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Introduction of Gothic Architecture into Italy by the French Cistercian Monks. II. The Monastery of San Martino al Cimino near Viterbo

Author(s): A. L. Frothingham, Jr.

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INTRODUCTION OF GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE  
INTO ITALY  
BY THE FRENCH CISTERCIAN MONKS.

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II. THE MONASTERY OF SAN MARTINO AL CIMINO NEAR  
VITERBO.

[PLATES XIX, XX.]

HISTORY OF THE MONASTERY.—On one of the ridges of the classic Mons Ciminus, about eight miles from Viterbo, stood a monastery founded by the Benedictines at an early date.<sup>1</sup> It was then connected with the important monastery on Monte Amiata,<sup>2</sup> and more than one document in the archives of Orvieto attest this fact. Little is known of its early history :<sup>3</sup> its interest for us commences when it was handed over to the Cistercian order in such a state of ruin and desertion as to be uninhabitable. The order appears to have demurred at the idea of maintaining its languid existence, for it was at a time when the attempt was being made (in 1151) to curb the injudicious, almost intemperate, spread of the order by the foundation of a great number of unnecessary monastic establishments.<sup>4</sup> In this, as in many other cases, Papal insistence finally prevailed, and in 1206, according to Ughelli, the monastery was occupied by Cistercian monks from Pontigny. A few words regarding this fact, well known in monastic annals, will give a good basis for a judgment on the date and origin of the buildings whose description is to follow : it is condensed from Ughelli, *Italia Sacra*, t.

<sup>1</sup> A page is devoted to the monastery, by Cav. R. OJETTI, in the *Mostra della Città di Roma* (1884), pp. 153–4. These remarks are, however, founded on nothing but drawings of the façade and apse, the two parts of the church that do not belong to the original structure.

<sup>2</sup> JANAUSCHEK, *Orig. Cisterc. tom. I*, p. 231.

<sup>3</sup> “ From a parchment of 1066 and another of 1044 from the archives of *S. Martino in Montibus* or *al Cimino*, now transferred to the archives of the Vatican, as is noted by GARAMPI (*Iter Viterbien. advers.*, vol. III, No. 135, *MSS. Arch. Vat.*), we find that the Benedictines of *S. Martino al Cimino* had at that time jurisdiction over the church of *S. Pellegrino*, around which were some possessions of that Abbey and of *S. Giovanni in Cocciola* or *Ciocola* :” CRISTOFORI, *Le tombe dei Papi in Viterbo*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> DOHME, *Die Kirchen des Cistercienserordens in Deutschland*, etc., p. 18.

I, c. 1403-4,<sup>5</sup> with reference also to Janauschek (*Orig. Cist.*, t. I, p. 124),<sup>6</sup> and the authorities which he there quotes.

It was in 1150 that Pope Eugenius III gave the monastery to the Cistercian order, by which it was placed under the jurisdiction of St. Sulpice in Savoy, one of the main offshoots of Pontigny. This connection with St. Sulpice lasted for over a half-century without producing any improvement in the condition of San Martino. The general chapter of the order consequently determined to cut off all connection with it. It was then that Innocent III came to its aid. From his letter, published by Ughelli, we learn that the monastery was in abject poverty and contained but three monks. The Pope,

<sup>5</sup> *Hac tempestate* [time of bishop Gensonius of Viterbo, 1149-79] *ac Petro Praesule vetus monasterium S. Martini Ord. S. Benedicti in montibus Cimini octavo ab hac urbe lapide, alieno aere oppressum, et fere ad nihilum redactum, Eugenius III monachis Cisterciensibus reformandum et incolendum tradidit. Verum cum sub Innocentio III ad extremam paupertatem redactum esset, generale capitulum Cisterciense (ut MANRIQUEZ scribit in Annal. Cist. Ord, tom. 3) atque Innocentius ipse zelo inter se religionis decertarunt: illud, dum penitus deserere statuit, quod non poterat in observantia conservare, hic cum conventum de novo illuc adducit; et liberandis oppignoratis fundis mille libras argenti, augmento dotis ecclesiam integram donat; ex quorum fructibus ibidem sustentarentur. Constat utrumque ex ejusdem Papae litteris expeditis anno 1206 ad Petrum abbatem, fratresque, qui tunc recens venissent ex Pontiniaco Galliae ejusdem ordinis coenobio, in hunc modum ex Reg. Vatic. Nicolai IV ubi Innocentii litterae confirmantur.*

<sup>6</sup> *Illustre illud asceterium in cacumine montis Cimini, terra Viterbiensi et patrimonio S. Petri situm nullique dioecesi subjectum, perantiqua familiae Benedictinae sedes erat, cujus restaurator jam Gregorius VII fuisse traditur. Quum autem saeculo XII aere alieno reddendo impar et fere ad nihilum redactum esset, ab Eugenio III P. M. a. 1150 monachis Cisterciensibus e S. Sulpitio (de linea Pontiniaci) advocatis reformandum traditum est (Bi. Pa. Ha. M. Du. V. Vi. N. W. Bl; 1149: A. R. E. EM. L. La.). De antiquioribus abbatibus nil constat; unius sine nomine memoria in statuto XI capituli generalis a. 1193 occurrit.*

*Verum quum enormia quibus illa abbatia laborabat damna a Sulpitiensibus omnem industriam adhibentibus per L annos reparari non potuissent et capitulum generale eam deserendam esse constituisset, ex Innocentii III imperio Pontiniaco resignata est, quo facti novus conventus Petro abbate duce inde emissus S. Martinum occupavit eumque liberalissimis donis a dicto pontifice Cal. Febr. 1207 (perp. 1206) collatis adjutus ecclesiae et ordini Cisterciensi conseravit; ubi silentio praeterire non licet, Rainerium Capocium, cardinalem nostrum, de monasterii aedibus rursus aedificandis egregie promeritum esse. Quod ad tempus quo Pontiniacenses advenerint attinet, Moronus (quo teste nescimus) pro a. 1199 contendit, Jongelinaus (JO. St. JC, Ve. Bo.), Historia Pontiniacensis, Chaillou pro 1200, Bl pro 1203, Na. F pro 1216 (alio loco, ubi S. Martinus perperam filia Vallis-Ecclesiarum vocatur, pro 1206); sed tamen considerantes matris mutationem a capitulo generali a. 1207 approbatam esse, porro Ughellum ex codice S. Salvatoris Montis-Amiatae referre, conventum a 1207 advenisse, Innocentium III denique laudatas literas eodem illo anno 1207 "ad Petrum abbatem et fratres qui tunc recens venerant" dedisse, eos initio a. 1207 S. Martinum ingressos esse recte asseritur.*

however, promised many gifts if the parent monastery of Pontigny would consent to send there a colony, and if the general chapter would rescind its resolution to separate from it. Early in the year 1207, the colony from Pontigny, under abbot Peter, entered San Martino. Innocent III paid all its debts and endowed it, as Ughelli relates, and within a few years Card. Rainerius Capocci gave many gifts and enabled the monks, under his supervision, to rebuild the entire monastery. So generous was he toward it that he, rather than Innocent III, is regarded as the real founder. I will here repeat two extracts given by Ughelli from codices of the monastery of Monte Amiata that are almost contemporary with the event. A *chronicon* of the monastery says: *Anno 1199 Innocentius III sedit an. 18 m. 4 d. 22. Hic multa bona fecit. Hic renovavit monasterium S. Martini de Monte Viterbii et anno 1207 de Pontiniaco fecit conventum ibi venire.* Another codex, after reporting the facts mentioned above, adds: *Raynerius cardinalis noster non multo post tempore fere totum monasterium reaedificavit et bonis multis locupletavit.*

Cardinal Capocci belonged to the Cistercian order, and when he became one of the leading ecclesiastics of his day never ceased to advance its interests with a strong and generous hand, until later in his life he transferred his favors largely to the new and more popular Dominican order, a fact which seems to have taken place before 1220. It was mainly through his influence and example that Viterbo became perhaps the greatest monastic centre in Italy during the first half of the thirteenth century. The construction of the buildings of S. Martino was one of his earliest undertakings, and we are led, without regard to the style of the construction, to date them between 1207 and about 1225: before the later date we find him erecting in Viterbo itself the monasteries of S. Maria della Quercia, S. Maria di Gradi, S. Maria della Verità, and others; some of which were intended for the Cistercians, but all were finally handed over to the Dominican order, under the influence of his changed affections.

The old connection with the great monastery of S. Salvatore di Monte Amiata appears to have been retained, especially after it joined the reform, in 1228, and had brought under its sway a number of churches in Viterbo and its vicinity.<sup>7</sup>

MONASTIC BUILDINGS.—The buildings that remain from the old monastery date back to the time of Innocent III and Cardinal Capocci,

<sup>7</sup> JANAUSCHEK, *op. cit.*, p. 231; CRISTOFORI, *op. cit.*, pp. 5, 7, 9, etc.

and show it to have been an establishment of considerable size and importance; almost a rival to the more southern colonies of Casamari and Fossanova. All but the church and chapter-house are in a ruinous condition, owing principally to the construction, on the site, of the great Pamphili palace. In 1564, the monastery had become extinct, and the property passed into the possession of the Vatican chapter. Toward the middle of the XVII century, it became the property of the Doria family, who are still its owners. Donna Olimpia Pamphily, sister-in-law of Innocent X, who died in 1657, made the site her favorite residence. She built a great palace within the former precincts of the ruined monastery, restored the church in the *barocco* taste of the time, and was buried there, as is shown by two inscriptions, one placed over the door of entrance, the other in the pavement in front of the high altar.

The area of the monastery not occupied by the palace is mainly filled with humble dwellings, built partly among the mediæval ruins, and, in some cases, leaving the old structures intact: some are even attached to the walls of the side-aisles of the church.

CHURCH.—Contrary to the usual Cistercian custom, the church is placed to the right of the monastic buildings. The façade is badly restored. Its general design can still be discerned in the central portion, especially in the portal, but the restorations have been so radical as to obliterate nearly all traces of the original work. It is divided vertically into three sections. In the centre is a round-headed portal surmounted by a gable, with a single column on either side; above it is a large false pointed arch reaching up to the gable, in the summit of which is a modern rose-window. Above this gable is a part of the ancient façade, with a round-headed window and a false horizontal termination. On either side, over the aisles, rises a tower in three stories, only the upper one being provided with windows. These towers are of late work, and the church did not originally possess any.

The interior (PLATE XIX) has remained practically unchanged in its lower portion. A few *barocco* altars were set up in the side-aisles by Donna Olimpia, thus closing their windows, and the beautiful tone of the peperino stone was covered with a coat of whitewash. The apse was disfigured by a coat-of-arms and some pallid decoration in fresco.

It is interesting to compare this interior with that of Fossanova and also with the French transitional interiors. Some twenty years or more intervene between Fossanova and San Martino; and the changes that had taken place in France during this time are clearly reflected in the

latter of these two buildings. The Cistercians of Pontigny had been influenced by the transitional buildings of the Ile-de-France erected shortly before 1200 ; and in this case they carried out what was perhaps the favorite type, that in which piers alternate with columns along the nave. This church of San Martino is as truly built by French architects and in an unadulterated French style as is Fossanova ; but the style is less severe ; it is less Cistercian, and conforms more to the type of the Ile-de-France ; the prototype is not Clairvaux but Pontigny—for each of the four main foundations of Cîteaux seems to have possessed a variation of the general architectural type.<sup>8</sup>

San Martino is lighter in its proportions, and yet, instead of showing increased height, we find that its main nave is broader in relation to its height, and this must have been still more marked before the vaults were raised. A consequence is the omission of the row of small windows between the arcades of the nave and the clerestory, and a consequent diminution in the slant of the roof of the side-aisles. There is also a diminution in the verticality of lines, owing to the system of vaulting. The alternation in the supports was intended, of course, to provide for the sexpartite vaulting, as at Notre Dame, the choir of Senlis, and the cathedrals of Mantes and Laon ; but this original intention was here either lost sight of during the construction, as in the naves of the cathedrals of Senlis and Noyon, or a quadripartite vaulting, like the present one, was a later substitution.<sup>9</sup> Thus, we find, at present, an engaged colonnette rising only from the heavy piers. The result of this is to make the present vaulting of the nave nearly square and of proportions similar to those of the aisles. There is hardly any domical character to the vaults, through the lightness and circular form of the transverse arches. The supposition that it was the original intention to use sexpartite vaulting is confirmed by the size of the windows and by a couple of the original intermediate vaulting-shafts which were left on either side in the further bay of the nave. Of the present windows, those over each column were evidently cut at the time of some restoration of the church, and involved the closing of the two original windows placed on either side of these columns over the point of each arcade and the demolition of the buttresses on the exterior that corresponded to the intermediate column. This probably

<sup>8</sup> See ground-plans in VIOLLET-LE-DUC, *Dictionnaire*, vol. I, under *Architecture Monastique*.

<sup>9</sup> In most transitional churches in France the supports and the present vaulting do not correspond, on account of the substitution of quadripartite for sexpartite vaults, or vice-versa.

coincided with the raising and rebuilding of the vaults and changing them from the sexpartite to the quadripartite form. On account of the transept, the new windows in the furthest bay were opened not in the centre but to one side of the new vaults, and this led to the preservation of the vaulting-shafts which were removed in every other case. Traces of the early windows that have been closed can yet be seen, and the late date of the present vaults is proved, not only by the character of their mouldings but by the additional height given to the wall, which is so noticeable on the exterior. In some cases, however, several courses of the original vaulting-mouldings have been sufficiently preserved to show that the wall or longitudinal ribs sprang from a greater height than the diagonal and transverse ribs, and that both the latter are nevertheless much stilted. There is a lack of structural logic and continuity in this system of San Martino as it originally existed. The vaulting-shafts do not spring from the ground, in the case of the main piers, or from the capitals of the intermediate columns, but from the clerestory cornice. They here rest upon a single shaft<sup>10</sup> of the same size as that engaged in the pier. This shaft ended in a typical Cistercian consol over each column and directly on the capital over each pier, without the intervention of any base.

The mouldings of the main arches and its supports are original, and are far in advance of those used in the other Cistercian buildings of the time in the Roman province, being analogous to the mouldings of the transitional buildings of the Ile-de-France. The same cannot be said of the foliage of the lower capitals, which is lacking in delicacy. The capitals of the intermediate shafts are slightly more advanced; they are triple, and thus form a somewhat awkward transition from the quintuple vaulting-mouldings above to the single shaft below.

The ground-plan (PL. XX) shows eight bays in the aisles and four double bays in the nave; a transept with two square chapels on either side; and a pentagonal apse instead of the usual square end. The side-aisles are square, measuring 4.15 met. between the axes; the width of the nave is 8.75 met.; the total length is about 57 met. in the interior. The dimensions are thus a trifle less than those of Fosanova; the walls are not as thick, nor the supports as heavy, but the span of the arches is slightly greater, thus producing greater height

<sup>10</sup> The wall is coated with a thick layer of plaster: it is possible that a slender shaft once existed on either side of the main one, corresponding to the small capitals under the cornice, and that it has been covered by the plaster. I did not think to examine this point when on the spot.

and lightness of the side-aisles. The simple ribbed cross-vaults of the aisles appear to be original, and are supported along the wall by a half-column engaged in a pier. The aisle-windows are now closed. The five-sided choir is of later date than the rest of the church, and may have taken the place of an original square end. Its construction is assigned by Signor Ojetti to the XIV century, without any proof. It was probably built at the same time that the vaulting and windows were remodelled. An examination of the exterior is not conclusive, but it proves (1) the raising of the vaults of the nave; (2) the partial rebuilding of the side-chapels and of a part of the transept, at the time of the reconstruction of the apse; (3) that the vaults of the transept are the only original high vaults that remain.

A comparison of the capitals and mouldings with those of French churches shows them to belong to the time when the transitional forms were passing into those of developed early Gothic. The outlines of the bases are very similar, for example, to those of Senlis, but they are much higher and heavier in relation to their shafts than those of any French church with which I am acquainted. They are of unequal height; those near the door being lower than the rest, as may be seen in the foreground of PLATE XIX.

CLOISTERS.—The arrangement of the monastery is somewhat peculiar, probably being influenced by that of the earlier Benedictine structures. The Pamphili palace has absorbed the front section with its dormitories and one side of the main cloister, whose foundations are still visible in the cellar of the palace. A sketch in PLATE XX gives all that could be ascertained, by a cursory examination, of the general plan. The main walls are almost everywhere preserved, but the details of exterior and interior have been ruthlessly made over: the monastic halls have been turned into shops and peasants' dwellings and store-rooms. At many points, the original round-headed windows remain; most of them are single, some double with a dividing shaft. There appear to have been two cloisters, both now destroyed. The north arm of the monastery, projecting from the transept of the church, is fairly well preserved. A corridor with cross-vaults has on either side one or more early rooms, those nearest the church being probably the treasury and sacristy. Then comes a section at right angles and parallel to the church, which formed, apparently, the division between the two courts or cloisters. At the corner of the second court, on the east side, is the chapter-house, which is locally termed the refectory, still in fair preservation.



CHAPTER-HOUSE.—The chapter-house corresponds in style to the church. It is even lighter and more graceful in comparison with the corresponding chapter-houses of Fossanova and Casamari, and it approaches far more the style of some French refectories and other halls of the XIII century. It measures 20 by 9 metres, and is divided into two aisles by three central piers. These piers are of the same general plan as those of Fossanova and Casamari, a central cylinder or octagon around which are grouped eight shafts, upon whose capitals rest the mouldings of the vaults. But the æsthetic effect is here made quite different by the greater slenderness of the pier and delicacy of the mouldings, as well as by the wider spacing of the supports. The consols that support the arches against the walls are of a charming acorn-shape design, and the mouldings of the arches are quite advanced in style. A round-headed window was originally placed in each bay, but, of these eight, nearly all are closed. A stone bench encircles the entire interior. The plan and view of the interior (PL. XX) will make a long description unnecessary.

Although this is, according to tradition, the refectory, it appears to me, for various reasons, to be the chapter-house: *first*, its position in the arm of the monastery, that is, at right angles with the transept of the church—the usual place for the chapter-house in Cistercian establishments; *second*, the analogy of form and construction to many other chapter-houses of the order, and its dissimilarity to the majority of the refectories of the order; *third*, the row of stone seats which surrounds the hall, as in all chapter-houses.

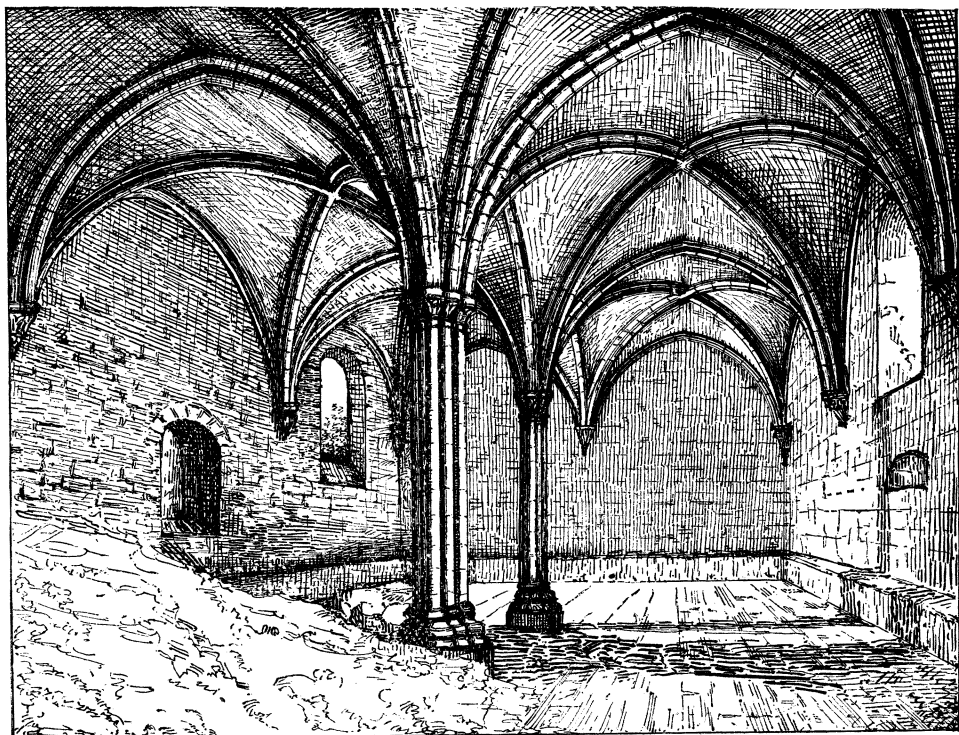
The monastery of San Martino does not present the diversity of style which we find at Fossanova and Casamari. It was built *d'un seul jet*, within the space of not many years. The date of 1207 is the earliest we can assign to the plan and foundations: the presence of round-headed windows everywhere forbids our giving a long *terminus ad quem*. Probably the construction was finished in about 1225.<sup>11</sup> Any earlier date than this would be in contradiction with the extremely rich mouldings of the ribs and cornices of the church, which correspond with those of French buildings usually dated from 1210 to 1230. This advantage, however, is more than counterbalanced by the fearful mutilations which it has suffered.

A. L. FROTHINGHAM, JR.

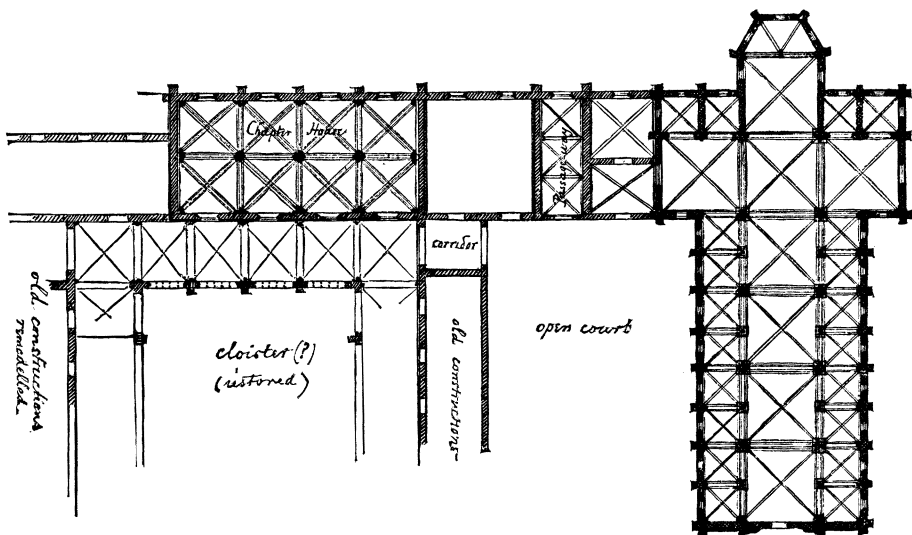
<sup>11</sup> CRISTOFORI (*op. cit.*, p. 9) gives the date 1228 as connected with the church, but without any indication of what it applies to.



INTERIOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE CISTERCIAN MONASTERY OF SAN MARTINO AL CIMINO, NEAR VITERBO.



*Interior of Chapter-House.*



*Ground-plan of Monastery and Church.*

MONASTERY OF SAN MARTINO AL CIMINO, NEAR VITERBO.

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