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For my niece

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and her parents

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Abstract – English

In my paper I discussed two major questions. First, if the Irish Cistercians developed or used distinct Irish architectural features, which may have derived from the early medieval Irish churches? Second, how much of the early Middle Eastern monasticism as well as of the early Irish monasticism survived into the times of the Irish Cistercians? Early Christian monasticism in general has developed in the Egyptian deserts between the 2nd and the 4th CE centuries. The early monastic ideas of a remote life in poverty, chastity and simplicity set up by the Desert Fathers, were of major importance for the earliest forms of monasticism in Europe and Ireland. The origins and the original ideas behind the Cistercians lie in the Egyptian desert as well. This paper outlines the foundation of the Cistercian order, its spread as well as its attitude towards architecture, as there were not actual buildings rules but only a general agreement to avoid anything superfluously. In the early years of the order on the Irish island, the Burgundian features dominated but already at this time the Cistercians could not reject the Irish stone carving tradition, as the capitals of the 12th CE century foundations suggest. The reconstruction of some houses in the 15th CE century, seemingly proving the increased English influence after the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1169/70 CE, and the example of the 'School of the West' at Boyle Abbey show the perfect combination of English and Irish elements.

Abstract – Deutsch

In meiner Arbeit habe ich zwei Hauptfragen diskutiert. Erstens, ob die irischen Zisterzienser bestimmte architektonische Charakteristika entwickelten oder einsetzen, welche womöglich aus den frühmittelalterlichen irischen Kirchenbauten hervorgegangen waren? Zweitens, wie viel des frühen Mönchtums des Nahen Ostens aber auch des frühen irischen Mönchtums bis in die Zeit der irischen Zisterzienser erhalten geblieben war? Das frühe christliche Mönchtum entstand in den Wüsten Ägyptens zwischen dem 2. und dem 4. Jahrhundert n.d.Z. Die Ursprünge und wichtigsten Ideen hinter den Zisterzienser, liegen ebenfalls in der ägyptischen Wüste. Diese Arbeit umreißt die Gründung des Zisterzienserordens, dessen Verbreitung und dessen Haltung gegenüber Architektur, hierfür gab es nämlich keine eigentlichen Architekturvorschriften, sondern nur eine allgemeine Übereinkunft alles Überflüssige zu vermeiden. In den frühen Jahren des Orders auf der irischen Insel, dominierten die burgundischen Merkmale aber bereits damals konnten die Zisterzienser die irischen Steinmetztradition nicht zurückweisen, wie die Kapitelle der Gründungen des 12. Jahrhunderts n.d.Z. nahelegen. Die Renovierungen in manchen Häusern während des 15. Jahrhunderts n.d.Z., die den wachsenden englischen Einfluss nach der anglo-normannischen Invasion in Jahre 1169/70 n.d.Z. zu bestätigen scheinen, und das Beispiel der 'Schule des Westens' in Boyle Abbey zeigen diese perfekte Kombination englischer mit irischen Elementen.

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Introduction

The Cistercians were the first actual religious order of the Middle Ages, originating in France, they succeeded in spreading all over the 12th and 13th CE centuries Europe. In 1142 CE they established the first house in Ireland, where the Cistercians and their distinct buildings kept dominating monastic and ecclesiastical architecture until the middle of the next century. This paper is an attempt to look underneath the surface of the reform order of Cîteaux, discovering their sources of inspiration for architectural feature as well as tracing back their theological origins, focusing on Ireland.

The theological and philosophical origins of western monasticism and therefore of the Cistercian order lie in communities of the Desert Father of the Middle East in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th CE centuries, when the first eremitical as well as cenobitic forms of life appeared. Eight-hundred years after the communities of Anthony and Pachomius, the Cistercian order was referring to those earliest monastic traditions and their ideals of an austere life of poverty, simplicity and chastity, as the early Irish Church of the early Middle Ages has done. Hence, in the first chapter of my paper, to give a deeper understanding of these early ideals, I am going to outline the 'birth' and development of early Middle Eastern monasticism and will further explain how it reached Europe and therefore Ireland. In the late 4th or early 5th CE century, Christianity reached the island of Ireland, where it engaged in a battle with the Celtic pagan faith of the local people. Early Irish Christianity succeeded in the struggle of faiths and became so popular that it actually spread to the Continent, when St. Columban travelled to Europe, where he founded new monasteries, following the strict Irish monastic rule. The fact that Ireland never has been part of the Roman Empire and therefore lacked the usual infrastructural features and centralised rule of the Continent was causing problems for the early Irish Church as well as for the Cistercians about six-hundred years later. After covering this recurring problem of the Irish society, which seems to have been slightly different to the Continental one until the Anglo-Norman invasion in the late 12th CE century, I will discuss the architecture of the early Irish monasteries, giving examples of different kinds of communities. As these early cenobitic houses, their architectural features and decorative ornamentations caused an impact on the Irish Cistercian architecture of the 12th and 13th CE century, their discussion will close the first chapter.

To understand the Irish Cistercians and their architecture, one needs to know the general Cistercian attitude towards architecture and therefore their history. The Cistercian order was a reform order that initially derived from the Benedictine order as a result of its general relaxation in the observance of the original austere life of the *Rule of St. Benedict*. So the

second chapter will deal with the history of the Cistercians, the founding of the order at Cîteaux, their success in spread and the architecture of the order. For the architectural issue it is important that, although it appears to have been different, it is proven that there were no set down rules for the architecture of an Cistercian abbey. There was a prohibition by the General Chapter referring to crossing towers, which was the only status dealing with architectural issues, and there were further prohibitions on paintings, sculptures, floor tiles and other decorating features as well as on liturgical devises. Further there were the writings of Bernhard of Clairvaux, most notable in the context of architecture and decoration his *Apologia* dealing with the lavish Benedictine features the Cistercians were trying to avoid. Eventually I will briefly discuss the two French communities of Clairvaux and Fontenay, their layout and their churches respectively, outlining their affinity with Irish Cistercian architecture, as Clairvaux was the mother-houses of Mellifont Abbey, the first Irish Cistercian foundation. Unfortunately the first monumental church of Clairvaux did not survived, but as Fontenay was built at the same time and was an affiliation of Clairvaux, its church is generally accepted as 'copy' of Clairvaux's first monumental church building.

The third and last chapter will focus exclusively on the Irish Cistercians in the period between their arrival in 1142 CE and the suppression of the religious houses in Ireland during the 16th CE century. There have been thirty-three Irish Cistercian houses during this period and due to the limited scope of this paper, I picked five communities from various times of Cistercian presence in Ireland. Using them on the one hand to give an overview of general developments of the Irish Cistercian houses, their appearance, their layout as well as their localization, and on the other hand, to point out specific architectural features of the Irish Cistercian that made them distinctive to the rest of European Cistercian.

Finally, the conclusion will sum up the three chapters, using the gained information to answer the questions:

1. If the Irish Cistercians developed or used distinct Irish architectural features, maybe deriving from the early medieval Irish churches?
2. How much of the early Middle Eastern monasticism as well as of the early Irish monasticism survived into the times of the Irish Cistercians?

On the literature side, MARILYN DUNN's¹ studies on early Christian monasticism and its

¹ Dunn 2000.

spread were a huge help, while TOMÁS Ó CARRAGÁIN's² book from 2010 offers the most up to date surveys on early Irish churches in term of layout, usage and architecture. The Irish Cistercians are still covered most appropriate by ROGER STALLEY's³ *The Cistercian Monasteries of Ireland* from 1987 and therefore is still standard for any study on the topic. MATTHIAS UNTERMANN's⁴ dissertation *Forma Ordinis. Die mittelalterliche Baukunst der Zisterzienser* published in 2001, provides the probably best general analysis of Cistercian architecture, although the Irish Cistercian are only mentioned briefly. In terms of Cistercian history, the only recently published book by JANET BURTON & JULIE KERR⁵ is highly recommended. Another major source for my studies were my visitations to the ruins of the early Irish monasteries and Irish Cistercian Abbeys, I was able to execute during my Erasmus exchange semester to Dublin, during the first seven months of 2012.

2 Ó Carragáin 2010.

3 Stalley 1987.

4 Untermann 2001.

5 Burton & Kerr 2011.

1. Early Christianity & Monasticism

To understand the Cistercians, either in European or more specific Irish context and to understand the changes that evolved over the centuries in western, respectively Cistercian monasticism, one needs to know the origins of Christian monasticism. Thus, in this chapter, I will point out the major developments and early forms of Christian monasticism briefly, covering the main ideals, their spread to Europe as well as the christianization of Ireland and the organisation and the architectural features of the early Irish Church and its monasteries.

1.1. The Desert Fathers – Middle East origins of Monasticism

1.1.1. Christianity in the Middle East

Scholars have agreed on the places, where the idea of Christian monasticism first emerged – in the desert regions of Roman Egypt, Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine (Fig.1) – but when it comes to the question, when this movement started, the answers vary from the 2nd to the 4th CE century. This is because the development of Western Christian monasticism was not a strict linear one: from the very beginning there were different forms of monastic life and they predominated in various countries respectively.

Asceticism is one of the oldest and major roots of what later became the European monasticism we know today. DUNN⁶ suggests that economically, the exemption from taxes for those living in the 3rd and 4th CE century Egyptian desert may have been the factor for the choice of ascetic life, while theologically Christian asceticism might have been a continuation of the older Jewish ascetic tradition and of the communal tradition of imitating the life of the Apostles. The theological basis for asceticism were the teachings and the life of Christ, offering the Christian monks a potentially deep and unique union with their god.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me!"
(Luke 9.23)

RYAN⁷ writes about a Palestinian Christian ascetic movement from the 2nd CE century and introduces the Apostle James, Bishop of Jerusalem in 160 CE, who lived an ascetic life by

6 Dunn 2000, p1-2.

7 Ryan 1931, p.8f.

refusing drinking alcohol or eating any meat and who did not shave or wash himself, as one of the very first ascetics we have knowledge of. It was Origen at the turn from the 2nd to the 3rd CE century who defined the four forms of asceticism – virginity, poverty, abstinence from meat and wine, fasting.⁸ Ascetics put Christ's saying from the Gospel of Luke into action, which meant to live a life in chastity, poverty, fasting and prayer, trying to experience the poverty, hunger, thirst, suffering, Passion and death of Christ as first hand as he did, hoping to get closer to a 'more intimate union with Jesus Christ'.⁹ But as those early ascetics still kept living with their families and friends, they must have struggled with the everyday distraction of societies. It was by end of the 3rd CE century, when ascetics began to try to overcome this problem. In Syria and Palestine some of them gathered in groups and started living together, for example, *Parthenons* – communities of virgins – began to arise in Egypt, while others chose to live a more eremitical life in the desert on their own.¹⁰ In Palestine the cenobitic *Laura* communities had their zenith in the 5th and 6th CE century, leaving behind the oldest extant Palestinian monastery Mar Saba.¹¹

The first “monk” we have knowledge of is Anthony, who died in 356 CE, and to whom literature refers to as 'the real founder of Christian monasticism' or 'father and founder of the eremitical institution'.¹² We know about him from the *Life of Anthony*, the biography by Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria and friend of Anthony. According to his *Life*, Anthony was a wealthy farmer born in the mid 3rd CE century in Middle Egypt, who one day sold all his property and became a hermit, living in a desert far away from any city. His ideals of dispossession, solitude and personal austerity marked the picture of early monasticism and the desert as locus of true religion. The seven *Letters of Anthony* are the theoretical and theological base for the ascetic life he lived and are based on Origen's definitions of asceticism; six *Letters*, which contain similar teachings, probably were sent to six different groups of monks.¹³ According to Anthony's belief the constant struggle for self-knowledge and self-purification – exercised by fasting, vigils and celibacy – would lead to the unity of body and soul and therefore to unity with God.¹⁴ After twenty years of solitude and eremitical life, Anthony, giving in to the demand of a group of peoples, who wanted to become his disciples, started teaching, advising and directing his followers and set up a semi-eremitical

8 Ryan 1931, p10.

9 Ryan 1931, p.4-8.

10 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.9f; Ryan 1931, p.14f.

11 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.12.

12 Dunn 2000, p.3; Ryan 1931, p.16.

13 Dunn 2000, p.3-8.

14 Dunn 2000, p.3-8.

community.¹⁵ His disciples had separate cells, where they spent their days fasting in pious reading, prayer, chanting psalms and working, but they were called together in intervals for spiritual conferences, worship and sacred celebrations.¹⁶ As Anthony was very successful with his 'monastery', his friend and biographer Athanasius came up with the idea of introducing and using him as role model for his own purpose. As since he had become bishop of Alexandria, Athanasius had been struggling with the new faith of Arianism, thus he wrote the *Life of Anthony* against this heretic theology, propagating Anthony's monasticism as the most acceptable form of asceticism in his church and simultaneously attempted to establish an episcopally-directed asceticism within it.¹⁷ Hence, although Anthony neither founded an order nor wrote his own rule, he influenced the development of the Christian monasticism heavily. In 4th CE century Egypt, following the example of Anthony's, more and more settlements developed, among which there were famous ones like Sectis, Kellia and Nitria, the latter held five thousand monks at the end of the century and therefore already established an identity and large infrastructure of its own.¹⁸

Those monks seeking an ascetic or eremitical form of life often became 'living monuments' and were visited by pilgrims. Pilgrimage from the West to the Eastern monks is known since the 370s CE and increased even further, when the hermits or ascetics began to settle at holy places, shrines and former pagan temple sights – operating as 'bridges' between Christians and Pagans, performing miracles and excorsims.¹⁹ In Syria, the strict and radical asceticism of the stylites, who lived on pillars, and the dendrites, who lived in trees, became famous since the middle of the 4th CE century and attracted many pilgrims.²⁰

Evagrius of Pontus, a monk at Kellia from 384 CE until his death in 399, taught and set down a systematized theory of asceticism and therefore needed to be mentioned in a history of monasticism; his theoretical papers were comprised of short individual sentences to meditate on; additionally he identified the *Eight Evil Thoughts*, which became the origins of the Seven Deadly Sins we know today, and their 'antidotes' for them.²¹

Another very prominent and important person for early Christian monasticism in the Middle

15 Ryan 1931, p.18-20.

16 Ryan 1931, p.18-20.

17 Dunn 2000, p.9f.

18 Dunn 2000, p.15, At Nitria there were specialized cells for different crafts (e.g. bakeries, linen workshops) the guest house was next to the great church used for communal worship; doctors and confectioners were living in the settlement and eight priests did serve the church. At Cellia and Scetis a xenodocheion – for the reception of visitors and the care of the sick – developed.

19 Dunn 2000, p.20.

20 Schwaiger & Heim, p.12f, Most famous among the stylites of Syria became Symeon Stylites (c.390-359 CE).

21 Dunn 2000, p.21-23.

East is Pachomius, a contemporary of Anthony, to whom DUNN²² refers as the "founder of the orthodox cenobitism". The son of a pagan family had served in the Roman army before he converted to Christianity and founded the very first entirely cenobitic Christian monastery of the Middle East at Tabennese in the Thebaid, in the 320s CE. Due to its success, daughter houses were founded – among them two female communities – creating the Pachomian federation of communities.²³ One of the major ideas behind giving up the eremitical life and picking up a cenobitic one, was Pachomius' suggestion that the monks could sustain each other in their ascesis; like the monks at Pachomian monasteries "lived in highly regulated fashion, eating and sleeping in common refectories and dormitories and meeting in a church at more regular intervals than their eremitical counterparts".²⁴ They were divided into different houses, according to the trade they were practising, while some monks were engaged in crafts others were responsible for the agricultural tasks; there was a strict and simple hierarchy demanding absolute obedience from the monks.²⁵ Monastic psalmody developed a formal aspect, parts of the nights were used for working and meditating and the monks attended communal midday and evening services, during which one monk recited a scripture and the other had to listen in silence, plaiting mats or baskets; food asceticism was an individual matter of the monks.²⁶ Admission was not granted automatically and the willingness to renounce property had become part of the conditions for Pachomian monks, those who were accepted, became direct subject to Pachomius' authority.²⁷ As the monasteries grew, their interaction with society became more frequent, and since it was more convenient to transport durables on the river Nile and alms and donations were obtained much easier in cities, the Pachomian communities chose to set up in or near towns situated next the river.²⁸ The monasteries were surrounded by a wall and within a church, a general meeting place, a kitchen, a refectory, a vegetable garden, various store rooms and workshops, an infirmary and a library could be found; the guest house was situated near the entrance of the monastery.²⁹ So the main basic buildings of a typical Medieval western Christian monastery – except the dormitory - could already be found in the Pachomian communities of the 4th CE century, although the layout of course was still far away from being Medieval. Pachomius died in 346/347 CE due to the plague, besides other problem, the question of his succession probably

22 Dunn 2000, p.25.

23 Dunn 2000, p.25-27.

24 Dunn 2000, p.25f.

25 Dunn 2000, p.30.

26 Dunn 2000, p.30f.

27 Dunn 2000, p.30.

28 Dunn 2000, p.32f.

29 Ryan 1931, p.29f.

led to the setting down of rules, which belatedly were attributed to Pachomius himself.³⁰

"Remarkable in the Pachomian institute is the highly centralized system of government characteristic of a fully organized congregation or order".³¹

In terms of early Christian pastoral care, the following is of importance. The 'White Monastery' near the deserted village of Atripe, became the monastic centre of Upper Egypt during the abbatial reign of Shenoute 383 CE till 466 – at this time it was housing two thousand and two hundred monks and additional eight hundred nuns.³² Besides the mere size of the site or the rather huge number of its members, the 'White Monastery' is also worth mention for its being an unique centre of pastoral care of its time. As the church had a western narthex, which seems to have been open to the local populace on Saturdays and Sundays, the monastic church functioned as an very early form of a 'parish church'.³³ But the strict and rigorous observance as well as the harsh administration, causing disaffection among the brethren, led to the end of the 'White Monastery'.³⁴

Basil of Caesarea, who worked in Asia Minor, managed to combine and unit the eremitical and the communal forms of life, as he used his influence to create ascetic communities which were obedient to his church hierarchy.³⁵ He had studied in Caesarea, Constantinople and Athens and experienced the monastic life of Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia in the late 350s CE.³⁶ It was then, when he decided to live a 'philosophic life' together with his friend Gregory of Nazianzus. They retreated into the rural region of Pontus trying to overcome the feelings passions, of desire, fear, anger and grief, by studying the writings of Origen, who strongly influenced their theology.³⁷ Basil was ordained priest in 365 CE and bishop only five years later, and started to set up ascetic communities in Asia Minor since 373 CE.³⁸ His principal monastic writings are two text, known as the *Longer Rules* and the *Shorter Rules*, but he personally never referred to the collections of precepts in dialogue form, which are full of his moral and monastic teachings, as *Rule*.³⁹ The major ideas were the rejection of wealth for the benefit of charity and that the communities should on the one hand be able to raise

30 Dunn 2000, p.30.

31 Ryan 1931, p.38.

32 Dunn 2000, p.33.

33 Dunn 2000, p.33.

34 Ryan 1931, p.40.

35 Dunn 2000, p.34f.

36 Dunn 2000, p.34.

37 Dunn 2000, p.34f.

38 Dunn 2000, p.35.

39 Dunn 2000, p.36.

money for charity from manual work – he lists the suitable trades for members of religious communities – and on the other hand support themselves, following the two apostolic commands to 'pray without ceasing' and to 'work night and day'.⁴⁰ Besides placing an extra emphasis on charity, Basil propagated a more moderate monasticism in matter of diet and asceticism, which actually attracted the aristocratic monks and bishops of the 5th CE century West and had a long lasting influence on monastic thought, especially in the Eastern orthodox church.⁴¹

1.1.2. Christianity in the West

By the middle of the 4th CE century, the influence of the middle Eastern monasticism was felt in Europe, when bishop Eusebius of Vercelli, who was exiled in Egypt, created the first formal ascetic community in Italy and further imposed chastity and community life on his clergy.⁴² Athanasius, biographer of Anthony, spent two periods of exile in the West – at Trier (335-336 CE) and at Rome (339-346 CE) – bringing his *Life of Anthony* into the West.⁴³ This rise and spread of asceticism and monasticism was met by suspicions by Roman aristocracy, which was alarmed by the dissolution of former great patrimonies. Nevertheless, some of the upper-class males actually did become ascetics and monks, especially in Northern Gaul, where aristocrats joined the monastic movement, attracted by the charisma and miracles of Martin of Tours.⁴⁴ Born in Pannonia and a former Roman soldier, Martin became bishop of Tours in 371 CE by popular acclamation, being the very first western monk reaching that high episcopal position; this increased the displeasure of the Gallic bishops, who were aristocratic and not remotely ascetic in orientation.⁴⁵ We know about Martin's deeds due to Sulpicius Severus, his biographer, who tells us about a loosely organized little group of hermits – Martin and eight disciples – who lived in huts and cells by the banks of the Loire.⁴⁶

Augustine of Hippo, born in North Africa, had followed Manichaeism first before he converted to Christianity and picked up the life of an ascetic. His importance derived from the first western monastic rule for a community he probably created in 397 CE, taking the Apostles' and earliest Christian communities as models.⁴⁷ Augustine accepted recruits from all

40 Dunn 2000, p.38.

41 Dunn 2000, p.41; Schwaiger & Heim, p.11.

42 Dunn 2000, p.59.

43 Dunn 2000, p.60.

44 Dunn 2000, p.61.

45 Dunn 2000, p.62.

46 Dunn 2000, p.63.

47 Dunn 2000, p.64f.

kind of social status and even adapted his *Rule* for a women's convent.⁴⁸

Between 420 and 430 CE, John Cassian wrote the *Institutes* and the *Conferences*, both dealing with his ideas of monastic life; he had been a monk in Bethlehem before travelling Egypt and eventually settled at Marseilles in Southern Gaul before 420, where he founded a monastery for men and another for women.⁴⁹ He assisted bishops and other monastic founders of Southern Gaul by bringing them the benefit of the Middle East monasticism and severely criticized the already established Gallic monasteries, campaigning especially against the length of the liturgy and insisted on self-support through manual labour.⁵⁰ Cassian was the first in the West who composed a theory of Western monasticism and monastic spirituality, his writings were going to be recommended by Benedict of Nursia to his monks in the 6th CE century and to become a major influence for the Eastern orthodox Church.⁵¹

In the south-east of Gaul, the Middle Eastern monasticism grew strong already in the 4th CE century, and in the early 5th century the monastery at Lérins – an island off the coast of Cannes – was founded by Honoratus of Arles, a Gallic nobleman, who shortly persuaded his family and friends to join him – so soon the loose eremitical community at Lérins mainly consisted out of members of the local upper-class.⁵² Lérins clearly was a community of elites, seeking refuge from political perils and became a nursery for bishops during the 5th CE century and the most important cultural centre in Gaul, influencing the dioceses and monasticism on the Rhône-Saône axis and even, indirectly those in Britain and Ireland.⁵³ The predominant Gallic aristocrats at Lérins were not forced to do manual labour or crafts but established a network for the distribution of alms, guaranteeing their independence. But Lérins and its hermits faced strong opposition already in the early 6th CE century Eastern France writing *The Lives of the Fathers of Jura*. The *Fathers* Romanus, Lupicinus and Eugendus – of high rank and heads of the communities at Condat and Lausinne – criticized Lérins, for the Jura monasteries took in both the poor and the rich, practised manual labour and followed the full common life, none of which was done at the aristocratic controlled foundation of Honoratus.⁵⁴ Besides their 'opening doors' for all kinds of people, it is also remarkable that the Jura-Monasteries were the first in the West to introduced a dormitory instead of single cells to cenobitic life, a

48 Dunn 2000, p.66.

49 Dunn 2000, p.73.

50 Dunn 2000, p.74-79.

51 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.21.

52 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.19.

53 Dunn 2000, p.82f, The bishops coming from the island-monastery of Lérins were middle aged men of secular education, transferring their gained knowledge to the community and bringing wealth and political power.

54 Dunn 2000, p.84.

development that took place about the same time in Rome and Constantinople.⁵⁵

The first western religious rules composed after the *Rule of Augustine* – which probably was created not by him but his abbatial successors – are known as the *Rules of the Fathers* and date back to the 5th or early 6th CE centuries. They had become necessary, due to the increasing institutionalisation of Western monastic life in the preceding century and were heavily influenced by the writings of the early Desert Fathers, like Pachomius and Basil of Caesarea, which were available in Latin by the time. The *Rules of the Fathers*, which shows evidence of the change and consolidation of the Western cenobitic life at that time, dealt with matters of hierarchy, ranks and functions within a monastery, obedience, as well as the power of the abbots, whereas the daily round of offices, prayers and services never had been described in any detail.⁵⁶

In the 5th and 6th CE century, the concept of basilical monasteries – when large basilicas were constructed over or near the tombs of saints and staffed by clerics, who lived in a less strict monastic community – reached Gaul from Rome.⁵⁷ The very first Gallic basilical monastery was St. Martin's in Tours, while the probably most famous one is St. Denis in Paris, which became burial place for the French kings throughout the Middle Ages, this growth of cults and pilgrimage clearly changed the monastic liturgy, as in addition to the pastoral care some monasteries offered now various saints needed to be worshipped.⁵⁸

1.1.3. Christianity in the East

To complete the overview I am trying to give, I want to mention the development of the Eastern Church as well. The history of the Eastern Church started with the division of the Roman Empire in 395 CE. The East Roman or Byzantine Empire consisted of the Balkan peninsula, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Libya. For the rise of the Eastern monasticism, Basil of Caesarea became one of the major influences and remains so for today's Eastern Orthodox Church.

Many orthodox Monasteries were placed in the mountains and Constantinople, capital of the empire and official seat of the emperor as well as of the patriarch, became one centre of the Byzantine monasticism.⁵⁹ At the beginning of the second third of the 6th CE century, in Constantinople alone, there were 73 monasteries, the most important among which being the

55 Schwaiger 2008, p.20; Dunn 2000, p.85.

56 Dunn 2000, p.85-87.

57 Dunn 2000, p.92.

58 Dunn 2000, p.92f.

59 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.14.

Monastery of Studious, which had been founded in 463 CE and became one of the centres of Byzantine monasticism up from 798 CE on, under the abbot Theodoros Studites.⁶⁰ Following the ideas of Basil of Caesarea, Studites propagated a cenobitic monasticism with a strict guidance through the abbot, a balance between prayer and contemplation, hard manual labour and asceticism, this reform again was adopted by the Mount Athos Monasteries.⁶¹ Probably since the 8th CE century, there were hermits living on the Mount Athos in northern Greece, starting to unit in the following century; a council of elders acted as an “advisory capacity” to the principal elected by the monks; the first *Rule* for the monasteries on and around the Mount Athos, dating to 972 CE, was signed by 58 monastic leaders of Athos.⁶² At Athos, eremitism at all times was favoured over cenobitism, thus anchorites and hermits never disappeared.⁶³ The monasteries at Mount Athos always kept a certain amount of independence against worldly or religious rulers: They survived the fall of the Byzantine Empire and the conquest by the Turks and despite that some of the sultans and later the Russian tsars even became patrons of the Mount Athos Monasteries, the monks never relied on them.⁶⁴

The christianization of the East Slavic tribes took place at the end of the 1st CE millennium; due to close political relations with the Byzantine Empire it happened that Byzantine Christians set base at Kiev – capital of the Rus-Empire founded by the Vikings – and Novgorod, and launched a missionary work which was going to last for centuries.⁶⁵ The Kiev Monastery of the Caves became head of the Christian missionary and education and further gained major importance for Russian monasticism, as the bishops were elected from this particular monastery by the Russian princes.⁶⁶ The Monastery had been founded by the middle of the 11th CE century in 1051, and soon adopted the *Rule of Theodoros Studites*.⁶⁷ By the middle of the 13th CE century, there already were about 70 Russian monasteries in existence; and although during the same period the Mongols invaded Russia and the majority converted to Islam they were quite tolerant about Orthodox Church in their Empire; allowing the Russian monasteries to maintain their power as cultural and religious centres for the following centuries.⁶⁸

Besides the one by Basil of Caesarea, the *Rule of Anthony* and the *Rule of Pachomius* – all

60 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.15.

61 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.15.

62 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.15.

63 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.15.

64 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.16.

65 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.16f.

66 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.17.

67 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.17.

68 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.17f.

three of which were already mentioned above – are the main writings in terms of monasticism for the orthodoxy.⁶⁹ Orthodox monasticism, in contrast to the West, is not divided into different orders but there are many independent monasteries ruled by a bishop.⁷⁰ The nuns and monks live as members of their particular monastery – according to the community either as cenobites or as hermits – of which each community has its own *Typikon*, a book of its very own monastic rules and traditions.⁷¹ Due to all this differences to Western monasticism, the orthodox monasteries have a far more identity-forming character. In orthodoxy bishops and monks form the 'black clergy', who is obliged to stay chaste and where all the bishops are needed to be elected from, in opposition to the 'white clergy', deacons and priests who are allowed to marry.⁷² The spirituality of the orthodox monasteries and of the father confessors and 'guiders of souls' – closely related to saints – led to a “spirituality of monasticism”, which is one of the basic principles of the orthodox theology.⁷³ This “spirituality of monasticism” is meant to be reached through the Jesus Prayer and the *hesychasm*, both of which according to orthodox faith provide a way of experiencing an 'union with god', which leads back to the early Middle East monasticism.⁷⁴ One of the major differences between the eastern and the western church is the position of icons and their production. For orthodoxy icons theologically are true images of the original image and therefore sharing its heavenly and spiritual powers, a theological dogma rejected by the Western Church. Therefore are icons only to be produced and consecrated by nuns or monks.⁷⁵

1.2. Palladius & Patrick – How Ireland became Christian

The first reliable date of Irish history and Christianity on the island is 431 CE, when pope Celestine ordained Palladius bishop and sent him to 'the Irish believing in Christ'. This little note from the Chronicle of Prosper of Aquitaine gives evidence that at that time there already had been Christians in Ireland and that they had grown to such numbers that a bishop was required. The possible channels through which the new faith could seep into the island were limited, nevertheless it remains unknown exactly, when and how it had happened. Ireland never was part of the Roman Empire and remained untouched by the migration of peoples,

69 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.89.

70 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.91f.

71 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.92.

72 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.92.

73 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.93.

74 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.93.

75 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.94.

but the island was not completely isolated. There were trading links to Gaul for wine and the Irish frequently raided the coasts of Western Britain and South Wales, kidnapping and enslaving the inhabitants – most prominent among them Patrick the later 'Apostle of Ireland'. Some Irishmen even settled in Wales and while they ultimately converted they nevertheless stayed in contact with their homeland until at least the 8th CE century.⁷⁶ In fact it is likely that the first Christians in Ireland were Britons.

1.2.1. The 'Apostle of Ireland'?

Despite the fact that by the end of 4th CE century, an organization of dioceses and provinces already had have been established, Christianity failed to become predominant in Britain during the first half of the 5th CE century; the officials and members mainly were upper-class and the churches – compared to those in Gaul – were poor, undeveloped and unimposing.⁷⁷ As the struggle of Christianity in Britain kept its clergy busy, it is hardly surprising that Palladius, the first actual bishop of Ireland, was not chosen and sent over from Britain but from one of the most important monasteries in 5th CE century Gaul, Auxerre.⁷⁸ His mission did not have any missionary purpose, as the early Catholic Church did not have any such concepts, but to simply guide the Irish Christians and try to organize the Irish Church in a system of dioceses.⁷⁹ Palladius operated on the southern and eastern coast of Ireland, today's Leinster and eastern parts of Munster, – where traces of sporadic Roman influence were found – and expanded inland from there, bringing the doctrines of late 4th CE century Gaul and northern Italy with him. As he disappeared from the historical records, it was not Palladius but Patrick who later became the known as the 'Apostle of Ireland'. We know about Patrick and his 'mission' from two major sources, both written by Patrick himself, the *Confessions* and his *Letters*, which, according to Ó CRÓINÍN, is "an account unparalleled in history of the West of one man's experience as a captive beyond the frontiers of the Empire".⁸⁰ In the *Book of Armagh* from the beginning of the 9th CE century, the oldest version of Patrick's *Confessions* can be found but only in fragments, as further details would have presented him in a less heroic and successful way they were omitted; it was only on the Continent that a full and uncensored version survived.⁸¹ His writings hardly give any information about himself. The

76 Ó Cróinín 1995, p.18f.

77 Ó Cróinín 1995, p.16f.

78 Ó Cróinín 1995, p.20f.

79 Ó Cróinín 1995, p.18.

80 Ó Cróinín 1995, p.23.

81 Ó Cróinín 1995, p.24.

son of a British decurio was kidnapped by Irish raiders at the age of sixteen and enslaved in Ireland for six years, when he managed to escape and flee. After a few years, he had a vision or dream of the 'messenger' Victorinus, telling him to go back to Ireland. Following his vision Patrick started his – in contrast to that of Palladius – entirely personal mission without any form of official sanction. Patrick had chosen the northern and western parts of the island for his mission, which are mainly today's Ulster and eastern parts of Connaght, where the town names and places give evidence of Patrick's work.⁸² In his own writings, Patrick called himself 'bishop' and – similar to Palladius – he tried to establish an organization for the Irish Church, while struggling with the difficulties of the Irish society and the lack of a late-Roman administration, which existed on the Continent and in Britain. The date of Patrick's re-arrival in Ireland is controversial – as he himself never mentioned a date. On the one hand, the Irish Chronicles tell that Patrick arrived in 432 CE, only one year after Palladius; on the other hand, the record of Maucetus – who referred to himself as disciple of Patrick and died only in 535 CE – suggests that the Patrician mission might have reached Ireland as much as half a century later than the Palladian one.⁸³ It seems that the two close dates of the arrival of Palladius and Patrick might occur due to a mixing of the bishop and the missionary, as there are records telling that Patrick was ordained deacon in the monastery of Auxerre in Gaul, just like Palladius.⁸⁴ It seems highly unlikely, if both of them really had been monks at the same monastery, that any of them had heard of the other. But it is far more likely, that episodes of the lives of Palladius and Patrick were mixed up. In addition to the lack of further information about the works of Palladius and Patrick in Ireland, there is a huge gap of historical sources about Ireland between the 5th and the late 6th and early 7th CE century, complicating the research on early Medieval Irish history and the spreading of Irish Christianity.⁸⁵

“We have no satisfactory way of knowing when Christianity became respectable, we only know that in Patrick's time it clearly was not.”⁸⁶

At least as legendary as Patrick, was the only famous female Irish Christian saint of these early days of Christianity on the island, Brigit, who essentially was merely a Christian adaptation of an earlier pagan goddess; her shrine is situated in her foundation at Kildare,

82 Ó Cróinín 1995, p.22.

83 Maurer 2003, p.26; Ó Cróinín 1995, p.26f.

84 Dunn 2000, p.143.

85 Ó Cróinín 1995, p.27.

86 Ó Cróinín 1995, p.33.

which became a major monastery of the island.⁸⁷ According to Gerald of Wales, a 12th CE century churchman, Birgit guarded an inextinguishable fire – even after her death – whose ashes miraculously did not increase; the fire was surrounded by a circular hedge, which no man could cross without the danger of severe injuries or death; Birgit is said to have been buried with Patrick and Colum Cille in a three sectioned cave in Ulster in the city of Down.⁸⁸ Two other quiet important men for Christianity on the island, who happened to be native Irish, were Columba the elder and Columba the younger. The monk Columba the elder was born Crimthann in 521 or 522 CE to the house of the Uí Néill and adopted his new name when joining monasticism, he later received the honorific title of Colum Cille (Church's dove).⁸⁹ Legend has that he started a bloody feud – when he secretly had copied a psalter – during the battles many men were killed; for repentance and compensation Columba the elder went to Scotland to convert the local Picts.⁹⁰ In 563 CE, he founded the most famous monastery on the island of Iona, which was going to become the spiritual head of all of Colum Cille's foundations in Scotland and Ireland; it was also here that the *Book of Kells* (Fig.2) was written.⁹¹ Colum Cille soon became a symbolic figure, for he wrote the *Cathach* (Book of the Battles) a psalter and talisman for his clan; the *Amra Coluim Cille*, a hymn of praise to the Christian monk, was composed by pagan bards to his honour, as it was him who combined the values of Pagans and Christians and established the position of an new Celtic-Christian Church within the Roman-Christian Church by uniting the latter one with the old Irish-Celtic society of warriors.⁹² Columba the younger, widely known as Columban, went to the Continent and became one of the most important and influential Irish missionaries – meanwhile stopping at Bregenz and Lake Constance – bringing the Irish monasticism's strict penal code and the invention of repeatable private confessions with him – the latter of which was soon adopted by the Christian communities all over Europe.⁹³ Columban founded many monasteries along his route and eventually died in Bobbio, one of his own foundations, in 615 CE. For 'his' monasteries of France and Burgundy, he composed the *Monastic Rule* or *Rule of the Father* (Regular *coenobalis* or *Regula Patrum*) – basically an Irish penal list.⁹⁴ In the 9th CE century, a *Rule of the Irish Brothers* (*regula fratrum Hibernensium*) was in circulation on the Continent, containing and preserving the rules from the monasteries of Iona and Bangor,

87 Dunn 2000, p.156.

88 Gerald of Wales, p.82, 105.

89 Maurer 2003, p.29.

90 Maurer 2003, p.29.

91 Maurer 2003, p.29; Dunn 2000, p.145f.

92 Maurer 2003, p.30.

93 Dunn 2000, p.150.

94 Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.24.

which had not survived in Ireland.⁹⁵ Such early Irish text barely survived from between the late 5th and the mid 6th CE century; they were mainly dealing with penitential practice and were used as handbooks, listing the penalties needed to be assigned for specific sins in addition to separation from the community and exclusion from the sacraments of the penitents as a general rule.⁹⁶ The principal figures of influences of these Irish texts were John Cassian, Basil of Caesarea and Jerome, whose writings probably reached Ireland in the 5th CE century from the Gallic monastery of Lérins maybe through Auxerre.⁹⁷

1.2.2. Celtic society and Christian faith

By the 6th CE century, the Christian faith was the predominant one among the Irish, but even by the 7th CE century Christianity did not control the whole island. The opponents of the new religion were the old pagan Celtic faith and the pre-Christian Celtic society of warriors and their clans. But even with the final victory of Christianity, the initial society did not go into complete obliteration.⁹⁸

The Celts and their pagan faith came to Ireland during the 1st CE millennium and according to oral tradition they came from today's Spain, which is proved through historical evidences; but the old Irish legal system is similar to the Roman and Greek ones.⁹⁹ Each of the many little Irish kingships (*tuatha*) were ruled by a king (*rí*), who was bind by fief to a higher king (*ruíri*), who again was bind by fief to the next higher King (*rí ruiréach*), who ruled one of the four or five Irish provinces; those fiefs obliged the one who received it to provide armed forces in case of warfare and to pay tribute to his master, in turn for granted legal help and support for his disputes.¹⁰⁰ The legendary position Irish High King, ruling the whole island from the Hill of Tara only came up in the 5th CE century but never was actually established by law.¹⁰¹ The four-generations-family (*derbfine*) formed the common legal unit, together with the fostering of the children it guaranteed a close bond between the own and the foster family, forming new alliances.¹⁰² Polygamy was standard in the Irish-Celtic society but divorce was possible without any difficulties as well, as many oral traditions tell about heroine and queens

95 Ó Cróinín 1995, p.197.

96 Ó Cróinín 1995, p.197-199.

97 Dunn 2000, p.88.

98 Maurer 2003, p.18.

99 Maurer 2003, p.18f.

100Maurer 2003, p. 18-20, The Irish-Celtic society strings the aristocratic warriors after the kings, a characteristic only known from India as well.

101Maurer 2003, p.20.

102Maurer 2003, p.21f, The concept of the four-generation-family, again shows a similarity only known from India.

demonstrating the power and high social esteem of Irish-Celtic women.¹⁰³ Up until of the arrival and final settlement of the Vikings in Ireland in the 9th CE century, there were neither cities nor towns on the island, but only little scattered settlements, thus it is likely that some of the major monasteries functioned as proto-towns.

Christianity, trying to gain a foothold under this circumstances, adapted to the Irish-Celtic society system, and it actually only succeeded in becoming predominant because of the liberal and open-minded Irish people and rulers, who allowed Christians to follow their religious faith. But in the beginning, Irish kings and the aristocracy were resistant to conversion to the new religion. As their ancestral line could be traced back to (pagan) gods. Hence converting would not only have meant to break with their own traditions but also a potential loss of their legitimation and therefore their political power, as members of their *derbfine* probably would have tried to challenge them and their leadership. But as the number and the influence of Christians in Ireland grew, conversion and becoming the son of a new god offered a potential way of social climbing; moreover mixed marriages were allowed and became another source for timely conversion, and although children of those marriages became Christians, the vast growing of Irish Christians in numbers can only be explained with conversions but not with birth rate.¹⁰⁴ To make the Irish convert, the story of Christ was told in a way similar to the Celtic legends; Christ and the Christian saints were praised as beautiful, strong, mighty warriors smashing their enemies and performing miracles – Colum Cille actually did smash his enemies on the battlefield.¹⁰⁵ The practice of baptism, through one becomes 'child of Christ' and therefore member of his family, was received readily as the Irish were quite enthusiastic about becoming the member and heir of 'God's family'.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, the suffering of Christ on the cross was admired for the great physical pain, although surprisingly this fact did not lead to any martyr in Early Irish Christianity.¹⁰⁷ As they wanted to call themselves martyr as well, the Irish Christians just invented new forms of martyrdom and distinguished between physical 'red martyrdom', the 'green martyrdom' which meant penance and 'white martyrdom' which meant exile.¹⁰⁸ It was pope Gregory the Great who became head of the Christian Church by the end of the 6th CE century and told the missionaries not to destroy but to only take over the pagan temples and to re-consecrate the former pagan shrines

103 Maurer 2003, p.22f.

104 Ó Cróinín 1995, p.27f.

105 Ó Cróinín 1995, p.29.

106 Hamlin & Hughes 1977, p.16.

107 Maurer 2008, p.29.

108 Dunn 2000, p.146.

– only the idols were meant to be destroyed.¹⁰⁹ Despite this re-use of sacred pagan sights for Christianity, there probably still was destruction of some pagan temples by Christian zealots and the subsumption of pagan tradition into Christianity all over the country, in about 200 years of presence Christianity was not able to gain complete control over Ireland.¹¹⁰

1.3. The Early Irish Church and Early Monasticism in Ireland

Although Patrick called himself 'bishop' and tried to establish an Irish episcopal organisation of Roman example, as the Romans never have been to Ireland and the old Irish-Celtic society of the 5th CE century lived in scattered settlements instead of cities and towns, he failed in his attempt. Instead, a heavily monastic church system developed over the centuries, making the monasteries the true centres of Christianity in Early Medieval Ireland. It was the first half of the 6th CE century, which marked the beginning of the most important period for the monastic establishment and spreading of Christianity in Ireland.¹¹¹ This was also the beginning of the golden age of Irish monasticism, which lasted until the 12th CE century, yet during the whole period there were only four monasteries for women we know of.¹¹²

In similarity to the early Christian monasteries in the desert of the Middle East, the Irish monasticism was a movement of lay people, but in contrast to the Desert Fathers the early Irish monasteries were mainly 'family businesses'. Like in Gaul, the monasteries in Ireland soon became 'aristocratized' as their influence grew, when the whole clan converted the land was donated to the monastery and the former head of the clan became abbot by election; after his death the title and power stayed within his *derbfine* – in this manner the Irish-Celtic society had successfully adapted to Christianity and managed to retain their influence through monasticism.¹¹³ Those monasteries soon became important religious, spiritual, commercial, economical and political centres, while simultaneously the problem that the episcopal power of consecration and the abbatial power of jurisdiction were in two different hands inevitably led to tension within the Irish Church.¹¹⁴ The Council of Chalcedon had already solved the problem for the Roman Empire in 45 CE, but Ireland was different.

109Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.30f.

110Ó Cróinín 1995, p.31; Fritzpatrick & O'Brien 1998, p.4

111Dunn 2000, p.144.

112Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.23.

113Ó Cróinín 1995, p.148; Maurer 2003, p.26.

114Maurer 2003, p.26-28.

“... at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, all monasteries had been declared subject to the authority of the bishop of the diocese in which they were situated and his permission was required for any new foundation.”¹¹⁵

By the beginning of the 7th CE century, in the conflict between episcopal and monastic church the situation seemed to get decidedly advantageous for the latter, as the important churches in Ireland were mainly monastic houses; the abbot was head of the mother church and its *paruchia*, the confederation of lesser daughter houses – a system never found anywhere on the Continent.¹¹⁶ During the 7th CE century, the 'battle for control' between the *Romani*, favouring the episcopally Continental church government of territorial dioceses, and the *Hibernenses*, preferring a non-territorial system of monastic *paruchiae*, had been fought out and finally was won by the latter ones by the turn of the century.¹¹⁷ Around that period, the Irish Church had been established in a way that it was going to retain until the 12th CE century with its great reforms. The bishops adopted the monastic life, sometimes only living with a community of clerics and monks but probably not subordinate to abbots, and sometimes trying to build up a *paruchia* of their own, greater and even beyond the boundaries of the old territorial dioceses.¹¹⁸ Despite this model of a 'tribal church', it is likely that the monastic Irish Church was at one with the episcopal Continental Church in terms of church doctrines and dogmas.¹¹⁹ Although there was no official strategy for missionary, the monks of these monasteries probably played an important role in the process of conversion, especially in those days, when Christianity was still spreading; the monasteries may have been used as bases for preaching and baptism, if this was the case the monks had covered at least parts of the pastoral care, for the areas the monastery was situated in and probably the whole *paruchia*.¹²⁰

1.3.1. The characteristics of early Irish monasteries

There were different kinds of communities, founded at various places, while some of them were very remote from the rest of the world on some rock in the Atlantic Ocean, others were less ascetic and less anchoretic, hidden in the mountains or situated next to some main route.

¹¹⁵Dunn 2000, p.96.

¹¹⁶Ó Cróinín 1995, p.147.

¹¹⁷Ó Cróinín 1995, p.150.

¹¹⁸Ó Cróinín 1995, p.162-164; Dunn 2000, p.148.

¹¹⁹Ó Cróinín 1995, p.151.

¹²⁰Dunn 2000, p.148f.

HAMLIN & HUGHES¹²¹ refer to a poem that revealed the existence of retreats in the Irish forest, which were made of wood that unfortunately led to their decay and loss for later generations. A fact that becomes quite obvious is that those monasteries, which became powerful and influential within the monastic Irish Church and with a long history, were not those off the shore or hidden in forests but those easy to approach and near major rivers, roads or crossings.¹²² Highly favoured areas for monasteries were boundaries of kingdoms, as royal forts were likely to be built here, offering protection and attracting public events like fairs and assemblies.¹²³ Furthermore there is evidence that pagan religious meetings were held near the borders of kingdoms.¹²⁴ To fight the pagan religions and to prevent their worshippers from meeting, was essential for Christianity to gain foothold in those regions. During the early centuries of Irish Christianity, small churches and oratories were built with next to no Roman influence, according to LEASK¹²⁵ the only Continental techniques were the use of mortar and the round arch which reached Ireland only during the 7th or 8th CE century. In terms of architecture and layout it is hard to tell, how exactly those first religious houses and settlements had looked like, as they were mainly timber structures and therefore had easily rotten away. The word *dairthech* – literally meaning 'oak house' and which was used in the meaning of 'church' – gives evidence of the main material of early Irish churches.¹²⁶ Due to the fact that the method of traditional Irish building was, using timber, a high standard of carpentry had developed in Ireland pretty early. Ó CARRAGÁIN¹²⁷ points out, according to excavations, early Christian timber churches were quite common on the Continent and England as well, but early Irish churches were not exclusively made of timber, but also of wattle and turf. This changed only at the end of the 8th CE century, when the Vikings invaded the island and started their regular raids especially focused on monasteries, as their liturgical equipment was made of precious metals and stones. Those attacks led to the increasing of stone buildings in general and in particular at the monastic sites and to the election of lay men more experienced in warfare for the position of an abbot; it further transferred the spiritual power from the north and east more to the south and the west of the island, as the centre of Christianity shifted from Armagh (Fig.15) to Clonmacnoise (Fig.21).¹²⁸

121Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.22.

122Fritzpatrick & O'Brien 1998, p.6; Not less than 50% of the Early Christian churches are situated near to navigable rivers.

123Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.29.

124Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.29.

125Leask I 1955, p.1f.

126Ó Carragáin 2010, p.15.

127Ó Carragáin 2010, p.15-17; Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.58.

128Maurer 2003, p.32-34, In 795 CE Vikings from Norway first came to Ireland, regularly raiding the the northern and eastern coast from that time on. In CE 840 they stayed on the island over the winter the first

To get an image of an early Irish monastic community, where the buildings, with possible exception of the church, were made of timber, one needs to rely on archaeological reconstructions and written sources. The only marks left of a former timber church are post-holes at various sites and written descriptions in the saints *Lives*. Thanks to the 7th CE century '*Life of St. Brigit*', we know about the wooden church at Kildare; it had two separate entrances, the southern one for priests and male worshippers and a second one in the north for female laity, the church was divided by a wall running the east-west axis in the nave and by another wall running north-south at the east end of the church, the latter one was painted and hung with linen cloths and might served like the later rood-screens.¹²⁹ Another 7th CE century timber-church description talks about 'a square building constructed of candle-shaped beams' which had a vaulted roof with 'four steeples on top', the entrance was situated in the western wall and the altar was placed in the middle of the building.¹³⁰ FRITZPATRICK & O'BRIEN¹³¹ suggest that the wooden churches were whitewashed and decorated with carvings, which inspired the sculptors of high crosses (Fig.4), shrines (Fig.3) and reliquaries up to the 12th CE century. One of the most important features about a monastery was the enclosure, its boundaries marked by the *vallum*, offering privacy on the one hand and some sort of protection on the other. Some of the *vallum* were made out only of an embankment and a ditch, others of an actual wall sometimes based on remains of an earlier *cashel* (a fortified house of a local *ri*), this barrier protected the monks only from wild animals at night but unlikely from raiders. Patrick wanted all his settlements to be of uniform scale, a circular enclosure of 140 feet (c. 43 m) in diameter and a circumference of about 150 yard (c. 137 m).¹³² The *vallum* not only marked the border of the actual monastery but delineated the legal area belonging to it, which was to be regarded as holy and meant to be free from aggression.¹³³ Due to the fact that people started to settle near monasteries, a division was

time and founded Dublin in 841 CE, launching a series of foundations of cities in the south of the island and introducing monetary economy. Those cities soon became important commercial and economic centres and formed a counterbalance to the influential Uí Néill clan in the north of Ireland. By the middle of the 9th century Danish Vikings started raiding Ireland, at some places Norwegian and Danish fought each other sometimes they worked together. The zenith of the Viking influence was reached by 900 CE, by that time they had been adsorbed by the Irish society and had adopted Christianity. It was under Viking rule that the institution of a 'High King of Ireland' (*ard ri*) was established and became reality. Most famous became the legendary story of Brian Ború who challenged the Uí Néills in 1001 CE and won the nominally leadership over the whole island only five years later, he died in 1014 CE in the Battle of Clondarf against the Vikings and became a national hero.

129Fritzpatrick & O'Brien 1998, p.9.

130Fritzpatrick & O'Brien 1998, p.9.

131Fritzpatrick & O'Brien 1998, p.9f.

132Ryan 1931, p.185f.

133Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.54.

needed between buildings of worship and those of craftsmanship, being situated in mainly two or sometimes three different boundaries. Workshops, guest houses and buildings needed for agricultural and domestic issues of the communities, were probably situated outside the main enclosure, at Nendrum (Fig.5), for example, there were three 'spheres' with concentric boundaries marking them.¹³⁴ The Irish monastic areas were divided into *sanctissimus*, *santior* and *sanctus* according to its position and the people who were allowed to enter.¹³⁵ The circular enclosure form might either refer to the Anastasis Rotunda in Jerusalem (Fig.6), to the Irish ringforts, to the prehistoric royal centres or has only developed on the island during the conversion period, due to the Continental influence.¹³⁶

“There may have been some zoning of different activities in particular areas, but there is no hint of the regular lay-out of buildings around a cloister which had certainly appeared in England by the tenth century and perhaps earlier.”¹³⁷

Ó CARRAGÁIN¹³⁸ recites a study by Nicholas Aitchison, suggesting that the layout at early Irish monastic sites were supposed to mirror Ireland and the world in some kind of *imago mundi*, presenting the monastery as a 'cosmological Sacred Centre'. Within the *vallum* situated the cells for the monks and the monasterium (*praindtech* or *tech mor*), one of the major buildings of a monastery besides the church; it basically was a great hall, where the monks cooked, ate and wrote as well as copied manuscripts – a refectory with extended functions.¹³⁹ Doubtlessly the most important monastic buildings of all was the church, which was of such great significance that according to RYAN¹⁴⁰, the word became synonymous for monastery. It might have held relics of a saint or the community's founder – who in many cases has become a saint as well – and was situated in the sanctuary (*termonn*), the centred and most sacred 'sphere' within the *vallum*.¹⁴¹ As most *dairthech* rotted away, the Irish churches one can study today are exclusively *damliac* (literally 'house of stone') as the succeeding stone churches were called.¹⁴² With only a few exceptions, the early Irish churches (Fig.8, 10, 11) are small and box-like, rectangular in shape without porches, aisles, sacristies or towers; the door

¹³⁴Dunn 2000, p.152.

¹³⁵Ó Carragáin 2010, p.58, 72f; This idea of a “hierarchy of sanctity” referred to the Jewish Temple, with its different courts and a further division of the Temple itself, as well as to the Anastasis Rotunda in Jerusalem.

¹³⁶Ó Carragáin 2010, p.59.

¹³⁷Hamlin & Hugher 2004, p.73.

¹³⁸Ó Carragáin 2010, p.57f..

¹³⁹Dunn 2000, p.151.

¹⁴⁰Ryan 1931, p.287.

¹⁴¹Dunn 2000, p.152.

¹⁴²Ó Carragáin 2010, p.60f.

usually is in the west wall with a usually huge lintel (Fig.12) – sometimes with a second one on top to spread the weight – or sometimes even an architrave and slightly inclining door-jambs; windows were few and small (Fig.12) and showed either round, triangular or flat heads.¹⁴³ The two most distinct features of the early Irish churches are first, the *antae* (Fig.7, 17, 23), side walls project beyond the gable wall line in the east and west, forming a skeuomorphical angle posts – instead of *antae* sometimes a pair of projecting corbels at eaves level can be found.¹⁴⁴ And second, the free standing gable butterfly finals (Fig.7) on the church's roof.¹⁴⁵ Both of these architectural details echo former timber construction. Early Irish churches (Fig.7) and high-cross capstones (Fig.4) indicate steeply pitched roofs of about 60°, while on the Continent 45° to 50° were common.¹⁴⁶ Steep roofs offered better protection against the Irish weather with its heavy rain and secured the wooden shingles more easily as they took away outward thrust. According to Ó CARRAGÁIN¹⁴⁷, this became a characteristic recognizable feature of churches at least by the 10th century. On the Dingle peninsula, the churches are mainly made of drystone, developing from circular corbelled houses in four stages (Fig.8) from the 8th CE century onwards.¹⁴⁸ Those corbelled and unmortared circular cells, from which the later small churches of the early Irish monastic communities developed, were called *clocháns* and often were referred to as 'beehives', due to their form.¹⁴⁹ At many monastic sites it is remarkable that in contrast to the rest of Europe, there are clusters of small churches (Fig.9, 16, 21), indicating the common practice to build a new church instead of enlarging or rebuilding an existing, older one. The main altar of the principal church usually was dedicated to the founding saint, and in most cases legend has it that it had been him who built the church, therefore it might have felt wrong to destroy it but new churches were built.¹⁵⁰ The major problem with the early Irish churches is to date them, as inscriptions are rare just like other clearly or closely datable features, while in addition the written sources are hardly helpful either.¹⁵¹ The characteristic shape of early Irish Churches was going to be mirrored in the capstones of high crosses (Fig.4), in manuscripts (Fig.2), in shrines (Fig.3), in reliquaries, and in sarcophagi of Ireland during the following centuries.

¹⁴³Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.60-62.

¹⁴⁴ Leask I 1955, p.69f.

¹⁴⁵ Leask I 1955, p.69f, LEASK suggest that some of the architectural motifs of the Early Irish Churches like lintels or architraves were brought to Ireland by immigrating clerics from Syria, fleeing the Middle East after the Arab conquest of Syria in the early 7th century.

¹⁴⁶Ó Carragáin 2010, p.22.

¹⁴⁷Ó Carragáin 2010, p.22.

¹⁴⁸Ó Carragáin 2010, p.49.

¹⁴⁹Leask I 1955, p.17

¹⁵⁰Ó Carragáin 2010, p.215.

¹⁵¹Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.57.

Next to the church was the graveyard and in its focal point the relics of the founder or a revered saint, which guaranteed the spiritual and material prosperity for the community, were placed in special graves marked by simple slabs, a shrines or a more complex kind of memorial structure like a shrine chapels (Fig.23), a small unicameral church with *antae* and doorway in the western wall.¹⁵² Major monasteries like Armagh, Glendalough or Clonmacnoise also functioned as burial places of royal rank, in exchange for protection and support of the ruling families.¹⁵³ Close to the church and the graveyard the round tower was usually found – a typical feature of Irish monasteries which developed during the 10th century. These towers are tall and slender in appearance with a conical cap and about 100ft (c. 30,5 m) of height holding four to eight storeys; the entrance door is only reachable with the help of a ladder, which is also needed in order to get from one floor to the other in the inside; there are only a few small windows in the tower but always four on the top floor, suggesting the tower's use as belfries, besides safe-keeping.¹⁵⁴ The high-above-the-ground doorway entrance of round towers must not be interpreted wrongly as a 'safety-feature', as it is simply a necessary architectural element to stabilize the building, for to support the weight of the structure the walls needed a solid foundation of reasonable height below the doorway.¹⁵⁵ According to HAMLIN & HUGHES¹⁵⁶, mentions of infirmaries are rare, so they suggest that monks who had fallen ill probably were taken care of in their individual cells. At many monastic sites evidences were found of a 'souterrain', sometimes a simple passage but sometimes a more complex system of crossings and 'rooms', mainly built into the ground and which were used for storage and as secret concealments and were quite common in secular buildings as well.¹⁵⁷ The monasteries, which were of major importance and size, may host craftsmen and their workshops and also lay monks with their families (*manaig*), who farmed the land, and maybe even a bishop, those “monastic cities” are entitled *civitas* by the scholars.¹⁵⁸

*“The isolated houses, remote from men, are often the ones which have survived best.”*¹⁵⁹

Probably the most impressive one of all the “isolated houses” is at Skellig Michael (Fig.9, 10)

¹⁵²Ó Carragáin 2010, p.66; Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.77.

¹⁵³Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.78.

¹⁵⁴Ó Carragáin 2010, p.161-164.

¹⁵⁵Fritzpatrick & O'Brien 1998, p.24.

¹⁵⁶Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.74.

¹⁵⁷Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.76f.

¹⁵⁸Ó Carragáin 2010, p.216: *Civitas* refers to the post-Roman structures of the Christian Church on the Continent, where it initially denoted an episcopal centre or city, while in Ireland it was used for non-ecclesiastically but royal settlements as well, both of far minor size than a Continental *civitas*.

¹⁵⁹Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.19.

in County Kerry, where the monks lived a life of contemplation but not of action – only hunted for bird's eggs and did some gardening and fishing. The triangular rock eight miles offshore the south-western Irish coast, about 2000ft (c. 610 m) from end to end and 715ft (c. 218 m) high, held a monastery which even included a small graveyard and a little garden; it was only to be reached by ship or boat and food supply, fire-wood and building materials needed to be brought over on the same way from the coast.¹⁶⁰ The monk's cells (*clocháns*) at Skellig Michael are round and 16ft (c. 4,9 m) across and high, the whole community covers six of those cells, two oratories and a church of unmortared stone (Fig.8, 9, 10).¹⁶¹

The Gallarus Oratory (Fig.11, 12) in County Kerry is one of the most prominent examples of an early Irish Church and due to the problem of dating mentioned above, the dates vary from the 7th to the 12th CE century, Ó CARRAGÁIN¹⁶² suggests a possible date between the 10th and 11th CE century. It is one of the early churches with an all-stone roof, almost complete and therefore of special interest. Its northern and southern walls had been constructed of unmortared stone but nevertheless survived centuries of Irish weather. This was possible due to the technique of corbelled walls (Fig.12), which makes each stone project a little inward and slightly out- and downwards than the stone below, forming a corbelled vault. Gallarus Oratory slightly looks like an inverted boat from the outside and has a pointed vault in the inside, representing the fourth and last stage of drystone church typology (Fig.8) which derived from the original *clocháns*.¹⁶³ The door in the west wall (Fig.12), showing a lintel and sloping jambs, is small and narrow, as it is the tiny window round headed window in the east wall (Fig.12), giving an impression of a pre-Romanesque church.¹⁶⁴ Although this is not the 'typical' early Irish church the cells of the monks often were constructed using the same technique; especially at the monasteries in the rocky west of Ireland, like Skellig Michael or Inishmurray. The cells were “circular corbelled stone structures”, sometimes covered with turf to increase the weather-proofing.¹⁶⁵

Inishmurray (Fig.13, 14), a settlement in County Sligo – like Skellig Michael situated off the coast – had been built within the walls of a former *cashel* or rath, which led to an unusual size of the enclosure wall comparable to a secular fort. There are internal walls dividing the site in one main area and three smaller one (Fig.14), probably each area was used for different purposes. Similar to the one at Skellig Michael, the community of Inishmurray had lived

¹⁶⁰Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.19f.

¹⁶¹Leask I 1955, p.19; Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.75.

¹⁶²Ó Carragáin 2010, p.5; Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.57.

¹⁶³Ó Carragáin 2010, p.49f.

¹⁶⁴Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.62.

¹⁶⁵Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.74.

pretty much untouched by the public world, until the Viking raids in the 8th CE century started.¹⁶⁶ To guide the stream of pilgrims visiting the *Teach Molaise*, the shrine-chapel of Inishmurray's founder Molaise, outdoor processions were devised and monuments were built.¹⁶⁷ The extant *Teach Molaise* dates back to the time between the 9th and the 12th CE century, as the predecessor collapsed and parts of the church had been rebuilt.¹⁶⁸

A community which actually was also off the coast but easy to access, and according to its size had times of great importance is Nendrum (Fig.5) on Mahee Island, County Down in Northern Ireland. The 8th CE century monastery had three concentric enclosure walls, while the church's chancel was an afterthought from the 12th century, verifying that the site was still in use by then.¹⁶⁹ A building which was called 'the school' was excavated at Nendrum, which, according to HAMLIN & HUGHES¹⁷⁰, should be regarded as workshop, where different crafts were taught and practised. From the former round tower only a stump of a few meters has survived.¹⁷¹ Later in history, the Benedictines settled at Nendrum and Down.¹⁷² Unfortunately, Inishmurray and Nendrum were extensively restored but with poor record, making it hard to distinguish between restoration and original work.¹⁷³

1.3.2. Armagh

One of the very first Irish monasteries might have been at Armagh, County Armagh in Northern Ireland. Legend has it that it was the first settlement founded by Patrick, it became the most influential and important community in Irish church, but the plague reduced its members and therefore its influence, as it did to other communities as well.¹⁷⁴ The settlement from (Fig.15) the second half of the 5th CE century started losing its power latest with the arrival and settling of the Vikings in the 9th century. Lying on a hill top, Armagh, where the local kings had their residence and burial place, hosted a huge population and a great variety of buildings.¹⁷⁵ Today's street plan (Fig.15) suggests at least two former circular enclosures for Armagh. Ó CARRAGÁIN¹⁷⁶ states that the layout of the buildings and the enclosure at

166Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.20f.

167Ó Carragáin 2010, p.66, 168, 218.

168Leask I 1955, p.28.

169Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.22.

170Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.75f.

171Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.69.

172Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.106.

173Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.112.

174Ó Cróinín 1995, p.159f.

175Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.15, 32,56.

176Ó Carragáin 2010, p.217, 221.

Armagh were supposed to mirror the plan of Rome and its churches, there even was a Sts. Peter and Paul's Church at Armagh. Although unfortunately, no pre-Norman structures survived here, still in documentation are the Cianán's *damliac*, probably a 5th CE century shrine-chapel traditionally built by Patrick or his disciple Cianán, and an *oratorium lapideum*, sometimes also refers to as *damliac*, which was built in the 8th CE century and functioned as the site's spiritual centre.¹⁷⁷ There were two separate communal churches at Armagh, the *australis basilica* (southern basilica), the probable successor of the *oratorium lapideum* and therefore principal church for the bishop, priests and anchorites, and the 'left-hand church' or 'church of the northern district' for the nuns, penitents and *manaig*, which later probably was replaced by the Temple Muire (Mary's Church) that housed a relic of the Virgin Mary – this monastic layout at Armagh is the only Irish *église double* we have knowledge of.¹⁷⁸ Ó CARRAGÁIN¹⁷⁹ thinks that this system of two churches is a prove of a dichotomy of the episcopally cathedral church and the monastic church. In the 11th CE century, at least two additional *damliacs* had been built and therefore the principal church was further called *damliac mór* (the great stone church), it kept holding Roman relics and was not replaced until the 1260s CE, while the relics of Irish saints continued to be housed in shrine-chapels (Fig.15).¹⁸⁰ The *damliac mór* probably was of the size of today's Gothic cathedral's nave and aisles.¹⁸¹ In the 12th CE century, the site was taken over by the Augustinian Canons, who had followed the Cistercians coming over to Ireland, and the new Romanesque cathedral was built.¹⁸² It fell into disrepair in the 16th CE century, when it was used as military garrison, but it is restored now and still in use; the city is seat of the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh.¹⁸³

1.3.3. Glendalough

The County Wicklow settlement of Glendalough (Fig.16) seems to be locked in by the Wicklow mountains but in fact lies just off a junction of two major routes in a little valley.¹⁸⁴ Traditionally it is said to have been founded by the later saint Kevin, who is buried here, in

¹⁷⁷Ó Carragáin 2010, p.61, In Irish writings *oratorium* simply meant 'church' sometimes a particular large one, in contrast to Continental writings in which the term mainly refers to a chapel.

¹⁷⁸Ó Carragáin 2010, p.61, 222f, Already in 7th CE century Armagh the laity was allowed, to attend Mass with the nuns in their church, by the 10th CE century a 'laity-church' may was built.

¹⁷⁹Ó Carragáin 2010, p.181.

¹⁸⁰Ó Carragáin 2010, p.63-65.

¹⁸¹Ó Carragáin 2010, fig.66.

¹⁸²Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.106.

¹⁸³Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.102f, 109.

¹⁸⁴Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.24f..

the late 6th or early 7th CE century. Soon it became a centre of pilgrimage; a 9th CE century source reveals that 'seven pilgrimages to Glendalough are equivalent to a pilgrimage to Rome' marking the significance of the place for early Irish Christianity.¹⁸⁵ The bishop's *cathedra* was established in the 1111 CE together with Armagh, but only about a hundred years later Glendalough was already united with Dublin.¹⁸⁶ According to Ó CARRAGÁIN¹⁸⁷, there are at least seven pre-1150 CE stone buildings at the site of Glendalough which actually have survived, further it seems likely to him, that most of the stone buildings at Glendalough were rebuilt between 1096 and 1111 CE, some of which had replaced wooden predecessors. He dates the Glendalough Cathedral between 1080 and 1120 CE; since for the Cathedral (Fig.17) spolia of the predecessor were used, its exact dating becomes more difficult.¹⁸⁸ Together with the St. Mary's Church, a unicameral and *antae*-less *damliac* which was built exclusively for women and at a distance from the rest of the monastic settlement, the cathedral was laid out following the Golden Section – two out of three known cases in Ireland.¹⁸⁹ The extant Glendalough Cathedral (Fig.17) is the second largest pre-Romanesque church in the whole of Ireland, the nave enlarged probably around 1100 CE.¹⁹⁰ The extant St. Kieran's, Trinity (Fig.19) and Reefert Church (Fig.22) probably all date back to the end of the 11th CE century, as they are early examples of 'nave-and-chancel churches'. Trinity Church has a vaulted western annexe with a belfry, a feature that it shared with the first stage of the extant St. Kevin's House (Fig.18).¹⁹¹ Trinity Church at Glendalough may have functioned as baptismal Church of the monastery while Kevin's House had housed the relics of Kevin and his anchorhold, as these two were the only buildings with belfries they may have symbolized the beginning and the end of life.¹⁹² Kevin stayed in the valley of later Glendalough for seven years, living an ascetic life before he founded the monastic settlement; his cell was situated near to later Reefert's Church, which had been the place of royal burials at Glendalough as well but foremost a church for ascetics.¹⁹³ Kevin's cell probably was rebuilt after a fire in 1163 CE to house his relics, it then had become a reliquary and burial chapel and was further called Kevin's House.¹⁹⁴ The room above the nave's inter-vault (Fig.18), whose structure resembles that attached to the church in the north, may have been used as a retreat or anchorhold, while

185 Ó Carragáin 2010, p.217.

186 Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.103.

187 Ó Carragáin 2010, p.193, 249.

188 Ó Carragáin 2010, p. 242.

189 Ó Carragáin 2010, p.112, 242; The third church following the Golden Section is Killiney in County Dublin.

190 Ó Carragáin 2010, p.242f.

191 Ó Carragáin 2010, p.242.

192 Ó Carragáin 2010, p.277-280.

193 Ó Carragáin 2010, p.223, 273.

194 Ó Carragáin 2010, p.270.

the belfry may have been inspired by English parish churches.¹⁹⁵ The predecessors of St. Kevin's and the Cathedral, Glendalough's shrine chapel and principal church, probably were the first stone churches at the site. St. Kieran's, likely dedicated to Ciarán of Clonmacnoise due to the alliance between the two sites during the 10th and early 11th CE century, has a doorway in the southern wall of the chancel, which seemingly have been used exclusively by priests, and a second doorway for the lay people, therefore a sign for the increasing division of clergy and congregation.¹⁹⁶ The round tower at Glendalough is one of the few in the whole of Ireland which is still complete today and actually would be safe to enter, had it not lacked the wooden floors. According to Ó CARRAGÁIN¹⁹⁷, it possibly dates to the rebuilding of most of the stone buildings around 1100 CE. Another interesting building of Glendalough is the gate house, featuring antae and two gateway arches, showing similarities with the chancel arches at Trinity and Reefert Church.¹⁹⁸

1.3.4. Clonmacnoise

The gravel ridge running from Dublin to Clonmacnoise and further to the west provided a safe route for travel and trade in former times. Along this ridge the settlement of Clonmacnoise in County Offaly was founded; located near to the junction with another route going from north to south and situated next to the wooden bridge which spanned the river Shannon, the former border between the provinces of Mide and Connaght.¹⁹⁹ Today there are still the Cathedral, seven smaller churches or shrine chapels, the former nunnery, three famous high crosses and the round tower (Fig.22) left to see of the former huge monastery at Clonmacnoise, though the buildings are partly ruined. The fact that in 1179 CE, a hundred and five houses were burned here, tells one that like Glendalough, Clonmacnoise must have been of enormous size for its time.²⁰⁰ It was named after its founder Ciarán, who established the settlement in 6th CE century. His burial place is the shrine chapel Temple Ciarán (Fig.23), which according to Ó CARRAGÁIN²⁰¹, is perhaps the first Irish pre-700 congregational church. It has been visited by many pilgrims eager to see the 'St. Ciarán's Hand' relic and therefore bringing wealth and power to the monks, secured by the patronage of the Kings of Connacht due to the royal

195Ó Carragáin 2010, p.271-273, 277.

196Ó Carragáin 2010, p.196, 270.

197Ó Carragáin 2010, p.244; Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.69.

198Ó Carragáin 2010, p.242.

199Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.24f, 28; Fritzpatrick & O'Brien 1998, p.6.

200Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.28.

201Ó Carragáin 2010, p.68.

graveyard which was situated at Clonmacnoise.²⁰² The extant Temple Ciarán may have been built later than 800 CE but was partly rebuilt in the 19th CE century.²⁰³ The Cathedral, built by the Southern Uí Néill king in 909 CE, and the 'Cross of the Scriptures' from around 900 CE are aligned with each other, so that the priest in the cathedral's chancel could have seen the cross through the open western doorway.²⁰⁴ Clonmacnoise Cathedral is single-chambered, simple in plan, has *antae* at both gable walls and is the oldest surviving pre-Romanesque congregational church and by far the largest extant.²⁰⁵ With the arrival and settling of the Vikings in Ireland, and especially due to the towns founded by them in the second half of the 9th CE century in the south, the religious power moved from Armagh in the north to Clonmacnoise further in the south of the island. Similar to Armagh, Clonmacnoise was associated with Jerusalem as well, and about a hundred years after the erection of the church, a 'stone of Salomon's Temple' was donated to be kept inside the altar.²⁰⁶ Another similarity between Armagh and Clonmacnoise is the dichotomy of episcopal and monastic churches, with the *damliac* associated with bishops, in contrast to the *dairthech* which referred to the monastic community and possibly was a 'parish church' for the lay community.²⁰⁷ Evidence suggests that there had been a nunnery at Clonmacnoise since 1026 CE, which was situated half a kilometre apart from the main complex and comprised three documented churches; the Arrouaisian canonesses, settling at Clonmacnoise during the 12th CE century and building the extant Romanesque Nun's Church (Fig.20), in 1167 CE.²⁰⁸ The other buildings at Clonmacnoise were built in later times, mainly in the 12th CE century, when the Cistercians already had set foot on the island Ireland. Temple Connor and Temple Melaghlin (Fig.24) are both royal chapels built around 1200 CE, the former for the kings of Connaght the latter for the king of Meath.²⁰⁹ Temple Finghin (Fig.25), situated on the edge of today's enclosure in the north of the complex with a nave-chancel plan and its own belfry, attached to the chancel on the exterior. Temple Doweling (Fig.26), a stone church with *antae* at both ends from the early 11th CE century, today faces the post-medieval addition of Temple Hurpan.²¹⁰ Of Temple Kelly (Fig.27) only foundations have survived, which probably already had functioned as such for the monastic *dairthech* of the early days of Clonmacnoise. The round tower at Clonmacnoise

202Ó Carragáin 2010, p.82; Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.78.

203Ó Carragáin 2010, p.82; Fritzpatrick & O'Brien 1998, p.15.

204Ó Carragáin 2010, p.68.

205Ó Carragáin 2010, p.107, Leask I 1955, p.72.

206Ó Carragáin 2010, p.74.

207Ó Carragáin 2010, p.181.

208Fritzpatrick & O'Brien 1998, p.8; Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.68, 106, 222.

209Ó Carragáin 2010, p.223.

210Fritzpatrick & O'Brien 1998, p.17.

probably dates to 1124 CE, while the cap and the top storey were destroyed in 1135 CE by a lightning.²¹¹

1.3.5. Life in an early Irish monastery

Besides asceticism, the eremitical and anchoretic idea was quite strong among the Irish during their early Christian centuries, and the early Irish monasteries were actually semi-eremitical. Similar to the communities founded by Anthony in 4th CE century Egypt or the *Laura* complexes from Syria, the Irish monks of the 5th CE century onwards lived in single cells and spent most of the time of the day praying and meditating for their own, yet they still met at regular intervals for the hours and services at the communal churches.

*“Early Irish monasteries had certain communal rooms but there was much more emphasis on individual practice and observance, ...”*²¹²

There is no complete philosophy of monasticism in early Irish writings, yet the rules by Columban were closest to a full rule of high and late medieval standard. He regarded the flesh as 'unclean by nature' and the body as prison and Christ's host, in which the monks needed to fight the evil at all time in three stages: 'the practise of asceticism', 'the purging of vices' and 'the most perfect and perpetual love with God', one stage leading to another after the mastering of the previous one; HAMLIN & HUGHES²¹³ point out, that Irish monasticism accepted that different gifts and capacities of the individuals would lead to different degree of asceticism. The life of an early Irish monk did not entirely consist of private prayer and penance, but was structured by regular communal activities. The at least six and up to eight hours or daily services were held at particular times of the day, starting with the *laud* in the morning at dawn, followed by *terce*, *sext* (at midday) and *none* during the day, and the *vesper* was held in the evening and at about the middle of the night *nocturns* were held.²¹⁴ Sometimes *compline* on going to bed and *prime* on rising were held as well, and at Sundays and bank holidays mass was celebrated by all monks summoned in the church by the bell.²¹⁵

As stated above, the cenobitic monasteries were family businesses and the leading groups, including the abbot, the bishop, the priests, the head of schools and the administrators, were formed by the social elite of Irish-Celtic society, who had converted as family unit and

²¹¹Fritzpatrik & O'Brien 1998, p.22-24.

²¹²Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.74.

²¹³Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.1f.

²¹⁴Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.5.

²¹⁵Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.5.

donated their land to the monastery they were going to take over. Due to that, not all of the monks lived an ascetic and celibate life, for example, the lay monks (*manaig*) even were married and probably had children who were born into that monastic system, experiencing great difficulties, if they were trying to leave, while a truly monastic ascetic life was only lived by the monk's personal choice.²¹⁶

The monasteries performed pastoral and duties for the laity and offered fosterage and education at the monastic schools, staying close to secular society.²¹⁷ One of the major aspects of monastic life was the copying of texts for the growing monastic libraries. Up to about 800 CE, the monks mainly produced grammar books, commentaries on the scriptures, service books, litanies, calenders, church legislation, annals and the *Lives* of saints; most famous among these early Irish Christian writings are the *Cathach*, the *Book of Kells* (Fig.2) and the *Book of Durrow*.²¹⁸ After 800 CE, more texts in Irish language occurred, dealing with old Irish-Celtic hero-tales, traditions, legends, genealogies and stories of the aristocracy, all of which taken from the *fili*, the poets of Irish-Celtic society, and kept alive by the Christian monks, who synchronized them with Old Testament events.²¹⁹ Besides their functions as place of fosterage, hospitality, education and bank, Irish monasteries were used as “kind of open prisons” for people who had committed major crimes and sought refuge in the monastic community.²²⁰

HAMLIN & HUGHES²²¹ suggest that the 'growth of the monasticism may have encouraged arable farming in Ireland', as the supplies needed to secure the economic survival of the communities soon led to more efficient farming and the increasing ownership of economically useful animals by the monasteries. As an ascetic life was the voluntary choice of individual monks, the monastic diets were not always as austere as one might think; except for fast seasons the diet of an Irish monk and an Irish lord was pretty much the same – including beer, wine, whey, cheese, meat, fish, fruits and vegetables.²²²

*“So the monastic diet varied, from house to house and within the monastery.”*²²³

²¹⁶Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.6f.

²¹⁷Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.9.

²¹⁸Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.10-12.

²¹⁹Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.10-12; smaller gospels like the 'Book of Mullig' or the 'Book of Dimma' were known as pocket-gospels and given to travelling monks.

²²⁰Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.15.

²²¹Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.36f..

²²²Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.39.

²²³Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.39.

As the diet varied, so did the clothing, as members of aristocracy who had their children brought up at a foster-monastery wanted them to be treated and clothed according to their rank in society. The basic dress was a tunic with a cloak for the clergy, with the colours changing according to the degree of austerity – a white tunic and a woollen cloak for ascetics.²²⁴ Foster-children who were members of royal families probably enjoyed more luxury.

The economy attached to a monastery required a lot of labour capacity. The *manaig*, living with their wives and families, probably farmed the monastery's land, while the greater monasteries even had their own craftsman who lived near or in the communities, some of whom may have travelled, as similarities in style of High Crosses suggest.²²⁵ Although once set up, a monastery worked pretty much self-sufficiently and generated regular income from fees, it sometimes happened that due to famine, cattle disease or plague, a monastery failed in covering the costs and the monks starved to death.²²⁶

As wealth, influence and power of some of the monasteries grew, rivalry which led to actual warfare between the major communities and their mother-houses increased as well; FRITZPATRICK & O'BRIEN²²⁷ suggest that those major monasteries were in charge of 'large forces' and perhaps even maintained modest trained armies. Due to their preoccupation with gaining and maintaining their power, the pastoral care probably was left to the minor foundations of the *paruchia* instead of the huge mother-houses.²²⁸

The *Céli Dé* (servants of god) probably developed as a reaction to the increasing abuse of power and decline of discipline at the established monasteries. It was a Christian reform movement, which originated in the 8th CE century, and had their own monasteries or were present in other communities as small sub groups, having their own church and domestic buildings.²²⁹ Their members propagated a very strict and ascetic life and created the *Rule of the Céli Dé* in the 10th CE century, stating that monks should at least attend communal Mass on Thursdays and Sundays but actually daily – in addition to their daily private Masses.²³⁰

224Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.40.

225Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.48f.

226Hamlin & Hughes 2004, p.50.

227Fritzpatrick & O'Brien 1998, p.25f.

228Fritzpatrick & O'Brien 1998, p.35.

229Ó Carragáin 2010, p.9, 221.

230Ó Carragáin 2010, p.10, 209.

2. The first religious order - The History of the Cistercians ²³¹

The *Rule of St. Benedict* is one of the cornerstones of western Medieval monasticism and so it is especially for the Cistercians, as they derived from the Benedictine Order at the end of the 11th CE century in France. Before discussing the Cistercians, I am going to explain the situation in the Christian West, which led to the splitting from the Benedictine Order by the monks of Cîteaux in 1098 CE.

Benedict of Nursia lived in the 6th CE century, probably between 480 CE and the middle of the following century, he came to Rome as a young man where he joined a group of ascetics; the following three years Benedict lived the life of a hermit at Subiaco, in the east of the Eternal City; during this time he founded some cenobitic communities.²³² As a reaction to an argument with a jealous priest, Benedict left Subiaco with some of his fellow monks and founded a new monastery at Monte Cassino, around 529 CE; it was here in this new community that he composed the his *Rule* between the 530s and 540s CE.²³³ The *regula benedicti* was spread and adopted over the whole of Europe in the Early Middle Ages, and one reason for its success was the support by pope Gregory I. the Great's *Dialogue*, which he had composed at end of the 6th CE century; the second reason was that Columban's ideas of observance has prepared the ground for the Benedictine *Rule*; since around 628 CE - only one decade after the death of Columban - the *Rule of St. Benedict* was followed by the Irish-Frankish monasteries he had founded; for some time the two *Rules of Columban* and *Benedict* were used simultaneously in a sort of 'mixed Rule' until the *regula benedicti* finally superseded Columban's *Rule*.²³⁴ The monastic capitular became Frankish law in 816 CE; according to SCHWAIGER & HEIM²³⁵, it is actually only since then correct, to speak about Benedictine monasteries. Besides the promotion by the pope it were Louis the Pious, son of Charlemagne, and Benedict of Aniane, Louis' advisor in religious issues, who helped the *Rule of St. Benedict* to become predominant in 9th CE century Western Europe.²³⁶ The 8th and 9th CE centuries were the heydays of the Benedictine Order in the East Frankish Kingdom and by the

231Burton & Kerr 2011, p.13, When studying the early history of the Cistercians one has to rely mainly on two sources written by the Cistercians themselves, the *Exordium Parvum* and the *Exordium Cistercii* both written in the 1st half of the 12th CE century. The *Exordium Parvum* was written partly by Stephan Harding, 3rd abbot of Cîteaux, and partly by his successor Raynard du Bar – a monk from Clairvaux and abbot of Cîteaux from 1113 until 1150 CE – while he *Exordium Cistercii* was composed entirely by Raynard du Bar.

232Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.25f.

233Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.26, Benedict and his sister Scholastica later both got buried in a crypt at Monte Cassino.

234Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.26f.

235Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.27.

236Burton & Kerr 2011, p.1.

end of the Early Middle Ages the Benedictine observance was followed nearly everywhere in the Christian Occident.²³⁷ The monastic prayer of the Middle Ages had a social function, as it served the spiritual needs of the society, therefore the monks were members of the *oratores*.²³⁸ Due to the ecclesiastical decline in the 9th and early 10th CE century, different kind of reform movements started in the 10th and 11th CE century; the probably most influential one amongst them was the Cluniac Reform, named after the Benedictine Abbey of Cluny founded in 908/910 CE by William of Aquitaine.²³⁹ During the 9th century, monastic life at Cluny had become wholly liturgical in a communal way, as private prayer was neglected as well as study and manual labour, the latter was either entirely skipped or reduced to a symbolic act.²⁴⁰ At the same time more and more former lay monasteries became clergy communities, as ordination to the priesthood had become the highest achievable goal of spiritual lives.²⁴¹ Besides the Cluniac Reform, another consequence of the ecclesiastical decline was the re-discovery of anchoritic and eremitical life in the 10th and especially in the CE 11th CE century, a phenomenon that scholars call 'new eremitism'.²⁴² During the Middle Ages, a lot of new communities were founded, some of them developed into new orders, while others stayed houses with a distinctive rule of its own. ASTON²⁴³ did an empirical survey on the actual number of newly founded religious orders from the 10th to the 16th CE century in Europe, from the 11th to the 13th CE century a total of seventy-two new religious orders were founded, while during the following three centuries only twenty new foundations of orders are documented. This proves that the centuries after the Cluniac Reform were the most prosperous one for the spread of the monastic idea. As these new orders used the same language, Latin, they formed a successful network which was going to spread the latest developments in farming and engineering all over Europe for centuries.²⁴⁴ One of these new, successful orders which was going to spread over the whole of Europe was the Cistercian Order. BURTON & KERR²⁴⁵ state, that there were two main reason for the Cistercian success: First the monks of Cîteaux told the truth about their attempt to seek poverty and seclusion, second the Cistercians soon created and sustained a cohesive congregation. The Cistercian

237Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.29.

238Burton & Kerr 2011, p.2: The three social sections of society were the *oratores*, the *bellatores* and the *laboratores*.

239Schwaiger & Heim 2008, p.30f, The Cluniac Order called for a stricter observance of the *Rule of St. Benedict* and sought to minimize the episcopal and secular influence on the monasteries, therefore they tried to get direct papal protection.

240Burton & Kerr 2011, p.3; Tobin 1995, p.28.

241Schwaiger & Heim, p.28.

242Burton & Kerr 2011, p.2; Melville 2009, p.26.

243Aston 2001, p.10, Table 3.1.

244Aston 2001, p.9.

245Burton & Kerr 2011, p.6f.

jurisdiction, their General Chapter and the practise of visitations soon became the new standard for *vita religiosa* of the 12th CE century and beyond.²⁴⁶ It were those juristic instruments and their consequent usage that made the Cistercian Order not just a congregation but the first real religious order in ecclesiastical history.²⁴⁷

2.1. The monks from Cîteaux – The founding of the Cistercian Order

In March 1098 CE, the abbot and founder of the Benedictine monastery Molesme, Robert, and twenty-one of his fellow monks left their home monastery to move to a new Burgundian site near Dijon called *Cistercium*, where they founded the *Novum Monasterium*, which after some time became known as Cîteaux. The monks initial aim never has been, to split from the Benedictine Order but to set up a place, where the strict and severe observance of the *Rule of St. Benedict* and a life in simplicity and notably poverty was going to be followed.²⁴⁸ The Cistercians soon started promoting the 'official myth of origin' of their order. The myth of Cîteaux, being a place of solitude in the wilderness inhabited only by beasts, remote and far away from any form of civilization. The myth presents the image of a group of monks, who had moved from Molesme to built a new monastery with bare hands to live a life of poverty and simplicity in strict observance to the *Rule of St. Benedict*, while fighting and taming the 'desert' surrounding them, just like the founders of the monastic idea had done centuries ago in the Middle East. This myth had great influence on the Cistercians and formed their identity and therefore their outer appearance, as the two major Cistercian aims, the life in strict observance to the *regula benedicti* and living remote from the world were propagated by it. By 1120 CE, the founding of the community at *Cistercium* already has become an established legend.²⁴⁹

Of course the truth of the foundation of the *Novum Monasterium* was slightly different, as various scholars have shown. First, the rural site called *Cistercium* never was as remote and bewildered as the Cistercian myth has it. The *Novum Monasterium* was situated next to the salt route running from Nuits to Châtelet and Chaugey, just a few kilometres from Dijon, the ducal and ecclesiastical centre of the region, it even had a church, probably the local parish

²⁴⁶Melville 2009, p.27.

²⁴⁷Untermann 2001, p.48.

²⁴⁸By the end of the 11th CE century the usual Benedictine monasteries like Cluny or Molesme had become considerably wealthy and had abandoned manual labour from the communities, they therefore did not follow the *Rule of St. Benedict* any more and were criticised by Robert and his fellow monks of Cîteaux.

²⁴⁹Untermann 2001, p.43.

church, serving the rural population.²⁵⁰ The vice-count of Beaune continued to support the young community at *Cistercium* by frequent donations as did the duke of Burgundy who even left a vineyard to the monks, so soon the aim of poverty had become reduced to an ideal.²⁵¹ Secondly, it has not been a spontaneous decision to leave Molesme neither was it the first attempt by its abbot Robert to establish a community more devoted to the *Rule of St. Benedict*, in fact the events of 1098 CE were politically and ecclesiastically well prepared. Robert, who was born around 1028 CE, had become a monk at Montier-la-Celle, where he eventually became the prior around the age of twenty-six and from where he helped to set up a eremitical community in the forest of Colan, in 1074 CE.²⁵² In 1068 CE, Robert got appointed abbot of Saint-Michel-de-Tonnerre, an Cluniac Abbey, with the attempt to reform this community but probably did not succeed, as in 1072 CE he is reported to be in Montier at the rank of a choir monk; also around 1068 CE, the hermits from Colan had asked Robert to become their leader, he decided to resign, in 1072 CE, after he had failed.²⁵³ Robert was ordered by pope Gregory VII. to accede to the hermits of Colan request and relocated them at Molesme in 1075 CE, maybe trying to transform it into a Benedictine abbey.²⁵⁴ Molesme soon grew wealthy so Robert tried to reform the monastery but felt the need to leave to live with a group of hermits at Aux, in 1090 CE, and came back to Molesme, due to its monks petition and the following papal order by Urban II., around 1094 CE; assisted by its claustral prior, Alberic, Robert then once more had intended to start a reform in Molesme but failed again.²⁵⁵ In 1097 CE, Robert tried once more to establish a community observant to the *regula Benedicti*, this time at St. Jean d'Alps but the monks he sent into the Alps of Savoie soon resolved, leaving Robert frustrated behind.²⁵⁶ The foundation of the later Cîteaux in 1098 CE, therefore was only the last of numerous experiments in setting up a community truly observant to the *Rule of St. Benedict*. It had been already in 1097 CE, when Robert and his monks had come up with a plan about how to live a life more strictly adherent to the *Rule*; they had presented it to the archbishop Hugues of Lyon, the papal legate, and had asked permission and ecclesiastical sanction for their ideas; eventually they were granted the allowance to leave Molesme and settle somewhere else by the currant pope Gregory VII.²⁵⁷ Before summer 1098 CE, the vice-count of Beaune, Renard, and his wife donated a site called *Cistercium* to the groups of

250Burton & Kerr 2011, p.19; Schneider 2000, p.5f.

251Schneider 2000, p.5.

252Burton & Kerr 2011, p.17; Melville 2009, p.30; Tobin 1995, p.32.

253Burton & Kerr 2011, p.17; Melville 2009, p.30; Tobin 1995, p.32.

254Burton & Kerr 2011, p.17; Melville 2009, p.30.

255Burton & Kerr 2011, p.17; Tobin 1995, p.32f.

256Tobin 1995, p.33.

257Schneider 2000, p.4; Tobin 1995, p.33.

monks, who set up the new community soon after.²⁵⁸ The lay founder and duke of Burgundy, Odo I., supported the group of monks and their abbot Robert in building the first wooden monastery by donating the timber.²⁵⁹ According to UNTERMANN²⁶⁰ the monks who had stayed in Molesme already feared in 1110 CE to be less respected and acknowledged in comparison with the brethren of Cîteaux.

In April 1099 CE, complains by the remaining brethren of Molesme forced pope Urban II. to order Robert, by that time already in his 70s, to go back from the *Novum Monasterium* to Molesme; his fellow monk and former prior of Molesme, Alberic, was elected second abbot of the *Novum Monasterium*; his abbacy lasted for nearly ten years until 1109 CE, during this period Alberic was successfully building up the material base of his abbey.²⁶¹ It was during his abbacy that the papal confirmation was granted, in 1100 CE, and the abbey's first church, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, was consecrated, in 1106 CE.²⁶² For ecclesiastical jurisdiction, the monks of Cîteaux became *fugitivi* by leaving Molesme, as they had broken their vow, although a papal decree laid down that the *lex privata* weighted more heavily than the *lex publica* and the breaking of the vow actually only occurred due to the wish to fulfil the vow better.²⁶³ In this situation, the papal confirmation at the turn of the centuries was even more important to the monks of Cîteaux, as it guaranteed their legality. It was around the end of Alberic's rule that the name *cenobium Cisterciense* became common for the *Novum Monasterium*.²⁶⁴ One of his early actions as abbot was to move the site about one kilometre, as the new site was served by a brook.²⁶⁵ Alberic's successor and third abbot of Cîteaux was Stephen Harding, an Englishman and the former secretary of Robert, who thus had been part of the initial group of monks leaving Molesme, and he led the monastery until 1133 CE, when he resigned.²⁶⁶ Stephen Harding excluded the secular lords, like the duke of Burgundy, from holding court in the monastery, during those events they were using the church for meetings

258Schneider 2000, p.4.

259Burton & Kerr 2011, p.10; Schneider 2000, p.4.

260Untermann 2001, p. 44.

261Burton & Kerr 2011, p.11, 20; Schneider 2000, p.6; Tobin 1995, p.36: Robert died at Molesme, in 1111 CE, and got canonized, in 1220 CE. Only up from 1222 CE he got mentioned as the first abbot of Cîteaux, as his return to Molesme was experienced as treaty by the remaining monks at the *Novum Monasterium*.

262Schneider 2000, p. 6: The first abbey church probably was made of timber but there are no secured archaeological data about it nor any descriptions; Tobin 1995, p.38: There are scholars suggesting that the Cistercian churches were built in harmony with 'earth forces', being regardful of the underground springs and streams; Stalley 1987, p.40: The Cistercian custom was to dedicate the abbey churches to the Virgin Mary, for some of the later communities an additional dedication to St. Bernhard is documented.

263Melville 2009, p.32-35.

264Schneider 2000, p.6.

265Tobin 1995, p.37.

266Burton & Kerr 2011, p.11.

and feasts.²⁶⁷ It was as well during the abbacy of Stephen that the first Cistercian granges, a farm up to a day's walking distance from the abbey, were acquired.²⁶⁸ He also introduced a more severe austerity by banning gold and silver from the church interior, helping to create the Cistercian identity; he drew up the 'order's constitution', the *Carta Caritatis* and wrote the first part of the *Exordium Parvum*, a history of the early Cistercians and it was him who started the age of Cistercian expansion.²⁶⁹ He came up with a new and more accurate liturgy for the Cistercian, part of which were the 'original chants of St. Ambrose' he thought to have discovered and written down in word and tune.²⁷⁰ Stephan was succeeded by Raynaed du Bar who finished the *Exordium Parvum* and wrote the *Exordium Cistercii*.²⁷¹

Probably due to the harsh living conditions, especially on the physical side, the monks of Cîteaux first had problems to secure the next generation for their community, but concurrently they received donations and endowments. But soon the Cistercians experienced an upturn, as the nobleman Bernhard of Fontaines and thirty of his relatives and friends joined the community, solving the recruiting problem of the *monasterium Cisterciense*. BURTON & KERR²⁷² state, that by the 1120s and 1130s CE the Cistercian had become the defenders of the *regula benedicti* in its most pure and true form.

2.2. The Cistercian success

There were spiritual and economical reasons for the success of the Cistercian order, both based on the order's ideals, which were laid down in the *Carta Caritatis*, the 'constitution' of the order, written by Stephan Harding around 1113 CE before the Cistercian abbeys began to flourish.²⁷³ The *Carta Caritatis* complemented the *regula Benedicti*, the strict and literal observance of the two put an extra emphasis on the manual labour and caritas, together with the ascetic life and the strict obedience this made the Cistercian Order very attractive for the people of the 12th CE century.²⁷⁴ Besides the asceticism, the Cistercian propagated a higher re-valuation of manual labour and thus a specific working ethos, both of which made them stand out of the usual secular and religious communities of the Middle Ages.²⁷⁵ The main idea of the

²⁶⁷Burton & Kerr 2011, p.11.

²⁶⁸Tobin 1995, p.43.

²⁶⁹Burton & Kerr 2011, p.20f.

²⁷⁰Tobin 1995, p.81.

²⁷¹Burton & Kerr 2011, p.13.

²⁷²Burton & Kerr 2011, p.15.

²⁷³Burton & Kerr 2011, p.29.

²⁷⁴Schneider 2000, p.11.

²⁷⁵Schneider 2000, p.11.

Carta was that uniformity of observance would preserve peace and love, or *caritas*; thus it became part of the Cistercian identity.²⁷⁶ UNTERMANN²⁷⁷ argues, that there were three most important aspects for the identity of the monks of Cîteaux and therefore the Cistercians: Firstly, their search for solitude, secondly, their refusal of the traditional monastic habit and their turn to the strict observance of the *regula Benedicti*, and thirdly their self-understanding as elite as well as their rejection of the Benedictine Order's tradition.²⁷⁸ It was this identity that made an order out of the monks of Cîteaux and its daughters and granddaughters. So, as uniformity of observance was needed to guarantee *caritas*, there was the need for mechanisms to guarantee this uniformity. The *Carta Caritatis* laid down how the *regula benedicti* had to be interpreted and a bunch of distinct books, which should be used by all Cistercian communities.²⁷⁹ But who was going to control that the *Rule* was interpreted correctly in all the daughter houses? Two mechanisms which were going to secure and enforce uniformity were introduced by the *Carta*. First the annual General Chapter in September held in Cîteaux, requiring the attendance of all abbots; second the annual visitations by the *Father Immediate* at each daughter house, Cîteaux was going to be visited by the four abbots of its first four daughters.²⁸⁰ The General Chapter was the forum for disciplining wrong behaviour, at the same time it was the legislative body of the order and maintained the bonds within the Cistercian Family; the *Father Immediate* was responsible for overseeing the elections of an abbot of his daughter house, he also was encouraged to suggest extra potential candidates.²⁸¹ It was Stephen Harding and his *Carta Caritatis* that replaced the usual monarchic concept – as it was commonly established in the rank of a General Abbot in the Benedictine abbeys like Cluny – with a Cistercian *congregatio*.²⁸² The strong relationship between the different houses, in particular between the mother house and its daughters, and the congregational character of the order soon became a distinct Cistercian hallmark.²⁸³

“ ... we may suggest that by this time [Stephan Harding's resignation in 1133 CE] the White Monks had begun to develop a sense of distinctiveness and a sense of self-identity, as well as mechanisms to transmit them.”²⁸⁴

276Burton & Kerr 2011, p.29

277Untermann 2001, p. 44.

278Untermann 2001, p. 44.

279Burton & Kerr 2011, p.31.

280Burton & Kerr 2011, p.31.

281Burton & Kerr 2011, p.32.

282Schneider 2000, p.12.

283Burton & Kerr 2011, p.21.

284Burton & Kerr 2011, p.35.

Another reason for the Cistercian success in the Middle Ages was that they thought of their community as 'one body', supporting the individual; every monk helping the other to withstand the austerity of the strict observance and fighting the devil – an idea of the Desert Father.²⁸⁵ As the brethren of a monastery supported each other, one houses supported the other, this bond was especially strong between mothers and daughters. The monks remained an important part of their community for their entire life and beyond that, thus some of the brethren who had left their original monastery to set up a daughter house would ask to be transported back and buried in their home soil.²⁸⁶

Additionally the Cistercians soon became part of the strategy to secure new land and to fight heretics, thus they became part of the creations of states and its identities.²⁸⁷ The foundation of a new monastery involved many different people from the Cistercians and churchmen to kings, princes and members of the lay aristocracy, all of them had their very personal reasons for their support, challenging the Cistercians in their attempt to serve the different interests.²⁸⁸

*“... the White Monks engaged with the world. They both influenced, and were influenced by, social, economic, political and spiritual developments. This might mean taking on regional practice and disseminating new styles and techniques of architecture and farming, or working with secular and ecclesiastical powers to champion reform or augment state building.”*²⁸⁹

The Cistercian economical knowledge attracted many patrons, who founded new communities and in return benefited from the Cistercian budgeting. The specific way of managing their finances with annual cost and revenue statements and strict accountancy made the Cistercians monasteries role models for the development of city and state budgets.²⁹⁰ The lay monks or *conversi* were essential for the Cistercians, as the lay monks built the abbey and worked on the fields as well as on the granges, the farms of the abbey; they could neither read nor write, and only took partial vows and inhabited the west wing of the cloister.²⁹¹ The income from the work was used for the community, following the self supporting ideal of the order.²⁹² Besides the manpower offered by the *conversi*, the economical success of the Cistercian was due to

285Burton & Kerr 2011, p.119, 200.

286Burton & Kerr 2011, p.123.

287Burton & Kerr 2011, p.51.

288Burton & Kerr 2011, p.36.

289Burton & Kerr 2011, p.189.

290Schneider 2000, p.12.

291Tobin 1995, p.45.

292Untermann 2001, p.53.

their exemption from taxation.²⁹³ The Cistercians refused the ecclesiastic tithe, as they did not want to benefit from it, for this would have meant, sharing the sins of those people who had paid it.²⁹⁴ Initially the Cistercians refused any income from interest yields as well as holding estates or villages especially with serfs, but soon these ideals and the self-supporting rule were followed more and more relaxed.²⁹⁵ The Cistercians became familiar not only with agriculture and the related grinding and baking business but also with mining and metal processing, far trading and the clearing of forests and draining of sites as well as fish-farming. When a potential future site was inhabited with serfs – which actually happened quite frequently – the serfs became lay monks and the former village was transformed into a grange. Cistercian interest yield is documented already before 1130 CE, and up from the 1190s CE it was no longer seldom and in the late 13th CE century it has become a common Cistercian practise.²⁹⁶ As a reaction to the increasing wealth, the General Chapter has set up restrictions on the order's economy, in the second half of the 12th CE century.²⁹⁷ According to UNTERMANN²⁹⁸ the Cistercian had abandoned their monastic ideal after the Occidental Schism (1378-1417 CE) during which the order temporarily had split.

What heavily distinguished the monks of the *Novum Monasterium* further from other new communities of those days were their ideology and structure. On the one hand they wanted to live indeed in *privatis locis* but not in *proprio jure*, wanting to live exactly the sort of life they actually were supposed to live according to the *regula Benedicti*, thus they sought for an appropriate new site of more or less solitude; on the other hand the monks from Cîteaux effectively benefited from the papal order that forced Robert to go back to Molesme, as they had lost their charismatic leader that early in the order's history, the monks were forced to replace him with a charismatic idea, which needed to be laid down fast as well as most precise, and its final result was the *Carta Caritatis* only a few decades later.²⁹⁹ As they lacked the leading figure, all their early decisions had to be the outcome of a 'democratic consent'. Around 1112 CE, the charismatic leader that the Cistercians had been waiting for, joined them in the person of Bernhard of Fontaines, bringing a major impulse for the Cistercian spread that was going to come.

293Schneider 2000, p.12.

294Melville 2009, p.29.

295Tobin 1995, p.125; Untermann 2001, p.53.

296Untermann 2001, p.54.

297Untermann 2001, p.55.

298Untermann 2001, p.59.

299Melville 2009, p.39f.

2.3. The Cistercian spread

The Cistercian order relied a lot on personal relationships and networks, especially in the early years of its existence the Medieval idea of 'friendship' and 'family' lead the Cistercian actions; one of the probably most important pupils in this terms was a certain Bernhard.³⁰⁰ The age of Cistercian spread did not only start due to the entering of Bernhard of Fontaines into the monastery of Cîteaux around 1112 CE, but he himself and the community founded by him at Clairvaux became a major force in the Cistercian spread throughout Europe. By the time of Bernhard's death in 1153 CE, there were one-hundred and sixty-six abbeys under the spiritual leadership of Clairvaux and in total around three-hundred and forty-four Cistercian abbeys in existence, by the end of the Middle Ages their number had doubled.³⁰¹ With the increasing number of Cistercian communities, the strict observance of their own rules, checking on it and keeping up the ideal of a standardized life had become quite difficult, in fact the Cistercians were in danger of separation more than once and especially in the last decade of the 12th CE century.³⁰² Those ten years came to be a turning point in the Cistercian history, as the order abandoned the idea of broad consents but started a period of intense discussion and control of the Cistercian life as well as reflections on it.³⁰³

300Untermann 2001, p.48; Burton & Kerr 2001, p.37-38, 195-199: Bernhard of Fontaines joined the Novum Monasterium in 1112 or 1113 CE together with thirty of his relatives and friends, he became one of the best known Cistercians of the century, as he wrote some quite influential texts, the probably most famous one among was the Apologia from around 1125 CE. He corresponded with daughter communities in all of Europe, thus he also left a huge number of letters. Bernhard not only was an abbot, he was a politician as well. Bernhard took part in the dispute about the papal election and succession in 1130 CE, when Bernhard together with the kings of France and England had supported Innocent II. The following year he accompanied the new pope, Innocent II., on his travels and met Henry I. of England as well as his archbishop, who was going to ease the path into England and Scotland for the Cistercians. Bernhard started to preach for the Second Crusade, to free the Church in the East and to offer an opportunity to the Christians of the West to expiate the sins and ensure their salvation. Bernhard's promotion mission for the Crusade had taken him to Flanders, France and the Rhineland, not a single Cistercian took the cross but Bernhard encouraged local kings and rulers to join the operation in the Holy Land. Bernhard was aware of his role for Western Christianity and he did not like it, as being a papal politician had taken him far away from the remote life of simplicity and poverty of a usual Cistercian. Bernhard was very fond about the warrior monks of the Knight Templar – as they fought a spiritual as well as a military battle – and took part in writing their rule around 1130 CE. Although the Second Crusade ended with a disaster, the alliance between the Cistercians and the pope continued, which eventually lead to the support of the bloody Albigensian Crusade (1209-1229 CE) by the order. One of the military leaders was Arnold Amaury, abbot of Cîteaux between 1201 and 1212 CE. From the late 12th CE century the Cistercian liturgy involved corporate prayers, processions and masses in support of the holy wars, by the 13th CE century the Cistercian way of preaching for the Crusades had become the predominant way of public preaching.

301Burton & Kerr 2011, p.42, 54; Schneider 2000, p.7.

302Untermann 2001, p.45, 48.

303Untermann 2001, p.51.

The Cistercians decided against the traditional idea of a huge monastery, housing hundreds of monks, to avoid the problem of increasing food supply, and shortly this actual practical thought became Cistercian ideology.³⁰⁴ In 1113 CE, the vast growth in number of monks at Cîteaux forced Stephan Harding to found a new monastery at La Ferté, followed by Pontigny in 1114 CE, and Clairvaux founded by Bernhard just one year later and eventually Morimond in 1116/1117 CE; for these early foundations Cîteaux used the donated estates which lay far away for the new foundations.³⁰⁵ Cîteaux and these first four daughter houses became known as the Cistercian Primary Abbeys, from which the five families of affiliations derived. Thus Cîteaux is the mother house of all Cistercian monasteries and the head of the entire Cistercian order. The first General Chapter was held in Cîteaux in 1116 CE, attended by all abbots of the Primary Abbeys.³⁰⁶ All the huge new foundations of those five main Cistercian abbeys focused on different specific geographical and territorial matters.³⁰⁷ Within only five years the Cistercian Order had grown from one monastery close to extinction to five flourishing houses in three different dioceses, soon starting to establish the daughter houses of the next generation. Until 1121 CE, Cîteaux had already nine daughters and six granddaughters but the spaciouly spread of the Cistercian Order started only after 1130 CE.³⁰⁸ In the early ages of the Cistercian spread, all daughter house were founded by 'apostolic gestation', an abbot and twelve monks, sent by the mother house.³⁰⁹ Besides the entire new foundations, the Cistercians grew by incorporations and affiliations as well.³¹⁰ The success of the Cistercians have been that huge that the General Chapter even tried to call halt to new foundations in 1152 CE; the Chapter order was pretty ineffective, as the founders' and patrons' desire were too strong.³¹¹ MELVILLE³¹² states, that latest by the mid 12th CE century the Cistercian age of the *vita religiosa* started and last for decades, but it is more precise to set the start of the Cistercian success already in the 1120s. After the success of the second decade of the 12th CE century in terms of foundations, the following ten years were a time of consolidation for Cîteaux, but its daughters kept flourishing and expanding.³¹³ After France the Cistercians 'discovered' Italy and the German-speaking territories followed by England and Wales as well as Spain; from the 1120s CE on the most successful one of the Primary Abbeys in expansion

304Untermann 2001, p.48f.

305Burton & Kerr 2011, p.23; Untermann 2001, p.46.

306Untermann 2001, p.46.

307Schneider 2000, p.8.

308Burton & Kerr 2011, p.28; Untermann 2001, p.46.

309Burton & Kerr 2011, p.22, 64.

310Burton & Kerr 2011, p.28.

311Burton & Kerr 2011, p.21, 44.

312Melville 2009, p.27.

313Burton & Kerr 2011, p.36.

became Clairvaux under Bernhards' abbacy.³¹⁴ And it had been monks from Clairvaux which were sent to Mellifont in Ireland in 1140 CE and to Scandinavia in the years 1143 to 1146 CE.³¹⁵ The 12th CE century, witnessed the establishment of many affiliations of mainly eremitical communities to the Cistercians, as mentioned, for the spread of the order, those affiliations were as important as the actual new foundations.³¹⁶ It was only from 1200 CE and especially from 1250 CE on that the Cistercian spread was subsiding.³¹⁷ But for central and eastern Europe the great period of Cistercian foundations was the 13th century.³¹⁸

2.4. The Rule of St. Benedict – The Cistercians everyday life

The Cistercian role model were the early Desert Father of the Middle East, as preparations for 'the higher calling of the desert' the *Rule of St. Benedict* put emphasis on the important of the eremitical and cenobitic life and combined both.³¹⁹ The *regula Benedicti* propagated a life of severity and humility, of total obedience and manual work like gardening, agricultural practice and household chores; it combined private prayer and contemplation with communal mass.³²⁰ Thus the life of the Cistercians was dominated by the strict observance of the *Rule* and a eremitical life in poverty and simplicity. The three main elements of Cistercian life were the *opus Dei* – the liturgical offices –, the *lectio divina* – the meditative reading – and the *labora* – the physical labour. Besides the strict observance, the Cistercian life was defined by the *Ecclesiastica Officia* as well as by the *Carta Caritatis* and the statutes of the General Chapter of the order. The daily cycle of prayer set up by Benedict in his *Rule* was inspired by Psalm 118 and divided the day into eight Offices, seven during daylight and the last at night; as the day of the monastery started and ended with the sun's rise and set, the actual Offices hours were hold at different times during winter and summer.³²¹ In addition to the eight daily hours at the monks choir at least one Mass was celebrated each day, on Sundays and feast days even two, as well as special masses for founders, patrons and the dead; the priests of the monastery celebrated private masses at one of the side altars in church; according to the *Rule* the liturgy of the Cistercians was more simple than the Benedictine one of the time. The daily

314Burton & Kerr 2011, p.36, 44.

315Burton & Kerr 2011, p.47.

316Untermann 2001, p.49.

317Schneider 2000, p.8.

318Burton & Kerr 2011, p.50.

319Burton & Kerr 2011, p.4.

320Tobin 1995, p.25.

321Burton & Kerr 2011, p.1,104; Psalm 118: "I rose at midnight to give praise to thee; for the judgments of thy justification." and "Seven times a day I have given praise to thee, for the judgments of thy justice."

(<http://www.medievalist.net/psalmstxt/ps118.htm>, 14.12.2012).

reading from a Chapter of the *regula Benedicti* was followed by the confessions of sins of the brethren and their discussion on any monastic businesses, it took place at the chapterhouse and became known as the daily Chapter.³²² Hot bathing was forbidden in the abbey with exceptions for the infirmary; a monthly bath was allowed to the monks but needed to be taken in silence and must not lead to 'inappropriate behaviour'; in addition to the vegetarian diet four times a year every monks was subjected to blood letting to fight the 'temptations of flesh'.³²³

In opposition to the Benedictine and especially Cluniac Order, the Cistercians reintroduced manual labour in the monastic life, as to avoid boredom and sloth; the daily tasks of the monks were various and usually took place within the monastic precinct, with the only exception being, when the monks assisted the lay brothers during harvesting time at the fields.³²⁴ Stories of vision during labour soon spread, reassuring the brethren that their effort was noted by their god and as a result, keeping up the moral among them.³²⁵

The *lectio divina* was a communal activity as well as a private introspective each monk experienced for his own; the slow and contemplative reading was fourfold, leading the monks through meditation and prayer to a deep and complete understanding of a text.³²⁶ To avoid any form of distraction cravings and decorations were prohibited and silence needed to be maintained in the cloister, only broken by the hum of some reading monks.³²⁷ These matters often lead to *accidie*, a depressive state due to boredom and listlessness, as talking was forbidden in the cloister, the church and the refectory would lead to a feeling of isolation and loneliness; necessary communication in the cloister was in the parlour and even there sometimes only signs were used.³²⁸ Exceptions for the strict maintenance of silence only were made for the infirm and travelling companions as well as on the afternoons of major feasts.³²⁹ The Cistercian taste of design was minimalistic and tried to demonstrate their aim of simplicity and poverty. Their habit was made of undyed wool grey or white in colour and of course simple and not lavish, instead of the usual black habit of a monk, symbolizing the refusal of the earthly life.³³⁰

322Tobin 1995, p.134.

323Tobin 1995, p.136.

324Burton & Kerr 2011, p.106.

325Burton & Kerr 2011, p.106.

326Burton & Kerr 2011, p.107f.

327Burton & Kerr 2011, p.108.

328Burton & Kerr 2011, p.116f.

329Burton & Kerr 2011, p.118.

330Melville 2009, p.37f; Tobin 1995, p.38.

The only art that was allowed in the church was a single wooden Triumph Cross, which was accepted to be painted; thuribles were allowed but needed to be of iron or copper, and there was only one candelabra which was supposed to be of iron; chalices of silver and if possible, gilded, were accepted, the wine cruets were not allowed to contain any gold or silver.³³¹

The chasuble were free of silk, gold and silver but of plain cloth or linen; all sort of copes, dalmatics, tunics and mantels the Cistercians rejected; altar cloth explicitly needed to be of linen without any pictorial ornamentation.³³² The ban on colourful and lavish ornamented manuscripts came only in 1134 CE by the General Chapter, but before that there has been a flourishing *scriptorium* and a library at Cîteaux during the abbacy of Stephen Harding, some of the richly illuminated codices, probably an early copy of the Bible, Stephan Harding being the client.³³³ TOBIN³³⁴ convincingly suggested that the reason for the silence Bernhard maintained on this topic probably was due to the order's hierarchy, as criticising Stephan on the manuscripts would have meant lecturing his superior and head of Cîteaux, mother of all Cistercian houses. The Cistercian monastic diet was simple and vegetarian but still rich on fruit, vegetables, fish and beans and varied according to the region and season, thus the actual number and contents of the meals depended on the availability at the particular abbey.³³⁵ The monastic diet was also changing during the Middle Ages, as social and economic developments brought exotic food from the East to Europe as well as luxurious meals, but probably exclusively to the abbot's diet; there were single communities serving meat already in the late 12th CE century and thereby breaking the order's law, in 1335 CE the General Chapter allowed meat for the infirm and the abbot and about hundred years later stated that monks should eat meat once or twice a week although not at the refectory.³³⁶ St. Benedict knew that a too austere diet would probably effect the monks physical and mental health, and therefore made provisions to allow the monks to dine with the abbot from time to time; due to the monastic diet some novices feigned illnesses, started hallucinating and some eventually committed suicide; there are many recorded cases of health problems like urinary stones, colics, fever, cough and difficulties to breath as well as confusion among the Cistercians, and Bernhard of Clairvaux himself suffered from 'extreme gastric problems', thus a less restrict regime was accepted which left the level of austerity to each monk's personal decision.³³⁷ For

331Burton & Kerr 2011, p.75.

332Burton & Kerr 2011, p.75.

333Schneider 2000, p.16f, Of the initially 1200 books from the monastic library at Cîteaux, only 312 survived the French revolution and are now to be seen at Dijon Library.

334Tobin 1995, p.93.

335Burton & Kerr 2011, p.110f.

336Burton & Kerr 2011, p.112f,

337Burton & Kerr 2011, p.114f.

their 'back-to-basic' policy and their harsh conditions the brethren of the Cistercian order were wildly admired on the one hand but as it was quite difficult to adapt to, concessions were only made for novices and the elderly and the sick on the other hand.³³⁸

Initially the vow of a monk meant that he was going to stay in the abbey for the rest of his life, but with the spread of the order the legitimate reasons for leaving the community increased; the abbots were expected to attend the annual General Chapter at Cîteaux as well as to visit their daughter houses at least once every year, and the normal monks were obliged to win new recruits whilst their travels, and from the mid 13th CE century on many brethren attended university and therefore were also permitted to leave the monastic precinct.³³⁹

Following the *regula benedicti*, the administration of charity and hospitality became a Cistercian duty; the porter at the gatehouse gave alms and bread as well as the brethren's old shoes and clothes to the poor on the behalf of the community, making the gatehouse the visible focus of Cistercian charity; the mechanism of Cistercian charity were set down in the order's 'constitution', the *Carta Caritatis*.³⁴⁰

2.5. Uniformitas – The Cistercian understanding on monastic architecture

The Cluniac theory stated that 'no costs should be spared in the adoration of God', thus the church of Cluny was lavishly decorated in bright colours and complex architectural details as well as with expensive carpets, tiles and liturgical vessels.³⁴¹ The Cistercians in contrast tried to translate their desire for simplicity and poverty into architecture by using harmonic and plain simple architecture and avoiding any form of *superfluitas*. Never the less, complete 'nude' Cistercian buildings without any form of decoration were seldom.³⁴² The term of the so called *forma Ordinis*, describing the outer appearance of the Cistercians in all aspects of their live, including their architecture derived around 1200 CE; the developments and changes in the architecture and lifestyle of the 13th and 14th CE centuries were not only accepted but welcomed by the Cistercians although they effected the *forma Ordinis*.³⁴³ The main aspects Cistercian architecture had to express were *uniformitas* and *unitas*. The idea that all Cistercian monks are divided only in their bodies but united in their minds, the idea of *unitas*, lead to the

338Burton & Kerr 2011, p.109f.

339Burton & Kerr 2011, p.190f: The Cistercians took a leading role in the spreading of *studia* and the establishing of universities in Europe.

340Burton & Kerr 2011, p.192f.

341Tobin 1995, p.29.

342Untermann 2001, p.637.

343Untermann 2001, p.17.

uniformitas to show it, by wearing the same clothes and building 'the same architecture'. According to UNTERMANN³⁴⁴, it is hard to estimate Bernhard's influence on Cistercian architecture, as there are no explicit statements; the most famous *Apologia* by Bernhard of Clairvaux is a polemic and satiric refusal of the High Gothic ecclesiastical and monastic architecture of his time but one of the few Cistercian sources dealing with architecture, respectively with its interior but the buildings. In general it is safe to say, that *superfluitas* – unnecessary height and luxury as well as lavishing ornamentations and all kind of distracting paintings, sculptures and capitals – should have been avoided in Cistercian abbeys.³⁴⁵ In the *Apologia* from around 1125 CE, Bernhard of Clairvaux argued against any kind of decoration in the cloister or the church, as it would distract the monks contemplation and lead them away from God.³⁴⁶ The strictness of the observance of these rules varied in the communities, but figurative capitals stayed unusual during the 12th CE century and only are documented more often from the 14th CE century.³⁴⁷

The common mistake, to think that the Cistercian had set down rules for their architecture pretty much derives from the extant buildings, which are mainly from the 13th CE century.³⁴⁸

“ *The Cistercians may have been noted for their unity and cohesion but there was no set of prescriptions defining the Order's architecture, ...* ”³⁴⁹

Over all it is important to keep in mind that there actually were no regulations on the architecture but only on the decoration of the *oratoria*.³⁵⁰ The only real Cistercian rule on architecture was the prohibition on crossing towers, the *tiburium*, in 1157 CE, thus only small wooden crossing towers with two bells were allowed as well as the weight of the bells restricted.³⁵¹ But in the 13th CE century, there were already stone bell towers in existence at various Cistercian abbeys.³⁵² During the 12th CE century the Cistercian General Chapter prohibited all kind of sculptures and painting, with an exception for painted altar crosses, as

344Untermann 2001, p.98f.

345Untermann 2001, p.101: Bernhard described the 'Path of Pride', ending with the deadly sin of *superbia*; the monk's *curiositas* leads to *levitas* followed by *ineptia*, *laetitia*, *iactantia*, *singularitas* and *arrogantia* which eventually leads to *superbia*. To save the monk's soul, any form of distracting ornamentation, possibly causing accidentally curiosity, or lavishing decorations were prohibited.

346See footnote 117; Burton & Kerr 2011, p.108.

347Untermann 2001, p.101.

348Untermann 2009, p.577.

349Burton & Kerr 2011, p.77.

350Untermann 2001, p.113, 116: In 1220 CE, the Dominicans were the first who laid down regulations on their monastic architecture.

351Untermann 2009, p.576; Untermann 2001, p.115.

352Untermann 2001, p.116.

well as coloured window glasses, manuscripts, cloth and clothes; coloured tiles were banned at the beginning of the 13th CE century but already common from the 1240s CE onwards.³⁵³ Especially after the death of Stephen Harding in 1134 CE, the General Chapter repeatedly felt the need to punish the official adoption of local inappropriate style and remind the Cistercian houses of the order's hallmarks, poverty and simplicity.³⁵⁴ UNTERMANN³⁵⁵ suggests, that increase of prohibiting orders of the General Chapter between 1155 CE and 1180 CE may have been a reaction to the decline of the Cistercian ideals.

*“... albeit unintentionally, the Cistercians developed a distinct architectural style of their own ...”*³⁵⁶

In the beginning the monks always had to decided where to settle. The Cistercians considered the sites they settled and the world surrounding them as a metaphorical desert, linking themselves to the early desert monks and their tradition of a life of simplicity, poverty and contemplation. Thus the ideal Cistercians site was rural and remote from any form of walled settlement, if possible it was close to a river, a road or any form of 'transport link' and near to 'communication routes'; of all sites the Cistercians favoured valleys the most, as they were 'sheltered but not cut off'.³⁵⁷ In Ireland the sound and arable land and a suitable water supply were hard to find, especially in the rocky west of the island, thus the order settled mainly in the slightly more fertile Irish south and east.³⁵⁸ In some cases the new arrived monks told the people initially inhabiting the site, to settle somewhere else and set up their abbey at the newly generated 'desert'.³⁵⁹ Each monastery needed to be at least ten Burgundian leagues (c. 40 km) away from the next nearest.³⁶⁰ Therefore choosing the right site was not entirely easy and the monks probably were advised by one of the mother house's brethren, later the General Chapter stipulated that any potential new site first needed to be inspected by two abbots before the permission for a new community was going to be granted.³⁶¹ On many occasions, the monks were invited to settle in a territory by the local duke or king, who even offered

³⁵³Untermann 2001, p.114f.

³⁵⁴Tobin 1995, p.85.

³⁵⁵Untermann 2001, p.118.

³⁵⁶Tobin 1995, p.81.

³⁵⁷Burton & Kerr 2011, p.56f.

³⁵⁸Stalley 1987, p.31.

³⁵⁹Tobin 1995, p.74.

³⁶⁰Burton & Kerr 2011, p.56.

³⁶¹Tobin 1995, p.74.

them land and endowments; other Cistercian houses were founded at a particular site due to its spiritual significance, making the Cistercians 'agents of transition and transformation'.³⁶² Other sites were the result of vows or of visions someone had, probably of the Virgin Mary, telling him to found a monastery at a particular place. Some sites became too small or proved to be too exposed to 'adverse weather conditions', therefore some communities were forced to relocate, some of them even several times.³⁶³ In some cases the new abbey church was built right next to an old predecessor, like it was done at some sites of Early Irish monasteries.³⁶⁴ In 1194 CE, the General Chapter decided that two abbots need to inspect and authorise every potential future site before the monasteries was going to be erected.³⁶⁵

Oratory, refectory, dormitory, guest quarters, gatehouse and of course the church: These six most important building for the monastic observance were supposed to be constructed before the monks arrive at a new Cistercian site; the church actually was not that important, as the monks prayed at the oratory instead; these early monastic structures, usually made of timber but sometimes even of mud and wattle, were going to be replaced by stone buildings one by one.³⁶⁶ Who was responsible for providing these first buildings can not be said without any doubt, as there is evidence of parties of lay brother preparing the site in advance as well as of patrons, agreeing on taking care of such issues and sometimes even of the secure travel of the monks.³⁶⁷ The first thing the monks took care of at a newly inhabited site was the water supply, as it was needed for washing, drinking, cooking, to power the monastic industry and to remove the monastic waste; additionally matters against flooding usually needed to be taken especially when the site locates near major rivers.

When the water system had been laid out, the rest of the community was planned, usually the cloister was located in the south, its west range housed the lay brothers while in the east the monks were accommodated.³⁶⁸ The idea of the monastic layout around a cloister was already common in times of St. Benedict and was still used in the Middle Ages by most of the orders; it had derived from the Roman *domus* structure, where all the rooms and offices were

362Burton & Kerr 2011, p.60-62; In Ireland some of the Cistercian sites were former Celtic sites, which were taken over by the new order.

363Burton & Kerr 2011, p.63.

364Untermann 2001, p.183; see Chapter 2.

365Stalley 1987, p.37.

366Burton & Kerr 2011, p.64f, The earliest Cistercian timber structures we have knowledge of date back to 1133 CE and were discovered in Fountains. It is a simple rectangular shaped church connected to a domestic range in the south.

367Burton & Kerr 2011, p.64f.

368Burton & Kerr 2011, p.70.

arranged and entered from the more or less square inner *atrium* in the middle.³⁶⁹ The usual distribution of the rooms and offices was already used similarly in the St. Gall plan from 820 CE; it was also the St. Gall plan that propagated a length of 100 ft for one cloister walk.³⁷⁰ BURTON & KERR³⁷¹ state that the Cistercian adopted the typical Benedictine plan (Fig.30) and stone buildings only in the middle of the 1130s CE, before their domestic buildings were loosely arranged around a timber church. On the contrast it was UNTERMANN³⁷² who dated the first monumental stone churches in Cîteaux and Clairvaux to the 1120s CE; for the time after 1125 CE he suggests stone buildings as standard.

The Cistercian churches first of all were functional spaces of monastic purposes, thus they had to follow three demands: the liturgical function, the visible demonstration of *uniformitas* and an appropriate *habitus*.³⁷³ The idea of *uniformitas* meant to 'copy' the plan of major churches of the order, mainly those of the mother house, by citing its characteristic architecture; the aim was not to 'beat' the model but to come as close as possible. To demonstrate the Cistercian *unitas*, the recipients of this citations were the monks themselves.³⁷⁴ UNTERMANN³⁷⁵ suggested in his dissertation that there were four generations of Cistercian churches, the first generation dating from 1125 to 1140/45 CE, the second between 1140/45 CE and 1180 and the third and fourth generations in the 13th and 14th CE centuries, with the development of the 'Cistercian sanctuary ambulatory' as its criteria. There is clear evidence of wooden monasteries in the early times of the Cistercians (Fig.31), by the late 12th and 13th CE century a monumental stone church has become usual at new Cistercian foundations.³⁷⁶ The early wooden buildings were often located at the edge of the later precinct and actually quite far from the extant stone architecture; due to these relocations there are only a few excavation reports of the early wooden monasteries.³⁷⁷ In general the Cistercian church's nave were divided into two areas – the eastern monks choir and the western converse choir – separated by a rood screen and between the two the retro-choir for the infirm and old was sometimes located.³⁷⁸ The side aisles and transepts were without function in the early decades of the order but later got equipped with side altars for private masses or housed the laity; from the 13th CE

369Tobin 1995, p.24,78.

370Stalley 1987, p.52.

371Burton & Kerr 2011, p.71.

372Untermann 2009, p.584; Untermann 2001, p.192.

373Untermann 2001, p.18.

374Untermann 2001, p.18.

375Untermann 2001.

376Untermann 2001, p.174.

377Untermann 2001, p.178-180.

378Burton & Kerr 2011, p.71; Tobin 1995, p.78: As most ascetic communities and in contrast to most of the other orders, the Cistercians initially did not open their churches for the laity, except their lay brothers.

century on independent altars in the transepts are documented.³⁷⁹ The nave and presbytery were unusually low and there were neither tombs nor images and only little light.³⁸⁰ The monks choir was not accentuated architecturally nor was it located in the chancel but west of the crossing.³⁸¹ The sanctuary only hold the high altar; in its south and north walls the *sedilia* and the *piscina* were located.³⁸² The refusal of apses in the presbytery is characteristic for the Cistercians, while another difference from the Benedictine churches was, that the side altars of the transepts were divided entirely from each other and the sanctuary.³⁸³ The sanctuary ambulatory, as it is first reported from the wooden church of Clairvaux, lead to a huge number of alternative solutions for the problem of increasing the number of radiating chapels between 1150 and 1180 CE; as the early Cistercian were trying to create a non-Benedictine solution for the chapels, they were experimenting with a number of different ideas.³⁸⁴ To increase the number of chapels was actual necessary in the liturgical context, as the Cistercians read only one daily mass per altar, additional altars were needed for the increasing numbers of priest-monks, thus the architectural solution of radiating chapels was not lavishly and therefore accepted by the General Chapter.³⁸⁵ Another major issue of Cistercian architecture was *rectitudo*, or straightness, especially for the apses, which Bernhard already mentioned in his writings, as moral principal and true observance of the *regula Benedicti*.³⁸⁶ The so called 'Bernadine' plan (Fig.28) derived from the Benedictine church plan including apses and became characteristic for the Cistercian churches; the name was first introduced by K.H. Esser in 1953 and meant a cross-shaped plan with square-shaped sanctuary and square-shaped chapels or apses in the transepts; a special version was the Burgundian 'Bernadine' plan which had an unusual high nave, running through the whole length of the church, and a low sanctuary and transepts, as in the first stones churches of Clairvaux, Fontenay and other houses of Bernhard.³⁸⁷ UNTERMANN³⁸⁸ suggested, that the following outer unification of the nave, holding both choirs, and the presbytery, holding the altar, in Cistercian churches has been the order's attempt to reduce the hierarchic differences between the two architectural and functional parts of the church and to avoid and abandon the traditional space for the choirs

379Untermann 2001, p.263, 628.

380Tobin 1995, p.81.

381Untermann 2001, p.233.

382Untermann 2001, p.242.

383Untermann 2001, p.298f.

384Untermann 2009, p.579f; Untermann 2001, p.427: After 1180 CE the solution of an ambulatory with radiating chapels became predominant.

385Untermann 2009, p.582.

386Untermann 2009, p.583.

387Untermann 2001, p.305.

388Untermann 2009, p.587.

stalls. In the early times of the order a 'non-Bernadine' plan was the rule not the exception; around 1130 CE there were a few different plan-types in existence which had derived from the Primary Abbeys.³⁸⁹ The late 12th and early 13th CE centuries were the heydays of this 'Cistercian plan', mainly with rib vaulted but sometimes with plain ceilings.³⁹⁰ By combining the *rectitudo* and the *Rule of St. Benedict*, the result was the 'typical Cistercian rectangular ambulatory' with radiating chapels around a sanctuary; of course the rectangular ambulatory was not an invention by the Cistercians but already known in the 11th CE century, the Cistercians used it to distinguish themselves from the Benedictine Order; such an rectangular ambulatory first occurred in Cîteaux in 1147 CE, in its third abbey church's plan.³⁹¹ In the 13th CE century the square-shaped sanctuary, following the *rectitudo*, was no longer a crucial part of an Cistercian church.³⁹² Besides the 'Bernadine' plan, an architectural detail, even more distinct Cistercian, were the corbels in the nave between the crossing and the western wall, the ribs from the vaulting ended at those corbels, which were used by the Cistercians all over Europe latest since 1150 CE but actually quite seldom occurred in the aisles or transepts; their meaning is still unknown, as there were no technical or functional reasons, but probably those corbels were not only decoration.³⁹³

*“Under the leadership of St. Bernhard, the Cistercians were, in essence, attempting to
redefine the true function of a monastic church.”*³⁹⁴

The first monumental Cistercian stone churches occurred around 1120/25 CE, at a time the initial Cistercian ideal of simplicity has already been idealised and the basic structures of the order had been set up.³⁹⁵

The claustral complex functioned as the neurological centre of a community (Fig.30) and accessible exclusively to monks; paradoxically the claustral walk was associated with Paradise as well as with Purgatory; the north ambulatory – usually next to the church, as the

389Untermann 2001, p.603, 609.

390Untermann 2001, p.472.

391Untermann 2009, p.584f.

392Untermann 2001, p.616.

393Untermann 2001, p.655.

394Stalley 1987, p.79.

395Untermann 2001, p.44.

cloister commonly were located in the south to make use of the sun – was used by the monks for reading and writing in the middle of the cloister a herb garden was located in most houses.³⁹⁶

The ground level of the east range housed the sacristy, the chapterhouse, the *armarium*, the parlour and the multifunctionally used day room or solar.³⁹⁷ The chapterhouse probably was the most important place beside the church, as it was here that the monks gathered every day and listened to the chapter from the *regula benedicti*, read to them by the abbot, further it was also a place of discussions, confessing and disciplining. Adjoined to the chapterhouse was the so called parlour, a small passage where conversations were permitted within the cloister, it was here that the monks were told there daily quests. The *armarium* was the monastic 'library' but as there were only a few books every Cistercian abbey needed to own and the monks were busy with manual labour during the day anyway, in many cases a simple cupboard was enough.³⁹⁸ As mentioned, the upper floor of the eastern range was occupied with the monks dormitory, which was linked to the church directly by the nightstairs in the south of the southern transept.³⁹⁹ The calefactory, the refectory and the kitchen were located in the southern claustral range; from the 1170s CE on, the Cistercian refectories were mainly built perpendicular rather than parallel to the cloister, which enabled a direct access to the kitchen from the cloister as well as the refectories to be lighter and larger in style.⁴⁰⁰ The calefactory was the only room of the community where a fire was allowed, except for the kitchen, and it was only lit when the water in the church's stoups had frozen.⁴⁰¹

The western claustral range was occupied entirely by the lay brothers, as mentioned, who owned their extra refectory and dormitory and sometimes even their own kitchen; at some sites there was an converse alley, an extra lane parallel to the western claustral ambulatory and separated from it by a wall, leading from the converse claustral wing to the church's converse door in its west wall and actually generating two individual communities, for example at the Irish Mellifont Abbey (Fig.35).⁴⁰² The strict division of *conversi* and *monachi* occurred first in Cîteaux, the first time in Benedictine monasticism, and lead to an increasing social differing which caused disputes.⁴⁰³

396Burton & Kerr 2011, p.71f; Tobin 1995, p.125.

397Burton & Kerr 2011, p.72.

398Untermann 2001, p.51: Besides the *regula benedicti* and monastery needed to own a Psalter, a Hymn, an antiphonary, a version of the Collectanea Cisterciensia, a Gradual and a Roman Missal. Later various Bible texts and a calendar were added.

399Burton & Kerr 2011, p.72.

400Burton & Kerr 2011, p.72f.

401Tobin 1995, p.110.

402Burton & Kerr 2011, p.73; Stalley 1987, p.54.

403Untermann 2001, p.63f, 68.

The monastic infirmary complex was located east of the cloister, thus the infirm monks were indeed removed from the actual convent for their treatment; usually there was an extra kitchen, chapel and hall in the infirmary.⁴⁰⁴ In the west of the precinct the guest houses and the working quarters were located; a boundary wall marked the monastic territory, access was exclusively granted by the porter at the gatehouse, which often housed an extra chapel for guests.⁴⁰⁵

The idea of Cistercian architecture was 'to subdue the senses and focus the mind' and was meant to support the monks contemplation, thus the appearance of Cistercian monasteries usually was unpretentious.⁴⁰⁶ Early Chapter orders banned colours and fabrics from the monastic architecture; the buildings were lime-washed white, with grisaille window glasses and exclusively lightened naturally; in the late 12th CE century these rules became more relaxed.⁴⁰⁷

The order sent its own architects to new foundations, to over-see the building process, who mainly functioned as coordinators and instructors but thereby transported Cistercian architectural ideas and ideals as well; a certain monk named Robert was sent to Ireland to establish the first Irish Cistercian abbey at Mellifont, from which most of the Irish houses derived.⁴⁰⁸ Thus the choir monks probably never had a major role in the actual working or building process, only taking care of the design and finances.⁴⁰⁹ The Cistercians hired external labours and artisans who together with the lay brothers, the *conversi*, built the monastery and replaced the early primitive wooden structures.⁴¹⁰ It were those *conversi* that actually enabled the economical and general success of the Cistercians.⁴¹¹ According to BURTON & KERR⁴¹², it took about twenty years to complete an average church and about twice the time to construct the usual claustral complex, although of course the actual times varied from community to community. Although the construction took quite long, usually it is not that easy to distinguish the different parts of the architecture, as in most cases the Cistercians stick with the initial plan over decades.⁴¹³ The Cistercians employed traditional methods and

404Burton & Kerr 2011, p.73.

405Burton & Kerr 2011, p.74.

406Burton & Kerr 2011, p.76.

407Burton & Kerr 2011, p.76.

408Untermann 2001, p.227f.

409Tobin 1995, p.75.

410Burton & Kerr 2011, p.66f.

411Schneider 2000, p.12.

412Burton & Kerr 2011, p.68.

413Untermann 2001, p.206.

worker, who were advancing new ideas and regional practice with local material.⁴¹⁴ There is evidence suggesting that there were moving groups of workmen, sharing and spreading new developments and styles throughout Europe by working at different Cistercian sites.⁴¹⁵

2.6. The 'mother house' - The monastery at Clairvaux

Similar to *Cistercium* (Cîteaux), the name *Claravallis* already gives away where Clairvaux was founded, in 1115 CE, a bright valley.⁴¹⁶ The monks of Cîteaux were quite surprised that the young and inexperienced Bernhard was appointed abbot of Clairvaux, but this probably was due to Bernhard's close relations with the lay founders; among the founders of Clairvaux were four brothers, an uncle, two cousins and four friends of Bernhard.⁴¹⁷

2.6.1. The monasterium vetus

The *monasterium vetus* or *anitquum monasterium* (Fig.31) unfortunately does not exist any more but still did in the 18th CE century; it was the original monastery built by Bernhard and his monks, when the community was founded, and its plan was reconstructed from a 18th CE century picture of the monastery. It housed the oldest known church of the site and maybe of the order, a wooden one which was equipped with two side altars and already had an ambulatory around the sanctuary.⁴¹⁸ The side altars were located in two radiating chapels in the ambulatory of the sanctuary; the chapels outside was smooth and broken up, the inside had straight walls to distinguish it from the richer Benedictine style.⁴¹⁹ The church was a stave church with a high, rectangular shaped middle room and a low square ambulatory; in its south-east the wooden L-shaped claustral buildings were located. They housed a multifunctionally used 'refectory' and a dormitory above it but lacked the cloister and the chapterhouse; soon after 1116 CE Bernhard, the abbot of Clairvaux, got an extra cell for

414Burton & Kerr 2011, p.77.

415Tobin 1995, p.75.

416Untermann 2001, p.123.

417Burton & Kerr 2011, p.23f; Untermann 2001, p.123.

418Untermann 2009, p.579: The 18th CE century plan by Dom Milley shows this church with its sanctuary ambulatory, the number of altars are reported in a written source.

419Untermann 2009, p.580f.

himself erected somewhere outside the claustral complex and which resembled the early free-standing eremitical monks cells of the Early Middle Ages.⁴²⁰ The *monasterium vetus* was used for probably not even ten years, before the first stone church was erected in Clairvaux.⁴²¹

2.6.2. The first monumental stone churches of Clairvaux and Fontenay

For Clairvaux nine altars are documented, UNTERMANN⁴²² has argued convincingly that this meant a 'Bernadine' plan with six chapels in the transept. This first stone church in Clairvaux, started around 1120 CE, had a strong influence on the other, later monumental churches of the Order and therefore need to be mentioned here. It was meant and built as a counterpoint to the Benedictine Cluny. Instead of the usual five apses of a Benedictine abbey Clairvaux had square-shaped chapels, with neither a crossing tower nor triforium or clerestory.

The abbey church of Fontenay dates back to the time when the church of Clairvaux was built as well and therefore is referred to as its 'official copy', as the first monumental stone church of Clairvaux did not survive into our time; for both churches the Cistercian did not use any curved lines in the plan, to follow their ideal of *rectitudo*.⁴²³ Fontenay was a daughter house of Clairvaux and founded in 1119 CE, the extant church from around 1130 CE is the earliest secured Cistercian abbey church with 'Bernadine' plan and thus gives an impression of the former dimensions and layout of the first huge stone churches of Cîteaux and Clairvaux (Fig.28).⁴²⁴ The presbytery as well as the square transept chapels are straight ended. Two rows of three windows in the eastern wall of the sanctuary (Fig.29) light the church; the upper row is round headed the lower one is pointed, in the gable additional five round headed windows are stacked. The eight bays of the nave and the side aisles are vaulted with pointed barrels, the piers separating them are rectangular and are applied with pilasters and columns. The aisles vaults (Fig.29) as well as the transept vaults are transverse to the main axis and at the vaults' springing are continuous string courses. Pointed arches are used at structural positions of the building, while round arches are used for windows and doorways. There is no defined crossing, as the nave runs through until it meets the lower sanctuary and transepts, making it the dominant space. The vertical plan of the nave shows no corbels and neither rich nor

420Untermann 2001, p.126.

421Untermann 2001, p.171.

422Untermann 2001, p.132.

423Untermann 2009, p.584.

424Untermann 2001, p.307-311.

detailed decorations, it further lacks the usual triforium as well as the clerestory, which causes the ceiling to hang quite low, thus giving the impression of the nave being quite dejected; its simplicity further increases the church's monumentality.⁴²⁵

According to UNTERMANN⁴²⁶, the abbey church of Fontenay was citing the High Romanesque architecture of Cluny and its rich column-pier subdivision. At least seven Irish houses followed the pattern of Fontenay in terms of the plan.⁴²⁷

425Untermann 2001, p.330.

426Untermann 2001, p.611.

427Stalley 1987, p.78.

3. The White Monks on the Green Island

Six centuries after Columban has travelled to the Continent, bringing Irish monasticism with him and founding monasteries in France, the relatively new Cistercian Order from France brought a new spirit of reform and the strict monasticism back to the island. At St. Malachy's instigation the Cistercian order was introduced to Ireland, in the second third of the 12th CE century. During his travel to Rome in 1140 CE, the archbishop of Armagh, St. Malachy, stopped and rested at Clairvaux, where he met the abbot, Bernhard, before he continued his journey. In Rome he asked papal permission to retire to the Abbey of Clairvaux, as he has been deeply impressed by the new order and its strict observance of the *regula benedicti*, but unfortunately his wish was rejected and he was sent back to his island. On his journey back home he again stopped at Clairvaux, this time leaving some of this Irish brethren behind, to be taught the *Rule* of the order. During the following years, Bernhard of Clairvaux and Malachy were corresponding to each other about the topic the site for the first Cistercian community in Ireland and eventually agreed on a valley through which the river Mattock meanders. In 1142 CE, a group of Irish and French brethren were sent to a place they called *fons mellis* (fount of honey) and which became known as the first Irish Cistercian house, Mellifont Abbey in Co. Louth. Exactly one-hundred and thirty years later, the last Irish Cistercian foundation, Hore in Co. Tipperary, was set up. But only the dissolution of the monasteries, in the mid 16th CE century, finally concluded the Cistercian era in Ireland.

The Cistercians were already established well on the Continent at that time and were now pushing on with a general expansion to the “frontiers of the Christian world”.⁴²⁸ When the first monks from Clairvaux arrived at Mellifont, the most essential elements of Cistercian life were already established, namely the one year of novitiate as well as the vows of poverty, obedience and chastity.⁴²⁹ Nevertheless the early Irish Cistercians had to face three major problems: Firstly, the foreign Gaelic language and the fact that Latin or French were hardly known throughout the island made it most difficult to hold contact with the Irish Cistercians.⁴³⁰ Additionally the mere geographical situation of Ireland made any frequent contact between the Irish and the French Cistercians a constantly troubled issue, leading to an drifting away from the mainstream of the order; in the early 13th CE century, the relations between the Continental and the Irish brethren became more tensed, as the attendance at the

428Stalley 1987, p.7.

429Stalley 1987, p.2.

430Stalley 1987, p.10, 16 :The Cistercians offered Latin and French language courses for the Irish monks but by the early 13th CE century many novices made their vows without mastering either of the two.

annual General Chapter by Irish abbot was too poor.⁴³¹ Secondly, in comparison to the rest of Europe, where the kingdoms became increasingly centralised, the political geography of Ireland in the early 12th CE century was most complicated, as the island still had maintained its early medieval *túatha*-patchwork with over a hundred *rí* and *ruíri* sometimes under the nominal rule of an *ard rí*, and the resulting local warfare has made it hard to establish an Irish Cistercian monastic network spanning the whole island.⁴³² Thirdly, the mentioned structure of the Irish society and Church, as neither an established division into dioceses nor an episcopal government but about two-hundred variously sized monasteries loyal to their local clans and often given in to secular interests and control were in exist, by the end of the 11th CE century.⁴³³ It was this bad situation of the once great Irish monasticism that made reforms necessary and led to the invitation of the Cistercians to Ireland by St. Malachy of Cashel.⁴³⁴ On the one hand, the order followed a strict rule and on the other hand – maybe even more importantly –, it had the well established and tested mechanisms to maintain the unity and to control the monks' obedience as well as the strict observance of the Cistercian *Rule*. For their ascetic and austere life the Cistercians were respected and admired by the Irish, as it evoke memories of the early Irish saints. Additionally the Cistercians had an efficient governmental system for their communities and the whole order and the knowledge to reclaim forests and to cultivate inhospitable sites. So after all the Cistercian order was perfectly equipped for its Irish mission, thus it is actually quite reasonable that it was chosen, to be brought over by the archbishop. The Cistercian success in Ireland proved Malachy's decision right, for after only four years there were already five affiliations of Mellifont in existence – by 1153 CE the number has risen to nine houses – and by 1170 CE four of the five Irish provincial kings had become patrons of the order and an over all of fourteen Cistercian communities had been set up in Ireland, which suggests a number of about two-hundred and fifty to five-hundred Irish Cistercians.⁴³⁵ From 1150 CE to 1250 CE, the Cistercians were predominant in terms of ecclesiastical architecture.⁴³⁶ The lesser kings were especially enthusiastic about new foundations, which meant prestige, served as loyal bastions as well as place for retirement and

431Stalley 1987, p.15.

432Stalley 1987, p.10.

433s. Chapter 2; Stalley 1987, p.11.

434Stalley 1987, p.11: Malachy initially was attracted to the Augustinian Canaons and by 1148 CE already more than fourty Irish houses were set up by them. Malachy later realized the Cistercian potential and even wanted to stay at Clairvaux when he stopped there in 1140 CE, a wish that was rejected by pope Innocent II. but eventually was granted partly later, as Malachy died in 1148 CE at Clairvaux during his second Continental journey.

435Stalley 1987, p.13.

436Stalley 1981, p.67.

burial, thus were of high political and personal value to the patrons.⁴³⁷ Due to the Irish geography, the Cistercians mainly settled in the south and east of the island, as the water supply was better and the hardly arable soil was slightly more fertile in comparison to the rocky north and west.⁴³⁸ The rate of construction of Irish Cistercian communities was quite slow, due to the low level of endowments in comparison to the Continental houses as well as the damages through local warfare and the high debts of the houses, due to an underestimation of the costs of the building project.⁴³⁹ The usual building materials for the Irish Cistercian monasteries, besides tons of timber, were sandstone and at some wealthier communities lead for the roofs; to use the precise and ashlar masonry for general walling and moulding features, as known from the Continent, would have been too expensive even for the few wealthy Irish houses, thus it was reserved for carvings and mouldings while the rest was done in rough undressed masonry.⁴⁴⁰

Due to the conflict between English and Irish, following the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1169/70 CE the Cistercians were actually split up into two separate orders; the usually more wealthy Anglo-Norman houses, where mainly situated in the south-east, were English or Welsh affiliations soon started using an austere Early English style for their churches, while the Irish houses were located in the west and all derived from Mellifont and its daughters and stick with an Irish, more decorative style in their architecture.⁴⁴¹ In 1216 CE, the General Chapter heard of the huge lack of discipline in the Irish communities and organized unsuccessful visitations – the visitors were shut out of the monasteries and an Anglo-Norman abbot was driven away – until in 1228 CE Stephen of Lexington was sent to the island; he had to use armed forces to re-install the abbot and left behind a new and strict *Rule*, which basically did not contend anything new but re-announced the Cistercian ideals and *Rule*.⁴⁴² As Mellifont was the centre of the conflict, which was interpreted as an conspiracy against the order, it became known as the 'Mellifont Conspiracy'.⁴⁴³ The consequences were severe: The affiliations of Mellifont were broken up and new mother-houses got appointed, lasting until 1274 CE and guarantee a stricter control.⁴⁴⁴ In these years between 1216 CE and 1230 CE, the Cistercian order was close to destruction in Ireland and the loss of contact with the rest of the

437Stalley 1987, p.14.

438Stalley 1987, p.31.

439Stalley 1987, p.44.

440Stalley 1987, p.47f.

441Stalley 1987, p.16.

442Stalley 1987, p.18.

443Stalley 1987, p.18: It actually was an conflict between the 'two orders' and a failure of the Cistercian visitation system; similar conflicts happened in Wales.

444Stalley 1987, p.19.

order was the main reason.⁴⁴⁵ Besides those conflicts, during the 13th CE century, many Irish Cistercian monasteries acquired feudal rights and hence enmeshed in feudal society; simultaneously the impatience of the communities with building their churches and claustral ranges lead to high debts for most of the abbeys.⁴⁴⁶ During the 13th CE century, in 1248 respectively, the General Chapter authorized the abbots of Mellifont, Dublin and Duiske to convoke the Irish abbots as often as necessary to take common counsel to defend the liberties of the order.⁴⁴⁷ Hore Abbey, set up in 1272 CE, was the last Cistercian foundation, during the 14th and 15th CE centuries only few new building were erected, the huge exceptions were Holycross Abbey, which was nearly entirely rebuilt after 1431 CE, and Jerpoint Abbey, where a new cloister was erected, between 1390 CE and 1450 CE, which has no parallel in the whole of Ireland.⁴⁴⁸ In 1357 CE, the General Chapter set that since safe visitations of the Irish houses were impossible, due to the wars, the abbots of those monasteries could be summoned at their father abbot's houses to receive visitation.⁴⁴⁹ During the Great Schism of the West (1378-1417 CE), the Irish Cistercians were released from obedience to Cîteaux's abbot.⁴⁵⁰ The 16th CE century, brought the Reformation under the English king Henry VIII., during the initial campaign in 1536/37 CE five Irish Cistercian abbey were suppressed and further sixteen in the period from 1539 CE to 1543 CE.⁴⁵¹ Some of the houses were protected by their local king, while others were transformed into parish churches; outside the Pale – a region around Dublin most loyal to the English – the Dissolution happened less rapidly.⁴⁵²

The distinctive Cistercian buildings became characteristic for the country and changed the island's monastic architecture for the centuries to come. The usage of stone for domestic buildings was pretty unusual for the 12th CE century Ireland, as even kings were satisfied with wattle and timber structures.⁴⁵³ As mentioned the monastic layout around a cloister derived from the Roman atrium and was already used in the St. Gall plan, but as Ireland never has been part of the Roman Empire and the early Irish monasteries consisted of a number of

445Stalley 1987, p.20.

446Stalley 1987, p.20.

447Ó Coubhuidhe 1999, p.59.

448Stalley 1987, p.27.

449Ó Coubhuidhe 1999, p.53.

450Ó Coubhuidhe 1999, p.58.

451Stalley 1987, p.27.

452Stalley 1987, p.28f.

453Stalley 1987, p.7.

loosely arranged and scattered huts around a – in comparison to Continental abbeys – very small church (Fig.5), the probably most revolutionary aspect of Cistercian monastic layout brought to Ireland was the square and rectangular cloister garth (Fig.30). As a result of the Anglo-Norman invasion, thinner mouldings, scalloped capital as well as cylindrical piers were used at the Irish Cistercian houses. Further the order took over the clerestory, triforium and open timber roofs from England, ignoring the order's custom. The tall and elegant lancet windows were unknown too prior to the Anglo-Normans arrival, as were another Gothic feature, like the ribbed vaulting, which was only used in two Irish communities at high level. From the mid 15th CE century on, the Cistercians regarded a crossing tower as essential for a house, mainly used as belfries and domestic accommodations, and it was obviously also a prestigious architectural feature to own. The Irish Cistercian towers (Fig.66, 81) show some distinct characteristics: they had two floors and were lit by ogee headed windows, were square in plan, of relatively low height and were constructed of rubble work, devoid of ornamentations as well as buttresses, string courses marked the base of the parapet.⁴⁵⁴ In many abbeys the construction meant that new piers and arches, especially in the crossing, needed to be built prior. A distinct Irish architectural feature is the 'dumb-bell' pier, maybe imported from Wales or Western England, in which twin shafts were cut out of a single block of stone and linked together by a thin plate or web which was used for cloister arcades on the island.⁴⁵⁵ There are three distinguishable types of 'dumb-bell' piers (Fig.32), the basic type with its round pseudo-colonettes, a type with polygonal colonettes and the most elaborate type with triple shafts taking the place of the single colonettes.

The Cistercian introduced the basic elements of both the Romanesque and Gothic design to Ireland and mixed it with regional techniques and styles.⁴⁵⁶ Simultaneously the Irish Cistercians were conservative in their attitude, betraying their general isolation and lack of information about new styles by sticking with the barrel vaulting, the absence of free standing piers in the transepts as well as ordering of the windows at eastern wall of churches.

“The Irish houses were orthodox in their arrangement and they formed a coherent and fairly stereotyped group within the order as a whole.”⁴⁵⁷

Of a total of thirty-three former Irish Cistercian monasteries, twenty-one site still show extant

⁴⁵⁴Stalley 1987, p.148.

⁴⁵⁵Stalley 1987, p.155.

⁴⁵⁶Stalley 1987, p.3, 20.

⁴⁵⁷Stalley 1987, p.53.

buildings, from which I have chosen the following five houses to represent the characteristics of the 'Irish Cistercian monastic architecture' of four-hundred years and to show their distinct Irish features.

3.1. The Bridgehead - Mellifont Abbey (1142)

It has been the archbishop of Cashel, Malachy, who corresponded with the abbot of Clairvaux, Bernhard, about the necessary conditions of a future Cistercian site and it has been him who negotiated with the king of Uriel, Donough O'Carroll ruling the middling kingdom and one of the five main parts of Ulster, to release the land in the Mattock valley which was going to become the first Irish Cistercian site. O'Carroll was the main benefactor of the foundation, thus he cleared the site and erected the necessary building prior to the arrival of the first Cistercians.⁴⁵⁸ In 1142 CE, after two years of training at Clairvaux, the Irish monks, Malachy had left with his friend Bernhard on the Continent, were sent back to their home island accompanied by French brethren and together they founded the abbey of Mellifont. The early months at their new house challenged the monks and a break up of the community was likely, fortunately those tensions did not last long and the abbey soon flourished, founding five daughter houses in only four years.⁴⁵⁹ However, the tensions did not vanish, during an argument in the early years the French brethren withdrew to Clairvaux eventually, as they could no longer live peacefully side by side with the Irish.⁴⁶⁰ Eventually this led to the mentioned Mellifont Conspiracy. In 1170 CE, there are one-hundred choir monks and three-hundred lay monks reported from Mellifont Abbey.⁴⁶¹ But with the rise of Mellifont came the decline of Monasterboice, an early Irish monastery only a few miles away. During the suppression of the monasteries Mellifont first became property of lord deputy, after 1566 CE Edward Moore transformed the abbey into a castellated house, in 1727 CE the estate was sold.⁴⁶²

3.1.1. The Architecture

It is bad luck that Mellifont Abbey, the first Cistercian house of the island, is most ruined and only little has remained, which is partly due to its transformation into an estate, on the other

⁴⁵⁸Stalley 1987, p.10f, 39.

⁴⁵⁹Stalley 1987, p.13.

⁴⁶⁰Stalley 1987, p.15.

⁴⁶¹Stalley 1987, p.148.

⁴⁶²Stalley 1987, p.233.

side the site of Mellifont is the most excavated on as well, thus it is still of major interest.

Mellifont I (Fig.35), the earliest church at the site and only known due to excavation, was consecrated in 1157 CE, thereby providing the abbey with numerous gifts and donations. Robert, a monk of Clairvaux already mentioned, came to Ireland to supervise the building of this first church, it was him who brought the first Burgundian elements and the knowledge acquired for monumental architecture to Ireland. Mellifont I had a slightly modified 'Bernadine' plan (Fig.35): a three aisled nave of eight bays, two transepts with three apses each and a roughly square-shaped presbytery. There were two unusual characteristics of Mellifont I, firstly the alternating apses in the transepts and secondly the crypt in the west of the nave (Fig.33). The six alternating transept apses meant that each of them needed to be roofed individually, as an continuous lean-to covering was not possible any more. According to STALLEY⁴⁶³ the crypt was needed due to the terrain, as the ground slopes down to the river and the burial chamber was the only possibility to keep the building level. This very special plan of the church has neither predecessors nor successors in Ireland. It is possible to study the piers of Mellifont I although they are partly covered up with later additions, probably square or rectangular in plan the north west pier had pilaster pointing towards the aisle.

The abbey's cloister initially formed a square, as the excavations showed, around 1200 CE the cloister garth was enlarged, by pushing the south range further to the south, and thereby its shape became rectangular.⁴⁶⁴ A short length of the cloister arcade of the 12th CE century ambulatory was reconstructed in 1954/55 CE, now five round-headed arches supported by slender, plain double-collumns without any base but with scalloped capitals, resting on a low wall, give an impression of the earliest Irish Cistercian cloister (Fig.36). STALLEY⁴⁶⁵ suggests, that the original chapterhouse at Mellifont, located in the east range, may have had a groin vaulting, dating to c. 1150 CE, over an rectangular plan and was lit by a Romanesque window in the east wall. A feature of Cistercian architecture only to be found at Mellifont, in Ireland, is the *ruelle de convers* or converse alley (Fig.35), an extra walled off lane parallel to the western claustral ambulatory, leading from the converse claustral wing to the church's converse door in its west wall.⁴⁶⁶

“ ... in the first buildings of Mellifont the right angle was evidently not much admired.”⁴⁶⁷

463Stalley 1987, p.57.

464Stalley 1987, p.54.

465Stalley 1987, p.130, 164.

466 In the later restorations the converse alleys were often removed, as they were not needed any more.

467Stalley 1987, p.49.

Mellifont II started with the remodelling of the eastern arm of the church between 1230 CE and 1320 CE (Fig.37).⁴⁶⁸ For the 13th CE century reconstruction, professional masons from outside of the order were employed, in the extant ruins of the abbey their various mason marks are still to find, proving that the time of manual labouring monks had pasted. The figure of eighteen surviving mason marks might gives a hint of the number of professional masons at the building site of Mellifont II.⁴⁶⁹ After a fire in 1304 CE, which had destroyed the church at Mellifont, around 1320 CE major works were going on at Mellifont Abbey.⁴⁷⁰ The south transept was enlarged and the nave was rebuilt with massive diamond-shaped piers of engaged shafts supported the new arches (Fig.37) and the south transept arch was decorated with double wave mouldings as was the doorway to the transept. According to the period the windows were maybe with curvilinear tracery, but that can not be proved. Probably due to the mere costs only the south-west crossing pier and first pier of the nave were executed in this lavishly Decorated style from England, before the plain octagonal compound piers were used for the rest of the abbey church. The northern transept (Fig.37, 38) has three aisles over a length of three bays with six square chapels – three in each aisle – the southern transept, due to the cloister, only consists of two aisles with three chapels but as well three bays. The transept chapels probably were separated by timer screens and ribbed-vaulted, as was the extended presbytery where the vault responds did not descend to the ground.⁴⁷¹ The piers in the northern transept, with filleted angle rolls and a single engaged column on the inner faces, indicate that the architect preferred to follow contemporary Irish Anglo-Norman trends instead of importing new styles from England or the Continent. Due to the massive crossing piers at Mellifont one can assume that there once was a tower, unfortunately the date of its erection is unknown. At some point between 1350 and 1500 CE the piers were enlarged, additional to the crossing piers it was necessary to buttress the first south nave pier.⁴⁷²

The new chapterhouse (Fig.39) was built about 1210-20 CE, in the 14th CE century its two bays of ribbed-vaulting were rebuilt, while the original roll moulded wall arches are still in place.⁴⁷³ The older chapterhouse was transformed into the vestibule for the new one.⁴⁷⁴ The octagonal lavabo at Mellifont from about 1200 CE (Fig.40) employs ribs in conjunction with

468Stalley 1987, p.61; 102.

469Stalley 1987, p.42: Mason marks appaered in Ireland after the Anglo-Norman invasion and all over the island. The actual porpose of them is still uncertain, most propably they were involved in qualitiy control and thus in the payment.

470Stalley 1987, p.112.

471Stalley 1987, p.61f, 102.

472Stalley 1987, p.144-146.

473Stalley 1987, p.131.

474Stalley 1987, p.165.

annular barrel vaults, its central pier was supporting a radiating pattern of moulded ribs with triple ordered arches forming the outer walls of the buildings.⁴⁷⁵ In the lavabo the capitals were ornamented and sculptured with grotesque animal heads, some of which have been excavated, while other are still *in situ* (Fig.41).⁴⁷⁶ Both vaulting, of the chapterhouse as well as of the lavabo, were Romanesque in style.

3.2. The 'School of the West' - Boyle Abbey (1148/61)

The monks who were eventually going to settle at *Buellium*, the latinisation of the local river Boyle, where an antecedent foundation named *Ath-da-Larc* (ford of the river) was located, left their mother house of Mellifont in 1148 CE and moved from site to site three times before they finally settled and founded Boyle Abbey in 1161 CE, following the invitation by the King of Moylurg.⁴⁷⁷ The McDermonts of Moylurg had a major role in defending Connaght against the Anglo-Normans during the 12th and 13th CE centuries but the strategic setting of Boyle Abbey led to its frequent plundering and occupation.⁴⁷⁸ In the 16th CE century the abbey got modified and was transformed for military needs.⁴⁷⁹

3.2.1. The Architecture

The plan of Boyle's abbey church is 'Bernadine' (Fig.42), the nave of eight bays has a northern and southern aisle. A doorway from 1215-20 CE (Fig.43), usually refereed to as the 'processional portal' with multiple recesses and two orders of roll mouldings leads from the south aisle to the cloister, its base and mouldings design is similar to the north arcade.⁴⁸⁰ Both the northern and the southern nave arcade have survived (Fig.44), so did parts of the clerestory and the western wall (Fig.49). There are two transept, one in the north and another in the south, both of which have pointed barrel vaults with small round headed windows in the east, in their two square chapels (Fig.45). The presbytery is square-shaped and again vaulted with a pointed barrel, the three lancet windows of the east wall were added later (Fig.46). Initially the chancel was lit by a double row of three round headed windows, as it can still be seen (Fig.47). Of the former ranges only little has survived, respectively only the sanctuary

475Stalley 1987, p.131.

476Stalley 1987, p.188.

477Kalkreuter 2001, p.23; Stalley 1987, p.13, 34, 39f.

478Kalkreuter 2001, p.23.

479Kalkreuter 2001, p.24.

480Kalkreuter 2001, p.51.

(Fig.51) and parts of the doorways of the chapterhouse (Fig.53) and the parlour (Fig.54) are extant in the east range.

The consecration of the finished church only took place in 1218/20 CE.⁴⁸¹ This building time of about sixty years explains the changes and breaks in style. Today we have knowledge of the following four separate phase of construction.

Phase I (c. 1161-80 CE): Following the standardized and general monastic as well as Cistercian practice, the first part of the abbey that was built after the foundation was the eastern part of the church, holding the presbytery (Fig.46) – not exactly aligned with the nave –, the transepts (Fig.45) as well as the monks choir, and shortly afterwards the eastern cloister range has followed.⁴⁸² This eastern arm had pointed arches and pointed barrel vaults, following the Burgundian 'Bernadine' plan. The *sedilia*, a single arched recess covering a stone bench, in the south wall of the chancel shows a stylised beast head (Fig.52) carved on the jamb, dating not much later than the foundation in 1161 CE itself, this carving is Hiberno-Romanesque masonry at its best, suggesting an Irish mason master. It seems to be an Irish version of a 'column-swallower' popular in western France and England at this time. The scalloped capitals in the crossing of Boyle (Fig.55) were transformed into plants by masons, as the cones are split down the centre, suggesting the opening of a flower, additionally the head of the capital is filled with leaves. In the north chapel of the north transept, one of the earliest capitals decorated with plant and leaf design are located, having parallels in Irish manuscripts illumination and Hiberno-Romanesque portals.⁴⁸³

The nave is built in an English style and has further three separate and distinguishable phases of construction showing various designs, dating from about 1175 to 1220 CE.⁴⁸⁴

Phase II (1175-80 CE): The first four bays of the south arcade (Fig.44) with massive and cylindrical shaped piers have round arches of two orders springing from octagonal capitals and abaci. The bases, alternating in thick and thin horizontal rolls, rest on square plinths, showing floral spurs in the angles. Most of the extant corbels in the spandrels of the arches were added later. They probably were supporting wall posts linked to the roof, giving the church a strong vertical accent and a clear bay division, unique in Ireland.⁴⁸⁵ The clerestory windows located above the arches support the theory of the wall posts. STALLEY⁴⁸⁶ states,

481Stalley 1987, p.43.

482Stalley 1987, p.47.

483Stalley 1987, p.183.

484Stalley 1987, p.87.

485Stalley 1987, p.89.

486Stalley 1987, p.89.

that due to the characteristic English style it seems possible that the mason master in charge has been an Englishman.

Phase III (1185-1200 CE): The first four bays of the north arcade (Fig.44) showing pointed arches supported by clustered piers, soon this expensive architecture was abandoned, as the fourth pier is octagonal. There are no Irish prototypes for the eight-shafted pier, which reached the island shortly before 1200 CE, thus it is likely that the source of the clustered piers was English.⁴⁸⁷

Phase IV (c. 1202-1220 CE): The final building period eventually finished the church. The mason master stuck with the round arches in the south arcade and the pointed arches in its northern counterpart. The piers in the west (Fig.48) are square in plan, their angles chamfered with three shafts on each inner face, supporting the inner order of the arches. There are no capitals or abaci interfering with the outer order rising. Long triple shafted corbels at spandrels level face both the nave and the aisles (Fig.48). Throughout the rest of the nave corbels of similar abaci profiles were inserted to support the mentioned wall posts for the roof (Fig.57), started shortly before 1218/20 CE. The west façade (Fig.49), with stairs running on the inside up to the former belfry, as well as its moulded doorway and the richly framed, tall lancet window all derived from this last building phase too (Fig.50).⁴⁸⁸

For the entire nave of Boyle Abbey about forty capitals were required for the piers and the corbels, of which seven were ornamented with animals (Fig. 57) and human figures, while the rest showed a variety and combination of geometrical and scallop and foliage ornament (Fig.56, 57).⁴⁸⁹ These extensive Romanesque carvings were direct contradiction of St. Bernhard's *Apologia* and the order's status'.

*Similar capitals were used in Mellifont, the mother-houses of Boyle, and at Boyle's daughter-house, Abbeyknockmoy, around 1400.*⁴⁹⁰

The impressive 13th CE century crossing tower at Boyle Abbey is the only example of an Irish Cistercian tower outside the Anglo-Norman affiliations; the western arch of the crossing rests on corbels, with nailhead ornament and round abaci, contrasting the other three arches, which have scalloped capitals and square abaci (Fig.55). Originally the nave was probably running through from west to east, meeting the chancel and the transepts at their present level, as the

487Stalley 1987, p.90f.

488Kalkreuter 2001, p.60f.

489Kalkreuter 2001, p.53-59: Kalkreuter distinguishes three different types of foliage ornament motifs, two different figure ornament motifs; Stalley 1987, p.184

490Kalkreuter 2001, p.59.

capitals of the transept arches suggest. Therefore the crossing and the tower were not part of the initial concept but, as the western arch, were added later.⁴⁹¹ Stairs in the presbytery's east wall led up to the room in the tower, from where the rooms above the transepts could be reached.

The western bays of Boyle Abbey with the characteristically English style (Fig.48), indicate that the mason master was very knowledgeable in western English architecture of this time and probably was trained either in Wales or the west of England, the style at Boyle abbey's western bays was named 'School of the West', describing a regional school between 1200 and 1240 CE.⁴⁹² The main features are the following: The outer order from pier to arch is plain and continuous, while the inner order shows the usual capital-base structure; the usage of octagonal abaci above triple-shafts, the centre one with a pointed bowtell moulding; capitals without any neck; wall buttresses with continuous angle shafts and the use of mini corbels, terminating an arch order.⁴⁹³ Further, features such as, the use of excellent ashlar masonry, precisely jointed, the abundance of low relief foliage ornament and the use of scalloped capitals, the complete framing of windows with hood mouldings, not interrupted by capitals, and sometimes string courses on both sides, retentions of late forms of chevron ornament and a preference for keeled mouldings, hollowed rolls were common but filleted mouldings were rare and there was a preference for certain base mouldings.⁴⁹⁴

The origins of the 'School of the West' laid in the Welsh and western English territories.⁴⁹⁵ As Boyle lies in the far west of the island the 'English-ness' surprises the scholars. The house was raided and partly destroyed in 1202 CE by English marauders, the abbot took part in the Mellifont Conspiracy and until at least 1235 CE there were no Anglo-Norman settlers in the region. So how and why Boyle abbey got its distinct English style remains a subject of further study.

3.3. The English cloister - Jerpoint Abbey (1160/62)

Jerpoint Abbey, which Latin name *Jeripons* probably refers to a bridge over the river Eoir, was founded in 1160 CE by Donal MacGillpatrick I., king of Ossory.⁴⁹⁶ It was the first

⁴⁹¹Stalley 1987, p.143.

⁴⁹²Stalley 1987, p.106.

⁴⁹³Stalley 1987, p.91.

⁴⁹⁴Stalley 1987, p.107.

⁴⁹⁵Stalley 1987, p.92.

⁴⁹⁶Stalley 1987, p.13, 40.

daughter of Baltingrass and the second granddaughter of Mellifont and was going to found two daughters, Killenny and Kilcooly.⁴⁹⁷ In 1227 CE, the community of Jerpoint Abbey took part in the Mellifont Conspiracy and greeted Stephen of Lexington, who was sent over to visit the Irish houses due to their enormous lack of discipline, with a riot and refuse to host him. In 1442 CE the house was granted an indulgence to help paying for the cloister, which is reported to have been in a bad state, as well as for the tower, the dormitory and some offices.⁴⁹⁸

In 1540 CE, Jerpoint Abbey was dissolved and its properties were granted to James Butler, Earl of Ormond.

3.3.1. The Architecture

The eastern arm and the first bay of the nave were built first and show richly decorated capitals (Fig.59, 60).⁴⁹⁹ Jerpoint developed its distinctive Cistercian brands of ornaments with ornamental frieze on the surfaces of the capitals; in Jerpoint there are fourteen different themes for such friezes and probably they were all painted once.⁵⁰⁰ At the great 14th CE century east window in the chancel (Fig.62), an angel was carved at the south jambs holding a soul, which is a Last Judgement iconography.⁵⁰¹ As well in the chancel are the *piscina* and the *sedilia* in the south wall, the latter one consisting of three round headed niches highlighted with a strip of chevron each (Fig.63). At the north-west crossing pier, there are still the traces of the initial springing of the lower transept arches to find, corresponding to the initial height of the presbytery. The lower transepts and sanctuary together with the pointed arches and pointed barrel vaults (Fig. 64, 65) indicate that the initial pre-15th reconstruction church, probably dating to 1160-70 CE, was following the Burgundian 'Bernadine' plan of Fontenay. It is possible to mark out the 12th CE century arrangement of the east window: The lower level consisted of at least three windows but it is uncertain, if there were any window openings above. In the first three bays of the nave, dating most likely around 1170 CE, the arcades follow an alternating system of square and cylindrical piers which changed in style (Fig.58, 61).⁵⁰² Already at the second pier the capitals became plainer with scalloped ornamentations. The third pier does not descent to the ground but rests on a high square plinth, levelling the

497Stalley 1987, p.247.

498Staley 1987, p.247.

499Stalley 1987, p.86.

500Stalley 1987, p.180-183.

501Stalley 1987, p.189.

502Stalley 1987, p.86.

adjoining perypyn wall. The fourth and fifth piers are of octagonal shape, furnished with shaft on the diagonal faces. The clerestory windows were placed over the piers instead of over the arches (Fig.61), a popular devise met at seven of the ten surviving clerestory in Irish Cistercian abbeys, its source may have lain in Wales or western England.⁵⁰³ According to STALLEY⁵⁰⁴ the church at Jerpoint was finished around 1200/10 CE.

During the reconstruction in the 15th CE century, the cloister was enlarged in the north, now including the space of the former south aisle of the abbey church. Furthermore rooms were constructed above the transept chapels and the tower (Fig.66), erected over the newly built crossing, eventually the chancel was equipped with an pointed barrel vaulting (Fig.62).⁵⁰⁵ The most interesting feature of this remodelling was the cloister, restored in 1953 CE, which is unique in Ireland in terms of its late medieval style and its carved figural program, even lacking a Continental Cistercian parallel (Fig.69). Unfortunately many sculptures were lost and the exact positions of the different figures are unknown. There may have been some sort of commemorative program of benefactors or each of the four walks was dedicated to one theme, visibly maybe not exclusively to the monks.

The cloister at Jerpoint Abbey houses the earliest known 'dumb-bell' piers in Ireland, dating to c. 1390-1400 CE.⁵⁰⁶ The piers have bases and capitals with a web between the pseudo-colonettes, providing the main field of sculpture . The program of the bases and capitals range from human faces, animals and hybrids to grotesques and flowers and does not lack humour. The web of the 'dumb-bell' pier depict a mixture of sacred and profane topics and people: saints, ecclesiastics, religious images, civilians and grotesque beasts. Best preserved and therefore as well to identify are seven knights two of them carrying a shield, three noble ladies, various churchmen among whom at least one bishop and an abbot, and two depictions of St. Christopher as well as one of St. Catherine (Fig.70, 71). The style of the figures is old-fashioned and unorthodox for the end of the 14th CE century, as they are depicted with stiff, frontal poses and their faces lack expression as well as individuality, and their anatomy as well as their proportions are incorrect. On the other hand, their simplicity and expressiveness has a 'Neo-Romanesque' flavour, suggests STALLEY.⁵⁰⁷ The female weepers at the King Edward III. tomb in Westminster Abbey share the stiff pose, the reticulated hairstyle and the

⁵⁰³Stalley 1987, p.87.

⁵⁰⁴Stalley 1987, p.44, 87.

⁵⁰⁵Stalley 1987, p.45, 127f, 144: The indulgence granted in 1442 CE for the repair of the abbey, was probably at least partly used to erect the tower.

⁵⁰⁶Stalley 1987, p.155.

⁵⁰⁷Stalley 1987, p.191.

frontal depiction with the noble ladies of Jerpoint Abbey's cloister.⁵⁰⁸ Therefore the cloister copies contemporary English fashion of the last quarter of the 14th CE century, but there is still a huge difference in skill of the masons. John Hunt has dated the cloister, according to the clothes the figures are wearing, to c. 1400 CE.⁵⁰⁹ In the only document about the cloister, from 1442 CE, the papal indulgence mentions that the cloister is in bad repair. Since there were no documented damages due to warfare at Jerpoint Abbey and the mid 15th CE century is too early for a only fifty year old cloister to be in bad repair, the date of the cloister remains a mystery.

From the same period as the cloister, c. 1390-1400 CE, dates the later reader's bay in the north ambulatory, used for the daily Collation, a ceremony when one monk was reading from a book and his brethren were supposed to listen in silence before entering the church for Compline, the last service of the day.⁵¹⁰ In the east range the usual chapterhouse (Fig.68) was located, while the dark, sombre room with a plain barrel vault was the complete opposite of the chapterhouse at Mellifont (Fig.39). Further some dormitory windows from the first floor of the east range (Fig.72) and the doorway linking the church and the cloister ambulatory (Fig.67) survived until today .

3.4. The conservative retrospective view – Hore Abbey (1272)

Hore Abbey was the eight and last affiliation of Mellifont as well as the last Cistercian foundation of Ireland prior to the dissolution.⁵¹¹ Although its official name was Abbey of the (lower) Rock of Cashel, it is generally referred to as Hore Abbey; its Irish name *Mainistir Liath* literally translates into Grey Abbey or Hoar Abbey, and Ó COUBHUIDHE⁵¹² therefore suggests that the name was created by the local people of Cashel, due to a consonant shift. Legend has it that, due to a dream of David MacCarville, archbishop of Cashel, plotting his beheading by the Benedictine monks of Cashel, the Benedictine order was banished and the Cistercian abbey of Hore was founded next to the Rock of Cashel, in 1272 CE.⁵¹³ Highly unusual for the Cistercians was the location of a new house close to a major city, as Cashel

⁵⁰⁸Stalley 1987, p.191f.

⁵⁰⁹Stalley 1987, p.191.

⁵¹⁰Stalley 1987, p.160.

⁵¹¹Ó Coubhuidhe 1999, p.305.

⁵¹²Ó Coubhuidhe 1999, p.311.

⁵¹³Stalley 1987, p.40: In the context of this story, it is interesting to mention that in 1196 CE the archbishop himself has joined the Cistercian order.

even had a cathedral. It is one of only three Cistercian churches founded in the second half of the 13th CE century. STALLEY⁵¹⁴ assumes that it erected within two or three decades.

Hore Abbey was dissolved in 1540 CE but three monks stayed to serve the local parish church, somewhat later the monastery was transformed into a small village.⁵¹⁵

3.4.1. The Architecture

Hore Abbey is the only Irish Cistercian house with the cloister located in the north instead of the usual southern setting – the reason is still unknown.⁵¹⁶ Apart from this, a quite conservative 'Bernadine' plan was used (Fig. 73). The simple presbytery (Fig.74) is pretty much square in plan with three tall lancet windows lighting it. The *piscina* in the south wall of the chancel has twin compartments, each framed by colonettes and trefoiled arches (Fig.77). The aumbry probably had a wooden door, judging the rebate (Fig.77). The two transepts, in the north and the south, each has two chapels which are straight ended. Unfortunately the actual vaults did not survive but according to the springing of the vaults one can assume pointed barrel vaults (Fig.75). Initially there was no defined crossing, like the tower it was an 15th CE century addition, erected between 1450 and 1500 CE (Fig.81).⁵¹⁷ The nave has six bays, a northern as well as a southern aisle. The arches of the plain arcades in the nave were blocked to secure the stability (Fig.79), the piers are square in plan and show chamfered corners. The extant clerestory has quatrefoil shaped windows, some of which also blocked, located above the piers (Fig.79). The numerous unfilled scaffolding holes give a very austere and functional impression of the abbey. Of the sacristy and the chapterhouse only little has remained (Fig.76, 78) and of the cloister a single arch in the south-east corner did survive. (Fig.80). Nevertheless, due to the dark carboniferous limestone allowing the sharp edges and details to preserve for centuries, the extant carvings and mouldings at Hore Abbey are still in good conditions.⁵¹⁸ Furthermore are some of the mason marks found at Hore Abbey are also found at Holycross Abbey, indicating that the masons moved from one building site to the other after finishing.⁵¹⁹

The conservative Early English style used at Hore Abbey would have suited a building around

514Stalley 1987, p.109.

515Stalley 1987, p.246.

516Stalley 1987, p.56.

517Stalley 1987, p.144.

518Stalley 1987, p.48.

519Stalley 1987, p.43.

1210 CE more sufficiently than the actual date of 1280 CE.⁵²⁰ One has to assume that there either was no interest in more contemporary designs or that there was no knowledge of it, at the building site of Hore Abbey.

3.5. The 15th century Revival - Holycross Abbey (1180)

Holycross Abbey was founded by Donall Ó Briain, king of Limerick, the monks coming from Monasteranenagh, an affiliation of Mellifont – succeeding Benedictine monks at the site.⁵²¹ From 1279 CE onwards it was a direct daughter of Mellifont.⁵²² Although the community was set up in Anglo-Norman territory it remained Irish in attitude in terms of architecture.⁵²³ Of the initial 12th CE century monastery only parts have survived. The extant building is the result of the 12th CE century remains, an 15th CE century restoration and a renovation in the 1970s. Already in 1364 CE, James, the 2nd Earl of Ormond, has put Holycross under his special protection.⁵²⁴ James, the 4th Earl of Ormond, repeated this protection in 1414 CE and funded the following reconstruction of the abbey in the mid 15th CE century.⁵²⁵ The decision was probably connected with the relics of the 'true cross' the abbey possessed, as the community had a sizeable income through pilgrimage, donations and begging and probably wanted to provide a more worthy setting for the relics.⁵²⁶ After the suppression of the monasteries in Ireland, Holycross was one of only four houses that continued monastic life, as pilgrims still resorted to the relics of the abbey and the Earl of Ormond allowed the church to maintain as college of secular priests.⁵²⁷

The 15th CE century building was restored 1971-75 CE and is since used as local parish church.⁵²⁸

3.5.1. The Architecture

In the 15th CE century, there were only two Cistercian houses experiencing a extensive rebuilding program, one of which was Holycross Abbey. The reconstruction of Holycross

⁵²⁰Stalley 1987, p.110.

⁵²¹Ó Coubhuidhe 1999, p.165f.

⁵²²Ó Coubhuidhe 1999, p.176.

⁵²³Stalley 1987, p.245.

⁵²⁴Stalley 1987, p.115.

⁵²⁵Stalley 1987, p.113.

⁵²⁶Stalley 1987, p.45, 115, 117.

⁵²⁷Ó Coubhuidhe 1999, p.224; Stalley 1987, p.227.

⁵²⁸Stalley 1987, p.1.

was, according to STALLEY⁵²⁹ the “most lavish architectural project of the late Middle Ages in Ireland”. He further argues that the complexity of the tracery at Holycross Abbey suggests the existence of an extra 'tracing house'.⁵³⁰ The extant mason marks with a splendid array of deeply cut floral and interlace motifs, which probably were used as decoration and a memorial moment meant to be seen, indicate approximately a mason team of twenty pupils for the reconstruction period.⁵³¹ At Holycross Abbey there were as well some decorative carvings of animals and foliage pattern, forming one of the delights of late Gothic Irish art.⁵³²

Dating the reconstruction period is quite difficult. The hard blue limestone at Holycross only had become popular after 1400 CE in Irish masonry.⁵³³ The *sedilia* in the chancel gives the *terminus post quem* date 1405 CE for the church.⁵³⁴ LEASK⁵³⁵ dates the cloister to c. 1448-55 CE, assuming it the oldest part of the reconstruction, and the church to the third quarter of the century. In contrast, STALLEY⁵³⁶ suggests that the beginning of the restoration was in 1431 CE, lasting at least until the end of the century and possibly until well into the 16th CE century and he dates the eastern arm as well as the erection of the tower to the decades between 1460 and 1500 CE.

The traditional 'Bernadine' plan was still used for the 15th CE century reconstruction of the abbey (Fig.82). As the height was maintained in the eastern part, the main change was the insertion of the rib-vaulting with liernes and tiercerons pattern. The reticulated window in the east wall of the chancel has six lights and any crusing, giving a hardly lively impression (Fig.84). In the south wall the *sedilia* is inserted (Fig.86), with three ogee arches supporting an ornate attic and canopy and a panel of leaf carvings fronts the bench. Between the ogee arches are five shields, three of which charged with the arms of England, Ormond and Fritzgerald. The recessed space as well as the underside of the canopy are covered with miniature tierceron vaults. It was produced by the same workshop as the shrine in the south transept.⁵³⁷

The south transept is not vaulted and still shows the nightstairs of the 15th CE century remodelling. There are two chapels, both vaulted and square in plan with their windows both having three lights, of which the centre on ending in a curious “exotic head” and the round

529Stalley 1987, p.43.

530Stalley 1987, p.50.

531Stalley 1987, p.43.

532Stalley 1987, p.196.

533Stalley 1987, p.113.

534Stalley 1987, p.115: The royal arms of England shown above the *sedilia* depicts three fleur-de-lis, as the reduction to three happend in 1405 CE the *sedilia* and therefore the *terminus post quem* is sercured.

535Leask 1960, p.60.

536Stalley 1987, p.115, 144.

537Stalley 1987, p.200.

headed side lights showing a Decorated style with western English origins (Fig.91).⁵³⁸ The wall between the chapels was replaced by a small architecture, sometimes referred to as tomb sometimes as shrine, of French Flamboyant design (Fig.88). On both sides the three arches are supported by spiral columns without any capitals, which rest on a low wall ornamented with blank ogee arches and elaborate foliage pinnacles (Fig.89). The shrine is covered by three bays of tierceron vaulting, above which a moulded string course separates the small architecture from the plain wall. The possibility of walking into was probably not part of the initial intention, as the function is generally explained with the presentation of the relic of the cross. Above the south transept there were chambers some equipped with fire places, thus designed for domestic use as the abbot's lodging.⁵³⁹ The rooms above the chancel and the northern transept were reachable as well, and those above the northern chapels may have been used as watching chambers for the relics below (Fig.83).⁵⁴⁰

The north transept has two rib-vaulted chapels of square plan too. In contrast to the south transept, there are no buttresses in the east but the north transept walls in the west were given a pronounced batter (Fig.82). There is another shrine or tomb (Fig.90), initially meant for the north-west angle of the northern transept, but it is neither part of the extant church nor shown; it was three bays long and one bay wide with a vaulted canopy, its arcades were supported by piers with attached columns and buttresses dividing them in separate bays.⁵⁴¹ Also in the northern transept, a *piscina* with a multi-cusped ogee arch and brought decorative mouldings can be seen (Fig.87). On the western wall of the north transept a mural, depicting a hunting scene, can be seen probably dating to c. 1500 CE (Fig.92, 93).⁵⁴²

The original nave was persevered but new windows in the west and north were inserted during the 15th CE century restoration. It is puzzling that the architects did not built a clerestory, making the nave unnecessarily dark (Fig.85). The reconstruction of the nave may have lasted well into the 16th CE century, as suggested by the awkward windows in the north aisle, where the tracery is cusp-less, as well as the great west window of large un-cusped Perpendicular style. Nevertheless some of the original 12th CE century structure is left, respectively the north arcade of crude rubble piers without capitals or abaci (Fig.96) and the doorway at the east end of the south aisle – still *in situ* and leading into the cloister (Fig.94).

538Stalley 1987, p.120.

539Stalley 1987, p.123.

540Stalley 1987, p.123: Such rooms in the upper levels of the churches became something like a fashion in the 15th CE century and can be found at other houses as well, e.g. at Jerpoint Abbey, a separate staircase was installed on the north side of the church. At some houses the towers even were transformed into tower houses.

541Stalley 1987, p.116.

542Stalley 1987, p.214.

The cloister at Holycross seems to be rectangular but when the width of the western ambulatory is added the cloister has a square shape of nearly 100 ft each side.⁵⁴³ The doorway leading to the former chapterhouse is still extant (Fig.95), while the cloister arcades were reconstructed in the north and west ranges in differing designs (Fig.97) during the 20th CE century.

The only complete west range of an Irish Cistercian house at Holycross Abbeys today houses a shop and a tourist information and unfortunately is not further open to the public.

The reconstruction of Holycross Abbey during the second half of the 15th CE century was a hardly uniform campaign, as the various window tracery pattern, the five different vaulting pattern and the inconsistent use of architectural details show. The general design is antithesis to English Perpendicular and the celebration of English Decorated Era with traces of Romanesque as well as Early English elements.⁵⁴⁴ The revival of the Decorated style was due to the diminishing authority of the English Lordship in Ireland.⁵⁴⁵ STALLEY⁵⁴⁶ points out that the Scottish architecture was showing the same belated taste of Decorated style and curvilinear tracery style as the Irish, sharing the Irish resistance against Perpendicular.

Although the general choice of style at Holycross was backward looking, the vaulting has a few quite distinct features: Firstly, the pitch is low and the diagonals are formed of semi-circular arcs, giving the vaults a heavy, rounded profile; secondly, there is a noticeable reluctance to soften the line of the ribs by using mouldings, as most of the Irish ribs have chisel or wedge-shaped profile; thirdly, the omission of carved bosses at the intersection of ribs, and fourthly, the handling of the ribs descending to the wall, the ribs merge together and taper to a fine point, lacking any capital or corbel.⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴³Stalley 1987, p.54.

⁵⁴⁴Stalley 1987, p.122.

⁵⁴⁵Stalley 1987, p.122.

⁵⁴⁶Stalley 1987, p.123.

⁵⁴⁷Stalley 1987, p.137f.

Conclusion

As this paper shows, the Middle Eastern monasticism of the early centuries of the first millennium did survive partly into the Irish Cistercian order of the high and late Middle Ages. The traces of the Desert Father are of course more of a theological and philosophical nature. Their ideals of living a remote and eremitical life of poverty, simplicity and chastity derived and survived from the first desert monks to the Cistercians' time. But in some aspects the Irish Cistercians were slightly different from their Continental brethren, probably at least partly due to their isolation and the resulting bad communication, as it became immanent during the Mellifont Conspiracy. Additionally the Anglo-Norman invasion had caused the problem of a 'split' Irish Cistercian order, causing furthermore problems in terms of unity. Hence the Irish Cistercians did not follow the order's architectural developments of the Continent but instead established a style which can be described as simple and conservative with early Irish and English influences.

The ideas and ideals of the early Christian Desert Father of Egypt, most important among whom being Anthony and Pachomius, reached Europe through people exiled or studying in the Middle East. Soon this early monasticism spread not only over the whole of the Continent but also to the British Islands. The semi-eremitical life within a community has first reached the island of Ireland in the late 4th or early 5th CE century. Until the 12th CE century, the Irish Church, a bunch of family businesses dominated by the Irish *derbfine*, and its monasteries and houses of prayer held up the 'traditions of the desert' in theological, philosophical and architectural terms. On the philosophical side, they generated the early Irish monasticism, which was going to get in touch with Europe, in the early 7th CE century, when Columban decided to travel the Continent and founded monasteries, following the strict early Irish monastic Rule. On the architectural side, early Christian Ireland developed distinct features of its own for stone churches, namely the *antae*, the butterfly plans and the corbelled vaulting, which had derived from the early timber construction. The layout of the early monasteries of the island divides the monastic enclosure in different 'spheres' of different importance and function, either referring to the Anastasis Rotunda in Jerusalem or to the Irish ringforts and prehistoric centres, with loosely arranged buildings scattered around the church. This layout was based on the semi-eremitical and cenobitic life of the early Desert Fathers. The sites of the early Irish Christian communities were mainly remote from any civilization but the major 'monastic cities' of those days were close to major settlements.

The Cistercians, coming to Ireland in 1142 CE with the remains of the early Irish monastic ideal of Columban, could not reject the Irish tradition of masonry carvings, known from the early Irish High Crosses. Thereby the Irish Cistercians did not obey the refusal of any *superfluitas*, as the *Apologia* and the order's understanding on architecture would have demanded. According to the *regula benedicti* they choose remote sites and tried live a self-sufficient life, circling around the daily prayer and hard manual labour, showing huge parallels to the early Irish monks. In similarity to their Continental brethren, the Irish Cistercians did not follow their *Rule* as strict as actually intended. Shortly after the foundation of the order, the observance of the original ideas of a life of poverty and simplicity became sloppy and eventually were unofficially abandoned but did survive as part of the Cistercian identity. At that point the difference between the Cistercians and the Benedictines and Cluniacs did no longer exist, as the manual labour was done by the converse and the communities had huge endowments.

On the one hand, the Irish Cistercians were quite liberal in terms of decorative carvings, as seen for example at Boyle Abbey's beast head of the *sedilia* as well as the ornamented capitals in the nave at the abbeys of Jerpoint and Boyle, and the capital of the lavabo at Mellifont, all of which show the distinct Hiberno-Romanesque style. This Hiberno-Romanesque style and its combination with English elements was executed most perfectly by the 'School of the West' between 1200 and 1240 CE, and is best observed at Boyle Abbey. On the other hand, the Irish Cistercians had a conservative attitude towards architecture, executed in the consequent rejection of an alternative to the 'Bernadine' plan. Furthermore the Irish Cistercians refused complex vaulting, sticking instead with the barrel vault for a long period and accepted vaulting exclusively in the chancel and chapels as well as in the transept at a later point in their history. This simple barrel vault that the Irish Cistercians were favouring for so long, reminds one of the early corbelled vault of the early Irish churches. The very conservative architectural attitude was experienced in the 13th CE century building of Hore Abbey as well as in the 15th CE century reconstructions of Holycross Abbey and the figural program at the cloister of Jerpoint Abbey. In all these cases the architectural design was backward looking, using a style of the former centuries. The plain wall of the nave arcades, the simple pier design, the unpretentious rubble masonry for the simple barrel and ribbed vaulting as well as a general austere and functional impression of the abbeys, as seen at Hore Abbey, communicated the Cistercian ideals of poverty and simplicity – covering up the lavish decorations. Although it has to be mentioned that most of the Irish Cistercian houses actually were quite poor, hence they did not really opted for a most simple and austere architecture

entirely freely. The Irish Cistercians started building crossing towers quite early and according to the secular Irish lords, some of the abbots used the abbey's tower as their own tower house. Other Cistercian architectural features hardly met outside of Ireland were the 'dumb bell' pier, whose origins are uncertain, but spread all over Ireland or into other orders, the quite unusual location of clerestory windows above the piers at some sites, a possible result of the unvaulted naves, and the complete absence of bay division with the exception of Boyle Abbey. The questions I drew up in the beginning, according to my research, can be answered as follows.

1. The Irish Cistercians indeed developed a distinct style, based on Burgundian, English and early Irish elements and it stands out through a simple, plain design with an exception on capital design. The traditional Irish craftsmanship of stone carving is found in the Hiberno-Romanesque style at the abbeys of Boyle, Mellifont I, Jerpoint and the 12th century remains at Holycross. Due to proximity with England and Wales many elements seeped into the Irish Cistercian architecture, as seen in the design of the 15th century cloister at Jerpoint Abbey and the reconstructed Holycross Abbey, as well as the 'dumb-bell' piers, the massive cylindrical piers at Boyle Abbey and the alternating pier design in the abbey church of Jerpoint. The Burgundian 'Bernadine' plan was used in Ireland from the 12th until the 15th CE century, and together with the reluctant use of vaulting, it proves a conservative architectural attitude of the Irish Cistercians.
2. Of the ideas of the early Christian monastic communities of the Middle East, mainly the theological and philosophical ideals had survived the centuries of changes. They formed the cornerstone for European monasticism and were of major importance for the early Irish monasticism, which propagated a strict and austere semi-eremital life remote from society. The Cistercian strongly identified with the early Desert Fathers but soon these ideas were only ideals, for the Continental as well as for the Irish brethren, with only little reference to the actual reality.

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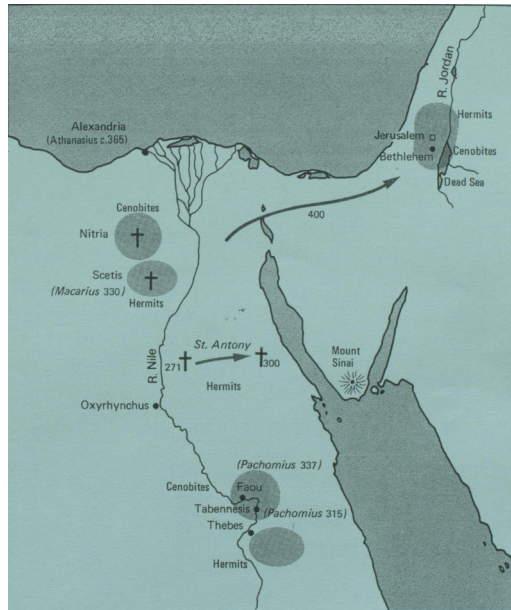


Fig. 1: Early Christian communities in the Middle East.



Fig. 2: The temptation of Christ, Book of Kells (folio 202 v.)



Fig. 3: House-shaped shrine from the eighth century.

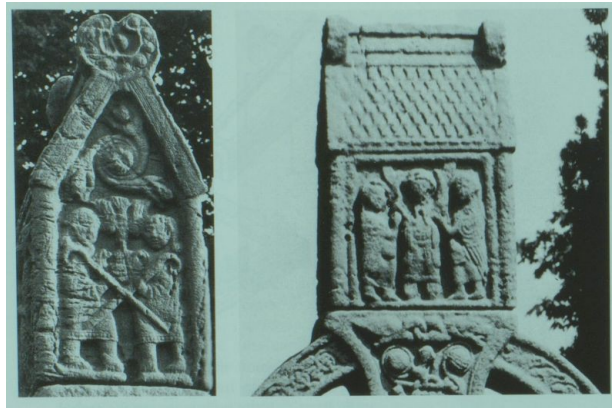


Fig. 4: Church-shaped capstone of Muiredach's Cross, Monasterboice.

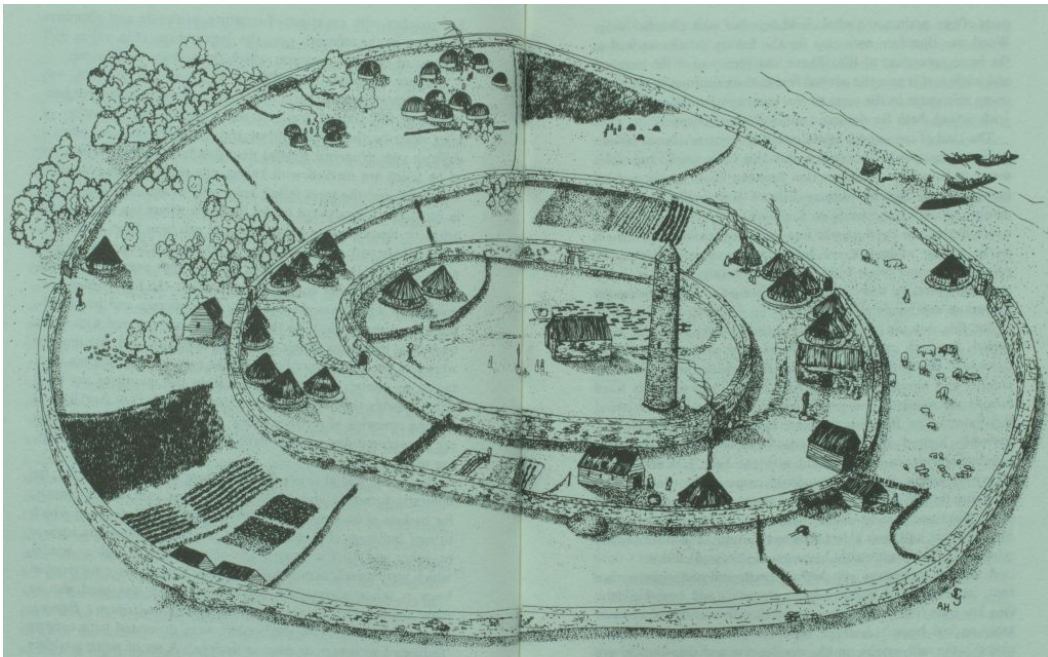


Fig. 5: An imaginative reconstruction of a tenth-century Irish monastery based on Nendrum.

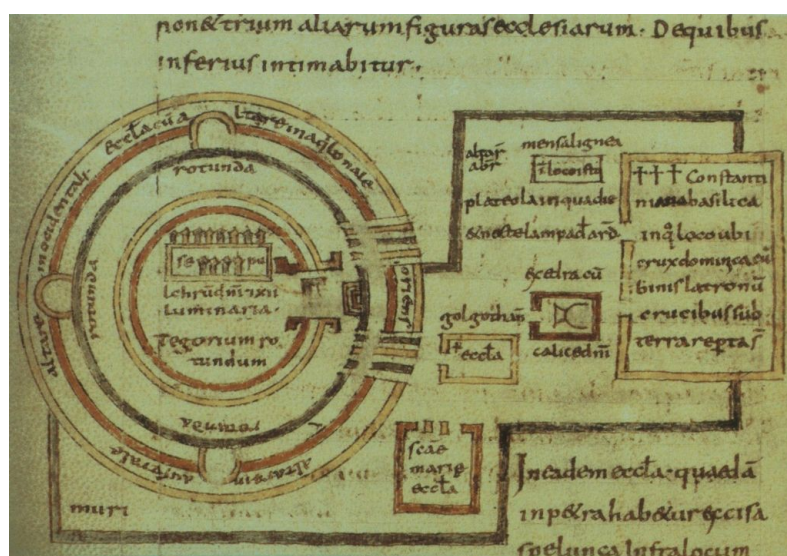


Fig. 6: The Holy Sepulchre complex, De locis sanctis (ÖNB, Cod. 458, folio 4 v.).



Fig. 7: St. Mac Dara's, Co. Galway.



Fig. 8: Typology of drystone churches after Rouke & Marshall.

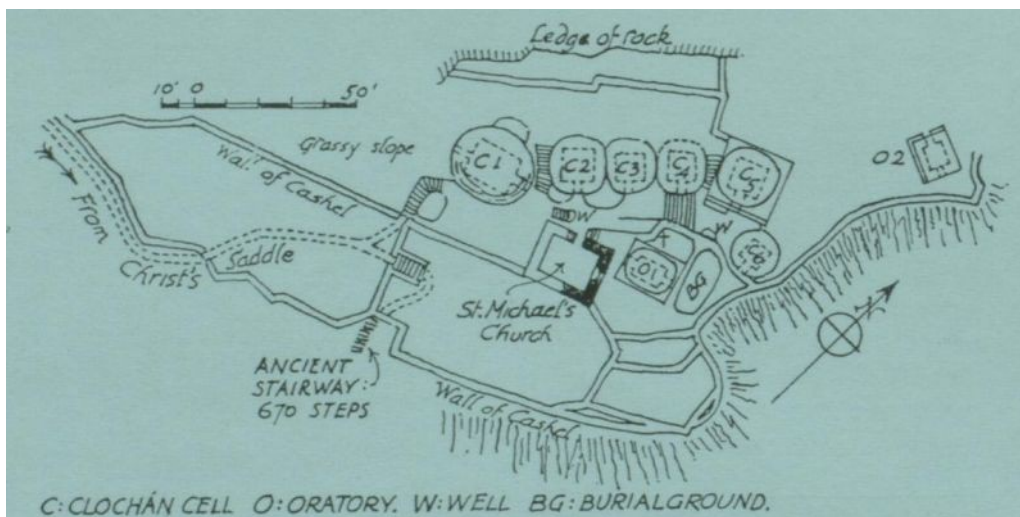


Fig. 9: Skellig Michael, Co. Kerry, layout of the monastery.

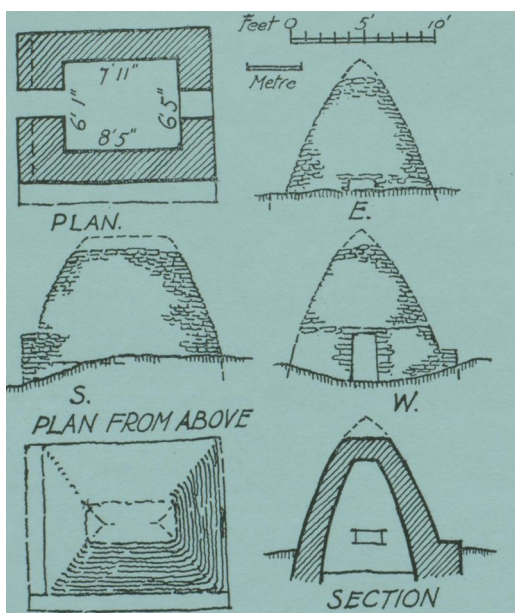


Fig. 10: Skellig Michael, Co. Kerry, oratory.

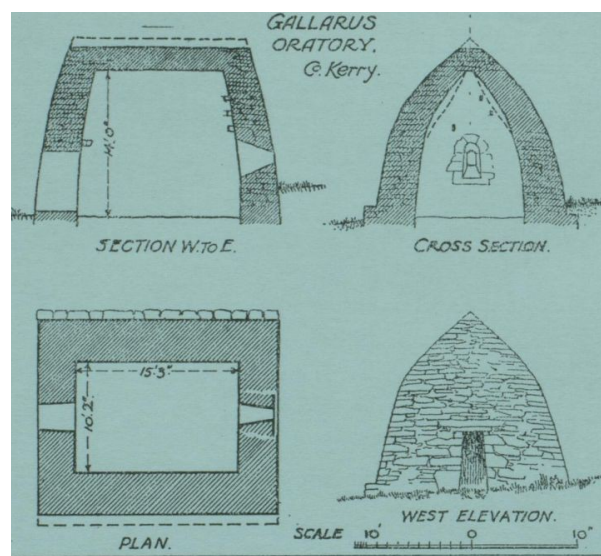


Fig. 11: Gallarus Oratory, Co. Kerry.

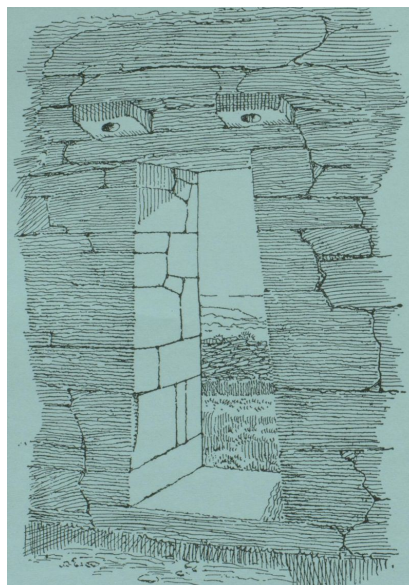


Fig. 12: Gallarus Oratory, inside, left: east wall, right: west wall



Fig. 13: Inishmurray, Co. Sligo.



Fig. 16: The settlement of Glendalough, Co. Wicklow, layout.



Fig. 17: Glenadlough, the Cathedral from the west.

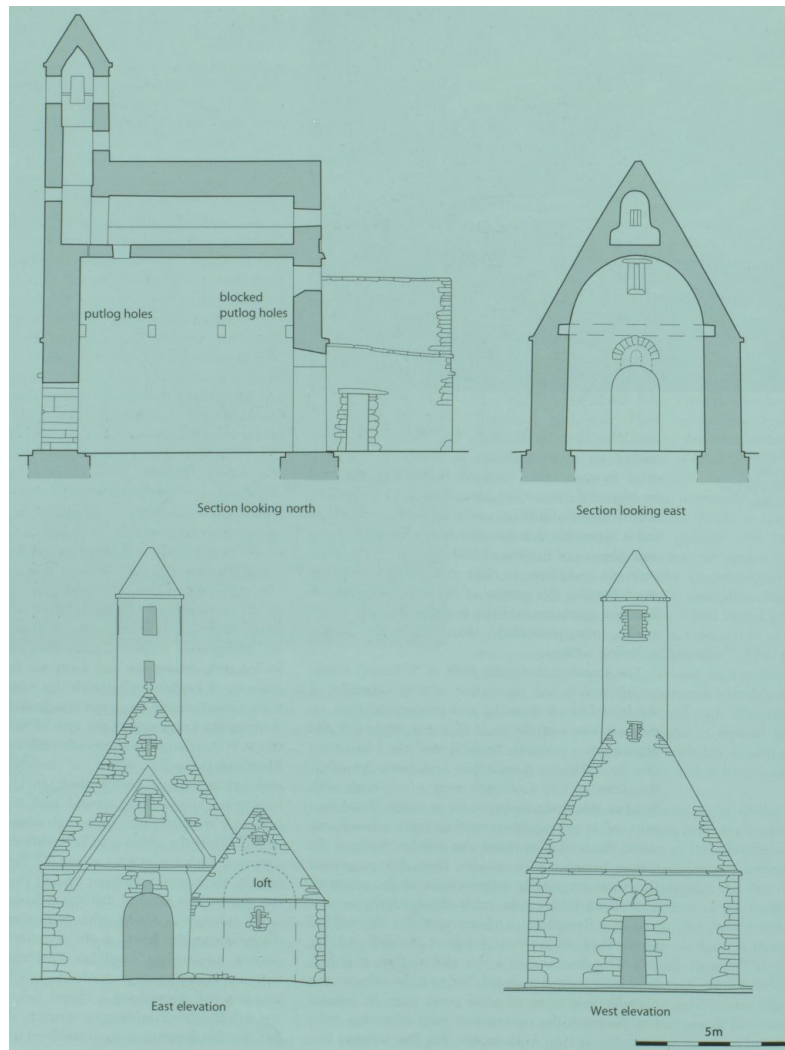


Fig. 18: Glendalough, elevation and section of St. Kevin's House.

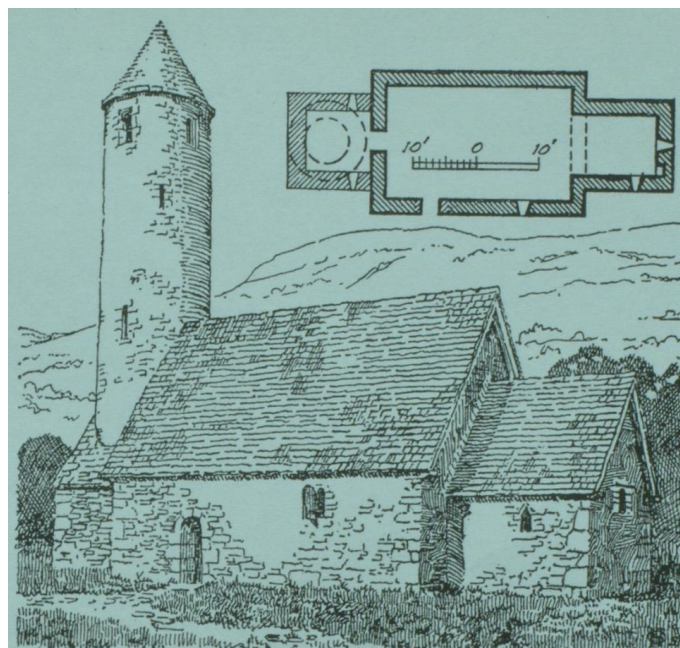


Fig. 19: Glenadlough, conjectural restoration of Trinity Church.



Fig. 20: Clonmacnoise, Romanesque nunnery.

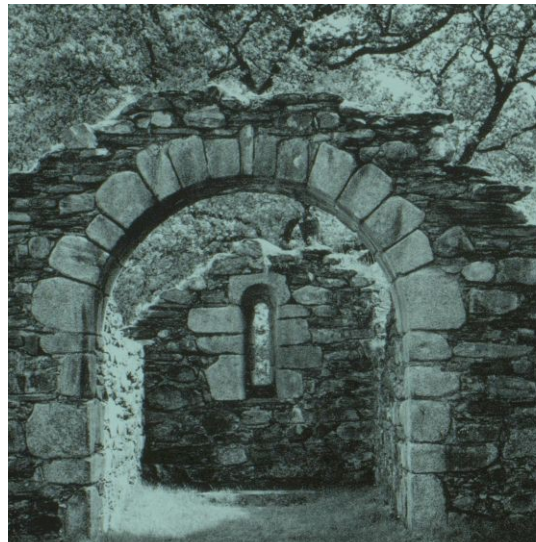


Fig. 21: Glendalough, chancel of Reefert Church.

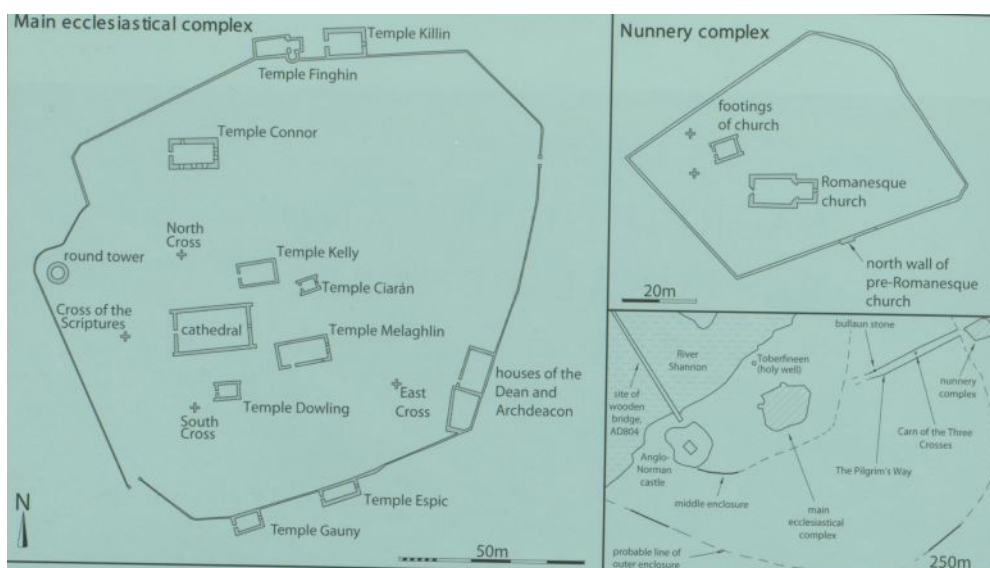


Fig. 22: The monastic complex at Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly.



Fig. 23: Clonmacnoise, Temple Ciarán.



Fig. 24: Clonmacnoise, Temple Melaghlin.



Fig. 25: Clonmacnoise, Temple Finighin.



Fig. 26: Conmacnoise, Temple Dowelling and Temple Hurpan.



Fig. 27: Conmacnoise, remains of Temple Kelly.

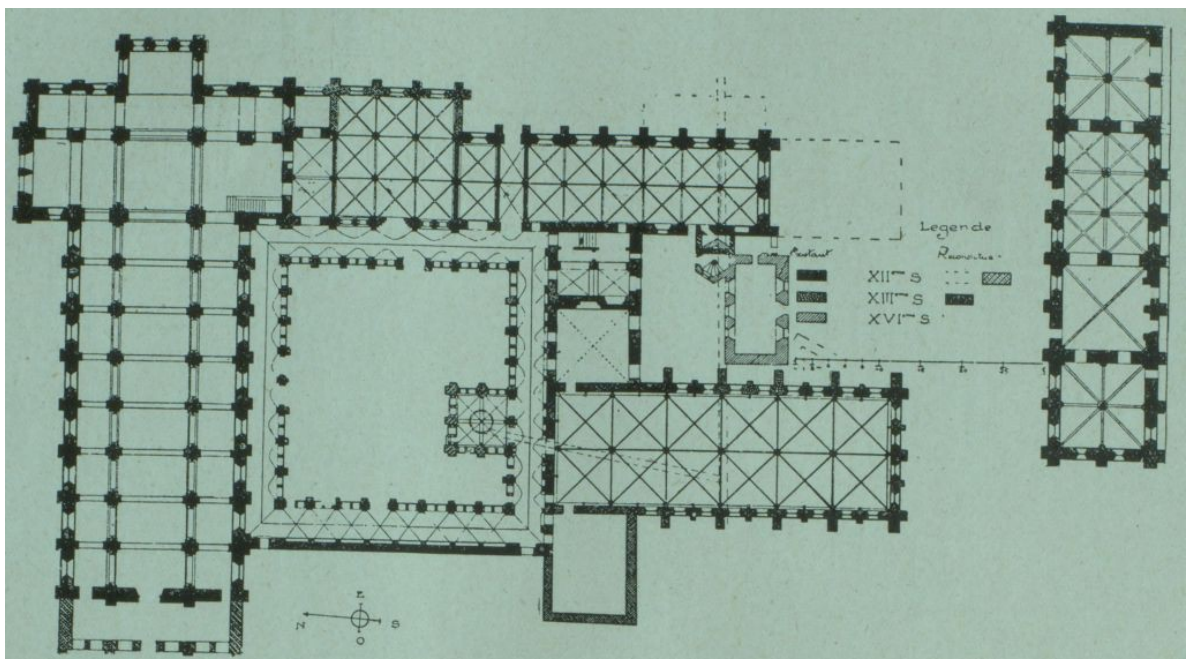


Fig. 28: Fontenay Abbey, plan.



Fig. 29: Fontenay Abbey, left: nave, right: aisle.

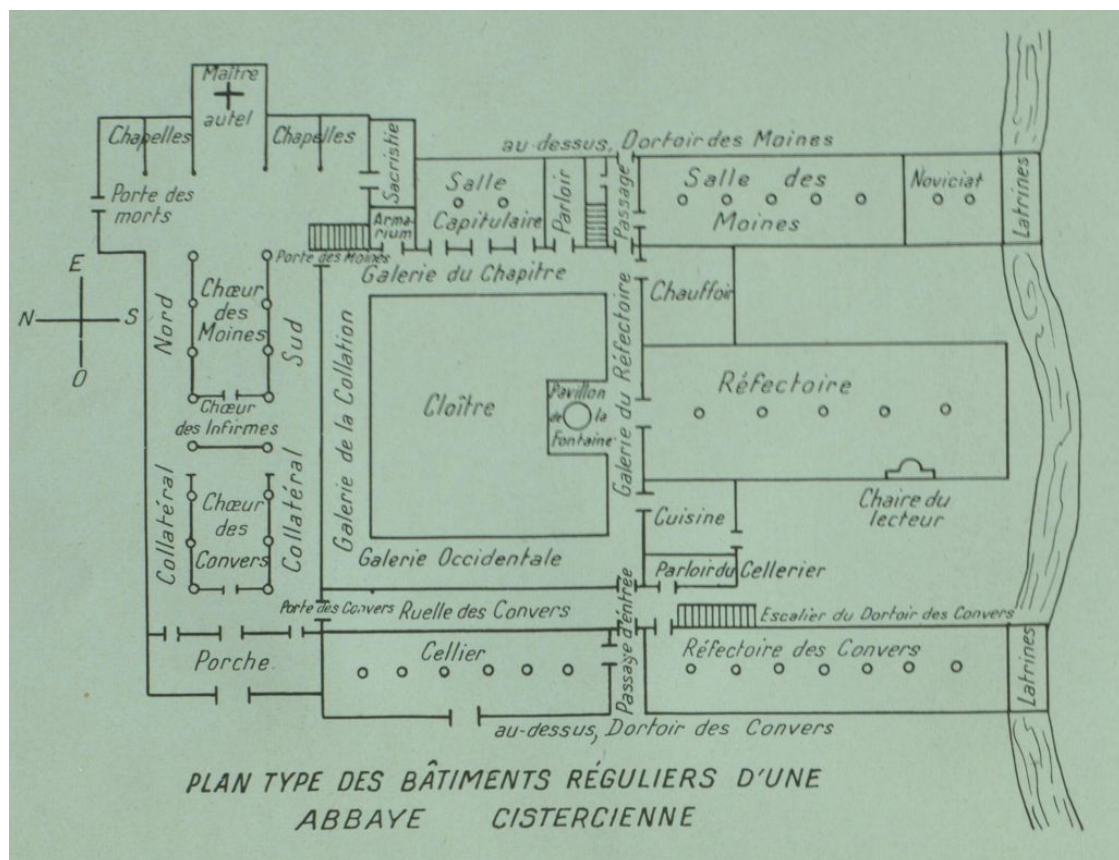


Fig. 30: Ideal plan of a Cistercian monastery.

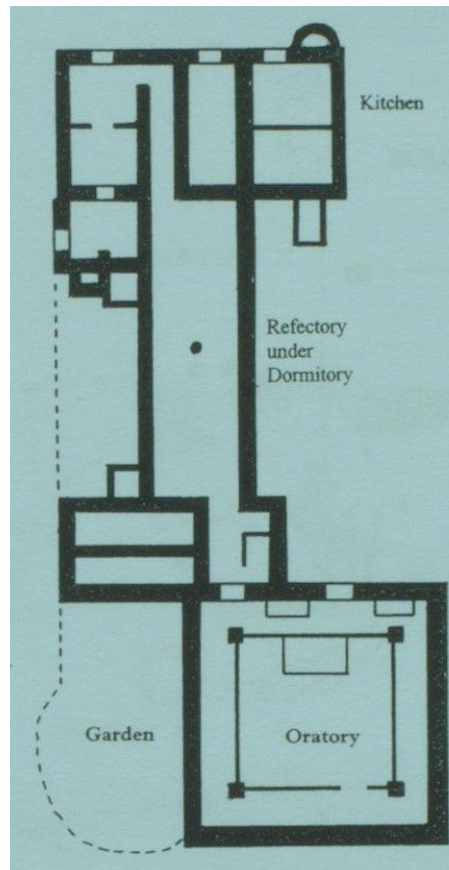


Fig. 31: Clairvaux Abbey, plan of the monasterium vetus.

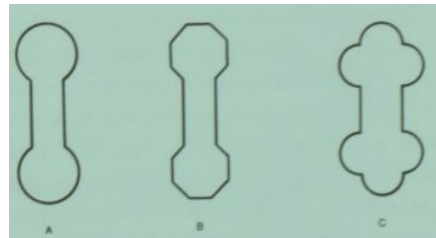


Fig. 32: 'Dumb-bell' pier design.



Fig. 33: Mellifont Abbey, crypt in the west of the nave.

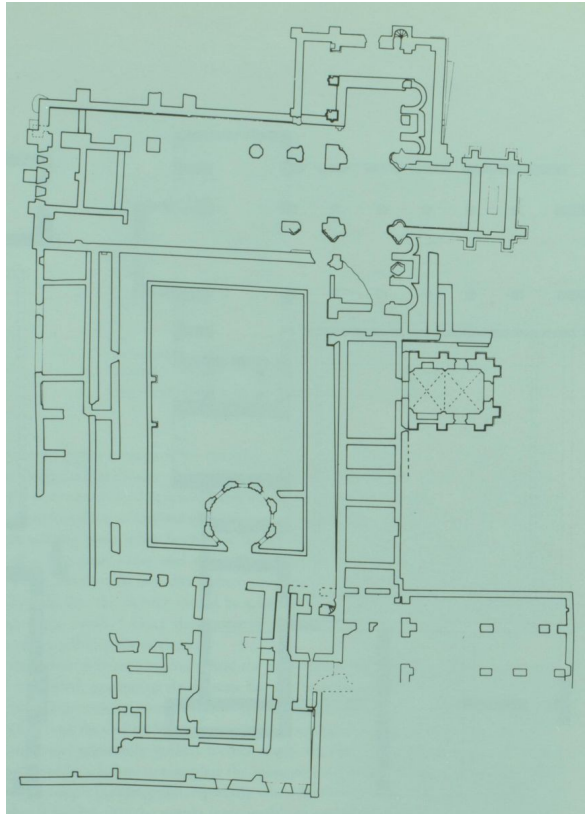


Fig. 34: Mellifont Abbey, Co. Louth, plan of the excavated parts.

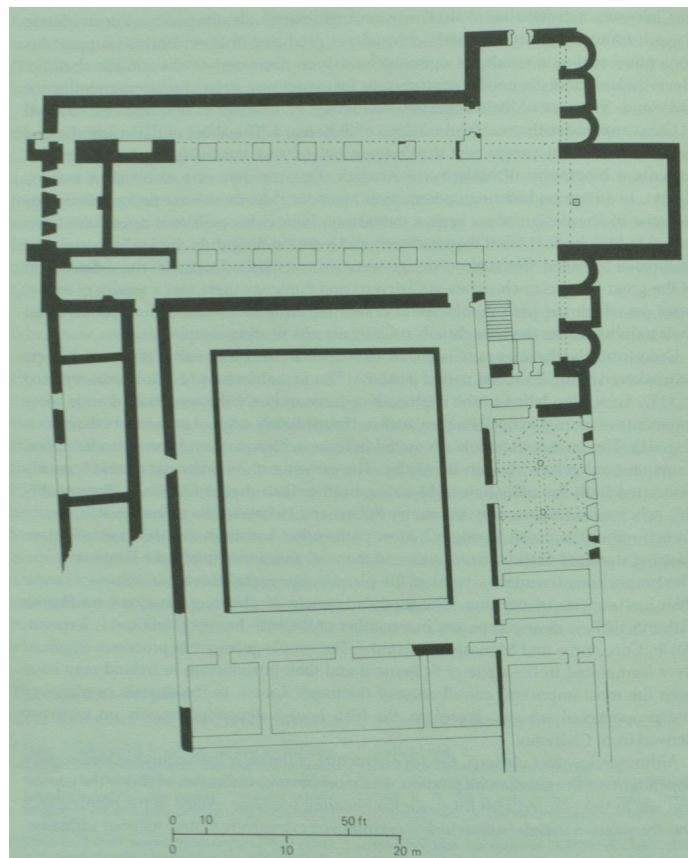


Fig. 35: Mellifont Abbey, plan of Mellifont I.



Fig. 36: Mellifont Abbey, restored twelfth-century cloister arcade.

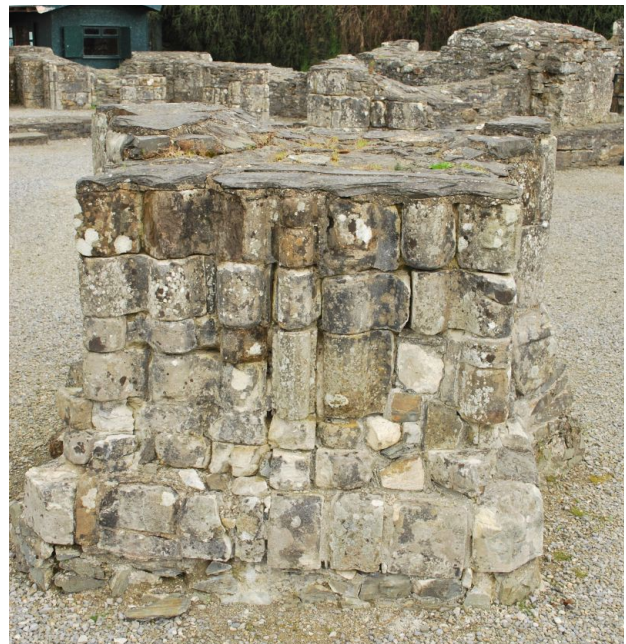
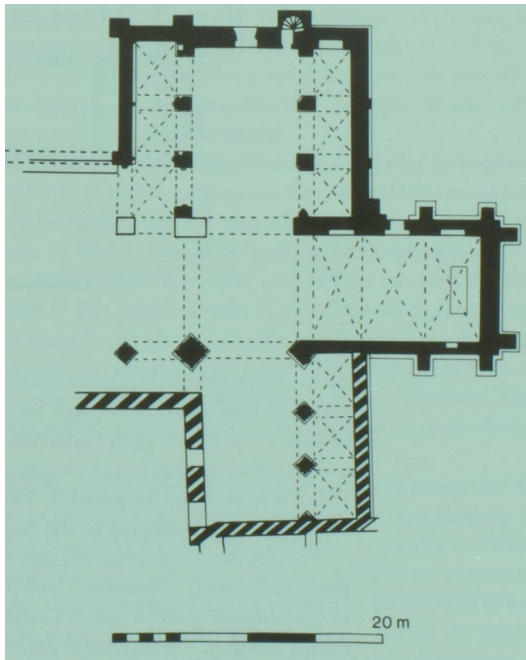


Fig. 37: Mellifont Abbey, left: Plan of eastern part of Mellifont II, right: Diamond-shaped pier of Mellifont II.



Fig. 38: Mellifont Abbey, north transept.

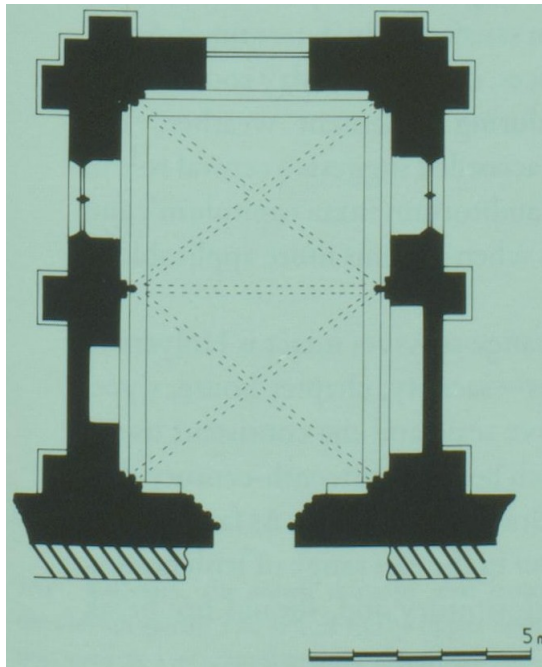


Fig. 39: Mellifont Abbey, thirteenth-century chapter house.



Fig. 40: Mellifont Abbey, twelfth-century lavabo.



Fig. 41: Mellifont Abbey, lavabo, figural capital with two owls.

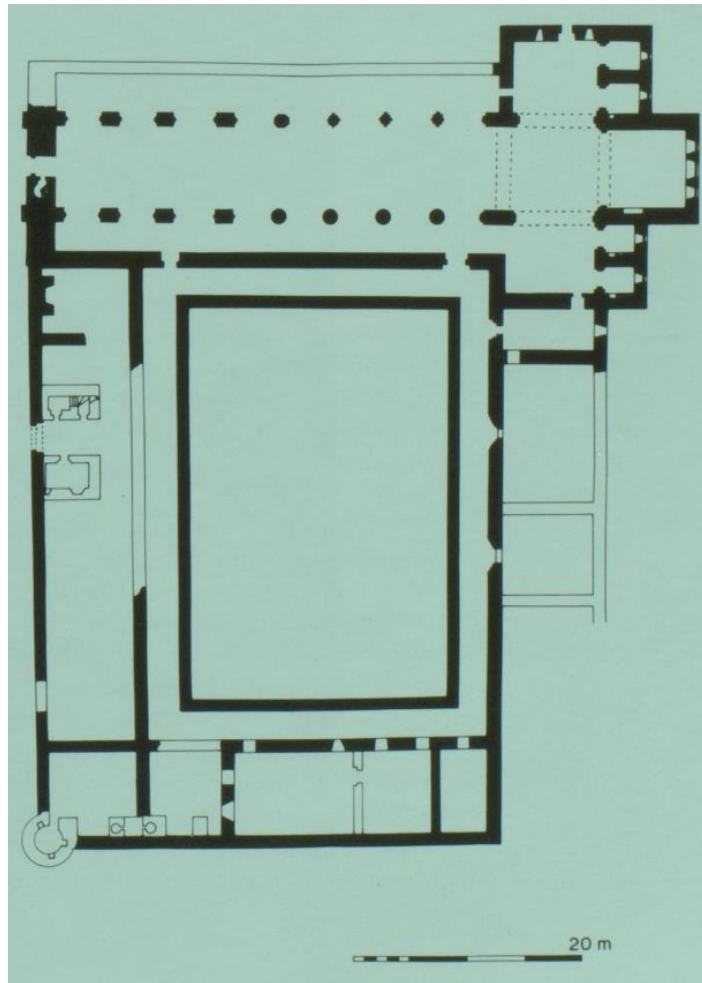


Fig. 42: Boyle Abbey, Co. Roscommon, plan.



Fig. 43: Boyle Abbey, processional doorway in the north east of the cloister/east end of the south aisle.



Fig. 44: Boyle Abbey, nave, left: North arcade, right: South arcade.



Fig. 45: Boyle Abbey, left: north transept, right: south transept.



Fig. 46: Boyle Abbey, chancel.



Fig. 47: Boyle Abbey, eastern arm from the east.



Fig. 48: Boyle Abbey, nave, north arcade in the west.



Fig. 49: Boyle Abbey, west façade from the west.

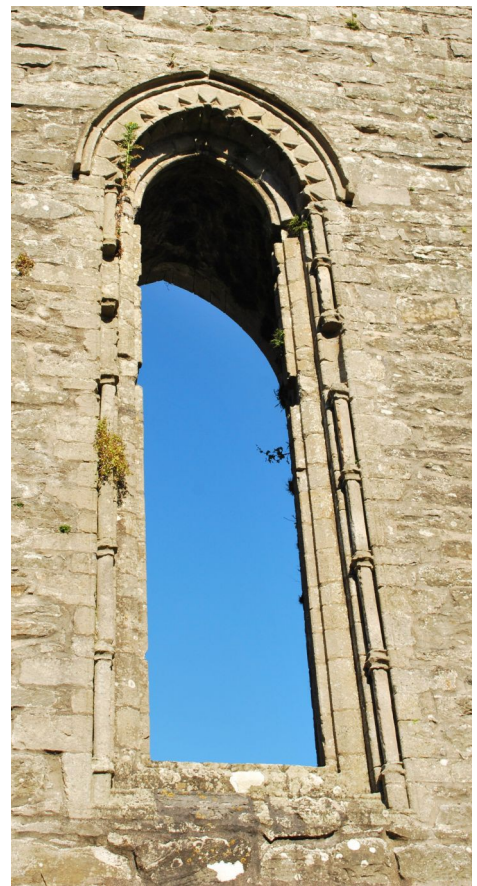


Fig. 50: Boyle Abbey, west façade from the west, left: Doorway, right: Window.



Fig. 51: Boyle Abbey, sacristy and sacristy doorway.

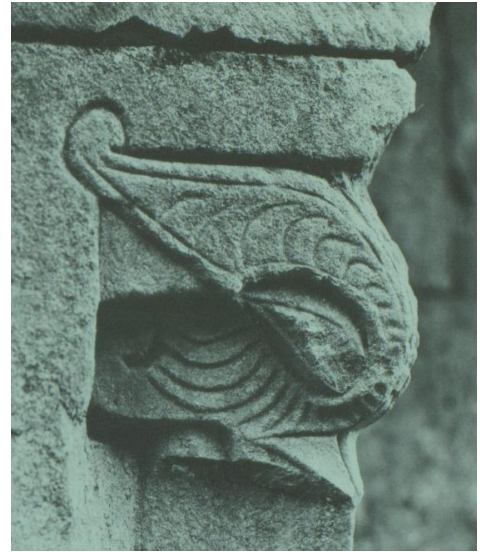


Fig. 52: Boyle Abbey, sedilia in the chancel's south wall and details of beast head capital.

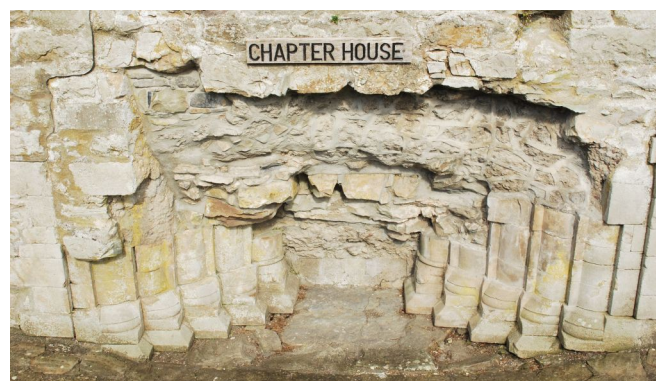


Fig. 53: Boyle Abbey, remains of the chapterhouse doorway.



Fig. 54: Boyle Abbey, remains of the parlour doorway.

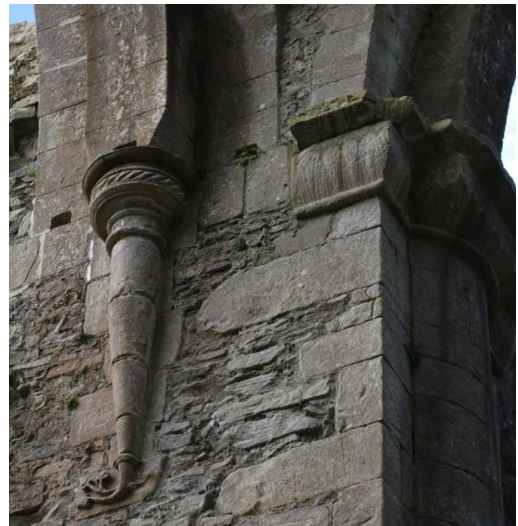


Fig. 55: Boyle Abbey, left: Southern crossing arch capital, right: western crossing arch corbel and northern crossing arch capital.



Fig. 56: Boyle Abbey, nave, left: North arcade east end, right: South arcade east end.

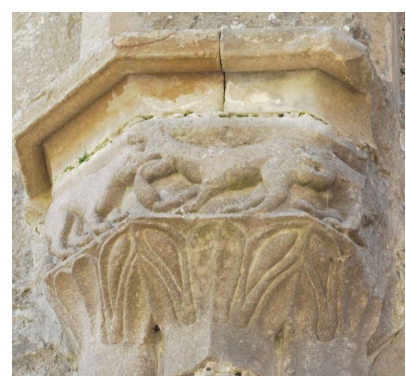


Fig. 57: Boyle Abbey, corbel capitals from the nave.

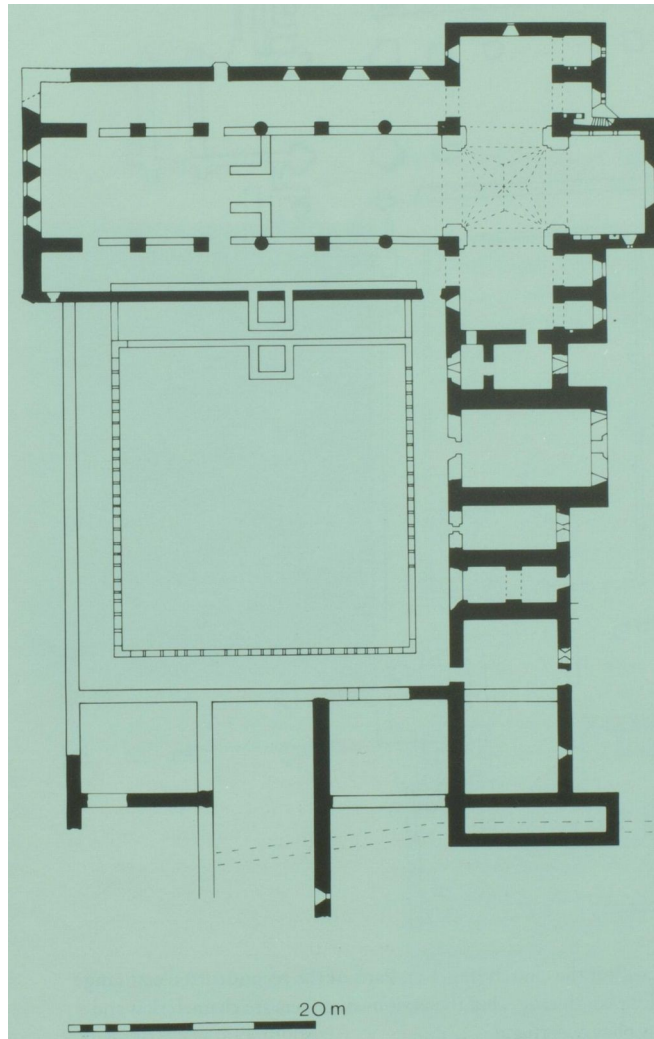


Fig. 58: Jerpoint Abbey, Co. Kilkenny, plan.



Fig. 59: Jerpoint Abbey, capital of the transepts, top: North transept, bottom: South transept.



Fig. 60: Jerpoint Abbey, capitals of the nave.



Fig. 61: Jerpoint Abbey, north arcade of the nave.



Fig. 62: Jerpoint Abbey, chancel.



Fig. 63: Jerpoint Abbey, chancel, sedilia (top) and piscina (bottom) in the south wall.



Fig. 64: Jerpoint Abbey, north transept chapels.



Fig. 65: Jerpoint Abbey, south transept chapels.



Fig. 66: Jerpoint Abbey, tower.

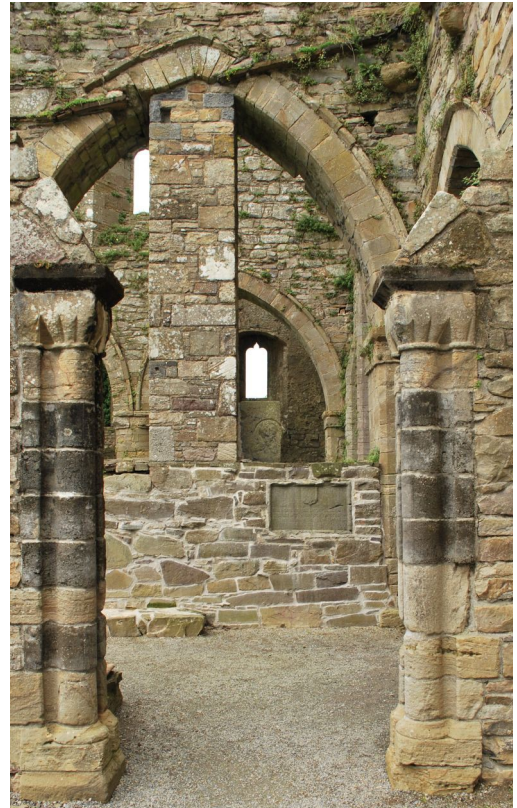


Fig. 67: Jerpoint Abbey, doorway in the north-east corner of the cloister.



Fig. 68: Jerpoint Abbey, chapterhouse.



Fig. 69: Jerpoint Abbey, fifteenth-century cloister arcade.



Fig. 70: Jerpoint Abbey, figural decorated cloister piers, left to right: monk, bishop, abbot, noblewoman, knight.

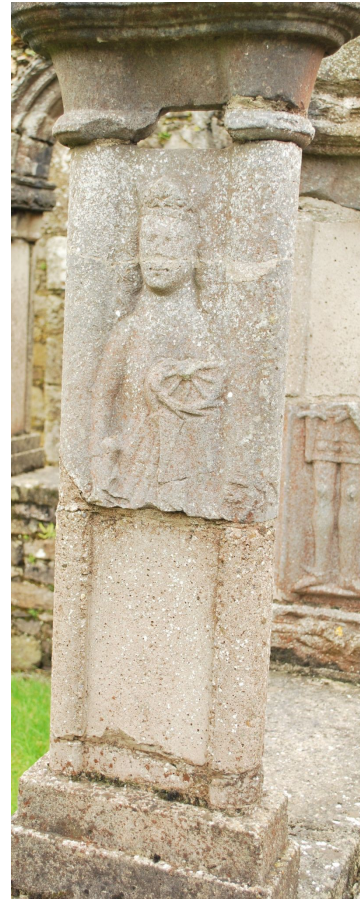


Fig. 71: Jerpoint Abbey, figural decorated cloister piers, left to right: St.Christopher, St. Christopher, St. Catherine.



Fig. 72: Jerpoint Abbey, remains of dormitory windows.

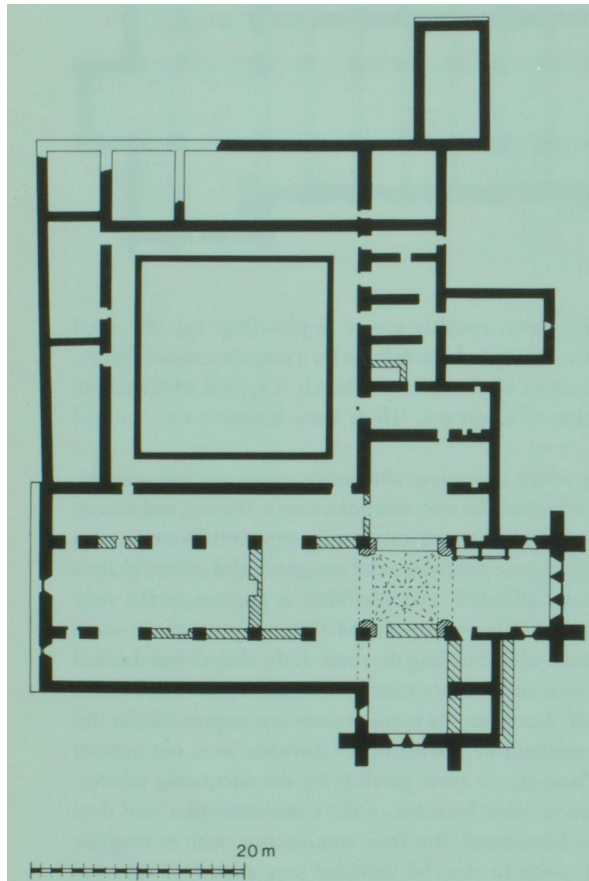


Fig. 73: Hore Abbey, Co. Tipperary, plan.



Fig. 74: Hore Abbey, chancel.



Fig. 75: Hore Abbey, northern transept chapels.



Fig. 76: Hore Abbey, left: Remains of the sacristy, right: Remains of the chapterhouse.



Fig. 77: Hore Abbey, piscina and aumbrey in the chancel's south wall.



Fig. 78: Hore Abbey, piscina in the sacristy's south wall.



Fig. 79: Hore Abbey, north arcade of the nave with clerestory.



Fig. 80: Hore Abbey, cloister arcade arch.



Fig. 81: Hore Abbey, crossing and tower.

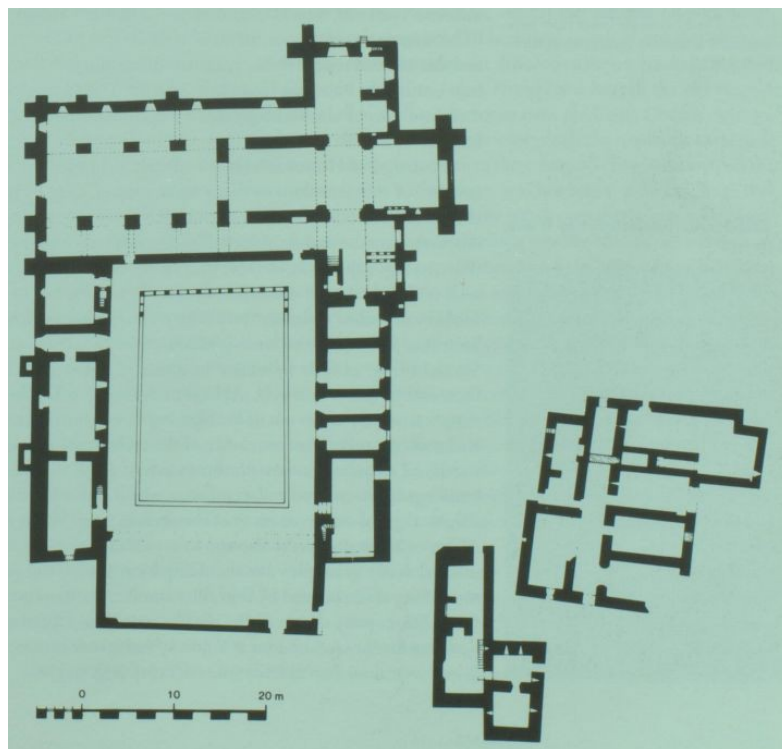


Fig. 82: Holycross Abbey, Co. Tipperary, plan.

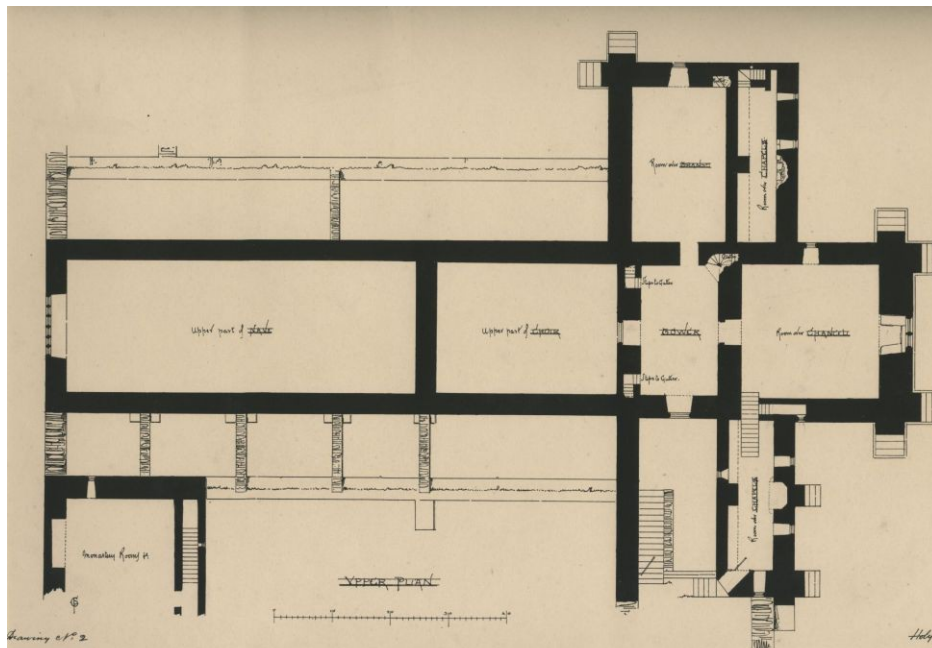


Fig. 83: Holycross Abbey, plan of the upper floor.



Fig. 84: Holycross Abbey, crossing and chancel.

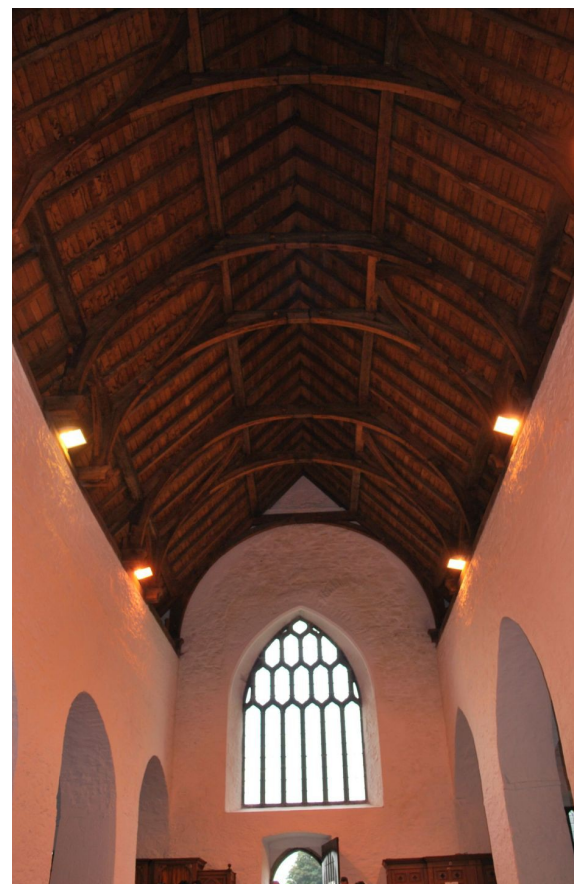


Fig. 85: Holycross Abbey, west wall and nave roofing.



Fig. 86: Holycross Abbey, sedilia in the chancel's south wall.



Fig. 87: Holycross Abbey, piscina in the north transept chapel.



Fig. 88: Holycross Abbey, shrine in the south transept.



Fig. 89: Holycross Abbey, shrine the south transept, ornamental detail.



Fig. 90: Holycross Abbey, second shrine with ornamental detail.

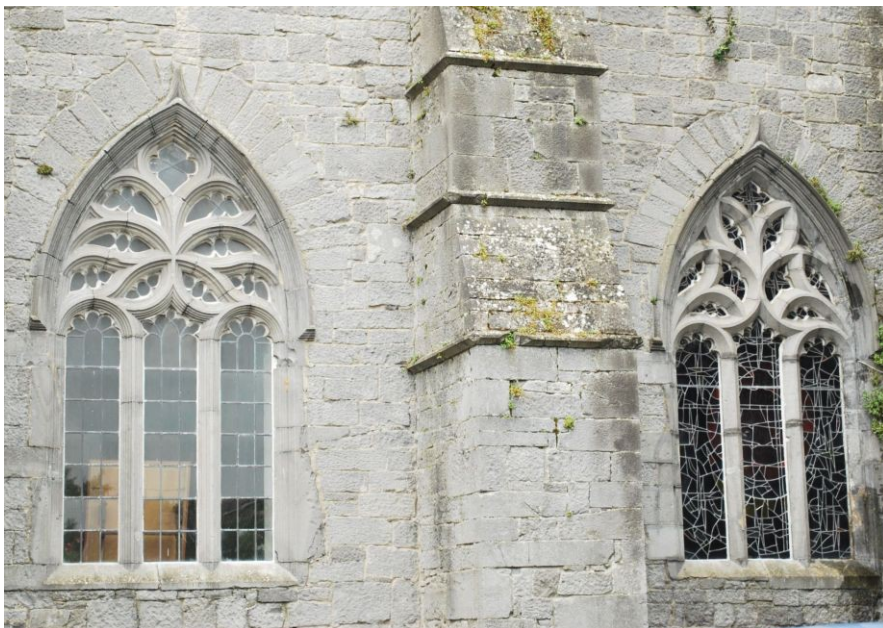


Fig. 91: Holycross Abbey, windows of the south transept chapels.



Fig. 92: Holycross Abbey, mural in the north transept.



Fig. 93: Holycross Abbey, mural in the north transept, drawing.



Fig. 94: Holycross Abbey, twelfth-century doorway connecting cloister and south aisle.

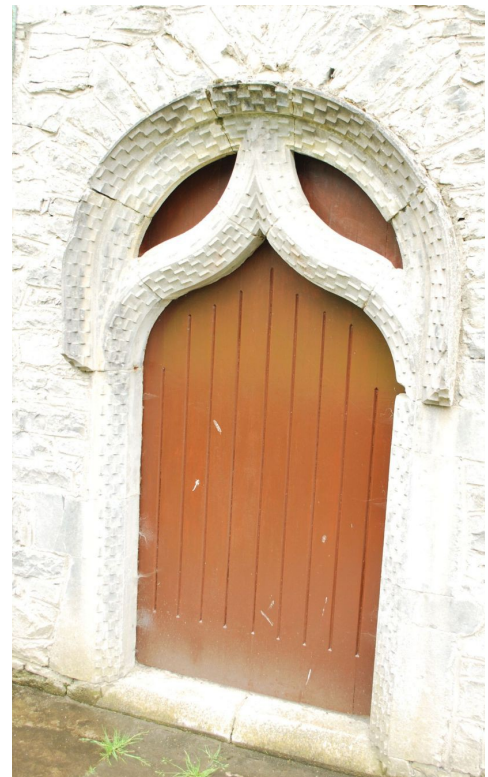


Fig. 95: Holycross Abbey, chapterhouse doorway.



Fig. 96: Holycross Abbey, twelfth-century north arcade of the nave.



Fig. 97: Holycross Abbey, cloister, left: North ambulatory, right: West ambulatory.

Fig.1	Knowles 1969
Fig.2	Ó Carragáin 2010
Fig.3	Ó Carragáin 2010
Fig.4	Ó Carragáin 2010
Fig.5	Hamlin & Hughes 2004
Fig.6	Ó Carragáin 2010
Fig.7	Ó Carragáin 2010
Fig.8	Ó Carragáin 2010
Fig.9	Leask I 1955
Fig.10	Leask I 1955
Fig.11	Leask I 1955
Fig.12	Ó Carragáin 2010 (photo) / Leask I 1955 (drawing)
Fig.13	Ó Carragáin 2010
Fig.14	Leask I 1955
Fig.15	Ó Carragáin 2010
Fig.16	Ó Carragáin 2010
Fig.17	Ó Carragáin 2010
Fig.18	Ó Carragáin 2010
Fig.19	Leask I 1955
Fig.20	Ó Carragáin 2010
Fig.21	Ó Carragáin 2010
Fig.22	Ó Carragáin 2010
Fig.23	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.24	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.25	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.26	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.27	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.28	Aubert I 1947
Fig.29	Dimier 1962
Fig.30	Aubert II 1947
Fig.31	Kinder 2004
Fig.32	Stalley 1987
Fig.33	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.34	Stalley 1987
Fig.35	Stalley 1987
Fig.36	Tobias Kiener, 2012

Fig.37	Stalley 1987 (plan) / Tobias Kiener, 2012 (photo)
Fig.38	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.39	Stalley 1987 (plan) / Tobias Kiener 2012 (photo)
Fig.40	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.41	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.42	Stalley 1987
Fig.43	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.44	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.45	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.46	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.47	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.48	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.49	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.50	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.51	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.52	Stalley 1987 (beast head) / Tobias Kiener 2012 (sedilia)
Fig.53	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.54	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.55	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.56	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.57	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.58	Stalley 1987
Fig.59	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.60	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.61	Tobias Kiener, 2012
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Fig.71	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.72	Tobias Kiener, 2012

Fig.73	Stalley 1987
Fig.74	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.75	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.76	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.77	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.78	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.79	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.80	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.81	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.82	Stalley 1987
Fig.83	Close 1868
Fig.84	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.85	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.86	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.87	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.88	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.89	Stalley 1987
Fig.90	Stalley 1987
Fig.91	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.92	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.93	Stalley 1987
Fig.94	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.95	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.96	Tobias Kiener, 2012
Fig.97	Tobias Kiener, 2012

Curriculum Vitae – Tobias Kiener

Primary & Secondary Education:

1996 – 2005	Secondary School BRG5 (5., Rainergasse, Vienna)
1992 – 1996	Primary School (22., Natorpgasse, Vienna)

Tertiary Education:

01/2012 – 05/2012	Study of Art History at the University College Dublin (UCD) (Erasmus exchange)
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since 09/2007	Study of History at the <i>University of Vienna</i>
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since 02/2006	Study of Art History at the <i>University of Vienna</i>
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