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Unlike Visigothic, Mozarabic, Asturian, Hispano-Muslim and Mudejar art and architecture, Romanesque art and architecture did not originate in Spain, but rather represents an imported style, which came to Spain when already mature and fully developed.

Of course, in Spain said style took on certain Hispanic characteristics, elements from Hispano-Celtic, Visigothic, Mozarabic, Asturian, Hispano-Muslim and Mudejar styles. Romanesque monuments are quite abundant in Northern Spain, and are found even as far south as Cordoba. Romanesque architecture took firm root in Galicia, though in the Central Plateau it was soon replaced by the Gothic style, which took firm root indeed. Why this should be the case is a good question, since the humid, cloudy climate of Galicia would seem to require the huge windows made possible by the Gothic architecture. A Gallego friend explained it this way:

"We Gallegos like things to look strong and solid."

This is as good an explanation as any. Catalunya, as usual following the lead of Occitania, also in general remained faithful to Romanesque throughout the Middle Ages and even later, though there are some notable Gothic monuments in Catalunya. The resistance of Occitania - and therefore indirectly Catalunya - to the Gothic style may be interpreted as the rejection of a style originating in what is now Northern France, the land of the *Langue d'Oil* in contrast to the *Langue d'Oc*. In Old French "yes" is *oil* (in Modern French *oui*), while in the land of the "Langue d'Oc" "yes" is *oc*. Thus the terms "Langue d'Oil" and "Langue d'Oc".

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Like the term "Gothic" (Gothic architecture has absolutely nothing to do with the Goths) the term "Romanesque" is a misnomer.

The term was coined by the French archaeologist Charles de Gerville, who held that Romanesque art and architecture, with its many regional and local variations (and much in contrast to the monotonous uniformity of Imperial Roman art and architecture) is derived from the art and architecture of Imperial Rome as the Romance languages are derived from Latin (96). I wonder if de Gerville postulated a "Romanesque d'Oil" and a "Romanesque d'Oc". This theory does contain a certain amount of truth, since it was the Romans who taught the peoples of Western Europe to build. The Celts, for all their enormous artistic, musical and literary genius, continued to be basically Aryan nomads and therefore little inclined toward architecture.

However, one who seriously studies so-called Romanesque art and architecture very soon sees how little it really owes to Imperial Rome; in effect, the basilical plan, which, much modified, continues to be used in most Romanesque buildings, the modified Corinthian capitals, the round or semicircular arch and very little else. If one forgets for a moment that part built by the Caliph al-Hakam II, the Mosque of Cordoba is far more Roman than any so-called Romanesque building.

The most important influences in Romanesque architecture are Syro-Byzantine, Armenian and Sassanian. Other aspects of Romanesque art are even more heterogenous, adding Celtic, Coptic, Sarmatian and even Viking elements to the three given above.

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Romanesque art, then, is anti-Classical, and was for that reason despised by the neo-classicists of the Renaissance. Classicism was a style imposed on the fundamentally Celtic peoples of Western Europe, and thus could not survive the downfall of the Imperial power which upheld it.

In effect, Romanesque art and architecture has very little continuity with that of Imperial Rome, and not much more with the Carolingian style. The reason for this is the fact that Western Europe was so thoroughly devastated by the Viking and Magyar invasions of the 9th and 10th Centuries. During this time very little building was done, save at the popular level. In effect, art barely survived. Only at the beginning of the 11th Century did architecture begin to revive, in this case in Northern Italy and in Occitania land of the "Langue d'Oc", now Southern France. The real cradle of Romanesque architecture is Lombardy. Lombard masons early acquired great fame and traveled widely, being the real creators of the "First Romanesque Style". This first style is really not of much interest to us; it is not very innovative and except for the famous "Lombard bands", which seem to derive from Sassanian lobed arches, there is little to say of it from our point of view. Most of what is now Catalunya was reconquered from the Muslims in the time of Charlemagne, becoming the "Spanish March" of the Carolingian Empire. For at least five centuries thereafter Catalunya was more a part of Occitania than part of Christian Spain. Even today the Catalan language resembles Provençal or Langue d'Oc far more than it does the other Romance

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languages of the Peninsula, if one excludes those such as Valenciano and Mallorquin, which are really variants of Catalan. In other words, Catalan and its variants resemble Provençal or Langue d'Oc far more than they do Castilian, Aragonese, Asturian *Bable*, Gallego, Portuguese or the old *Lisan al-Ajjam* of al-Andalus.

By contrast, the rest of Christian Spain remained somewhat isolated from the rest of Christian Europe until near the end of the 10th Century, from the artistic viewpoint living on its own Celtic, Visigothic, Mozarabic and Asturian traditions. Thus, outside Catalunya there are no Carolingian monuments nor early Romanesque buildings in Spain. What sort of style the Western Kingdoms of Christian Spain might have developed from the above elements if left to their own devices is interesting to speculate.

Dr. Fernando Chueca Goitia at the I International Congress of Mozarabic Studies said that the Asturian-Mozarabic style was on the verge of maturity when it was cut short by the introduction of Romanesque architecture from North of the Pyrenees. The fact that the Western Kingdoms of Christian Spain ceased to be isolated from the rest of Christian Europe is therefore important to our study.

At least from the time of Charlemagne French and Occitan knights had come to Spain to fight against the Muslims. Nevertheless, the main factor was the pilgrimage to the tomb of the Apostle St. James in Santiago de Compostela (Galicia), since it was this which first caused large-scale contact between the Christian peoples on the two sides of the Pyrenees. Almanzor made a daring incursion to Santiago de Compostela. He destroyed the

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Asturian-style Cathedral then on the site, and had the bells of this cathedral taken to Cordoba on the backs of Christian prisoners. However, it being that St. James was a disciple and very probably blood relative of Jesus Christ, Almanzor proclaimed that he should be revered by Muslims as well as Christians and ordered that the tomb itself not be damaged.

Occitan trobadors came to Santiago de Compostela as pilgrims, inspired the Gallego-Portuguese trobadors, and left place-names such as *Bonaval* (good valley) and *Belvis* (beautiful view) on the urban topography of Santiago de Compostela. William (or Guilhem) IX, the trobador Count of Poitou, grandfather of Eleanor of Aquitaine and therefore ancestor of the Plantagenets, made the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and is still remembered as "don Gayferos de Mormaltan", hero of a romance still very popular in Galicia. (See Appendix 2)

Some may be confused by the spelling. The original Provençal or Occitan spelling of "troubadour" is "trobador" as in the Romance de don Gayferos de Mormaltan. However, in French (or the "Langue d'Oil") said Occitan word is spelled "troubador" in Old French, "troubadour" in Modern France, and it is the Modern French spelling which is used in English.

There are a great many legends of the Pilgrim's Road to Compostela. At least one is worth telling, to give the reader a sample of the flavor of said legends. The Castilian city of Santo Domingo de la Calzada takes its name from a saint of the 11th Century who devoted his life to aiding the pilgrims to Compostela.

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The legend says that a French family was on pilgrimage to Compostela. When they arrived at Santo Domingo de la Calzada the waitress of the tavern where they stayed tried to tempt their 18 year-old son, but being a good Christian, he rejected her advances. To avenge her frustrated lechery and bruised vanity, the waitress hid a silver cup in the lad's pack. When the family had gone, the waitress denounced the boy as a thief. The constable arrested the boy, who protested his innocence, but was condemned to be hung according to the Fuero Juzgo, the Visigothic law code in force in Castile. His parents continued the journey to Compostela. Their prayers at the tomb of the Apostle were effective. When the boy was to be hung, the rope did him no harm.

News of this was brought to the constable, who at that moment was preparing to eat a roast cock and a roast hen. Irritated at being disturbed at such a moment, he said that the miracle had as much possibility of being true as if the the roast chickens could jump cackling from the table. To his great surprise, the roast chickens jumped off the table cackling and covered with white plumage. The boy was released, and all the family went to Compostela to give thanks to the Apostle. As the Romance de don Gayferos de Mormaltan says:

Iste e un dos muitos milagres
Que Santiago Apostol fai.

This is one of the many miracles
Done by the Apostle St. James

To this day a live cock and a live hen are kept in the main

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Church of Santo Domingo de la Calzada.

Under Fernando II of Castile and Leon and most especially under his son Alfonso VI the transpyreneean contacts multiplied. Encouraged by the kings of Navarra, Castile and Leon, the Benedictine monks of the Cluniac Order entered Spain, first to build hospitals, churches and hostels along the Pilgrim Road to Compostela. These are the first Romanesque buildings in Spain outside Catalunya. For better or worse, the changes now became rapid. The Cluniac Order repalced the old Visigothic-Mozarabic monasticism, so filled with Irish, Syro-Byzantine and Coptic elements. The Roman or Gregorian Rite replaced the Visigothic Rite, though the latter survives in Toledo. The Asturian-Mozarabic architecture of the Western Kingdoms of Christian Spain was replaced by Romanesque. This Romanesque is not the somewhat rudimentary "First Romanesque Style", but a mature, fully developed style. As we said before, said style developed outside Spain, in France, Occitania and Northern Italy. It is therefore necessary for us to discuss the formation of this style, though in order to do so we must cross the Pyrenees.

As we said before, the so-called "First Romanesque Style", though solid in construction, was somewhat rudimentary. The buildings had no domes, and the roofs were of timber. The difficulties of the timber roof were soon evident, but the problem of eliminating them not so simple. A barrel vault is simply an extended arch. But a wide barrel vault creates a great deal of thrust, being far heavier than a wooden roof. In a plain barrel

vault this thrust is diffused and difficult to control. This problem was solved by the use of transverse arches, inclining slightly the stones of the vault so that the thrust is concentrated on said transverse arches. The thrust thus canalized could be neutralized by way of interior and/or exterior buttresses. This scheme appears in its complete form in France near the end of the 11th Century (97).

The origin of the scheme is Sassanian, as Oskar Reuther says of Sassanian vaults:

"It was the effect of greater width that was sought - especially a relief from the sense that the walls were too restricting... but he (the designer) had quite a good practical knowledge of statics and understood quite well both the approximate continuation of the line of pressure of his vaults and the possibility of distributing the thrust and counter-thrust by means of a system of interior buttresses connected by arches. This is a first tentative step towards the construction system of which Gothic architecture is the supreme realization"(98).

In simpler terms A.U. Pope says:

"The problems presented by the barrel vault were in principal solved in Sassanian times by one of the most important inventions in the history of architecture: the transverse arch and vault"(99).

The idea that the Romanesque vaults with their transverse arches and buttresses could be local inventions arrived at by trial-and-error is not at all convincing because:

- ❖ 1.) The very competent Roman engineers developed nothing remotely similar during all the Imperial centuries. That the architects of a recently devastated Western Europe could have done so in a few decades is hardly credible.

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- ❖ 2.) The first known use of the barrel vault-transverse arches-buttresses scheme in Western Europe is neither in France nor in the 11th Century, but in Asturias in the 9th Century, specifically in Santa Maria del Naranco (it may, of course, have been used in Visigothic buildings, there is no way to know this) near Oviedo. While not quite as elaborate as the full-fledged Romanesque scheme which uses a system of both internal and external buttresses, there is no doubt as to the effectiveness of the Asturian scheme, which uses transverse arches and external buttresses, the transverse arches canalizing the thrust of the vault to the external buttresses placed against the sides of the building as well as to the thick columns between the arches which form the windows, virtually all the weight of the vault being supported by the transverse arches and buttresses; the walls are pierced by large windows and are, by themselves, quite incapable of supporting the thrust of the vault (see photos). Yet Santa Maria del Naranco and its vault have stood for more than 1100 years and show no signs of collapsing. We have spoken before of the many Sassanian elements found in Santa Maria del Naranco and in Asturian art and architecture in general. The idea that the rugged mountaineers of Asturias, isolated in their remote corner of Spain and suffering from both Muslim and Viking attacks could have invented this brilliant and sophisticated scheme, the like of which defied the Imperial Roman architects and engineers, is simply ludicrous. Its precedence is revealed by other Sassanian elements found in Asturian art and architecture.

- ❖ 3.) As we shall see later, there is no lack of Sassanian elements in other aspects of Romanesque art and architecture.

The Romanesque architects also mounted round domes over square bases, using both the original Sassanian technique of squinches and the later Byzantine technique of pendentives. As we have said before, the Byzantine technique is derived from the

Sassanian. The Byzantine technique canalizes the thrust of the dome to the pendentives, which are in turn supported by external buttresses. This is more elegant in appearance, and, since the walls support less of the thrust of the dome, they may more readily be pierced by windows. The Sassanian technique is very solid and much simpler to build.

Mounting a round dome over a square base is, as we have said before, used in Visigothic, Hispano-Muslim and Mozarabic architecture before the time of Romanesque. As we also have said before, many Visigothic buildings follow the same ground plan as Sassanian fire temples. Santa Maria de Melque and Santa Comba de Bande are examples which are still standing, and other examples are known from archaeological investigations. The well-known church of St. Germigny des Pres, which we have discussed before, must be considered as Mozarabic, since its builder was a Mozarabic bishop from Spain with the very Visigothic name of Theodulf. Its ground plan is that of a Sassanian fire temple, and its central dome is mounted over the square base by the use of squinches.

The majority of Armenian, Byzantine, Visigothic, Mozarabic, Romanesque and Gothic churches follow the cruciform plan, even in this respect being permeated with religious symbolism. While the spiritual origin of this plan is Christian, yet its "incarnation" is of Zoroastrian precedence. The Parthian and Sassanian fire temples, being essentially domes mounted over a square base formed by intersecting vaults, in effect form a Greek Cross. Those Christian churches which take the form of a Greek Cross have a

ground plan which is virtually unchanged from that of a Sassanian fire temple, though the vaults (or "arms" of the Cross) may be longer in proportion to the size of the dome.

In Roman Catholic countries the Latin Cross is more widely used than the Greek. The Irish or Celtic Cross is a special case.

It was originally an Aryan solar symbol, though it resembles a combination of the Latin Cross and the Greek Cross, the latter enclosed in a halo. The Celtic Cross is widely used in Celtic countries and in Galicia.

By combining the "fire temple" or Greek Cross plan with the basilica plan, one achieves a synthesis in which the church has a ground plan in form of a Latin Cross, one arm of which is much longer than the others. Thus, at base, the ground plans of the great majority of medieval churches and many modern churches derive in the last analysis from that of Sassanian fire temples.

Romanesque architecture may be considered as a sort of preparation for the triumph of Gothic, this last being of far greater perfection and marking one of the high points in the whole history of architecture. In the field of sculpture such is not the case. Romanesque sculpture at its best is technically as fine as any and from the aesthetic viewpoint has its own virtues and values. From the viewpoint of sculpture, Romanesque art at its best represents one of the high points of the art form. It is sculpture which so often gives Romanesque architecture a greater power than the more architecturally perfect Gothic buildings.

As is true in the field of architecture, Romanesque sculpture

represents a synthesis of heterogenous elements. The heritage of classic sculpture, extended by Imperial Rome and to some extent revived by the Carolingian Emperors, never entirely died out. Yet, after the fall of Imperial authority, it was challenged from several directions; on the one hand by Byzantium, on the other hand by a profoundly anti-classical artistic tradition of which we shall have more to say very shortly. As a result, the Romanesque sculptor reduced human and animal forms to geometric shapes, thus achieving a sort of synthesis between classical, and anti-classical traditions.

Yet this more-or-less realistic sculpture is only a part of the repertoire of the Romanesque sculptor. The other part is composed of linear or geometric dynamism and fantastic monsters.

This repertoire is in part the result of a Celtic resurgence which occurred after the death of Imperial Roman authority, aided by the rise of Irish civilization and its widely traveled monks and scholars, in part the result of Iranian influences, both Sassanian and Sarmatian. At base, of course, all of this has a common origin. The Celts, like the Iranians, are an Aryan people and like the Iranians were once nomads of the great Eurasian steppes. Almost certainly at one time in the not too remote past Celts, Iranians and Indo-Aryans were all one people, Erin, Iran and Aryan being the same. Celtic and Iranian art is thus essentially the same. As we said before, it is often impossible to distinguish between Celtic pieces on the one hand and Scythian and Sarmatian pieces on the other. There is a difference of

emphasis; Celtic art tends more toward pure lineal dynamism, while Iranian art tends more toward the "animal style". Yet the animal style is very common in Celtic art, and pure lineal dynamism is common in Iranian art. It is from this anti-Classical Celtic and Iranian tradition that the Romanesque sculptor drew most of his inspiration. Among the typically Persian mythological beasts found in Romanesque sculpture are griffins and simurghs. One also finds animals facing one another on either side of the Tree of Life and animals within circles formed by interlacing bands (100), both typically Persian motifs.

The tympanum is a characteristic feature of Romanesque architecture. The doorway is formed by a semicircular arch, but the door itself is rectangular. Therefore above the door remains a semicircular area called the tympanum. This area is very often filled with elaborate sculptures. Among the motifs most frequently used to decorate the tympanum is that of "Christ in Majesty" (see photos). This motif is derived from the Sassanian motif of the Emperor in majesty. One example of this is the so-called Cup of Solomon, which contains a relief of the Sassanian Emperor Kobad I in majesty. It is generally believed that this cup was among the gifts sent to Charlemagne by Harun al-Rashid (101).

In Spain as in other parts of Western Europe Romanesque art and architecture has a vast number of local and regional variations. In Catalunya and sporadically in other parts the "Lombard bands" continued in use. This feature is of Sassanian

origin (102). Perhaps a heritage of Visigothic times, the "trefoil" and "quatrefoil" motifs continued in use. We have already spoken of Mudejar-Romanesque. In Spain motifs of Persian inspiration such as "Christ in Majesty" and certain fantastic beasts were used in sculpture. But this is better explained in the photos section.

In the Cathedral of Jaca in Aragon (11th-12th Centuries) one finds very Persian-looking lions in the tympanum and other places. The dome is strengthened by ribs which meet in the centre and is mounted on the base by means of squinches; the whole very little changed from the dome of a Sassanian fire temple (103).

In the small Church of San Quirce, near Burgos (12th Century) the dome is mounted on the base in the same manner as in the Sassanian edifice at Sarvistan (104). Of all the regional variants of Spanish Romanesque, perhaps the most interesting from our point of view is that local style whose centre is Zamora, the city so well-known in the Castilian epic.

The most remarkable feature of the Cathedral of Zamora (12th Century) is the dome. This is mounted over the base in the Byzantine fashion, and the interior of the dome is ribbed, the ribs crossing in the centre as in Sassanian fire temples. From the exterior said dome is even more remarkable. Here even more than in the interior the impression is totally Byzantine. At each corner, over the pendentives, are small towers crowned by small domes, which help to stabilize the main dome. As we said before,, the first impression is of extreme Byzantinism. But a closer look

reveals that in many ways it is nearer to Sassanian and Early Islamic models than to Byzantine examples.

The ribbed dome is not at all typically Byzantine; as we said before, it is of Sassanian origin, and later appears in Hispano-Muslim and Armenian structures. However, crossing in the centre as they do, the ribs of the dome of the Cathedral of Zamora are nearer to Persian than to Armenian or Hispano-Muslim prototypes. The four small towers crowned by small domes at once remind many of Byzantine examples, such as the Holy Apostles in Constantinople and San Marco in Venice. But there is a vast difference. In the Byzantine examples cited above four auxiliary domes are mounted over the naves whose crossing forms the base of the main dome. This is not the case in Zamora. Here the four small towers are mounted over the pendentives which cover the four corners formed by the crossing of the naves. The nearest precedent for this is the tomb of Ismail Samanid at Bukhara (105). Here as in Zamora the main dome is stabilized by four smaller domes mounted over the squinches which cover the corners of the square base of the main dome. As in Zamora the auxiliary domes are of ovoid shape. It should be noted in passing that much of the brickwork in this same tomb bears a great deal of resemblance to the brickwork of Cristo de la Luz and to that of Mudejar buildings, particularly in Aragon (106).

Very much of the "Zamora school" is the Collegiate Church of Toro. From our point of view its interesting features which it does not share with Zamora are certain sculptures and the use of

lobed arches, which are of Sassanian rather than Hispano-Muslim type (see photos). Otherwise, the Collegiate Church of Toro is, from our point of view, a version of the Cathedral of Zamora on a smaller scale.

One feature common to Spanish Romanesque but not to French is the ribbed dome, which as we have said before, is of Sassanian origin. Also, the lobed arch appears in many Spanish Romanesque Churches, particularly in Toro, Leon and Galicia. This too is not found in French Romanesque Churches, but is found in Spain. Interestingly, the Spanish Romanesque lobed arches follow Sassanian prototypes far more closely than they do the Hispano-Muslim examples. Thus said arches cannot be classified as a "Mudejarism".

There existed various schools of Romanesque painting in Spain, particularly in Catalunya. Except for the "Christ in Majesty" motif, this is not very relevant for our purposes. The inspiration is quite clearly Byzantine.

Romanesque ivory carving in Spain follows Hispano-Muslim prototypes, of which we have already spoken at some length, and to deal with Spanish Romanesque ivory carving in any detail would therefore be highly repetitious. The only new motif interesting from our point of view is, once again, "Christ in Majesty".

In dealing with Hispano-Muslim art and architecture, one has only a relatively few monuments from each period with which to deal: Medina az-Zahara, the Mosque of Cordoba and Cristo de la Luz for the Caliphate, the Giralda of Seville for the Almohad period

and the Alhambra for the Nazrids. In such circumstances one deals in detail with each monument. With Mudejar and Romanesque art and architecture the monuments are abundant. To deal with all of them would be highly repetitious and quite frankly boring for all but the specialist. Also, from our point of view, much of what is most interesting in Romanesque art and architecture consists of fantastic beasts: fanciful lions, simurghs, griffins, dragons, etc., which are better dealt with in the photos section. There are interesting combinations of Celtic and Iranian motifs also better dealt with the aid of photos. It should also be noted that the documented history of Hispano-Muslim art and architecture covers more than seven centuries; the history of Romanesque art and architecture in Spain covers about 250 years.

In spite of the impression I may have given, Persian influences are at least as abundant, perhaps more so, in Romanesque art and architecture as they are in Hispano-Muslim art and architecture.

Gothic art and architecture, like their Romanesque predecessors, represent in Spain an imported style, which when it reached Spain was already fully developed and mature. Although the regional and local variations are not so extreme as in the Romanesque style, yet there is a great deal of variation, and no two Gothic buildings are alike, each having its own personality.

As to the area where Gothic architecture developed and the era, there is no real doubt. It developed in the middle decades of the 12th Century in what is now Northern France in an area

bordered on the South by the Loire, on the West by Normandy and Brittany, on the North by Flanders and Wallonia, on the East by Lorraine.

The name "Gothic" is very much a misnomer, since the Goths never even passed through that part of France. It was applied to said art and architecture during the 16th-18th Centuries in the sense of "barbaric". Fine example of the bad taste, the frivolity, the provincialism of both time and place and the superficiality of the so-called "Age of Reason" or "Enlightenment". Said "Age of Reason" or "Enlightenment" in truth was sophomoric in the extreme; the men of said age "knew not and knew not that they knew not". One can readily sympathize with Goethe and others of the Romantic Period who laughed at the "Age of Reason" or "Enlightenment".

Like the term "Romanesque", the term "Gothic" refers not only to a style of architecture but to the other visual arts as well. This has led to some confusion. There is no transition between Romanesque and Gothic architecture; we shall see later why this is so. In the other arts there is indeed a transition between the Romanesque and the Gothic styles. Particularly in the field of sculpture the two styles blend imperceptibly into one another, and there are many works of sculpture impossible to classify as either "Romanesque" or "Gothic", and thus are called "transitional". This has misled many people into believing that there exists a "transitional" architecture.

The Romanesque and Gothic architects began from different

starting points. The Romanesque architects began with a geometrical, mathematically proportioned scheme and followed it as closely as the play of thrusts and stresses permitted; the Gothic architects began with only a rough ground plan and let the play of stresses and thrusts lead where it would, in the expressive analogy of Rene Huyghe, "like rainwater running off a roof"(107).

Hence, there is no transition between Romanesque and Gothic architecture; rather there is a rupture. The Northern origin of Gothic architecture and its break with the classical traditions of geometrical and mathematical proportions has given a field day to the proponents of various Nordic hypotheses; one theorist, Josef Strzgowski, went so far as to derive Gothic architecture from Nordic wooden structures (108). Were the "Nordic hypothesis" true, Gothic architecture would logically have developed in Scandinavia, Germany, Flanders, England or Normandy. As we shall see, the idea that Gothic architecture developed from Nordic wooden structures is purest fantasy. Building without a pre-conceived geometrical-mathematical scheme is not particularly "Nordic"; as we have seen, at times Hispano-Muslim architecture goes much farther than does the Gothic as far as building without a pre-conceived plan is concerned; the Alhambra is a case in point.

Gothic architecture carries the principles of vaulting of the Sassanian architects to their culmination. As we said before, the ribbed vault is a Sassanian invention, as is the basic principle of using transverse arches to canalize the thrust of a stone vault

to interior and/or exterior buttresses. The Gothic architects carried these principles to their logical conclusion. By skillful use of "ribs" they canalized the thrust and stress of the vault to certain points along the upper edge of the wall. They then, by means of stone arches, carried the thrust to buttresses placed at some distance from the wall. These are the famous "flying buttresses", hallmark of Gothic architecture in its great period.

While not so high and daring as the Gothic examples, something very simialar to flying buttresses is known in Persian architecture.

This feature appears in the Masjid-i-Jami of Yazd (1324) (109). I do not know when this first appeared in Persia.

The flying buttress is not a mere "tour de force" which the Gothic architects used to show their prowess; it has a very oractical and artistic application. The use of ribbed vaults and flying buttresses relieved the wall of nearly all its task of supporting the weight of the roof. Hence it was possible to pierce the walls with enormous windows, flooding the interior with light. This is, of course, quite useful in the humid, cloudy, often very chilly climate of Northern France. It also made possible the extraordinary development of the art of stained glass, of which we shall have more to say.

In many ways Gothic art reflects the dynamic spirit of the Aryan nomads - Celts and Iranians - translated into architecture.

Romanesque architecture is essentially static. Gothic architecture, with its play and counterplay of stresses and

thrusts, is dynamic. Even static geometrical forms such as the circle are made to "radiate" as in the great "rose windows" or even to "rotate", recalling the trisqueles and whorls of Celtic metalwork (110). Even the very name "rose window" is interesting, for, as W.B. Yeats and others have noted, if the lotus is the Mystic Flower of the Indo-Aryans, the rose is the Mystic Flower of the Iranians and the Celts. Certainly there is no lack of proofs of this in Celtic (including Yeats himself), Persian and Medieval literatures. To even begin to give a list of examples would require several pages. Thus, Gothic architecture is profoundly anti-Classical. This fact has given the Nordic theorists another field day, but once again they are mistaken. Said anti-Classical features are not really Germanic at all, but rather are typical of the metalwork of the Celts and the Sakas. This sort of plagiarism is very common among the Germans, who do not care to admit just how poor the Germanic tradition really is. The great German composer Richard Wagner quite shamelessly claimed as Germanic the Celtic epic heroes Percival and Tristan, and also claimed as Germanic the legend of the Holy Grail, whose Celtic and Iranian origins are abundantly proven. The fact that various Germanic peoples copied Celtic and Iranian artistic motifs does not make said motifs Germanic.

One of the hallmarks of Romanesque architecture is the round or semicircular arch of Roman derivation. On the contrary, the semicircular arch is rare in Gothic architecture; here predominates the pointed or ogive arch, at times called the

"broken arch" because it sometimes has a double rather than a single keystone. This arch was first extensively used in Persian bridges of the 9th Century; later it becomes by far the commonest arch in Persian architecture (111). The pointed arch was known in Romanesque architecture, but was very little used. In contrast to the semicircular or "barrel" vaults, most Gothic vaults are pointed. So far as is known, pointed vaults first appear in the Masjid-i-Jami of Nain (circa 960 AD) (112).

Persian architects have always had what A.U. Pope calls an "urge for height" (113). The same is most emphatically true of the Gothic architects.

Roman basilicas have no feeling of height; in general, Islamic architecture in Arabic-speaking lands also has little or no feeling of height, except, perhaps, for the minarets. Romanesque vaults sometimes achieve considerable height, but nothing comparable to the soaring vaults and towers of the Gothic cathedrals. Part of the dynamism of Gothic architecture is its tendency to lead the eye upward. Gothic architecture is permeated with religious symbolism; the pointed arch, which "points" toward Heaven, the soaring height, the tendency to lead the eye upward, all symbolize the aspiration of the soul toward God. Many Persian mosques, with their high, pointed arches and twin minarets (nearly all Gothic churches and cathedrals have twin towers flanking the entrance) recall a Gothic church. In the interior of Gothic churches and cathedrals one very often finds rows of pointed arches on columns. This feature has a distinctly Persian

flavor, reminding one of such works as the Palace of the Khan in Baku (114).

As we said before, the use of ribbed vaults and flying buttresses made possible the use of enormous windows. This in turn made possible the great development of satined glass. This was known in Romanesque architecture, but reached its full glory in the Gothic churches and cathedrals. Stained glass does not adapt itself to prettily drawn, finely shaded pictures: its effect depends on the dazzling brilliance of the jewel-like saturated primary colors - red, blue, green, yellow, brown; fine, delicate shades are impossible. The pieces of colored glass are fitted into grooved lead strips, which tends to break the composition into compartments and medallions. This very powerfully evokes Celtic and Sarmatian *cloisonne* enamel work, the jewel caskets and book covers of Visigothic, Merovingian and Carolingian times and such Sassanian pieces as the so-called "Cup of Solomon" of which we have spoken before, which consists of jewels and pieces of stained glass set in a framework of grooved gold strips with a centre medallion of carved rock crystal portraying Kobad I in majesty. Stained glass also evokes Persian carpets with its brilliant display of saturated primary colors.

The medieval glass makers knew secrets now lost; they were able to fit the panes of glass directly into stone sills without later producing breakage due to expansion and contraction caused by temperature changes, something impossible today. More important, medieval stained glass is very much brighter than

modern; anyone who has seen medieval stained glass side by side with modern (as in Marburg or in Notre Dame de Paris) cannot fail to compare the grayish dullness of the modern stained glass with the jewel-like brilliance of the medieval. No one who has seen the bright sunlight of a summer afternoon streaming through a medieval stained glass window can fail to feel a sense of spiritual exaltation. Here is beauty dematerialized, free of material form; spiritual, mystical beauty.

The sculptures of the Gothic churches and cathedrals were painted, but otherwise the walls, vaults and columns were of bare stone. Except for Gothic-Mudejar, of which we have spoken before, glazed or faience tiles are virtually unknown in Gothic buildings. Thus Gothic buildings lack the element which covers and fills so many Persian buildings, particularly those of the Seljuk, Timurid and Safavi periods, with brilliant, dazzling color. Though impossible to appreciate from the outside, the stained glass of the Gothic churches and cathedrals in very many ways is the equivalent of the faience tiles of Persian architecture, and shows the same taste and spirit, as does the enamelwork of the Celts and Sarmatians. Indeed, a stained glass window could be defined as a huge piece of enamel *cloisonne* with the metal back removed.

The Gothic stained glass windows, with their brilliant colors and flat perspective (Gothic painters knew of perspective, but the medium of stained glass does not really permit its use) powerfully evoke both Persian carpets and Persian miniatures, particularly those of the school of Herat.

We have spoken of the use of Arabic calligraphy in connection with Persian and Hispano-Muslim architecture. Gothic sculptures and to some extent the stained glass windows very often represent scenes from the Bible and from the lives of the saints, as well as symbolic representations of theological doctrines. Thus Gothic cathedrals are often called "the Bibles of the illiterate". The analogy with the Arabic calligraphy used in so many Islamic buildings is evident; a desire to turn the building itself into the Word of God. While the number of people who could read Arabic in Persia was always fairly small, yet the intention at least is evident.

There is a great deal in Gothic architecture which unites it to Persia; the "urge to height", the pointed arch and vault, the twin towers flanking the main entrances, the very system of ribbed vaults and flying buttresses, the dazzling colors of the stained glass windows, the statuary which converts a Gothic cathedral into "the Bible of the illiterate"... . For different though they may appear at first glance, a Gothic cathedral and a Persian mosque at base are very similar, In part this is the result of direct influences, in part of the essential kinship between Christianity and Islam, in part of the common Aryan heritage of Iranians and Celts.

Gothic architecture at its best is one of the high points in the whole history of architecture, and is at least a candidate for the crown of the greatest architecture in all history. I have no hesitation whatever in saying that Gothic architecture at its best

is the greatest and noblest which Europe has ever known, and am prepared to defend this opinion from any point of view against all comers. As we said before, Gothic architecture is very anti-Classical, and there are many in the Western World who, sensing this, instinctively condemn it as "barbaric". Perhaps this is my Celtic blood speaking, but I have never shared this "Classical" or "Hellenic" prejudice nor understood it; in fact I have always considered it to be narrow, provincial and stupid. Anyone who judges Gothic architecture with an open mind will very soon come to agree. Few people are better qualified to judge and appreciate Gothic architecture than are the Iranians, for reasons given above.

The term "Gothic" does not refer only to architecture. Concerning Gothic sculpture there is not much to say from our viewpoint. Certain motifs of Persian derivation, such as "Christ in Majesty" continued to be used. Indeed, the transition from Romanesque sculpture to Gothic sculpture was very gradual. Gothic sculpture gradually became less abstract and mathematical and more realistic.

Romanesque sculpture tended to be governed by the requirements of the structure, Gothic sculpture much less so. The intention of Gothic sculpture was, in fact, less decorative and more didactic, as we said before. Classical enthusiasts see this as a return to classical patterns. This is quite untrue; among other things it contradicts the whole thrust and spirit of Gothic architecture, which is profoundly anti-Classical. In fact Gothic

sculpture really has almost nothing in common with Classical models. In truth, the art with which Gothic sculpture has most in common is with certain periods of Byzantine art, particularly that prior to the Iconoclastic periods. The Gothic sculptor had no interest in making a realistic representation of the human body, nor in classical proportions. The body itself is rarely shown except for the hands, feet and head, the rest being covered by clothing. In fact, the proportions of the body are often elongated to give a more spiritual effect. The main concern of the Gothic sculptor was the face and its expression. Here we are very near to Early Byzantine and Coptic art and very far indeed from Classic Greece. The Classic Greek sculptor wished to portray the body; the Gothic sculptor the soul.

Particularly in reference to vegetal motifs, Gothic sculpture did come more and more to imitate nature. The fantastic monsters of Celtic and Iranian origin so common in Romanesque sculpture never completely disappeared from Gothic art. Rather late, the tendency toward realism and naturalism in Gothic art (which was never more than a "tendency", not a dominant characteristic) to a great extent reversed itself. Not only did the fantastic monsters of Celtic and Iranian origin return, but the vivid linear dynamism of Celtic metalwork with its spirals, *trisqueles* and whirling wheels reappeared in the stone and wood of Gothic sculpture, as well as in the rose windows. In all periods Gothic art remained charged with a strong religious symbolism. For the Gothic sculptor, the idea of merely imitating nature was absurd. To him

the visible world was a mask which concealed the Infinite and the Eternal, which is expressed by means of symbols.

Gothic art and architecture reached Spain in more or less the same ways as did the Romanesque style. Perhaps the part played by the religious orders was smaller. The Cistercian Order, founded by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, used a very severe and austere architecture, which had little influence outside its own monasteries. Matrimonial connections between the Royal House of Castile and Leon and the Plantagenets, who ruled England and Western France, were also a factor, and perhaps explain why Gothic art and architecture appear earlier in Castile and Leon and there follow more closely the Northern French examples.

Leaving aside the Gothic-Mudejar, of which we have spoken before, there is, from our viewpoint, very little to say of Gothic architecture in Spain which we have not said in relation to Gothic architecture in Northern France, homeland of the style. In Catalunya and Aragon Gothic architecture received an indifferent welcome, being accepted late and never receiving much distinction. This is no doubt because this part of Spain had very close relations with Occitania, where Romanesque was firmly rooted, and less relation with Northern France, homeland of Gothic.

Galicia, except in places near the Portuguese border, such as Tuy, La Guardia and Orense, never accepted Gothic architecture, but remained faithful to Romanesque. As I said before, I am quite unable to discover a logical explanation for this.

In Castile and Leon Gothic architecture was very well

received, and there became very firmly rooted, to a very large extent continuing in use until today in both popular and ecclesiastical architecture. The cold climate of the Castilian Plateau makes the Gothic windows particularly welcome. The Castilian temperament, at once chivalrous, warlike and profoundly mystical (virtually all the great Spanish mystics of the 16th Century were Castilians; it has been said that "None can understand Spanish [Christian] Mysticism who does not know Old Castile) found Gothic congenial. This same temper later tended to reject Baroque, Rococco and neo-Classical architecture. In the Cathedral of Burgos I remember a native of Burgos complaining about how the area around the main altar had been redone during the Baroque period. "What a crime", he said, "this Baroque garbage taking the place of the splendid Gothic." The great cathedrals of Burgos and Leon most faithfully follow the Northern French models, Burgos following rather closely Notre Dame de Paris and Bourges, Leon following Amiens and Chartres. The Cathedral of Leon has the most beautiful stained glass windows in Spain.

Spanish Gothic has one characteristic which very much interests us; the large, ribbed dome on squinches. That of the Cathedral of Burgos is perhaps the handsomest example of this, while that of the Cathedral of Lerida (Catalunya) perhaps follows more closely the Persian models. There are many other examples of this, a feature unknown in French Gothic (115). This of course follows a long tradition in Spain, i.e., Visigothic, Hispano-Muslim and the Romanesque style of Zamora.

Speaking of Gothic sculpture in Spain, once again from our point of view there is very little to say which has not been said in reference to French Gothic. In the main portal of the Cathedral of Leon one may see typical Sassanian motifs sculptured in relief, particularly the *quatrefoil* motif (see photos).

The Collegiate Church of Toro is fundamentally Romanesque, but the main portal is Gothic. Here also one may see typically Sassanian motifs sculptured in relief, once again particularly the *quatrefoil* (see photos). This may be a heritage from Visigothic times.

On one of the capitals of the Cloister of the Cathedral of Oviedo one may see a high relief sculpture of a king hunting lions which recalls similar Sassanian works (116). In other capitals of the Cloisters of the Cathedrals of Leon and Oviedo one may see other high relief sculptures which call to mind Sassanian motifs and models (see photos).

I do not mean to imply that Spanish Gothic is of little importance, but merely to state that, from our point of view there is little to say about it which we have not already said concerning the earlier French Gothic.

The topic of Persian influence in Medieval Spain is vast, much vaster than I expected when I began the present work. In this book I have aimed to be comprehensive rather than exhaustive. A really exhaustive treatment of the subject would require years of research and travel in Spain, Iran and other countries, and the result would be several volumes of text and illustrations.

Particularly the parts dealing with art and architecture would be quite repetitious for all but the specialist.

In other words, the present book does not pretend to be definitive; indeed, one of its objectives is to call attention to fields of research heretofore neglected. I am a medievalist in a very broad sense of the word, not a real specialist in any one field. In this book I have done what a "jack-of-all-trades" is supposed to do; now it is the turn of the specialists.

Certainly there remains a great deal of work to be done in many of the fields I have touched upon in this book. For a starter, much work remains to be done in clarifying the relation between the Celts on the one hand and the Iranians and Indo-Aryans on the other. The Iranian epics are of enormous bulk; the question of an Iranian origin or influence on the Castilian epic can only really be answered by a real comparison between the Castilian epic on the one hand and the Iranian epics on the other. At present this is quite beyond my capacities. Likewise, Persian Sufi verse is of enormous bulk; I have until now been able to examine only a very small part of it. For this very reason the many parallels which I have found between St. John of the Cross and the Persian Sufi poets are all the more significant. (See Chapter 7) Much work remains to be done concerning the possible influence of Persian Sufis on St. John of the Cross. I have barely scratched the surface.

The excavations of Medina az-Zahara may yet reveal surprises for us, but this is a job for archaeologists.

A great deal of work remains to be done on Persian influences in Mudejar and Romanesque art and architecture because of the sheer abundance of said monuments.

In summary, I hope that the reader is not too bored by now. Also, I most sincerely hope that this book will be a beginning, not an end.

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CHAPTER 4 - ART

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