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Architektura Opactw Cysterskich, Małopolskie filie Morimond / The Architecture of Cistercian Abbeys, Morimond Filiations in Little Poland

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In the last twenty years, a series of monographic and regional studies on Cistercian abbeys has broadened our knowledge of the Order's architecture, from Rievaulx in England to Lilienfeld in Austria, from Cistercian architecture in Ireland to the south of France. The book under discussion, the first survey of the Morimond filiations in Lesser Poland, published in both Polish and English, makes this Eastern European material accessible for the first time to the wider scholarly community. And Cistercian studies, more perhaps than any other field of art-history, invite international exchange and collaboration despite – or rather because of – the fact that traditional ideas of the Order's centralism and its artistic meta-language are increasingly shifting to acknowledge the variety and complexity of individual abbeys' responses to their specific local context.

The historiography of this debate has particular implications for Eastern Europe. Until recently, the phenomenal international expansion of the Cistercians in the 12th century was considered the consequence of the Order's centralised organisation and its rigorous, almost militaristic discipline. Propelled forward by this internal dynamic, the Order sent out daughter-houses to the far flung corners of medieval Christendom. Economic historians highlighted the pioneering skills with which the Order cultivated regions of wasteland, especially on the edge of settled territory. Within the nationalistic atmosphere of 19th-century Germany, the argument was twisted to take on political overtones. The Cistercians were

presented as “Kulturträger”, conveyers of (western) culture and, it was implied, civilisation in the east.

However, since the 1960s cracks started to appear in the image of the tightly regulated Order. The search for an architectural model that might have served as a blue print for Cistercian church architecture proved elusive. At the same time, historians signalled frequent noncompliance with the statutes, already at an early date in the Order's history. The idea of the Cistercians as colonizers and driving forces behind economic progress in medieval Europe, and especially Eastern Europe, was also challenged, and scholars highlighted the importance of local patrons in inviting and supporting the monks and the fact that Cistercian abbeys were often established within already functioning economic settlements. Today, the discussion about the relationship and possible tension between the international outlook of the Order and its local ties remains wide open and there is a need for further comparative material both historical and archaeological.

In the context of this debate, the four Morimond filiations in Lesser Poland add a new and intriguing facet to the general picture. Founded in the principality of Little or Lesser Poland, they were all direct daughter-houses of Morimond, one of the four Burgundian proto-abbeys (*Fig. 1*). Jędrzejów was founded around 1150, Sulejów in 1176, Wąchock in 1179, and Koprzywnica in 1185. Architecturally they form a distinct group and, as Zygmunt Świechowski has noted some time ago, the churches with their “Bernardine

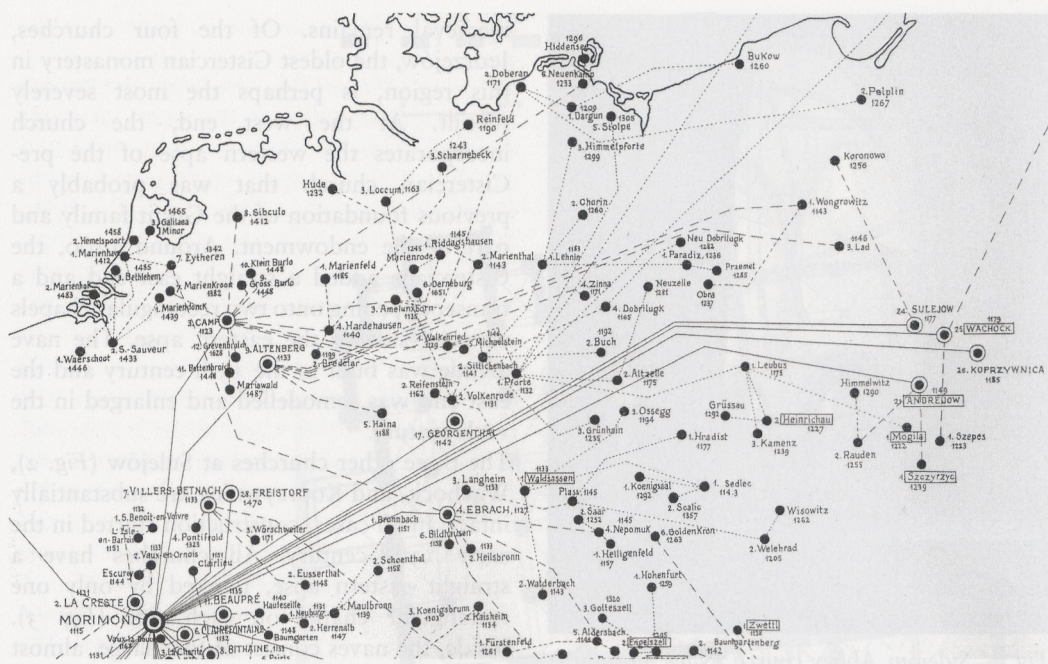


Fig. 1 Map: Cistercian settlement in Poland (after Krönig)

plan” and Pontigny-type two-story elevation show startlingly close links with Burgundian Cistercian architecture. Three authors have collaborated on the volume: Świechowski, one of the most eminent Polish art historians, whose many publications include numerous studies of Polish Cistercian art and architecture, some of them published in French and German, and Ewa Łuźniecka and Robert Kunkel, both well-known architectural historians who have supervised recent archaeological investigations of these abbeys. The book contains a rather short text section (pp. 109-199 for the English text) consisting of an introduction to previous scholarship on the abbeys and two essays, one by Świechowski on the art-historical and historical context of the foundations and one by Kunkel on the monastic buildings. This is followed by a concise archaeological study of each of the four abbeys (Kunkel on Jędrzejów, Świechowski on Sulejów, and Łuźniecka on both Wąchock and Koprzywnica). But the real

heart of the book is its illustrations (pp. 223-610). The authors have provided impressive dossiers of images for each monastery, including not only recent photographs (helpfully dated; regrettably, a not insignificant number are out of focus), but also historic photos, ground-plans, sections, moulding profiles, photogrammetric surveys, reconstructions, etc. that show the most recent archaeological discoveries.

Unfortunately for the English speaking reader who is looking to the texts for a discussion of this visual material, the quality of the translation is deplorable. It is not only lacking in fluency, it is at times unintelligible and a serious obstacle to comprehension. There are problems of grammar and syntax and some blatant errors. For example, the Cistercians, the grey or white monks, become the grey friars in the translation (pp. 107, 110, 118, 119, 121) and Romanesque is translated as Roman (p. 157). But most problematically, the text shows a complete lack of familiarity with

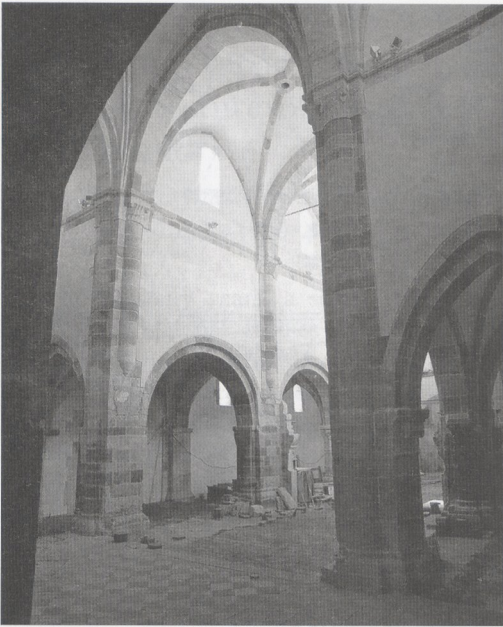


Fig. 2 Sulejów, Abbey church. Nave and north aisle seen from transept, 1998 (p. 308)

architectural terminology. That corbels, so frequent in Cistercian architecture, are translated as cantilevers (*passim*) is perhaps trivial, but when transverse arches are given as buttresses (*passim*) the reader is likely to remain confused. This confusion is further aggravated by an astonishing omission: apart from Świechowski's essay, none of the texts includes references to the images and the reader is left desperately leafing through the unwieldy image section in order to find the relevant illustrations of the text.

These formal problems are all the more regrettable since the essays provide a wealth of in-depth and detailed information. The individual studies of the four abbeys summarise the most recent architectural and archaeological findings and assess the evidence for the surviving medieval fabric, medieval and post-medieval construction campaigns, and the dating. They reveal that, despite frequent rebuilding, fires, and Baroque transformations, there are substantial

medieval remains. Of the four churches, Jędrzejów, the oldest Cistercian monastery in this region, is perhaps the most severely rebuilt. At the west end, the church incorporates the western apse of the pre-Cistercian church that was probably a previous foundation of the Gryfit family and part of the endowment. Around 1200, the Cistercians added a straight east end and a transept opening onto two rectangular chapels on each side of the eastern apse. The nave arcade was built in the 15th century and the east end was remodelled and enlarged in the 18th century.

The three other churches at Sulejów (*Fig. 2*), Wąchock, and Koprzywnica are substantially intact. In all cases, construction started in the early 13th century. All churches have a straight eastern apse, flanked by only one rectangular chapel on each side (*Fig. 3*). Inside, the naves consist of four large, almost square bays covered by quadripartite rib-vaults. The elevations are made of two stories with an arcade of square or cruciform piers supporting rounded arches and a short clerestory above a string-course (*Fig. 4*). One of the most fascinating aspects of these churches is the huge variety of corbel types of which a large number are included in the illustrations, together with details of sculpted key-stones and capitals. Despite the superficial similarities between the churches, all authors highlight the differences, especially in their construction methods and detailing, which oppose the idea of a single architect being responsible for their construction.

In the course of recent archaeological investigations, new light has been thrown on the original disposition of the church and the cloister ranges. For example, according to Łuźniecka the excavations do not confirm Krystyna Białoskórska's argument that Wąchock was built on the site of a former palace (p. 194). However, Łuźniecka's laconic discussion of the pre-Romanesque walls Białoskórska claimed to have discovered on

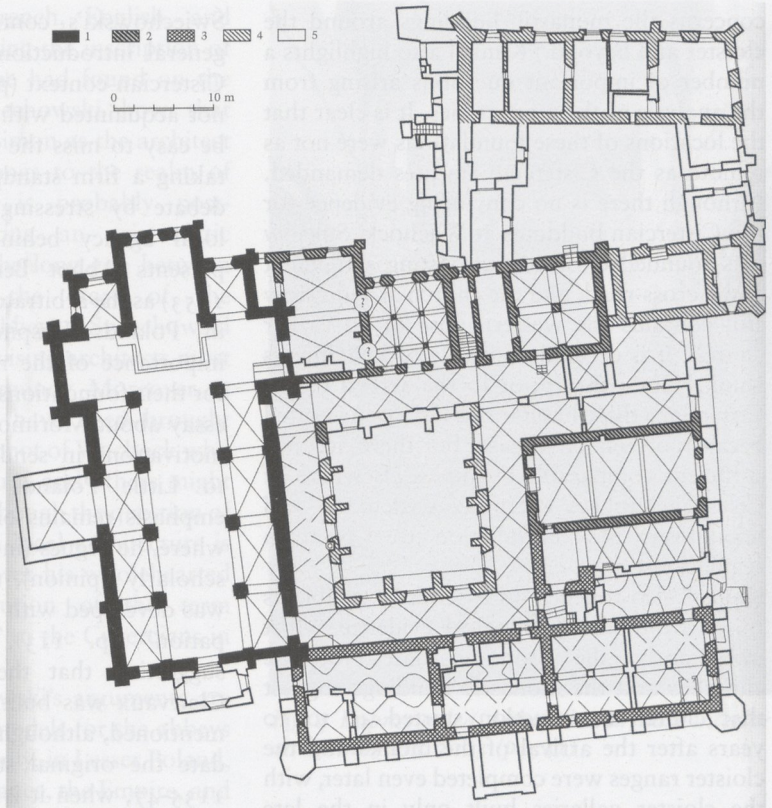


Fig. 3
 Wąchock,
 Abbey church and
 east range, ground plan.
 (p. 387)

the site is unlikely to disperse all doubts in this matter. While the situation of the south and west ranges remains ambiguous, there are some fresh insights into the organisation of the east ranges, especially at Jędrzejów where the cloister does not survive. In all abbeys, the sacristy (a narrow bay adjacent to the church) was followed by the chapter-house and a staircase leading to the dormitory with a room located underneath the stair-case (Fig. 3). The authors suggest that this room might have been used as a prison. Comparison with Belgian and English examples might also suggest the possible use as a treasury. The narrow bay next to the stair-case served as a passage. Finally, the last room within the east range was probably used as the monks' day room. At Sulejów, another bay situated between the passage and the day room must

have served as the parlour. The authors also confirm the existence of dormitories extending over the upper parts of the eastern ranges of all four abbeys. Moreover, there is now new evidence for heating and water systems, the original polychromy, and floor tiles. The authors also discuss the buildings situated beyond the cloister, especially the fortified ring of structures that surrounds the monastery at Sulejów and that, according to Świechowski, should date to the 15th and 16th centuries, despite recent arguments in favour of an earlier dating. For readers not familiar with the material, Kunkel's essay "The Monasteries of Little Poland – Enclosure and Farm Buildings" is valuable in that it provides a brief comparative survey of the abbey buildings (pp. 137-148). (The English title is misleading. The essay

concerns the monastic buildings around the cloister and beyond.) Kunkel also highlights a number of important questions arising from the analysis of the monasteries. It is clear that the locations of these foundations were not as remote as the Cistercian statutes demanded. Although there is no convincing evidence for pre-Cistercian buildings at Wąchock, Sulejów was founded close to an existing settlement and a cross-road, and the church at Jędrzejów still contains the western apse of an earlier church. It is certainly possible to imagine, as Kunkel does, that prior to the arrival of the Cistercians these habitations had been vacated because of war or disease, but there are also sufficient comparable examples elsewhere of Cistercian abbeys accepting settlements and habitations in contradiction to Cistercian regulations.

Kunkel also touches on a series of problems raised by the archaeological evidence. Most importantly, the proposed dates for the churches and the monastic buildings suggest that church construction started 40 to 50 years after the arrival of the monks and the cloister ranges were completed even later, with the cloister galleries built only in the late Middle Ages. For Kunkel this forms the basis of his argument that the initiative for the construction did not come from outside patrons but from within the monastic community itself which determined the appearance and lay-out of the buildings. The time gap also offers a way of explaining the fact that the churches are all rib-vaulted, while the details of the capitals, key stones, and other elements are still Romanesque in character, resulting in what he calls a Gothic structure in Romanesque clothing. He envisages that some features could have been carved in preparation half a century before the construction started. Kunkel's discussion of the function, aesthetics, and the dating of the buildings allow fascinating insights into the specific conditions of the communities in Lesser Poland. One could have wished for more details and comparative material.

Świechowski's contribution offers a more general introduction to the subject and the Cistercian context (pp. 109-135). For anyone not acquainted with the discussion, it would be easy to miss the fact that Świechowski is taking a firm standpoint in a long-standing debate by stressing Cistercian rather than local agency behind the foundations. He presents Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153) as the arbitrator of the Order's diffusion in Poland. Despite a reference to the importance of the mother-houses as models for their foundations, we learn nothing in this essay about Morimond or about that house's motivations in sending out daughter-houses to Little Poland. Instead, Świechowski's emphasis remains on Clairvaux as a model, where, he argues (in contrast to most current scholarly opinion), the plan of Clairvaux II was developed with Bernard's "direct participation" (p. 113). Matthias Untermann's suggestion that the first stone church at Clairvaux was built already in the 1120s is mentioned, although Untermann is quoted to date the original straight ended church to 1135-47, when it is exactly that church that Untermann would like to move to the 1120s (*Forma Ordinis: die mittelalterliche Baukunst der Zisterzienser*, München 2001, pp. 129-132.). The discussion is not without interest for the abbeys in Little Poland since dating the first "Bernardine-type" church to the 1120s further widens the gap between the Burgundian origin of the plan and its use for the Little Poland abbeys in the early 13th century.

Next to Burgundy, Świechowski envisages a wider range of European models for certain features: the alternating colouring of the masonry courses at Wąchock is of Italian origin, the exterior buttressing system at Koprzywnica has perhaps German models, and the capitals show German, Italian, and Byzantine influence. Świechowski gives much thought to the origins of the architects and masons. He criticizes Białoskórska's theory,

widely published in French, English, and Italian journals, concerning the inscription of the name Simon that she had found on the façade of Wąchock. Świechowski shows that her suggested career of Simon as the architect of the four abbeys belongs to the realm of myth. The inscription is probably post-medieval, commemorating an aristocratic monk. In fact, despite the long gap between the foundation and the start of the construction of the abbeys, Świechowski maintains that the supervising architects must have been trained in Burgundy. Moreover, at least one mason might have been brought back from Italy by the Abbot of Wąchock who travelled to Rome in 1214, and others might have been locals. And although the question of the abbeys' influence on local architecture is not raised, the author gives his wholehearted support to the attribution of the term "missionaries of Gothic" to the Cistercians in Little Poland.

In many ways, Świechowski's arguments are convincing: clearly, the models for the abbeys were not to be found locally, in Lesser Poland, but further abroad, in France, the Empire, and Italy and undoubtedly it was the Order's international network that made such a wide choice of models and the necessary masonry skills available. The idea of the Burgundian origin (or at least training) of the architects needs perhaps further consideration, since what remains of Cistercian architecture around 1200 in Burgundy itself, for example the east end of Pontigny, presents a different aspect. Yet, the central problem with Świechowski's essay (and also that of Kunkel) is that the whole debate surrounding the question of Cistercian agency is never fully laid out to the reader and opposing views are found with luck in the rare footnotes. The gravest consequence of this approach is that the role of the founders, secular patrons, and bishops is denied without their impact ever having been properly discussed. Given the importance Cistercian scholars have attached



Fig. 4 Koprzywnica, Abbey church, nave interior and presbytery, 2003 (p. 541)

to these figures elsewhere, and well beyond the date of the original foundation of an abbey, a thorough discussion of this issue would have been necessary.

At the end of the book, one is left wondering what type of readership the publication might be aimed at. The bi-lingual edition would suggest that it is destined for a wider English-speaking scholarship and especially perhaps for the Cistercian community. However, the archaeological studies of the abbeys and many of the images of building breaks and reconstructions are clearly intended for the specialist architectural historian and archaeologist. This, in itself, need not be a contradiction. The four architectural surveys could serve as a catalogue to be consulted by those wanting to know more about the buildings presented in the preceding thematic essays. David Robinson's recent study (*The*

Cistercians in Wales, architecture and archaeology, 1130-1540, London 2006) uses a similar approach. Unfortunately, Świechowski's and Kunkel's essays are too brief and summary to provide a scholarly introduction to the subject. In fact, the book lacks a clear concept and a structure. Opening up the subject to the wider academic community would have demanded, for example, a short introduction to the medieval history of Little Poland. There would be need for a more in-depth comparative analysis of the foundations, their buildings, their dates,

including some plates showing illustrations of all churches, or all ground-plans on one page. Generally, one would have wanted a thorough discussion and contextualising of the wealth of empirical data offered in the image section. Still, in a new edition with a revised translation, the book will serve as an invaluable source for the architectural historian and, moreover, persuade many a reader of the importance of including Lesser Poland's Cistercian abbeys in the wider debate about Cistercian architecture.

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NICOLE DACOS

Les Loges de Raphaël. Chef-d'œuvre de l'ornement au Vatican. Paris, Hazan 2008. 352 pp., 223 col. plates, 154 bw. text figures. €79,-. ISBN 978-2-7541-0294-0. – Parallel editions: Le Logge di Raffaello. L'Antico, La Bibbia, La Fortuna. Monumenta Vaticana Selecta. Roma, Musei Vaticani, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Milano, Jaca Book, 2008. 978-88-16-60401-8. €130,-. – The loggia of Raphael. A Vatican Art Treasure. Translated from the French by Josephine Bacon. New York, Abbeville Press 2008. ISBN 978-0-7892-1004-3. \$ 125,-. – Raffael im Vatikan. Die päpstlichen Loggien neu entdeckt. Übersetzt von Bernd Weiß. Stuttgart, Chr. Belser Verlag 2008. ISBN 978-3-7630-2517-6. €88,-

This is the second volume of the new "Monumenta Vaticana Selecta" series published by Jaca Book on behalf of the Vatican Museums. The first volume, published in 2007, was Heinrich Pfeiffer's *La Sistina svelata, Iconografia di un capolavoro*. Although the updated introductory texts of these first two volumes in the new series contain new discussions and interpretations, the predominant space given to the numerous, large scale color reproductions, made from photographs taken after the most recent cleaning of the decorations of the two artistic sites, clearly betrays the fact that it is this impressive visual documentation that constitutes the principal *raison d'être* for the publication of these volumes. The subject of Dacos' book is the painted and plastic decoration of the second story of the logge

overlooking the west wing of the Cortile di S. Damaso in the Vatican Palace, commonly known as "Raphael's loggia". The construction of the loggia, initially planned by Bramante, was completed by Raphael (with the addition of a third story) after Bramante's death in 1514, and its decoration was finished by summer 1519. The best known section of the decoration is the famous cycle of 52 frescoes, on the 13 bays of the vault of the loggia, traditionally called "La Bibbia di Raffaello" representing 48 scenes from the Old Testament and 4 from the New Testament.

"Raphael's Bible" has been studied in numerous previous publications, and entirely reproduced (mostly in black and white) in several monographs on Raphael as well as in specialized studies (N. Dacos, *Le Logge di*