled columns of the west gallery of Hagia Sophia (Figure 45). The latter was reserved for the empress and her entourage.[134] Strikingly, all known examples of free-standing coupled columns in Rome and Constantinople were associated with empresses, a fact which seems to provide them with special prestige.[135]

Another noteworthy feature of the gallery windows of Conques (Figure 44) are their outer engaged half columns. Mullioned windows with outer engaged (half) columns did not have any known precedence in Roman or Byzantine architecture. Coincidence or not, the presumably only extant ancient relatives are the mullioned portals in the wide arcades of Basilica A in Resafa (Figure 46). Resafa, located near the important traffic route from Antioch to Seleucia, was an important pilgrimage site dedicated to St. Sergios. Basilica A was also built in the late 5th century following the example of

[132] Coupled columns were already known as engaged half-columns supporting blind arches or transverse arches, for example at Santa María del Naranco near Oviedo.
[133] Vergnolle, "Saint-Martial de Limoges," 9.
[134] Mainstone, *Hagia Sophia*, 59–61.
[135] Naraschewski, *Der Bamberger Dom aus kunst- und kulturhistorischer Sicht*, 155 f.

Qalb Loze. Later, several Early Christian reliefs or mosaics showed blind mullioned windows with outer columns pretending the existence of longer arcades. Similar arrangements are known from Carolingian blind arcades. The earliest known mullioned window with outer engaged half columns exists at Santa María del Naranco (around 850) near Oviedo (Figure 47). Its overstretched arches point towards Byzantine or Islamic models. In the 11th century, mullioned gallery windows with outer engaged half columns became a widespread element of French Romanesque architecture. It is remarkable that even this element of Conques has a rare trace leading to the artistic environment of Qalʿat Simʿān. However, in this case, an independent re-creation in Romanesque France may be more likely.

In many Byzantine churches, angels are displayed in the pendentives of the crossing tower, be it as mosaics or frescoes. The Hagia Sophia was a very prominent example, although her angels are seraphim. At San Marco in Venice, regular angels are displayed. It is one of the most unusual elements of Conques that sculptures of angels are positioned in the squinches of the crossing tower (Figure 48), in the same way as the mosaics or frescoes of many Byzantine churches.

Finally, the cloister portal of Conques has an oculus above the mullioned portal at a rather uncommon position (Figure 49). The existence of oculi above double or mullioned windows has Early Christian precursors in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly in Syria. A prominent extant example exists above the apse of the church of St. Catherine's monastery in the Sinai desert. Another more refined example is known from the Asturian church San Miguel de Lillo near Oviedo. In general, oculi were a common element of Carolingian and Ottonian architecture, but not in conjunction with double windows. According to current building research, the earliest extant oculi in the spandrels of mullioned windows with discharging arches may exist at two gallery windows of Gernrode.[136] If their dating is correct, they did not have a lot of succession. In France, Conques seems to be the earliest extant example of an oculus in the spandrel of a mullioned window with discharging arch, precursor of later Gothic windows. The parallel with distant Gernrode (see the discussion on the floor plan above) is another hint that the European use of this motif may have had Byzantine origins. In any case, the rather low position of the oculus of the cloister portal of Conques, between the arches of the mullioned portal, appears unusual and unbalanced when compared to later occurrences. Strikingly, the arcades of the nave of Hagia Sophia have black round-shaped inlays at the same position as the oculi of the cloister portal of Conques.[137] It was already noted that Hagia Sophia possesses some fine examples of basket capitals with wickerwork similar to those in the chevet of Conques, but also similar to those from the Holy Land.

The parallels with Hagia Sophia are weaker than the earlier cases discussed. But they also contribute to the overall picture of a significant number of unusual elements of Conques that can most naturally be explained by Byzantine influences.

Panagia Chalkeon as representative of the latest trends in Byzantine architecture

One of the characteristic features of Conques is the rich articulation of its external façades. Apart from the application of engaged (half) columns and moldings, that were discussed in a previous section, the walls have a distinctive articulation through various stepped profiles (Figure 50). The stepped profiles of its windows hardly had any precedence in French Romanesque architecture and can be considered a hallmark of Conques. One of the rare precursors is provided by the rotunda of Saint-Bénigne in Dijon, only known through various 18th century drawings.[138] The stepped profiles of the portals of the transepts of Conques were adorned with columns (see above), thereby paving the way for later portals of Romanesque and Gothic architecture. One of the few, if not the only earlier example of a Romanesque portal with

[136] Wolfgang Erdmann et al., "Neue Untersuchungen an der Stiftskirche Gernrode," in *Diethard von Winterfeld. Meisterwerke mittelalterlicher Architektur. Beiträge und Biographie eines Bauforschers: Festgabe für Dethard von Winterfeld zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Ute Engel et al. (Schnell & Steiner, 2003), 144–53.

[137] Mainstone, *Hagia Sophia*, 42, 192.

[138] Mélinda Bizri, "La rotonde à travers ses représentations iconographiques," in *La rotonde de Saint-Bénigne. 1000 ans d'histoire*, ed. Musée Archéologique de Dijon (Faton Éditions, 2025).

a stepped jamb profile is provided by the west portal of Speyer cathedral. In addition, the west façade and west towers of Conques have several blind arcades framing windows with stepped profiles, thereby creating a particularly pronounced three-dimensional appearance.

It can be assumed that the stepped profiles of Conques have their origins in the blind arcades of the late Roman architecture of Trier and Ravenna from the 4th to 6th centuries. While these blind arcades provide the walls with a stepped profile, the steps are not linked to the windows. Only in rare cases, when the blind arcades were subject to space constraints, such as at the lantern tower of San Vitale or the clerestory of Sant'Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna, was the impression of a stepped window profile created. Possibly already in the 10th or early 11th centuries, the mullioned windows of various bell towers of Ravenna had stepped profiles. The windows of the rotunda of Saint-Bénigne, mentioned above, are of the same type. Hence, a certain influence of Ravenna on Conques may be conjectured. However, the shallow and narrow stepped frames of the windows of Ravenna and Dijon are far from the deep multi-step articulation of the façades of Conques.

Instead, such profound articulation corresponded to the latest trends in Middle Byzantine architecture. In previous centuries, the concepts of Ravenna were further developed in Constantinople. For example, the Myrelaion from the 920s (Figure 53) exhibits a rich articulation of its façades via massive, engaged half columns made of bricks. The early 11th century saw a significant amount of further innovation in Byzantine architecture. Leading churches which spearheaded these innovations include Hosios Loukas near Delphi, the Church of Panagia Chalkeon in Thessaloniki, the Daphni monastery near Athens, and Nea Moni on the island of Chios. In our analysis, Panagia Chalkeon is chosen as a representative since it is conveniently located on the pilgrimage route to the Holy Land described. It also is the most relevant of them for the understanding of Conques. The Church of Panagia Chalkeon (Figure 51) was completed in 1028, only a few years before work on the chevet of Conques commenced.[139] During the initial construction phase of Conques, Panagia Chalkeon was the most recent of the innovative buildings of Middle Byzantine architecture.

Apart from the fact that Panagia Chalkeon is one of the earliest extant churches of the cross-in-square type, it is notable for introducing multi-stepped blind arches around its windows. With them, the façade acquired a significantly more three-dimensional appearance than in Ravenna or in Early Byzantine architecture. Similar trends are visible at the other innovative churches of this period. The frames of Panagia Chalkeon are the most extensive of them. Later, blind arches and window frames with multi-stepped profiles became a common element of Byzantine architecture.

Arguably, the most prominent of the blind arches of Conques is the shield-like frame around the double windows and the oculus of its west façade (Figure 40). This framed group of windows strongly resembles the transepts of Panagia Chalkeon (Figure 51) which are rather unique with that respect.

Panagia Chalkeon also provides evidence that the artistic dynamics along the investigated pilgrimage route must have been bidirectional. It displays pronounced features of Romanesque architecture that have no notable precedence in Byzantine architecture. The domes above the western corner rooms and their elevated bases create the unusual impression of a Romanesque westwork with a twin-towered façade. In contrast to most other cross-in-square churches, the cruciform floor plan is clearly visible from the outside. To emphasize this impression, the transepts and the east façade are accentuated by decorative pediments that protrude from the low-slope roofs above the barrel vaults of the naos. The west façade of Conques has a rather similar configuration (Figure 40). Finally, the crossing tower of Panagia Chalkeon has two stories, rather resembling the elongated towers of Carolingian tradition than its single-story Byzantine brethren. Possibly, such unusual western influences can be explained by the fact that the founder of Panagia Chalkeon was a military leader in southern Italy where he may have come into contact with western architecture or western craftsmen.[140]

[139] Anna Tsitouridou, *The Church of the Panagia Chalkeon*, Guides of the Institute for Balkan Studies 7 (Institute for Balkan Studies, 1985), 7–9.

[140] Tsitouridou, *The Church of the Panagia Chalkeon*, 10.

Further evidence for Byzantine origins of the stepped profiles of Conques is provided by the apses of Santa Fosca in Torcello and San Marco in Venice.[141] Both were important churches in the lagoon of Venice, the latter with close ties to Constantinople. Presumably, these apses were built during the extended construction phase of Conques. They feature polygonal apses with blind arcades that have the same stepped profiles as Panagia Chalkeon. Santa Fosca even has a blind arcade with engaged columns, comparable to the blind arcade of the apse of Conques.

Panagia Chalkeon also possesses one of only three relevant Byzantine visualizations of the Last Judgment from the 11th century, together with the already mentioned monastery of Stoudios in Constantinople and with Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello.[142] The latter is adjacent to Santa Fosca. This point constitutes another rare coincidence and will be discussed later.

Potential Byzantine or Islamic models for the crossing tower

The crossing tower of Conques has two characteristic features that were unusual in Romanesque architecture. It was one of the earliest octagonal crossing towers with squinches in the West (Figure 48), albeit not the earliest. Likely, the original crossing tower was a single-story lantern tower instead of the current two-story tower (Figure 42). Being a lantern tower, it provides the interior of the church with unusually bright lighting, one of the key factors of the special charm of Conques. These elements also have their origins in the Eastern Mediterranean and were characteristic elements of Byzantine and Islamic architecture.

The earliest form of crossing tower was rectangular, as can be seen at the so-called mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna. The same holds for crossing towers in Visigothic Spain and in Carolingian France, such as the tower of Germigny-des-Prés. Later, rectangular crossing towers became a characteristic feature of Norman architecture. In contrast, Byzantine architecture used round crossing towers with pendentives, following the precedence of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. The creation of round crossing towers and pendentives was enabled by the brick masonry of Byzantine architecture which facilitated the creation of fluid surfaces.

In contrast, the architecture of the Orient, from the Caucasus via Cilicia and Syria to the Holy Land, was rather based on ashlar masonry. Therefore, crossing towers of the Orient tended to be octagonal having squinches. Polygonal crossing towers with squinches can be found in Georgia, Armenia, and Syria. Precursors from the 5th and 6th centuries are known from the Church of St. Simeon Stylites and from Cappadocia and Cilicia.[143] The church of St. Simeon Stylites had precursors of squinches on the ground floor, as described above.[144] Arguably, the most influential octagonal crossing tower with squinches still exists at the Ummayad mosque of Damascus, which replaced the earlier Basilica of St. John the Baptist (Figure 52). The Ummayad mosque was built around 715, still based on Byzantine construction techniques. As the primary mosque of the Ummayad dynasty, its architectural influence rapidly spread within the Islamic world, even reaching North Africa and al-Andalus in Spain. The Great Mosque of Córdoba from the 10th century has an octagonal crossing tower too. The same applies to the former mosque El Cristo de la Luz in Toledo from the same period. However, the latter two crossing towers are supported by interlaced arches rather than by squinches.

In the West, octagonal crossing towers with squinches seem to have been introduced only in the last decades of the 11th century. Apparently, the earliest still extant example is the crossing tower of Sant Vicenç in Cardona in Catalonia. It dates from 1040 or a little later. The irregular octagon of Sant Vicenç constitutes an intermediate state between a rectangle and a regular octagon. Some of the next octagonal towers with squinches presumably were built at San Martín in Frómista and San Pedro in Loarre. Others that are earlier

[141] Gianna Suitner-Nicolini, *Romanisches Venetien mit Südtirol* (Zodiaque-Echter, 1994), 54, 99.

[142] Another less relevant example originates from the Sinai desert.

[143] The churches from Cilicia and Cappadocia include the Red Church in Sivrihisar and the Alahan monastery. Ousterhout, *Eastern Medieval Architecture*, 180 f., 237.

[144] Sodini and Biscop, "Qalʿat Semʿan et Deir Semʿan: naissance et développement d'un lieu de pèlerinage durant l'Antiquité tardive," 47 f.

than or contemporary with Conques existed at San Nazaro in Brolo in Milan, Toulouse, Santiago de Compostela, Cluny III, Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe, and Nevers, to name some of the most important ones. Their relative dating is uncertain. The geographic locations of Cardona in Catalonia, Frómista in Castile, and Loarre in Aragon suggest that the octagonal crossing tower may have been imported from Islamic Spain, potentially after the reconquest of Toledo in 1085. But the only extant octagonal tower of Toledo has interlaced arches instead of squinches. Be it as it may, octagonal crossing towers with squinches can be considered a reference to Eastern Mediterranean architecture if we count the Islamic architecture of Spain as Eastern Mediterranean in origin.

In contrast to earlier crossing towers of Southern France, the crossing tower of Conques was a lantern tower flooding the interior of the church with light (Figure 48). The earliest rectangular crossing towers, as mentioned above, did not have windows or only very small ones. Later, rectangular crossing towers from Normandy had better lighting, albeit only from windows at a high level above the nave due to the steep roofs of their nave and transepts.

In Byzantine architecture, windows were already inserted into the dome of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. They were the starting point for the development of single-story lantern towers as a key concept of Byzantine architecture. The trend towards lantern towers became firmly established with the introduction of churches of the cross-in-square type. The Myrelaion in Constantinople from around 920 is a perfect example (Figure 53). Consistently, the octagonal crossing towers of the Ummayad mosque in Damascus and many of their successors in North Africa or Spain as well as the crossing tower from Frómista were single-story lantern towers too. Hence, the imported concept of an octagonal crossing tower with squinches often went hand in hand with a single-story lantern tower.

In contrast, most Romanesque crossing towers from south of the Loire developed into a different direction. In line with Carolingian traditions, these crossing towers could become quite tall. The late medieval crossing tower of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse provides an extraordinary example of that sort. In most cases, the crossing was covered by a dome or roof which was the basis of a multi-story crossing tower that often served as bell tower. The crossing towers of Cluny III, Paray-le-Monial, and Saint-Sernin in Toulouse are good examples with that respect. Even the additional barlongs between nave and crossing tower, a hallmark of Auvergnatic architecture, were not used to flood the church with light. Therefore, many southern Romanesque churches can be quite dark. Literally, Conques is a shining counterexample from that perspective.

But apart from being a lantern tower, the crossing tower of Conques is unusual since it appears that the original tower may have been a single-story tower. The current second story of the crossing tower was only built in the second half of the 15th century.[145] There is no evidence that it replaced an earlier second story.[146] In fact, the attached staircase tower, which ascends from the galleries to the second story of the crossing tower, does not exhibit the same consistency in its ashlar masonry as the first story of the tower (Figure 42). Some of the stones appear to be original, but most aren't. If an original second story had collapsed, why would it have destroyed the rather solid staircase tower while leaving the more fragile walls of the first story entirely intact? If the second story hadn't collapsed, why was it necessary to entirely rebuild it to add a new vaulting?

Certainly, several questions remain. But at least in its current state, there is no reliable evidence for the existence of a fully developed second story in the 12th century. The current physical evidence rather points towards the existence of an original crossing tower that was both a lantern tower and a single-story tower, very much in line with Byzantine tradition.

On a side note, it was only possible to erect the crossing tower of Conques as a lantern tower with windows slightly above the crossing because the roofs above the barrel vaults have a low gradient. As consequence, the steep gable of the west façade of Conques only has a decorative function. This situation is very similar to Panagia Chalkeon, as discussed before.

[145] Vergnolle et al., "Conques, Sainte-Foy. L'abbatiale romane," 77.

[146] Personal communication by Lei Huang.

Euphrasian basilica in Poreč as potential model for a charming detail

Arguably, the most charming detail of the iconography of Conques are the small angels in the archivolt of the west portal. They hold a scroll using this opportunity to catch a glimpse of the scenery in the tympanum of the Last Judgment (Figure 54). In more abstract terms, they constitute personifications of curiosity. While there is an extended tradition in Romanesque art of depicting personifications of virtues and vices following the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius, curiosity was not one of them. So far, only one earlier depiction of curiosity has been found at a building. At the apse mosaic of the Euphrasian basilica in Poreč, a secret observer peeks out from behind a veil to watch the scene of the Visitation (Figure 55). In early Christian and Byzantine tradition, veils were often attached between the columns of arcades or at doors. Prominent examples are displayed at the mosaics of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo and San Vitale in Ravenna. The idea of depicting a secret observer behind a veil would provide a rather natural motivation for the unusual small angels of Conques. We do not know how common the motif of a secret observer was in Byzantine art. At least, a Carolingian ivory from the end of the 8th century shows a similar scene, also including the Annunciation and Visitation.[147] However, given the close relations of Charlemagne to Ravenna, it is quite possible that it was created after the model of nearby Poreč.

Byzantine iconographic elements in the tympanum of the Last Judgment

Overall, the iconography of the famous tympanum of the Last Judgment of Conques followed Carolingian models, as will be concluded later. However, several of its iconographic elements point towards Byzantine origins. The most important of them, the Bosom of Abraham and the Weighing of Souls by archangel Michael, did not require a voyage to Constantinople to be adopted. They are prominently featured on the wall mosaic of the Last Judgment of Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello. Whether the representation of the Virgin Mary without St. John the Baptist in Conques can be read as a truncated deesis will have to remain open. More details regarding these elements will be provided later.

However, it shall be noted that the very concept of a sculpted tympanum in a round-arched portal comes from the Eastern Mediterranean.[148] The earliest extant tympanum of that kind exists in Ephesus (Figure 83), at the so-called Temple of Hadrian (114-18). The woman in the low relief of the lunette was likely associated with Artemis.[149] However, it is unknown whether medieval travelers to Ephesus still were able to see the relief in its original place. In Georgia and Armenia, sculpted tympana with Christian iconography can already be found in the late 6th and early 7th centuries, for example near Mtskheta and in Mren. In contrast, sculpted tympana did not have a tradition in Byzantine art, possibly as a consequence of iconoclasm. Thereafter, lunettes of round-arched portals sometimes were decorated with figured mosaics, two of the most prominent being the Imperial Gate mosaic and the founders' mosaic of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople from the late 9th or early 10th and from the late 10th or early 11th centuries respectively.[150]

The tympanum of Conques includes two additional iconographic elements that are quite unusual. They were not part of any standardized iconography of the Last Judgment. These are the prostrated Sainte-Foy interceding with God, her hands in prayer, and Charlemagne led to Christ by the hand (Figure 60). These representations hardly had any precedence and succession in Romanesque art. It is postulated here that they may have referred to Byzantine court ceremonies.

The *proskynesis*, a ritualized form of prostration fitting with the representation of Sainte-Foy in Conques,

[147] The ivory is associated with the Ada group. In 1926, it was kept by the Musée des Arts décoratifs et industriels in Brussels. Adolph Goldschmidt, *Die Elfenbeinskulpturen aus der Zeit der karolingischen und sächsischen Kaiser, VIII. - XI. Jahrhundert* (Cassirer, 1926), 1:9, Tafel II, doi:10.11588/diglit.23832.

[148] Sculpted tympana of the triangular pediments of temples existed already in the 5th century BC in Greece, e.g., at the Parthenon in Athens, and later in Roman architecture.

[149] Ursula Quatember, *Der sogenannte Hadrianstempel an der Kuretenstraße. Textband*, ed. Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut, with Hans Taeuber, Forschungen in Ephesos, XI/3 (Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2017), 29, 100.

[150] Mainstone, *Hagia Sophia*, 29–35.

was a standard element of Byzantine court ceremonies, raising eyebrows with western ambassadors. Everyone but the emperor was subject to it. Therefore, it did not have any pejorative connotation. The mentioned Imperial Gate mosaic of Hagia Sophia and a 10th century Byzantine ivory even show an emperor and a church founder in *proskynesis* before Christ and the Virgin.[151] Prostration as demonstrative form of submission was also known in the West. One of the best known examples relates to Henry IV in Canossa. But, as demonstrated by this example, it had a connotation of defeat and penance. Both are not qualities that one would associate with the representation of a patron saint like Sainte-Foy.

There are also indications that Byzantine court ceremonies required ambassadors or officials, that were to be promoted, to be led to the emperor by some form of physical contact.[152] Liutprand of Cremona explicitly describes how he had to lean on the shoulders of two eunuchs while being led to the emperor in their first encounter.[153] The nearly exclusive occurrence of the representation of Charlemagne in Conques as being led by the hand, may suggest that such a motion was not common practice in western court ceremonies.[154]

Absence of prominent west towers and of a crypt

In contrast to Byzantine architecture, bell towers have a long tradition in the West. The earliest documented example existed at the abbey church of Saint-Martin in Tours from the 6th century.[155] Bell towers proliferated in Carolingian and Capetian times based on the prominent examples of the bell tower in the atrium of Old-St. Peter in Rome and the assumed twin-towered façades of Saint-Denis and Cluny II.[156] The tall westwork of the Palatine Chapel of Charlemagne in Aachen was a prominent precursor of later porch towers. In the 11th century, nearly every Romanesque church with serious ambition was embellished with one or two prominent bell towers. All competitors of Conques had at least a porch tower, if not a twin-towered façade.[157] The robust substructures of the narthex of Conques suggest that a prominent twin-towered façade was originally planned.[158] For whatever reason, only an unassuming turret at the northwestern corner of the nave was executed (Figure 56). The current twin towers are fictitious reconstructions of the 19th century (Figure 1). The prominence of the original turret relative to the gable is so low that it does not reward the name tower. Even the rather small southwestern tower of Saint-Philibert in Tournus has significantly more prominence. In the literature on Conques, it has been speculated that a second turret may have existed but was destroyed by the fire of 1586, caused by the Wars of Religion.[159] But there is no proof substantiating such a speculation.

As mentioned earlier, Conques also does not have a westwork in the Carolingian sense, at least not the massive form of the second half of the 9th century that is still visible in many places such as in Corvey.[160] These later westworks, with an era extending far into the Salian period, were compartmentalized at ground floor level with staircase access to the gallery above.[161] The gallery was liturgically connected with the ground floor due to its purpose of enabling the *laus perennis* for those buried or venerated at ground floor level.[162] In other cases, the upper floor served as a chapel dedicated to St. Michael, as in nearby Bessuéjouls. Apparently, the earlier abbey church of Conques had such a westwork with a presumed porch tower.[163]

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[151] For the ivory: Bayerisches Nationalmuseum München, Inv. MA 162.
[152] Nigel Westbrook, *The Great Palace in Constantinople. An Architectural Interpretation*, Architectural Crossroads. Studies in the History of Architecture, ed. Lex Bosman, vol. 2 (Brepols Publishers, 2019), 98.
[153] Liutprand von Cremona, *Antapodosis* (n.d.), VI, 5.
[154] Further examples are known from Basel and Bamberg. Both representations are believed to have been inspired by Conques.
[155] Lelong, *La basilique Saint-Martin*, 15 f.; Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture*, 39 f.
[156] Naraschewski, *Der Bamberger Dom aus kunst- und kulturhistorischer Sicht*, 29–35.
[157] This applies to the other so-called 'pilgrimage churches' in Tours, Limoges, and Santiago de Compostela. The westwork of Saint-Sernin in Toulouse was only completed in the 20th century. Mozac, a likely model for the sculpture of Conques, also has a single west tower that is based on a Carolingian westwork. Aurillac and Figeac do no longer exist or have been substantially modified.
[158] Huang, "Memory between Tradition and Modernity," 68.
[159] Vergnolle et al., "Conques, Sainte-Foy. L'abbatiale romane," 79.
[160] Skalecki, "Turris occidentalis. Das Phänomen des Westbaues in der karolingischen Architektur. Teil 2."
[161] Huang, "Memory between Tradition and Modernity," 68–70.
[162] Skalecki, "Turris occidentalis. Das Phänomen des Westbaues in der karolingischen Architektur. Teil 2," 9.
[163] Ivan Foletti et al., "In the Valley: Geographical Context and Origins of the Abbey," in *Conques Across Time: Inventions and Reinventions (9th-21st Centuries)*, ed. Ivan Foletti and Adrien Palladino, with Martin F. Lešák, Convivia 6 (Viella, Masaryk University Press, 2025), 97.

In contrast, the current west section of Conques is organized in an entirely different way. The side aisles of Conques are accessible from the "westwork", or rather narthex, like in most Early Christian or Byzantine churches. The narthex of the monastery of Stoudios in Constantinople provides a good example. In a very unusual way, the staircases to the galleries of Conques are inserted in the side aisles. Comparable Byzantine buildings, like the monastery of Stoudios, did not have integrated staircases at all. The access to their galleries was achieved through wooden staircases attached to the building from outside. Hence, instead of a Carolingian westwork, Conques has a classic Early Byzantine narthex with a gallery. For example, the disposition of the narthex of Conques is structurally identical to Panagia Chalkeon, including a central west portal followed by three portals from the narthex to the naos or nave.[164]

To conclude, apart from its one or maybe two unassuming turrets, the steep decorative gable seems to be the only concession of Conques to the impressive west façades of other Romanesque churches. Hence, the absence of prominent bell towers and a Carolingian westwork is an unusual feature of Conques that is more in line with Byzantine than with Carolingian or Romanesque traditions.

Likewise, Conques does not have a crypt. Ever since the invention of the crypt at Old-St. Peter in Rome, many prominent churches of the West had crypts to venerate the tomb or the relics of a patron saint, in case such relics existed. Admittedly, Conques did not have the tomb of an important saint or martyr, but it established a significant veneration of the relics of Sainte-Foy. In western tradition, it would have been natural to position them in a crypt. In contrast, Byzantine tradition rarely uses the concept of a crypt. Shrines were often positioned on the ground floor, like the tomb of Jesus in the center of the Anastasis. At least, this was the case for the memorial churches of the Holy Sepulchre, St. Simeon Stylites, and the Holy Apostles. One may argue that the underground of Conques may have posed an impediment to building a crypt. But given the massive earthwork that was needed to make space for the church, a crypt should have been only a minor complication.[165]

Hence, even the absence of two characteristic features of western churches may provide hints of a deliberate adherence to Byzantine traditions. Certainly, these traces are not as prominent as some of the explicit similarities discussed above. But they further add to the list of unusual features that can be most naturally explained by Byzantine influences.

The Majesty of Sainte-Foy as a three-dimensional icon

The absence of a crypt went hand in hand with the veneration of the Majesty of Sainte-Foy and her relics in the apse. This highly unusual body reliquary constituted a significant disruption of established religious practices, as was documented by Bernard of Angers about twenty years before the start of the construction of the current abbey church. The way how Bernard describes the theological dispute and its outcome, the "veneration" of a three-dimensional icon in the sanctuary, very much resembles the disputes of Byzantine iconoclasm and the later central role of icons in the Eastern Orthodox church, including the dominant use of gold on such icons. In both cases, the main theological justification for prominently demonstrating an icon was that the veneration was not directed to the icon itself but to the holy person displayed, the Virgin with the child or Sainte-Foy.

It was shown by Taralon and Taralon-Carlini that the head of the Majesty of Sainte-Foy was an ancient spolia portraying a Roman emperor of the late 4th or early 5th century, such as Valentinian I or Honorius.[166] Busts of emperors of this period were found both in the western and the eastern part of the former Roman Empire. Hence, the provenience of this bust remains uncertain. However, its use demonstrates a deliberate allusion to the Roman Empire. At the assumed creation of the full-body figure of Sainte-Foy in the late 10th century, the cultural view of the Ottonian rulers of the empire was firmly directed towards their peers in Constantinople. The use of such an imperial bust is consistent with the

[164] Tsitouridou, *The Church of the Panagia Chalkeon*, 10–14.
[165] Huang and Sparhubert, "Building the Abbey Church," 153 f.
[166] Jean Taralon and Dominique Taralon-Carlini, *La Majesté d'or de Sainte Foy de Conques*, Bulletin Monumental 155 (Société française d'archéologie, 1997), 1:11–73.

overall representation of the Majesty of Sainte-Foy as a male ruler. Such masculinization of empresses or women, or rather the androgynization of men and women, was typical for the early Christian art of the 5th to 7th century.[167] Prominent examples are the mosaics of Justinian and Theodora of San Vitale in Ravenna. Apparently, such practice remained relevant in the Byzantine empire for much longer, as can be seen in the joint coronation images of emperor Otto II and empress Theophanu as well as of emperor Henry II and empress Cunigunde from the late 10th and early 11th centuries which were created under strong Byzantine influence.[168] Earlier and later portraits of western kings or emperors most often did not even include their wives.

Despite her Carolingian crown, the full-body figure of the Majesty of Sainte-Foy and the unusual way of its veneration constitute a more natural fit to the Ottonian-Byzantine culture of the time of its creation than to earlier Carolingian traditions that were still prevalent in northern France.

Traces of the treasury to the Byzantine world

Finally, the rich treasury of Conques contains several objects of Byzantine or Far Eastern origin. Arguably, the most important of them is the 10th century Byzantine silk shroud in which the skull of Sainte-Foy was wrapped.[169] Another piece of fabric is believed to come from Persia. Some of the enamels may be of Byzantine origin too, while others were local copies of Byzantine models.[170]

There are multiple indications that the reconquest of Jerusalem in 1099 refocused the attention of Conques on Jerusalem. In 1100, abbot Bégon III received relics of the True Cross from Pope Paschal II. Bégon had pieces of them placed in several reliquaries that he commissioned from regional artisans or that he had received as a gift.[171] The so-called Reliquary of Pope Paschal II seems to include graphical representations of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with the Basilica of Constantine and the Anastasis. Similarly, the shape of the so-called Lantern of Bégon, another reliquary, resembles the aedicula of the Holy Sepulchre. The treasury of Conques also includes a so-called Jerusalem cross, another True Cross reliquary, most likely from the third quarter of the 12th century.[172] It is believed to have been sent by the Canons Regular of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem indicating direct relations of Conques with them.

Conques as a medieval „Neo-Byzantine" project

By applying a novel method of Analytical Humanities, as described in the appendix, it is shown that the abbey church of Sainte-Foy in Conques features 25 rather unusual architectural or decorative elements or sets of elements that have no or only very limited precedence in the architecture of the West. Instead, it was shown that each of them had natural precursors in the Byzantine culture. More specifically, models for all analyzed elements could have been found along a natural pilgrimage route to the Holy Land. In return, each of the most prominent Byzantine buildings on this pilgrimage route seems to have left characteristic traces in Conques. This overall picture is astonishingly consistent. The significant number of investigated elements hardly leaves any statistical room for an independent invention in Conques.

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[167] Ivan Foletti, "Sainte Foy as Sacred Focus," in *Conques Across Time: Inventions and Reinventions (9th-21st Centuries)*, ed. Ivan Foletti and Adrien Palladino, with Martin F. Lešák, Convivia 6 (Viella, Masaryk University Press, 2025), 119–22; See also Kris N. Racaniello, "A Translike Object? Composing the Majesty of Sainte Foy and Staging Gender," in *Entangled Histories at Conques. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on a Unique Site of Medieval Heritage*, Convivium Supplementum 15 (Brepols Publishers, 2024).

[168] For example, these can be found at an ivory of the late 10th century (Paris, Musée de Cluny, Cl. 392) and in the Pericopes of Henry II of the early 11th century (München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 4452, fol. 2r).

[169] Cynthia J. Hahn, "The Treasury Reconsidered: Renewal and Incorporation," in *Conques Across Time: Inventions and Reinventions (9th-21st Centuries)*, ed. Ivan Foletti and Adrien Palladino, with Martin F. Lešák, Convivia 6 (Viella, Masaryk University Press, 2025), 264 f.

[170] *Byzantine Echoes in "Romanesque" France: Textiles, Enamels & Modern Myths*, directed by Adrien Palladino, 2024, Slovanský Ústav Akademie věd ČR, 21:13, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xUplZ1Q6dIQ.

[171] Adrian Bremenkamp, "Conques, Rome, Jerusalem, and Barbastro: The True Cross and a Global Treasury Around 1100," in *Conques Across Time: Inventions and Reinventions (9th-21st Centuries)*, ed. Ivan Foletti and Adrien Palladino, with Martin F. Lešák, Convivia 6 (Viella, Masaryk University Press, 2025), 303–13.

[172] Bremenkamp, "Conques, Rome, Jerusalem, and Barbastro," 313–15.

This finding permits us to conclude that the builders of Conques deliberately tried to set them apart from their regional competitors by adding a distinct (Early) Byzantine flavor to an otherwise advanced but not groundbreaking Romanesque building. It is therefore justified to describe the construction of the abbey church of Conques as a medieval „Neo-Byzantine" project.

More strikingly, the observed relationships allow the speculation that the builders of Conques may have intended to create specific references to the most extraordinary buildings of the Eastern Mediterranean. It was already discussed that the chevet of Conques can be interpreted as deliberate reference to the outstanding chevets of Saint-Martin in Tours and Cluny II. Given the undoubted aspirations of the monks of Conques to establish themselves as a pre-eminent pilgrimage destination, what would have been a more apparent and more ambitious aspiration than to quote the three most important pilgrimage destinations of the Eastern Mediterranean?

In this sense, the chevet, transepts, and nave of Conques can be read as an image of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The specifics of the cruciform floor plan would have been a reference to the Basilica of St. John the Apostle in Ephesus, most likely also to the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. The east and west façades of Conques with their famous portals would have been copies of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qal ʿat Sim ʿān. Potentially, also the octagonal crossing tower referred to the latter. Finally, some important decorative details would refer to Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Thereby, the new abbey church would not only have referred to the two most important churches of its time in France but also to the five most important churches in the Byzantine empire. Some additional adoptions from Byzantine architecture would only have underlined the ambition of Conques to reach beyond their peers in creating a groundbreaking church and a highly attractive pilgrimage destination.

The available data does not permit us to draw conclusions about individual models of Conques with statistical confidence. But the interpretation above would very much be in line with general preferences of the 10th and 11th centuries. Already around 825, the monks of Reichenau Abbey were in the possession of a pilgrimage report with a rather accurate floor plan of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, at least as far as the Anastasis is concerned (Figure 5).[173] Later in the 9th century, a copy of the Anastasis was built at St. Michael in Fulda and a rotunda at Saint-Germain in Auxerre.[174] In the last three quarters of the 10th century and in the first quarter of the 11th century, rotundas or a copy of the Holy Sepulchre were built in Reichenau, Constance, St. Gall, and Dijon.[175] Historical sources and excavations suggest that even the earlier abbey church of Conques had a rotunda next to its apse.[176] The rotunda of Reichenau Abbey was initiated by the acquisition of a relic of the Holy Blood from the Byzantine empire. The bishop of Constance had personally undertaken a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Monks from Reichenau are known to have traveled to Jerusalem several times in the 11th century. There are indications that Conques was already connected with Reichenau Abbey and St. Gall in the 9th and 10th century. At least, such a connection is very likely in the second half of the 11th century, as will be demonstrated later.

A particularly high propensity for the recreation of important buildings is proven for the years between 1025-50, at least as far as the empire is concerned. In this period, the nearly only known copies of the Palatine Chapel of Charlemagne in Aachen were created in Nijmegen, Goslar, Ottmarsheim, Essen, Wimpfen, Groningen, and Bamberg.[177] In 1033, the bishop of Paderborn sent a monk to the Holy Land to measure the dimensions of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.[178] Allegedly, the so-called *Jerusalemkirche* (later Busdorf church) in Paderborn was built according to these measurements. However, archaeological evidence suggests that it rather was a size-reduced and simplified

[173] Untermann, "Ein Kloster, sieben Kirchen," 126.
[174] The current rotunda was built in the late 11th century. But the existence of a Carolingian rotunda above the extant crypt is described in historic sources. Notker Baumann et al., *Michaelskirche Fulda*, Kunstführer 2973 (Schnell & Steiner, 2023), 4–17.
[175] Untermann, "Ein Kloster, sieben Kirchen," 125.
[176] Foletti et al., "In the Valley," 97–99.
[177] Walter Burandt, *Die Baugeschichte der Alten Hofhaltung in Bamberg* (Bayerische Verlagsanstalt, 1998), 183–87.
[178] Günther Binding, *Die Michaeliskirche in Hildesheim und Bischof Bernward als "sapiens architectus"* (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2013), 245.

copy of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites.[179] In the same year, the bishop of Elne in medieval Catalonia undertook a pilgrimage to the Holy Land with the documented consequence that he had the apse of his new cathedral decorated with a blind arcade emulating the Anastasis of the Holy Sepulchre.[180] Likewise, the rotunda of Neuvy-Saint-Sépulchre from the mid-11th century allegedly goes back to a pilgrimage to the Holy Land from 1027.

The second half of the 10th century and first half of the 11th centuries also were a period of intense adoption of Byzantine architectural elements in the empire. Prominent examples include Gernrode, St. Pantaleon in Cologne, the (former) cathedrals of Bamberg and Trier, St. Michael in Hildesheim, and the westwork of Reichenau Abbey. This trend lasted until the groundbreaking cathedral of Speyer (Speyer I) temporarily narrowed the architectural focus of the empire down to the style of Ravenna or Burgundy.

Hence, the period, in which the blueprint for the construction of Conques was designed and its ground floor was built, was the apex of an era in which the most extraordinary churches were imitated and Byzantine decorative elements were adopted. The first half of the 11th century was a period of significant disruption in French Romanesque architecture too. However, the sources of its inspiration are less evident.

There is also no doubt that pilgrimage to the Holy Land was a relevant social phenomenon in the area around Conques. A historic source mentions the presence of 700 pilgrims from Aquitaine, Normandy, and Germany in Jerusalem during the year of 1027.[181] More specifically, Jotsald of Sainte-Claude attributes the establishment of the feast of All Souls' Day in the order of Cluny, instituted in the first half of the 11th century, to a pilgrim's account of an alleged encounter with purgatory on Sicily, when returning from Jerusalem. According to Jotsald, the monk came from the area of Rodez.[182]

After a pilgrimage to the Holy Land from 1053, Odile de Morlhon founded in Villeneuve d'Aveyron, about 50 km southwest of Conques, the church of Saint-Sépulchre (today Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Paul).[183] Around 1070, it was donated to the Cluniac abbey of Moissac. The church had the plan of a rotonda with four inserted columns and three apsidioles, obviously mimicking the Anastasis of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.[184] The rotonda of Villeneuve d'Aveyron was built at the same time as the radial chapels and the lower parts of Sainte-Foy in Conques. It provides independent proof that the idea of copying prestigious churches, visited during pilgrimages to the Holy Land, was a historic reality in the cultural environment of Conques.

Whether the monks of Conques really intended to copy specific buildings will remain subject to debate. However, little doubt seems to exist that their abbey church was highly influenced by Early Byzantine architecture from the Eastern Mediterranean.

[179] The cruciform Jerusalemkirche consisted of an octagon with four rectangular annexes. Apparently, Gregor of Nyssa (Cappadocia) already intended to build a similar size-reduced precursor of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in the last quarter of the 4th century. Rudolf Wesenberg, "Wino von Helmarshausen und das kreuzförmige Oktogon," sec. 1, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* (München, Berlin) 12 (1949): 30–32, https://doi.org/10.2307/1481228.

[180] Escarra, *L'abside majeure d'Elna*, 46.

[181] Jacoby, "Bishop Gunther of Bamberg," 270.

[182] Joachim Wollasch, *Cluny - Licht der Welt. Aufstieg und Niedergang der klösterlichen Gemeinschaft* (Patmos, 2001), 119–21; Patrick Henriet, "Chronique de quelques morts annoncées: les saints abbés clunisiens (Xe-XIIe siècles)," *Médiévales* 31 (1996): 93.

[183] Virginie Czerniak, "Villeneuve-d'Aveyron, église Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Paul," in *Congrès archéologique de France. 167e session, 2009, Aveyron* (Société française d'archéologie, 2011), 415.

[184] Czerniak, "Villeneuve-d'Aveyron, église Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Paul," 416; Wesenberg, "Wino von Helmarshausen und das kreuzförmige Oktogon," 39 f.

The Carolingian spirituality of the tympanum of the Last Judgment

The findings of the previous chapter suggest that the famous sculpted tympanum of the Last Judgment of Conques (Figure 57) may have had Byzantine origins too. According to recent research, the tympanum was the first of its kind, created around 1100.[185] Nearly all known Byzantine visualizations of the Last Judgment of an earlier date existed on the same pilgrimage route from Venice to the Holy Land that was discussed in the previous chapter (Figure 71).[186] Hence, it is plausible that at least some of these representations, in particular the monumental wall mosaic of Torcello (Figure 68), were known to the builders of Conques. Indeed, the tympanum of Conques shows significant iconographic parallels with the classic Byzantine type of the Last Judgment from the second half of the 11th century. It exhibits more extensive parallels to the Byzantine type than any other tympanum of the Romanesque and early Gothic era. Nevertheless, the iconographic ideas of the Byzantine type were not merely copied in Conques. It will be shown that they were adapted to reflect the specific Carolingian spirituality of the afterlife.

This conclusion is reached by combining art-historical and religious-historical approaches. The analysis of the relevant written sources shows how the concept of the Last Judgment evolved from the Bible to 13th century scholastic theology. With each development step, the concepts of Particular Judgment, purgatory, and intercession became more refined, thereby adding a new doctrine to the text of the Holy Scriptures. But this development was not homogeneous. By combining the evolution of written sources and iconography, two archetypes can be identified. The Carolingian spirituality and iconography of the Last Judgment had its most prominent representative in Reichenau Abbey. In the 11th century, a slightly differing Byzantine iconography and spirituality was developed. A similar evolution of spirituality is known from Cluny.

From the 780s to the middle of the 11th century, Reichenau Abbey was one of the most pre-eminent cultural, artistic, and scientific centers within the Germanic territories of the Frankish kingdom and the later empire, only comparable to Fulda abbey. Reichenau was the center of an informal monastic network that ranged from Jumièges in northern France to Benevento in southern Italy as well as from Saxony and Bavaria in the northeast to Conques in the southwest. Rich anecdotal evidence supports the assumption that Conques and Reichenau must have been connected, directly or indirectly, from the Carolingian era until the end of the 11th century.

The addition of religious-historical research to the well-established art-historical study of the Last Judgment leads to a more consistent result conforming with the iconography of the tympanum of Conques to an astonishing level of detail. The fact that Conques employed a spiritual model, which was already outdated in Cluny, justifies the notion of a Neo-Carolingian approach, significantly going beyond the presence of the figure of Charlemagne. This conclusion is in line with earlier observations regarding the tympanum and the

[185] Huang, "Memory between Tradition and Modernity," 74.

[186] Marcello Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier: entre Orient et Occident*, ed. Valentino Pace (Les Éditions du Cerf, 2007), 34–36, 53–60.

treasury of Conques.[187] Based on the latter, the assumption of a Neo-Carolingian background became an important initial hypothesis of the recent "Conques in the Global World" project.[188]

Here, it is shown that the Carolingian iconography and spirituality of the Last Judgment were predominantly based on the texts of Matthew 24-25, Reichenau's *Visio Wettini*, and Augustine's *Enchiridion* 29:109-111. Surprisingly, these three texts provide a rather detailed blueprint of the iconography of the tympanum of the Last Judgment in Conques. Many of its peculiarities find a straightforward explanation in them.

Earlier illustrations of the Last Judgment from Reichenau's workshop were predominantly based on Matthew 24-25, the most foundational text of the Gospels on the Last Judgment. Reichenau's *Visio Wettini* from 824 undoubtedly was the most important and most widely distributed Carolingian vision of the afterlife. Correspondingly, Augustine's *Enchiridion* 29:109-111 was one of the most often quoted texts of Carolingian authors in the context of memorial prayers. It also was used by the monks of Reichenau and St. Gall for their liturgy of the Office of the Dead.

These texts can be identified with specific registers of the tympanum of Conques. The upper register with its dominant presentation of the Cross reflects the text of Matthew 24. The Cross also was a central element of Reichenau's iconography of the Last Judgment, as in their Bamberg Apocalypse (Figure 67). The middle register of the tympanum of Conques with its oversized figure of Christ and its prominent representation of Charlemagne is postulated to follow the *Visio Wettini* with references to Matthew 25 and Apocalypse 19-20. The *Visio Wettini* has a strong focus on proto-purgatory and intercession by saints, clerics, and relatives. The concern for the soul of Charlemagne is another characteristic element. Finally, the lower register of the tympanum can be read as a rather accurate reflection of Augustine's *Enchiridion* 29:109-111.

As a result, the tympanum of Conques can be interpreted as a monumental and enduring act of intercession for the soul of their legendary founder Charlemagne, thereby setting a moral example for its monks and pilgrims. But the tympanum also constitutes a very explicit promotion for the 11th century "business model" of Conques which was based on generous donations by the wealthy to secure spiritual support for the souls of the deceased.

The Carolingian spirituality of the afterlife with its strong focus on the torments of Hell and intercessions at scale was already about to be superseded when the tympanum was created. Despite its innovative artistic character, the tympanum rather marked the end of a spiritual and cultural era than the beginning of a new.

The Last Judgment according to the sources

Any interpretation of an artwork as complex and cryptic as the tympanum of the Last Judgment of Conques will leave room for doubt and debate. Therefore, it is not sufficient to show that certain sources have parallels with the iconography of the tympanum. Instead, it is necessary to show that a proposed interpretation and its sources are the most likely combination in view of their potential alternatives. For this purpose, the relevant theological documents on the afterlife, from the Bible to the medieval visions, are briefly summarized below, focusing on those nuances that are relevant for the interpretation of the tympanum of Conques (Table 5).

Matthew 24-25 with 19:28 and the Last Judgment

Undoubtedly, the most important biblical source for the iconography of the Last Judgment is Matthew 24-25 in conjunction with Matthew 19:28.[189] The text describes the return of Christ and his consequential Last Judgment as a one-time event.[190] His return is heralded by the appearance of the sign of Christ in the sky, usually equated with the Cross. Angels with trumpets call the elected from all four wind directions. Thereafter, Christ

[187] Ivan Foletti et al., "'Romanesque' Conques as a Neo-Carolingian Project," *Convivium* 8, no. 2 (2021): 172 f.
[188] Foletti et al., "'Romanesque' Conques as a Neo-Carolingian Project."
[189] Yves Christe, *Das Jüngste Gericht* (Schnell & Steiner, 2001), 45 f., 53; Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 12.
[190] A highly abbreviated version of Matthew 24-25 is also provided by Matthew 13:36-43.

sits on a throne as judge with the twelve apostles as his jury separating the saved from the damned. He calls the saved on his right side rewarding them with eternal life. In contrast, he sends the damned on his left side away into the eternal fire. The eternal fire also is predestined for Satan and his angels. This narrative is complemented by various parables, including the separation of the sheep from the goat and the Ten Virgins. While Hell is characterized as a place of eternal fire, no description of Heaven is provided.

The elements described can be found in most visualizations of the Last Judgment. Often, they are complemented by a glory of angels above the Apostles and by the dead rising from their tombs. Both elements are not explicitly mentioned in Matthew 24-25. The twelve Apostles are only mentioned in Matthew 19:28. The presentation of the Cross plays an important role in western iconography. Only few illustrations include the four winds or an asymmetric gesture of Christ to welcome the saved and to reject the damned. Instead, the rejection often is displayed by angels pushing the damned into the fire. The illustration of the Last Judgment in the Bamberg Apocalypse is one of the best examples (Figure 67).

Book of Revelation of John or Book of the Apocalypse

The other prominent biblical tale of the Last Judgment is provided by the Book of Revelation or Book of the Apocalypse, the final book of the New Testament. Its scope is much wider than the text of Matthew and it uses cryptic allegoric language. Due to its complexity, the narrative of the Apocalypse was rarely used as model for illustrations of the Last Judgment. However, some of its elements have found wider use in Christian iconography. For their interpretation, it is necessary to understand the narrative of the Book of the Apocalypse which can be divided into seven sections:[191]

1. **Revelation of Christ (1-3):** Appearance of Christ as "one like a son of man" with seven candle sticks and seven stars, representing the seven original Christian communities and the seven angels. He sends messages to these communities. One of them introduces the concept of the Crown of martyrdom (Apocalypse 2:10).
2. **Paschal mystery of Christ (4-5):** Transfiguration of Christ as Lamb of God between the Throne of God, the twenty-four elder, and the four living creatures. The Lamb receives the Book with Seven Seals from God. This allegory summarizes the paschal mystery of Christ whose incarnation and passion will fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament.
3. **Contemporary world of John (6-8:5):** The opening of the seven seals triggers the events following the passion of Christ, including the four Apocalyptic horsemen, the cry of the martyrs for vengeance, the rolling up of the scrolls of the sky, and the appearance of seven angels with seven trumpets. An eighth angel with a golden censer devastates the earth with fire. These events relate to the oppression or difficulties of early Christian communities in the pagan Roman empire.
4. **End of the contemporary world of John (8:6-18):** The sounding of the seven trumpets announces the end of the contemporary world of John (pagan Roman empire), including the expulsion of the dragon (Satan) and his angels from Heaven by archangel Michael, the final battle at Armageddon, and the destruction of New Babylon (pagan Rome). In contrast to widespread belief, the seven trumpets announce the imminent Parousia of Christ followed by his thousand-year reign, instead of the Last Judgment.

[191] François Brossier, "Verschlüsselte Botschaft. Die Symbolik im Buch der Offenbarung," *Apokalypse. Die Offenbarung an Johannes*, Welt und Umwelt der Bibel, no. 52 (2009): 28–33.

5. **Parousia of Christ (19-20:6):** Marriage of the Lamb (Christ) with the woman (Christian church). Allegory of Christ as King of Kings who is to rule for thousand years together with the martyrs (first resurrection). The twenty-four elder assist Christ as judges. The thousand-year reign of Christ refers to the era of the Christian church. During the reign of Christ, ordinary sinners remain dead. Christ is also described as an angel with a heavy chain who imprisons the dragon (Satan) in the bottomless pit, while the Beast (pagan Roman empire and its imperial cult) and the False Prophet (presumably pagan Roman emperors) are sent to their final destinations in the Lake of Fire (Hell).
6. **Last Judgment (20:7-20:15):** The Last Judgment marks the end of the reign of Christ as King of Kings. The judges are only described by mention of their thrones. In early Christian and Byzantine iconography, an empty throne was shown as symbol of God as judge. The dead rise from the land and from the sea. They are judged according to their deeds in life recorded in various books. The damned who are not listed in the Book of Life (*Liber vitae*) are cast into the Lake of Fire (Hell), together with Satan, Death, and *Hades*, where they join the Beast and the False Prophet.
7. **Heavenly Jerusalem (21-22):** Allegory of Heavenly Jerusalem as the eternal Paradise, only admitting those who are listed in the Book of Life. God will reside amongst them.

This brief synopsis includes a sizable list of iconographic elements that were common in Christian art. However, most of them have no direct link to the Last Judgment. This includes the twenty-four elder, the four living creatures, the Lamb of God, the Book with Seven Seals, the seven angels with seven trumpets as well as the Crown of martyrdom. According to the Apocalypse, even the majesty of Christ does not refer to the Last Judgment but to the preceding era of the Church, the contemporary period of the Middle Ages. Only the empty throne, the open *Liber vitae*, the Lake of Fire, potentially including Satan, Beast and False Prophet, or Heavenly Jerusalem constitute references of the Apocalypse to the Last Judgment and to the eternal rule of God.

Western illustrations of the Last Judgment often do not separate between the thousand-year reign of Christ and the act of the Last Judgment. They rather represent Christ as *Rex* and *Iudex*, in line with Matthew 24-25. In contrast, Byzantine iconography of the 11th century and later is more differentiated showing Christ as ruler and the empty throne of God as judge in separate iconographic elements. Both traditions have in common that fire is the most frequently used representation of Hell.

In Byzantine iconography of the 11th century and later, Christ sitting on a throne, the empty throne of the judge, and the Lake of Fire are connected by a Stream of Fire that emanates from the throne of Christ referring to Daniel 7 and 12 (Figure 68). In these passages of the Book of Daniel, many elements of the Apocalypse were already introduced, including the four creatures, the throne of God, a tribunal with open books, resurrected, saved and damned, eternal life or punishment, and the eternal reign of God. To complete the picture, Judith 16:15 adds serpents as additional torments of Hell. The idea of the *Liber vitae* can also be found in Luke 10:20.

Luke 16:19-31 and the Particular Judgment

The concept of the Last Judgment, as expressed by Matthew and the Apocalypse, is contrasted by the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. In its narrative, Lazarus and the rich man face their ultimate destiny immediately after their deaths. Lazarus is carried by angels into the Bosom of Abraham while the rich man is tormented by flames in *Hades*. The allegory of the Bosom of Abraham later became an important element of the visualization of Paradise or Heaven. In the text of Luke, there is no further mention of a Last Judgment. Hence, the idea of the Last Judgment of Daniel, Matthew, and the Apocalypse is contrasted in Luke with the concept of the Particular Judgment occurring immediately after the death of a person. This apparent contradiction is not resolved in the Bible leaving a lot of room for later theological interpretations.

Graeco-Roman and Egyptian mythologies of the afterlife

The unresolved contradiction between Last and Particular Judgment reflects the heterogeneity of the world of early Christians. While Jewish belief favored the concept of the Last Judgment expressed in the Book of Daniel, Graeco-Roman and Egyptian mythologies were based on the idea of the Particular Judgment.[192]

In Greek mythology, as described by Homer among others, the dead are ferried to the Underworld (*Hades*).[193] *Hades* is assumed to be a bleak but not a frightful place. In *Hades*, the dead are immediately judged according to their deeds in life. Exceptional sinners are sent to a special place of punishment (*Tartaros*) in the remotest parts of *Hades*. Some of them are given the opportunity to return to the ordinary parts of *Hades* after a certain period of purgation. Serious sinners with incurable sins will stay in *Tartaros* forever. On the other hand, the righteous, who are chosen by the Gods, will enjoy a happy afterlife in the Elysian Fields (*Elysion*).[194] The majority of ordinary people will stay in *Hades*. This three-partite concept of the afterlife, consisting of *Hades*, *Tartaros*, and *Elysion* with some form of probation, heavily influenced later Christian concepts of the afterlife.

The ideas of Greek mythology were further developed in the sixth book of Virgil's *Aeneid*.[195] In Greek mythology, *Tartaros* and *Elysion* were reserved for exceptional individuals that were handpicked by the Gods, such as Sisyphus or Tantalus. In Virgil's *Aeneid*, *Tartarus* and *Elysium* became mainstream notions with relevance for ordinary people. In fact, every mortal is destined for one of them. However, *Elysium* is not a final destination. It rather is a resting stop in a cycle of death and rebirth before a soul reaches its ultimate home, *Tartarus* or reunification with the divine. As consequence, every soul requires purification by wind, water or fire in preparation of its rebirth. *Tartarus* is described as a city with walls surrounded by a river of fire and reaching deep down into earth, a counter image to the Christian Heavenly Jerusalem.

While Homer and Virgil preempted many concepts of later Christian thinking on the afterlife, Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* (Dream of Scipio) was the prototype of an entire genre of later medieval visions of otherness.[196] The main intent of the *Somnium Scipionis* was to admonish the Roman elite to strive towards the highest standards of moral conduct.

Egyptian mythology was also based on the concept of the Particular Judgment. The judgment of the dead occurred by weighing of their hearts conducted by the god Anubis. Anubis was the equivalent of the winged god Hermes of the Greeks. Most likely, the concept of the Weighing of Souls by archangel Michael was influenced by this Egyptian model.

Apocryphal apocalypses, the Church Fathers, and Anglo-Irish visions of the afterlife

The ambiguity of the biblical texts with regards to Particular and Last Judgment and their very limited details about Heaven and Hell were addressed by the apocrypha, mainly the three apocryphal apocalypses of Peter, Paul, and Mary, and by the texts of the Church Fathers. The apocryphal apocalypses were written in the 2nd century in the Eastern Mediterranean and were transmitted to the west through the Homilies of Ephraim the Syrian among others.[197] They provided further details on the torments of Hell. According to them, the individual torments reflect the specific nature of the respective sins, often affecting the body parts that were involved in the sinful conduct. As a result, Hell is divided into various compartments for the different types of sins and their respective punishment. In addition, the repository of punishments was extended beyond fire and serpents to also include hanging and various kinds of torments performed by demons. At least, the Virgin and the saints acted as intercessors on behalf of the wicked.

[192] Susanna Braund and Emma Hilliard, "Just Deserts in the Ancient Pagan Afterlife," in *Imagining the Medieval Afterlife*, ed. Richard Matthew Pollard, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 9 f.
[193] Braund and Hilliard, "Just Deserts in the Ancient Pagan Afterlife," 9–12.
[194] The concept of the Elysian Fields was introduced by the cult of Demeter.
[195] Braund and Hilliard, "Just Deserts in the Ancient Pagan Afterlife," 15–18.
[196] The Somnium Scipionis was part of Cicero's lost De Re Publica. It is preserved through a later commentary of Macrobius. Braund and Hilliard, "Just Deserts in the Ancient Pagan Afterlife," 13 f.
[197] Christe, *Das Jüngste Gericht*, 33 f.; Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 16.

These elements were widely used in the medieval iconography of the Last Judgment.

While the apocryphal apocalypses were rejected by the Church Fathers as unauthentic, many ideas were adopted by them. The most notable contributions of the Church Fathers to medieval thinking about the afterlife were provided by Tertullian, Augustine, and Gregory the Great.[198] As a consequence, from the 3rd to the middle of the 8th centuries, the doctrine of Particular Judgment successively gained importance relative to the Last Judgment, complemented by the concepts of proto-purgatory and intercession. Increasingly, the Graeco-Roman and Egyptian mythologies of the afterlife permeated the thinking of the Holy Scriptures which were based on Jewish traditions. Understandably, this rather fundamental paradigm shift was a slow process that lasted for about one thousand years. It only converged to a more balanced view in the 12th and 13th centuries, i.e., after the completion of the tympanum of Conques. It is this lack of convergence that often makes the interpretation of visualizations of the Last Judgment from the 11th and early 12th centuries difficult.

Around 200, Tertullian established in *De anima* 55 the notion that all ordinary people will spend the time between their death and the Last Judgment in *Hades*, a vast deep space in the interior of the earth. Before the Last Judgment, only the patriarchs, prophets, and martyrs are with Christ. He introduced in *De anima* 58 the additional idea that the souls in *Hades* do not sleep, in contrast to their dead bodies. This assumption made the exclusive idea of a Last Judgment untenable. Otherwise, the souls of sinners would mingle with those of their victims in *Hades* without any restraint. As a resolution, he postulated that *Hades* already is a place of consolation and punishment, thereby reconciling the seemingly conflicting ideas of the Particular and the Last Judgment. The righteous will immediately be provided with refreshments (*refrigeria*) and the wicked be treated with torments in anticipation of glory and gloom at the Last Judgment. No further details were provided. Only in the second half of the 11th century, the idea of *refrigerium* was developed into the concept of an Earthly Paradise as the waiting area for the elected.

Augustine confirmed the existence of the Particular Judgment in *De natura et origine animae* 2:8. He described in his *Enchiridion* 18:69 and 29:109-111 the existence of separate waiting areas in the otherworld for the souls of the righteous and the wicked. However, he did not go as far as Tertullian who postulated that the righteous will be rewarded with refreshments before the Last Judgment. According to Augustine, the souls of the righteous will simply rest in peace until Judgment Day while the wicked will already be subject to their deserved punishment. From his perspective, refreshments for the elected are unnecessary since the reunification of the souls with their bodies – only the latter benefitting from such refreshments – will take place with the Last Judgment.[199] Augustine also posed the open question whether some of the wicked with marginal sins may be saved from Hell by a time-limited purgation. He nearly preempted the answer by conceding that relatives of the dead may in certain marginal cases be able to provide relief through masses and alms.[200] Finally, he assumed that after the Last Judgment, the righteous and the wicked will reside in separate cities or kingdoms that are ruled by God and Satan respectively. The idea of an eternal *civitas immortalis* ruled by God (Heaven) and a mirror-image *civitas mortalis* ruled by Satan (Hell), full of eternal torments for the wicked, was further explored in his *De civitate dei*. Such structural symmetry between Heaven and Hell was a unique concept of Augustine. In addition, by refraining from providing rewards to the good before Judgment Day, he preserved the relevance of the Last Judgment and its priority over the Particular Judgment.

The ideas of Tertullian and Augustine were further developed and substantiated by pope Gregory the Great in the fourth book of his Dialogues, written in 593/94 after years of significant turbulence with an outbreak of the plague and Lombard threats to Rome.[201] Gregory's

[198] Sebastian Scholz, "'Durch eure Fürbitten ist er Gefährte der Heiligen': Grabinschrift als Ausdruck des Totengedenkens im Mittelalter," in *Bücher des Lebens - Lebendige Bücher*, ed. Peter Erhart and Jakob Kuratli Hüeblin (Stiftsarchiv St. Gallen, 2010), 153 f.

[199] This line of thought is expressed in *De natura et origine animae* 2:8 and not in the *Enchiridion*.

[200] The concept of prayers for the souls of the dead already was briefly introduced in 2 Maccabees 12:43-46.

[201] Jesse Keskiaho, "Visions and the Afterlife in Gregory's Dialogues," in *Imagining the Medieval Afterlife*, ed. Richard Matthew Pollard, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 226.

Dialogues were the model of numerous other medieval visions of the afterlife.[202] In contrast to Augustine, Gregory rather sided with Luke 16 and assigned priority to the Particular Judgment. According to Gregory, the souls of the righteous will immediately be accepted in Heaven while the souls of the wicked will immediately be sent to Hell.[203] During the Particular Judgment, forces of Heaven and Hell, later interpreted as angels and devils, dispute over sinners with an ambivalent life record. Gregory also foresaw that venial sinners with significant good deeds in their life will have to spend a certain time in proto-purgatory before receiving their admission to Heaven. Masses and prayers by relatives may help to shorten or alleviate the time in proto-purgatory. On the other hand, even the mighty of the world may end up in Hell. For Gregory, the only benefit of the Last Judgment for the righteous was to provide them with the additional joy of reunification of their souls with their bodies. While Augustine saw a horizontal relationship between Heavenly Jerusalem and its Satanic counterpart, both being separate areas in the same otherworld, Gregory assigned a vertical relationship to Heaven and Hell. He conjectured that Hell is located deep below the surface of Earth, in line with the description of Virgil. Heaven, as the name says, would obviously be above the surface of Earth.

Julian of Toledo solidified the idea of a purgatorial fire after the Particular Judgment in his *Prognosticum futuri saeculi* from 688/89 eradicating any remaining doubts whether the purgation of Gregory the Great was referring to the Particular or to the Last Judgment.[204]

From the 8th to the early 10th centuries, these ideas were the basis of several Anglo-Irish visions of otherness which are of no relevance for Conques.[205] Only, the Vision of Drythelm, documented by Bede the Venerable in his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*, introduced the allegory of the Mouth of Hell. It first became popular in Anglo-Saxon art and is also visualized in the tympanum of Conques (Figure 65).[206]

From the second quarter of the 8th century, it became Christian practice in the southwest of England to ask friends for prayers for deceased relatives.

Carolingian spirituality of the afterlife

The visions and prayer practices described came to the Frankish kingdom with St. Boniface and other Anglo-Irish missionaries as well as through the texts of Bede the Venerable.[207] They fell on fertile ground leading to an evolved Carolingian spirituality of the afterlife that is characterized by significantly increased fear of Hell and by unprecedented efforts to save the souls of the dead through prayers, masses or alms.

The Anglo-Irish practice of joint prayer for the souls of the dead was adopted by the League of Attigny of 762 and by a similar confraternity of prayer, established in Dingolfing in 770.[208] The League of Attigny was initiated by archbishop Chrodegang of Metz, a successor of St. Boniface, during a synod. Its members, 44 bishops and abbots, individually agreed to celebrate 100 masses and to read 100 psalters for each deceased member of the League. Most of the members originated from the Carolingian heartlands in northern France, including the abbots of Saint-Denis, Saint-Germain-des-Prés, and Jumièges. The German members included the bishops of Mainz, Würzburg, and Eichstätt as well as the abbot of Reichenau and St. Gall and the abbot of Hornbach. The participants of the synod in Dingolfing, all coming from Bavaria, also agreed on 100 masses and 100 psalters for every deceased member, this time including the priests and monks of their communities. In addition, many bilateral confraternities of prayer were formed, such as

[202] Yitzhak Hen, "Visions of the Afterlife in the Early Medieval West," in *Imagining the Medieval Afterlife*, ed. Richard Matthew Pollard, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 29.
[203] Keskiaho, "Visions and the Afterlife in Gregory's Dialogues," 239.
[204] Helen Foxhall Forbes, "The Theology of Afterlife in the Early Middle Ages, c. 400 - c. 1100," in *Imagining the Medieval Afterlife*, ed. Richard Matthew Pollard, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 156.
[205] Eileen Gardiner, *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell: A Sourcebook*, Garland Medieval Bibliographies (Garland, 1993).
[206] Gardiner, *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell*, 95.
[207] Jean Dufour, "Totenroteln im deutschen Sprachraum (8.-18. Jahrhundert)," in *Bücher des Lebens - Lebendige Bücher*, ed. Peter Erhart and Jakob Kuratli Hüeblin (Stiftsarchiv St. Gallen, 2010), 200.
[208] Gisela Muschiol, "Gedenken und Verbrüderung: Europäische Netzwerkbildung der Lebenden und der Toten," in *Welterbe des Mittelalters: 1300 Jahre Klosterinsel Reichenau*, ed. Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe (Schnell & Steiner, 2024), 226.

the confraternity between the abbeys of Reichenau and St. Gall from 800.[209]

Again, the 760s were a phase of significant uncertainty. The transition from Pepin the Short to Charlemagne caused a weakening of the Carolingian rule which enticed several attacks on Frankish territory by the dukes of Aquitaine. The shifted military focus of the Carolingian troops on Aquitaine left the Papal States exposed to feared attacks by the Lombards or the Byzantine empire. Such political instability may have been interpreted as a punishment from God or as a warning signal of the nearing end of the world.

In 783/84, bishop St. Virgil of Salzburg, another Irish missionary and a participant of the synod of Dingolfing, established the earliest extant confraternity book.[210] About 4,500 names are listed in this book. Such written *memoria* was supposed to help their souls in the afterlife. Some of the names mentioned relate to distant locations, such as Saint-Denis, York or Aquileia. But most were of local or regional origin. The confraternity book of Salzburg marked the beginning of a Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon memorial tradition of so-called *Libri vitae* that included not only the deceased of the respective local community but also members from other communities in the same region or even from further away.[211] Many of these confraternity books include the names of Carolingian kings or regional rulers. The name *Liber vitae* was chosen to create an association with the Book of Life of the Apocalypse. It was hoped that the names in the local *Liber vitae* would be added to the *Liber vitae* of the Last Judgment. Nine *Libri vitae* from the 8th and 9th centuries or traces thereof have survived.[212] Nearly all of them had close connections to Reichenau Abbey.[213] Some of them were in use until the 12th century. Beyond these early books, an isolated group of three 11th century *Libri vitae* has survived in England.[214]

One of the earliest and by far the most comprehensive of these *Libri vitae* was initiated by Reichenau Abbey in 823/25.[215] It contains nearly 40,000 names. More importantly, it is the only known *Liber vitae* with a universal ambition reflecting the exceptional political role of Reichenau Abbey in the Carolingian empire. Many of its entries relate to St. Gall and to other monasteries along the Rhine, ranging from Disentis at the Anterior Rhine to Lorsch at the Upper Rhine. However, in contrast to the other confraternity books, it also documents extensive connections to all major regions of the Frankish kingdom. The initial focus was on the important Carolingian abbeys of Leno near Brescia, Nonantola near Modena, and Fulda as well as on other places in Bavaria and northern France. The latter contacts went back to the League of Attigny. Later, many connections to places in Saxony and Burgundy were added. For the purposes of our discussion, it is relevant that the *Libri vitae* and other sources of Reichenau and St. Gall document close connections to northern Italy, including Verona, Brescia, Pavia, Bobbio, and Como (Figure 71).[216] Reichenau's connections reached even further to the south of Italy, as far as Benevento. Even the names of the patriarchs of Jerusalem and Alexandria were added. Only, the coverage of medieval Aquitaine was very sparse. At least, half a dozen monastic connections in Lyon constitute a step in this geographic direction. The few entries of Reichenau's *Liber vitae* from Aquitaine are limited to Conques in Rouergue as well as presumably Manglieu and Charroux in Auvergne. It is

[209] Dieter Geuenich, "Die Verbrüderungsverträge im St. Galler Kapiteloffiziumsbuch (Cod. Sang. 915)," in *Bücher des Lebens - Lebendige Bücher*, ed. Peter Erhart and Jakob Kuratli Hüeblin (Stiftsarchiv St. Gallen, 2010).

[210] Maximilian Diesenberger, "Das Salzburger Verbrüderungsbuch," in *Bücher des Lebens - Lebendige Bücher*, ed. Peter Erhart and Jakob Kuratli Hüeblin (Stiftsarchiv St. Gallen, 2010).

[211] Rosamond McKitterick, "Geschichte und Memoria im Frühmittelalter: History and Memory in the Early Middle Ages," in *Bücher des Lebens - Lebendige Bücher*, ed. Peter Erhart and Jakob Kuratli Hüeblin (Stiftsarchiv St. Gallen, 2010), 19–24.

[212] These originate from Salzburg, Reichenau, St. Gall, Pfäfers, Murbach (lost), Remiremont, Corvey, Brescia, and Lindisfarne. Pfäfers is located close to Chur. Murbach was a foundation closely linked to Reichenau. McKitterick, "Geschichte und Memoria im Frühmittelalter," 21 f.

[213] The connection to Remiremont is established via the *Liber vitae* of Murbach, a former foundation of the founder of Reichenau. No connections of Reichenau to Lindisfarne are known.

[214] The *Liber vitae* of Lindisfarne was the basis of the *Liber vitae* of Durham. Two further books are known from Thorney and Winchester.

[215] Régine Le Jan, "Beziehungen und Politik: Das europäische Netzwerk des Klosters Reichenau nach seinem Liber Confraternitatum (Verbrüderungsbuch)," in *Die Klosterinsel Reichenau im Mittelalter: Geschichte - Kunst - Architektur*, ed. Wolfgang Zimmermann et al. (Schnell & Steiner, 2024); Muschiol, "Gedenken und Verbrüderung."

[216] For the connections of St. Gall, see the included map of: Peter Erhart and Jakob Kuratli Hüeblin, eds., *Bücher des Lebens - Lebendige Bücher* (Stiftsarchiv St. Gallen, 2010).

remarkable that the entry identified with Conques (*Colticas*) was already included in the initial *Liber vitae* from 823/25.[217] It will be shown later that connections from Conques to Reichenau and St. Gall seem to have existed until the end of the 11th century.

Like Gregory's Dialogues of the 590s and the confraternities of prayer of the 760s, the *Liber vitae* of Reichenau Abbey was created in response to unstable external conditions. According to the annals of the empire, the year 823 was an *annus horribilis* with adverse weather conditions that led to a bad harvest, famine and a deadly outbreak of the plague.[218] The *ordinatio imperii* or rather *divisio imperii* of 817, which was supposed to secure an orderly succession from Louis the Pious to his three sons, had shaken the empire only a few years ago. The planned succession was unsettled again in 823 by the unforeseen birth of Louis' fourth son Charles the Bald. Hence, the uncertain political situation of 823/25 was somewhat comparable to the 760s in which the first confraternities of prayer were established.

The exceptional *Liber vitae* of Reichenau Abbey provides a first indication that the abbey may have played an important role in the development of the Carolingian spirituality of the afterlife. This impression is supported by other theological and liturgical documents. Undoubtedly, the most important literary product of Reichenau Abbey was its *Visio Wettini*. Reichenau's schoolmaster Wetti had this vision in 824, few days before his death.[219] It was documented in 824/25 by Reichenau's abbot Heito, the builder of the abbey church mentioned above, and as a poem by Walahfrid Strabo. Both authors count amongst the most important leaders of Reichenau Abbey.

In his vision, Wetti is led by an angel to several places of otherworld where he can see various deceased acquaintances and deceased leaders of Reichenau Abbey or leaders of the empire, all being subject to torments. The most prominent and by far most extensively described example is Charlemagne.[220] Despite his significant and widely recognized good deeds for the Catholic faith and for the church, his genitals are being gnawed at by an animal. This punishment is attributed to various extramarital affairs in the later years of his life. At least, Wetti receives the consolation that Charlemagne eventually is destined for Heaven. In other words, Charlemagne is in a state of proto-purgatory.

Wetti himself is accused of sexual misconduct related to his pupils. In three consecutive attempts, he asks the saints, the martyrs, and the Holy Virgins for their intercession with Christ.[221] It is described in much detail how each group rushes to Christ as the King of Kings to ask for mercy on behalf of Wetti. Each time, Christ reconfirms his verdict emphasizing the severity of the sins. But after the third attempt, he also offers the possibility of forgiveness if Wetti will lead those that he had misled back to the path of virtue. Eventually, Wetti wakes up with a clear path to salvation but with little time left to pursue it. He uses the last days of his life having Heito document and disseminate his vision as a warning for others. He also sends ten letters to friends asking for their support in prayer referring to the 100 masses and 100 psalters required by the League of Attigny.[222]

The *Visio Wettini* was the most influential and most widely distributed vision of the afterlife of the entire Carolingian era, in particular with respect to proto-purgatory and intercession.[223] Its strong influence lasted at least until the end of the 11th century. In total, 58 medieval copies are known, of which 25 were created in the 9th to 11th centuries.[224] Trans-regional copies of the 9th century are known from Nonantola, Milan, Saint-

[217] Le Jan, "Beziehungen und Politik," 60; Some researchers believe that the entry Colticas refers to Couches in Burgundy instead of Conques. However, most researchers interpret the entry as a reference to Conques. For an alternative view, see Katrinette Bodarwé and Moritz Rother, "Die Gründung(en) des Klosters Conques: Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Frommen (BM2 688) und Pippins I. von Aquitanien (D 32)," *Archiv für Diplomatik* 57 (2011): 7.

[218] Alfons Zettler, "'Visio Wettini' und Reichenauer Verbrüderungsbuch," in *Bücher des Lebens - Lebendige Bücher*, ed. Peter Erhart and Jakob Kuratli Hüeblin (Stiftsarchiv St. Gallen, 2010), 65 f.

[219] Walahfrid Strabo and Heito, *Visio Wettini: Einführung. Lateinisch-Deutsche Ausgabe und Erläuterungen*, 3rd ed., ed. Walter Berschin, with Hermann Knittel, Reichenauer Texte und Bilder 12 (Mattes, 2009).

[220] Strabo and Heito, *Visio Wettini*, 49–51.

[221] Strabo and Heito, *Visio Wettini*, 53–55.

[222] Zettler, "Geschichte und Memoria im Frühmittelalter," 61.

[223] Gardiner, *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell*; Richard Matthew Pollard, "Nonantola and Reichenau. A New Manuscript of Heito's Visio Wettini and the Foundations for a New Critical Edition," *Revue Bénédictine* 120, no. 2 (2010): 3 f., https://doi.org/10.1484/J.RB.5.100547; Strabo and Heito, *Visio Wettini*, 13.

[224] Pollard, "Nonantola and Reichenau. A New Manuscript of Heito's Visio Wettini and the Foundations for a New Critical Edition," 30–38.

Amand, northern France, and England. In the 10th and 11th centuries, copies were created among others for Tours, Lombardy, Murano (Venice), and Monte Cassino. Other visions of the afterlife inspired by the *Visio Wettini* were written in Reims and Monte Cassino.[225]

The passages from Augustine's *Enchiridion* discussed above were among the most popular texts cited by Carolingian authors in the context of prayer for the dead.[226] Hence, they have a particular importance for the Carolingian spirituality of the afterlife. Apparently, the abbeys of Reichenau and St. Gall were the first to even introduce excerpts of them in the responsories of their Office of the Dead. But only a handful of nearly 1,800 analyzed responsory sequences from different places used passages of the *Enchiridion*.[227] In the course of the 11th century, the passages from *Enchiridion* were replaced in St. Gall by passages from Job and from the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. The latter emphasized the importance of the Last Judgment.[228] Such prominence of the text of Augustine, particularly at the abbeys of Reichenau and St. Gall, as well as the later prominence of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians support the assumption of a Carolingian renaissance of the Last Judgment relative to the Particular Judgment favored by Gregory the Great.

The first half of the 9th century saw the emergence of further innovations in memorial practices. Martyrologies were extended to become necrologies. An early example again is preserved from St. Gall.[229] Text passages from funeral liturgies were added to epitaphs asking readers to pray for the deceased person.[230] These anecdotal observations add further evidence to the claim that the spirituality of the afterlife saw a significant surge in the Carolingian era.

Due to its detailed account and its wide influence, the *Visio Wettini* teaches several important lessons on Carolingian spirituality of the afterlife. First, the narrative of the temporary torments of Charlemagne further solidifies earlier assumptions of proto-purgatory by Augustine and Gregory the Great. In fact, the *Visio* mentions that the Dialogues of Gregory the Great were its most important source of inspiration. Wetti also had access to the visions of Julian of Toledo, Fursey, and Barontus as well as to other visions from the *Historia ecclesiastica* of Bede the Venerable.[231] However, in contrast to Gregory the Great, the *Visio Wettini* leaves the relationship between Particular and Last Judgment open. In fact, the use of Augustine's *Enchiridion* in the liturgy of the Office of the Dead of Reichenau Abbey and the important illustrations of the Last Judgment based on Matthew 24-25 created in its cultural space provide a clear indication that the Last Judgment had a significantly higher relevance for the monks of Reichenau than can be expected from the Dialogues of Gregory the Great.

A second important lesson from the *Visio Wettini* and other Carolingian visions as well as from several *Libri Vitae* of the 9th century is the concern for the souls of important leaders of the Carolingian empire, most notably for Charlemagne. This concern also must be read as a moral critique or admonishment of the contemporary elite in the wake of the religious reforms of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious.[232] Visions with mention of leaders of the Frankish kingdom include the Visions of Charles the Fat, Bernold, Fulrad, a Poor Woman, Rotcharius, and the *Visio Wettini*. The latter three focus on Charlemagne.

The idea of intercession by saints and by prayers of the living proliferated in the Carolingian era to unprecedented levels, aptly described by the notion of "the more, the better." While the earlier texts of Augustine and Gregory the Great acknowledged the

[225] Gardiner, *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell*, 31, 45.
[226] Julian Hendrix, "Das Totenoffizium auf der Reichenau und in St. Gallen: The Office of the Dead at Reichenau and St. Gall," in *Bücher des Lebens - Lebendige Bücher*, ed. Peter Erhart and Jakob Kuratli Hüeblin (Stiftsarchiv St. Gallen, 2010), 70 f.
[227] Hendrix, "Das Totenoffizium auf der Reichenau und in St. Gallen," 77 f.; Knud Ottosen, *The Responsories and Versicles of the Latin Office of the Dead*, 2nd ed. (Books on Demand, 2007).
[228] Hendrix, "Das Totenoffizium auf der Reichenau und in St. Gallen," 78 f.
[229] Bernhard Zeller, "Die frühmittelalterlichen Necrologien des Klosters St. Gallen," in *Bücher des Lebens - Lebendige Bücher*, ed. Peter Erhart and Jakob Kuratli Hüeblin (Stiftsarchiv St. Gallen, 2010).
[230] Scholz, "Durch eure Fürbitten ist er Gefährte der Heiligen," 154 f.
[231] Strabo and Heito, *Visio Wettini*, 12; Pollard, "Nonantola and Reichenau. A New Manuscript of Heito's Visio Wettini and the Foundations for a New Critical Edition," 21.
[232] Richard Matthew Pollard, "A Morbid Efflorescence: Envisaging the Afterlife in the Carolingian Period," in *Imagining the Medieval Afterlife*, ed. Richard Matthew Pollard, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 41–43.

potential support of masses, prayers or alms in very limited cases and while the apocryphal apocalypses introduced the intercessions by the Virgin and by saints, the exhaustive intercessions by saints, martyrs, and Holy Virgins as well as by the living described in the *Visio Wettini* elevate the concept of intercession to an entirely new level. Augustine and Gregory the Great still were very careful, if not cautious, in identifying situations in which masses, prayers or alms may be of any help. In contrast to the considerate attitude of the latter, the *Libri Vitae* and the *Visio Wettini* promote a coordinated approach to intercession at scale. However, such excessive use of prayers can also be read as a sign of significant doubt about the effectiveness of individual intercessions.[233] After unsuccessful attempts with the saints and martyrs, Wetti requires the support of the Holy Virgins to achieve at least some progress with Christ. But even then, he is required to correct his past misconduct after returning to "this-world" to be considered for salvation. Hence, the Carolingian theologians did not question the feeble power of an individual prayer, as expressed by Augustine and Gregory the Great. Rather, they tried to overcome this weakness by adopting an orchestrated volume approach to intercessions.

Lastly, Carolingian visions or related texts are characterized by an increased focus on the spiritual role of women, in particular in the context of intercession.[234] In the Carolingian texts of the *Visio Wettini*, a revised Apocalypse of Paul, and the Vision of the Poor Woman among others, women have a more prominent role than in earlier comparable visions. The reference of the *Visio Wettini* to intercession by the Holy Virgins is a notable new element that was by no means standard practice. Apparently, such increased role of women in the spiritual texts was in contradiction with their diminished role in Carolingian religious practices.

To conclude, the Carolingian era was characterized by a significantly increased focus on the afterlife and on the Last Judgment. The non-biblical ideas of proto-purgatory and intercession matured to a level that allowed them to have significant impact on memorial practices. The themes of intercession by masses and prayers, moralizing political agendas with focus on the soul of Charlemagne, and the concern for women are very specific aspects of Carolingian spirituality.[235]

Cluny and the developments of the 10th to 13th centuries

In the 10th and 11th centuries, further visions of otherness were created, some based on the *Visio Wettini*.[236] Except for two, discussed below, none of them seem to have had relevance for the tympanum of Conques. More importantly, the 10th and 11th centuries saw the rise of the Cluniac movement. The foundation of Cluny Abbey in 910 was the consequence of the Carolingian paradigm of intercession by extensive masses and prayers. Cluny was funded by wealthy donors for the benefit of their souls. The excessive memorial practices of Cluny that were required to provide the promised memorial services for its numerous donors, resulting among others in the introduction of the feast of All Souls' Day, underline that Cluny Abbey maintained, if not intensified, the practices of the Carolingian era described above.[237] This conclusion is confirmed by the tale of two visions. After the death of pope Benedict VIII in 1024, the latter reported in visions of three high-ranking clerics that he was suffering in purgatory, asking the monks of Cluny for their intercession. Some time later, after extensive prayers by the monks, Benedict VIII reported back in a vision of the monk Eldebertus that he was released from purgatory thanks to the support of the order of Cluny.[238] This prominent story of a leader of the church being saved by the monks of Cluny through prayer closely resembles the *Visio Wettini* of Reichenau Abbey, only replacing Charlemagne and other leaders of the empire by a pope. This substitution was very much in line with the different political position of 11th century Cluny compared to 9th century Reichenau.

[233] Pollard, "A Morbid Efflorescence," 50 f.
[234] Pollard, "A Morbid Efflorescence," 51–55.
[235] Pollard, "A Morbid Efflorescence," 42.
[236] Gardiner, *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell*.
[237] Franz Neiske, "'Pro defunctis exorare ut a peccatis solvantur': Theologie und Praxis der Memoria in Cluny," in *Bücher des Lebens - Lebendige Bücher*, ed. Peter Erhart and Jakob Kuratli Hüeblin (Stiftsarchiv St. Gallen, 2010), 190–94.
[238] Wollasch, *Cluny - Licht der Welt*, 120.

However, many charters that were created in the 11th century in the context of donations to Cluny exhibit an important shift relative to the earlier Carolingian view exemplified by Reichenau Abbey.[239] Instead of emphasizing the horrors of proto-purgatory and Hell, as was the case in the *Visio Wettini*, the monks of Cluny rather emphasized the positive effects that a donation would have for the souls of the donors in the afterlife. In this context, Tertullian's notion of *refrigerium* was revived. In the second half of the 11th century, the use of *refrigerium* in the charters of Cluny evolved from describing an abstract benefit to a paradise-like location in otherness. The notion of an Earthly Paradise as a resting place after purgation, often allegorized by the Bosom of Abraham from Luke 16, became more and more concrete in visions of the 12th century such as the Cistercian *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii* from around 1180.[240]

Both Reichenau, as representative of the Carolingian spirituality, and Cluny, as pre-eminent representative of the 11th and early 12th centuries, agreed on the importance of the Last Judgment and the effectiveness of intercession by masses and prayers. However, different perspectives existed with respect to how the righteous are treated before the Last Judgment.

Formal convergence between these incongruent views only occurred in the 13th century, siding more with the Carolingian perspective.[241] In 1245 and 1274, the councils of Lyon affirmed that the afterlife mainly consists of Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory. The new formal concept of Purgatory (*purgatorium*) as an enduring waiting area reconciled the seemingly divergent ideas of Particular and Last Judgment. *Tartaros* and eternal Hell denote the same place. The 11th century idea of an Earthly Paradise as a separate waiting area for the righteous and purified was abandoned. Instead, Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas introduced two categories of Limbo (*limbus*) as waiting area for the patriarchs and as final resting place for children that died before their baptism.[242] With the two Limbos, the Underworld now was believed to consist of four layers, contrasted by Heaven as an undifferentiated location. This new doctrine reconciled the divergent positions of Tertullian, Augustine and Gregory the Great, as well as of Matthew and Luke. However, this evolution happened too late to be relevant for the iconography of the tympanum of Conques.

The spirituality of the afterlife around 1100

With the Church Fathers, the Graeco-Roman concepts of *Hades* and *Tartaros* had permeated the traditions of the Jewish-Christian Scriptures. Foxhall Forbes calls the new doctrine, developed until the early 8th century, the "fourfold judgment."[243] According to it, the Particular Judgment is a kind of triage system. Saints and martyrs are immediately sent to Heaven to sit with Christ as judges. The most wicked sinners are immediately cast into hell and will not be summoned before Christ as judge. For ordinary sinners with a more ambiguous record in life, Christ will make the final call during the Last Judgment in which the righteous will be elected to Heaven and the wicked will be cast into Hell.

However, there was still some uncertainty as to how ordinary people spend their waiting time in *Hades*. In Carolingian times, the concepts of proto-purgatory and intercession by saints or by masses and prayers became a mainstream notion that was applied at scale. Hence, most souls would have to spend time in proto-purgatory and therefore would benefit from intercessions. These ideas maintained their validity until 1100.

Different perspectives are recognizable between the Carolingian spirituality and the spirituality of the late 11th

[239] Neiske, "Pro defunctis exorare ut a peccatis solvantur," 194–96.
[240] Carl Watkins, "Otherworld Journeys of the Central Middle Ages," in *Imagining the Medieval Afterlife*, ed. Richard Matthew Pollard, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 105, 110.
[241] Watkins, "Otherworld Journeys of the Central Middle Ages," 111; Ananya Jahanara Kabir, *Paradise, Death and Doomsday in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 32 (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 188, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511483332; Isabel Moreira, "Purgatory's Intercessors: Bishops, Ghosts, and Angry Wives," in *Imagining the Medieval Afterlife*, ed. Richard Matthew Pollard, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 134.
[242] Henry Ansgar Kelly, "Afterdeath Locations and Return Appearances, from Scripture to Shakespeare," in *Imagining the Medieval Afterlife*, ed. Richard Matthew Pollard, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 177–79.
[243] Foxhall Forbes, "The Theology of Afterlife in the Early Middle Ages," 155; Helen Foxhall Forbes, "Diuiduntur in Quattuor: The Interim and Judgement in Anglo-Saxon England," *The Journal of Theological Studies, New Series* 61, no. 2 (2010): 659–84.

century. In Carolingian spirituality, the good will not receive early rewards in *Hades*, in accordance with Augustine. Carolingian texts also had a strong moralizing note, focusing on the souls of Charlemagne and other leaders of the Frankish kingdom. They particularly emphasized the important roles of intercession by prayer and intercession by women. A particularly influential role in this development was played by Reichenau Abbey.

These beliefs were gradually superseded by the thinking of the second half of the 11th century, for example promoted by Cluny and Constantinople. The concepts of Tertullian and Gregory the Great evolved towards the assumption of an Earthly Paradise in *Hades* for the souls of the good, providing a more desirable alternative to the sober perspective of idle resting, as promoted by Augustine. Thereby, the focus of the narrative of the afterlife had begun to shift from the torments of proto-purgatory and Hell to the rewards of Earthly Paradise and Heaven.

A short history of the iconography of the Last Judgment

The previous section summarized the development of the spirituality of the afterlife according to literary sources. Here, this view will be complemented by a concise summary of the evolution of the iconography of the Last Judgment (Table 6). The combination of both views will eventually provide a renewed perspective on the tympanum of Conques. The following synopsis is largely based on the comprehensive monographs of Voss, Christe, Pace with Angheben, and Loerke.[244]

Precursors of the iconography of the Last Judgment were created in the 3rd to 6th centuries in Rome and Ravenna. While further precursors from the Eastern Mediterranean are likely, their existence has never been proven. The iconographic ideas of Rome and Ravenna were adopted at the Anterior Rhine in the second half of the 8th century. From there, the idea of visualizing the Last Judgment developed and continuously matured while moving down the Rhine from Disentis via Chur/Müstair and St. Gall to Reichenau. The iconography of these illustrations was based on the text of Matthew 24-25. Only selected iconographic ideas were adopted from the Apocalypse or from later texts. Due to the leading artistic role and vast network of Reichenau Abbey, the latter became the most influential center of dissemination for the iconography of the Last Judgment. In the 10th and 11th centuries, illustrations of the Last Judgment also appeared in a handful of Byzantine locations along the pilgrimage route from Venice to the Holy Land. It therefore remains open to what extent their iconography was imported from the west or constitutes an echo of pre-iconoclastic iconography. The most important innovation of 11th century Byzantine iconography, known from visualizations in Constantinople and Torcello, was the joint representation of the Particular and the Last Judgment following the texts of Tertullian and Gregory the Great. The tympanum of Conques is believed to constitute the earliest monumental visualization of the Last Judgment of the Romanesque period.

According to this history, the wall painting of Müstair may have been the decisive moment in which the mature iconography of the Last Judgment was developed. Evidently, such a significant development required spiritual and artistic precursors, most likely from Reichenau Abbey and from Italy. The surprisingly similar wall painting of Sant'Angelo in Formis near Naples raises the open question whether Müstair and Formis may have had a common ancestor, potentially in Rome. In the following, more details will be provided on the development steps outlined above.

The Good Shepherd and the Parousia of Christ in Rome and Ravenna

From the 3rd to the early 6th centuries, until the end of the Ostrogothic rule, selected iconographic motifs were developed that heralded later visual representations of the Last Judgment. These include the Good Shepherd and his separation of the Sheep and Goat as well as early visualizations of the Parousia of Christ. Such depictions

[244] Georg Voss, *Das Jüngste Gericht in der bildenden Kunst des frühen Mittelalters* (E. A. Seemann, 1884); Christe, *Das Jüngste Gericht*; Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*; Marc-Oliver Loerke, "Höllenfahrt Christi und Anastasis: Ein Bildmotiv im Abendland und im christlichen Osten" (Universität Regensburg, 2007), https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bvb:355-opus-7544.

are known from Rome and Ravenna. There is no evidence for the existence of comparable motifs in the Byzantine empire.

The earlier of them is the representation of Christ as the Good Shepherd and his separation of the Sheep and the Goats according to Matthew 25:31-46. The earliest extant visualization of the separation of the Sheep and the Goats exists at a 4th century sarcophagus from Rome, now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. The left hand of Christ shows a rejecting gesture towards the goats in line with the text of Matthew 25.[245] Further representations of this scene are known from the apse of a lost church in Fondi from about 400, located between Rome and Naples, as well as from a mosaic of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna from about 500.[246] The shepherd of Ravenna also shows an asymmetrical hand gesture to indicate his rejection of the goat.

In the same period, several mosaics were created in Rome with the Parousia of Christ, showing him sitting on a throne or on a large sphere. In these mosaics, Christ is often arranged with selected iconographic elements from the Book of Apocalypse. These include clouds symbolizing divine power, the twenty-four elder, the four living creatures, the Lamb of God, twelve lambs as representations of the twelve apostles or depictions of Heavenly Jerusalem. These elements were shown in different combinations at Old-St. Peter, Santa Constanza, Santa Pudenziana, San Paolo fuori le mura, and Santi Cosma e Damiano. An early representation of the triumphal cross exists at Santa Pudenziana. Later representations followed at San Michele in Africisco and Sant'Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna. But apart from Heavenly Jerusalem and the triumphal cross, these iconographic elements have no relevance for the Last Judgment.

In this first phase, the idea of the Last Judgment was introduced through the allegory of the Sheep and the Goat. But its iconography has no resemblance with later representations, except for the rejecting gesture of the left hand of Christ.

First iconographic elements of the Last Judgment in the early Byzantine era

In the next phase from the second quarter of the 6th century to the first quarter of the 9th century, starting with the rule of Justinian, several visualizations were created under Byzantine influence that in the past were interpreted as early representations of the Last Judgment. However, later analysis rejected or at least questioned these claims. These visualizations have iconographic parallels with later representations of the Last Judgment. Therefore, it remains an open question whether pre-iconoclastic representations of the Last Judgment existed in the Byzantine empire.

An important development step was the often-overlooked apse mosaic of San Michele in Africisco in Ravenna from around 545 (Figure 66), now in the Museum of Byzantine Art in Berlin. It contains the earliest extant representation of the seven angels with seven trumpets of the Apocalypse as well as one of the potentially earliest representations of the Arma Christi. The mosaic shows seven angels with trumpets surrounding the Majesty of Christ and the two adjacent archangels with the Arma Christi.

According to the text of the Apocalypse, the seven angels with seven trumpets announce the Parousia of Christ rather than the Last Judgment. However, they create a parallel with the text of Matthew 25 and later representations of the Last Judgment. In addition, they convey the sense of a one-time event rather than a continuous state. Most likely, the mosaic was an early, not yet fully developed representation of trinity. Christ is displayed three times, as a young person with the triumphal cross (the Son), as an older person sitting on a throne with the symbols of his Parousia (an approximation to the Father), and as the Lamb of God surrounded by twelve doves (an early representation of the Holy Spirit). Such a representation of trinity would be well motivated in the anti-Arian climate of Justinian Ravenna.

Apart from the seven angels with seven trumpets and the representation of Christ with the triumphal cross, the two angels with the Arma Christi deserve further

[245] Christe, *Das Jüngste Gericht*, Abb. 2.

[246] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 21 f.

discussion. Today, the mosaic is displayed in heavily restored condition. Due to the poorly documented restoration of the 19th century and due to conflicting earlier drawings, it is not beyond doubt that the angels next to Christ held the Arma Christi in their hands rather than plain ceremonial sticks. Three of five drawings from the time before the restoration show the Arma Christi.[247] The watercolor of Ravenna (Figure 66) is one of them. The earliest of the two drawings showing ceremonial sticks, dating from 1699, is very inaccurate, leaving only one rather accurate drawing that would speak against the originality of the Arma Christi. Unfortunately, it is the latter drawing that was used for the restoration work giving some credibility to potential doubts about the originality of the Arma Christi. On the other hand, the restored mosaic clearly shows the Arma Christi. In light of the interpretation of the mosaic as representation of trinity, the Arma Christi would indeed be important to indicate that the Majesty with the beard is identical with Christ and not an image of God as a separate person.[248] A 6th century pilgrim ampulla from the Holy Land, found in Bobbio, also contains a representation of the Arma Christi.[249] Similar representations are known from several art works created in the Orient, dating from the 6th to the 10th centuries and later.[250] Therefore, it is quite likely that the mosaic from San Michele in Africisco constitutes one of the earliest representations of the Arma Christi indeed. Interestingly, also the lost apse of Fondi with the separation of the Sheep and the Goat contained a representation of trinity.[251] Apparently, the concept of trinity was seen as closely linked to the Parousia of Christ and eventually to the Last Judgment. In any case, the angels with trumpets, the triumphal cross of Christ, and the angels with the Arma Christi of San Michele in Africisco have considerable iconographic parallels with the tympanum of Conques, even though the overall themes of both images are not identical. Before Conques, the Arma Christi were already included in the Last Judgments of St. George in Reichenau-Oberzell and Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello (Figure 68), both dating from the 11th century.[252]

Generally, Justinian Ravenna was under strong influence from the Eastern Mediterranean. In particular, the anti-Arian theme of the mosaic of San Michele in Africisco and its patron saints Cosmas and Damian point towards a creation under strong Byzantine influence.

A handful of artistic artifacts created between the 6th and 9th centuries preempt iconographic elements of later representations of the Last Judgment. But none of them was validated as an early representation of the Last Judgment. In most cases, even their dating leaves significant room for doubt. These new elements include courtroom scenes, dead rising from their tombs or damned in the fire. Such elements can be found in copies of a manuscript of the Christian Topography of Cosmas Indikopleustes, a terracotta from the Palazzo Barberini in Rome, now in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, a sarcophagus from Jouarre, and a manuscript that may be attributed to Johannes Damascenus.[253] At least the text of Johannes Damascenus indicates the potential existence of a Byzantine iconography of the Last Judgment before the iconoclasm.[254] In addition, it is assumed that the Trier Apocalypse from the early 9th century may have been based on a 6th century manuscript.[255] It contains an illustration of the Last Judgment closely following the text of Apocalypse 20. But it has not found any notable succession in Carolingian art.[256]

Between the end of the 7th century and around 820, representations of the Lamb of God with the Book with Seven Seals and the Seven Candlesticks were added to the iconographic toolbox at Santi Cosma e Damiano and Santa Prassede in Rome. Pope Sergius I who mandated the mosaic on the triumphal arch of Santi Cosma e Damiano was of Syrian origin further pointing towards Byzantine influences.

[247] Arne Effenberger, *Das Mosaik aus der Kirche San Michele in Africisco zu Ravenna: Ein Kunstwerk in der Frühchristlich-byzantinischen Sammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1975), 65.
[248] Effenberger, *Das Mosaik aus der Kirche San Michele in Affricisco zu Ravenna*, 73–75, 78.
[249] Christe, *Das Jüngste Gericht*, 94.
[250] Tania Velmans, *L'Orient Chrétien. Art et Croyances* (Éditions A. et J. Picard, 2017), 72–79.
[251] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 22.
[252] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 65.
[253] Christe, *Das Jüngste Gericht*, 16 f., 25–27, 33 f.
[254] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 25.
[255] Peter K. Klein, "L'Apocalypse de Trèves," in *Le Jugement dernier: entre Orient et Occident*, by Marcello Angheben, ed. Valentino Pace (Les Éditions du Cerf, 2007).
[256] Christe, *Das Jüngste Gericht*, 109.

Iconography of the Harrowing of Hell

Another indication in the direction of Early Byzantine influences is provided by the iconography of the Harrowing of Hell or *Descensus ad inferos*, the descent of Christ into *Hades* between the crucifixion and the resurrection.[257] The Sixth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople of 680/81 emphasized the importance of the feast of Easter and promoted the representation of Christ as a person rather than by its transfiguration as the Lamb of God. In this context, the narrative of the Harrowing of Hell became an important element of orthodox Easter liturgy although it is hardly mentioned in the Bible.[258] It is rather based on Jewish traditions and on the apocryphal gospel of Nicodemus. Nevertheless, the doctrine of the Harrowing of Hell was already accepted by the councils of Nicaea and Constantinople from 359/60. Its main theological intent is the redemption of those who lived before the death of Christ and therefore were unable to adopt the Christian faith. From an iconographic perspective, such redemption was directed to Adam and Eve or to the Patriarchs of the Old Testament.

For the purposes of our discussion, it is relevant that the motif of the Harrowing of Hell motivated the first Christian illustrations of Hell predating the earliest representations of the Last Judgment. It contributed to the introduction of the Greek concept of *Hades* to the Christian faith, beyond the vague allusions of the Apocalypse. Both points were instrumental for later representations of the Last Judgment.

Most likely, the iconography of the Harrowing of Hell was developed in the last quarter of the 7th century, as a consequence of the Sixth Ecumenical Council from 680/81.[259] Due to the iconoclasm, no Early Byzantine representations are known. Instead, the earliest extant illustrations exist in the chapel of pope John VII at Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome. John VII mandated the wall painting around 705-07.[260] There and in later Byzantine depictions, Christ grabs Adam by the hand to pull him out of Hell while *Hades* tries to hold him back by the foot. The earliest extant Byzantine depiction is known from Kiliçlar Kilise near Göreme in Cappadocia.[261]

In the 9th century, a handful of wall paintings with this motif were created in some churches of Rome, including the chapel of Zeno of Santa Prassede, the crypt and nave of San Clemente, San Giovanni e Paolo, and Old-St. Peter.[262] Outside Rome, early wall paintings are only known from Müstair and Cimitile near Naples. Also, a few miniatures from the 9th and the early 11th centuries exist, most notably in the Utrecht Psalter. In the period of 1080-1110, a few more depictions were created in the Papal States, such as in Sant'Angelo in Formis, Salerno, Farfa, and Monte Cassino.[263] The slightly earlier doors of San Paolo fuori le Mura with the same motif were created in Constantinople. The scene of the Harrowing of Hell is also included in the wall mosaic of the Last Judgment at Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello from about 1080.

To conclude, nearly all western representations of the Harrowing of Hell from the time before 1100 were created in Rome or in the Papal States. The only notable exceptions are Müstair and Torcello. These were key locations for the development of the iconography of the Last Judgment. Coincidences with the iconography of the Last Judgment also exist in Göreme and Formis. Apparently, the evolution of the iconography of the Last Judgment was closely related to the Harrowing of Hell. In the Catholic Church, the crucifixion of Christ increasingly gained priority over his resurrection, by the latest since Anselm of Canterbury in the late 11th century.[264] As a consequence, the tympanum of Conques displays the Cross where the wall mosaic of the Last Judgment of Torcello shows the Harrowing of Hell.

Full development of the Last Judgment in the cultural space of Reichenau Abbey

The iconography of the Last Judgment matured in the West. Possibly, it was even invented there since the early medieval spirituality of the afterlife described in the previous section was developed during the Byzantine

[257] Loerke, "Höllenfahrt Christi und Anastasis."
[258] A short allusion to the Harrowing of Hell is included in 1 Peter 3:19. Loerke, "Höllenfahrt Christi und Anastasis," 4–7.
[259] Loerke, "Höllenfahrt Christi und Anastasis," 23–25.
[260] Loerke, "Höllenfahrt Christi und Anastasis," 22.
[261] Loerke, "Höllenfahrt Christi und Anastasis," 26, 29.
[262] Loerke, "Höllenfahrt Christi und Anastasis," 37 f.
[263] Loerke, "Höllenfahrt Christi und Anastasis," 64.
[264] Loerke, "Höllenfahrt Christi und Anastasis," 15.

iconoclasm. In line with this evolution, a text of Bede the Venerable from the early 8th century reports on an image of the Last Judgment on the northern wall of a church in Wearmouth.[265] However, the maturation of the iconography of the Last Judgment seems to have taken place in the period from the late 8th to the mid-11th centuries in the eastern Frankish kingdom and later empire, along the Alpine sections of the Rhine ranging from the Anterior Rhine to Lake Constance.

Recent excavations at the abbey of St. Martin in Disentis at the Anterior Rhine provided evidence that a precursor church from around 750 contained a monumental painted relief with seven angels with trumpets, a dozen or more saints holding scrolls in their hands, more than 45 angels, and the potentially earliest representation of the Dormition of the Virgin (*Koimesis*).[266] As discussed in the context of the mosaic of San Michele in Africisco, the angels with trumpets alone do not suffice to interpret the relief as a representation of the Last Judgment. The large number of angels and saints or apostles would at least be consistent with Matthew 25 and 19. Given the spiritual developments of the period around 760 exemplified by the first confraternities of prayer, a reference of the relief of Disentis to the Last Judgment is not unlikely. At least, it represented a further step in the development of iconography going beyond San Michele in Africisco.

According to current knowledge, the most significant development step of the iconography of the Last Judgment consisted in the extensive wall painting at the interior west wall of the church of St. John the Baptist in Müstair, presumably dating from the first half of the 9th century.[267] Müstair was an important Carolingian monastery at the former border to Lombard Italy. It also was a residence of the bishop of Chur, the latter being located at the Alpine Rhine between Disentis and Lake Constance. The iconography of Müstair is almost entirely based on Matthew 24-25 with 19.[268] The scene of the Judgment is arranged in several registers. As outlined in the previous section, the iconographic elements derived from Matthew include the announcement of the Judgment by angels with trumpets and presumably by the Cross, a glory of angels, an oversized Christ as judge sitting on a throne in a mandorla, the twelve Apostles as his jury, the dead rising from their tombs as well as the saved on the right side of Christ and presumably the damned on his left side. The assumed representations of the Cross and the damned are no longer extant. The most unique element of the Last Judgment of Müstair consists in the asymmetrical gestures of Christ. He raises his right arm which is directed towards the saved while lowering his left arm pointing to the assumed representation of the damned. In addition, his left palm is turned away from the observer in a somewhat unnatural way. The gesture of Christ's left arm refers to the rejection of the damned, as described in Matthew 25. The only iconographic elements based on the Apocalypse are an angel rolling up the scrolls of the sky and the arches above the Apostles representing Heavenly Jerusalem. The Last Judgment of Müstair is part of an extensive series of scenes from the Book of David and from the New Testament filling the entire nave.[269] The arrangement of these scenes closely resembles what is known about the lost wall paintings of important basilicas of Rome, such as the Lateran Basilica, Old-St. Peter or San Paolo fuori le mura, manifesting strong Italian influences.[270]

A document from Reichenau Abbey dating from the second half of the 9th century comments on a planned painting of the Last Judgment at the west wall of the new abbey church of St. Gall near Lake Constance. Christ as judge was to be surrounded by trumpet angels and by several saints as a jury, conforming with the archaeological findings from Disentis. This painting was to be executed by monks from Reichenau Abbey.[271]

The manuscripts of the Bamberg Apocalypse, the Pericopes of Henry II of Bamberg, and the Bernulphus Codex in Utrecht, produced by monks of Reichenau Abbey around 1000-50, contain rather similar

[265] Christe, *Das Jüngste Gericht*, 18; Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 27.
[266] Studer, *Byzanz in Disentis*, 11–13, 50–65, 202–33.
[267] Alexis Dind and Jürg Goll, *Kloster St. Johann. Müstair*, 32nd ed., Kunstführer 10601 (Schnell & Steiner, 2017), 18.
[268] Peter K. Klein, "Les peintures Carolingiennes de Saint Jean à Müstair," in *Le Jugement dernier: entre Orient et Occident*, by Marcello Angheben, ed. Valentino Pace (Les Éditions du Cerf, 2007).
[269] Dind and Goll, *Kloster St. Johann. Müstair*, 26–28.
[270] Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen in Rom*, 23–26, 102, 130 f.
[271] Christe, *Das Jüngste Gericht*, 105; Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 27 f.; Cornel Dora, "Fischfang trifft Morchelzucht: Die Reichenau und das Kloster St. Gallen," in *Welterbe des Mittelalters: 1300 Jahre Klosterinsel Reichenau*, ed. Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe (Schnell & Steiner, 2024), 192.

miniatures of the Last Judgment. They constitute a somewhat condensed version of Müstair. The most representative of them is the miniature from the Bamberg Apocalypse (Figure 67). Despite being an illustration for a Book of the Apocalypse, its iconography is derived from Matthew 24-25 as well. In a slight variation of the text of Matthew, Christ presents a large triumphal cross with his right hand. The only iconographic additions from the Apocalypse are the representation of Hell with Satan in chains as well as the representations of kings and bishops among the saved and damned (Apocalypse 20:12). Further characteristic elements are two angels with scrolls containing passages from Matthew 25. Angels with illegible scrolls already existed in Müstair. The Brescia Casket would have provided a natural model for them.[272]

In the middle of the 11th century, another wall painting of the Last Judgment was created at the eastern wall of the narthex of St. George in Reichenau-Oberzell.[273] Generally, it is similarly structured as the wall painting from Müstair. However, it no longer is presented in the nave as the end of the sequence of scenes addressing those leaving the church. Instead, it is positioned above the entrance to the nave. Its position preempts later tympana of the Last Judgment in Romanesque and Gothic art. The wall painting of Reichenau-Oberzell introduced three novel elements regarding the iconography of Christ.[274] The mandorla is decorated with stars and clouds to more explicitly indicate its representation of Heaven. In addition, the passion of Christ is emphasized by a depiction of the Arma and Stigmata Christi. Like the Arma Christi, the Cross is presented by an angel. Another angel presents the open *Liber vitae*. The stars and the Arma Christi may have been derived from early Christian models such as the mosaic of San Michele in Africisco. In addition, the Virgin is introduced as intercessor. Intercession with Christ by the Virgin and by St. John the Baptist, the deesis, was an element of Byzantine representations of the Last Judgment. However, this analogy does not necessarily imply Byzantine influences. The Virgin was the patron saint of the abbey church of Reichenau. A prayer for the dead of Reichenau Abbey from the 9th century already refers to intercession by the Virgin.[275] To provide space for these new elements, the glory of angels was dropped which had no basis in the text of Matthew 24-25 anyway. Finally, the representation of the Last Judgment was combined with a depiction of the crucifixion.

The related representation of the Last Judgment of St. Michael in Burgfelden dating from the second half of the 11th century is stylistically linked to St. George in Reichenau-Oberzell. It is located about 75 km north of Reichenau. Here, the Cross is presented by two angels, like in Conques. An additional angel with a lance pushes the damned into Hell.[276] In addition, they are pulled by two devils.

From the second half of the 11th to the early 12th centuries, a few additional wall paintings related to the Last Judgment were created at the northern edge of Italy, such as at San Michele in Oleggio, San Vincenzo in Castro near Novara, San Carlo in Prugiasco (today Negrentino), and San Pietro al Monte in Civate near Como or in Acquanegra sul chiese near Nonantola.[277] Their iconography shows selected Byzantine influences that will be discussed in the next section.

To summarize, from the middle of the 8th to the middle of the 11th century, a specific iconography of the Last Judgment was developed in the cultural space of Reichenau Abbey. This iconography was mostly based on Matthew 24-25 with few additions from the Apocalypse. The presentation of the Arma and Stigmata Christi, the

[272] Brescia and Verona were the nearest important settlements in northern Italy. Christ teaching with a scroll in a synagogue is the central motif of the impressive 4th century Brescia Casket. The latter was kept by the monastery of San Salvatore in Brescia which was very closely connected to Reichenau Abbey according to their *Liber vitae*. Therefore, it is not unlikely that the artists of Müstair or Reichenau Abbey were aware of the Brescia Casket. The motif of Christ teaching in a synagogue from the Holy Scriptures would provide a natural motivation for the introduction of scrolls with texts in iconography.

[273] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 64; Caroline Raither-Schärli, "Wunderbilder im Großformat: Die frühmittelalterlichen Wandmalereien von St. Georg in Oberzell," in *Welterbe des Mittelalters: 1300 Jahre Klosterinsel Reichenau*, ed. Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe (Schnell & Steiner, 2024), 322.

[274] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 65; Peter K. Klein, "Le dévéloppement du Jugement Dernier dans le Haut Moyen Âge à Reichenau," in *Le Jugement dernier: entre Orient et Occident*, by Marcello Angheben, ed. Valentino Pace (Les Éditions du Cerf, 2007), 46.

[275] Hendrix, "Das Totenoffizium auf der Reichenau und in St. Gallen," 73.

[276] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 65 f.

[277] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 62.

intercession by the Virgin as well as angels with scrolls containing explanatory texts appear to be specific elements of Reichenau Abbey.

When taking the institutional connection between Müstair and Chur into account, one can follow the early development of this iconography step by step as it progressed down the Rhine, from Disentis via Chur/Müstair and St. Gall to Reichenau. San Michele in Africisco of Ravenna would have provided a natural model for Disentis.

Also, the vast majority of all western illustrations of the Last Judgment from the period before 1100 were created in the cultural space of Reichenau Abbey, in or near a geographic triangle defined by Reichenau, Milan, and Verona (Figure 71), including the major Alpine passes between the Germanic and Italian territories of the Frankish kingdom and the empire. The few other realizations do not show any regional clustering nor did they have any noticeable influence on later manifestations of the motif. The exceptional case of Sant'Angelo in Formis will be discussed later. Given that this finding is based on various sources, including excavations, extant wall paintings, mentions in text documents, and illuminated manuscripts, it is very unlikely that another region of such influence has existed elsewhere in Latin Europe without leaving any trace in history.

Given the leading role of Reichenau Abbey in the manifestation of Carolingian thinking on the afterlife, it is plausible that the earliest extant visualization of the Last Judgment of monumental size may have been created in Müstair indeed. As a residence of the bishop of Chur, it had close connections to St. Gall and Reichenau. On the other hand, Chur and Müstair belonged to the diocese of Milan until 843.[278] Most of the bishops and monks of Chur and Müstair came from Italy. Thereby, it had a unique pivotal position between early influences of Carolingian spirituality from Reichenau and artistic influences from northern Italy.

For the sake of completeness, it shall be mentioned that the 9th and 10th centuries saw a limited development of the iconography of the Last Judgment under Anglo-Irish influence. A Carolingian ivory from about 800 of unknown origin, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, includes the presumably earliest extant joint representation of Heaven and Hell. It features allegorical representations of Heaven's Gate and of the Mouth of Hell, the latter being based on Bede's vision of Drythelm.[279] In addition, few differently structured representations of the Last Judgment from the 10th century exist in Ireland.[280] Muiredach's cross in Monasterboice from 923 contains the earliest extant depiction of the Weighing of Souls. It is unclear whether there were any connections with contemporary representations in Cappadocia.[281]

Further development of the iconography in the Byzantine empire

Only very few Byzantine visualizations of the Last Judgment are known from the time before 1100. The presumably earliest of them was created in Kastoria in the early 10th century.[282] Further wall paintings are known from Cappadocia, near Aksaray and Göreme, and from Thessaloniki. A relevant illustrated manuscript is preserved from Constantinople. Other representations are known from Armenia, Georgia, and the Sinai. It is still subject of debate whether pre-iconoclastic illustrations of the subject existed in the Byzantine empire. Given the findings above, there is a certain likeliness that precursors may already have existed. But most likely, the fully developed representation of the Last Judgment was a Carolingian invention developed in the cultural space of Reichenau Abbey. This hypothesis is supported by the observation that nearly all known Byzantine visualizations of the Last Judgment from this period were located on or near the pilgrimage route from Venice to the Holy Land that was discussed in the chapter on the architecture of Conques (Figure 71). Moreover, the earliest of them is located furthest to the west in western Greece. The wall painting of Panagia Chalkeon in Thessaloniki was created for a church that shows

[278] Walter Kettemann, "Ein Namen-Text: Die Churer Bischofsreihe und die politische Botschaft des ältesten Eintrags im 'Liber viventium Fabariensis,'" in *Bücher des Lebens - Lebendige Bücher*, ed. Peter Erhart and Jakob Kuratli Hüeblin (Stiftsarchiv St. Gallen, 2010), 90 f.

[279] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 26, 30 f.

[280] Christe, *Das Jüngste Gericht*, 110.

[281] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 32–34.

[282] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 34 f.

significant western influences in its architecture, as was discussed above. Connections to the west certainly existed in Constantinople too. In the case of a Last Judgment from Armenia, created around 930, it is even documented that the artist came from the west.[283] These observations indicate with high likeliness that the Byzantine representations of the Last Judgment were not created in isolation.

Therefore, it is not surprising that some representations of the Last Judgment in remote Cappadocia exhibit striking similarities with their western precursors, including representations of the twenty-four elder, the presentation of the Cross or angels with scrolls.[284] The following discussion of the Byzantine representations of the Last Judgment will be limited to the novel iconographic elements that they contributed.

In the first half of the 10th century, the earliest extant Byzantine representations of the Last Judgment were created in Kastoria and in four churches of Cappadocia near Aksaray and Göreme, the most prominent being the so-called Church of Serpents.[285] They added several new iconographic elements that were later adopted in the West. One of their most important innovations is the representation of the deesis with the Virgin and St. John the Baptist as intercessors. Another is archangel Michael with the Weighing of Souls and a devil trying to influence the balance in his favor. The novel representation of the three Patriarchs later evolved to the Bosom of Abraham. Particularly relevant for Conques are the extensive representations of Hell separated into numerous compartments. The torments of Hell are represented by devils and serpents. Devils may ride on monsters. Less relevant for the western adoption are the addition of the Stream of Fire emanating from the throne of Christ as well as the images of cherubim and seraphim. Sometimes, there is a link to the representation of the scene of Pentecost. Most of these new elements relate to Greek and Egyptian mythologies or to other biblical texts, such as the Books of Daniel and Judith.

In contrast to Latin Europe, later Byzantine representations of the Last Judgment followed a clearly defined standard that was developed in the 11th century.[286] The earliest representations are a wall painting in the narthex of Panagia Chalkeon in Thessaloniki from around 1028 and two miniatures from a *tetraevangelion* of the monastery of Stoudios in Constantinople (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms. grec. 74) produced in the middle or second half of the 11th century.[287] Additional 11th century realizations exist in Ateni in Georgia and on the Sinai. The miniatures from Constantinople are prototypical for the later classic Byzantine type.[288] By the end of the 11th and early 12th centuries, the new Byzantine type was adopted in Italy by a monumental mosaic at the west wall of Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello (Figure 68) and by an ivory, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.[289]

The representation of the Last Judgment of Constantinople includes even more elements from the text of the Apocalypse than its Carolingian precursors. However, its most significant innovation is the joint representation of the Particular and the Last Judgment.[290] This co-representation is even more visible in Torcello (Figure 69).[291] In both representations, the process of the Judgment is separated into three registers. The Last Judgment is displayed in the middle register with the saved on the right side of Christ and the damned on his left side. The saved are turned towards Christ while the damned are pushed away by two angels, following the text of Matthew 25. The damned reside in a Lake of Fire together with representations of Satan and the False Prophet or Antichrist, both sitting on the Beast. These elements closely follow the text of Apocalypse 20. Accordingly, the judge of the Last Judgment is represented by an empty throne. The upper register shows the resurrection of the dead bodies, in Torcello from sea and from land as described in Apocalypse 20. The register below can be read as a representation of the Particular Judgment.[292] In Constantinople, the latter

[283] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 36.
[284] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 36.
[285] Christe, *Das Jüngste Gericht*, 21–24; Catherine Jolivet-Lévy, "Premières images du Jugement Dernier en Cappadoce Byzantine (X° siècle)," in *Le Jugement dernier: entre Orient et Occident*, by Marcello Angheben, ed. Valentino Pace (Les Éditions du Cerf, 2007).
[286] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 53.
[287] Christe, *Das Jüngste Gericht*, 27, Abb. 8.
[288] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 53.
[289] Christe, *Das Jüngste Gericht*, Abb. 10.
[290] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 55 f.
[291] Christe, *Das Jüngste Gericht*, Abb. 11.
[292] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 56–60.

judgment act is indicated by archangel Michael with the Weighing of Souls.[293] The righteous are sent to an Earthly Paradise with Lazarus in the Bosom of Abraham and the Virgin as inhabitants. The wicked are sitting in various compartments of *Hades*. In contrast to the Lake of Fire of the Last Judgment (middle register), most of these compartments do not show any signs of fire. None of these compartments contain explicit visualizations of torments. Christ thrones on top of this three-register scene of the Judgment together with the twelve Apostles and a glory of angels (Figure 68). According to the text of the Apocalypse, this visualization of Christ refers to his thousand-year reign as King of Kings rather than to the Last Judgment. In order to indicate that Christ is also involved in the Last Judgment, a Stream of Fire emanates from his throne connecting the latter with the empty throne of the Last Judgment and with the Lake of Fire representing Hell.

For the first time, this comprehensive illustration of the Last Judgment integrates the ideas of Matthew 24-25, Apocalypse 20, and Luke 16 in a balanced way. The tension, if not conflict, between the descriptions of the Particular and the Last Judgment in these texts is resolved based on Tertullian and Gregory the Great. Tertullian's concept of *refrigerium* is re-interpreted as a location, an Earthly Paradise hosting Abraham and Lazarus from Luke 16. The act of the Last Judgment is represented by the reunification of the previously judged souls (lower register) with their dead bodies (upper register) following the Dialogues of Gregory the Great. The Weighing of Souls is introduced as counter-image to the empty throne of God to differentiate between Particular and Last Judgment.

As mentioned before, such re-interpretation of the *refrigerium* of Tertullian as location in the otherworld rather than an abstract concept can also be observed in the charters of Cluny of the same period, the middle or second half of the 11th century.[294] Similarly, the link between Pentecost and the Last Judgment that exists in some representations of the Last Judgment in Cappadocia had parallels with Cluny. In the liturgy of Cluny, the text of Matthew 24-25 was read on the Sunday after Pentecost.[295] Similarly, the tympanum of the lost west portal of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine in Vézelay, which was linked to Cluny, showed the Last Judgment while the central portal of the narthex addresses the event of Pentecost. The nature of potential links from Cluny to Constantinople is unknown. At least, Cluny demonstrated a strong interest in the Crusades. It possessed five priories in the Holy Land and near Constantinople around 1100.[296] The establishment of its priory in Civitot, near Nicaea and Constantinople, may even predate the First Crusade.[297]

The very visible adoption of the new Byzantine type of the Last Judgment in Torcello near Venice certainly played an important role in the dissemination of its iconography to the West. Nevertheless, the mosaic of Torcello (Figure 68) did not fully follow the Byzantine model. Among others, the strict arrangement of the scenes in registers, the presentation of the Cross, and the Arma Christi are typical elements of western iconography. In addition, it complemented the Byzantine type consisting of the Parousia of Christ as well as the Particular and Last Judgment with representations of the Crucifixion and the Harrowing of Hell.

To conclude, there is credible evidence that the motifs of the deesis, the Bosom of Abraham, and archangel Michael with the Weighing of Souls had their origin in Byzantine art. The same applies to detailed representations of Hell with several compartments and explicit representations of torments executed by demons or serpents. However, the most significant innovation of the Byzantine Last Judgment was its integration of the concepts of Particular and Last Judgment following the texts of Tertullian and Gregory the Great. Nevertheless, there are no hints that the Last Judgment had particular importance in Byzantine art. For example, the many Byzantine wall paintings in the Balkans do not provide the slightest indication that even associated motifs of the Last Judgment were common.[298] We also have no

[293] In Torcello, the link of the Weighing of Souls to the Particular Judgment is less obvious. It could also be linked to the Last Judgment.
[294] Neiske, "Pro defunctis exorare ut a peccatis solvantur," 195.
[295] Christe, *Das Jüngste Gericht*, 8.
[296] Marcellin Babey, "Le pouvoir de Cluny: 1100 ans d'une abbaye d'exception," *Histoire et images médiévales* 31 (2010): 59.
[297] Jules Gay, "L'abbaye de Cluny et Byzance au début du XIIe siècle," *Échos d'Orient* 30, no. 161 (1931): 84–86, https://doi.org/10.3406/rebyz.1931.2667.
[298] Vojislav J. Đurić, *Byzantinische Fresken in Jugoslawien* (Hirmer, 1976).

indications for the existence of an iconography of the Last Judgment in Egypt and its neighboring regions.[299] From the 11th century, selected Byzantine elements enriched western representations of the Last Judgment. But the primary iconographic development must have happened in the West, most likely in the cultural space of Reichenau Abbey.

Adoption of the Last Judgment in Romanesque Art

For the longest part of the 11th century, the motif of the Last Judgment did not find further adoption in the West, other than at some smaller churches in Northern Italy. Only at the end of the 11th century, two realizations of the Last Judgment were created that may have had greater influence. The wall mosaic of Torcello introduced the new Byzantine type of the Last Judgment to the West. The monumental wall painting at Sant'Angelo in Formis introduced the Carolingian tradition to the south of Italy. This situation changed significantly in the first third of the 12th century. In this period, first sculpted visualizations of the Last Judgment were created in Conques, Autun, and Mâcon. In contrast to their Carolingian and Byzantine precursors, their iconography was rather individual. The most important innovation was the shifted position of the Last Judgment from the west wall of the nave to the façade of the church.[300] This shift was preempted by the Last Judgments of Panagia Chalkeon in Thessaloniki and St. George in Reichenau-Oberzell which were positioned in the narthex, above the entrance to the nave.

The tympanum of Saint-Denis from around 1140 paved the way for the Gothic type of the Last Judgment. Therefore, Conques, Autun, Mâcon, Vézelay (lost), Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne, and Santa María la Real in Sangüesa represent the only known Romanesque tympana of the Last Judgment.[301] The tympanum of Moissac rather addresses the Parousia of Christ.[302] Apart from Conques and Sangüesa, the mentioned Romanesque locations were either institutionally or geographically linked to the abbey of Cluny. Hence, Cluny may have played a major role in the dissemination of the motif of the Last Judgment in Romanesque France.

The Formis challenge: Did a common ancestor exist in Rome?

In the previous sections, it was argued that the iconography of the Last Judgment had its most relevant origins in the Carolingian era, in the cultural space of Reichenau Abbey. It reached its maturity in the 11th century through cultural exchanges with the Byzantine empire, along the pilgrimage route from Venice to the Holy Land.

However, this surprisingly concise picture has one potential crack that has not been addressed yet. The church of Sant'Angelo in Formis near Naples has a monumental painting of the Last Judgment at its west wall that dates from the last two decades of the 11th century. This wall painting has many unique similarities with the painting of Müstair. Apart from the position at the west wall of the nave, Christ also turns his left palm away from the observer. Further unique commonalities consist in the position of the angels with trumpets and of the dead rising from their tombs above Christ as well as in the existence of angels with scrolls.[303]

By the time of the creation of the painting of Formis, Müstair had become a quiet, politically no longer important place in a remote side valley of the main traffic routes across the Alps. At first glance, it is difficult to imagine that Müstair may have been a model for distant Formis. However, it is known from the confraternity book of Reichenau Abbey that their monks had connections to nearby Benevento. An 11th century copy of the *Visio Wettini* is known to have existed in the Benedictine abbey of Monte Cassino, the owner and builder of Sant'Angelo in Formis. Hence, indirect links between Müstair and Formis did exist.

Nevertheless, the question remains whether Müstair and Formis may have had a common ancestor that now is lost. This question is kept relevant by another rare

[299] Velmans, *L'Orient Chrétien*, 171.
[300] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 60–62.
[301] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 69.
[302] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 71.
[303] Angels with scrolls are also displayed in other representations of the Last Judgment from Reichenau Abbey. Klein, "Les peintures Carolingiennes de Saint Jean à Müstair," 44; Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 63.

coincidence. The rich and comprehensive depictions of the scenes of the Old and New Testament in Müstair must have had models in Italy. In fact, the grid-like arrangement of the scenes is well known from major basilicas of Rome, such as Old-St. Peter, San Paolo fuori le mura or Santa Maria Maggiore. It is an open debate whether such extensive depictions only existed in very few prominent places, like the major basilicas of Rome, or whether they were more widespread. So far, the scientific opinion tends towards looking for artistic models of Müstair in Lombardy, such as in Pavia, Brescia or Verona. However, there is one detail that would rather speak for a direct link to Rome.

The rich scenes of the life of Christ in Müstair include a representation of the Harrowing of Hell. As discussed before, the notion of the Harrowing of Hell is of Byzantine origin. Nearly all known western wall paintings from before 1080 existed in Rome, with the sole exceptions of Müstair and Cimitile.[304] Cimitile is less than 40 km from Formis. The motif of Christ turning his left palm away from the damned, realized in Müstair and Formis, goes back to the text of Matthew 25. This gesture already was displayed on the 4th century sarcophagus from Rome showing the Sheep and the Goat. Apart from the mosaic of Ravenna, the only other known representation of the Sheep and the Goat existed in Fondi, halfway between Rome and Naples. Hence, nearly all potentially relevant iconographic precursors of Müstair, featuring the Sheep and the Goat or the Harrowing of Hell, were located in a region ranging from Rome to Naples, including the abbey of Monte Cassino. A joint representation of the Last Judgment and the Harrowing of Hell is only known from Müstair, Cimitile/Formis, and Torcello. The fact that the iconography of the Harrowing of Hell had its known origin in Rome naturally raises the question whether the Last Judgments of Müstair and Formis may have had a common ancestor in Rome too.

One more indication is pointing in the direction of Rome. The gesture of Christ turning his left palm away from the observer is consistently shown on the mentioned early 12th century Italo-Byzantine ivory of the Last Judgment, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, as well as on nearly all Italian wall paintings or mosaics of the Last Judgment from 1270 to the middle of the 14th century. Such wall paintings or mosaics were created at the baptistery of Florence, Santa Maria ad Cryptas in Fossa, Santa Cecilia in Trastevere in Rome, Santa Maria in Vescovio, the Scrovegni chapel in Padua executed by the Florentine painter Giotto, Santa Maria Novella in Florence, Sant'Andrea in Sommacampagna near Verona, and Santa Maria in Pomposa.[305] All wall paintings described were created in Rome or in a location that was geographically or politically closely connected to the Papal States. Apart from the mosaics in the dome of the baptistery of Florence, all are positioned at the west wall of the nave, like in Müstair and Formis.

While it is a valid possibility that Müstair may have influenced Formis which then influenced the images of the 13th and 14th centuries around Rome, one should consider the possibility that the ancestor of all western representations of the Last Judgment existed in Rome rather than in Müstair. The earliest representation of the Harrowing of Hell in Rome is known from Santa Maria Antiqua, a church with Greek background. Therefore, the most likely candidates would be the handful of secondary churches of Rome that were built in the late 8th or early 9th centuries. Most of them do not show any traces of earlier wall paintings or were so substantially altered that their original state can no longer be judged. Strikingly, Santa Cecilia in Trastevere from about 820 is the earliest of the churches in Italy with a painting of the Last Judgment from the 13th or 14th centuries at its west wall, dating from about 1290. Only the mosaics of the baptistery of Florence are about twenty years older. Most likely, the wall paintings of Müstair were created shortly after the completion of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere.

These rare coincidences pose the open question: Is it conceivable that the Gothic painting of the Last Judgment of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere replaced the true Carolingian ancestor of the iconography of the Last Judgment?

Unless there are new insights from future building research, such a hypothesis will remain speculative. For

[304] Loerke, "Höllenfahrt Christi und Anastasis," 37 f.

[305] The left hand of Christ of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere is no longer visible. As an exception, the Christ of Santa Maria ad Cryptas in Fossa turns the palm of the left hand towards the observer.

the time being, we need to assume that the western iconography of the Last Judgment was invented in Carolingian times in Müstair or in a nearby location in Lombard Italy with close cultural connections to the abbeys of Reichenau or St. Gall.

The tympanum of Conques as a Neo-Carolingian project

The studies on the spirituality and iconography of the Last Judgment have shown that two archetypes of the iconography existed when the tympanum of Conques was created. The earlier Carolingian archetype, developed in the cultural space of Reichenau Abbey, focused on the Last Judgment, mainly based on the text of Matthew 24-25 with limited additions from Apocalypse 20. The more recent Byzantine archetype, for the first time appearing in Constantinople, reached a much higher level of sophistication. It combined the Parousia of Christ with the Particular and Last Judgment in one image. For this purpose, it leveraged the biblical texts of Matthew 24-25, Apocalypse 20, and Luke 16 with additional inspirations from Tertullian and Gregory the Great. Reasonably good examples of these two archetypes are provided by the visualizations of the Bamberg Apocalypse (Figure 67) and Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello (Figure 68).[306]

Given the findings in the previous chapter on the likely origins of the architecture of the abbey church of Conques in the Byzantine world, it would be an obvious hypothesis to look for models for its tympanum of the Last Judgment in the Byzantine archetype too. Indeed, the tympanum of Conques (Figure 57) exhibits several elements that were identified as Byzantine. These include archangel Michael disputing with a devil over the Weighing of Souls and the Bosom of Abraham in the lower register. Whether the Virgin on the right side of Christ goes back to models of Reichenau or whether it constitutes a truncated deesis of Byzantine origin is not evident. Certainly, the most apparent parallel with earlier Byzantine representations consists in the extensive representation of Hell which extends over the middle and lower register of Conques showing various torments by demons and serpents.

However, many Byzantine elements, such as the empty throne of God, the Stream of Fire, the cherubim and seraphim, a complete deesis, the prominent representation of the dead rising from their tombs, the Earthly Paradise featuring Abraham, the Virgin, and lush vegetation or the representation of Satan with the False Prophet (Antichrist) and the Beast, did not find their way to Conques. The few adopted Byzantine elements are insufficient to call the tympanum of Conques a „Neo-Byzantine“ project.

Instead, the arrangement of the scenes in registers, the prominent presentation of the Cross, the Arma Christi, and an oversized representation of Christ are typical elements of the Carolingian archetype. However, they are also included in the hybrid mosaic of Torcello. Hence, the simplest explanation of the tympanum of Conques would be that it was created after the hybrid model of Torcello which conveniently is located on the pilgrimage route to the Holy Land that apparently was of great importance for Conques.

However, a close inspection of the iconography of the tympanum of Conques shows that this assumption is oversimplified. While influences of Torcello certainly are highly likely, for example the anagrams in the nimbus of Christ, the following analysis will show that significant influences from Reichenau must have existed too. The two angels holding the Cross, the asymmetric gesture of Christ, the intercession by the Virgin rather than by the deesis, Heavenly Jerusalem instead of the Earthly Paradise, and the angels with scrolls containing explanatory texts are distinctive features from the cultural space of Reichenau Abbey. Also, the combination of Heaven's Gate and the Mouth of Hell followed a Carolingian model, as did the general sculpture of Auvergne and Rouergue from a stylistic perspective.[307]

In fact, it will be shown that the tympanum of Conques is an innovative Neo-Carolingian visualization that only leveraged some of the recent iconographic elements of the Byzantine archetype, albeit with an entirely new composition and interpretation. The

[306] The mosaic from Torcello is not a pure reflection of the Byzantine archetype. It also exhibits selected western influences. However, these are not material for the discussion below.

[307] Le Deschault De Monredon, "The Influence of Carolingian Art on Some Great Romanesque Sculpture Masters in Auvergne and Rouergue."

following iconographic analysis follows the structure of the tympanum of Conques along its three registers. It will first focus on the upper and the lower registers before conclusions on the more enigmatic middle register are drawn.

Upper register: Presentation of the Cross according to Matthew 24

The upper register is an obvious allusion to Matthew 24. The angels with trumpets signal the imminent beginning of the Last Judgment, and the sign of Christ appears in the sky (Figure 58). In Conques, the sign of Christ is a large cross in the clouds held by two angels. Two additional angels present the Arma Christi. This combination of angels with trumpets, the Cross, and the Arma Christi was already a distinctive feature of the mosaic of San Michele in Africisco of Ravenna. The same elements are also included in the wall painting of the Last Judgment of St. George in Reichenau-Oberzell and in Torcello, albeit less prominently. The size and dimensions of the Cross of Conques as well as the fact that it is being held by two angels point towards models from the Reichenau school, most notably from Reichenau-Oberzell or Burgfelden.

On the other hand, it was recently pointed out that the True Cross received particular attention in Conques in the time when the tympanum was created.[308] Around 1100, Jerusalem was just reconquered by the First Crusade. Several contemporary items of the treasury of Conques refer to Jerusalem and to the True Cross.[309] Eventually, both factors may have influenced the dominant representation of the Cross in the tympanum.

Lower register: Particular and Last Judgment according to Augustine's Enchiridion

The distribution of the extensive representation of 'Hell' over the middle and lower register as well as the representation of the Weighing of Souls and the Bosom of Abraham in the lower register are so analogous to the Byzantine archetype from Constantinople and Torcello that one is tempted to assume that Conques merely copied them. In this spirit, earlier research interpreted the middle register of Conques as a representation of the Last Judgment with the saved and the damned. The lower register was suggested to be a representation of the Particular Judgment.[310]

However, a second look shows that it cannot be that simple. The text of Apocalypse 20 characterizes the Hell of the Last Judgment as a Lake of Fire into which Satan is cast. More generally, fire is the most consistent element of Hell in the Scriptures. In the representations of Constantinople and Torcello, the Lake of Fire with Satan, the False Prophet, and the Beast is shown in the middle of the three registers, the one associated with the Last Judgment. In contrast, the *Hades* of the lower register hardly shows any traces of fire. In Conques, it is the other way around. The Hell of the lower register is full of fire and prominently hosts Satan (Figure 63). However, there is hardly any fire shown in the middle register (Figure 61). According to Apocalypse 21, the elected will reside in Heavenly Jerusalem after the Last Judgment. The house-like structure with an arcade surrounding Abraham and the saints in the lower register of Conques is a clear reference to Heavenly Jerusalem of Apocalypse 21 (Figure 62). It is not the Earthly Paradise of the Byzantine archetype in the tradition of Tertullian, full of lush vegetation and including the Virgin.

These observations strongly suggest that the lower register of Conques needs to be read as a representation of the Last Judgment, other than in Constantinople or Torcello. As a consequence, the act of the Last Judgment is represented in Conques by the Weighing of Souls instead of by Christ or an empty throne.

Furthermore, the lower register has a substructure. It consists of two half-registers. The lower half-register contains the representations of Heaven and Hell in their conditions after the Last Judgment. The upper half-register shows dynamical flows from both sides towards the Weighing of Souls in the center and from there into

[308] Vincent Debiais and Cécile Voyer, "The Times of the Cross on the Conques Tympanum," in *Conques Across Time: Inventions and Reinventions (9th-21st Centuries)*, ed. Ivan Foletti and Adrien Palladino, with Martin F. Lešák, Convivia 6 (Viella, Masaryk University Press, 2025).
[309] Bremenkamp, "Conques, Rome, Jerusalem, and Barbastro."
[310] Marcel Angheben, *L'iconographie du portail de l'ancienne cathédrale de Mâcon: Une vision synchronique du jugement individuel et du jugement dernier*, Les cahiers de Saint-Michel de Cuxa, vol. 32 (2001): 79.

Heaven and Hell (Figure 64). Apparently, it shows the process of the Last Judgment as a dynamic movement.

On the right side of Christ, dead rise from their tombs with the help of angels looking towards the Weighing of Souls. Below the Weighing of Souls, they enter Heavenly Jerusalem through a gate, ushered in by a female saint. On the left side of Christ, wicked are brought to the Weighing of Souls by demons, already tortured and in fire. After the judgment they are pushed into the Mouth of Hell by another demon. This dynamic bipartite representation suggests that an earlier Particular Judgment preceded the Last Judgment. The to be judged do not come to the Last Judgment on equal terms. But the Particular Judgment itself is not shown in the lower register.

The assumption that serious sinners are already in torments before the Last Judgment is a common theme, from Greek mythology to the *Visio Wettini*. More interestingly, the elected of Conques seem to rise from their tombs only immediately before the Last Judgment. This rather sober representation of the waiting area for the elected, without any refreshments, is in stark contrast to the doctrines of Luke 16, Tertullian, and Gregory the Great. However, it is fully in line with the description of Augustine's *Enchiridion* 29:109-111. The scroll above the dead rising from their tombs explicitly states that happiness and the glory of their past life will be given to the elected to Heaven (*electis ad c(o)eli*). They will rest in eternal peace until Judgment Day. It does not talk about any refreshments (*refrigeria)* or any social mingling with the other elected. The opposite scroll states that injust sinners (*iniusti*) will face eternal torments by fire and demons.

The text of Augustine also naturally explains the two nearly identical housing structures of the tympanum representing Heaven and Hell, with Abraham and Satan at their centers. Such symmetrical equivalence of Heaven and Hell has no precedence in Christian art. However, it matches the co-existence of a city of God (*civitas immortalis*, Heaven) and a city of Satan (*civitas mortalis*, Hell) of Augustine's *Enchiridion* and *De civitate dei*. After the completion of the tympanum of Conques, the monks of Conques created another sculpted portal (Figure 70) at their priory church of Sainte-Hilarian-Sainte-Foy in Perse (Espalion). Its oversized lintel contains another representation of the Last Judgment that is reduced to the Weighing of Souls with symmetrical representations of Hell and Heaven. In Perse, Christ takes the place of Abraham. The lintel of Perse provides further evidence that the lower register of the tympanum of Conques refers to the Last Judgment in the spirit of Augustine rather than to the Particular Judgment.

Finally, the lower register of the tympanum of Conques shows how one of the elected, who is about to enter the gate of Heavenly Jerusalem, and the demon pushing the damned into the Mouth of Hell have eye contact over their backs (Figure 64). The two figures suggest that this elected only narrowly escaped Hell. Possibly, the elected and the demon had met before. In that case, the elected must have successfully passed proto-purgatory. The scene of Conques remains vague with that respect. But it is the same vagueness with which the possibility of proto-purgatory is described in the *Enchiridion*.

Therefore, it is concluded that the lower register of the tympanum of Conques has to be read as the earliest and perhaps only accurate visualization of Augustine's *Enchiridion* 29:109-111, featuring the Last Judgment with symmetrical representations of Heaven and Hell as the cities of God and Satan, the implicit assumption of an earlier Particular Judgment without further details about it, the sober treatment of the elected before the Last Judgment, and the vague possibility of proto-purgatory. The lack of an Earthly Paradise with refreshments and the lack of a reunification of bodies and souls at the time of the Last Judgment speak against Tertullian and Gregory the Great as direct models. The latter elements are clearly visible in the Last Judgments of the Byzantine archetype from Constantinople and Torcello.

For the sake of completeness, it is mentioned that Heaven's Gate as entrance to Heavenly Jerusalem and the Mouth of Hell as entrance to the city of Satan have no model in the text of Augustine. The notion of the Mouth of Hell was introduced by the 8th century Vision of Drythelm captured by Bede the Venerable. The Carolingian ivory from around 800 mentioned above, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, contains very similar representations of Heaven's Gate and the Mouth of Hell as the tympanum of Conques

(Figure 65).[311] The scrolls with texts of this ivory may point towards connections with Reichenau Abbey. At least, the Mouth of Hell of Conques is a Carolingian iconographic element too.

Middle register: Proto-purgatory and intercession according to the Visio Wettini

Given that the process of the Last Judgment is described in much detail in the lower register and given that the otherworld of the middle register hardly shows any fire, which was a very consistent symbol of eternal Hell, it is unlikely that the middle register of Conques addresses the Last Judgment again. The allusion of the lower register to an earlier Particular Judgment indicates that the middle register may be linked to the Particular Judgment. In the following, it will be argued that the middle register shows the era of the Parousia of Christ in which the Particular Judgment occurs. However, the scene is not a depiction of the Particular Judgment itself.

The nimbus of Christ in the mandorla contains anagrams denoting Christ both as King (*rex*) and Judge (*iudex*) (Figure 59).[312] In the figure of Christ, the allegories of Apocalypse 19-20 regarding the King of Kings (Parousia of Christ) and the throne of the Judge (Last Judgment) converge. Similar anagrams already existed in the nimbus of Christ of Torcello. They constitute a unique reference from Conques to Torcello. In Torcello, the dual role of Christ is made even more explicit by the Stream of Fire emanating from his throne and flowing under the empty throne of the judging God to the Lake of Fire of Hell (Figure 69). The Stream of Fire connects the Parousia of Christ with the Last Judgment. However, it does not touch the scenery of the Particular Judgment. Also, none of the sources assign a personal role in the Particular Judgment to Christ. In Conques, the function of the Stream of Fire is assumed by the asymmetrical judging arm gestures of Christ. These are based on Matthew 25 connecting the announcement of the Last Judgment of Matthew 24 in the upper register with its execution in the lower register.[313] Therefore, the middle register cannot be a mere representation of the Particular Judgment.

The interpretation of the middle register as a broader reference to the period of the Parousia of Christ is supported by further iconographic elements. The scrolls above the middle register refer with their texts to the community of saints (*sancti*) happily convening with Christ as judge and to the mortal sinners (*homines perversi*) who already are in *Tartaros*. In the spirit of the "fourfold judgment" of Foxhall Forbes and in line with the text of Apocalypse 20, these references correspond to the period of the Parousia of Christ that precedes the Last Judgment.

This interpretation is also supported by the angel to the left of Christ holding the open Book of Life. The text on the book states "*Signatur liber (vi)t(a)e*" or "The Book of Life is in the process of being signed." If the intention had been to state that the Book of Life already is signed or sealed, the Latin text would have to read as "*Signatus (est) liber vitae.*"[314] The temporal form *signatur* instead of *signatus* clearly expresses that the process of signing the book has not yet been finished. This epigraph leaves room for intercession. If Christ would already read from the signed Book of Life, any intercession effort would be in vain from the outset.

Another proof point is provided by the angel with censer below the angel with the open Book of Life. According to Apocalypse 8:3-5 the eighth angel with a golden censer devastates the earth before the seven angels sound their trumpets. Together, the eight angels announce the imminent Parousia of Christ and not the Last Judgment. The two angels with candle sticks below Christ may refer to Apocalypse 1 but are of no relevance for our purposes.

[311] Angheben, *Le Jugement dernier*, 26, 30.
[312] Debiais and Voyer, "The Times of the Cross on the Conques Tympanum," 193–95.
[313] The tympanum of Conques does not show the twelve Apostles, as most of the earlier representations did. The twelve Apostles have no precedence in Matthew 24-25. They are derived from Matthew 19:28 instead. Apparently, the tympanum of Conques only refers to the core text of Matthew 24-25.
[314] The potential intention of describing the Book of Life as still being sealed would be in obvious contradiction with its representation as an open book.

The same applies to the stars in the mandorla of Christ which are also mentioned in Apocalypse 1.[315] For the sake of completeness, it is pointed out that these stars have known models at the representations of the Last Judgment of St. George in Reichenau-Oberzell and of Constantinople while the asymmetric arm gesture of Christ has its only known precursor in Müstair. With this layer of stars and five layers of clouds, Christ is displayed to reside in the seventh heaven.[316] Potentially, this representation may be a reference to the 8th century Reichenau Seven Heaven Homily which was a precursor of later Irish texts about souls having to pass seven heavens before reaching Christ for their final judgment.[317]

The interpretation of the middle register as a reference to the era of the Parousia of Christ provides a natural explanation for the procession of saints on the right side of Christ and for the outer part of otherness on his left side. The otherworld to the left of Christ is visibly divided into two compartments (Figure 61). The outer part shows identifiable mortal sinners, a counterfeiter, a sexually engaged couple, and a person who potentially is a fraudster, a liar, or a thief.[318] They already are subject to harsh treatment, for example by hanging. Only the counterfeiter is exposed to fire.

However, the explicit reference of the scrolls to saints and mortal sinners does not include the figures around Charlemagne on the right side of Christ and the inner part of the otherworld on his left side. The latter shows various figures, including kings and clerics, that are molested by demons but not tortured. Also, these figures are not associated with typical symbols of sin.

In line with the Carolingian spirituality of the afterlife, these two groups of figures, not addressed by the scrolls of the middle register, are interpreted as depictions of proto-purgatory and intercession.

The compartmentalized structure of otherworld on the left side of Christ conforms with the Greek concept of *Hades* and *Tartaros* (Figure 61). The scenery is bleak but lacks the emblematic fire of Hell. In line with the Church Fathers, it can be read as an image of the afterlife of sinners in the time before the Last Judgment. The inner compartment of proto-purgatory is reserved for venial sinners who still may be elected for Heaven. The outer part is for mortal sinners who cannot be saved. The scroll above this representation of otherworld states that mortal sinners (*homines perversi*) are submerged in *Tartaros* (*tartara*). *Tartaros* was the special place of punishment in *Hades* for serious sinners. The text does not use the generic term sinners (*peccatores*) that is used on the lintel above the left door of the portal. Thereby, it leaves the fate of venial sinners ambiguously open.

This interpretation of the left side of Christ raises the consequential question why Charlemagne and other non-canonized figures are shown on his right side. Apocalypse 20 and the texts of the Church Fathers clearly state that ordinary people will not yet be with Christ at this stage. It will be argued in the following that the scene on the right side of Christ needs to be read as an act of intercession by the saints for Charlemagne. The saints already have their natural place with Christ.

It was concluded above that the visualization of the Last Judgment in the lower register is based on Augustine's *Enchiridion*. The Carolingian spirituality of the afterlife, as matured by the abbeys of Reichenau and St. Gall, was uniquely based on a combination of Augstine's *Enchiridion* and Reichenau's *Visio Wettini*. The cultural space of Reichenau Abbey played a crucial role in the development of the iconography of the Last Judgment. The prominent representation of the Cross in the upper register of Conques has its closest artistic parallels in the art of Reichenau Abbey too.

Therefore, it is proposed that the iconography of the middle register of the tympanum of Conques was inspired by Reichenau's *Visio Wettini*. While the depiction of proto-purgatory and *Tartaros* on the left side of Christ would also reasonably be in line with the

[315] The text of the Apocalypse mentions seven stars instead of the six stars of the mandorla of Conques. However, it also mentions at a later point that part of the stars are being kicked down from the sky.
[316] The idea of the seven heavens that need to be passed was introduced by the apocryphal Ascensio Isaiae. Hen, "Visions of the Afterlife in the Early Medieval West," 27.
[317] Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe, Cod. Aug. perg. 254. Elizabeth Boyle, "The Afterlife in the Medieval Celtic-Speaking World," in *Imagining the Medieval Afterlife*, ed. Richard Matthew Pollard, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge University Press, 2020), 69 f.
[318] Kirk Ambrose, "The Counterfeit and the Authentic in the Conques Tympanum," in *Contextualizing Conques. Imaginaries, Narratives & Geographies*, ed. Ivan Foletti et al., with Jasmin Richardson and Tomas Shannon, Convivium Supplementum 13 (2023).

thinking of the Church Fathers, the scene on the right side of Christ shows characteristic elements that have no other potential model than the *Visio Wettini*.

The *Visio Wettini* describes in much detail how saints, martyrs, and Holy Virgins rush to Christ to intercede for Wetti. It also emphasizes the relevance of the spiritual support of clerics or relatives by masses, prayers or alms. No other written source prior to the creation of the tympanum of Conques contains such an explicit and extensive description of intercession. Also, no other relevant source explicitly mentions the Holy Virgins in the context of the Last Judgment. Both elements can be found in the middle register. The Holy Virgins also populate Heavenly Jerusalem of the lower register, another rather unique feature of Conques.

In the Byzantine representations of the Last Judgment from Constantinople and Torcello, the elected are also oriented towards Christ, grouped according to their social order. But these groups form a static picture. In contrast, the procession of Conques is quite dynamic, suggesting that the holy intercessors rush to Christ (Figure 60). Furthermore, the procession of the tympanum is nearly positioned at the level of Christ enabling the interaction with him.[319]

The procession on the right side of Christ is led by the foundational patron saints of Conques, the Virgin and St. Peter.[320] Intercession by Sainte-Foy is prominently shown in the upper left corner of the lower register. The Virgin and St. Peter are followed by a hermit and an abbot. The hermit is often identified as Dadon, the founder of the monastic cell of Conques.[321] Dadon and the abbot are usually seen as references to the abbey of Conques. The presumed abbot of Conques leads a king by the hand to Christ, commonly identified as Charlemagne. This element provides the entire procession with a dynamic character. Charlemagne is followed by a group of laymen carrying a treasury and a precious garment or holding a hand in prayer. After this group comes another couple of saints. An angel holds a crown above their heads. This crown is to be read as the martyr's crown of Apocalypse 2:10. It labels the saintly couple as martyrs. The crown is also mentioned in the *Visio Wettini*, albeit in conjunction with the saints.[322] More importantly, the procession is ended by a couple of saintly women, obviously the Holy Virgins of the *Visio Wettini*. The angel with the martyr's crown also hovers above them.

With the background of the *Visio Wettini*, the entire procession can be read as a massive act of intercession for Charlemagne. The intercessors include the three patron saints of Conques, martyrs and Holy Virgins, the clerics of Conques, and a group of relatives carrying alms and being engaged in prayer.

The tympanum remains ambiguous whether the group of laymen behind Charlemagne really represents intercessors or whether they are subject of intercession themselves. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the proto-purgatory to the left of Christ shows the small figure of a king who points with his finger towards Charlemagne (Figure 61). Could this be the alter ego of Charlemagne in proto-purgatory, as described in the *Visio Wettini*? Both questions remain open. But they do not materially alter the interpretation of the tympanum.

This unusual procession of saints, martyrs, Holy Virgins, clerics, and presumably relatives interceding for Charlemagne is an excellent visualization of Reichenau's intercession principle of "the more, the better," as expressed in the *Visio Wettini* or in its extensive *Liber Vitae*. In Conques, the exhaustive procession of intercessors replaces the more modest deesis of Byzantine art.

The recognition, based on the *Visio Wettini*, that the procession of saints does not only include Charlemagne but may entirely be devoted to him, constitutes a significant finding. It would fully be in line with the prominent focus of the *Visio Wettini* and of other Carolingian visions on the souls of Charlemagne and other leaders of the empire.

To conclude, the somewhat enigmatic middle register of the tympanum of Conques finds a natural explanation, down to nearly all levels of detail, if it is read as a reference to Reichenau's *Visio Wettini*, both the most important text on the afterlife of the Carolingian era and

[319] In the late 12th and early 13th centuries such arrangements of the saved and damned were also created in Sangüesa and Bamberg.
[320] Alternatively, the Virgin and St. Peter can be read as an allegory of the universal Church.
[321] Huang, "Memory between Tradition and Modernity," 71, 75.
[322] Strabo and Heito, *Visio Wettini*, 53.

the most extensive testimony of the importance of proto-purgatory and intercession.

The few remaining ambiguities of the proposed interpretation may still leave room for debate. However, the alternative interpretations suffer from significant contradictions. There is clear evidence that the middle register was neither intended to show the Particular nor the Last Judgment. While its representation of *Hades* and *Tartaros* would conform with the writings of the Church Fathers, the potential interpretation of the procession on the right side of Christ as a convention of the elected would be in contradiction with Augustine's *Enchiridion* which apparently was the basis for the lower register. It would also be in contradiction with Apocalypse 20 and Tertullian. It may better conform with Gregory the Great, which was an important model for the *Visio Wettini*. The dialogues of Gregory emphasize the immediate reception of the souls of the good in Heaven. But this view, more oriented towards Luke 16, is in contradiction with the representation and epigraph of the lower register of the tympanum.

On the other hand, the interpretation of the tympanum of Conques as a representation of the Carolingian spirituality of the afterlife as developed by Reichenau Abbey, based on Matthew 24-25, the *Visio Wettini*, and Augustine's *Enchiridion*, provides a very clear and consistent picture that is free of such contradictions.

The temporal and hierarchical orders of the tympanum

Based on these considerations, the narrative of the tympanum of Conques follows a rather strict temporal sequence that needs to be read from top to bottom. The upper register announces the imminent Parousia of Christ according to Matthew 24. The middle register describes the current state of the otherworld, between the event of the Parousia and the Last Judgment. The iconography drew its inspirations from Reichenau's *Visio Wettini*. The lower register contains the Last Judgment with an implicit allusion to the preceding Particular Judgment, in accordance with the *Enchiridion* of Augustine. In fact, this temporal sequence of the tympanum is more precise than in most of the earlier representations of the Last Judgment of comparable complexity. In some of the Carolingian representations, the Cross does not precede Christ in the sky. Also, the dead rising from their tombs may be represented between or below the saved and damned. In the Byzantine archetype from Constantinople and Torcello, the Last Judgment is shown above the Particular Judgment, in reverse temporal order.

In addition, the texts of the scrolls of the tympanum define a hierarchical order that should be read from bottom to top. One can call it a climax. The lintel above the left door of the portal contains a text relating to Bede the Venerable that addresses all worldly sinners (*peccatores*) whose eschatological fate is not yet determined.[323] They are reminded that a harsh judgment will await them if they do not change their moral way of life. The scrolls above the lower register address the deceased ordinary sinners which are subject to the Last Judgment. They are either called just sinners that will be admitted to Heaven (*electi*) or injust sinners (*iniusti*) that will be sent to Hell. The middle register follows the same logic but addresses extraordinary people whose fate is already determined with the Particular Judgment, the saints (*sancti*) and the mortal sinners (*homines perversi*). These four groups correspond to the idea of the "fourfold judgment" introduced by the Church Fathers.[324] Finally, the upper register is devoted to Christ. This explicit elaboration of a hierarchical order following the idea of the "fourfold judgment" is another unique quality of the tympanum of Conques.[325]

The historical connections of Conques to Reichenau Abbey

The previous analysis, primarily based on an exclusion principle, indicates that the iconography of the

[323] Christe, *Das Jüngste Gericht*, 49.

[324] Foxhall Forbes, "The Theology of Afterlife in the Early Middle Ages," 155.

[325] Many of the representations of the Last Judgment produced in the cultural space of Reichenau Abbey also contain scrolls with texts. But they are typically limited to repeating the verdict of Matthew 25 for the saved and the damned.

tympanum of Conques can best be understood as a reflection of the Carolingian spirituality and iconography of the afterlife, matured in the cultural space of Reichenau Abbey. Given the significant distance from Conques to Lake Constance, it would be reassuring if Conques had historic connections to Reichenau in the late 11th century. The likeliness of such connections will be demonstrated below. Even without further analysis, Reichenau Abbey needs to be considered a natural reference point, only comparable to the most important Carolingian abbeys from northern France, such as Saint-Denis, Tours or Fleury. From the early 9th to the middle of the 11th centuries, Reichenau Abbey was one of the most influential political, artistic, and scientific centers of the Frankish kingdom and the Ottonian empire.

It was already pointed out that one of the earliest entries in the famous confraternity book of Reichenau from 823-25 refers to Conques. Such an early connection is plausible since both abbeys played important roles under king Louis the Pious with close connections to his court. As one of very few contacts in Aquitaine, Conques fills an important gap in the otherwise comprehensive regional coverage of the Frankish kingdom in Reichenau's *Liber vitae*. In addition, the detailed history of the foundation of Conques was recorded by Ermoldus Nigellus in his *Carmina in honorem Hludowici*, written in Strasbourg around 826-28.[326] In this time, Reichenau Abbey had close connections to Murbach abbey and other monasteries of Alsace.

Beyond the explicit mention of Conques in Reichenau's *Liber vitae*, there is circumstantial evidence from the 9th to the early 12th centuries pointing towards continued connections between Conques and the Upper Rhine in conjunction with the pilgrimage of St. James. The legend of the evangelization of Spain by St. James was already known to the monks of St. Gall and Reichenau in the second half of the 9th century. One of the earliest reports of the veneration of St. James in Compostela is documented in a martyrology of St. Gall from 896.[327] The relevant passage can be traced back to Vienne and Lyon where Reichenau had multiple connections. The church of St. George in Reichenau-Oberzell, mentioned because of its wall painting of the Last Judgment, already had St. James as secondary patron saint in 896, one of the earliest documented cases in Southern Germany.[328] The first report of a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela from outside Spain was again documented in a hagiographic text of Reichenau from about 930, referring to a blind monk of the abbey who allegedly regained his eyesight in Compostela.[329] It is highly likely that this monk had passed through Conques on his pilgrimage.

More direct anecdotal evidence comes from the second half of the 11th century in which the pilgrimage of St. James replaced the pilgrimage to the Holy Land that had become untenable. An important turning point for the latter must have been the widely publicized pilgrimage of 1064/65, led by bishop Gunther of Bamberg and by archbishop Siegfried I of Mainz.[330] Despite its extraordinarily large number of participants, it took a dramatic turn and nearly failed due to a massive raid by Bedouins, resulting in numerous fatalities. The conquest of Jerusalem by Turkish Seljuks in 1071 interrupted the pilgrimage to the Holy Land until the reconquest of Jerusalem by the First Crusade in 1099.

While there are no explicit sources that describe the rise of the pilgrimage of St. James in the empire, several historical facts can be pieced together. From them, a prominent network emerges that was closely connected to the pilgrimage of St. James, if not even driving it. In the empire, important nodes of this network must have been the courts of the Salian king Henry IV and his Hohenstaufen successors as well as the imperial abbeys of Reichenau and St. Gall. Cluny and Conques appear as their French counterparts.

The rapid shift in pilgrimage from the Holy Land to Santiago de Compostela can best be seen in the leaders of the nearly failed pilgrimage from 1064/65. In 1071, the successor of bishop Gunther, also a close confidant of Herny IV, founded the collegiate of St. James in

[326] Bodarwé and Rother, "Die Gründung(en) des Klosters Conques," 13 f.
[327] Klaus Herbers, "Frühe Spuren des Jakobuskultes im alemannischen Raum (9.-11. Jahrhundert): Von Nordspanien zum Bodensee," in *Der Jakobuskult in Süddeutschland. Kultgeschichte in regionaler und europäischer Perspektive*, ed. Klaus Herbers, Jakobus-Studien (Narr, 1995), 8–15.
[328] Herbers, "Frühe Spuren des Jakobuskultes im alemannischen Raum," 7.
[329] Herbers, "Frühe Spuren des Jakobuskultes im alemannischen Raum," 20 f.
[330] Jacoby, "Bishop Gunther of Bamberg," 274–76.

Bamberg. Under his successor Otto I, again a close confidant of Henry IV, all subsequent churches or chapels of Bamberg were named after saints from the various Ways of St. James. Eventually, all five major Ways of St. James in France and Spain were represented by a patron saint in Bamberg.[331] In 1124, Otto I founded the priory of St. Getreu, a reference to Sainte-Foy in Conques.[332] In 1072, archbishop Siegfried I of Mainz, the other leader of the pilgrimage of 1064/65 and another close confidant of Henry IV, embarked on a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela that prematurely ended in Cluny. Henry IV had close connections to France and to Cluny. His mother, Agnes of Poitou, came from southern France. Abbot Hugh of Cluny was his godfather. Close connections to Cluny via the reform movement of Hirsau are also visible in Bamberg under bishop Otto I.[333]

Already in 1070, count Eberhard VI of Nellenburg, whose family was closely connected to Reichenau Abbey, had undertaken a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela.[334] In fact, he is one of the earliest German pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela who is known by name. In the following year, his son became abbot of Reichenau Abbey succeeding a former abbot of Bamberg's mother abbey of St. Getreu.[335] Allegedly in 1085, the abbot of St. Gall personally translated relics of Sainte-Foy from Conques to St. Gall where he founded the church of St. Fiden.[336] In 1093, the only priory of Cluny on the right side of the Rhine, located in Bollschweil in the Black Forest (later moved to Sölden), founded a priory for women named after Sainte-Foy. In the following year, Hildegard of Egisheim-Dagsburg, a close parent of Eberhard VI of Nellenburg and the founding mother of the Hohenstaufen dynasty, donated the priory of Sainte-Foy in Sélestat with rich possessions to Conques.[337] This donation was the consequence of a penitential pilgrimage of her three sons to Conques, presumably in 1090 or 1091. Her son Frederick, Duke of Swabia, was a son-in-law of king Henry IV. Her grandson Conrad III became the first Hohenstaufen king of the empire. Therefore, Sainte-Foy is considered the family saint of the Hohenstaufen dynasty. In 1095, the abbey of Allerheiligen in Schaffhausen, a memorial foundation of Eberhard VI of Nellenburg, founded a priory named after Sainte-Foy in Grafenhausen which is also located in the Black Forest. The abbey of Allerheiligen had close links to Cluny and Hirsau. No other churches in the Germanic territories of the empire are known to have had Sainte-Foy as patron saint. However, further altars may have existed.

The close connections of the Hohenstaufen dynasty to Conques seem to have endured during the largest part of the 12th century. Former monks of Conques are assumed to have played a major role in glorifying Charlemagne as the legendary founder of the pilgrimage of St. James via the Chanson of Roland.[338] On the other hand, the Hohenstaufen emperor Frederick I Barbarossa and one of his relatives, a later bishop of Bamberg, drove the canonization of Charlemagne in 1165.[339] It is generally assumed that this canonization was linked to a propensity of Frederick I for the pilgrimage of St. James with the intent of strengthening the apostolic role of Santiago de Compostela relative to the apostolic see of Rome.[340] Two of the most prominent penitential pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela of the High

[331] Naraschewski, *Der Bamberger Dom aus kunst- und kulturhistorischer Sicht*, 55 f.
[332] Nathalie Kruppa, "Die Priorate des Klosters Michaelsberg: St. Jakob in Stettin und St. Getreu in Bamberg," in *1000 Jahre Kloster Michaelsberg Bamberg. 1015-2015. Im Schutz des Engels*, ed. Norbert Jung et al. (Imhof, 2015), 150.
[333] Naraschewski, *Der Bamberger Dom aus kunst- und kulturhistorischer Sicht*, 154.
[334] Herbers, "Frühe Spuren des Jakobuskultes im alemannischen Raum," 22 f.
[335] Harald Derschka, *Geschichte des Klosters Reichenau* (Kunstverlag Josef Fink, 2024), 130 f.
[336] Ernst Tremp, "Ulrich I.," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 26, ed. Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Duncker & Humblot, 2016).
[337] Philippe Cordez, "Charlemagne in Conques: Objects and Narratives," in *Conques Across Time: Inventions and Reinventions (9th-21st Centuries)*, ed. Ivan Foletti and Adrien Palladino, with Martin F. Lešák, Convivia 6 (Viella, Masaryk University Press, 2025), 217.
[338] Frédéric de Gournay, *Les origines méridionales de la Chanson de Roland*, Les cahiers de Saint-Michel de Cuxa, vol. 32 (2001): 103–8.
[339] Caroline Göldel, "Otto von Andechs, Stiftspropst von Aachen, Bischof von Bamberg, und das Tafelgüterverzeichnis.," in *Die Andechs-Meranier in Franken. Europäisches Fürstentum im Mittelalter* (Mainz, 1998), 75.
[340] Niels von Holst, *Der Deutsche Ritterorden und seine Bauten: von Jerusalem bis Sevilla, von Thorn bis Narwa* (Mann, 1981), 20; Bernhard Graf, *Oberdeutsche Jakobsliteratur: eine Studie über den Jakobuskult in Bayern, Österreich und Südtirol*, Kulturgeschichtliche Forschungen 14 (Tuduv, 1991), 112 f.

Middle Ages were conducted by Frederick's divorced wife Adela and by his adversary Henry the Lion.[341]

Around the same time, Frederick I Barbarossa donated precious glass windows for the new priory church of Conques in Sélestat.[342] No other church endowments are known of him. Recent art-historical analysis has shown that buildings erected in association with Frederick I Barbarossa drew artistical inspirations from the *Via Podiensis* and from Conques.[343] The priory church of Conques in Sélestat must have played a pivotal role in this artistic transfer.[344] The impact of this transfer can most prominently be seen in the eastern parts of Bamberg cathedral commissioned by bishop Otto II, the relative of Frederick I who drove the canonization of Charlemagne. Presumably around 1173, an altar of Sainte-Foy and a secondary assignment of another altar to Saint-Léonard were added to the abbey church of Reichenau under an abbot with close connections to the Hohenstaufen dynasty.[345]

On the other hand, Conques also had close links to Rome in this period. In 1076, abbot Étienne II participated in the Lenten synod in Rome upon request of pope Gregory VII to assist in judging king Henry IV, resulting in his deposition and excommunication. Possibly, the choice of Étienne II was intended to counter-balance the role of abbot Hugh of Cluny as advisor to his godson Henry IV. In 1077, relations between king and pope were temporarily restored following Henry's Road to Canossa. The translation of relics from Conques to St. Gall allegedly occurred in the year after Henry IV finally deposed pope Gregory VII and installed Clemens III as successor of the latter. In the Investiture Controversy lasting until 1122, St. Gall supported the king while Reichenau sided with the papacy resulting in a significant conflict between them.[346] In light of this background, one can assume that the translation of relics from Conques to St. Gall may have had a political background. Presumably, Conques tried to hedge its bets on both sides.

Given their prominent presence in Aquitaine and their deep involvement in the Reconquista of Spain, it can be assumed that Conques and Cluny had tight connections too. At least, the unusual link between the feast of Pentecost and the Last Judgment, that was mentioned for Cluny and its abbey in Vézelay, is also visible in Conques. The tympanum of its priory church of Saint-Hilarian-Sainte-Foy in Perse (Espalion) includes one of the very few representations of Pentecost on a sculpted portal (Figure 70). The lintel contains a highly condensed version of the Last Judgment.

This anecdotal picture shows how tightly Conques must have been interwoven in the close connections between Cluny, the pilgrimage of St. James, and the Salian and Hohenstaufen dynasties of the empire. The evidence presented is even more noteworthy since only few other historic sources of this period exist that describe personal connections between the empire and the pilgrimage of St. James.

For the purposes of this study, it can be concluded that Conques must have had some form of connection to the abbeys of Reichenau and St. Gall in the time when the tympanum of Conques was created, if only indirectly. The alleged pilgrimage of abbot Ulrich III of St. Gall to Conques and his translation of relics in 1085 even constitutes a direct link. In any case, the area around the Upper Rhine and Lake Constance was one of two hotspots of German pilgrimage of St. James in the 11th century, together with the Middle Rhine around Mainz.[347]

[341] Odilo Engels, "Weingarten, das Hauskloster der Welfen, und die politische Bedeutung der Pilgerfahrt Heinrichs des Löwen nach Compostela," in *Der Jakobuskult in Süddeutschland. Kultgeschichte in regionaler und europäischer Perspektive*, ed. Klaus Herbers, Jakobus-Studien (Narr, 1995), 288.

[342] Caroline Vienney, "Sélestat, église Sainte-Foy," in *Congrès archéologique de France. 162e session, 2004, Strasbourg et Basse-Alsace* (Société française d'archéologie, 2006), 144.

[343] Naraschewski, "Bamberg, Conques, and the Hohenstaufen Dynasty"; Naraschewski, *Der Bamberger Dom aus kunst- und kulturhistorischer Sicht*.

[344] Naraschewski, "Bamberg, Conques, and the Hohenstaufen Dynasty."

[345] The altars of Sainte-Foy and Saint-Léonard are only documented since 1477. Most likely, they were added after 1173 when the side aisles of the church were widened to provide additional space for secondary altars. Kleiner, "Keine Gründung auf der grünen Wiese?," 147–49; Andreas Odenthal, "In monasterio nostro fiat processio cum crucibus ad sepulchrum sancti Marti: Überlegungen zur Sakraltopographie und Stationsliturgie des Reichenauer Münsters St. Maria und Markus," in *Die Klosterinsel Reichenau im Mittelalter: Geschichte - Kunst - Architektur*, ed. Wolfgang Zimmermann et al. (Schnell & Steiner, 2024), 155–63.

[346] Derschka, *Geschichte des Klosters Reichenau*, 130 f.

[347] Herbers, "Frühe Spuren des Jakobuskultes im alemannischen Raum," 4 f.

Focus on proto-purgatory and intercession

The analysis of this study has shown that the tympanum of Conques can be regarded as one of the most detailed and most explicit visualizations of the Carolingian spirituality of the afterlife, shaped in the cultural space of Reichenau Abbey. The underlying sources from Matthew, Reichenau, and Augustine give priority to the presentation of the Cross as well as to the concepts of proto-purgatory and intercession at scale. On the other hand, they do not include the assumption of an Earthly Paradise as a waiting area for the elected. This profile of Carolingian spirituality is clearly visible in the tympanum of Conques. The visible concern for Charlemagne and the many women interceding for him, the Virgin, Sainte-Foy, and the Holy Virgins, further sharpen this profile.

The procession of saints interceding for Charlemagne attracts significant attention, even today. Together with the extensive and differentiated representation of Hell, it is the most unique element of the tympanum. In view of the *Visio Wettini*, one can argue that the tympanum of Conques was created by its monks as a monumental act of intercession for their legendary founder Charlemagne. Linking themselves so visibly to Charlemagne likely served to re-emphasize the important role of Conques in the Frankish kingdom relative to their rivals of Aurillac and Figeac.

The interpretation of the tympanum of Conques as an act of institutional intercession of Conques on behalf of Charlemagne has to be seen in light of the earlier claim of Cluny of having saved pope Benedict VIII from purgatory through collective prayers. Presumably, the monks of Conques aspired to emulate Cluny but tried to differentiate themselves from the latter by focusing on the leaders of the empire rather than on the pope, very much in line with the foundational history of Conques. This conjecture is supported by the close ties of Conques to the Hohenstaufen family and by their unusual donation of relics to the imperial abbey of St. Gall. Both events date back to the 1080s and 90s, about 10 to 20 years before the creation of their famous tympanum.

On the other hand, the tympanum also constitutes a less than subtle advertisement for the 11th century "business model" of Conques: intercession and miraculous support by Sainte-Foy against generous donations. Many other clerical institutions benefitted from such a "business model" too, most prominently Cluny and other pilgrimage sites along the Ways of St. James. The Carolingian spirituality of the afterlife, manifested in the *Visio Wettini*, the confraternities of prayer, and the extensive *Libri vitae,* as well as its further development by Cluny certainly were critical prerequisites. The Romanesque architecture of southern France and northern Spain would not exist without this medieval form of fund raising.

For abbeys like Conques, the pervasive Carolingian focus on proto-purgatory had the convenient side effect that intercession became relevant for nearly everyone. Even apparent role models like Charlemagne or pope Benedict VIII could not evade proto-purgatory. On the other hand, the example of Wetti, who was accused of significant sexual misconduct, indicated that the proper form of intercession could make a difference even in severe cases. Such comprehensive impact of intercession contrasted with the views of Augustine and Gregory the Great who only saw value in it for marginal sinners with positive overall record and venial sins.

The message of the tympanum with respect to proto-purgatory and intercession primarily addressed the pilgrims who visited Conques. It is known from the *Liber Sancti Jacobi* that a large part of them must have come from the Germanic part of the empire, in particular from the Upper Rhine and Lake Constance, the cultural space of Reichenau Abbey but also an area with close links to Cluny. The tympanum of Conques conveniently provided them with a spiritual perspective that was familiar to them.

However, the beneficial effects of such spirituality were not to last. Already around 1100, the era of Carolingian spirituality was about to come to an end. The success of the First Crusade diverted pilgrims again towards the Holy Land. In Cluny and other places, the volume of promised masses and prayers was no longer sustainable, and it no longer was socially acceptable.[348]

[348] Neiske, "Pro defunctis exorare ut a peccatis solvantur."

The rise of the Cistercians under the protection of the ruling dynasties of the 12th century and the rise of the Mendicant Orders in the fabrics of the emerging cities of the 13th century ended the viability of this "business model". Certainly, the faithful continued to make donations to clerical institutions, but apparently at much reduced level. The Cistercians had to earn their wealth themselves through economic activities. They re-invested or distributed it rather than spending it on spiritual luxury items. The Mendicant Orders even refrained from amassing wealth. In addition, the costly participation in one of the Crusades provided a preferred new path to salvation. In this climate, it was impossible for traditional Benedictine abbeys like Conques or Cluny to maintain their financially attractive position.

From this perspective, the Neo-Carolingian tympanum of Conques is a romantic echo not only of the Carolingian era of its foundation but also of the era of its highest prosperity. When the construction of the abbey church of Conques was completed around 1125, the abbey had passed its apex. Cluny would follow a few decades later. Eventually, the rapid decline may have saved Conques from destruction. Due to beneficial circumstances, it managed to transfer its appeal for pilgrims, now called tourists, into the 21st century. The tympanum has no small share in it.

Building the perfect pilgrimage church

The findings of this study allow us to create a rather consistent picture of the potential intentions of the builders of Conques, complementing earlier findings of other researchers. Obviously, the monks of Conques aspired to establish themselves as a pre-eminent pilgrimage destination with transregional appeal. In earlier tradition, such a destination would have required the tomb of an important saint and ideally a *genius loci*.[349] Tourists visiting Conques today can attest that its charming location in a pristine valley undoubtedly possesses such a *genius loci*. But even the theft of the relics of Sainte-Foy from Agen did not suffice to compensate for the lack of a pre-eminent saint.

In the 10th and 11th centuries, the monks of Conques closed this gap by creating a novel spiritual attraction, the Majesty of Sainte-Foy and its surrounding tales of miracles. The monumental figure became ground-breaking since it merged several artistic traditions in an innovative way. The Massif Central was one of the last regions in the West where a Roman self-image and Roman artistic traditions were preserved until the Middle Ages.[350] The Carolingian era paved the way for the re-introduction of monumental sculpture in the sacred space, initially limited to the crucifix. The post-iconoclastic Byzantine era introduced the veneration of two-dimensional icons. These separate developments converged in the Majesty of Sainte-Foy, thereby taking western art to a new level and creating an outstanding attraction for pilgrims.

It only is natural to assume that the monks of Conques aspired to repeat this success story by making their new abbey church an extraordinary attraction in its own right. For this purpose, it had to surpass the relatively sober architecture of the Carolingian era and of earlier competing churches in its vicinity. What would have been more ambitious but also more adequate than copying the most pre-eminent pilgrimage churches of Christianity, located in the Holy Land and in other parts of the Byzantine empire? The second half of the 10th and first half of the 11th centuries were a period in which the emulation of extraordinary churches, such as the Anastasis in Jerusalem or the Palatine Chapel of Charlemagne in Aachen, was fashionable anyway. In the time from about 1065 to 1099, in which significant parts of the abbey church of Conques were built, an emulation of the important pilgrimage sites of the Holy Land even served as a substitute for them since the pilgrimage to the Holy Land had become untenable.

The most unique and innovative attraction of the abbey church of Conques undoubtedly is its sculpted tympanum of the Last Judgment. Leveraging the Carolingian text of the *Visio Wettini* as a model, as suggested by the findings of this study, would be consistent with the Carolingian past of the abbey. The *Visio Wettini* would have conveniently served to "kill three birds with one stone," as the saying goes. The very visible reference to Charlemagne recalled the glorious Carolingian past of the abbey allowing Conques to differentiate itself from its regional competitors in Aurillac and Figeac. The focus of the *Visio Wettini* on intercession provided undisguised promotion for their "business model." Finally, the spirituality of the *Visio Wettini* was familiar to their many pilgrims from the southwestern area of the empire.

Be it as it may, the potential models of Conques with differentiating influence were identified on the

[349] Thunø, "Localism and Sainte Foy at Conques."

[350] Denis Hénault, *L'Abbaye Saint-Pierre de Mozac. Architecture, Décors et Histoire d'un Site Monastique (VIIe-XXe siècle)* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2017), 27.

pilgrimage route from Conques to the Holy Land or on the section of the Way of St. James from the southwestern part of the empire to Conques (Figure 72). Thereby, the most relevant influences must have come from the East. Tours and Limoges, the most important models for the Romanesque elements of Conques, were rather located to the northwest. However, many of their elements were traced back to the Holy Land too.

The early 12th century was a period of extraordinary prosperity for Conques, given the simultaneous completion of the abbey church, the creation of its extraordinary tympanum, the construction of its cloister, and the acquisition of many precious objects for its treasury. Such wealth attests how successful Conques was in attracting pilgrims and their donations. At least temporarily, a possible ambition of building the "perfect" pilgrimage church was achieved. Its extraordinary echo can still be felt today.

Appendix

Pre-Romanesque development history of selected elements of Conques

Above, it was shown that the abbey church of Sainte-Foy in Conques has multiple architectural and decorative similarities with buildings in the Eastern Mediterranean that cannot or at least not easily be explained by potential models from the West. Most strikingly, nearly the entire external decoration of Conques appears to be a derivative of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qalʿat Simʿān and a few other buildings in the vicinity of the latter.

In this section, the analysis will be taken one step further to better understand the pre-Romanesque dynamics that led to the unusual decoration of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites as well as the dynamics of its further adoption (Figure 73). It will be shown that the novel decoration of Qalʿat Simʿān had its origins in the traditional and Ptolemaic-Hellenistic architectures of Egypt. We can follow step by step how the influences from these two sources began to merge in Hauran, close to the Holy Land, integrating further influences from Roman and Mesopotamian architecture. The resulting decoration style reached its highest maturity further to the north in the *hinterland* of Antioch, most prominently in Qalʿat Simʿān. Artistic influences spread to Asia Minor and Constantinople, to Split and Ravenna, to Armenia and Georgia, and to mainland Greece. These dynamics largely occurred between the 1st century BC and the 7th century CE. Only the adoption in Greece was a phenomenon of the early 11th century CE. The presumed models of the external decoration of Conques developed "en route" between Alexandria and Antioch, the two most important centers for the formation of the Christian faith.

However, this analysis also shows that several ingredients of the decoration of Conques had already reached Italy by the 6th century and earlier. Therefore, it is studied, from what alternative sources the builders of Conques could have derived their decoration. Finally, the decoration of Conques is compared to contemporary Romanesque buildings with similar decorative elements to gain insight in the mindset of other advanced church builders of the mid-11th century.

The results of this comprehensive analysis confirm that Qalʿat Simʿān and the *hinterland* of Antioch provided the most plausible primary model for the external decoration of Conques. However, Syrian influences manifested themselves in multiple locations along a prototypical route from Conques to Jerusalem. Hence, the Syrian influences in the architecture of Conques should not only be narrowed down to Qalʿat Simʿān.

Pre-Romanesque development of a Syrian fusion architecture

The following analysis will focus on the pre-Romanesque development history of the round-arched portals and the external decoration of the radial chapels of Conques. Some of their components are special forms of broader architectural categories. We will therefore analyze the broader categories. The analysis will focus on the following decorative elements:

- Stacked engaged columns on pedestals, together with broken or curved entablatures and broken pediments
- Eyebrow-shaped cornices, together with Syrian arches and Syrian pediments

- Tori/rolls and scotiae/cavetto moldings of archivolts and entablatures
- Round-arched portals with decorated archivolts, supported by columns
- Pylons/twin-towered façades and pyramids *(as additional tracers of transregional dynamics, not as models for Conques)*

The starting point for the identification of transregional dynamics are several standard elements of Graeco-Roman, Roman Republican, and traditional Egyptian architecture.

For our purposes, the most relevant element of Graeco-Roman temple architecture is the entablature of the Ionic/Corinthian order, especially its architrave with three stepped fasciae, often separated by decorated astragals (Figure 74 left).[351]

Round-arched portals were a key element of Roman architecture. Roman Republican and Early Imperial portals had a characteristic cavetto cornice around its archivolt. Additional horizontal cornices supported the archivolt and its cornice. Typically, archivolt and jamb were undecorated. A good example still exists in Falerii Novi near Rome (Figure 74 right).[352]

Traditional Egyptian temple architecture had four major elements of relevance. The monumental pylon (Figure 75), the frontal façade of many temples, has a vague resemblance of Romanesque twin-towered façades.[353] It is not argued here that the pylon was a model for Conques and other Romanesque churches. Instead, it is included as a tracer of Egyptian influences on the architecture of the Roman East. Pylons and many temples were crowned by large cavetto cornices (Figure 76).[354] The edges of these buildings were emphasized by horizontal and vertical tori or rolls. In the Late Period and in Ptolemaic times, the combination of cavetto cornice and torus was also used to decorate the architraves of colonnades, for example in Edfu or Philae.[355] Finally, pyramidal tombs are used as another iconic tracer of Egyptian influences.

Under Ptolemaic rule, Hellenistic architecture was introduced in Egypt. The work of McKenzie provided comprehensive evidence that Ptolemaic architecture included several baroque elements that distinguished it from its Hellenistic roots.[356] These elements include among others

- Broken pediments and broken/curved entablatures
- So-called Syrian pediments and Syrian arches (a curved entablature introducing a segmental arch into a colonnade; the entablature is continued in the archivolt)
- Complex articulated façades with stacked engaged columns and aediculae

Only fragments of them are preserved in Egypt. However, it is believed that the Nabataean architecture of Petra from the 1st centuries BC or CE, most notably the famous Al-Kazneh and its successor Ed-Deir (Figure 77), can be seen as an authentic echo of the lost Ptolemaic-Hellenistic architecture of Alexandria.[357]

In Petra and some other Nabataean sites, the elements of traditional Egyptian and Ptolemaic-Hellenistic architecture were sometimes employed at the same building. A good example, among multiple others, is the Uneishu Tomb in Petra from the 1st century CE (Figure 78).[358] In the Nabataean kingdom, elements of traditional Egyptian and Ptolemaic origin were still used separately and in their traditional manner. An even earlier example is provided by the Hellenistic Tower of the Winds in Athens from the middle of the 2nd century BC.[359] There, the Egyptian-style combination of cavetto cornice and torus is inserted below the cornice. However, the absence of such elements in Hellenistic buildings from Asia Minor and in the Roman architecture of Athens

[351] Schollmeyer, *Handbuch der antiken Architektur*, 26.
[352] Ward-Perkins, *Rom*, 18–24.
[353] Seton Lloyd and Hans Wolfgang Müller, *Ägypten und Vorderasien*, trans. Gerd Betz, Weltgeschichte der Architektur (Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1987), 142–46.
[354] Lloyd and Müller, *Ägypten und Vorderasien*, 92 f.
[355] Lloyd and Müller, *Ägypten und Vorderasien*, 178 f.
[356] Judith McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt. c. 300 BC to AD 700*, Pelican History of Art (Yale University Press, 2007), 80–118.
[357] Judith McKenzie, *The Architecture of Petra*, British Academy Monographs in Archaeology 1 (Oxford University Press, 1990), 85–100.
[358] For Uneishu, see: McKenzie, *The Architecture of Petra*, 37, 163 f. The volume also contains numerous other examples. For similar tombs of Hegra, see: Jane Taylor, *Petra and the Lost Kingdom of the Nabataeans* (I. B. Tauris, 2001), 157–59.
[359] John M. Camp, *The Archaeology of Athens* (Yale University Press, 2001), 178 f.

speak against a widespread adoption in Greece or Asia Minor.

The fusion of both traditions in common decorative elements began in the late 1st century BC. Apparently, the center of innovation was a specific part of Hauran, near the ancient city of Kanatha (today Qanawat) in Syria. The Hauran was a fertile border region in South Syria, at the intersection of multiple cultural spaces. At the begin of the fusion process, Kanatha belonged to the Herodian Kingdom which was strongly influenced by Rome.[360] But culturally, it was closely connected to the neighboring Nabataean kingdom and potentially to Mesopotamia and Iran via Palmyra. In Hauran, i.e., the area between Bostra and Damascus, elements of Roman, Egyptian, Ptolemaic-Hellenistic, and even Iranian architecture were blended in novel ways, producing very innovative fusion architecture, henceforth called "Syrian architecture."

The important sanctuary of Seeia (today Sî) and the temple of Mismiyeh were situated near Kanatha. Both sites are known from expeditions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.[361] At the time of these surveys, only ground walls and fragments remained from the sanctuary of Seeia. The temple of Mismiyeh was still in much better condition. Unfortunately, it was entirely dismantled by Ottoman troops in 1887.[362]

The temple of Ba'alshamin in Seeia from the time of Herod the Great (23-4 BC) or shortly thereafter was reconstructed with a pylon and Graeco-Roman decoration (Figure 79).[363] The slightly later so-called Temple of Dushara (Figure 80) with inscriptions from the early 1st century CE was reconstructed with a Syrian arch.[364] Apparently, the latter is the earliest known temple from the Roman era with such an arch.[365] Another 1st century example of a Syrian arch exists at the Nabataean gate of Bostra, the most important Roman city of Hauran. The Graeco-Roman pylon and the Syrian arch clearly point towards Egyptian influences. In contrast, the unusual square-in-square floor plans of both temples seem to be influenced by models from Mesopotamia or Iran.[366]

More revealing is the temple in Mismiyeh (164-69) which is documented through a photograph (Figure 81) and drawings. It did not only have a floor plan similar to Middle Byzantine cross-in-square churches, but also the same barrel vaults of its cross arms.[367] Its façade was very unusual too. The central portal and a mullioned window above it were framed by three tori, in the same way as Egyptian pylons used to be (Figure 76). Next to the central mullioned window existed two aediculae with Syrian pediments. A higher resolution print of Figure 81 reveals that the architraves of the pediments consisted of a voluminous torus between two cavetto moldings.[368] These architraves are amongst the earliest in a Graeco-Roman context with such convex and concave moldings, in particular with voluminous tori. The fact that the tori and cavetto moldings of Mismiyeh were realized in conjunction with a more traditional use of Egyptian elements, the torus frame around the portal and the aediculae with Syrian arches, indicates that they were derived from traditional Egyptian temples rather than from the Attic bases of Graeco-Roman columns.

This conjecture is supported by the slightly later Sanctuary of Tyche (191) in nearby Is Sanamen.[369] The interior of its temple included a Syrian arch framing a large conch. Again, we find a torus beneath the cavetto cornice of the conch, while the entablature of its portico consisted of two cavetto cornices in the style of traditional Egyptian temples, instead of Ionic fasciae.

The nature of this novel fusion architecture is well illustrated by the portal of the synagogue of Kfar Bar'am (around 220) in North Israel (Figure 82).[370] Its prototypical archivolt is a fusion of Roman Republican, traditional Egyptian, and Graeco-Roman elements. The cavetto cornice of the archivolt is derived from the

[360] Taylor, *Petra and the Lost Kingdom of the Nabataeans*, 74, 134.
[361] For Seeia, see: Howard Crosby Butler, *Syria*, ed. Princeton University, Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria in 1904-1905 and 1909, Div. 2, Sec. A, Part 6 (Late E. J. Brill, 1916), https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.45586.
[362] Segal, *Temples and Sanctuaries in the Roman East*, 163.
[363] Butler, *Syria*, 375; J. B. Ward-Perkins, *Roman Imperial Architecture*, 2nd ed., Pelican History of Art (Yale University Press, 1994), 341; Segal, *Temples and Sanctuaries in the Roman East*, 213.
[364] Butler, *Syria*, 386; Ward-Perkins, *Roman Imperial Architecture*, 340; Segal, *Temples and Sanctuaries in the Roman East*, 211.
[365] Corresponding fragments in Alexandria were dated to the earlier Ptolemaic era.
[366] Ward-Perkins, *Roman Imperial Architecture*, 341.
[367] Segal, *Temples and Sanctuaries in the Roman East*, 167–69.
[368] Segal, *Temples and Sanctuaries in the Roman East*, 166.
[369] Segal, *Temples and Sanctuaries in the Roman East*, 171–77.
[370] Segal, *Temples and Sanctuaries in the Roman East*, 170.

Roman archetype (Figure 74 right).[371] A decorated torus and another cavetto molding, separated by a narrow fillet, represent Egyptian influences (Figure 76). They are followed by three Graeco-Roman fasciae (Figure 74 left), albeit with undecorated and slightly oversized astragals.

The insertion of a torus with one or several scotiae or cavetto moldings between the cornice/frieze and the fasciae became a standard element of Syrian entablatures and archivolts. A particularly evolved example is provided by the Syrian arches of the wall niches of the temple of Brekeh from the first half of the 3rd century.[372]

Similarly, tori or quarter circle ovoli ("half tori") became a widespread element of Syrian portal jambs and lintels. The temple of Hebran (151), south of Kanatha, has very unusual rectangular frames around its conches, mimicking the portal jambs of the Ionic order.[373] However, in the "jambs" of Hebran, the fasciae are complemented by an ovolo. Similarly structured portal jambs from the 3rd century exist for example in Shakka, to the northeast of Kanatha.[374] This combination of fasciae and tori/ovoli preempts many Early Christian portal jambs of the 6th century, such as the jambs of the Hagia Sophia or the Mausoleum of Theoderic in Ravenna (Figure 88).

Further examples of Syrian arches with convex and concave moldings in their entablatures/archivolts or examples of corresponding portal jambs can be found in Damascus and its vicinity. Prominent examples include the temple of Ain Hersha (114/15), even predating Mismiyeh, the Sanctuary of Jupiter Damascenus (late 2nd or early 3rd century), predecessor of the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus, and the temple of Dmer (245).[375]

Shortly thereafter, these elements reached Lebanon. The enormous Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus in Baalbek from the 1st century CE and later was already mentioned for its frieze, made of consoles with masks of lions and bulls. In the early 3rd century, a propylon was added, featuring a twin-towered façade, derived from Egyptian pylons, and a Syrian arch.[376] Even further to the north is the location of the Sanctuary of Zeus in Hosn Suleiman. Its Northern Gate from the middle of the 2nd century also includes wall niches with Syrian arches.[377] Many more Roman temples or city gates of Syria were reconstructed with Syrian arches or portal jambs of the kind described.[378] But at least for the sites listed above, the former existence of these elements is archaeologically confirmed.

In this section, it was shown how several characteristic elements of traditional and Ptolemaic Egyptian architecture were adopted "as is" in the Nabataean kingdom and were later blended in Hauran, integrating the tori and cavetto moldings of Egyptian architecture in the entablatures and portal jambs of the Ionic order. This stepwise development took about 300 years, from the mid-1st century BC to the mid-3rd century CE. In this period, the novel decorative elements migrated northward, from Alexandria in Egypt via Bostra, Damascus, and Baalbek to Hosn Suleiman in North Syria.

Adoption of Ptolemaic and Syrian architecture in the Roman Empire

Parallel to this evolution, some of the elements discussed were adopted in other parts of the Roman Empire. Initially, only the baroque elements of Ptolemaic-Hellenistic architecture found adoption in the West.

Stacked engaged columns on pedestals and broken entablatures became characteristic elements of Roman triumphal arches (Figure 93). The earliest extant triumphal arches with engaged columns and broken entablatures exist in Rimini (27 BC) and Aosta (25 BC). In contrast, the Arco di Ricardo in Trieste from 33 BC still has a traditional Ionic entablature supported by pilasters. Unfortunately, the Arch of Augustus on the Forum

[371] Ward-Perkins, *Rom*, 18–24.
[372] Segal, *Temples and Sanctuaries in the Roman East*, 186.
[373] Segal, *Temples and Sanctuaries in the Roman East*, 218–20.
[374] Freyberger, "Heiligtümer aus römischer Zeit in den Dörfern Südsyriens," 476.
[375] Segal, *Temples and Sanctuaries in the Roman East*, 152, 159, 161.
[376] Segal, *Temples and Sanctuaries in the Roman East*, 126; Klaus Stefan Freyberger and Friedrich Ragette, "Stadt des Jupiter Heliopolitanus. Baalbek als Kultzentrum in römischer Zeit.," in *Baalbek. Im Bann römischer Monumentalarchitektur*, ed. Margarete van Ess and Thomas Weber (Philipp von Zabern, 1999), 66 f.
[377] Segal, *Temples and Sanctuaries in the Roman East*, 79 f.; Klaus Stefan Freyberger, "Das Heiligtum in Baitokaike (Hössn Soleiman): Chronologie, Funktion und Bedeutung," *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 2009, no. 2 (2009): 279, https://doi.org/10.34780/667f-5qeb.
[378] Segal, *Temples and Sanctuaries in the Roman East*.

Romanum is lost. It was erected to commemorate the Battle of Actium in 31 BC which led to the Roman conquest of Egypt. It is therefore tempting to assume that the stacked engaged columns and broken entablatures of most Roman triumphal arches go back to the Ptolemaic architecture of Alexandria.

Also, several Second Style Pompeian wall paintings (before 79 CE) show buildings with baroque elements of the Ptolemaic architecture from Alexandria.[379] It is unknown to what extent buildings with these features may have existed in Southern Italy. At least, few fountains of Pompeii and Herculaneum had eyebrow-shaped cornices.[380] McKenzie and others assume that these Pompeian wall paintings may have been intended to depict the paradisal and thereby remote world of the gods.[381] Pompeii is located near Puteoli which at that time was the main port of Rome for imports from the Eastern Mediterranean. It is known that the Nabataeans maintained a trading post in Puteoli.[382] Most likely, similar influences from Alexandria existed as well.

Eventually, we have no indication that the baroque elements of Ptolemaic architecture found broader adoption in Western Roman architecture, with the notable exception of imperial triumphal arches. But these only exhibit a narrow subset of the Ptolemaic elements.

A more visible adoption of Ptolemaic architecture, including Syrian and broken pediments as well as their variants, occurred in the 2nd and 3rd centuries in Asia Minor, with Ephesus as its artistic center.[383] One of the earliest examples is the so-called Temple of Hadrian in Ephesus (114-18) which had a Syrian arch (Figure 83).[384] The lunette above its central portal contained the earliest extant round-shaped tympanum with a sculpted frieze. Syrian arches also were realized in Sardes and Aphrodisisas (both 3rd century). The Market Gate of Miletus (2nd century), now in Berlin, has a prominent broken pediment. Broken entablatures were even more widespread, for example at the Library of Celsus in Ephesus (117-20).[385] Presumably between 250-270, aediculae with eyebrow-shaped cornices (Syrian arches) were inserted in the Constantinople and Lefke gates of the city walls of Nicaea. Finally, the Theodosian propylon of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople from the first half of the 5th century had a Syrian arch too.[386]

However, in contrast to their equivalents in the East, the Syrian arches and broken pediments of Asia Minor and Constantinople were realized with the traditional Ionic entablature, without the convex and concave moldings of Syrian origin. This distinction rather points towards direct adoption from Alexandria.

Further examples of Ptolemaic architecture can be found in North Africa. However, these have no relevance to our discussion.

Apart from the mentioned small fountains in Pompeii and Herculaneum, there are only two known Roman adoptions of Syrian arches in the West (north of Africa). The canopus of Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli has a decorative colonnade with several Syrian arches. The canopus itself was built as a reference to a model in Alexandria. These rather unusual Syrian arches are of no recognizable relevance to our study. Much more interesting are the Syrian arches of Diocletian's Palace in Split. The palace from the late 3rd century had a peristyle including a propylon with Syrian pediment (Figure 84). Based on a historic source, it can be assumed that the architecture of the palace was inspired by the 3rd century Imperial Palace of Antioch.[387] In line with this assumption, the entablature of the Syrian pediment of Split includes the convex and concave moldings of the Syrian fusion architecture (Figure 85). The archivolt of a lunette of the Golden Gate of Split exhibits a similar structure, albeit with two rather than three fasciae (Figure 86). In fact, Diocletian's Palace appears to be the only extant pre-Theodosian building outside of Syria with such an entablature or archivolt.

[379] McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 96–112.
[380] Donald F. Brown, "The Arcuated Lintel and Its Symbolic Interpretation in Late Antique Art," *American Journal of Archaeology* 46, no. 3 (1942): 393; Gertraut Hornbostel-Hüttner, *Studien zur Römischen Nischenarchitektur*, Studies of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society, IX (E. J. Brill, 1979), 201.
[381] McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 112.
[382] Taylor, *Petra and the Lost Kingdom of the Nabataeans*, 70.
[383] Ward-Perkins, *Roman Imperial Architecture*, 280–87.
[384] Quatember, *Der sogenannte Hadrianstempel an der Kuretenstraße*, 29, 100.
[385] Ward-Perkins, *Roman Imperial Architecture*, 288–92.
[386] Mainstone, *Hagia Sophia*, 135 f.
[387] Ward-Perkins, *Roman Imperial Architecture*, 458.

Adoption of Syrian architecture in Early Christian architecture

After the propylon of Baalbek and Diocletian's Palace, both dating from the 3rd century, there was a notable gap in the adoption of Syrian architecture. It took more than a century until Early Christian architecture was ready to revert to architectural ideas from pagan temples. The early 5th century adoption of the Syrian arch in the Theodosian propylon of the Hagia Sophia was already mentioned in the previous section.

Much more important was the construction of the pilgrimage church of Qalb Loze (459-70) in the *hinterland* of Antioch.[388] It was dedicated to St. Simeon Stylites, like the monastery in Qalʿat Simʿān (476-90). It served as the architectural prototype for the latter.[389] In Qalb Loze and Qalʿat Simʿān, the convex and concave moldings of the Syrian architecture, combined with Graeco-Roman fasciae, were excessively used to decorate cornices and archivolts. The archivolts of Qalʿat Simʿān feature multiple repetitions of both elements. But also, other elements of Ptolemaic architecture were modified to suit the purposes and constraints of Christian architecture. At the South Basilica of Qalʿat Simʿān, the Roman propylon with Syrian arch was reduced to the arch and its supporting columns (Figure 27). Thereby, the round-arched portal with decorated archivolt and supporting columns was invented. At Qalʿat Simʿān, such portals also existed at the large octagon (Figure 31) and at the triumphal arch of the entrance to the sanctuary.

The rich articulation of Ptolemaic façades with stacked engaged columns and aediculae was applied to the apse of the East Basilica of Qalʿat Simʿān (Figure 25). The aediculae of Ptolemaic architecture were imitated by windows with eyebrow-shaped cornices. Related cornices were also applied to the windows of the nave (Figure 23). The apse and windows of Qalb Loze were decorated in a similar way (Figure 22). However, Qalb Loze does not feature the round-arched portals with columns of Qalʿat Simʿān. In Syria, it remained an exclusive feature of the latter. The stacked engaged columns of its apse can also be found at Qalb Loze, but only there. In contrast, horizontal cornices with convex and concave moldings, also enclosing windows, became a widespread element of 5th and 6th century architecture of North Syria.[390] Eyebrow-shaped cornices can also be found at the walled-up Golden Gate of the temple mount in Jerusalem, dating from Byzantine or Umayyad times.[391]

From North Syria, eyebrow-shaped cornices of windows and round-shaped portals with columns spread in the 6th and 7th centuries to Armenia and Georgia.[392] The earliest adoption of these elements may have happened in Tekor around 485. The church is best known through an engraving of the 19th century.[393] If this dating is correct, Tekor must have been contemporary with Qalʿat Simʿān. However, both are predated by Qalb Loze. The same elements were adopted in Georgia in the late 6th century, most notably at the Jvari monastery near Mtskheta (586-605).[394] By the latest with the Church of St. Hripisme in Etchmiadzin (618), eyebrow-shaped cornices of windows became a common element of Armenian and Georgian architecture.[395] However, round-arched portals with columns were only adopted in a few places, such as in Voskepar, Aruch or at the church of S. Astvatsatsin in Talin, all from the 7th century.[396]

While eye-brow shaped cornices, round-arched portals with columns, and archivolts with convex and concave moldings did not find adoption in the Early Christian architecture beyond North Syria, Armenia, and Georgia, the Syrian architrave with torus/ovolo, possibly a scotia/cavetto molding, and three fasciae was adopted in Justinian architecture. Often, the torus/ovolo was decorated with ornaments.

In some cases, the decoration of the Syrian architrave was applied to the jambs of rectangular portals. In Graeco-Roman architecture, many portal jambs were modeled after the Ionic architrave, featuring

[388] Strube, *Die "Toten Städte,"* 61–65.
[389] Strube, *Die "Toten Städte,"* 63.
[390] Strube, *Die "Toten Städte"*; Peña, *The Christian Art of Byzantine Syria*.
[391] W. Harold Mare, *The Archaeology of the Jerusalem Area* (Wipf & Stock, 2002), 156–58.
[392] Thierry, *Armenien im Mittelalter*; Russudan Mepisaschwili and Wachtang Zinzadse, *Georgien. Wehrbauten und Kirchen*, with Rolf Schrade (VEB E. A. Seemann, 1987).
[393] Thierry, *Armenien im Mittelalter*, 62 f.
[394] Mepisaschwili and Zinzadse, *Georgien*, 116, 131.
[395] Thierry, *Armenien im Mittelalter*, 59.
[396] Thierry, *Armenien im Mittelalter*, 69, 71.

fasciae. In the 6th century, tori/ovoli and scotiae were added to them. Prominent early examples of portal jambs with tori/ovoli and scotiae exist at the mausoleum of Theoderic (Figure 88) in Ravenna. Later, we find such jambs also at the Basilica of St. John in Ephesus, the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, Sant'Apollinare in Classe in Ravnna or the Euphrasian basilica in Poreč. The cornices under the archivolt of the presumed gate of the Palace of Theoderic in Ravenna exhibit tori and scotiae as well (Figure 87).[397] The entire gate is a close copy of the Golden Gate of Diocletian's Palace (Figure 95), but it may also have been modeled after the contemporary Chalke Gate of the Great Imperial Palace of Constantinople. Hence, the convex and concave moldings of Ravenna most likely followed models in Split or maybe Constantinople.

It is an important conclusion of these findings that the convex and concave moldings, characteristic of the portals of Conques, reached Latin Europe (beyond Split) only in the first half of the 6th century, in regions with strong Byzantine influence. So far, no moldings of that kind have been identified by the author in Rome. By the late 6th century, Rome had already passed her Early Christian apex. Only few churches were built in this period. The most important and iconic churches came from earlier decades or centuries. Nevertheless, one or the other portal jamb with such elements may have existed in Rome as well. But certainly, they were not prominent in the city.

Generally, the early Romanesque architecture of Northern Italy also does not exhibit such advanced decoration elements. The situation of Sicily and Southern Italy is difficult to assess due to the Arab conquest of the 9th century. Hence, by the middle of the 11th century, when the portals of the transepts of Conques were built, the only somewhat likely European locations outside the Byzantine Empire, where such curved moldings could reasonably be found, were Ravenna, Poreč, Split, and potentially some lost Lombard churches in Northern Italy, for example near Cividale or in Brescia. Except for Split, none of these places provided models for eyebrow-shaped cornices or stacked engaged columns. But once travelers from Conques had reached Split, they most likely were on their way to Constantinople or to the Holy Land anyway.

Further evidence of Egyptian origins of Syrian architecture

In the previous sections, it was shown how elements from traditional and Ptolemaic Egyptian architecture were adopted in the Nabataean kingdom and later were fused in Hauran to form a specific Syrian architecture culminating in the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qalʿat Simʿān. Two other iconic elements of traditional Egyptian architecture, the pylon of temples and the pyramidal tomb, provide further evidence for pre-Romanesque dynamics from Egypt along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean to North Syria.

In the course of these dynamics, the pylon of traditional Egyptian temples (Figure 75) was converted to the twin-towered façades of some Early Christian churches. Possibly, the broken pediments of the Ptolemaic architecture of Alexandria, today known from Petra (Figure 77), were already intended to reconcile the centered façades of Hellenistic temples with the bifurcated pylon of Egyptian temples.

In the 2nd century BC, the Jewish palace of Qasr el-Abd (Jordan) was built with a main entrance flanked by two tower-like structures.[398] However, these structures had open colonnades and therefore seem to have had a representative rather than a defensive character. A similar façade was built under Herodian rule before or shortly after 4 BC at the Nabataean temple of Ba'alshamin in Seeia (Figure 79), mentioned before.[399] Another very similar structure is reconstructed for the propylon of the Sanctuary of Jupiter Heliopolitanus in Baalbek (Lebanon) from the 3rd century CE.[400] The appearance of the propylon of Baalbek was later adopted in a simplified way in Qalb Loze (459-70), creating the earliest extant twin-towered façade of a Christian

[397] The gate may have been built only in the 7th century by the Byzantine exarchs.
[398] Freyberger, "Das Heiligtum in Baitokaike," 274 f.
[399] Segal, *Temples and Sanctuaries in the Roman East*, 212 f.; Taylor, *Petra and the Lost Kingdom of the Nabataeans*, 134–38.
[400] Segal, *Temples and Sanctuaries in the Roman East*, 122–26.

church.[401] One may argue that the porch of the south basilica of Qalʿat Simʿān with its three pediments was an evolved echo of the twin-towered façade of Qalb Loze. In North Syria, further twin-towered façades were created in the early 6th century in Deir Turmanin and in Ruweiha (North Church).[402] Whether the twin-towered façades of North Syria had an impact on Romanesque architecture cannot be discussed here.[403] Possibly, the twin-towered façades of Jordan and Syria were co-influenced by alternative models from Mesopotamia. The situation is much clearer with respect to the following architectural element.

Arguably, the pyramidal tomb was the most famous element of Egyptian architecture. Pyramidal tombs spread across large parts of the (Eastern) Mediterranean. Already, the famous Mausoleum at Halicarnassus (about 350 BC) in Asia Minor is known to have had a pyramidal roof on top of the façade of a classic Greek temple. In the 1st century BC, smaller tombs with pyramidal roofs were built in Petra (Obelisk Tomb), Jerusalem (Tomb of Zechariah), and Karmouh el Hermel (North Lebanon). About 18-12 BC, Gaius Cestius erected his pyramid in Rome.[404] In the 1st century CE, further tombs with pyramidal roofs were built in Homs (Tomb of Gaius Julius Sampsigeramus, Syria) and in Diokaisareia (Cilicia).[405] After a gap of nearly 300 years, more extant monuments of that kind were constructed in North Syria, in Kokanaya (384), Dana (late 5th century), and El Bara (6th century).[406] A few further examples are known from North Africa.

Adoption of Syrian architecture in Middle Byzantine architecture

In the second half of the 10th and in the 11th century, the influences of Qalʿat Simʿān and North Syria spread to the Middle Byzantine architecture of mainland Greece, contributing to the so-called Helladic style. It is believed that this style had its origins in the Panagia Church of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas, dated around 960.[407] From Hosios Loukas, it spread to Athens, dominating the 11th century architecture of the latter. In Athens, a relatively large number of Middle Byzantine churches of exceptional quality have survived.[408] For our purposes, elements of the Helladic style potentially pointing to North Syrian origins include the use of ashlar masonry, albeit as a very characteristic opus mixtum (cloisonné masonry), octagonal crossing towers with engaged half columns, eyebrow-shaped cornices of windows, often framing the archivolt and the full jamb of the windows, portal jambs with tori and scotiae, horseshoe arches, the structure of exonarthexes and propylons, and the pervasive use of pseudo-Kufic patterns.

The Panagia Church of Hosios Loukas was one of the earliest Byzantine churches of the cross-in-square type. Likely, it was built after the model of the Lips Monastery in Constantinople. Its novel cross-in-square architecture had remarkable similarities with earlier Roman temples of Seeia and Mismiyeh in Hauran, as was mentioned before.[409]

While the Panagia Church of Hosios Loukas already showed many of the potential influences from North Syria, the church of Panagia Kapnikarea in Athens (Figure 89) is an even more telling and mature example. The latter is considered the most famous Byzantine building of Athens and a close copy of the Panagia Church of Hosios Loukas.[410] The church of Panagia Kapnikarea is assumed to have been built shortly after 1050, only a few

[401] Strube, *Die "Toten Städte,"* 61–63; Peña, *The Christian Art of Byzantine Syria*, 147.
[402] Strube, *Die "Toten Städte,"* 10; Peña, *The Christian Art of Byzantine Syria*, 109.
[403] For further details see: Naraschewski, *Der Bamberger Dom aus kunst- und kulturhistorischer Sicht*, 30–33.
[404] Ward-Perkins, *Rom*, 12.
[405] Ward-Perkins, *Roman Imperial Architecture*, 143 f.
[406] Strube, *Die "Toten Städte,"* 21, 88.
[407] Bouras Charalambos, *Byzantine Athens. 10th-12th Centuries* (Routledge, 2017), 285–87.
[408] Charalambos, *Byzantine Athens*, 127, 287.
[409] Segal, *Temples and Sanctuaries in the Roman East*, 164–69, 210 f.
[410] Charalambos, *Byzantine Athens*, 226, 285–87.

years after the Byzantine reconquest of Qalʿat Simʿān.[411] With such a dating, it would have been contemporary with the construction of the ground level of Sainte-Foy in Conques.

Like many other 11th century churches of Athens, Panagia Kapnikarea has eyebrow-shaped and fully framing cornices around the windows of south façade and apses (Figure 89), made of dentil courses. The shape of these cornices did not have a tradition in Early Byzantine architecture beyond North Syria. The cornices of the apses are of the eyebrow-shaped type, only framing the archivolts, while the cornices of the south façade "fully" frame the jambs and archivolts of the windows while omitting the sole benches.[412] The same arrangement also existed in Qalʿat Simʿān (Figure 25 and Figure 23). Cornices fully framing the windows in such way were a characteristic feature of the 5th and 6th century architecture of North Syria, as can be seen in Qalb Loze (Figure 22).

The exonarthex of Panagia Kapnikarea (Figure 90) has a structure, similar to the porch of the south basilica of Qalʿat Simʿān (Figure 27). It consists of four bays with saddle roofs, rather than the three of Qalʿat Simʿān. Today, the inner bays have (dual) mullioned windows while the outer bays have single windows. Originally, these windows were open portals, as in Qalʿat Simʿān.[413] At Panagia Kapnikarea, a small propylon was added to the south portal of the exonarthex. Such propylons are well known from 10th century Georgian architecture. The exonarthex and propylon of Panagia Kapnikarea were uncommon in earlier Byzantine architecture. Later, they found wider adoption in the Helladic Middle Byzantine architecture. Therefore, many authors assume that the exonarthex and propylon of Panagia Kapnikarea were an addition of the late 11th or early 12th century. However, such an assumption is rather speculative.

Further specific hints of Panagia Kapnikarea towards Syria are provided by the horseshoe arch of its walled-up south portal (Figure 91) and by several pseudo-Kufic patterns.[414] Both elements were introduced at the Panagia Church of Hosios Loukas and later became characteristic features of the Helladic style of the 11th century.

Finally, the jamb of the walled-up south portal of Panagia Kapnikarea (Figure 92) featured tori and scotiae, typical elements of the architecture of North Syria. Extensive use of convex and concave moldings at portal jambs was another characteristic element of the Helladic style.[415] Especially, the prominent use of tori, or rather rolls, went beyond their much more modest use at the 6th century jambs of Constantinople or Ravenna.

To conclude, there is multiple anecdotal evidence that the artistic influence of Qalʿat Simʿān and North Syria spread to Athens and mainland Greece in the late 10th and the 11th centuries, while no comparable adoption is known from Constantinople or other parts of the Middle Byzantine empire.

Potential models for the round-arched portals of Conques

It was shown in the main text how closely the decoration of the façades of Conques followed the example of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qalʿat Simʿān plus a few sites in its vicinity. However, some doubts regarding a potential model role of Qalʿat Simʿān for Conques may remain. Therefore, this section will more systematically explore what models for the innovative round-arched portals of Conques may have existed. It was outlined above that the large south portal of Qalʿat Simʿān can best be understood as a truncated propylon with Syrian arch. Alternative inspirations for the portals of Conques may have come from the portals of Roman triumphal arches, Roman wall niches, and the triumphal arches of some Early Christian churches.

[411] Jarry, "Trouvailles épigraphiques à Saint-Syméon," 108–10; Nikolaos Gkioles, "The Church of Kapnikarea in Athens: Remarks on Its History, Typology and Form," *Zograf* 2006–2007, no. 31 (2006): 15–27, https://doi.org/10.2298/ZOG0731015G The author tentatively dates the exonarthex to the early 12th century without providing specific arguments.

[412] Hence, the term "fully framing", used in this section, only refers to the archivolts and jambs of the windows, excluding the sole benches.

[413] Charalambos, *Byzantine Athens*, 229.

[414] Gkioles, "The Church of Kapnikarea in Athens," 19 f.

[415] Charalambos, *Byzantine Athens*, 293 f.

The portals of Qalʿat Simʿān and Syrian arches

The portals of Qalʿat Simʿān are the only known round-arched portals with columns predating Conques, except for a few successors of the former in Armenia and Georgia. Theoretically, the idea of truncating a propylon with a Syrian arch could have emerged independently in Conques. But Diocletian's Palace in Split had the only known propylon of that kind in the West. As mentioned before, the assumption of a voyage from Conques to Split most likely implied a continued journey to Constantinople or beyond. In addition, Diocletian was the most fervent persecutor of Early Christians which does not make his palace an ideal model for an important Christian church.

In order to support the hypothesis of a direct model role of Qalʿat Simʿān, we will have a closer look at the structure of the moldings of its archivolts. When read from outside to inside, the moldings of the archivolts of the west portal and the portal of the northern transept of Conques have the sequence:

Decorated Roman cornice – fillet – scotia – scotia – small cove with torus

In comparison, the south portal of Qalʿat Simʿān, the most likely model for Conques, has the sequence:

Decorated Roman cornice – two ornamental friezes – scotia – astragal – scotia – two very narrow fasciae with astragal

The archivolt of Conques can be read as a simplified version of Qalʿat Simʿān. The two ornamental friezes were replaced by a simple fillet and the astragal between the two scotiae was omitted. The two narrow fasciae with their astragal were replaced by a much larger torus, separated by a small cove.

Even closer are the similarities between the moldings of the oculus of the west façade of Conques and the archivolts of the octagon of Qalʿat Simʿān. The sequence of the moldings of the oculus of Conques is:

Decorated Roman cornice – fillet – scotia filled with decorative balls (stars) – torus with small cove – decorated scotia – fillet

In comparison, the corresponding sequence of the octagon of Qalʿat Simʿān is:

Decorated Roman cornice – fillet – torus – three fasciae – scotia – torus – two fasciae – scotia – fillet (strongly damaged)

Again, the moldings of Conques can be achieved by dropping the torus with three fasciae and the two fasciae. Instead, the scotiae of Conques are filled with decorative balls and round billet moldings.

Most significant is the similarity between the archivolt of the closed south portal of Conques and the corresponding archivolt of the window of Baqirha. The relatively simple sequence of Conques reads:

Fillet – scotia filled with decorative balls (stars) – small cove with torus

The corresponding sequence of Baqirha reads:

Fillet – scotia filled with decorative balls – torus – three fasciae

Again, the fasciae were dropped in Conques. Both archivolts are rather simple. Hence, the similarity of their moldings is not surprising per se. More stunningly, the archivolts of Baqirha are about the only extant precursors of Conques with such decorative balls, and in addition they have a very similar structure of their moldings.

Overall, it can be observed that the moldings of the west portal and portal of the northern transept of Conques have significant similarities with the relevant south portal of Qalʿat Simʿān while the moldings of the oculus of Conques have close correspondence to the octagon of Qalʿat Simʿān. Even the south portal of Conques and the window of Baqirha with their rather unique decorative balls have nearly identical moldings. In all three cases, the main alterations of Conques consist in elimination of the fasciae and in different ornamental decorations of fillets or scotiae. While these observations strengthen the hypothesis of a direct model role of Qalʿat Simʿān for Conques, it is instructive to better understand the potential alternatives that the builders of Conques might have had.

Roman triumphal arches

The most obvious alternative model for the portals of Conques would have been the round-arched portals of Roman triumphal arches. Following a standard model of Roman Republican architecture, as still visible at the Theatre of Marcellus in Rome, the round-arched portals of Roman triumphal arches were flanked by a blind colonnade consisting of at least two engaged (half) columns and an entablature. In nearly all cases, the archivolts of the portals were decorated with three fasciae, with or without astragals. The Arch of Constantine in Rome, the most relevant triumphal arch for Christians, is a good example (Figure 93). Only in rare cases, the archivolt of the portals was supported by faintly implied pilasters with capitals. However, the triumphal arches closest to Conques, in Orange (Figure 94 right), Besançon, and Glanum (Saint-Rémy-de-Provence), had such implied pilasters. When comparing the portal of the northern transept of Conques (Figure 94 left) with the central portal of the triumphal arch of Orange, there are quite a few similarities. One only wonders why the primary decoration of Orange, the engaged half columns, was applied in Conques at the position of the secondary decoration of Orange, the pilasters. The space in Conques would have permitted a closer copy of Orange. In contrast, the stacked half columns of the radial chapels of Conques, framing the windows of the latter, preserved the logic of Roman triumphal arches, derived from Ptolemaic architecture.

But even if we attest such variation to artistic freedom, it is unclear where the complex sequences of cornices, fillets, scotiae and tori would have come from. As outlined before, only some portal jambs of Ravenna had a torus or ovolo inserted between cornice and fasciae, albeit with low prominence. The overall impression of these jambs was still dominated by the fasciae that are missing in Conques. The only argument that might speak for triumphal arches as models for the portals is the fact that the stacked, engaged half columns on pedestals of the radial chapels were a characteristic element of Roman triumphal arches too. But why would one decorate radial chapels with the appearance of triumphal arches, let alone that there hardly existed any models for the eyebrow-shaped cornices of Conques in the West?

Hence, the assumption of Roman triumphal arches as models of the portals of Conques has some justification. But several critical questions remain unanswered. This conclusion leads us to the second major alternative, Roman wall niches in the form of an exedra or conch.

Roman wall niches

In contrast to triumphal arches, Roman wall niches, often adorned with statues, had much higher variation in their architecture.[416] We have encountered such wall niches already in the case of the temple of Mismiyeh in Hauran. There, the niches were rectangular, framed by an aedicula with Syrian pediment. For our purposes, only wall niches in the form of an exedra or conch are of interest. Some of them had an archivolt supported by engaged (half) columns. But typically, the archivolt was not decorated. Good examples of such exedrae with supporting half columns or pilasters are provided by the Golden Gate of Diocletian's Palace in Split (Figure 95). But it needs to be cautioned that these examples, like many other exedrae with engaged (half) columns, had their origins in the Eastern Mediterranean too.

In Early Christian times, the statues of Roman wall niches were replaced by figures of saints or symbols of God. In order to avoid the creation of sanctioned idols, such figured niches were only realized as small-scale reliefs, most often on sarcophagi. A prominent example of relief figures of saints in pseudo-wall niches exists in the Neonian baptistery of Ravenna from the 6th century (Figure 96). In a parallel development, the figures of saints were replaced by a symbol of God. The respective pseudo-wall niches typically consisted of two half columns and a richly decorated archivolt, often drawing from friezes of Graeco-Roman temples. On a Jewish tomb door from Kafr Yasif from the 4th or 5th century, God is represented by the Eye of Providence.[417] In Early Christian churches, windows were often associated with

[416] Hornbostel-Hüttner, *Studien zur Römischen Nischenarchitektur*.

[417] See: Musée du Louvre, AO 3989, bottom left corner, https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010164839

God.[418] Hence, apse windows or other important windows were sometimes adorned with engaged half columns and decorated archivolts. An early reflection of this practice exists at an altar of the Neonian baptistery in Ravenna (Figure 97). Even more explicit are the gestures of two figures of women pointing to a decorated window in a pseudo-conch in the Lombard oratory of Santa Maria in Valle near Cividale from the 8th century (Figure 98). Later in Romanesque architecture, the external side of apse windows was sometimes decorated with engaged half columns (Figure 100).

But when the main intent of engaged half columns and decorated archivolts of windows was to provide a special honor to God, why would one use the same decoration for a church portal that is used by ordinary sinners? This caveat especially applies to the west portal of Conques with its famous tympanum of the Last Judgment. An inscription over one of its doors explicitly addresses human sinners and admonishes them to repent.

The triumphal arches of some Early Christian churches were related to decorated apse windows. Most prominently, the triumphal arch of San Paolo fuori le mura in Rome (443-50) is supported by flanking columns.[419] It frames the view from the nave to the sarcophagus of the apostle. But like many apse windows, the triumphal arch of San Paolo fuori le mura does not have any sculpted ornaments in its archivolt.

In contrast, the earliest portals of Conques, positioned at its transepts, provide a view to the side chapels at best. The main purpose of the portal of the southern transept was to provide monks with access from the cloister to the choir, not to the side chapel. Also, the archivolt of the triumphal arch of Conques is not decorated in any way. But then, why would the portals be decorated if the triumphal arch itself was not?

To conclude, imitated wall niches in reliefs and portal-like decorations of apse windows or triumphal arches of Early Christian times were architecturally somewhat close to the round-arched portals of Conques. But their potential role as models for church portals poses severe challenges regarding their symbolic significance. In addition, the convex and concave moldings of Conques do not seem to have relevant models in Early Christian architecture or relief art, at least in the West. Most Early Christian sarcophagi predate the 6th century. As a case in point, the pseudo-wall niches of the Neonian baptistery of Ravenna are decorated with traditional fasciae (Figure 96).

Overall, this analysis has provided further evidence of the close proximity between the portals of Conques and Qalʿat Simʿān. The closest alternative model would have been Roman triumphal arches. But their required transformation in combination with the substantial transformation of some inconspicuous portal jambs of Ravenna would have been very significant and complex.

Contemporary Romanesque buildings

As was noted before, the round-arched portals with columns of Conques do not have any contemporaries. However, the articulation of its radial chapels was not entirely solitary at their time, albeit the list of relevant buildings is rather short.

The western apse of Trier cathedral was constructed between 1037-47, shortly before Conques. The apse of Elne cathedral in Southern France was also built around 1040. The chevet of Notre-Dame-la-Blanche in Selles-sur-Cher is tentatively dated to the second half of the 11th century. The chevet of Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand in Poitiers from before 1049 would also be relevant but does not seem to provide additional insight. Two churches with close connections to the abbey of Monte Cassino, San Clemente a Casauria and Santa Maria in Valle Porclaneta, were only dated to the second half of the 12th and the first half of the 13th century. But they show unusually close proximity to the central apse of Qalʿat Simʿān. It is instructive to compare Conques with these churches.

Trier cathedral

As was mentioned in the main text, the western apse of Trier cathedral (Figure 43) was built after an extensive

[418] Patrik Reuterswärd, *The Forgotten Symbols of God: 5 Essays Reprinted from Konsthistorisk Tidskrift*, Stockholm Studies in History of Art 35 (Almqvist & Wiksell, 1986), 95–102.

[419] Brandenburg, *Die frühchristlichen Kirchen in Rom*, 130–35.

pilgrimage of its founder, archbishop Poppo, to the Holy Land with an unspecified assumed link to St. Simeon Stylites through his guide, the later St. Simeon of Trier. The overall arrangement of the stacked pilasters of Trier, including the Lombard bands, mirrors the decoration of the central apse of the East Basilica of Qal ʿat Sim ʿān (Figure 41). However, the detailed execution with pilasters is closer to the local Porta Nigra from the period of emperor Hadrian. Also, the arcades and portals next to the western apse of Trier create the appearance of a late Roman city gate. However, the alternating colors of its stones point towards Constantinople. Apparently, Trier was subject to several influences. For us, the most important learning is that the novel decoration of its west façade was the result of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Elne cathedral

The apse of the cathedral of Elne (Figure 99), near the French border to Spain, was built between 1033-53, most likely around 1040, after a pilgrimage of its bishop Berenguer to the Holy Land. At first glance, the blind arcade of the apse may look like late Roman precursors in Trier and Ravenna, such as the palace hall of Constantine or the so-called Mausoleum of Galla Placidia. However, in contrast to the latter, the blind arcade of Elne has small cornices that mimic the capitals of pilasters. Thereby, the blind arcade of Elne aspires to be a closer image of a real arcade than its late Roman predecessors in Trier and Ravenna. In fact, it is known from a rare historic source that the apse of Elne was built after the model of the Anastasis of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.[420] As in Trier, the idea of decorating an apse with engaged columns or pilasters was the result of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Selles-sur-Cher

The previous examples with documented links to the Eastern Mediterranean are contrasted with a building that firmly points towards the city of Rome. At first glance, the radial chapels of Notre-Dame-la-Blanche in Selles-sur-Cher (Figure 100) may look like a close equivalent of Conques. However, they are markedly different. In contrast to Conques, they can entirely be derived from models in Rome. The engaged half columns flanking the windows of the radial chapels, without attic and pedestals, are a standard motif of Roman Republican and Early Imperial architecture. Relevant examples are the Tabularium at the Capitoline Hill, the Theatre of Marcellus or the Flavian Amphitheatre of Rome.[421] The cornices around the archivolts of these windows correspond to the Roman Republican type, preserved in Falerii Novi and few other places (Figure 74 right).[422] The engaged half columns and associated archivolts of the windows of the central radial chapel and the ambulatory correspond to Roman wall niches (exedrae). As outlined before, their use at windows had a specific Early Christian connotation that was certainly known in Rome. An important novel feature of the radial chapels of Selles-sur-Cher are the figured friezes under its roof cornices. Such figured friezes under the roof existed at many Graeco-Roman temples. It can be assumed that such friezes also existed in Rome. Finally, the Romanesque consoles under the roof cornices of Selles-sur-Cher are of the shaving type, mimicking the voluted consoles of Graeco-Roman temples. Hence, the radial chapels of Selles-sur-Cher are Romanesque in the true sense of the word, referring to models of the city of Rome.

From this perspective, the radial chapels of Conques with their stacked engaged columns on pedestals, their eyebrow-shaped cornices, their square billet moldings, and their consoles with masks are rather "Syrianesque". Unfortunately, we do not know about the circumstances of the construction of Selles-sur-Cher. Also, the date of its construction is contested. Vergnolle provided evidence of construction in the second half of the 11th century, possibly already in the 1060s, in line with the similar but simpler chevet of Saint-Savin-sur-Gartempe.[423] On the other hand, the imitation of models from the city of Rome only became a broader trend in the 12th century.

[420] Escarra, *L'abside majeure d'Elna*, 46 f.
[421] Ward-Perkins, *Rom*, 21, 33, 63.
[422] Ward-Perkins, *Rom*, 18–24.
[423] Éliane Vergnolle, *L'Art Monumental de la France Romane. Le XIe Siècle* (The Pindar Press, 2000), 271.

Monte Cassino

Even closer to Qalʿat Simʿān, but not contemporary with Conques, are the apses of two monastic churches in the Abruzzo region of Italy that were built under the influence of the Abbey of Monte Cassino. The apse of San Clemente a Casauria was built approximately between 1155-75 while the apse of Santa Maria in Valle Porclaneta (Figure 101) can be dated to the 13th century.[424] The decoration of the apses with engaged columns is structurally very similar. But only the apse of Santa Maria in Valle Porclaneta has multiple registers of stacked columns.

Both apses have two additional features with remarkable similarity to the central apse of the East Basilica of Qal ʿat Sim ʿān (Figure 41). The engaged columns of the two apses are full columns in contrast to the typical half columns of Romanesque architecture. Even Pisa cathedral features engaged three-quarter columns rather than full columns. In addition, the roof cornices of the two apses have Lombard bands, somewhat similar to the western apse of Trier cathedral. However, at these apses and at the central apse of Qalʿat Simʿān, every second arch of the band was supported by an engaged column.

This arrangement was rather unique. Neither blind arcades with engaged full columns nor the combination of engaged (half) columns with Lombard bands had any relevant precedence in Romanesque architecture.[425] There are no credible models from Roman Republican or Imperial architecture either. In the 13th century, the unusual decoration of the apse of Santa Maria in Valle Porclaneta had its only, still extant direct model in Qalʿat Simʿān.

The Abbey of Monte Cassino had close ties to the Byzantine empire and was one of the major sources of Byzantine artistic influences in the West.[426] Together with the churches of Sant'Angelo in Formis, San Liberatore alla Maiella, and San Pelino in Corfinio, Santa Maria in Valle Porclaneta counts among the art-historically most important, still extant priory churches of Monte Cassino from the 11th to the 13th centuries. Unfortunately, the abbey church of Monte Cassino itself, built with the support from two Byzantine emperors, is lost.[427] The apse of Santa Maria in Valle Porclaneta was most likely built in conjunction with the even more elaborate apse of San Pelino in Corfinio from 1229-35, another priory of Monte Cassino.[428] The latter is believed to exhibit Byzantine influences.[429]

In the 1230s, when the apse of Santa Maria in Valle Porclaneta was probably built, pilgrimage to the Holy Land was feasible again due to the successful Sixth Crusade of Frederick II, who resided in nearby Apulia. In any case, Qalʿat Simʿān was located in the Principality of Antioch, ruled by descendants of the Normans of Apulia, and thereby was accessible for westerners throughout the entire 12th and large parts of the 13th century. Even if the apse of Qalʿat Simʿān was not the direct model for the apses of San Clemente a Casauria and Santa Maria in Valle Porclaneta, the relationships described make Byzantine models of some form very likely.

Potential relevance for Conques

This short analysis of relevant contemporary buildings of Conques provides interesting insight into the thinking of advanced church builders of the mid-11th century. First, the builders of Trier, Elne, and Selles-sur-Cher closely followed the example of specific ancient buildings but rearranged or imitated the elements of their models in a novel way. In the case of Santa Maria in Valle Porclaneta, the copy may even have been rather direct. Trier, Elne, and Santa Maria in Valle Porclaneta point towards models in the Eastern Mediterranean, resulting from pilgrimages to the Holy Land or from close links to the Byzantine Empire, while Selles-sur-Cher refers to the city of Rome. In the case of the western apse of Trier, it remains open to what extent it was built after the model of Qalʿat Simʿān or the model of the local Porta Nigra. But Byzantine influences are clearly visible.

[424] Paolo Favole, *Abruzzes Molise Romans*, with Francesca Del Vitto, La nuit des temps 74 (Zodiaque, 1991), 54 f., 119.
[425] Contemporary apses with engaged half columns under Lombard bands existed in the wider region at the cathedral of Sessa Aurunca, Santa Maria al Lago in Moscufo, and Santa Maria Assunta in Bomincao.
[426] Herbert Bloch, "Monte Cassino, Byzantium, and the West in the Earlier Middle Ages," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 3 (1946): 163–224.
[427] Bloch, "Monte Cassino, Byzantium, and the West in the Earlier Middle Ages," 194 f.; Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture*, 362 f.
[428] Favole, *Abruzzes Molise Romans*, 99, 119.
[429] Favole, *Abruzzes Molise Romans*, 101.

Conclusions about the likely models of Conques

The detailed art historical analysis of this section has confirmed that the most likely primary model of the external decoration of Conques was the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qalʿat Simʿān and its vicinity. Roman triumphal arches may have provided an alternative model but would have required significant, non-intuitive transformations. The comparison with Trier, Elne, Santa Maria in Valle Porclaneta, and Selles-sur-Cher provides evidence that advanced church builders of the mid-11th and mid-13th century drew inspirations from models in remote locations, such as Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Rome, most likely even from Qalʿat Simʿān itself.

Qalʿat Simʿān and its possibly lost echo in Antioch are the only obvious models that could explain the rich external decoration of Conques. Qalʿat Simʿān even provides a nearly 1:1 model of the arrangement of the decorative elements of Conques.

The only somewhat likely alternative explanation would be Roman triumphal arches. However, there is no convincing answer why one would decorate a radial chapel with the appearance of a triumphal arch. Also, Roman triumphal arches do not provide an explanation for the moldings of the eyebrow-shaped cornices and archivolts of Conques, nor do they provide a model for its iconic double windows with oculus or its consoles with masks. With a lot of goodwill, one might derive the convex and concave moldings of the archivolts and the eyebrow-shaped cornices from Ravenna and Split. But the necessary artistic transformation would be significant. Still, we would lack models for the square billet moldings and the consoles with masks. They could have been derived from earlier Romanesque buildings. But the models of these earlier buildings would remain open. Finally, the motif of double windows with oculus is known to be of Syrian origin. Only a small group of windows at the church of San Miguel de Lillo in Oviedo from around 850 provides a European precursor with potential relevance for Conques.

As suggested in the main text, the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qalʿat Simʿān and its vicinity provide the most likely model for the external decoration of Conques. We were able to follow the evolution of the decorative elements of Qalʿat Simʿān from their origins in traditional and Ptolemaic Egypt nearly step by step. From the adoption of Ptolemaic architecture in Petra to its evolved appearance in Qalʿat Simʿān, this evolution took almost 500 years to be completed. Even then, the extensive use of columns at Qalʿat Simʿān constituted a prominent singularity in pre-Romanesque architecture. Apparently, the idea of decorating apses with engaged columns and the idea of creating round-arched portals with columns were all but intuitive. In Qalʿat Simʿān, we find a special spiritual motivation for these elements in the local veneration of the column of St. Simeon Stylites. These complex findings make it very unlikely that the builders of Conques immediately arrived at the same complex conclusions without any external stimulation.

Finally, it is documented that monks from Rouergue and other regions of Aquitaine frequently undertook pilgrimages to the Holy Land. One would assume that some of them must have been exposed to Qalʿat Simʿān, even if only through its potential artistic echo in Antioch. Also, other relevant Romanesque buildings in Trier, Elne or Santa Maria in Valle Porclaneta, drew from models of the Eastern Mediterranean. It is particularly relevant, that the monks of Monte Cassino, the mother abbey of all Benedictines, most likely chose Qalʿat Simʿān as the model for one of its art-historically most relevant priory churches. Similarly, influences from Qalʿat Simʿān and North Syria are visible in 11th century Athens.

However, the discussed examples from Ravenna, Poreč, Split, and Constantinople also show that some elements of Syrian architecture had already begun to make their way towards the West in the Late Roman era (Figure 102). In the 11th century, they reached mainland Greece. Therefore, one cannot reduce Conques only to the influence of Qalʿat Simʿān and only to pilgrimages to the Holy Land. The assumed traffic route from Northern Italy to the Eastern Mediterranean had a much broader relevance for the creation of Romanesque architecture.

Analytical Humanities: Towards a new research approach

Digital technologies profoundly affect nearly every aspect of our daily lives. Responding to this development, the field of Digital Humanities aims to employ state-of-the-art digital technologies to advance scientific knowledge or to make scientific knowledge more accessible to broader audiences, for example via virtual reconstructions of historical buildings.

Introduction to basic concepts of Digital Humanities

A particular subfield of Digital Humanities leverages advanced algorithms of Data Science or Machine Learning to gain new scientific insight that cannot be obtained with traditional scientific approaches.[430] Most of these advanced algorithms are of a statistical rather than an algorithmic nature. In this context, complex situations are being abstracted into high-dimensional mathematical models. These models are filled with large amounts of real-life data, thereby justifying the somewhat colloquial term *Big Data*. Instead of deriving causal relationships between the dimensions studied in a systematic and structured manner, as would have been done in the past, statistical methods are being employed. Such statistically identified relationships are called correlations. For example, AI-based translation algorithms are no longer instructed about the rules of syntax and grammar. Instead, they autonomously learn about these rules by identifying statistical correlations between the words of large numbers of real-life texts and their translations produced by humans. In the same spirit, forecasting algorithms predict future outcomes through the identification of statistical correlations between potentially relevant influencing factors and their impact on the predicted outcome, based on historical data of influencing factors and actual outcomes. Such analysis typically is performed without quantitative human insight into how these factors impact the predicted outcomes.

However, statistical identification of correlations only is a necessary but not a sufficient indicator of causal relationships. There are various ways how the existence of correlations can be misinterpreted. In the best case, a causal relationship between two factors exists, but the causal pathway is so complex that the assumption of direct causality is misleading. More often, correlations can be the reflection of independent influences from a common cause. In this case, causality exists between the common cause and both investigated factors. But no causality exists amongst them. In the worst case, the size of the data set was not large enough allowing random fluctuations, called statistical noise, to pretend the existence of meaningful correlations. It is therefore important to validate the plausibility of any findings from such correlation analysis with other historical context information, be it art-historical, political-historical or cultural-historical.

A particular challenge of the approach of Digital Humanities described lies in the large volume of data that may need to be processed. Often, a mathematically

[430] See for example Amanda Wasielewski, *Computational Formalism: Art History and Machine Learning* (The MIT Press, 2023).

precise correlation analysis is not feasible, and special heuristics need to be applied. Neural networks and their more recent variants of Deep Learning provide such heuristics. However, parametrizing neural networks in an effective way often is more an art than a science. Therefore, the use of methods of Digital Humanities requires tight collaboration between scholars of the humanities and data scientists. The need for such collaboration poses a significant impediment for widespread application of such new methods.

Analytical Humanities: Semi-statistical approach to Digital Humanities

In many situations, the ideas of Digital Humanities can be applied in a more traditional and more qualitative approximation abolishing the need for collaboration with data scientists. Here, it is proposed to refer to such semi-statistical use of methods of Digital Humanities as *Analytical Humanities*. A semi-statistical approach may be feasible if the underlying problem is highly complex requiring a significant number of dimensions, but the supporting data set is sparse enough to be handled manually. Such situations often occur in art history when a novel artwork constitutes a step change in innovation drawing in an obscure way from multiple precursors. The analysis of such a use case of Analytical Humanities may involve the following steps:

1. **Model definition**: To avoid duplicate work in data collection, it is paramount to define all dimensions of the model investigated upfront. Typically, such dimensions are architectural, decorative or iconographic elements of a complex artwork, e.g., a Romanesque church, with the aim of identifying the likely models or successors of the latter. From a methodological perspective, it is important that the chosen dimensions are clearly defined. A valid dimension may be a standardized class of decoration elements, like Lombard bands, or a standardized iconographic motif, like the Adoration of the Magi. In contrast, stylistic similarities often are debatable and do not lend themselves well to such an analysis.
2. **Data collection**: Usually, the biggest challenge of this approach is posed by the collection of the data set to be analyzed. In the above example, it would mean collecting comprehensive and detailed information about all earlier or later churches that possess the same decorative or iconographic elements. For example, with more than 2,000 Romanesque churches being known in Europe, comprehensive data collection may not always be viable. In this case, a heuristic grid search needs to be employed. In an iterative process, the search grid needs to be narrowed down in those regional areas where potential findings turn out to be most promising. Like every heuristic, such an iterative approach will have a certain error rate. Relevant buildings may be overlooked. Therefore, the search grid needs to be gradually refined, until sufficient convergence of the overall results has been reached.
3. **Data analysis and data representation**: An often effective, yet relatively simple way of analyzing high dimensional data is to consolidate them in various tables, organized by different leading dimensions. Thereby, potential relations can be tested and displayed. One of the most effective ways of analyzing geo-spatial correlations is to put data on a map. Ideally, these include relevant context information, such as important cities or churches, major traffic routes or borders of territorial rulership. The scientific value of representing data in tables or on maps should not be underestimated. The laborious act of creating such representations in a complete and accurate way often provides relevant insight that would have been overlooked by a less meticulous approach. The aim of such data representations is to identify nontrivial spatial or temporal patterns that may provide insight into the artistic dynamics investigated.
4. **Result verification**: In a last procedural step, the plausibility of identified patterns or correlations needs to be verified. First, the

statistical relevance of the correlations needs to be assessed. In contrast to the quantitative methods of Digital Humanities, such an assessment will necessarily be of a qualitative nature. It will require rather pronounced correlations for them to be credible. The simultaneous occurrence of several elements in two investigated sites only is of statistical significance if these elements are so rare that no other clustered occurrence can be identified that could have served as a common model. In particular, one needs to exclude the potential existence of solitary but prominent common models in remote locations such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem or of common models of different materiality such as illustrated manuscripts. Also, any verification of potential causalities should include the identification of potential political or cultural relationships between the identified sites.

5. **Data interpretation**: Nevertheless, such a statistical approach will only allow drawing aggregated conclusions. The identification of validated correlations may prove the existence of a causal relationship between a model region and the successor building investigated. But the existence of such semi-statistical correlations does not necessarily infer that each element of the successor had its model in the investigated model region. Some elements may have been invented independently or may have been derived from other relevant models elsewhere. The existence of correlations also does not permit conclusions to be drawn on the way how influence has spread. The artist of the successor may have visited the model region himself. But just as well, he may have leveraged sketch books from other artists who have visited the region on various earlier occasions. Alternatively, artistic influences may have spread in a diffusive way via several intermediate artworks.
6. **Publication of results**: The publication of insights gained through methods of Analytical Humanities often faces practical challenges in finding a suitable publication medium. Often, the comprehensive data of studies of Analytical Humanities, in the form of tables, images or other contextual information, may exceed the limits imposed by established art-historical journals. On the other hand, many studies may not be suitable for publication as monographs by traditional publishing houses either. To overcome these limitations, the author has established the new e-publication series Athenanea (www.athenanea.net). It provides the necessary flexibility in terms of publication length and formats. In addition, it allows published studies to be updated through successive editions to include post-publication data that further sharpen the initial findings.

The relevance of Analytical Humanities for the study of Romanesque art

Romanesque art exhibits a vast variety of architectural, decorative, and iconographic elements. Already in the 19th and 20th centuries, researchers like Eugène Viollet-le-Duc in France or the contributors to the RDK Labor in Germany have systematically described and classified various architectural and decorative elements of Romanesque architecture including a cataloging of their occurrences.

Using a vague analogy with Egyptology, we know the various types of Romanesque 'hieroglyphs' and their general occurrence in various 'documents' reasonably well. But often, we have yet to discover our 'Rosetta stone' to understand their meaning in a broader context. In the world of Romanesque art, this means that we have yet to better understand why artists chose certain decorative elements. Was it a mere matter of artistic convenience or did they intend to demonstrate allegiance to a regional ruler, to a monastic network, to a spiritual idea or to a place of particular importance, such as Old-St. Peter in Rome or the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem? Did specific decorative elements have a spiritual meaning beyond their aesthetic appeal, and was there a spiritual meaning when some elements were used in conjunction? Did artistic dynamics occur along certain traffic routes more often than along others? Who determined the

artistic program of a new church? Was it the politically well-connected bishop or abbot or rather an intellectual local cleric or maybe the artist himself? The amount of progress that Romanesque art history has made in this direction is surprisingly limited due to the lack of explicit historical sources. For example, the work of Reuterswärd on the various early Christian and Romanesque symbols of God as well as the work of Blanc and Blanc on the symbolism of Romanesque sculpture was an important step in this direction.[431] But there may be more to be learned if we would better understand transregional dynamics and their drivers. The methods of Analytical Humanities described here may help to achieve this goal.

It may be objected that several generations of highly acclaimed researchers have already attempted to identify such relationships. Why should the prospects be more promising now? Such skepticism underestimates that the proposed semi-statistical approach, when applied in a rigorous and meticulous manner, constitutes a significant conceptual innovation. By looking conjointly at large numbers of decorative elements, one may be able to derive collective conclusions with confidence where the study of individual elements was inconclusive. Furthermore, recent advances in building research, the publication of many detailed regional monographs as well as the pervasive availability of intelligently searchable images on the internet, in particular via Wikimedia Commons, fundamentally changed the perspective of successfully applying such a research approach.

As a pioneering step, such a method of Analytical Humanities was successfully applied by the author in an earlier study to identify the likely models of the late Romanesque parts of Bamberg cathedral.[432] By analyzing about 40 architectural, decorative, and iconographic elements, it could be shown that an extension of the *Via Podiensis* ranging from Cluny to Moissac must have been the core model region for the builders of Bamberg cathedral. Similar results were obtained in the study on the abbey church of Conques presented here. In this case, the pilgrimage route from Conques to the Holy Land played the most crucial role.

[431] Reuterswärd, *The Forgotten Symbols of God: 5 Essays Reprinted from Konsthistorisk Tidskrift*; Anne Blanc and Robert Blanc, *Les Symboles de l'art roman* (DU ROCHER, 1999); Anne Blanc and Robert Blanc, *Monstres, sirènes et centaures: Symboles de l'art roman* (DU ROCHER, 2006).

[432] Naraschewski, *Der Bamberger Dom aus kunst- und kulturhistorischer Sicht*; Naraschewski, "Bamberg, Conques, and the Hohenstaufen Dynasty"; Martin Naraschewski, *Les origines de la cathédrale de Bamberg sur la Via Podiensis: Résumé partiel de Athenanea, n° 1*, 2nd ed., Athenanea 2 (Martin Naraschewski, 2025).

Tables

LOCATION	CHURCH/SANCTUARY	PRECURSOR ELEMENTS	OTHER OCCURRENCES BEFORE CONQUES
Jerusalem	Holy Sepulchre	Anastasis (model for ambulatory/radial chapels)	Tours, Limoges, others; Rotunda: Fulda, Auxerre, Reichenau, Constance, Dijon; Villeneuve d'Aveyron (contemporary)
		Anastasis (model for blind arcade of the apse)	Georgia, Contemporary: Speyer, Pisa, Saintes
		Alternating supports	Other Byzantine churches, Dome of the Rock, Reichenau, Ottonian architecture, Jumièges, Poitiers (Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand)
		Galleries of the nave	Other Byzantine churches, Gernrode, Jumièges, Dijon, Tours, Limoges, others
Damascus	Ummayad mosque, ex-St. John the Baptist	Octagonal crossing tower with squinches	Armenia, Georgia, few Byzantine churches, Islamic buildings of North Africa and Spain
Baalbek	Temple of Jupiter	Consoles with lions or bulls	Armenia, Poitiers (Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand)
	Temple of Venus	Double-row dentils (alternating)	Egypt, Qalʿat Simʿan, Armenia; Qalb Loze (triple-row, non-alternating)
North Syria	See the next table		
Ephesus	St. John the Apostle	Floor plan (wide transepts)	Holy Apostles, Tours, Limoges, Orléans
		Alternating supports	See above
Constantinople	Hagia Sophia	Angels in pendentives	Other Byzantine churches
		Coupled columns of gallery	Rome (Santa Constanza, arcade)
		Oculi in spandrels	Gernrode
		Alternating supports	See above
	Myrelaion	Single-story lantern tower	Other Byzantine churches
	Monastery of Stoudios	Painting of Last Judgment	Müstair, St. Gall, Reichenau, Torcello, others
		Galleries of the nave	See above
		Absence of westwork	Other Byzantine churches
Thessaloniki	Panagia Chalkeon	Painting of Last Judgment	See above
		Stepped profile of windows	Hosios Loukas (less pronounced)
		Framed group of windows	-
	Hagios Demetrios	Alternating supports	See above
		Galleries of the nave	See above
Poreč	Euphrasian Basilica	Personification of curiosity	-
Torcello/ Venice	Santa Maria Assunta	Mosaic of Last Judgment	See above
	Santa Fosca	Stepped profile of windows	See above; dating of Santa Fosca uncertain
	San Marco	Angels in pendentives	See above

Table 1: Potential models for Conques along the identified pilgrimage route to the Holy Land.

LOCATION	CHURCH/MONUMENT	PRECURSOR ELEMENTS	OTHER OCCURRENCES BEFORE CONQUES
Qalb Loze	Basilica (St. Simeon Stylites)	Stacked engaged columns on pedestals	Roman triumphal arches and (amphi-)theatres, Ptolemaic architecture
		Tori and scotiae/cavetto moldings in archivolts	North Syria, some portal jambs in Ravenna, Constantinople, Ephesus (very different)
		Triple-row dentils	-
Baqirha	West Church	Decorative balls in scotia of archivolt	-
		Tori and scotiae/cavetto moldings in archivolts	See above
Qalʿat Simʿan	Church of St. Simeon Stylites	Stacked engaged columns on pedestals	Roman triumphal arches and (amphi-)theatres, Ptolemaic architecture
		Eyebrow-shaped cornices of windows (only framing the archivolts)	North Syria (different, also framing the jambs), Syrian arches in Syria and Split, Armenia, Georgia, Saint-André-de-Sorède, Paris (Saint-Germain-des-Prés), Poitiers (Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand), Nevers (cathedral), Arles-sur-Tech
		Tori and scotiae/cavetto moldings in archivolts	See above; structures of Qalʿat Simʿan very similar to Conques
		Portal house/porch with pediment and columns	Armenia, Georgia; structure of Qalʿat Simʿan incl. position of doors very similar to Conques
		Round-arched portals, supported by columns	Rome (San Paolo fuori le mura, triumphal arch, different), Armenia, Georgia
		Double-row dentils	Egypt, Baalbek, Armenia
		Double windows with oculus	North Syria, Sinai (Monastery of Catherine), Oviedo (San Miguel de Lillo)
		Octagonal crossing tower and squinches	For other examples, see the previous table *Comment: Octagonal crossing tower without squinches at the separate baptistery. Precursors of squinches on the ground floor of the central octagon.*
Deir Simʿan	Tomb	Decorated frames around windows (incl. sole benches)	Armenia, Georgia, Contemporary with Conques: Speyer, Como (Sant'Abbondio) (both without sole benches)
Qalʿat Kalota	East Church	Decorated frames around windows (incl. sole benches)	See above
		Tori and scotiae/cavetto moldings in archivolts	See above
Resafa	Basilica A	Mullioned portals with outer engaged columns	Oviedo (Santa María del Naranco), Early Christian sarcophagi, widespread use in French Romanesque architecture

Table 2: Potential models for Conques in North Syria.

ELEMENTS OF CONQUES	BYZANTINE PRECURSORS	OTHER OCCURRENCES	COMMENTS
Byzantine elements with occurrences in Romanesque architecture before Conques (approx.. 950-1050)			
Floor plan (wide transepts)	Ephesus/Holy Apostles	Tours, Limoges, Orléans	Static necessity of vaulting
Ambulatory with radial chapels	Holy Sepulchre (Anastasis)	Tours, Limoges, Clermont, Orléans, Beaulieu-lès-Loches	Rotunda: Fulda, Auxerre, Reichenau, Constance, Dijon
Galleries of the nave	Holy Sepulchre (Basilica), Ephesus/Holy Apostles, many Byzantine churches	Gernrode, Jumièges, Dijon, Tours, Limoges, Mont-Saint-Michel, some others	Potentially, combined reference to Holy Sepulchre in conjunction with ambulatory
Alternating supports	Holy Sepulchre (Anastasis), Ephesus, Hagia Sophia, Thessaloniki, many Byzantine churches	Reichenau, Gernrode, Ottonian architecture, Jumièges, Poitiers (Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand)	Reichenau is the only known Carolingian example; possibly reference to Holy Apostles, together with Gernrode
Square billet moldings	Church of St. Simeon, Baalbek, Egypt, Armenia	See the next table	Baalbek is closest pre-Romanesque precursor
Eyebrow-shaped cornices	Church of St. Simeon, Syria, Armenia, Georgia	See the previous table	Several shortly after Conques, e.g., Frómista
Byzantine elements without relevant occurrences in Romanesque architecture before Conques			
Stacked, engaged half columns of radial chapels	Church of St. Simeon Stylites, Qalb Loze	Roman triumphal arches and (amphi-)theatres	Toulouse and Frómista dependent on Conques
Blind arcade of the apse (external façade)	Holy Sepulchre (Anastasis), Armenia, Georgia	Contemporary: Speyer, Pisa, Saintes	Appearance in Europe around 1100; precursor in Elne
Round-arched portals, supported by columns	Church of St. Simeon Stylites, Armenia, Georgia	-	Most characteristic innovative element of Conques
Tori and scotiae in archivolts	Church of St. Simeon Stylites, North Syria	Split	Portal jambs in Ravenna, Constantinople, Ephesus
Oculi in spandrels of mullioned or double windows/portals	Hagia Sophia (inlays), Church of St. Simeon, Syria, Sinai (St. Catherine)	Gernrode, Medallions in spandrels: Santa María del Naranco, Pisa	Unusual position of oculus at cloister portal of Conques, similar to Hagia Sophia
Stepped profiles of windows and portals	Panagia Chalkeon, Torcello, many Byzantine churches	Contemporary: Selles-sur-Cher (limited similarity)	San Marco in Venice shortly after Conques
Framed group of windows	Panagia Chalkeon	-	Result of 11th century trends in Byzantine architecture
Coupled columns of galleries or of cloister	Hagia Sophia, very few other Byzantine churches	Rome (Santa Constanza, arcade)	Contemporary occurrences in Toulouse and Compostela
Angels in squinches (elsewhere in pendentives)	Hagia Sophia, San Marco, many Byzantine churches	-	Unusual realization as sculptures in Conques
Octagonal crossing tower with squinches	Syria, Armenia, Georgia, few Byzantine churches, Islamic architecture	Cardona, Frómista, Loarre	Frómista linked to Conques, few contemporary buildings, potential models in Toledo
Single-story lantern tower	Church of St. Simeon Stylites, Myrelaion, many Byzantine churches	Germigny-des-Prés, Caen (Saint-Étienne), Normandy, Fulda, Frómista	Germigny-des-Prés and Caen have tall rectangular lantern towers with limited lighting
Personification of curiosity	Poreč (Euphrasian Basilica)	-	Unique element of Conques

Table 3: Potential Byzantine elements of Conques and their potential models (incomplete list).

ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS	PRECURSORS (EARLY EXAMPLES)	COMMENTS
Architectural elements of Conques with Early Christian (West), Visigothic, Merovingian or Lombard precursors		
Cruciform floor plan with crossing tower	Early Christian: Ravenna (Santa Croce), San Nazaro in Brolo (Milan), Trier, Sofia Visigothic: Braga, Santa Comba de Bande, San Pedro de la Nave, others Merovingian: Paris (Sainte-Croix-et-Saint-Vincent)	Widespread adoption in France only in Carolingian era (after Saint-Denis) and in the Empire only in Ottonian era (after Gernrode); in the Empire often without crossing tower
Figured or historiated capitals	Early Christian: Rome (San Lorenzo fuori le mura), Ravenna Visigothic: San Pedro de la Nave	Only few Roman examples from the West, more widespread use of eagle capitals in Roman art
Decorated imposts	Early Christian: Ravenna (limited) Visigothic: San Pedro de la Nave	San Pedro de la Nave is early example of historiated capital with decorated impost
Three-stranded interlace/ wickerwork	Early Christian: Italy (reliefs), Rome (San Clemente, basket capital) Lombard: Verona, several others	Characteristic for Conques, often two-stranded in French Romanesque art
Architectural elements of Conques with Asturian or Carolingian precursors		
Cruciform floor plan	Carolingian: Saint-Denis, Germigny-des-Prés, Saint-Riquier, Reichenau	Re-introduction in the empire through Gernrode, St. Pantaleon, Bamberg
Barrel vaults with transverse arches	Asturian: Santa María del Naranco, Santa Cristina de Lena	Earlier examples of transverse arches in Syria, Islamic architecture, e.g., Ukhaidir
Double windows with oculus	Asturian: San Miguel de Lillo	Earlier examples in Syria and the Holy Land (e.g., Monastery of St. Catherine)
Mullioned windows with outer engaged half columns	Asturian: Santa María del Naranco	Widespread use in French Romanesque architecture, not in Empire or Italy
Mullioned windows with discharging arch	Carolingian: Corvey Early Ottonian: Gernrode	Earliest known example in Byzantine architecture: Hosios Loukas
Round staircase towers	Carolingian: Aachen (Palatine Chapel)	Widespread use in Ottonian architecture
Architectural elements of Conques with Romanesque precursors (mainly Loire, Burgundy, and Auvergne)		
Compound piers with engaged columns and pilaster strips	Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Châtillon-sur-Seine, Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, Auxerre (Saint-Étienne), Cardona, Bernay, Poitiers (Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand)	Significant innovation of French Romanesque architecture, absent in Roman or early Byzantine architecture
Figured or historiated capitals	Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire (porch tower)	Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire was the most important model for Romanesque art
Square billet moldings	Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, Dijon (Saint-Bénigne), surroundings of Tours	Later, widespread use at the Loire, in Burgundy, and in Auvergne
Consoles with masks under the roof cornice	Poitiers (Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand), Contemporary: Azay-le-Rideau, Saint-Sever	Widespread use of shaving consoles without masks at the Loire, in Burgundy, and in Auvergne (see below)
Shaving consoles under the roof cornice	Dijon (Saint-Bénigne), several others	Widespread use at the Loire, in Burgundy, and in Auvergne; few precursors in Córdoba and in Mozarabic architecture

Table 4: Architectural elements of Conques with potential models from the West.

TIME PERIOD	SOURCE	NEW CONCEPTUAL OR ICONOGRAPHIC ELEMENTS
New Kingdom	Egyptian mythology	Weighing of hearts (souls), Particular Judgment
5th century BC or earlier	Greek mythology	Particular Judgment, Otherworld: Hades, Elysion, Tartaros (special place of punishment with possibility of purgatory)
2nd to 1st centuries BC	Daniel 7:10 Judith 16:15	Stream of fire from the throne of God/Christ to the damned Torments of damned by fire and serpents
80/90	Matthew 24-25, 19:8	Angels with trumpets, Last Judgment heralded by sign of Christ (Cross), Christ as judge, saved rewarded with eternal life, damned facing perpetual torments, 12 apostles as jury
70/90	Luke 16:19-31	Parable of poor Lazarus and rich man, Particular Judgment, Bosom of Abraham, torments for wicked
90/95	Book of the Apocalypse	Paschal mystery of Christ: 24 elder, four living creatures, Lamb of God, seven candle sticks, book with seven seals Parousia of Christ: Seven angels with seven trumpets and eighth angel, rolling up the scrolls of sky, Christ as King of Kings with thousand-year reign, First resurrection of martyrs, crowning of martyrs, others remain dead Last Judgment: empty throne of God, *liber vitae*, resurrection, damned, Satan, Beast, and False Prophet cast in Lake of Fire, Heavenly Jerusalem with God residing between saved
2nd to 4th centuries	Apocryphal apocalypses (Peter, Paul, Mary)	Detailed description of Hell and its torments, Hell compartmentalized by type of torment, torments reflecting the respective sin and involved body part, hanging and demons as punishment, intercession by Virgin and saints
180-220	Tertullian (De anima 58)	Particular Judgment, refreshments or torments in otherworld
First third of 5th century	Augustine (Enchiridion 18 :69, 29 :109-111, De civitate dei)	Elected resting (no Paradise) and damned in torment until Last Judgment, possibility of proto-purgatory, prayers and alms may help venial sinners, co-existence of eternal civitas immortalis (Heaven, God) and civitas mortalis (Hell, Satan) with differentiated levels of benefits or torments
593/94	Gregory the Great (Dialogues, 4th book)	Priority of Particular Judgment, immediate ascension to Heaven, perpetual torments in Hell, time-limited proto-purgatory in dedicated places of Hell, prayers and masses may help sinners in purgatory, dispute of angels and devils over souls, re-unification of body and soul at Last Judgment
8th to early 10th centuries	Anglo-Irish visions (Boniface, Bede)	Mouth of Hell, largely following Gregory the Great, link to confraternities of prayer in the Frankish kingdom
8th to 9th centuries 824/25: Visio Wettini	Carolingian visions (mainly Visio Wettini; also woman, Barontus, poor woman, St. Ansgar, Rotcharius, Bernoldus)	Intercession by saints, martyrs, and virgins as well as by clerics and relatives through masses, prayers, and alms, concern for the souls of worldly or clerical leaders of the Frankish kingdom, Charlemagne in proto-purgatory, women as intercessors, confraternity books (libri vitae)
First third of 12th century	Hildebert of Lavardin	Purgatory as formal concept within framework of Limbo

Table 5: Evolution of concepts and iconography of the Last Judgment according to written sources.

TIME PERIOD	REGIONS, SITES	CHURCHES, SITES	NEW ICONOGRAPHIC ELEMENTS
3rd to mid-6th century	Rome, Fondi, Ravenna	Old-St. Peter, Santa Constanza, San Paolo fuori le mura, Santa Pudenziana, Santi Cosma e Damiano, Sant'Apollinare Nuovo	Parousia of Christ with Christ on throne, sphere or walking on clouds, 24 elder, 12 apostles (sheep), Lamb of God, 4 living creatures, Heavenly Jerusalem; Good Shepherd with separation of Sheep and Goats, asymmetric hand gestures
4th or mid-6th to early 9th century	Ravenna, Rome, Jouarre, potential Byzantine influences	San Michele in Africisco, Santa Prassede, Santi Cosma e Damiano, Notre-Dame (Jouarre)	Angels with trumpets, resurrected, to be judged, stigmata of Christ, damned with stream of fire, book with seven seals, seven candle sticks, angels with Arma Christi, presentation of Cross
Early 8th to early 10th century	Rome, Müstair, Cimitile/Naples	Santa Maria Antiqua, St. John (Müstair), Santa Prassede, San Clemente, Santi Giovanni e Paolo, Old-St. Peter, Cimitile/Naples	Harrowing of Hell (independent from Last Judgment)
Early 9th century	*Rome*	*Santa Cecilia in Trastevere (820)*	*Potential common model for Müstair and Formis (hypothesis)*
8th to early 11th century	Wearmouth, Rhine valley/ Lake Constance	Disentis, Chur/Müstair, St. Gall, Reichenau, (Utrecht)	Saved and damned, devils in hell, bishops and kings amongst saved and damned, asymmetric hand gestures of Christ, stars in Mandorla, angels with scrolls, Virgin, angel rolling up the scroll of the sky, arrangement in registers
10th to late 11th century	Byzantine: Kastoria, Cappadocia, Thessaloniki, Constantinople, Torcello	Kastoria, Cappadocia, Panagia Chalkeon, monast. Of Stoudios, Santa Maria Assunta, Victoria and Albert Museum (from Italy)	Deesis (Virgin with St. John the Baptist), stream of fire, cherubim, seraphim, Satan, Archangel Michael with weighing of souls, Hades/Tartaros, Bosom of Abraham and St. Peter in Paradise, Particular Judgment; Torcello: Harrowing of Hell, Arma Christi
2nd half of 11th century to early 12th century	Burgfelden, Novara, Civate, Acquanegra sul chiese, etc.	St. Michael, San Michele in Oleggio, San Pietro al Monte	Archangel Michael fighting the dragon, Bosom of Abraham (three patriarchs) in western iconography
1080	Formis/Naples	Sant'Angelo	Iconography similar to Müstair
Early 12th century	Conques, Mâcon, Autun	Sainte-Foy, Saint-Vincent, Saint-Lazare	Conques: Christ with exposed right side, prominent representation of torments of hell, Charlemagne (founder), intercession at scale, Holy Virgins

Table 6: Evolution of the iconography of the Last Judgment.

Figures

Figure 1: South façade of the abbey church of Sainte-Foy in Conques. The prominent west towers are fictitious reconstructions of the 19th century. The second story of the crossing tower was added in the 15th century. The apse with its blind arcade is hidden by the scaffolding.

Figure 2: Chevet of Notre-Dame-du-Port in Clermont-Ferrand with typical decorative elements of the Romanesque architecture of the Loire, Burgundy, and Auvergne. These include square billet moldings and shaving consoles at the roof cornices as well as single-row round billet moldings at the eyebrow-shaped cornices around the windows. The black inlay patterns are a typical feature of Auvergne.

Figure 3: Cornices of the ambulatory and of a radial chapel of Sainte-Foy in Conques. The cornice of the ambulatory is decorated with the characteristic multi-row round billet moldings of Conques with separating lines between the rows of billets. The round billet moldings of the transept window above do no longer have these separating lines. Most of the consoles of the ambulatory have animal masks. The earlier shaving type can be seen on the left.

Figure 4: Map of a prototypical 11th century pilgrimage route from Conques to the Holy Land. Ephesus could have been omitted since the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople would have provided a rather similar model. Alternative land routes to Constantinople would have passed through South Italy or from Venice through the Balkans.

Source: User Nzeemin, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, pilgrimage route and locations added by the author.

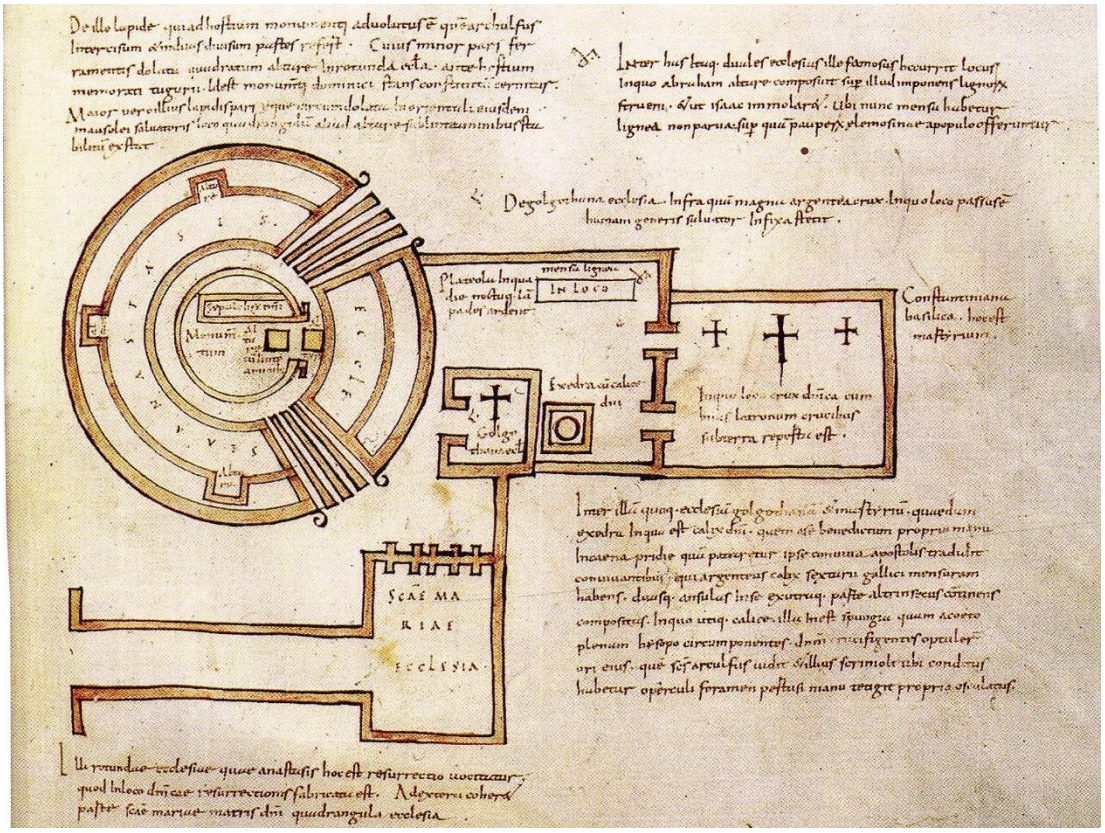

Figure 5: Floor plan of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem according to the pilgrimage report of Arculf from the 7th century. The image shows a copy from the first half of the 9th century created in Reichenau Abbey.

Source: Adamnanus, De Locis Sanctis, Zurich, Zentralbibliothek, Ms. Rh. 73, fol. 5r., Wikimedia Commons.

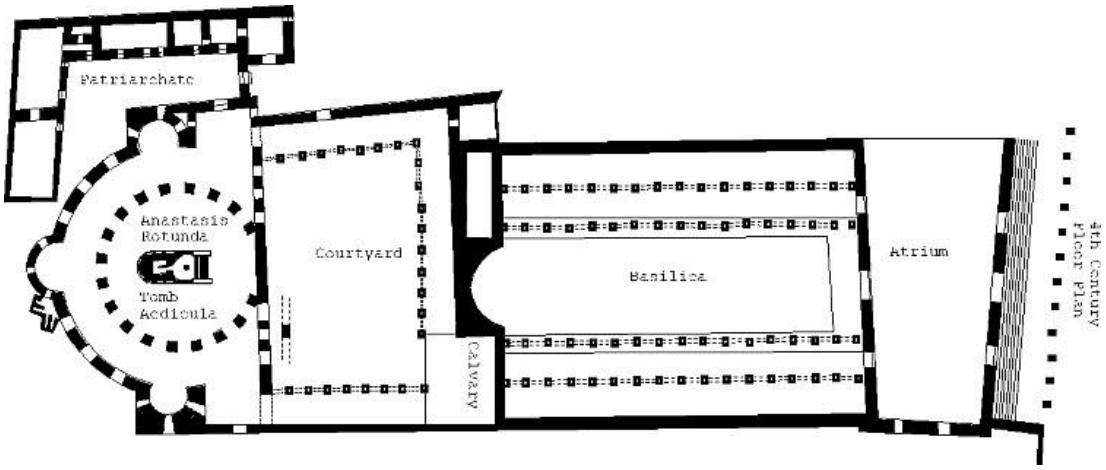

Figure 6: Sketch of the reconstructed floor plan of the Constantinian Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem with Anastasis, atrium, and basilica (with galleries).

Source: Yair Talmor (User Talmoryair), Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 7: Basket capitals with wickerwork in an apsidiole of the northern transept of Sainte-Foy in Conques (left) and presumably from Bawit in Egypt (5th or 6th century, right). Similar basket capitals are known from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and various other Early Christian churches of the Holy Land.

Source of right image: Rogers Fund, 1910, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Object 10.176.160.

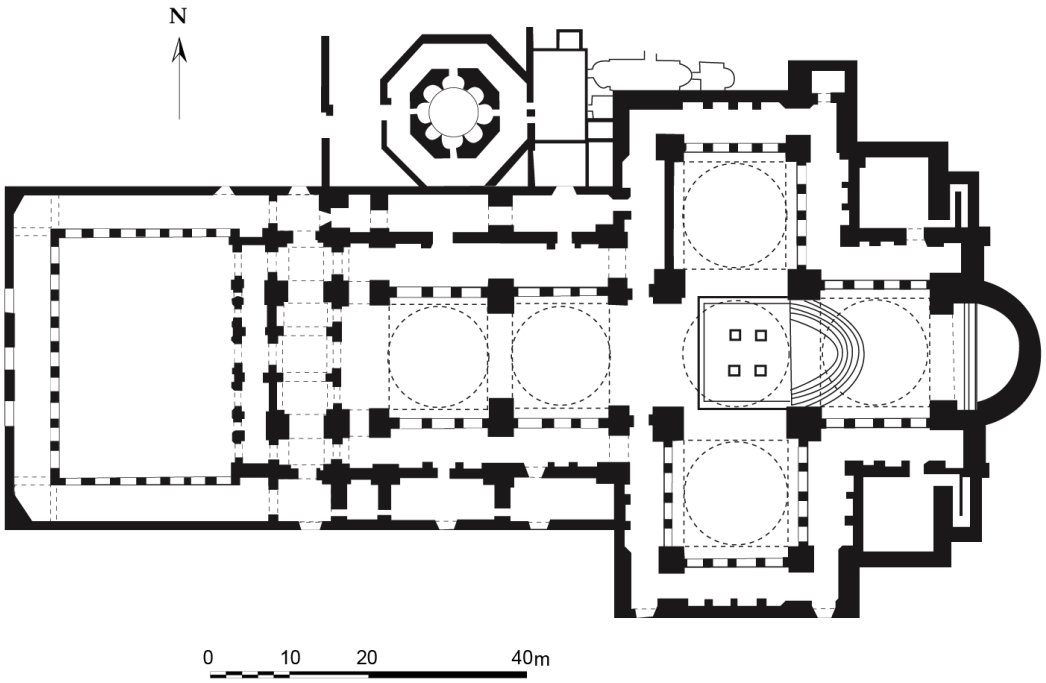

Figure 8: Floor plan of the Basilica of St. John in Ephesus. The chevet possesses side aisles but no ambulatory. The arcades of the naves have alternating supports. The western arcade of the northern transept also had three columns, in contrast to the wall shown in this plan. The side aisles of the nave are accessible from the narthex. The central entrance to the nave is split into three doors, while the central portal of the façade only has one door.

Source: User Marsyas, redrawn from Clive Foss, Ephesus after Antiquity, Cambridge 1979, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY.

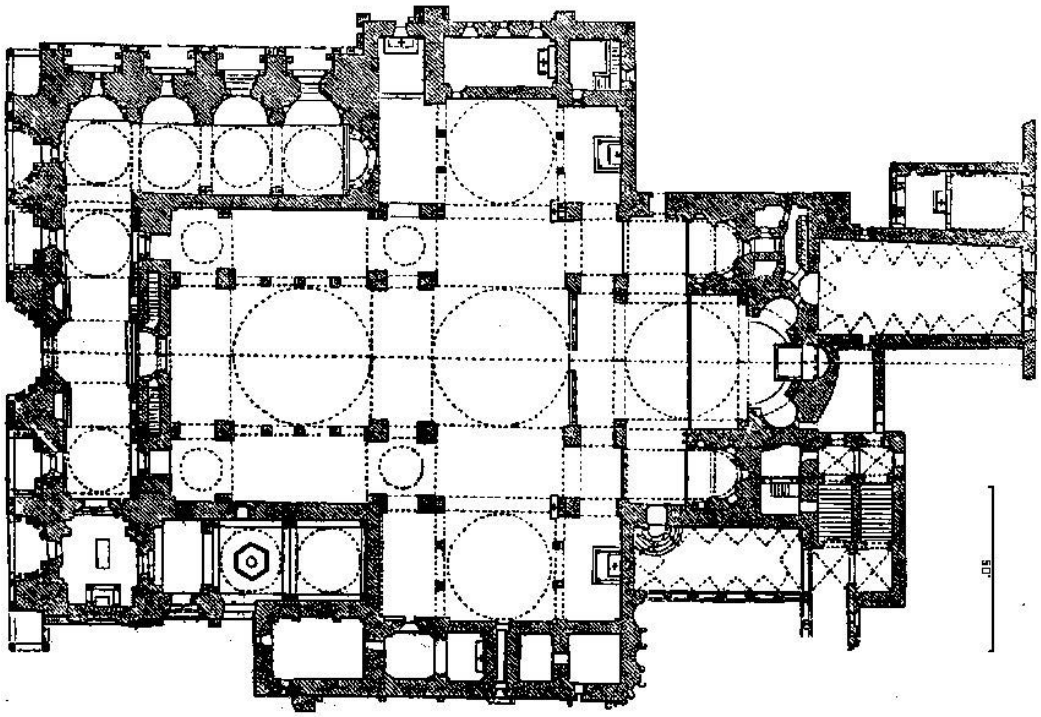

Figure 9: Floor plan of San Marco in Venice. The northern portico is an addition from the 13th century. The plan includes further alterations from the 14th century.

Source: James Fergusson, The Illustrated Handbook of Architecture, London 1855, Wikimedia Commons.

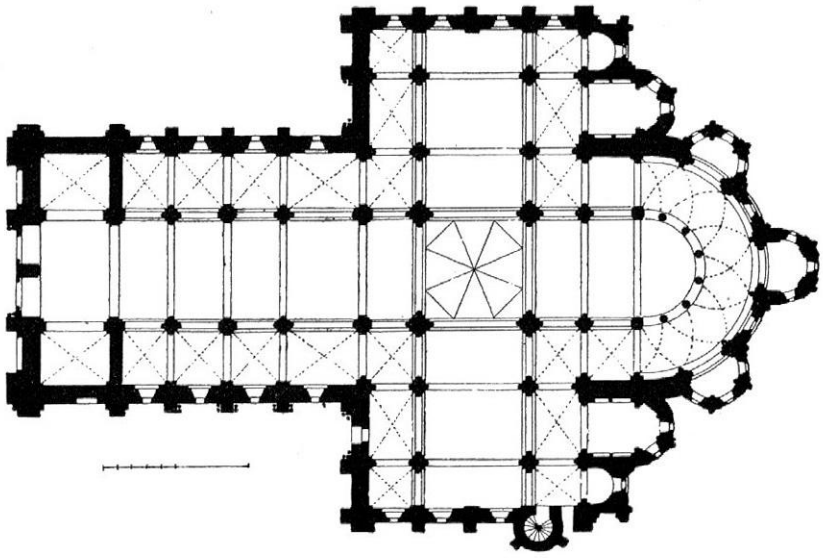

Figure 10: Floor plan of Sainte-Foy in Conques. The staggered chevet followed the models of Saint-Martin in Tours and Cluny II. The alternating supports of the arcades of the nave are hardly visible on this plan. In contrast to this plan, the side aisles of the nave are accessible from the narthex. The main portal is split by a trumeau.

Source: Georg Dehio/Gustav von Bezold, Kirchliche Baukunst des Abendlandes, Stuttgart 1887, Wikimedia Commons.

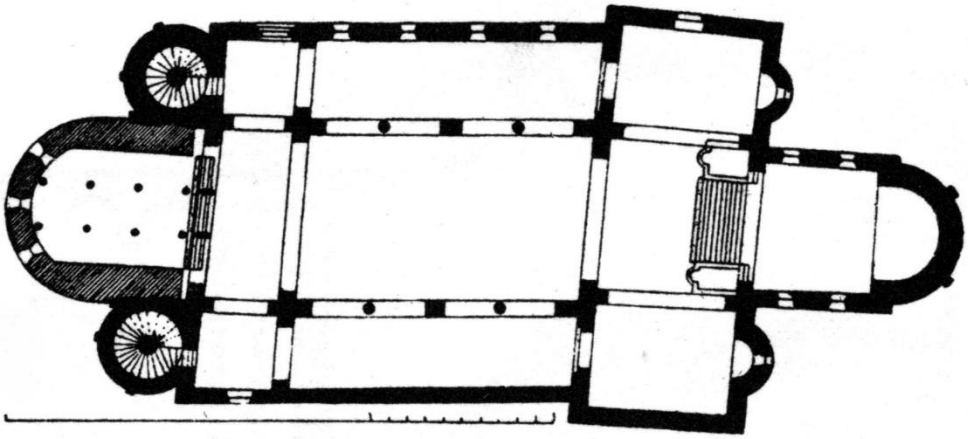

Figure 11: Floor plan of St. Cyriac in Gernrode from the second half of the 10th century. The western crypt (on the left) is an addition of the 12th century. The arcades of the nave have alternating supports. The nave has galleries (not shown).

The reconstructed floor plan of the *Heito Münster* of Reichenau Abbey from the second quarter of the 9th century is structurally very similar to the 10th century church of Gernrode, albeit with more accurate proportions and orientations. In Reichenau, the dimensions of the transepts and sanctuary correspond to the dimensions of the crossing. They are repeated twice in the nave. The *Heito Münster* had different apses and no galleries of the nave. A westwork and rotunda were added in the 10th century.

Source: Georg Dehio/Gustav von Bezold, Kirchliche Baukunst des Abendlandes, Stuttgart 1887, Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 12: Northern arcade of the nave of Sainte-Foy in Conques. The image shows the four western bays of the nave, not including the fifth bay next to the crossing. The alternating supports at arcade level correspond to a pseudo-sequence of pier – column – pier – column – pier. At gallery level, the alternation has been suspended in favor of consistent half columns supporting the transverse arches of the vaulting.

Figure 13: Galleries of the nave (left) and the northern transept (right) of Sainte-Foy in Conques. The first narrow bay of the nave has a parallel in St. John of Ephesus. Like in Ephesus, the sequence of alternating supports starts with its first pier only after the compound pier of the crossing, as is visible from the pilaster strip at arcade level. This disposition may have mimicked the massive quadrupedal piers of the crossing of Ephesus.

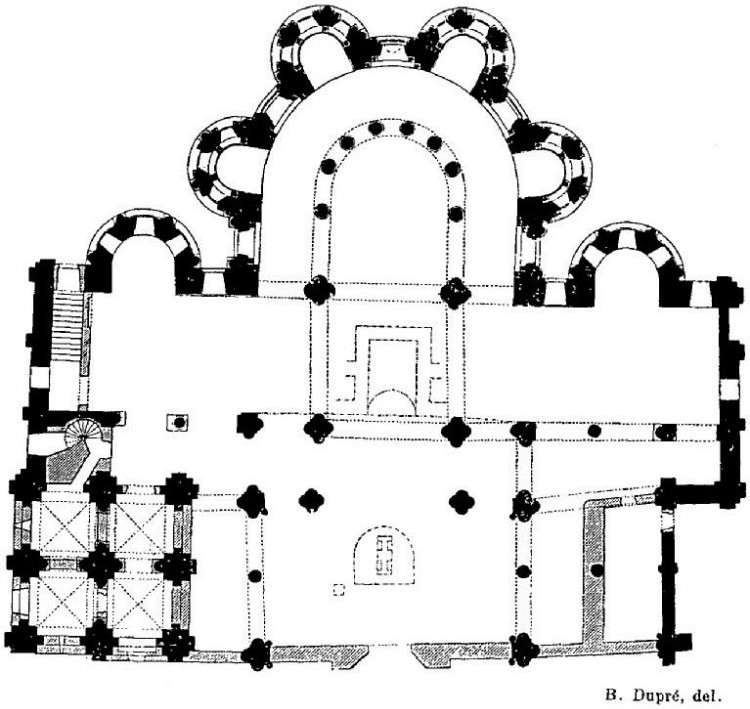

Figure 14: Floor plan of the chevet, transept, and first bay of the nave of Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand in Poitiers, showing the condition in 1854 before the reconstruction of the nave. The parts in black supposedly go back to the condition in 1080.

Source: B. Dupré, from Eugène Lefèvre-Pontalis, Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand, étude archéologique, in Société française d'archéologie, LXXe session, Paris 1904, Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 15: First bay of the nave and northern transept of Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand in Poitiers in its current condition. The domes of the nave, of which only one squinch is visible (upper left corner), are reconstructions of the 19th century.

Source: Gerd Eichmann, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA.

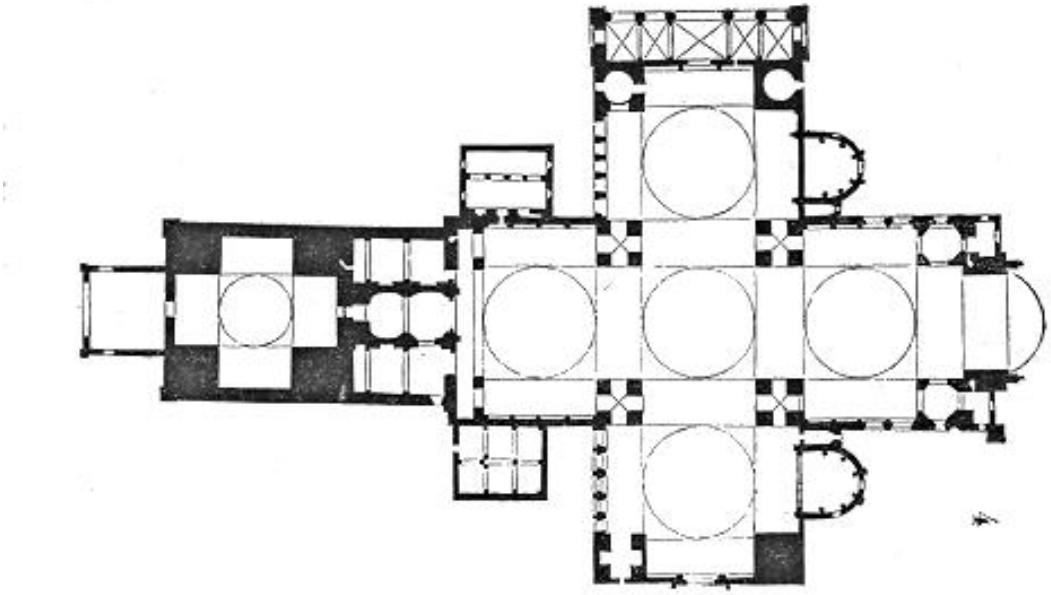

Figure 16: Floor plan of the cathedral of Saint-Front in Périgueux from about 1170.

Source: Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du Xie au XVIe siècle, Paris 1856, Wikimedia Commons.

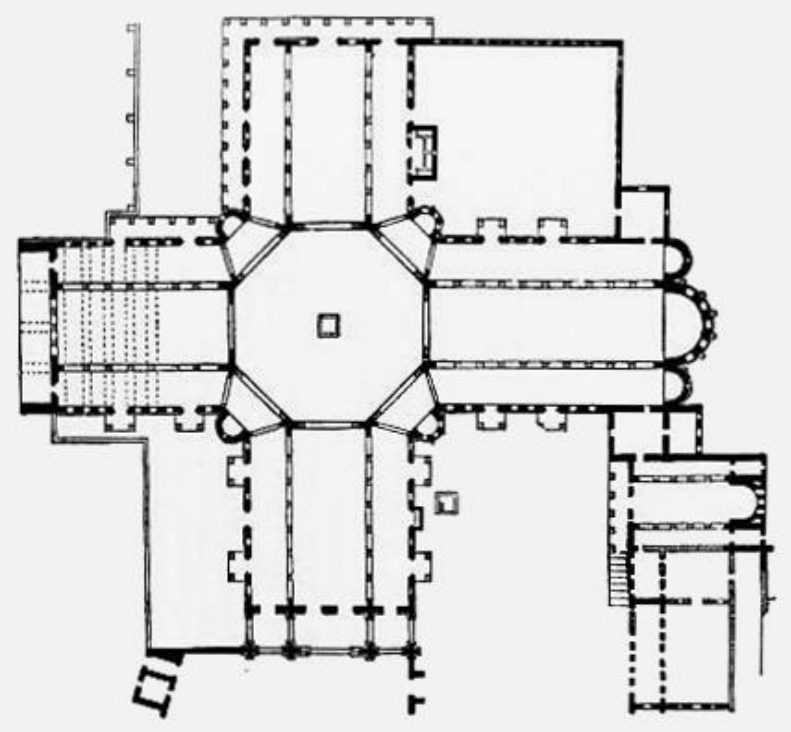

Figure 17: Floor plan of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qal ʿat Sim ʿān. Four basilicas with side aisles were connected to an octagon. The main entrance with a porch is part of the south basilica. The three apses were located in the east.

Source: Encyclopædia Britannica, 11th edition, 1911, Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 18: Ambulatory in the rectangular east arm of Ishkhani cathedral (medieval Georgia).

Source: User Serafita, Wikimedia Commons, cropped from original.

Figure 19: Pseudo-gallery window in the southern transept of Ishkhani cathedral (medieval Georgia).

Sources: User Ziegler175, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped and brightened from original (left image). User Jean & Nathalie, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY (right image).

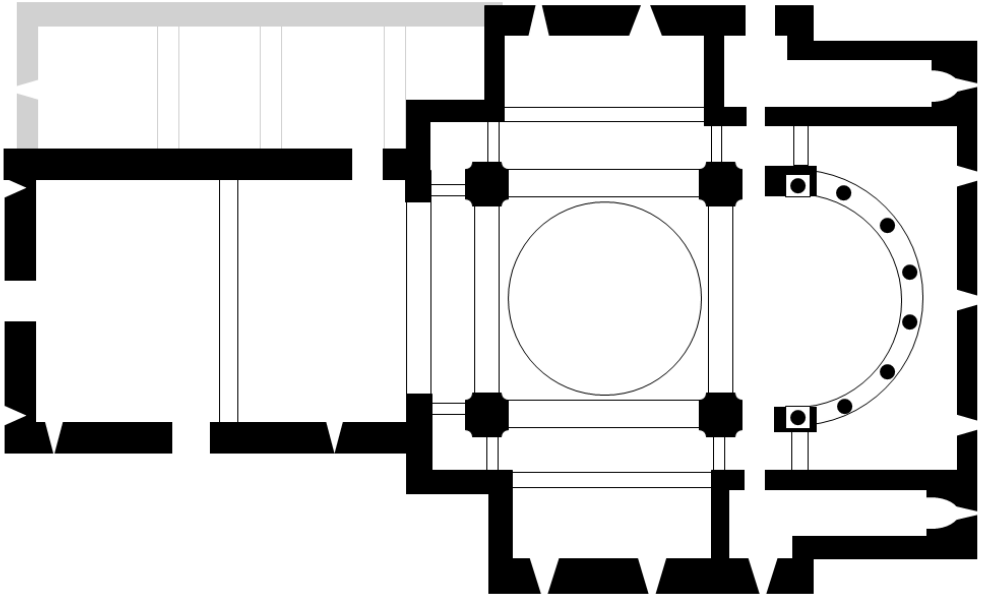

Figure 20: Simplified floor plan of Ishkhani cathedral. The rich articulation of its walls through pilaster strips and engaged half columns is omitted.

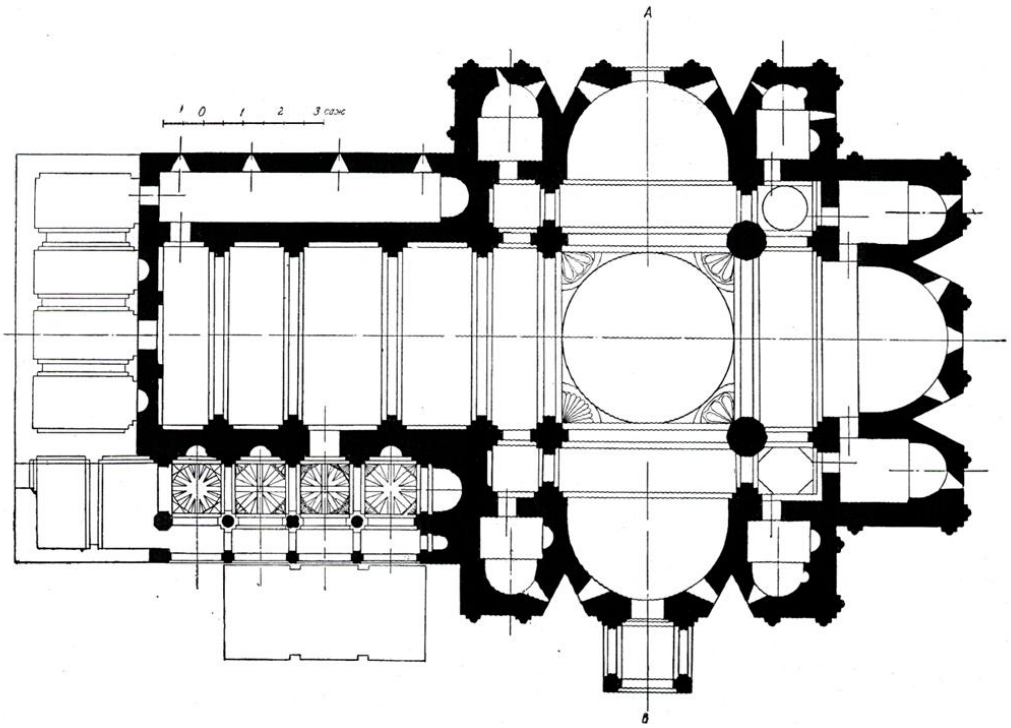

Figure 21: Floor plan of the Monastery of Oshki.

Source: User Rastrelli F, Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 22: Basilica of Qalb Loze, dedicated to St. Simeon Stylites, which served as prototype for Qal ʿat Sim ʿān. The apse (right) had stacked engaged columns. The cornices around the windows of the nave became characteristic features of the 6th century architecture of North Syria.

Source: User Bertramz, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped from original.

Figure 23: Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qal ʿat Sim ʿān. View from northeast with east basilica (left), south basilica (background left), central octagon (center), and north basilica (right). The west basilica is no longer extant.

Source: Bernard Gagnon (User Bgag), Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped from original.

Figure 24: Radial chapel of Sainte-Foy in Conques, looking like a height-compressed version of the central apse of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites. The size-reduced upper half-columns sit on the eyebrow-shaped cornices of the windows rather than on a separate entablature above the windows.

Figure 25: Central apse of the east basilica of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qal ʿat Sim ʿān. The apse had stacked columns on pedestals, separated by an entablature-like cornice. The windows have eyebrow-shaped cornices.

Source: Bernard Gagnon (User Bgag), Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA.

Figure 26: West portal of Sainte-Foy in Conques. The overall disposition with portal house, two widely separated entrance doors and blind portals to the left and to the right has no precedence in Romanesque architecture. It can be read as a simplified version of the main entrance to the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qal ʿat Sim ʿān.

Figure 27: Main entrance (south basilica) of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qal ʿat Sim ʿān. The narthex had the form of an open porch with three connected portal houses. It is opened to the nave through four doors (in the background).

Source: User Aotearoa, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA.

Figure 28: Archivolt of the west portal of Sainte-Foy in Conques. The moldings have significant structural similarity with corresponding moldings of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites. The reconstructed cornice of the portal house (upper left side) shows typical square billet moldings between two tori/rolls.

Figure 29: Archivolt of the central south portal of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qal ʿat Sim ʿān.

Source: Bernard Gagnon (User Bgag), Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped from original.

Figure 30: Archivolt of the stepped portal of the north transept of Sainte-Foy in Conques.

Figure 31: View from the central octagon of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites to one of the corner chapels with an apsidiole. The corner chapels with apsidiole are equivalents of the squinches of other octagonal crossing towers.

Source: Effi Schweizer, Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 32: Portal of the north basilica of St. Simeon Stylites. The cornice above the lintel has double-row dentils.

Source: Frank Kidner Collection, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, DC, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped from original.

Figure 33: Multi-row dentils at a ruined window next to the so-called Temple of Venus in Baalbek (left) and at the central portal of the south façade of Qalb Loze (right).

Sources: User نور الهدى الياس عثمان, Wikimedia Commons (left image). Frank Kidner Collection, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, DC, Wikimedia Commons (right image). Both: CC BY SA, cropped from originals.

Figure 34: Partially reconstructed roof cornices with double-row dentils of the church of S. Astvatsatsin, next to the cathedral of Talin in Armenia. The window on the left is framed by an eyebrow-shaped cornice.

Source: Travis K. Witt (User Liveon001), Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped from original.

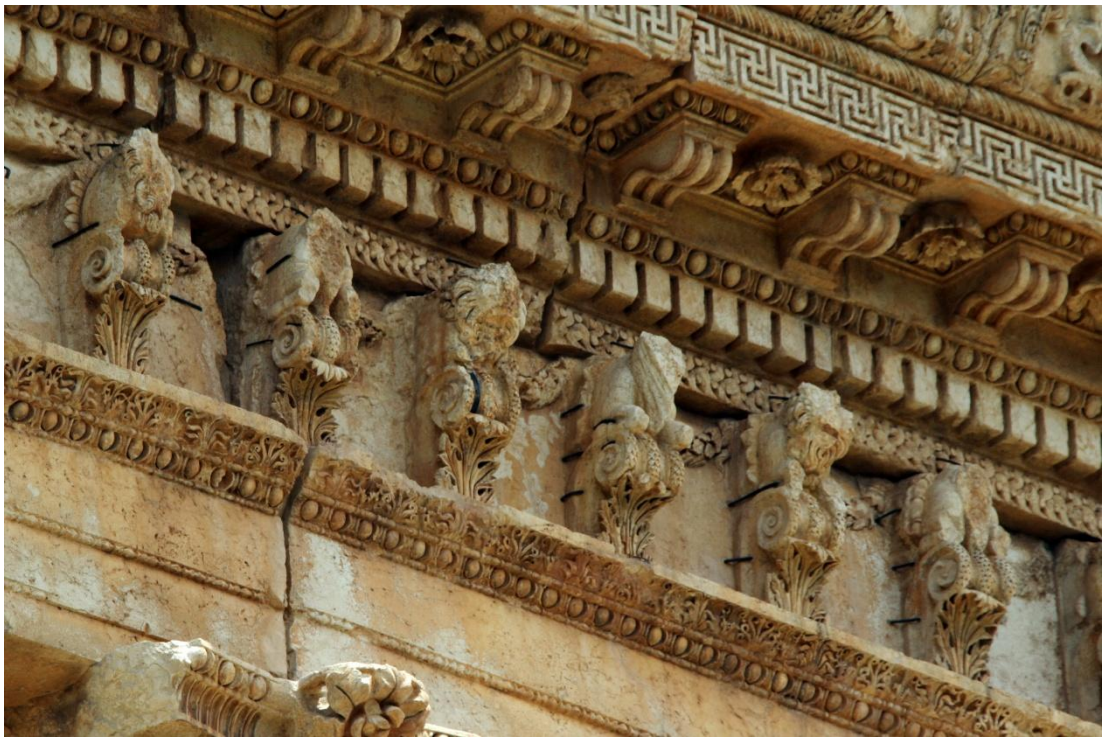

Figure 35: Frieze of the Temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus in Baalbek with consoles carrying lions. The cornice above the dentils is supported by traditional consoles with volutes.

Source: User NidalSolh, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped from original.

Figure 36: Walled-up south portal of Sainte-Foy in Conques. The structure of the archivolt is simplified compared to the other portals of Conques. Instead, the scotia of the archivolt is filled with ball-shaped stars.

Figure 37: Window of the West Church of Baqirha near Qalb Loze. Apart from the additional three fasciae, the structure of the archivolt is identical to the south portal of Conques.

Source: Frank Kidner Collection, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, DC, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped from original.

Figure 38: Modern reconstruction of the large oculus of the west façade of Sainte-Foy in Conques.

Figure 39: Ruins of the East Church of Qal ʿat Kalota near Qal ʿat Sim ʿān. The arched windows (left and right) were entirely framed by convex and concave moldings, deviating from common practices in North Syria.

Source: Frank Kidner Collection, Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, DC, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped from original.

Figure 40: West façade of Sainte-Foy in Conques with its iconic framed group of windows. The transparent window at the top indicates that the steep gable has a purely decorative function. The roof of the nave has a significantly lower position than indicated by this gable. The two towers are fictitious reconstructions from the 19th century.

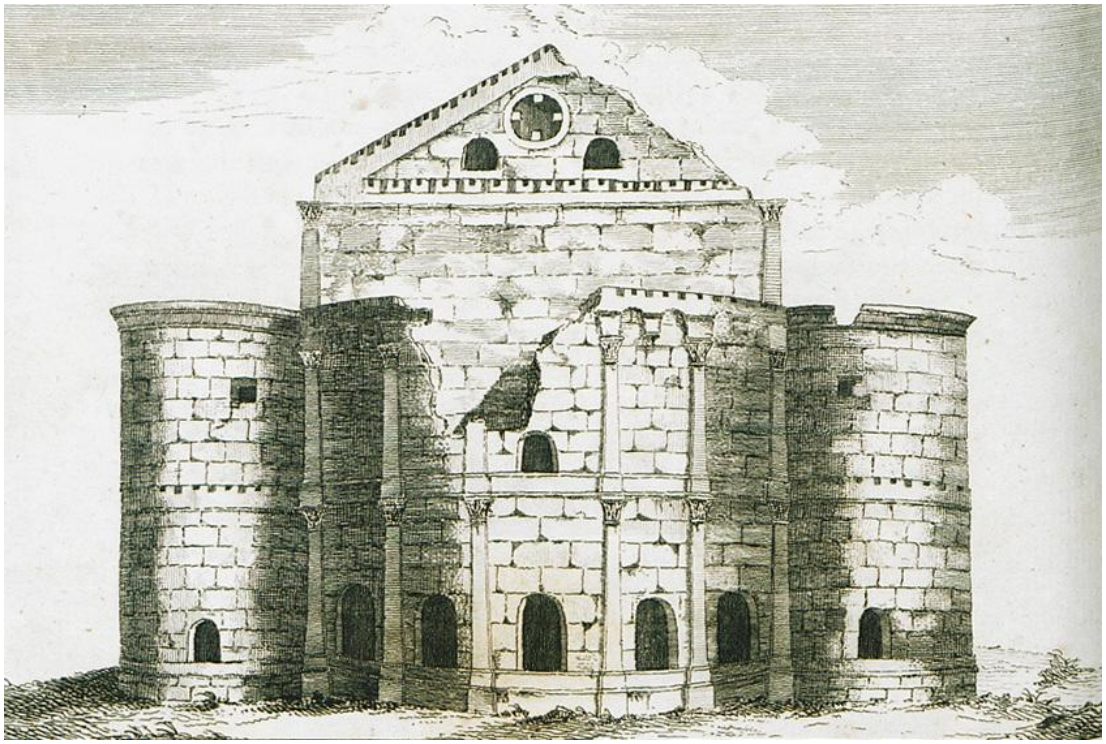

Figure 41: Drawing of the façade of the east basilica of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites with its three apses. The gable featured two arched windows with a large oculus above them. Fragments of this oculus have been preserved. The engaged columns of the upper row support a precursor of later Lombard bands.

Source: Alexander Drummond, 1754, Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 42: Chevet and crossing tower of Sainte-Foy in Conques. The apse has a large blind arcade. The masonry of the staircase tower attached to the crossing tower is not consistent with the lower story of the tower.

Source: User Flaurentine, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped from original.

Figure 43: Western apse of Trier cathedral. The apse is decorated with stacked pilasters and Lombard bands.

Source: User Woscho, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, rotated and cropped from original.

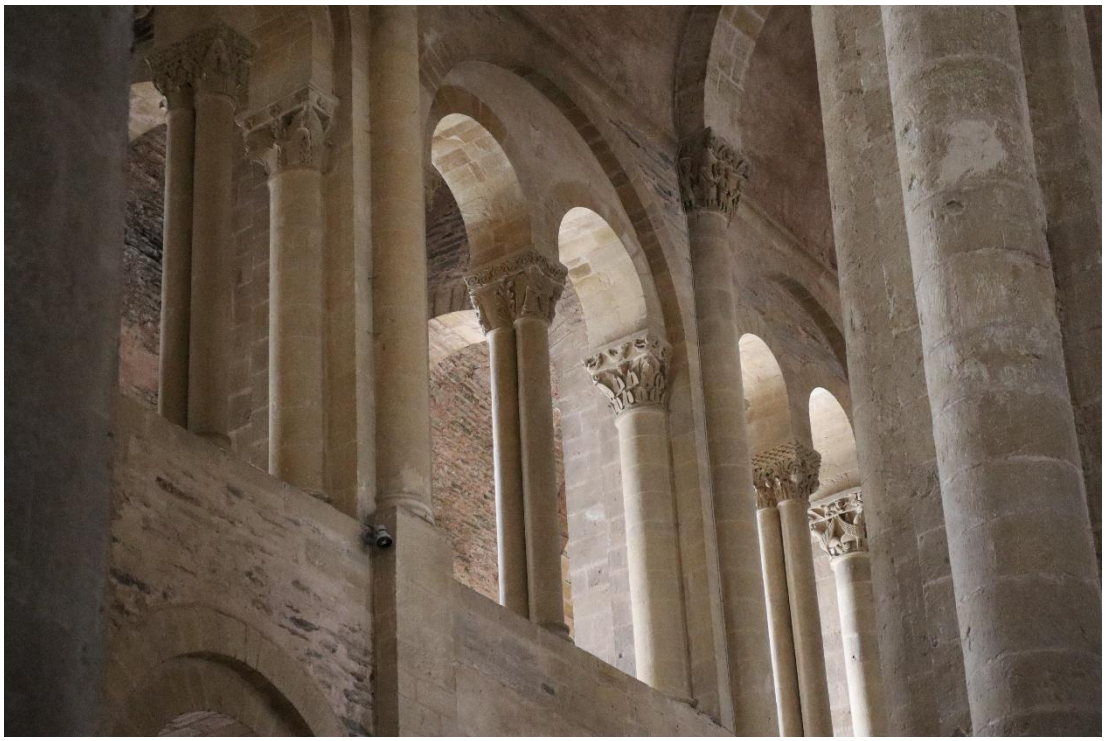

Figure 44: Southern gallery of the nave of Sainte-Foy in Conques. The mullioned windows have coupled columns at the center and additional outer half columns. The outer half columns are a frequent feature of French Romanesque architecture. They have no earlier correspondence in Roman architecture.

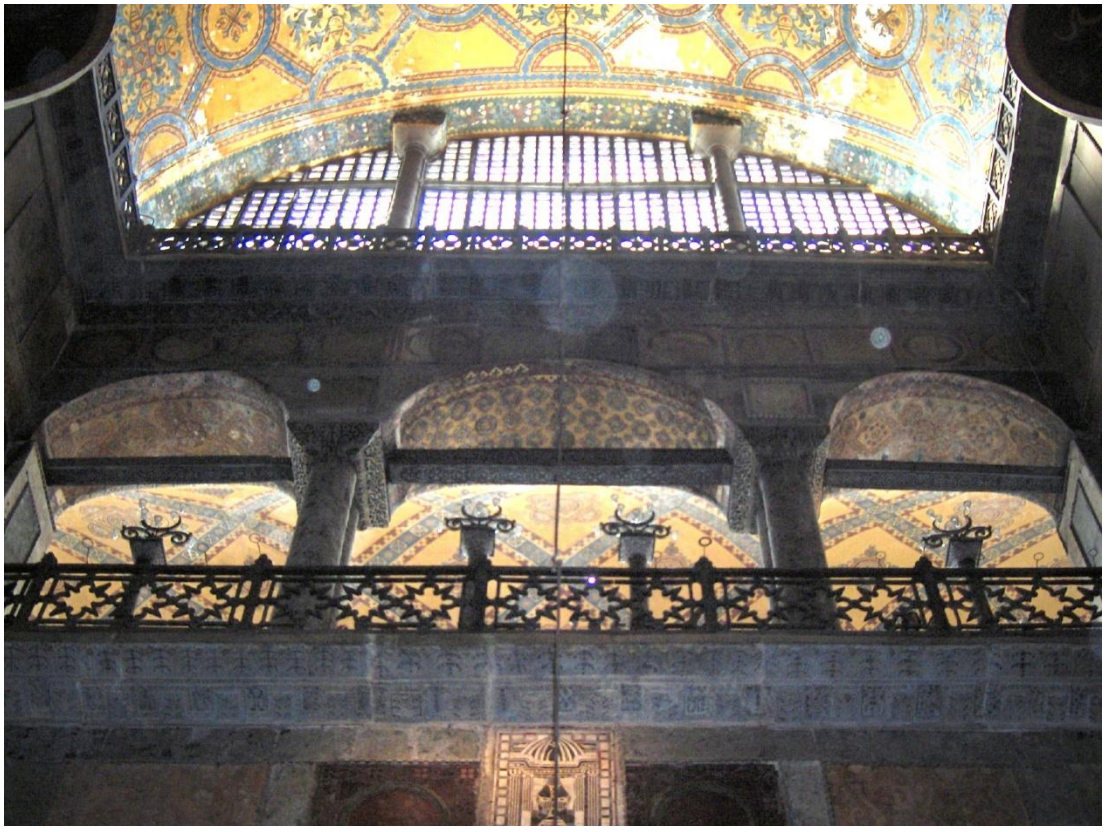

Figure 45: Windows of the western or empress gallery of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople with two coupled columns.

Source: Georges Jansoone (User JoJan), Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped and brightened from original.

Figure 46: Mullioned portal with unusual outer engaged columns, inserted in the wide arcade of the Basilica A in Resafa.

Source: User Bertramz, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY, cropped from original.

Figure 47: Mullioned window of the east façade of Santa María del Naranco near Oviedo. The window has unusual outer engaged half columns. The overstretched arches point towards Byzantine origins.

Source: User PMRMaeyaert, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped from original.

Figure 48: Two angels in the squinches of the crossing tower of Sainte-Foy in Conques. Mosaics or paintings of angels in pendentives were a common motif in Byzantine art. Most Byzantine crossing towers or domes are round-shaped and have pendentives instead of the squinches of Conques.

Figure 49: Portal and windows of the cloister of Sainte-Foy in Conques. The mullioned portal and windows have coupled columns. The mullioned portal has an oculus in the spandrel of its arches. The arcades of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople feature black circular inlays at the same low position. Such a low position is unique in Romanesque architecture.

Figure 50: South façade of Sainte-Foy in Conques. The many stepped frames around the windows are clearly visible.

Figure 51: South façade of Panagia Chalkeon in Thessaloniki. The stepped frames around the windows are characteristic innovative features. The frame around the five windows of the transept has high similarity to the framed group of windows of the west façade of Conques. The decorative gable of the transept was unusual in Byzantine architecture.

Source: Konstantinos Stampoulis (User Geraki), Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA.

Figure 52: Ummayad Mosque in Damascus with octagonal lantern tower, echoing Byzantine precursors.

Source: Francis Bedford, 1862, Royal Collection, Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 53: Myrelaion in Constantinople, one of the first cross-in-square churches incl. a single-story crossing tower.

Source: Nina Aldin Thune (User Nina-no), Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA.

Figure 54: Angel in the archivolt of the tympanum of the Last Judgment of Sainte-Foy in Conques. The angel is holding a scroll using this opportunity to catch a glimpse of the scenery in the tympanum. The angel can be interpreted as a personification of curiosity.

Figure 55: Mosaic in the apse of the Euphrasian basilica in Poreč. The secret observer behind the veil looks at the scene of the Visitation. The secret observer constitutes another personification of curiosity.

Figure 56: West façade of Sainte-Foy in Conques in its condition before the restauration of 1877. Today's massive double towers do not yet exist. The northwestern corner has a turret that hardly breaks through the silhouette of the gable. It has been speculated that a second turret may have existed at the southwestern corner but may have been destroyed in 1586, during the Wars of Religion. However, there is no proof for the former existence of a second turret. Like today, the gable has a decorative function and does not support the roof.

Source: Séraphin-Médéric Mieusement (1840-1905), July 1877, Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA.

Figure 57: Tympanum of the Last Judgment of Sainte-Foy in Conques. The scene is arranged in three registers with a temporal sequence from top to bottom and a hierarchical order from bottom to top.

The temporal sequence describes the sequence of events of the Last Judgment. In the upper register, various angels announce the Parousia of Christ and the imminent Last Judgment following Matthew 24. The middle register reflects the Carolingian spirituality of the afterlife according to the *Visio Wettini*. It shows a procession of saints, martyrs, Holy Virgins, clerics, and relatives interceding for Charlemagne on the right side of Christ. On his other side, sinners are denied direct access to him by two angels. These sinners await the Last Judgment in *Hades*. Venial sinners are subject to proto-purgatory in the inner part of *Hades*. Mortal sinners (*homines perversi*) already are subject to permanent punishment in its outer part, called Tarataros (*tartara*). The lower register describes the process of the Last Judgment according to Augustine's *Enchiridion*. Elected and sinners move from their individual waiting areas in the otherworld, which are determined by the Particular Judgment, towards the judgment act and from there to their final destinations in Heaven or Hell.

The spiritual hierarchy, as described by the scrolls, should be read from door level. An epigraph on the lintel of the left door addresses the worldly sinners (*peccatores*) who still may influence their fate by moral conversion. The lower register of the tympanum deals with the fate of ordinary sinners who will be saved (*electi*) or damned (*iniusti*). The middle register describes the fate of exceptional individuals, saints (*sancti*) and mortal sinners (*homines perversi*). The upper register addresses the fate of Christ.

Figure 58: Announcement of the Parousia of Christ and his imminent Last Judgment, heralded by the Cross and the Arma Christi (Matthew 24). The ambivalent anagrams of *rex* and *iudex* in the halo of Christ indicate that the angels with trumpets announce both the thousand-year kingdom of Christ (Apocalypse 8-11) and the following Last Judgment.

Figure 59: Christ as king and judge in the mandorla. His asymmetric gesture underlines his active role as judge. The two angels underneath Christ are an allusion to the seven candle sticks of the Apocalypse. The upper angel on the left side of Christ holds the open *Liber Vitae*. The lower angel with a censer complements the seven angels with trumpets of the Apocalypse. Christ resides in the seventh layer of heaven, potentially alluding to the Reichenau Seven Heaven Homily.

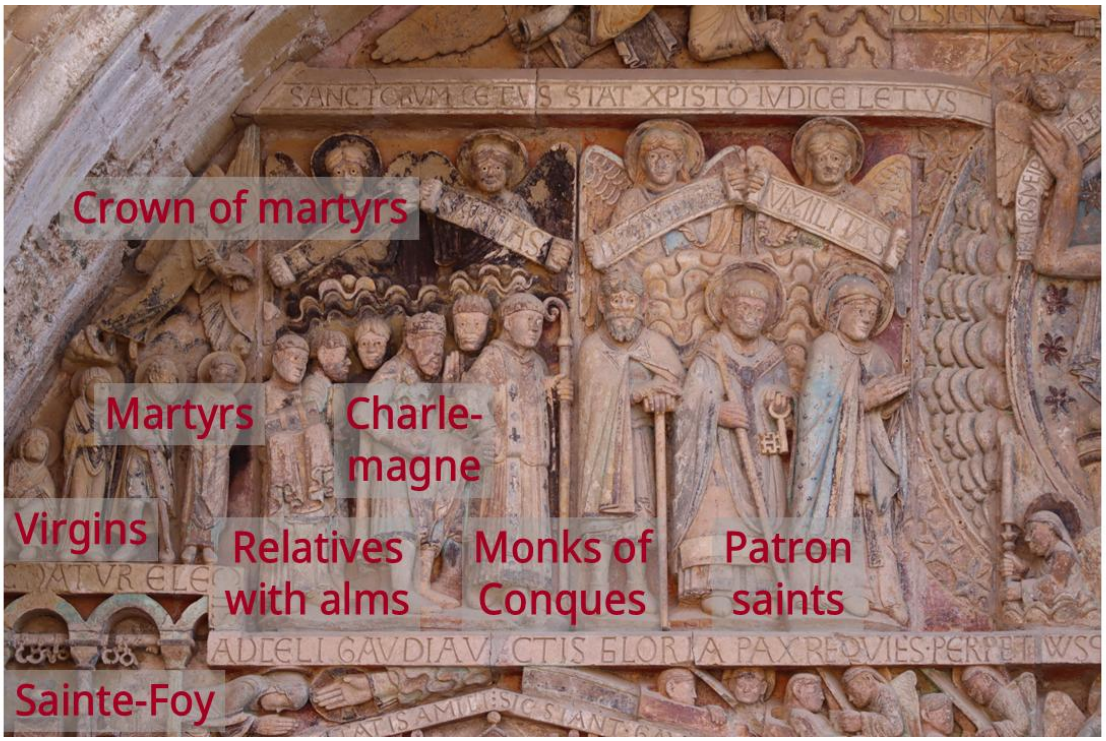

Figure 60: Procession of saints, martyrs, Holy Virgins, monks of Conques, and relatives interceding for Charlemagne, in line with the *Visio Wettini*. The angel on the left holds the crown of life that will be given to martyrs or saints. The procession is led by the Virgin and St. Peter, the patron saints of Conques, followed by the hermit Dadon and an abbot leading Charlemagne by the hand to Christ. His companions seem to support him with alms and prayers.

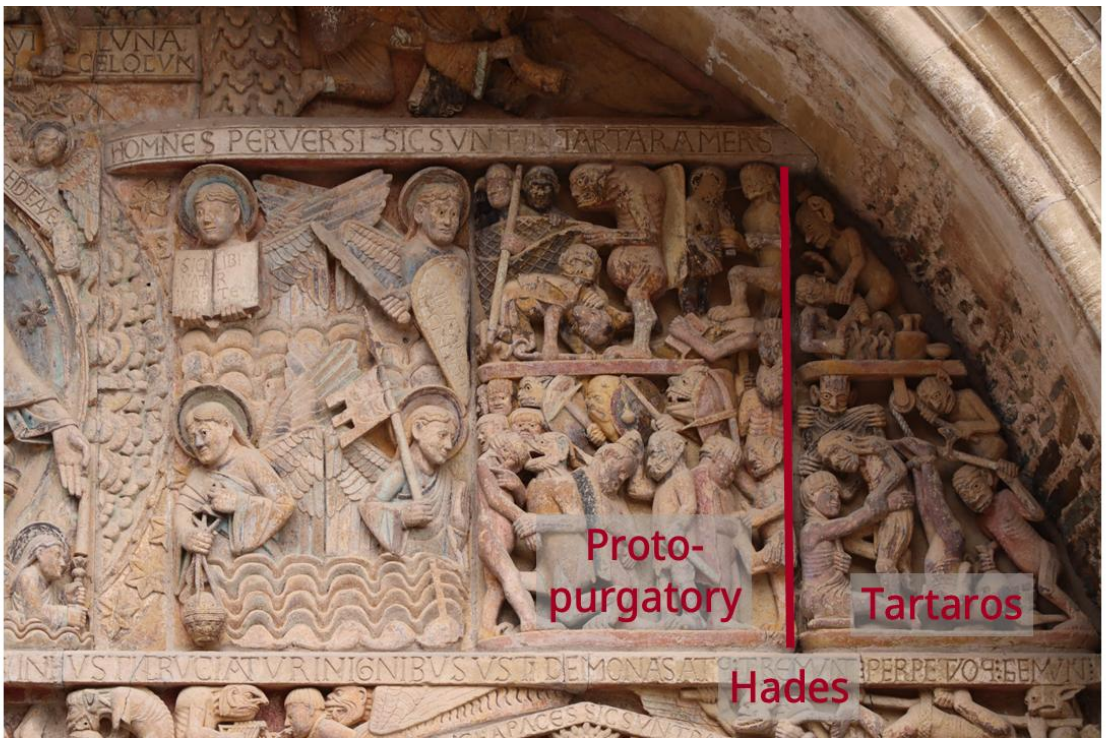

Figure 61: Sinners, including kings and clerics, are waiting in the otherworld (*Hades*) for their judgment without direct access to Christ, in line with the text of the Apocalypse. *Hades* is compartmentalized. The inner part is for ordinary sinners while the outer part is *Tartaros*, the special place of punishment (*tartara*) for mortal sinners (*homines perversi*).

Figure 62: Representation of the Heavenly Jerusalem (*civitas immortalis*) with Bosom of Abraham and various saints. The small register above the roof shows on the left side Sainte-Foy interceding with God for those under her protection. On the right side, the elected for Heaven (*electi*) rise from their tombs where they rested in peace until Judgment Day. The elected for Heaven are described by the banner on the roof as chaste, peaceful, gentle, and pious.

Figure 63: Representation of Hell (*civitas mortalis*) as counterimage to the Heavenly Jerusalem, with Satan taking the place of Abraham. The small register above the roof shows that unjust sinners (*iniusti*) are subject to perpetual torture by demons and fire while moving towards the Last Judgment. The damned are described by the banner on the roof as thieves, liars, counterfeiters, greedy, voluptuous, and looters.

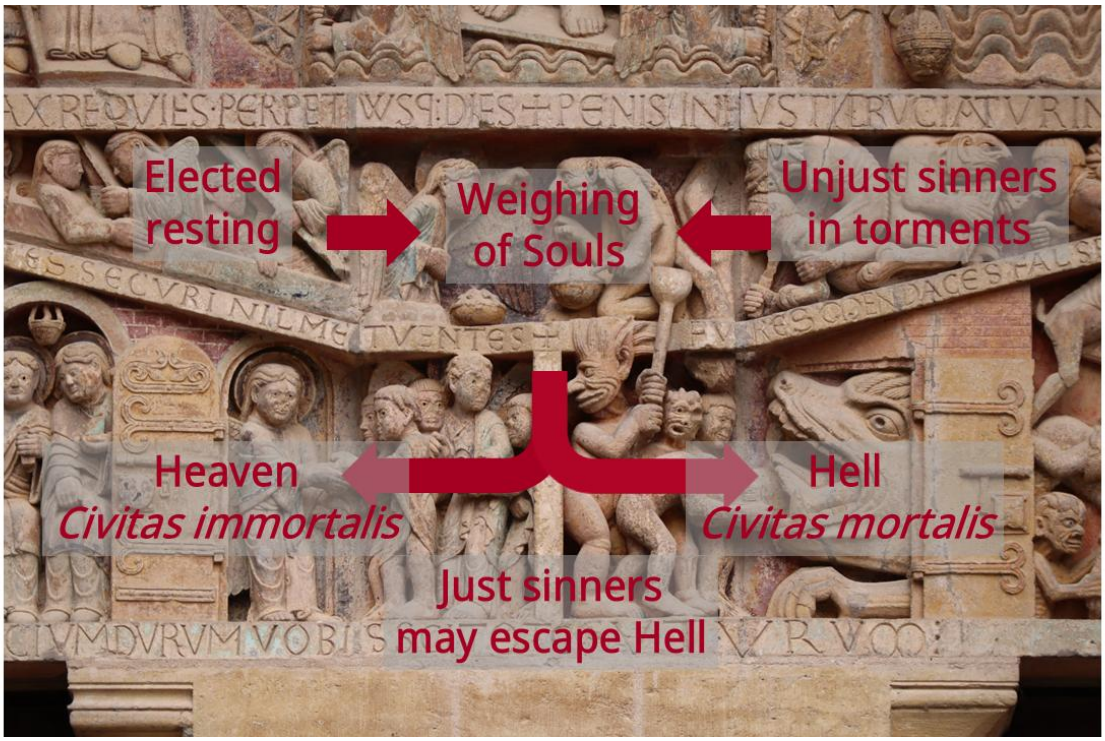

Figure 64: Process of the Last Judgment according to Augustine's *Enchiridion* 29:109-111 and *De civitate dei*. After the Particular Judgment (not shown), the elected rest in peace until Judgment Day (left), while the unjust sinners spend their waiting time in torment (right). The Last Judgment, indicated by the Weighing of Souls (center), determines whether the to be judged will be sent to Heaven (*civitas immortalis*) or Hell (*civitas mortalis*). The carefully balanced judgment act and the eye contact between one of the elected and the devil sending damned to Hell (center bottom) indicate that just sinners may successfully pass proto-purgatory to enter Heaven.

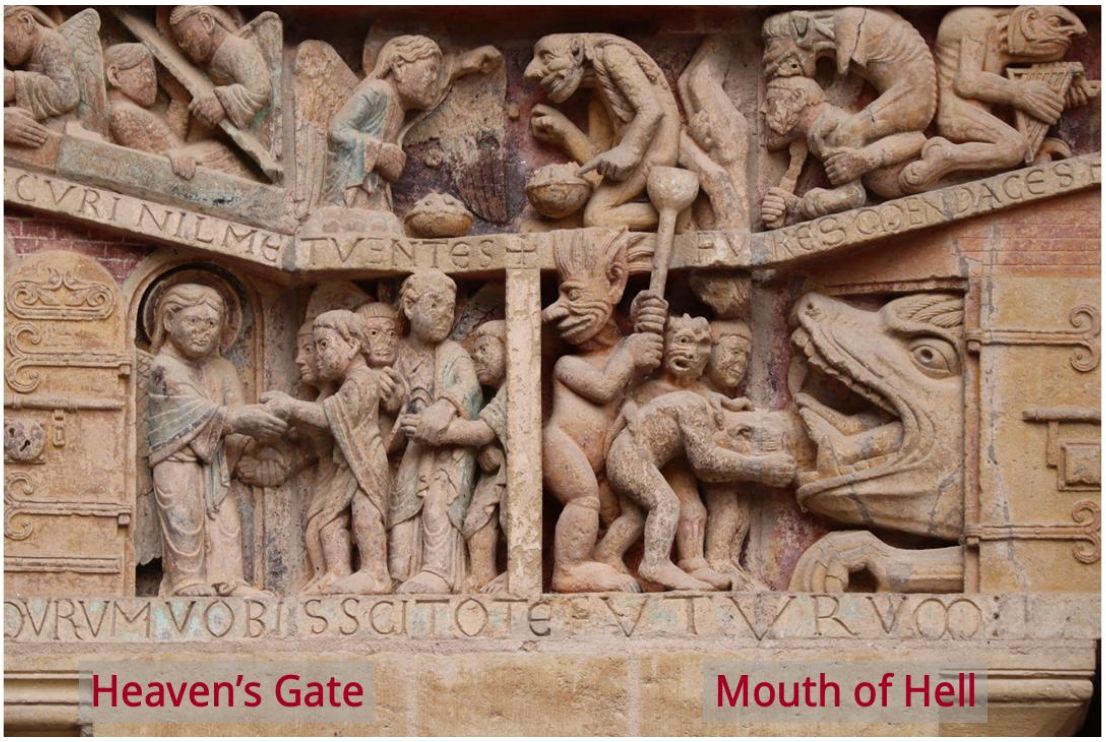

Figure 65: Representation of Heaven's Gate and of the Mouth of Hell following the example of a 9th century Carolingian Ivory, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The ivory shows similarities with the art of Reichenau.

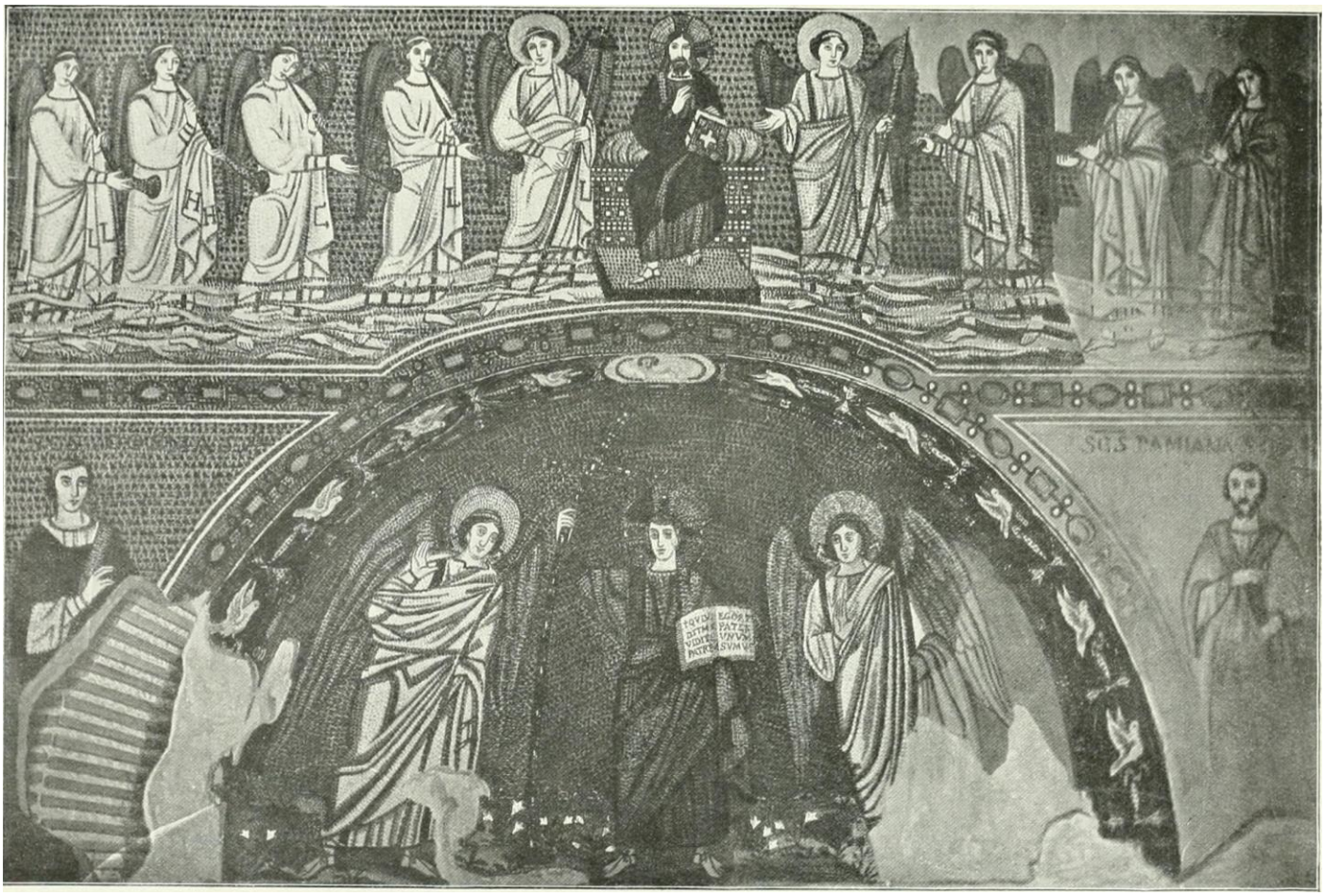

Figure 66: Watercolor of the 6th century mosaic of San Michele in Africisco of Ravenna before its restoration in 1844 and its later relocation to Berlin. This mosaic is the earliest extant representation of the seven angels with seven trumpets indicating the imminent Parousia of Christ. The angels next to Christ show the Arma Christi. Their original existence is not beyond doubt. The Arma Christi emphasize that the person on the throne is Christ. Christ is also represented as a younger person with the Cross in the apse and as the Lamb with doves in the archivolt. Thereby, the mosaic may have been an early representation of trinity. The formerly twelve doves in the archivolt stood for the twelve apostles. The figure of Christ in the apse is flanked by the archangels Michael and Gabriel.

Source: Unknown artist, before 1844, From Julius Kurth, Die Wandmosaiken von Ravenna, Tab. XXIX, Munich 1912, Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 67: Miniature of the Last Judgment of the Bamberg Apocalypse, produced by the scriptorium of Reichenau Abbey between 1000-20. It is one of the most evolved representations of the Last Judgment of the Reichenau school, mainly following Matthew 24-25. The ostentation of the Cross is very prominent. Other examples in Müstair, St. Gall or St. George of Reichenau-Oberzell present the scenes in registers while Christ is positioned in a mandorla with judging hand gestures. Some of these other examples also include stars and clouds in the mandorla, the Arma Christi, an angel scrolling up the sky, the *Liber Vitae* or a representation of Heavenly Jerusalem.

Source: Bamberg Apocalypse, Staatsbibliothek Bamberg, Msc.Bibl.140. Photo: Gerald Raab, cropped from original.

Figure 68: Mosaic of the Last Judgment at the western wall of Santa Maria Assunta in Torcello from about 1080. This mosaic is the most evolved example of the Byzantine tradition from the second half of the 11th century, complemented by some western elements, such as the arrangement of the scenes in registers, the representation of the Crucifixion and the Harrowing of Hell, the presentation of the Cross as well as the Stigma and Arma Christi. The mosaic has a near-temporal sequence from top to bottom, including the Crucifixion of Christ, his Harrowing of Hell, his Parousia and thousand-year reign, and the Last Judgment represented by the empty throne of God. The lower three tiers describe the Last Judgment as re-unification of the resurrected bodies (above) with their souls (below).

Source: User Gsimonov, Wikimedia Commons, CC0 Universal.

Figure 69: The three registers of the wall mosaic of Santa Maria Assunta focusing on the Last Judgment. The Last Judgment itself is shown in the middle register. The upper register shows the throne of God and the resurrection of the dead bodies. The lower register shows the Particular Judgment with the souls in Earthly Paradise and *Hades*. In the earlier model from Constantinople, the Weighing of Souls is more directly associated with the lower register.

Source: User Gsimonov, Wikimedia Commons, CC0 Universal, cropped from original.

Figure 70: Tympanum of Saint-Hilarian-Sainte-Foy in Perse (Espalion), a former priory of Conques. It is one of very few tympana with the scene of Pentecost. The oversized lintel contains a compressed representation of the Last Judgment.

Figure 71: Map of locations with relevance for the iconography of the Last Judgment of Conques (marked in red). The Way of St. James from Reichenau to Conques and a prototypical travel route from Conques to the Holy Land are shown as black lines. The locations in black as well as some in red had special links to Reichenau Abbey.

Source: User Nzeemin, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped, travel routes and locations added by the author.

Figure 72: Map of the identified locations of influence with the pilgrimage routes of St. James and to the Holy Land.

Source: User Nzeemin, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped, travel routes and locations added by the author.

Figure 73: Map with pre-Romanesque dynamics (dark grey) of selected decorative elements with relevance for Conques. The arrows in light grey indicate potential external influences. The arrow in red indicates Romanesque dynamics.

Source: User Sémhur, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped, travel routes and locations added by the author.

Figure 74: Entablature of the so-called Temple of Hadrian in Ephesus (left) and a city gate of Falerii Novi (right) exemplifying typical decoration elements of Graeco-Roman temples and of Roman Republican portals. The modern reconstruction of the right part of the entablature of Ephesus (left) clarifies its underlying geometrical structure.

Sources: Dick Osseman (User Dosseman), Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA (left image). User Howardhudson at English Wikipedia, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA (right image). Both: cropped from originals.

Figure 75: Pylon of the Ptolemaic Temple of Edfu. The central portal has a cavetto cornice. The edges of the pylon are decorated with tori. In Ptolemaic times, cavetto cornices and tori also were used at architraves of colonnades.

Source: User timsdad, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped and contrast increased from original.

Figure 76: Alabaster chapel in Karnak with the typical ornamental elements of traditional Egyptian temples: cavetto cornice and tori (more precisely: rolls), the latter emphasizing the edges of the building.

Source: Olaf Tausch (User Oltau), Wikimedia Commons, CC BY, cropped from original.

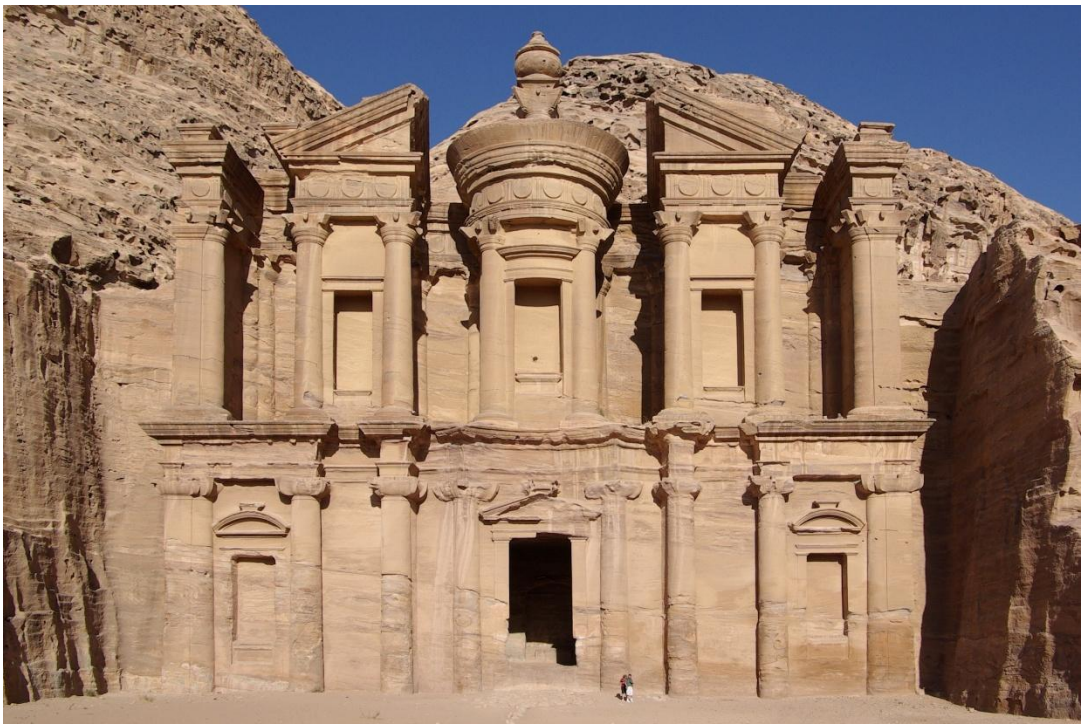

Figure 77: Tomb Ed-Deir in Petra as an example of Ptolemaic architecture with broken pediment, broken and curved entablatures, and aediculae in the façade. The cornices of its precursor Al-Kazneh already show first convex moldings.

Source: Berthold Werner, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped from original.

Figure 78: Uneishu Tomb in Petra with a mixture of decorative elements from traditional Egyptian (cavetto cornices, tori) and Hellenistic (pseudo-Corinthian capitals, pediment, door jambs) architecture.

Source: Bernard Gagnon (User Bgag), Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped from original.

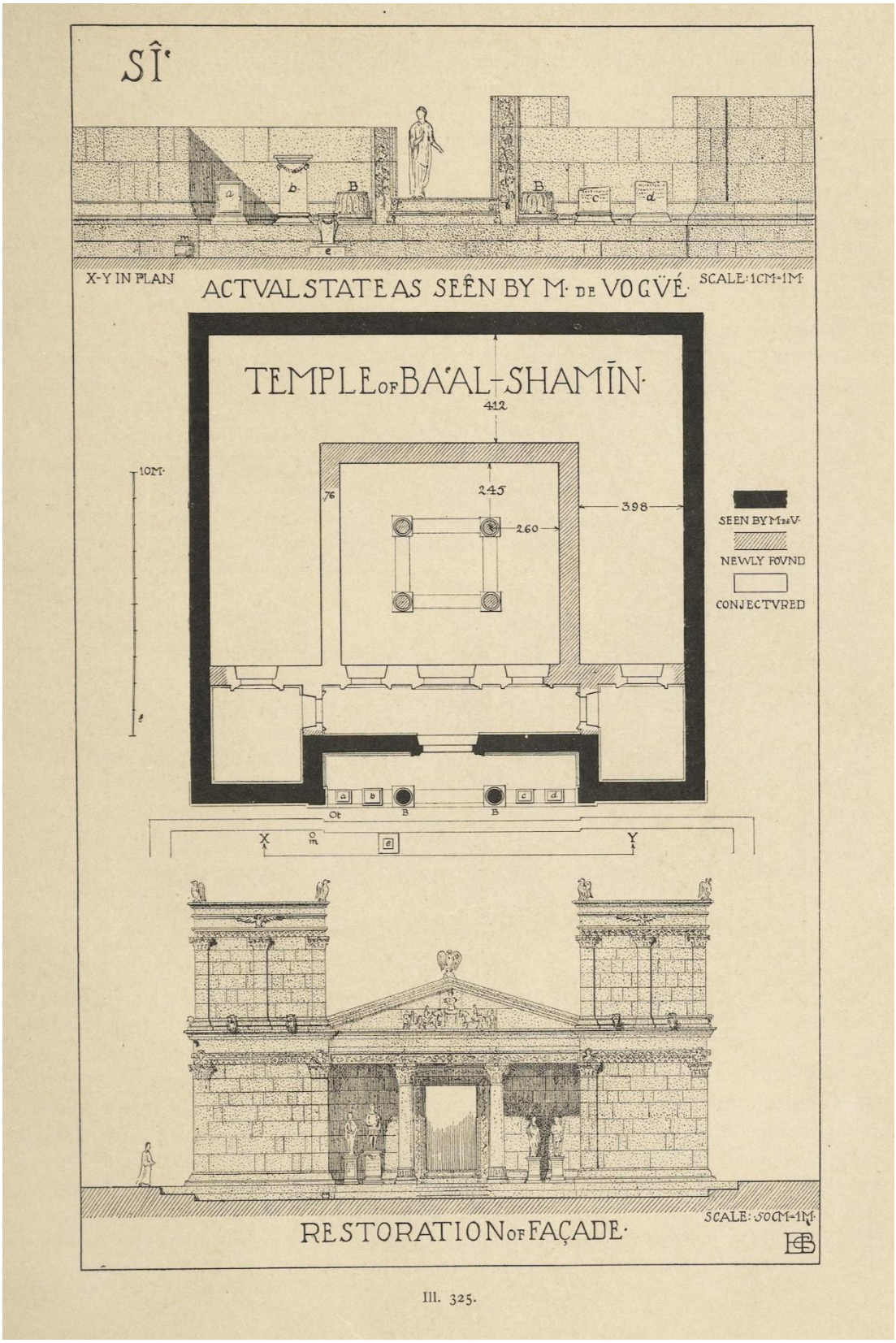

Figure 79: Reconstruction of the temple of Ba'alshamin in Seeia with a twin-towered façade derived from the pylons of traditional Egyptian temples.

Source: Howard Crosby Butler, 1916, Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, cropped from original.

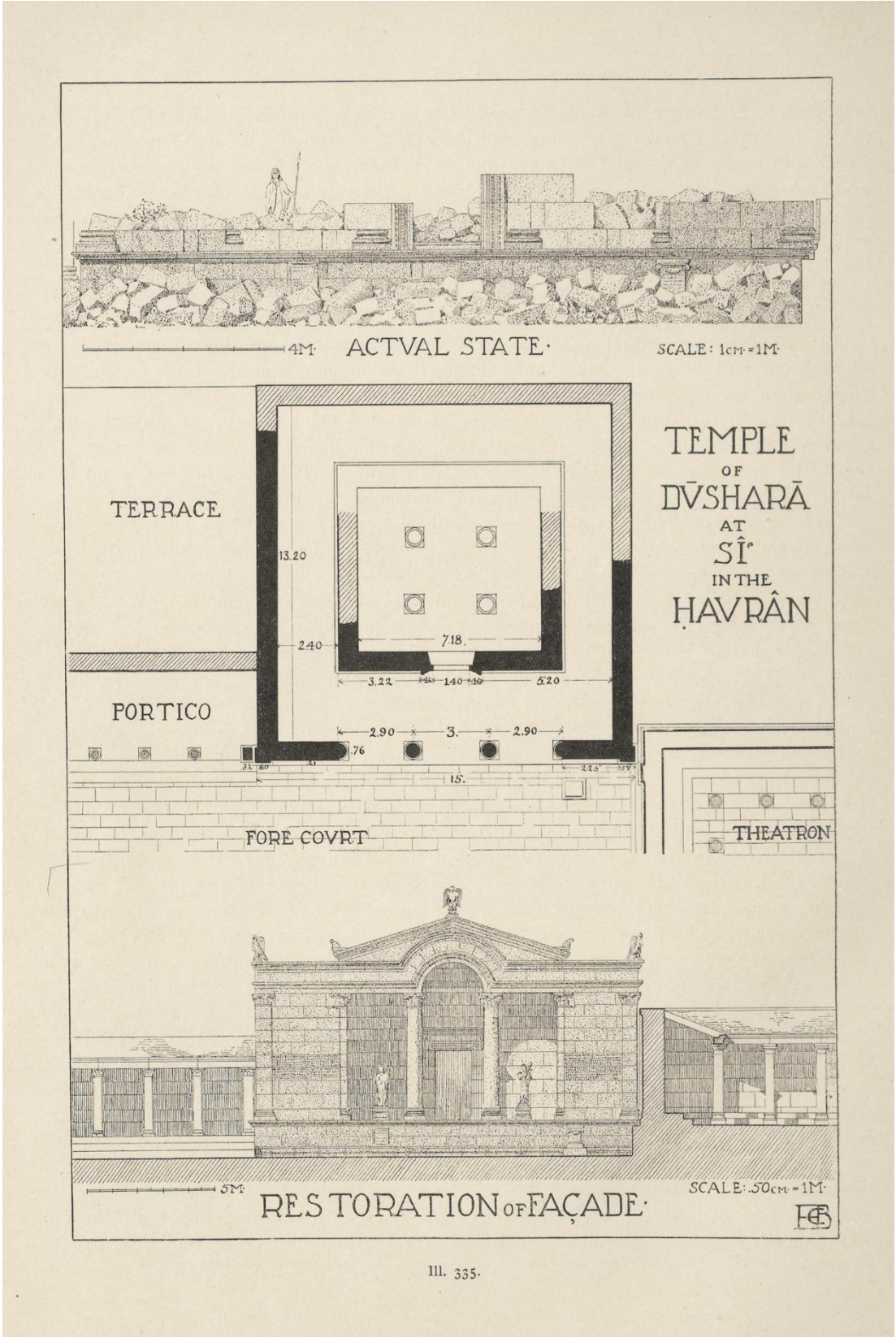

Figure 80: Reconstruction of the temple of Dushara in Seeia with a propylon featuring a Syrian arch.

Source: Howard Crosby Butler, 1916, Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, cropped from original.

Figure 81: Roman temple of Mismiyeh (now destroyed) with an Egpytian torus frame around the central window and portal. The aedicula (right) is crowned by a Syrian arch with a torus between two cavetto moldings.

Source: T. R. Dumas, about 1875, User Uskamudafudia, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped from original. For a higher resolution copy, you may contact: The Palestine Exploration Fund Photographic Archive (P 1659).

Figure 82: Portal of the synagogue Kfar Bar'am. This prototypical archivolt is a fusion of elements of Roman Republican (cavetto cornice), Egyptian (torus, fillet, and cavetto molding), and Greek (three fasciae with astragals) architecture.

Source: Roded Shlomo Pikiwiki Israel, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY, cropped from original.

Figure 83: So-called Temple of Hadrian in Ephesus with Syrian arch. The entablature follows traditional Graeco-Roman models. The sculpted tympanum under a round arch (background) is the earliest extant specimen of its kind.

Source: User Sailko, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, rotated and cropped from original.

Figure 84: Peristyle of Diocletian's Palace (end of 3rd century) in Split with Syrian arch (above) and three traditional Roman portals (below). The central portal with the archivolt is derived from Roman triumphal arches.

Figure 85: Syrian arch of the Peristyle of Diocletian's Palace in Split. The upper fascia of the architrave is replaced by an Egyptian torus (here, more precisely: ovolo) and cavetto molding, following the 3rd century architecture of Syria. The frieze consists mostly of dentils.

Figure 86: Archivolt of a lunette at the Golden Gate of Diocletian's Palace in Split. The archivolt follows the example of Hauran with a decorated cavetto cornice, a decorated torus, and two fasciae with an astragal. The general structural is similar to the architrave of the Peristyle of Split and the archivolt of Kfar Bar'am.

Figure 87: Palace Gate of the so-called Palace of Theoderic in Ravenna (6th century). The horizontal cornices mimic a Syrian arch and are decorated with tori and scotiae. The Palace Gate itself followed the model of the Golden Gate of Dioclatian's Palace in Split or the Chalke of the Great Palace in Constantinople (no longer extant).

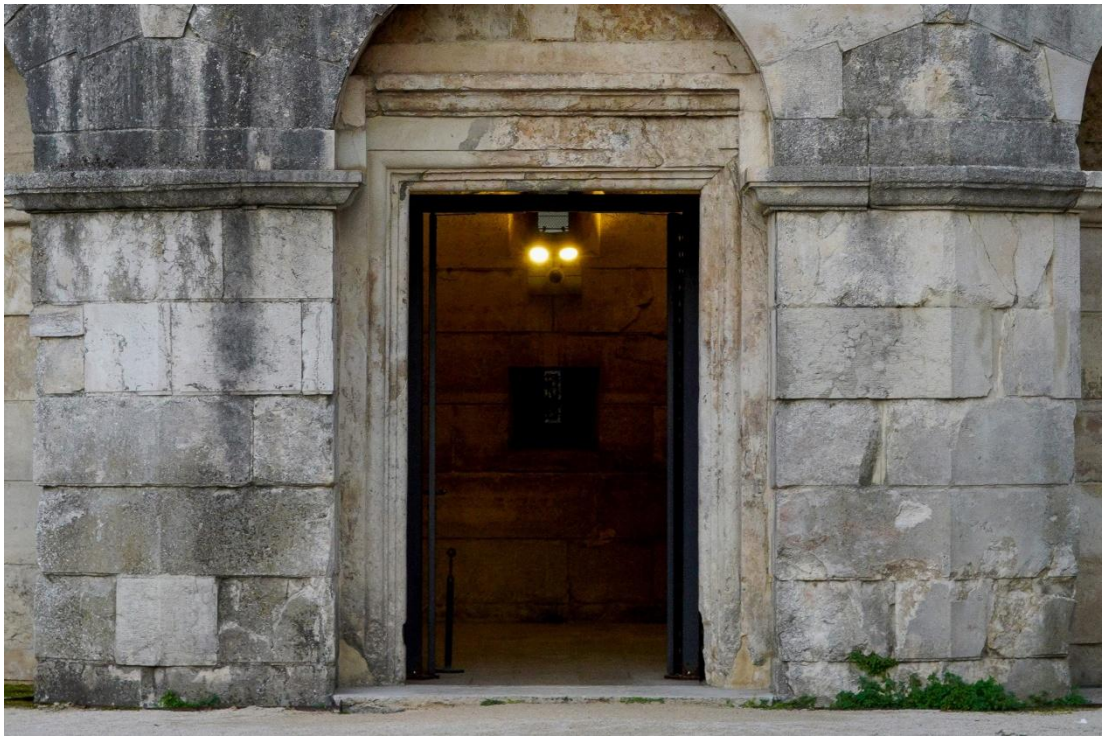

Figure 88: Lower portal of the Mausoleum of Theoderic in Ravenna. The jamb is structured with a torus and three fasciae without astragals, a further simplification of the structure of the archivolts of Diocletian's Palace. Similar Jambs can be found at the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, St. John in Ephesus or Sant'Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna (all 6th century).

Source: User ThePhotografer, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped from original.

Figure 89: South façade and chevet of Panagia Kapnikarea in Athens. The eyebrow-shaped cornices of the windows of the apses and the fully framing cornices of the windows of the south façade replicate the equivalent cornices of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qal ʿat Sim ʿān and of other North Syrian churches, such as Qalb Loze.

Source: User Steve-milea, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, rotated and cropped from original.

Figure 90: Exonarthex with propylon and south façade of Panagia Kapnikarea in Athens. The two visible bays of the exonarthex (left) are replicated to the north. The exonarthex with several saddle roofs, dual windows in the center, and single windows at the edges mirrors the configuration of the porch of the south basilica of Qal ʿat Sim ʿān.

Source: User bynyalcin, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY, cropped from original.

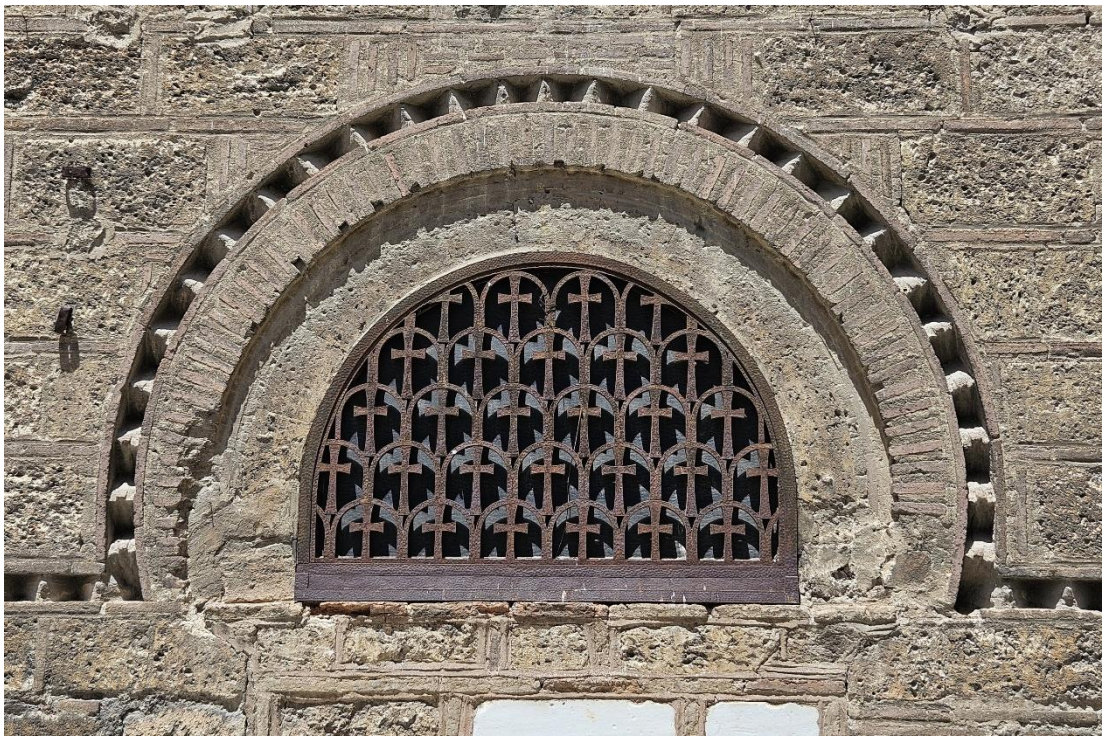

Figure 91: Lunette of the walled-up south portal of Panagaia Kapnikarea in Athens. The cornice of the archivolt has the shape of a horseshoe arch, a typical element of the architecture of North Syria.

Source: John Samuel (User Jsamwrites), Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, rotated and cropped from original.

Figure 92: Relics (below left and right) of the jamb of the south portal of Panagia Kapnikarea in Athens, now walled up. The original jamb included tori at the edges and associated scotiae. This and other jambs of Athens are much closer to the decorative style of Syria than comparable 6th century jambs of Constantinople or Ravenna.

Source: John Samuel (User Jsamwrites), Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped from original.

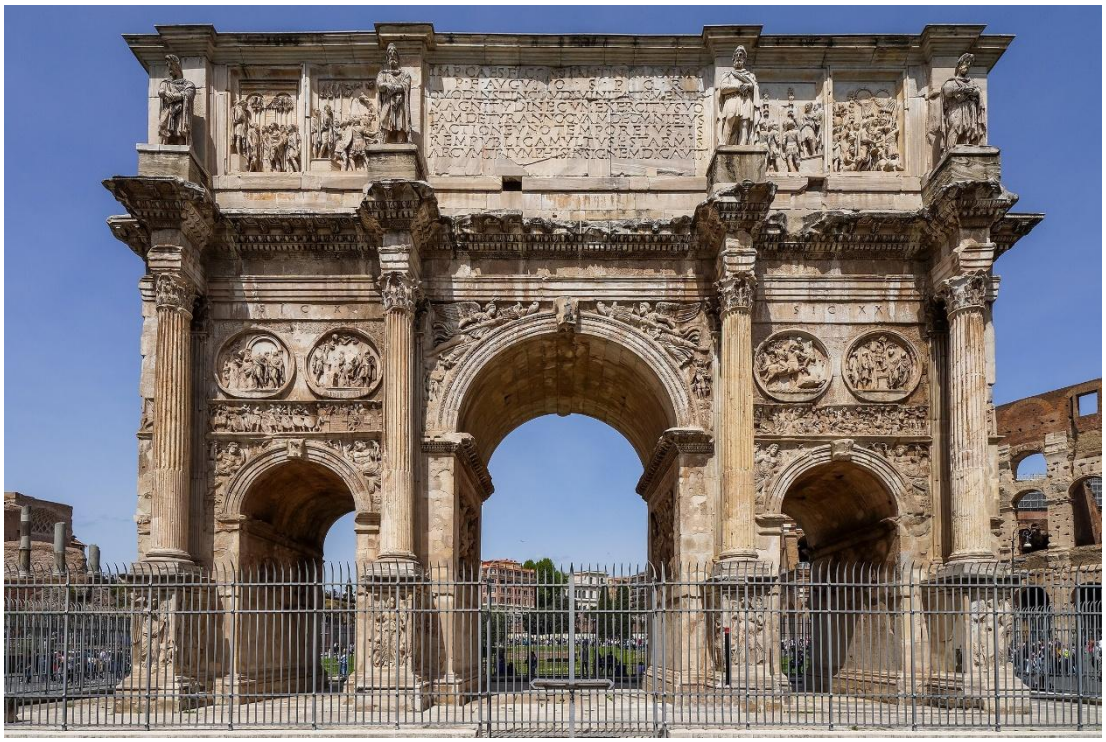

Figure 93: Arch of Constantine (315) in Rome. The archivolts of the three portals have cavetto cornices and three fasciae with astragals, following the traditional Graeco-Roman model. The archivolts are not supported by columns or pilasters.

Source: User NikonZ7II, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped and perspective corrected from original.

Figure 94: Portal of the northern transept of Sainte-Foy in Conques (left) and Roman triumphal arch in Orange (right). Most Roman triumphal arches do not feature the kind of pilasters under the archivolt that can be seen in Orange.

Source of right image: User Synek125, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped from original.

Figure 95: Ruined wall niches at the Golden Gate of Diocletian's Palace in Split. It is assumed that such niches originally were filled with statues. The upper row of niches is integrated with an arcade while the two isolated niches below do not feature decorated archivolts. This arrangement is strongly influenced by the Syrian architecture of the 3rd century.

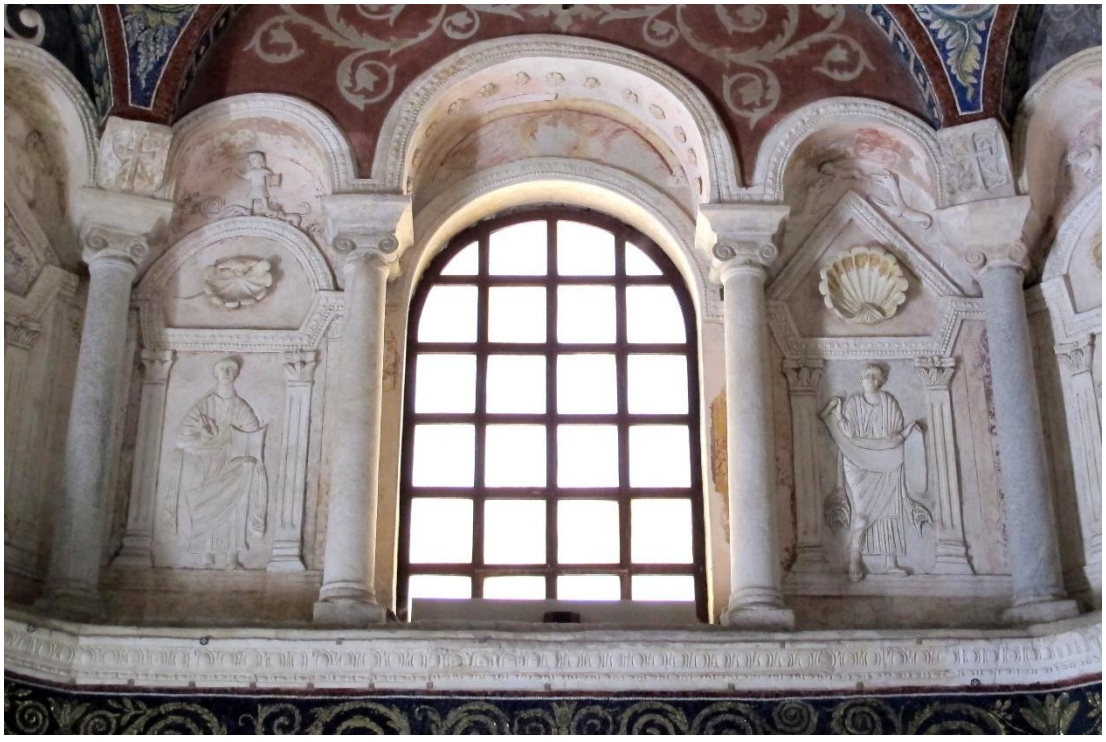

Figure 96: Reliefs with figures of saints in Roman pseudo-wall niches of the Neonian Baptistery in Ravenna (450-73).

Source: User Sailko, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped from original.

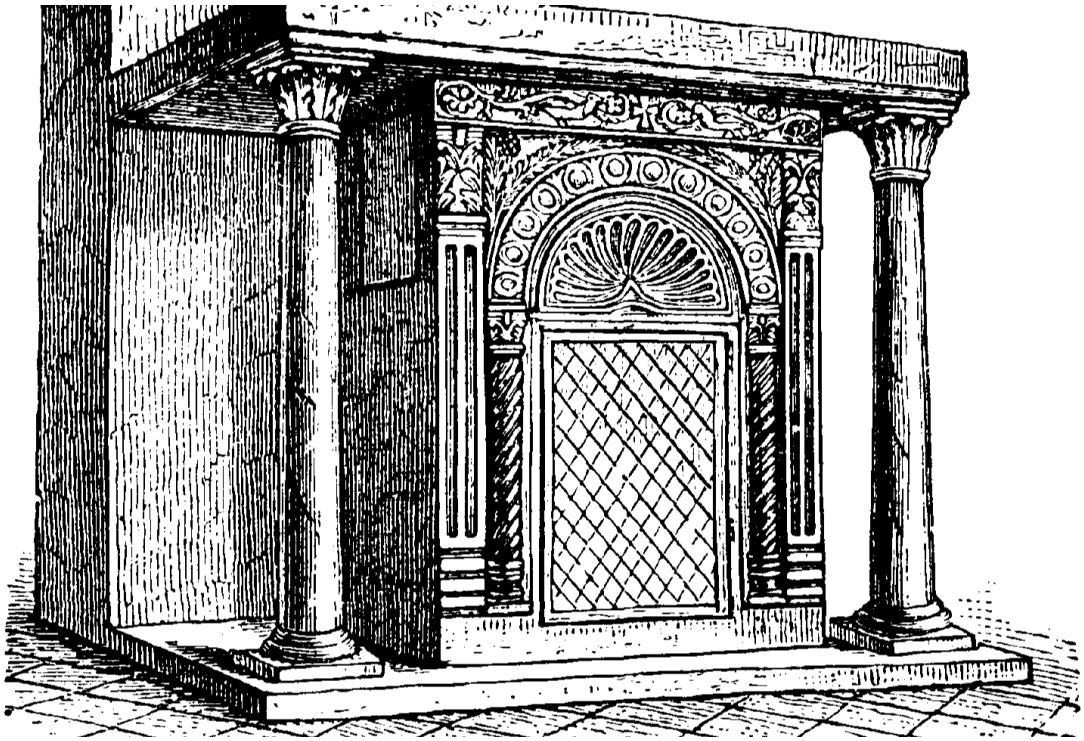

Figure 97: Altar in the Neonian Baptistery in Ravenna (450-73) with a blind window in a pseudo-conch as symbol of God.

Source: Nordisk familjebok, Wikimedia Commons, cropped from original.

Figure 98: Window of Santa Maria in Valle near Cividale (8th century), framed by a richly decorated pseudo-conch, as symbol of God. The gestures of the flanking figures emphasize the spiritual interpretation of the window.

Source: User Welleschik, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, cropped from original.

Figure 99: Apse of the cathedral of Elne from the middle of the 11th century. The buttress on the right side is a later addition. According to a historic source, the apse was built after the model of the Anastasis in Jerusalem.

Source: User Enric, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, rotated and cropped from original.

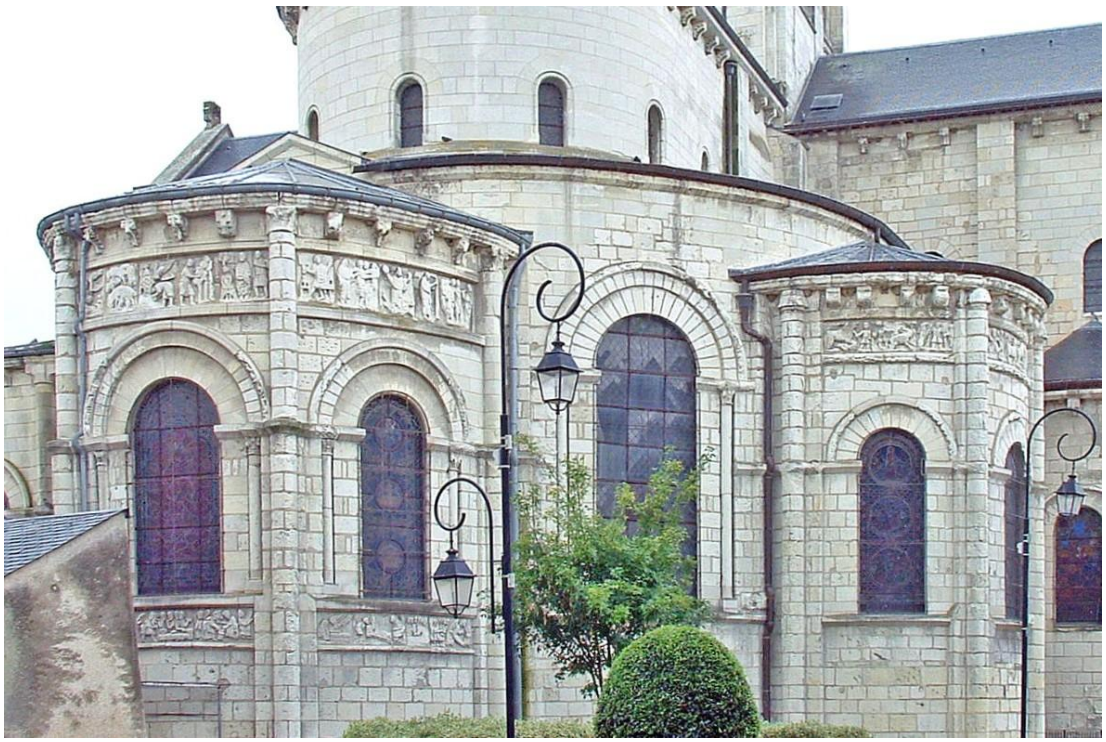

Figure 100: Chevet of Notre-Dame-la-Blanche in Selles-sur-Cher. In contrast to Conques, the decoration combines typical decorative elements of Roman architecture (city of Rome and its vicinity) in a rather traditional arrangement.

Source: User MOSSOT, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, rotated and cropped from original.

Figure 101: Apse of Santa Maria in Valle Porclaneta. The apse has stacked engaged columns and a roof cornice with a Lombard band, closely resembling the central apse of the east basilica of Qal ʿat Sim ʿān.

Source: User Mongolo1984, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, rotated and cropped from original.

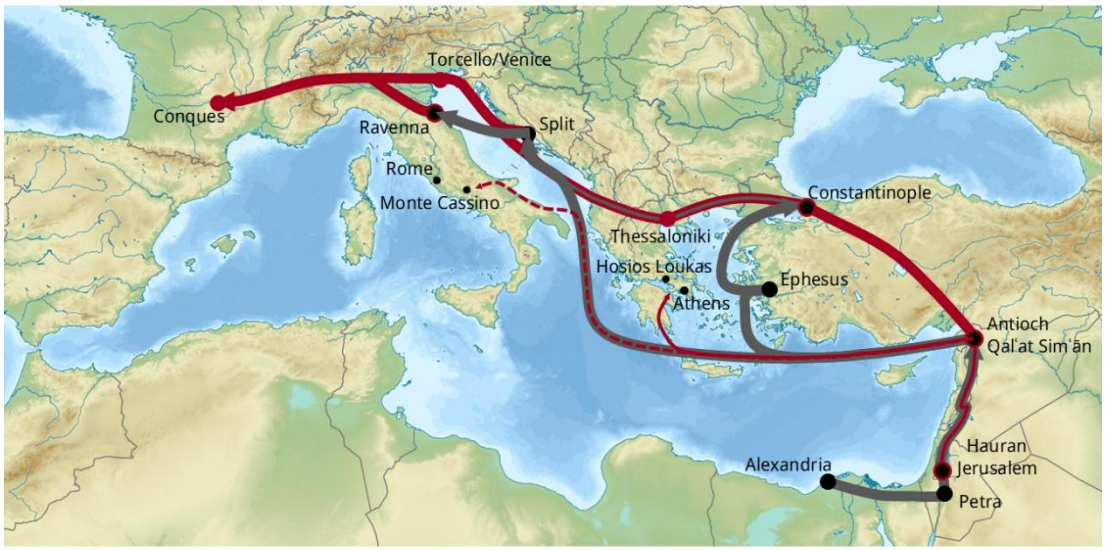

Figure 102: Aggregation of ancient (1st century BC to 6th century CE, dark grey) and hypothetical medieval (11th century, red) dynamics. The dashed line refers to the late 12th or the 13th centuries. The hypothetical medieval dynamics reflect the decorative similarities identified in this study. Due to the high overlap between ancient and hypothetical medieval dynamics, the actual medieval dynamics may have been a blend of both that cannot be identified with full confidence. Nevertheless, the analysis suggests that the primary model region for Conques, even if only indirectly, was a specific part of ancient Syria, ranging from Hauran to Antioch, with the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qal ʿat Sim ʿān as its culmination.

Source: User Nzeemin, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY SA, routes and locations added by the author.

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Changes from earlier editions

Changes from the first edition (June 2025)

The second edition provides significant further evidence for the postulated model role of the Church of St. Simeon Stylites in Qalʿat Simʿān and its vicinity. To support this hypothesis, the pre-Romanesque development history of the decorative elements of Qalʿat Simʿān is systematically traced back to origins in Graeco-Roman as well as in traditional and Ptolemaic Egyptian architecture. It is shown that the convergence of these precursors occurred in Hauran (South Syria). From there, adoption moved to the north, culminating in Qalʿat Simʿān. Eventually, adoption reached Armenia and Georgia as well as Greece. The examples of the Georgian churches of Ishkhani and Oshki provide further anecdotal evidence for a potential model role of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople for Conques. A potential model role of Ravenna is assessed in more detail. To support this extended analysis, nearly 50 new figures were added. Beyond these major changes, several smaller additions and corrections were made.

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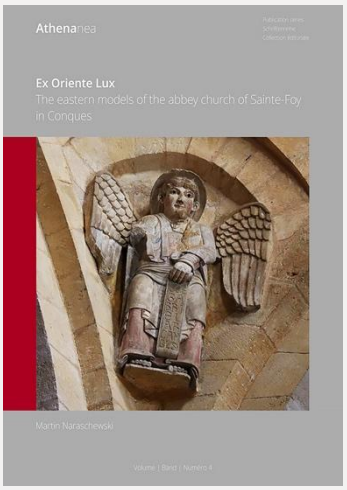

Volume 4

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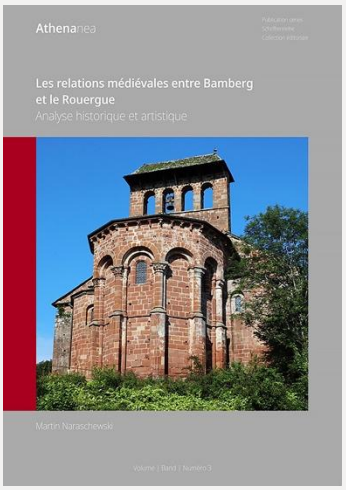
Martin Naraschewski



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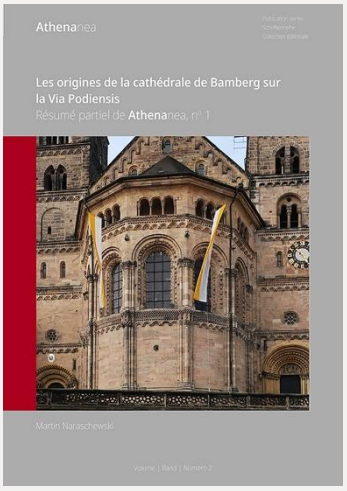
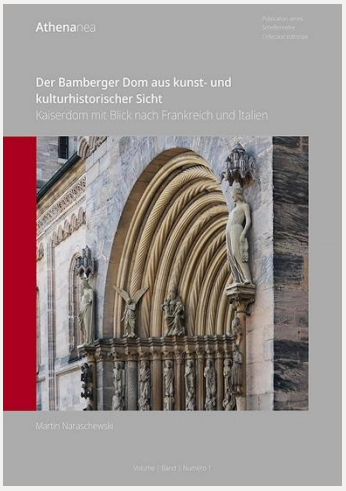


Volume 2

Les origines de la cathédrale de Bamberg sur la Via Podiensis
Résumé partiel de Athenanea, n° 1

Martin Naraschewski



Volume 1

Der Bamberger Dom aus kunst- und kulturhistorischer Sicht
Kaiserdom mit Blick nach Frankreich und Italien

Martin Naraschewski

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