

THE BEGINNING OF EREMITICAL ARCHITECTURE IN TUSCANY

In the late tenth and eleventh centuries the rise of industry and trade as well as demographic changes created intensive communication between Rome and the rest of continental Europe. Religious, political, social and artistic ideas traveled along established routes and left lasting traces on the areas they passed through. Among these ideas the easiest to recognize are the stylistic variations in taste, best shown in art and architecture.*

The first task is to determine those routes along which ideas travelled and the origins of the ideas. Next, one needs to examine the extent that stylistic trends were transmitted with subsequent influence on local traditions. The topic, as treated here, is necessarily limited in scope by considerations of space. We are here concerned with a particular aspect of changes in the forms and currents which influenced the styles of the architecture of rural churches dating from the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries in Tuscany.

One may note that, in general, the origin of rural ecclesiastical architecture in Italy is still largely a *terra incognita*. By way of contrast, some later architectural styles of monastic orders are well-documented. For example, we know much about the architectural styles of the Franciscan, the Cistercian, the Dominican and other orders at least starting from the thirteenth century on. But no such information is available about the earlier style in architecture of those hermitages that coalesced to become the Augustinian Order in its present form, first in Tuscany in 1244 and then more widely in Italy and elsewhere in 1256.

The Routes of Communication

The most important artery which connected Italy with South and Central Europe was the *Via Francigena* or *Ruga Francigena*, now the *Via Cassia* (also called *Romea* from the pilgrims bound for Rome called *Romei*). It was once one of the principal routes linking Rome and Northern Europe through the Alpine passes. It may have been part of an Etrusco-Roman road which once led through Rosia, Poggio del

* I am grateful to the Reverend Karl A. Gersbach, OSA, Director of the Augustinian Historical Institute at Villanova University, for his helpful suggestions in composing this article.

Luco, Savignano and Pieve Scuola continuing in the Valdelsa. (See Illustration 1) The ruined Roman bridge of Ponte della Pia near Rosia, immortalized by Dante, was once part of this road.¹ With its diverging roads, such as the *Via Piedmontana* bypassing the Pontine marshes and the *Apia Traiana* (Via delle Gravine) through which the *Triburtina Valeria* could be reached, the *Francigena* was an artery at times far more important than the *Via Appia*.

The *Francigena* route came from the North through Alpine passes, the Val d'Aosta, Val d'Adige and the Valle del Taro, which is connected to the Valle Padana. The road continued past Luni, Lucca and Chianti. In the Valdelsa area, where much of this study is concentrated, it eventually passed San Gimignano, Borgo d'Elsa, Siena, and Chianti through its southeasterly course.² One branch of the *Francigena*, the *Volterrana* following the river Elsa, passed Castel-Fiorentino and Poggibonsi, following the same lines as the once existing *Cassia Seriore* and the *Cassia Adriana* eventually joining the *Strada Maremanna*.

Somewhat less important, but also serving as a means to pass along ideas and ideals, were the sea-routes from Marseille through the Ligurian Sea to Genoa and a southern route from Sicily via the Tiber to the *Ripa Romea*. The pilgrims, the *Romei ad limina Beati Petri*, arrived to the former imperial wharf on the right bank of the Tiber, the *Ripa Romea*, from where the towering silhouette of the Old Saint Peter's was already visible – a familiar and welcome landmark. The Port of Ostia was already silted up and eventually abandoned. The only road remaining was the *Via Campana* (later *Via Portuense*) which connected the *Porto* and the Eternal City to the sea. In the seventh century the importance of the *Porto* was already diminished. It no longer functioned in full capacity while river ports assumed new importance.

Pilgrims from the North and from local areas were clogging these roads during the economic *rinascimento* beginning with the eighth century. Before the turn of the millennium and the great urban expansion, a great network of assistance consisting of large and small pilgrimage churches, hospitals, hospices, abbeys and monasteries had

¹ *Purgatorio*, Canto V, 133-136; A. LISINI, G. Bianchi BANDINELLI, *La Pia Dantesca* (Siena, 1939); G. BOETTI, *Suavis Locus ille Sovicille* (Siena, 1981), 160, n.73.

² A. Venerosi PESCIOLINI, "Tracce della strada Francigena sulle pendici orientali del Monte Maggio," *Bolletino Senense di Storia Patria* 1 (1930) 437; A. TRACCHI, "Di alcune antiche strade dell'Etruria settentrionale," *L'inverso: Rivista dell'Istituto Geografico Militare* 51 (1930) 2.

been set up for the pilgrims on the way to Rome. Many establishments offered spiritual assistance; some exercised economic and political influence, such as fortresses, fortified settlements and castles, while hospices and hospitals offered corporeal assistance. Around this time some of the mushrooming eremitical communities of Tuscany and Umbria joined in the services offered by traditional establishments and delivered wide ranging assistance to pilgrims.

Architectural Influences

Along the pilgrimage routes, many architectural influences proliferated, which, at least, in rural areas, modern research has so far left undetected. Even today many of Italy's enjoyable secrets are hidden in small tawny-stoned villages tucked between the hills along Rome and Florence. Frequently, smaller but ambitious features of well-known monuments from far away areas were translated into local idioms and reflected in rural ecclesiastical architecture on a modest scale. Churches and hermitages in the Valdelsa and Siena area were focal points along the pilgrimage routes and became, with others, a medley of various architectural styles.

For the last quarter of a century, intensive research coupled with the results of archaeological excavations has shed light on some of these influences on ecclesiastical buildings, especially those of the eremitical establishments in Tuscany by relating the historical records to the physical remains.³ As a result of the research, it is possible to

³ G. RADAN, "Gli eremi nell'area senese: una prospettiva archaeologica," in C. ALESSI, C. BRANDI et al., *Lecceto e gli eremi Agostiniani in terra di Siena* (Milan, 1990), 73-95; [cited hereafter as *Lecceto e gli eremi*]; G. RADAN and A. VALERI, "L'Eremo di S. Lucia: Solitudine secondo Agostino," *Archaeologia Viva* 3 (1984) 36-40; G. RADAN, "Out of the Cave. Excavations at San Leonardo al Lago, Tuscany," *Proceedings of the PMR Conference* 5 (1980) 82-105; IDEM, "Archaeological Excavations at San Leonardo al Lago and Santa Lucia di Rosia," *Analecta Augustiniana* 60 (1997) 142-72; IDEM, "The Medieval Water Engineering at the Hermitage of SS. Lucy and Anthony of Rosia," *Bulletin of Mediterranean Archaeology* [cited hereafter as BMA] 2 (1977-78) 17-25; G. RADAN and A. LENGYEL, "The Hermitage of SS. Lucy and Anthony of Rosia: Historical Documentation of an Augustinian Hermitage," *The Church and the Human Society*; Villanova University Symposium VI (1983) 237-55; G. RADAN, "The Eremo of S. Lucia di Rosia: Archaeological Documentation of an Augustinian Hermitage," *Etruscans* 3 (1974) 5-33; IDEM, "Preliminary Report of the Excavations in Santa Lucia di Rosia, Siena, Summer 1972-73," *Acta Toscana* 1 (1974), 15-26; I. LENGYEL, "Analysis of Human Skeletal Fragments from the Eremo di Santa Lucia di Rosia," *Etruscans* 3 (1974) 40-44; M. B. HACKETT, "Cinque eremi agostiniani se nei dintorni di Siena," *Lecceto e gli eremi*, 45-72; M. B. HACKETT and G. RADAN: "Significato degli affreschi nel chiostro e nel portico di Lecceto," *ibid.*, 97-113.

decipher the original appearance of many previously unsuspected structures. The picture which emerges is unusual. It appears that in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, some rural areas developed architectural productions influenced by Lombard, Byzantine, Near Eastern, Moslem and even paleo-Christian styles. These styles run parallel with those of abbeys, parish churches, oratories, and chapels in the proto-Romanesque period. While the exact process of transition of various styles into the rural variety must remain conjectural, it can safely be assumed on the base of analysis that the cumulative example of comparative monuments has been effectively translated into the bricks and stones of the rural buildings.

Monk and Friar Architects

But many *lacunae* still remain in the investigation of the transmission of the architectural features. Names of architects, who apparently received their inspiration by visiting well-known monuments in urban centers in Europe and the Near East and/or through discussions with pilgrims, remain mostly unknown. Along with stone masons, monastic architects, such as Andrea di Piperino, Ratger (who was probably a *sapiens* architect instead of an *operaio*), and Baugulf, brought inspiration from places far from those rural areas which we are treating.⁴ Magister Martinus emerges as *magister operis lapidum* at Rosia and leaves his name on a stone plaque presently in the lobby of the Biblioteca Comunale in Siena.⁵ As far back as the ninth century Winihardus was the architect of Saint Gaul in 835, and all the workers were monks.⁶ Likewise in the ninth century, the deacon Pacifico, who died in 847, actively designed ecclesiastical buildings.⁷ By the fourteenth century the active participation of clerics in architecture in Cremona or Lodi was no longer unusual.⁸ The presence of Cistercian *conversi* from San Galgano among the advisors during the building of the cathedral of Siena is well-documented.⁹ According to Enlart, San

⁴ G. SABAZIO, "Artisti Agostiniani d'Italia," *Bolletino Storico Agostiniano* 9 (1933) 26; R. KRAUTHEIMER, "The Carolingian Revival of Early Christian Architecture," *The Art Bulletin* 24 (1942) n. 65.

⁵ G. RADAN, *Lecceto e gli eremi*, 80.

⁶ K. PORTER, *Lombard Architecture* (Yale, 1917), vol. 1, 18.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ C. ENLART, "L'Abbaye de San Galgano près Sienne au Treizième Siècle," *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire* 11 (1891) 201.

Galgano, so very important in the influence of Cistercian architecture in Italy, had some 80 monks who labored on the completion of the church.

While the distinction between *architectus* in the Vitruvian sense and a medieval lay craftsman was clear after the fifteenth century, it was somewhat blurred before this time. It is certain, however, that monastics played an important part in the building of ecclesiastical structures earlier than the Cistercian contribution in Italy, and religious with names of Ceccano, Ferentino, Sermoneta, Andrea de Piperino and others may have been students of monastic master builders.¹⁰

Topography of Architectural Influences

Among the various architectural influences in rural areas in Tuscany, the frequent Near Eastern features are of special interest. By proto-Romanesque times rural churches in the Val di Taro and Valdelsa area were adapting such influences into styles of their own. These influences on rural churches, however, did not always arrive directly from the Near East but for the most part came through Rome. As a result of the flux of refugees from Palestine, many relics, customs, and styles were imported, and the skyline of Rome began to demonstrate an oriental flavor.¹¹ The time that Near Eastern influences started to have an impact on ecclesiastical architecture in Rome is uncertain. Could it be as early as the middle of the fourth century when Athanasius, accompanied two Egyptian monks, visited Rome in 339?

Under the Syrian pope Sergius I (678-701) and the Greek pope John VI (701-705) some parts of Rome must have had similarities to Jerusalem or Baghdad. The *solea* in the earlier churches changed to *schola cantorum* with trabeated colonnades.¹² It is not unlikely that

¹⁰ ID., *Origines françaises de l'architecture Gothique en Italie* (Paris, 1894), 11; H. ROTT, *Quellen und Forschungen zur Südwestdeutschen Kunstgeschichte* (Stuttgart, 1933-38), 302; Sabazio, "Artisti Agostiniani," *passim*. A considerable number of friars had artistic talents and employed it in the interest of their monasteries. A famous case was at Parma where many *fratres laborarii* were recorded working on the Baptistry of Parma. Master builders, all of whom were clerics, signed their names in the transept of the Cathedral of Cremona. See PORTER, *op. cit.*, 18.

¹¹ R. KRAUTHEIMER, *op. cit.*, 90. Greek and oriental liturgical practices became more common under the Sicilian, Greek and Syrian popes. The center of Greek settlements at that time were around the Forum Boarium at the Santa Maria in Cosmedin. See: F. KEMPF, M. G. BECK et al., *The Church in the Age of Feudalism* (Freiburg/Montreal, 1969), 4-5.

¹² C. WARDS, *A history of the Early Church to A.D. 500* (London, 1937 and 2000), 197; also KRAUTHEIMER, *op. cit.* 9.

some prototypes from Syria and *martyria* from Antioch and Apamea were used in Rome as models. The Near Eastern influence in ecclesiastical architecture vanished in Rome with the end of the Syrian, Dalmatian and Greek popes and the coming of Hadrian I in the ninth century, introducing the time of the *renovatio*, an attempt to renew Rome's past. This period was marked by a return to the earlier proto-basilica types.

Various influences also on the architecture of eremitical establishments can be observed although the characteristics of eremitical communities in Tuscany can only be expressed in generalities. Huts, caves, and other primitive buildings were standard in the evolution of such communities. Location played a major role in their foundation such as picturesque and inspiring rocky heights on mountain tops overlooking valleys, plateaus and promontories sometimes dominated by primordial forests and streams. At this early stage the eremitical establishments were less influenced by architectural monastic reforms and imperial patronage and more by the imagination and travel experiences of local masons and members of the communities. In this sense emotion dominated the formal expressions of such religious groups.

Later on, the influence from the North, the "Latin sense of order," which eventually created new directions, obliterated memories and imposed occidental programming on monastic establishments in most places. In the case of hermitages of Tuscany, however, the architectural characteristics of the earlier styles persisted even when the newer architectural influences both in Rome and in major ecclesiastical centers north of the Alps came into vogue. The underlying motive was the desire to reflect the poverty and simplicity of the eremitical past. This desire for greater poverty and simplicity is seen also in the monastic reforms of Saints Romuald, Peter Damian, and John Gualbert.

The ground plans of some rural churches in the Valdelsa area show that the earlier Eastern tradition vanished more slowly. Some rural churches still were subject to such influences long after the fashion ceased in Rome. For instance, a group of rural churches originating in the ninth and tenth centuries had pastophories such as Sant' Appiano and Sant' Agnese in Chianti. Some have galleries above the aisles like San Giovanni Battista at Castello. While these influences are frequent in the ninth century, they already appeared in the Val di Taro area in the eighth century. Another local variation of the Near Eastern type, choir with flanking side rooms (not unlike the eastern-

influenced San Giovanni a Porta Latina in Rome), is found in the Pieve di Appiano, one of the oldest proto-Romanesque churches in the Valdelsa area, possibly dating from the late eighth century.¹³

Our interest centers around the development of the architecture in the period before the individual hermitages were organized in the thirteenth century to form the Augustinian Order in its present form. Several decades ago Professor Elm suggested that if there was any connection between fifth and seventh-century Augustinian monasticism and the thirteenth-century eremitical communities, the connecting links point to the hermitages of Aquaviva, Centumcellae and Lecceto.¹⁴ It was the early period of those communities which supplied in many cases the inspiration and the basis for the forthcoming architecture of the emerging Order.

By the time the Grand Union came in 1256 most of the presently existing hermitages had already undergone an adaptation to the Cistercian style with its fastidious proportioning expressed in terms of rural simplicity. In some cases at least such changes did not entirely obliterate the earlier architecture. The Cistercian style was undoubtedly attractive to these thirteenth-century communities and captured the imagination of many monastic settlements. Much later the buildings underwent other changes when the Baroque came along.

At the time the legends relating to the origin of the Augustinian Order were composed, the authors must have also been inspired not only by traditional oral sources but also by the still visible and not yet obliterated earlier foundations under the thirteenth-century churches.¹⁵ The desire to establish links with the past by identifying with early monastic foundations of Africa augmented interest in the far remote past. None of these foundations display technical expertise or show signs of experimental processes, but rather they were primitive and ruggedly conceived. Thus earlier foundations were not destroyed but incorporated in the later buildings. Unfortunately, paleographic materials, such as inscriptions, which would fortify dates are extremely scanty. The influence of the various renaissances is more easily detected in rural churches and hermitages, where tradition endured

¹³ M. SALMI, *Architettura Romanica in Toscana* (Rome, 1927), 21, 53, nos. 9, 58.

¹⁴ K. ELM, „Italienische Eremiten Gemeinschaften des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts,“ *L'eremitismo occidentale nei secoli XI e XII* (Milano, 1962), 549: "The Augustinian Friars, keeping in line with their eremitical vocation, never wholly lost touch with their hermitages, where a few groups continued to live" (translation, mine). See also: C. H. LAWRENCE, *Medieval Monasticism* (Harlow, 1953), 274.

¹⁵ RADAN, "Lecceto e gli eremi," 73-95; also "Out of the Cave," 82-105.

and adherence to such forms lasted longer than in urban centers. Tuscany and Umbria, however, must not be considered areas with slavish imitations, lands without creativity of their own, but capable of absorbing diverse stimuli. The manifold nature of early medieval architecture defies summary treatment. A salient example of this is San Leonardo al Lago where such foundations were left almost intact and served for the later building. (See Illustration 2) The eremitical ideals enjoyed a renaissance at the turn of the tenth century, and the architectural remains from the early stages must have been visual reminders. The visual remains served legends, which were presented as proof to show that the Order originated earlier than the thirteenth century.¹⁶

The Archaeological and Visual Evidence

Historical analysis of annals and hagiographical writings is an important source of information, but one that often needs to be verified by recourse to other evidence such as that which archaeology supplies. One has only to think of the great leaps forward in biblical studies that resulted from archaeological discoveries. Again, by supplying tangible evidence, archaeology can fill the lacunae left by lost or undiscovered historical documents.

The center of most eremitical foundations, where the loosely united members of communities met, were found, generally speaking, in the so-called box-churches. (See Illustration 3.) Recent excavations demonstrated their existence. The origin of these box-churches may lie in the so-called *consignatoria*, that is, the cemetery chapels in Egypt. In Italy they go back to the centuries after the decline of the Roman Empire, to the time when barbarian kingdoms were on the rise and conditions were hostile to monumental undertakings. During the ensuing centuries these rectangular box-churches were commonly used throughout Europe, but especially in Tuscany from the fourth century on and survived in rural areas into the tenth century.

Besides the excavated foundations of the various *eremi* in Tuscany, the *Thebaid* fresco cycles of the late *Trecento* and early *Quattrocento* show how architectural traditions survived through the

¹⁶ R. ARBESMANN, "Henry of Friemar's <<Treatise on the Origin and Development of the Order of the Hermit Friars and its True and Real Title>>", *Augustiniana* 6 (1956) 37-145; ID., "Jordanus of Saxony's Vita S. Augustini: the Source of John Capgrave's Life of St. Augustine," *Traditio* 1 (1943) 345 ff.

centuries. The *Thebaid* subject matters are particularly salient examples. Almost all of them originated in the late *Trecento* and early *Quattrocento* and indicate old and powerful traditions. The subjects nostalgically recall Egyptian and Palestinian solitaries as well as scenes of cenobitic life. Although most of them are thematic variations of imaginary vistas, they refer to the earliest eremitical establishments and show caves and numerous box-churches and sanctuaries. Some are based on accurate observation and on traditions of few generations before. The most monumental one, after the one at Lecceto, is the large panel in the Galleria dei Uffizi in Florence. This work is attributed to Gherardo Starnina, a student of Agnolo Gaddi (but lately thought to have followed Fra Angelico), and is probably inspired by Byzantine "Dormition" themes and the *Lives of the Desert Fathers*. Visual observation played a part in the depiction of some simple architectural details. Pietro Lorenzetti's *Thebaid*, which may have been inspired by the one in the *chiostro* of Lecceto, is presently in the Pinacoteca in Siena but once decorated the altar of the Carmine in Siena.¹⁷

All *Thebaid* paintings show early box-churches. To judge from the ruined but still extant early Augustinian hermitages, as evidenced by archaeological excavations, wall analysis, and ceramic evidence, the paintings have an affinity with hermitages such as San Leonardo al Lago Verano,¹⁸ Santa Lucia and Antonio di Valle Rosia,¹⁹ Sant' Agos-

¹⁷ 17. G. RADAN, "The Lecceto Frescoes: The Augustinian Cycle," in J. SCHNAUBELT, F. VAN FLETEREN, G. RADAN, *Augustine in Iconography*, (New York, 1999), 431-65; M. B. HACKETT and G. RADAN, "Significato degli affreschi nel chiostro e nel portico di Lecceto," *Lecceto e gli eremi*, 97-113; C. ALESSI, "I cicli monocromi di Lecceto: nuove proposte per vecchi problemi," *Lecceto e gli eremi*, 211-46. See also E. CARLI, *Guide to the Pinacoteca of Siena* (Milan, 1972), 35-36; E. CALLMAN, "Thebaid Studies," *Antichità Viva* 14 (1975) 8-12.

¹⁸ While the founder of the hermitage was identified as a certain "Benedetto priest and monk" according to a decree of Raniero II, bishop of Siena (1166-1170), the data obtained from the archaeological excavations point to an earlier, more humble beginning. The dig revealed a subterranean rock-chapel where the ceramic evidence indicate a ninth century beginning and another small chapel built above it shows a tenth century origin. The original church, mentioned above by Raniero, was still standing by 1168. The decree legitimizing the *eremo* was registered by Brigitte SZABO-BECHSTEIN in *Quellen und Forschungen aus Italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 55/56 (1976) 159-99. See also: RADAN, "Out of the Cave," n. 2. According to M. B. HACKETT, the foundation of San Leonardo can be the "early years" of the eleventh century, maybe about 1050. Hackett feels that the date of 1119 for the foundation of the *eremo* is not realistic; see his "Cinque eremi" in *Lecceto e gli eremi*, 45-46.

¹⁹ The antiquity of Rosia was stated by B. VAN LUIJK, who placed the foundation at 952. See his "Gli eremiti neri nel Dugento con particolare riguardo al territorio Pi-

tino di Montespescchio,²⁰ San Salvatore di Lecceto,²¹ and Sant' Agostino de Monticiano.²² These hermitages trace their origin to early box-church ancestors. (See Illustrations 4 and 5)

In addition to the hermitages listed, some such buildings, which witness their ninth and tenth century origins, exist in the Valdelsa area; namely, San Jacopo, San Bartolo and San Pietro, both at San Galgano, Santa Maria at Radi, and San Donato at Gavignano. All of these buildings appear to have a box-church type of origin strikingly similar to the oratories on the *Thebaid* paintings.²³ The Portiuncola, originally

sano e Toscano," *Biblioteca del Bollettino storico pisano, origine, sviluppo ed unione*, Colana storia 7 (1968) 44-46. The several years of excavations found traces of an ancient campo santo under the earliest foundation long before the year 1000. The ancient foundation was incorporated into the later box-church. See G. RADAN and A. LENGUEL, "The Eremo di S. Lucia," *Etruscans* 3 (1974) 5-33. M. B. Hackett describes the earliest stages of the hermitage as follows: "nel 1200 ... avesse avuto 60 anni [the founder Bonacorso], e fosse nato, perciò, nel 1140; ... ammettiamo, infine, che avesse avuto circa 30 anni quando decise di vivere nella Valle di Rosia, allora, l'anno della fondazione del l'eremo sarebbe il 1170." Somewhat further he adds in "Cinque eremi," 49: "infatti, nel 1200 vennero costruiti una piccola chiesa e degli alloggi primitive, come capanne o grotte, che circondavano la dimora rudimentale del fondatore." The fact is that while the above mentioned little church was incorporated in the Gothic phase of the church, ceramic evidence shows that the small chapel under the first church was completed before the turn of the millennium. See: RADAN, "Gli eremi," 92-93.

²⁰ We do not have any archaeological evidence regarding the foundation of Montespescchio. Literary evidence points to 1189 or 1190. Some claims were made regarding the church, namely, that it was consecrated in 1016 and that a provincial chapter was held there at the time. A. LANDUCCI, *Sacra Leccetana Selva, cioè origine e progressi del'antico e venerabile eremo e congregazione di Lecceto in Toscana del'ordine erem. del padre Sant Agostino* (Rome, 1657); cf. M. B. HACKETT, "Cinque eremi," 53.

²¹ The first literary evidence for the existence of Lecceto is from 1119; see M. B. HACKETT, "The Medieval Archives of Lecceto," *Analecta Augustiniana* 40 (1977) n. 3. However, Landucci in *Selva* states that the hermitage was established in 1084. In fact, Giacomo Piccolomini died at Lecceto in 1074: see HACKETT, "Cinque eremi," nos. 87, 88. No archaeological evidence through excavations could be obtained at Lecceto since the Sovrintendenza refused permission for a dig. There are sources which place the beginnings of Lecceto as early as the eighth or ninth centuries. See A. KUNZELMANN, *Geschichte der Deutschen Augustiner-Eremiten*: Teil 1, in the series *Cassiciacum* 26 (1969) 24, n. 46; K. ELM, „Neue Beiträge zur Geschichte der Augustiner-Eremitenorders im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 42 (1971) 360 ff.

²² The foundation date is not known. The present form of the church is fourteenth-century – late Gothic and it may have been built on an earlier foundation of unknown date. See M. B. HACKETT, "Cinque eremi," 68.

²³ I. MORETTI and R. STOPANI, *Chiese Romaniche in Valdelsa* (Florence, 1968), 130 and passim. The word "oratory" was used in various archaeological re-

dedicated to Santa Maria di Giosafat and later given to St. Francis of Assisi by the Benedictine monks of Subiaco, was a building of this type. So was the Vittorino near Gubbio and San Damiano where the Christ on the crucifix spoke to the same saint.²⁴

Several Augustinian hermitages with such simple foundations, upon which single nave churches were erected, also adhered to this tradition even when they were converted into *canoniche rurale*, and later when during the Renaissance and the Baroque periods more elaborate changes were made. Written evidence is insufficient to ascertain the earliest foundations of these hermitages. For instance, sources, which mention a certain Benedictine named Benedetto at San Leonardo al Lago, place us far before the times when hermits were centered around a building erected above a grotto. Archaeological evidence points however to a "proto-historical" period and foundation before 1050.²⁵ In the cave chapel under the hermitage the discovery of ceramic remains of so-called "Forum Ware," which has a *terminus ante quem* in the ninth century and which remained in use till about the eleventh century, points to a primitive religious center which existed well before the millenium.

ports related to San Leonardo al Lago. In the case of San Leonardo, it preceded and became part of the later Gothic structure. For the medieval meaning of the word see A. H. FELDHAUS, *Oratories*, in Catholic University of America: Canon Law Series, 42 (Washington D. C., 1927), *passim*.

An unexplained, almost perfect illustration of the development from an unknown eremitical community to cave sanctuary and then to a box-church and finally into a quasi Gothic style of church is a panel attributed to Paolo Uccello in the Galleria della Accademia in Florence. See J. Pope HENNESY, *Paolo Uccello* (London, 1969), 172. The painting has not been sufficiently researched to establish the identity of the locality illustrated, but it is likely that it represents San Leonardo al Lago; the only place where the transition and tripartite elevation of an eremitical building was still known when this late *Trecento* or early *Quattrocento* painting was completed. The painting also shows on the second level of the elevation what may be a "confessio," a place for relics of saints. If indeed it is, then it is the only one in Tuscany with such an architectural feature. The idea of the "confessio" received its first impetus when Pope Paul I distributed relics from the catacombs of Rome in 765. See: J. HUBERT, J. PROCHES et al., *The Carolingian Renaissance* (New York, 1972), 53. Although the painting is associated with the *Thebaid* subject matter, it is a unique variant of it. It is not influenced and has no association with those manuscripts which came from monasteries interested in hermits and which may have had some influence on the subject matter such as Valombrosa, Monte Oliveto and Camaldoli. See E. CALMAN, "Thebaid Studies," *Antichita Viva* 14 (1975) 11.

²⁴ MORETTI and STOPANI, *Chiese Romaniche*, 30 (n. 26).

²⁵ D. WHITEHOUSE, "Forum Ware: a Distinctive Type of Early Medieval Glazed Pottery in the Roman Campagna," *Medieval Archaeology*, 9 (1965) 55-63 and RADAN "Gli eremi," 81.

At Santa Lucia di Rosia, we have a salient case where written documents are supplemented by archaeological evidence. For instance, M. B. Hackett states: "Non vi sono prove che l'eremo sia stato edificato prima del 952 come casa colonica dell'abbazia di San Bartolomeo di Sestinga, dato che non troviamo riferimenti a Sestinga, fino all'anno 1025."²⁶ Some tangible evidence, however, does exist to fill the lacuna of written documents in a coin of Henry II (the Lambe) that was found under the terrazzo floor of the second church in the NE section of the presbytery at Santa Lucia.²⁷ This represents a *terminus ante quem* for the foundation of the church since Henry was born in 962 and was crowned as king in 1004. This early date is not surprising if one accepts the data supplied by B. van Luijk who dates the existence of Santa Lucia da Rosia prior to 952.²⁸

Further documentation may be mentioned here in reference to the two ossuaries attached to the foundation of the church of Santa Lucia. Extensive research conducted by one scientist of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences proved that the age of the bones preceded the first building. This bone material constituted the lowest (first) level of the ossuaries under the porch and under the west side of the church. The bones were first collected from an ancient *campo santo* on the promontory where the hermitage stands today and were reburied in the ossuaries. Was the *campo santo* a Christian burial place? One has to remember that the proximity of cemeteries of early religious communities to paleo-Christian places was not unusual. For example, the excavations at Farfa discovered tegulated graves, originating from the first Christian settlement under Lawrence of Syria (552-563).²⁹

Such discoveries pertaining to the "prehistoric" period of the Augustinian Order are connected with several early eremitical foundations. For instance, although there is a firm date for the foundation of the hermitage of Montespечchio in 1189 (hypothetically the construction may be dated to around 1200), there is a legendary date of

²⁶ M. B. HACKETT, "Cinque eremi," 49.

²⁷ RADAN and LENGUEL, "The Eremo di S. Lucia di Rosia," *Etruscans* 3 (1974), 10, n. 16.

²⁸ B. VAN LUIJK, *Bullarium Ordinis Eremitarum S. Augustini, Periodus Formationis 1187-1256*, in the series *Cassiciacum* 18 (Würzburg, 1964), 16, n. 14. For a somewhat different opinion and a complete bibliography on the subject, see: K. ELM, "Gli eremiti neri nel Dugento: Ein neuer Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte des Augustiner-Eremitenordens," *Quellen und Forschungen aus Italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 50 (1970), 58-79.

²⁹ C. B. McCLENDON, *The Imperial Abbey of Farfa: Architectural Currents of the Early Middle Ages* [cited hereafter as *Farfa*] (New Haven, 1987), 16.

April 16, 1015.³⁰ In addition, one sketch from the nineteenth century in the Biblioteca Comunale (MS A.VIII.53, fol. 286r) clearly attests to the box-church origin of this hermitage. (See Illustration 5)

Another characteristic, namely a squared presbytery, still existed at Lecceto at the time when the "new church" was consecrated by Bishop Bonfilius of Siena on 16 April 1228.³¹ Its traces were left intact when the fourteenth-century church, which was an extension of the thirteenth-century structure, was completed between 1317 and 1345. The description of the altar by Landucci provides important documentation of the survival of the squared presbytery so typical of early eremitical churches: "E dretto al altar' maggiore vi è il choro a volta, di braccia 12 lungo e largo braccia 10."³² These are the measurements of the squared presbytery at Santa Lucia di Rosia measured from the main altar to the back to the choir! With one Florentine braccia equal to 46 cm, the measurements are 9m 66cm x 4m 60cm with a difference of only 15 cm of length. At Santa Lucia the length is only 9m 51cm. Such close relationships may point towards, if not one architect, at least a common model or a local tradition.

As to a *terminus ante quem*, a trial trench in front of the portico at Lecceto, which probably once served as atrium, would yield important data since it surely would show early burials like those at San Leonardo al Lago and Santa Lucia di Rosia. The custom of using the church steps or portico for reburials may have arisen from the fact that *atria* had been popular sites for burials, as is seen, for example, in the courtyard of Old St. Peter's, which was used for tombs, beginning with early times and lasting into the Middle Ages.³³

³⁰ LANDUCCI, *op. cit.*, 55. I am grateful to M. B. HACKETT for this information. See also note 20.

³¹ F. SCHNEIDER, *Regestum Senese* (Rome, 1911), 337, n. 757; RADÂN, "The Eremo di S. Lucia," 5-6; IDEM: "Archaeological Excavations," 154; HACKETT "Cinque eremi," 49, nos 37, 38; L. FRANCHINA, *op. cit.*, tav. 1, 174.

³² LANDUCCI, *Sacra Illicitana Sylva*, 20-21. The measurements in this article differ somewhat from those described by M. B. HACKETT in his "Lecceto, the Monastery and its Economy by 1650," *Analecta Augustiniana* 52 (1989), where one Tuscan braccio is equaled to 0.583626 of a meter.

The tradition and desire to recreate a bygone Arcadian memory remained so vivid that centuries later, long out of fashion, such a monastic "village" was built at Gross-Burlo. See K. ELM, "Ein Plan des Klosters Gross-Burlo aus dem Jahre 1728," *Westfallen* 54 (1976) 101-3. For similar continuing tradition in the fifteenth century, see: F. CARDINI and G. VANINNI, "San Vivaldo in Valdelsa. Problemi topografici e interpretazioni simboliche di una 'Gerusalemme' Cinquecentesca in Toscana," *Religiosità e Società in Valdelsa nel basso Medioevo*, Atti del Convegno di S. Vivaldo, 29 Settembre 1979, *passim*.

³³ McClendon, *Farfa*, 69.

Frequently the squared presbyteries were over crypts. Such crypts, at the beginning, resulted from various geographical and topographical conditions and, in the case of the eremitical past, the evolution of communities into functioning and regulated groups.³⁴ It is not known how much the architecture was influenced at the time by various liturgies practiced during the period. Long before the famous ninth century Badia di Sant'Antimo (c. 890) near Monte Amiata in Umbria, simple crypts, almost never annular ones, seem to have been developed in the Valdelsa area. These crypts were reminiscent of the great French prototypes.³⁵

In the development of crypts, there is likely to have been an influence in the Carolingian period from the north, from churches such as St. Nazarius at Lorsch (c. 774) and St. George at Reichenau-Oberzell (c. 888), that is, during the period when the earliest eremitical establishments are thought to have begun in Italy, but long before the Cistercian innovations took root in Umbria and Tuscany. Thus the Cistercian wave of architectural innovations in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries contained certain features which must have seemed familiar to the innovators.

In addition to the eremitical churches, similar characteristics, such as timber roofing and raised squared presbyteries, are found in other early box-churches, for example, San Ruffiniano at Monsanto and Santa Maria at Colle in the Valdelsa area. Other notable squared endings are still in existence at San Michele a Rencine and San Donato a Lucardo.³⁶ Another remaining example is the Canonica di Monteriggioni although it dates from a somewhat later date. Again, such squared presbyteries are not uncommon north of the Alps during Merovingian and Carolingian periods as is seen in two important examples, St. Nazarius at Lorsch and St. George at Reichenau-Oberzell. Thus squared presbyteries became a standard feature in the development of the early eremitical box-churches long before the Cistercian influence was felt in Italy at Fossanova.³⁷

³⁴ RADAN, *Analecta Augustiniana* 40 (1997) 154; L. FRANCHINA, "Il convento di Lecceto: crescita di un organismo," *Lecceto e gli eremi*, tav.1, 174.

³⁵ The half vaults imitate the prototypes of Southern France with ambulatories, such as at Conques and Limoges, as well as urban examples in Italy, such as San Pietro in Vincoli at Pisa. See also: G. MARTELLI, "Le più antiche crypte dell'Umbria" *Atti del 3e Convegno di Studi Umbri*, (Gubbio, 1965), 33, 53 and passim.

³⁶ These type of plans are also common in the Val di Cecina area. See I. Moretti and R. Stoppani: *Chiese Romaniche in Val di Cecina* (Florence, 1970), 67-69, 75-82.

³⁷ F. OSWALD, L. SCHAEFER, et al., *Vorromanische Kirchenbauten* (Munich, 1966-67) 179-81.

Some authors even maintain that the development of the architecture of the eremitical orders remained independent of the Cistercian influence even once the Cistercian style became dominant. Thus Renzo Pardi writes: "Ritengo che gli organismi degli ordini eremitici, quali ad esempio i Camaldolesi, si siano sviluppati indipendentemente da eventuali condizionamenti cistercensi e siano anzi i diretti precursori delle architetture degli ordini mendicanti."³⁸

On the other hand, one has to take in consideration here those box-churches which were erected hundreds of years later as a result of the tendency to simplification found in the Cistercian style. Such structures, however, are different and distinguishable from the ones which were erected at the turn of the millennium or earlier. Their masonry is far more sophisticated, finished with chisel, instead of hacked out with stone ax. Consequently in the later box-churches arch voussoirs, where they exist, are already wedge-shaped instead of distorted in an effort to create the curve of the arch. The arches supporting the vaults of their crypts have well-developed diagonal and transverse ribs. This is the case, for instance, with Sant' Antimo di Petroro near Todi in Umbria.

In architectural development, moreover, one must not discount the impact of changing liturgy and the influence of clerics, especially abbots. At the end of the seventh century, Benedictine abbots experimented with lay-outs of monasteries adapted to the Rule so that everything essential for communal living should be contained within the monastery walls.³⁹ The Benedictine conference at Aachen (817) discussed the relationship of the plan to the Rule and liturgical lay-outs. Some abbots, such as the one those from the Imperial Abbey of Farfa, are known to have traveled extensively and brought back well-established ideas from the great abbeys of the Carolingian realm north of the Alps. Important clerical architects were men like Bishop Bernward, or Abbot Suger, or the architect-abbot Ratgar (who was removed from his post by Louis the Pious), or Abbot Sichardus at Farfa.⁴⁰

³⁸ R. PARDI, *Richerche di architettura religiosa medioevale in Umbria* (Perugia, no date), 80.

³⁹ 39. W. BRAUNFELS, *Monasteries of Western Europe* (Princeton, 1972), 10. Specifically the sixty-sixth chapter of the *Regula Sancti Benedicti* calls for monasteries functionally laid out to serve the community. St. Benedict's Rule places the abbot in charge of much activity around the monastery, *ibid.*, 11; also MCCLENDON, *Farfa*, 64-69.

⁴⁰ *Farfa*, 116. Others are named as well who were instrumental in the architectural development at Farfa, namely Alanus of Aquitane, Probatius and Ragambaldus.

Clearly less famous but still important architectural innovators existed in the history of the Augustinian Order also. One of the first with a mission of building and restoration appears to have been Rinero/Rainerio, who was one of the *beati* at Rosia and who is credited with the restoration of the church there in 1276.⁴¹ Extensive building activity at Lecceto between 1317 and 1345 is connected to the names of the priors Giovanni Battista Benincasa da Siena and Giovanni di Gucci Molli da Siena. Again, Cristofano, alias Christoforo di Giovanni Landucci, a lay brother at the end of the fourteenth century, became the designer and architect of the tower at that monastery, still a landmark today after almost six centuries. In another still later case, we may see the hand and imagination of Mariano da Genazzano, prior of Lecceto in 1489, in the design of the new refectory, dormitory and loggia. He was the vicar general of the Lecceto congregation in 1483.⁴²

The kaleidoscopic variety of stylistic influences which this article attempts to group chronologically, comes to an end in the thirteenth century when the practical forms and new aspects of the French Gothic style with its serene simplicity, directness, and lack of adornment started to penetrate Corneto Tarquinia in the southern confines of the Maremma and eventually Central Italy. However, when the characteristics of all vaulted Cistercian buildings were adapted by local builders, it is reasonable to assume that they looked upon squared presbyteries sympathetically and with familiarity since to them it was already a *déjà vu*.

Conclusion

This analysis has spanned almost half a millennium of architectural influences in rural areas of Tuscany with special regard to little known eremitical establishments. These influences preceded those still standing Gothic architectural remains, which are distinguishable under the Baroque disguise of some Augustinian establishments. The convergence of stylistic and archaeological facts allow us to extrapolate little known phases of the development, influences, life, function, and taste of eremitical establishments in the dimly-lit earlier centuries. Because of the lack of historical documents, uncertainty reigns as far as so-called "Augustinian Prehistory" is concerned. It is

⁴¹ LANDUCCI, 121; cf. Hackett, "Cinque eremi," 61.

⁴² HACKETT, *ibid.*, n. 51.

there that archaeology may shed light on that particularly obscure yet important period when a specific type of architecture developed.

During this time a fascinating melee of influences derived from the Near East – the survival of eremitical movements flowing from the south mostly through Rome – along with those influences coming from northern Merovingian and Carolingian features was translated into local idioms by local masons, many of whom were members of monastic communities. Thus the architecture of the hermitages at that time became crossroads for various movements. The architectural revival of the eighth and ninth centuries created profound changes in church architecture which conformed to the ecclesiastical *renovatio* of the papal court. These periods were critical for the development of early eremitical structures.

The stylistic influences on eremitical churches range from rigid conservative adherence to eremitical ideals and rural simplicity to surprisingly delicate refinements. These different strands are interwoven into a fabric so complex that it is difficult to determine a representative sampling that conveys its flavor and variety. Thus the influences are detectable not only in local rural developments but in the constructions of hermitages as well. While examining these strains, one must get accustomed to opposing views and accept a many-sided approach to the phenomenon with the result that unrelated explanations are accepted side by side.

Some features were common in the early structures. These features are still visually distinguishable today in the ruins or in the buildings, where they were incorporated into the construction. All of them, before they became syntheses of different architectural currents, show that they originated from simple box-churches: single navata, no side aisles or chapels, squared endings (some with and some without crypts), and probably of timber origin before gradually being converted into stone. What is characteristic of these early sanctuaries is that there was a scarcity of decoration on the facades and in the interiors. Most of the masonry is roughly hewn instead of the finely chiseled stonework of the later phases. In the eremitical churches no traces are yet detectable of the battle that developed within a century between plasticism and chromatics in church decoration. The few primitive, or should we say, humble decorations were limited to some stoops, lesenes, crest tiles and mouchettes (some of which may have already belonged to the Gothic phase). Reused, however, in the next phases of building periods were some remarkably preserved purlins and struts in the interiors.

Nonetheless, the convergence of hypothetically synchronized factors – archaeological, historical, and stylistic – reveals architectural inspirations from various sources. The rural churches are sometimes unpretentious copies of little known monuments in Rome and other places. The ground plans reveal inspirations from far away places – an interesting crossroad of architectural influences. Since, however, most hermitages were associated with caves, the exact process of transmission of these influences must remain largely conjectural. The austere, picturesque, dense forests and almost inaccessible rocky heights rising above the mountain gorges played a role in selecting sites and defining the holy man's relationship to God. These were places where the search for and positive attraction of natural beauty and idyllically sheltered solitude dominated. These were sanctuaries where the spirit of Christianity gradually superseded ancient beliefs in the supernatural and where solitude inspired deep religious feelings. The cliffs, forests and wild rivers offered the opportunity for a remarkable union of nature and architecture with many different levels of contrasting textures. Thus the picturesque, essential to good architecture in later centuries, was pioneered by eremitical architecture and kindled the burning desire to sustain continuous communion with God.

Villanova

G. T. RADAN

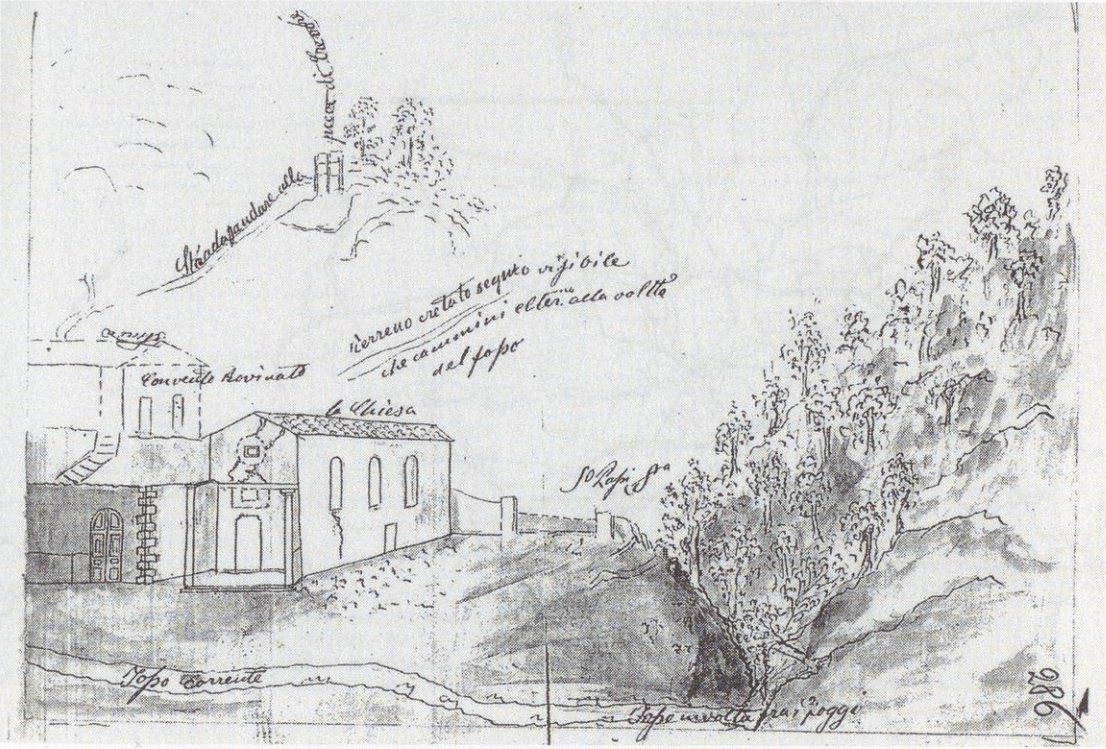


Abbildung 1

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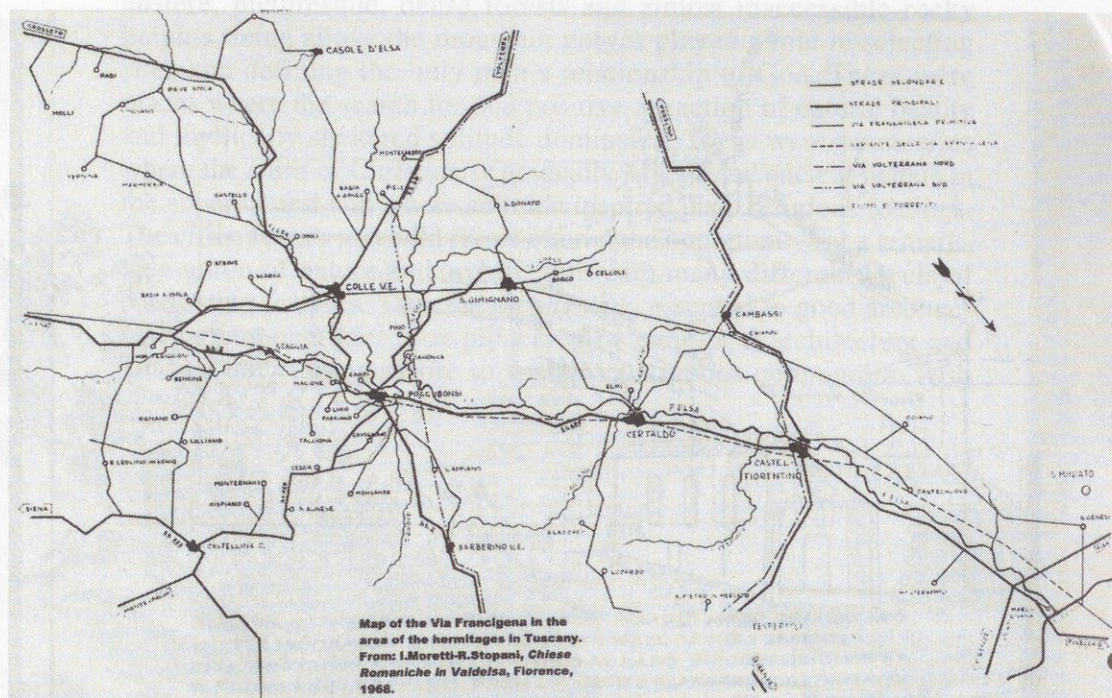


Abbildung 2

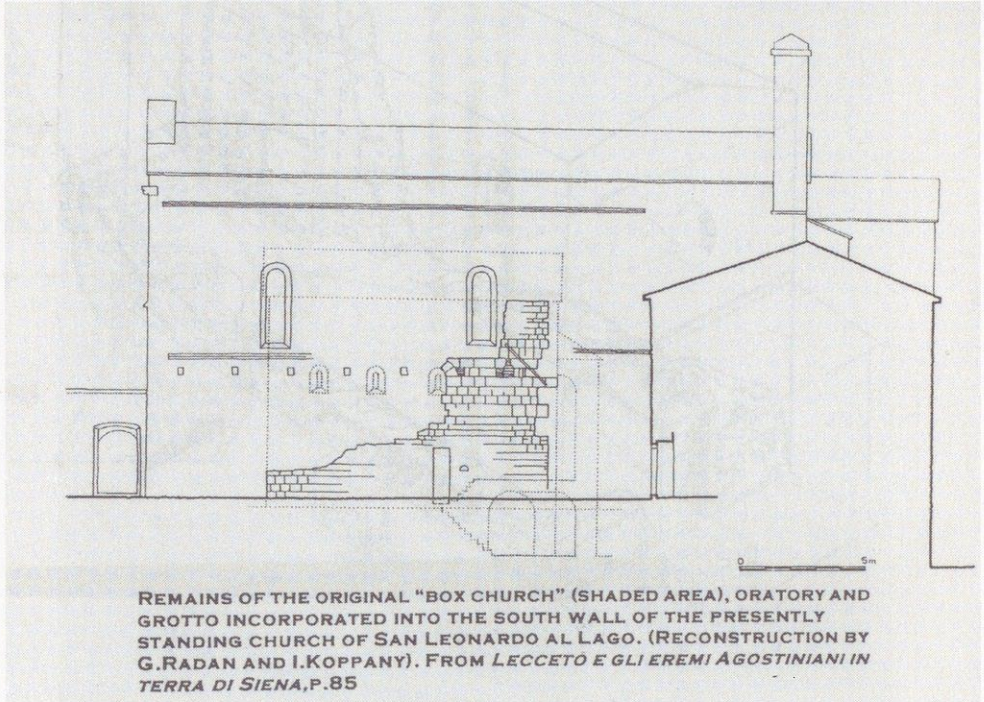


Abbildung 3

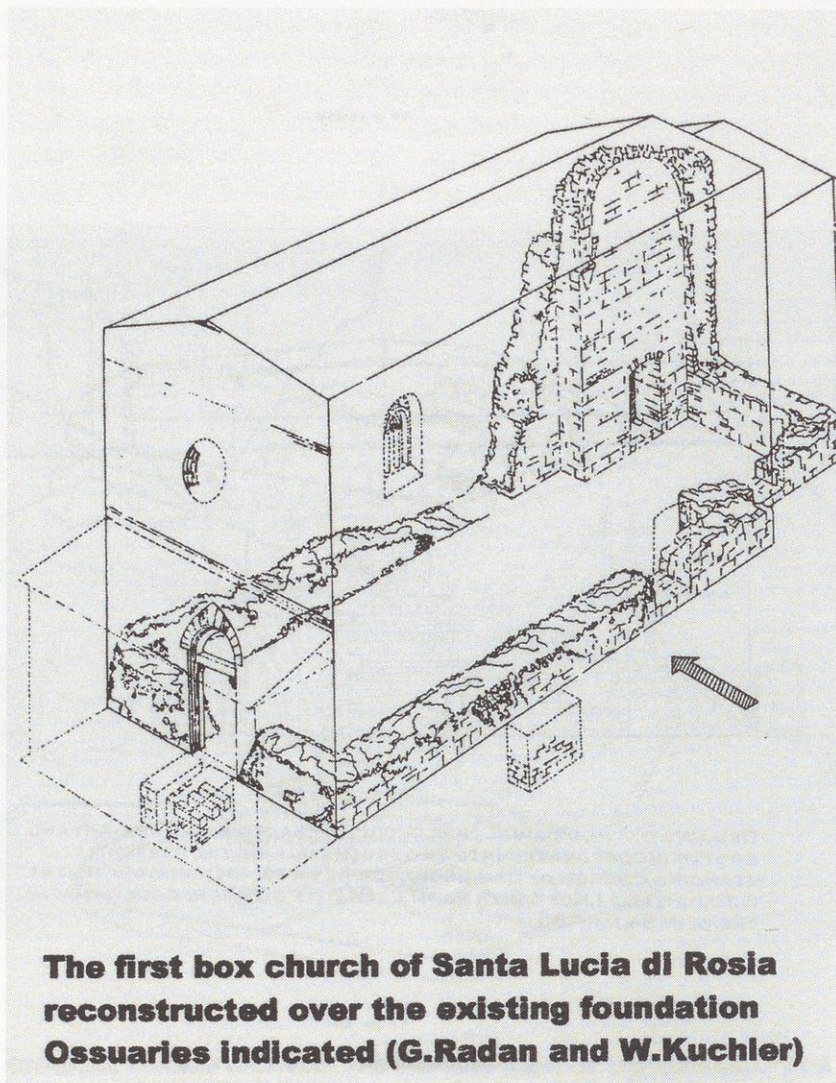


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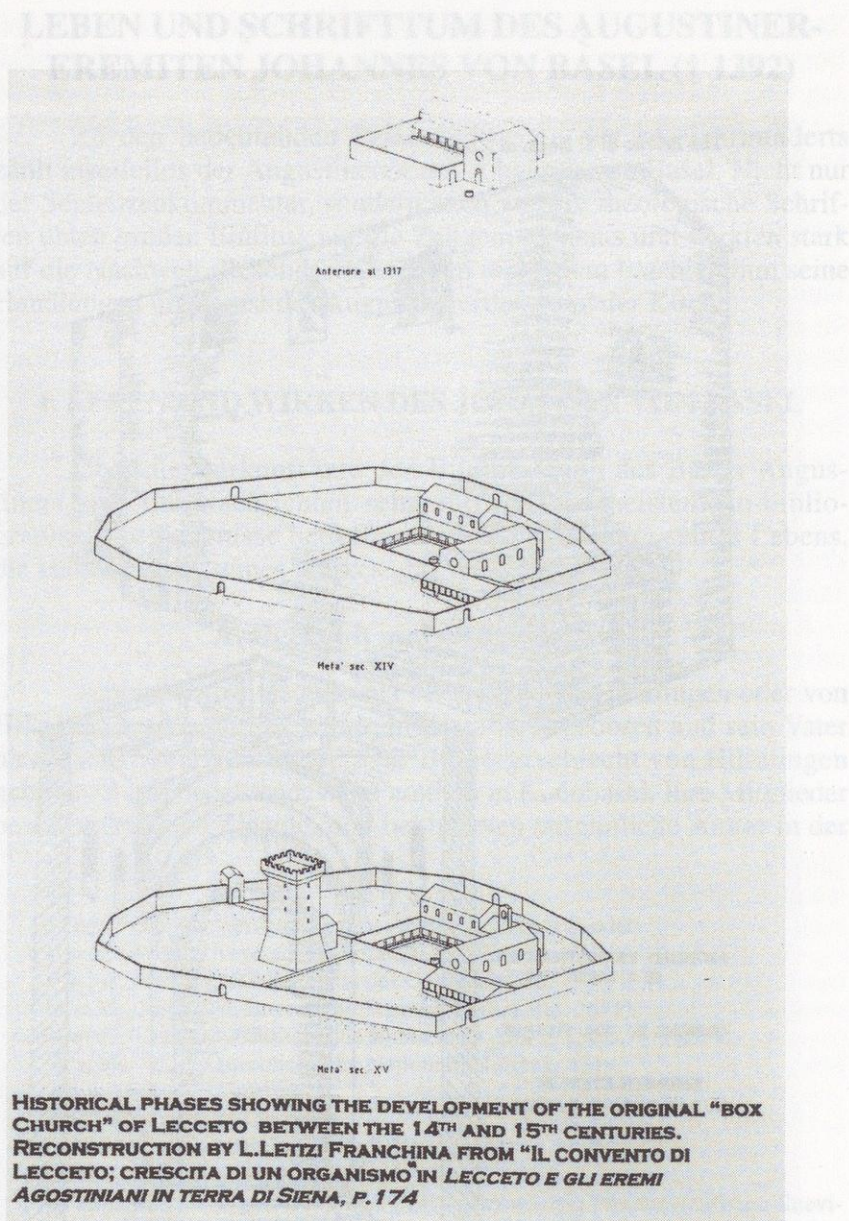


Abbildung 5

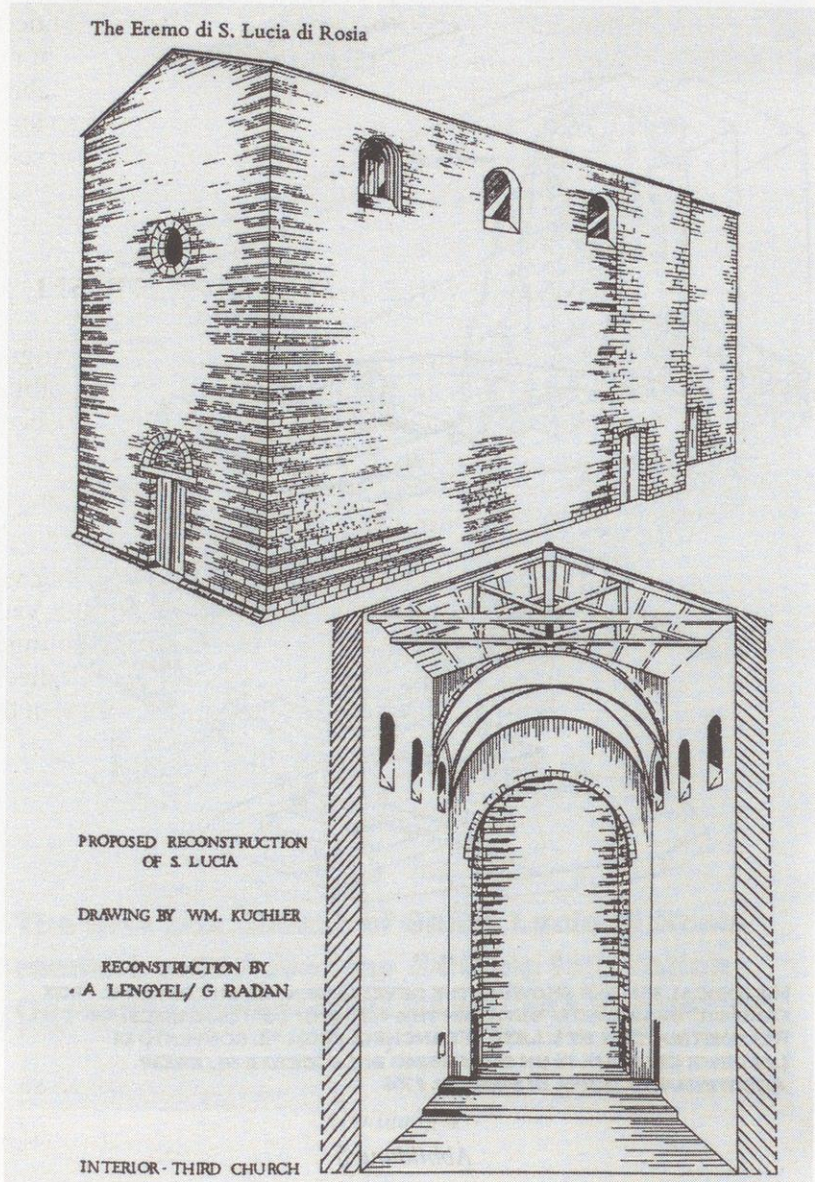


Abbildung 6