



# A New Classification of Gothic Buildings of Southern France of the 13th and 14th Centuries

I.I. Orlov<sup>1</sup>, A.V. Martinova<sup>1</sup>, L.S. Abdullah<sup>1</sup>, O.S. Pavlova<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Design and Technology Artistic Processing of Materials, Lipetsk State Technical University, Lipetsk, RUSSIA.

\*Corresponding Author (Email: [igorlov.64@mail.ru](mailto:igorlov.64@mail.ru)).

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## Abstract

In rich amendments to the article, the author describes the social-ideological context of the period of church construction and its character. The author devoted to a cult Gothic style of Southern France (Languedoc). It was the religious Languedoc's Gothic that later exerted a material effect on the formation of the original Catalan Gothic of the Kingdom of Aragon and the peculiar Gothic of the Kingdom of Palma-Mallorca.

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## 1 Introduction

The Gothic art of Languedoc, which for a long time had been considered in foreign and native medievalism as the art of “invaders from Northern France”, is the manifestation of the creative genius of local architects and customers. It was the masters from Southern France who could find their own original “Gothic style” by way of creative revising the Parisian “radiant” Gothic which was fashionable at that time in Europe and which they used as their model. This style has been known in art studies as “Eglise fortifiee” (church-fortress, fortified church). The monks of the new orders (first of all Dominicans and Franciscans) played the most important role in introducing the new «Parisian style» (Gothic). As these orders had to struggle with the heresy of Cathars (widespread in the region), so they were most interested in creating a new type of cult architecture called “predicatory Church”, which would be different from the classic Gothic of Île-

de-France. Further, when the struggle with heretics became repressive (with the introduction of inquisitional tribunals), it was bishops from the Dominicans who initiated the development of the concept of religious Gothic structures in the style of “indestructible fortress of faith”; they were erected in the areas (Albi, towns of the Toulouse diocese) where the struggle with the Cathars was at its peak. And vice versa, where the heresy of the Cathars was completely extirpated either by repressions (Béziers) or by resettling the population infected by heresy from captured towns (Carcassonne, Narbonne), cathedrals were built as a mere imitation of the “Parisian Gothic”, which later caused such a dismissive attitude to the Gothic of Languedoc. [3, p.645]

## 2 Material and Methods

Another important factor which, in a most prominent way, influenced the formation of peculiar ideological and artistic programs of Languedoc's Gothic became the heritage of Rome's ancient tradition, the latter achieving its further development in a wealth of images in the Romanesque architectural school of Languedoc and Provence. It is to this style of South that France and Europe owe the appearance of Gothic sculpture plastic, the beautiful images of which are exhibited nowadays in the Museum of Augustinians in Toulouse. Besides, Lombard architectural school (partially Tuscan) influenced greatly the formation of Languedoc's peculiar Gothic, because the towns of Languedoc and Lombard were connected by both trade and political, as well as religious ties (the Cathars doctrine). The architectural schools of Anjou (through its trade, political and dynastic ties), Burgundy, and Auvergne (connected with Occitania from early Christian times) also had a great impact on the formation of Languedoc's Gothic.

## 3 Theory

On the whole, speaking about the religious Gothic of Languedoc of that time, we can point out some regional features. The architecture of cathedrals and churches is not so prevailing as of the “classic” cathedrals of northern France, because the outer wall preserves its massiveness and density especially accentuated by abutments adjoining tightly the wall. The shell of the wall seems to hide the chapels, and as a rule, there is no transept. Thus, the wall plane gets back its rights despite the fact that it is profiled with orbs, mashiculi, or round skylights (under the influence of the Lombard school). The volumes of buildings tend to greater cliquishness, removing systematically all “extra” protrusive details; it is typical for the 14<sup>th</sup> c. religious Gothic architecture of parish churches, influenced by mendicant religious orders. Chapels occupy the space indoors between buttresses and are an integral part of the whole. Sculpture tends to occupy the inner part of the interior, moving there from the outer space of Gothic portals. “The Bible for the illiterate” – church wall painting scenes devoted to Christ, the Virgin, and the saints - plays an important role in the creation of the mystical mood of parishioners along with traditional Gothic stained glass windows. [10, p.648] The religious Languedoc Gothic has almost no example of the “classic” two-tower scheme of the western façade, with the exception of “imitative cathedrals” in Narbonne and Beziers. Western façades in the Languedoc Gothic style have a restrained, even austere, interpretation, and single bell towers similar to Italian campaniles directly adjoin the side of the

building. Thus, we can say that Languedoc's Gothic was not of an obviously imitative character, as it was considered earlier; its peculiarity was conditioned by various ideological and artistic programs, the intersection and combination of which created such a variety of forms of religious Gothic constructions in a small enough region. It was the religious Languedoc's Gothic that later exerted a material effect on the formation of the original Catalan Gothic of the Kingdom of Aragon and the peculiar Gothic of the Kingdom of Palma-Mallorca. [4-9].

## 4 Results

In his monographs "The religious Gothic of Languedoc" (Moscow Stroganov Academy, Orius, 2010) [1] and "Anticatharistic fortresses of faith – the religious Gothic of Languedoc" (Lambert Academic Publishing, GmbH, 2012) [2] the author suggests the following classification of the researched religious Gothic structures.

1. Monastic churches of mendicant orders (first of all those orders, whose creation had fighting the Cathars' heresy as their aim or the reason of foundation). To these orders, we should, first of all, pertain the order of "mendicant preachers", or the Dominican order, whose origination, organization, and activities were connected with the Cathari doctrine. A wonderful model of Gothic "predicatory church" in a Dominican monastery in Toulouse (Figure 1) is evidence of it. The monographs contain a semantic analysis of the Gothic forms of the Jacobins church in Toulouse as an "anticatharistic" preaching in the material, through its architectural forms. [12, p.81].



**Figure 1:** Church of the Dominican monastery in Toulouse.  
«Le couvent des Jacobins de Toulouse»

Besides, the author analyses the architectural forms, composite solutions and conceptual iconographic programs of religious Gothic structures of the "predicatory" type. Apart from the church of a Dominican monastery, the author investigates the church of an Augustinian monastery (now the Augustin museum). The iconography of this church was greatly influenced by the ideological and artistic programs embodied in the Jacobins church. The Activities of the Augustinian missionary order was brought to life (even if indirectly) by the necessity to cleanse the Church through the promotion of the concept of «return to earlier simple life» of early Church, which was determined by the speeches of Albigensian preachers revealing the abuse of Catholic prelates of the South. Based on the above, the church of the Augustinian monastery can also be considered as a "Predicatory Church".

2. Churches of urban and rural parishes located in those regions, where the spread of the Cathar heresy, and therefore the intensity of the struggle against them were especially great. We also suggest the division of parish churches into two sub-groups according to the characteristics that stand out in one group or another.

The first subgroup includes churches, whose ideological and artistic program was directly or indirectly influenced by the iconography of the churches of Toulouse “mendicant orders” and partly by the lofty Gothic of Northern France: Notre-Dame la Dalbade and Saint-Nicolas in Toulouse, Saint-Michel in Carcassonne. That kind of churches was built in the regions where the anticatharistic preaching was carried out in word and deed (the Tribunal of the Inquisition), and, as a result, “the Dominican component” of the Jacobins church in Toulouse takes the leading place in the basis of ideological and artistic programs of these religious buildings. There are simple and strict external forms and a well-thought-out semantic and iconographic scheme of the epic building in general.



**Figure 2:** Church of Notre-Dame-la-Dalbad in Toulouse. XII-XV centuries.

The second subgroup comprises churches, whose iconography reveals the typical features of Toulouse and Languedoc: Saint-Salvy in Albi and parish churches with the west facade being of a decorative character, a kind of screen: Notre-Dame du Taur and Midi Toulousain churches (Figure 2). The research of ideological and artistic programs of these religious buildings reveals the presence of a long-standing tradition of Romanesque Languedoc, i.e. the construction of single-nave buildings (originally without the apse at times) spanned with simple bars. Later, a special type of parish church was formed in connection with the Albigensian wars and the necessity to conduct the anticatharistic preaching and under the influence of ideological and artistic programs of Dominican “predicatory” churches. Due to the peculiarities of financing the construction of parish churches, their western facades acquire an independent role of a front-screen, i.e. a façade that doesn’t perform any constructive function (except, probably, a few bells, which, however, are mounted later).

3. Cathedral churches (churches which were built where there was an episcopal or archiepiscopal see) were built in the towns where the spread of the Cathars’ heresy and therefore their influence on city life and culture was so great that the Catholic church was forced to found

there constant tribunals of the Holy Office for the extermination of heretics. So here the division into three sub-groups is appropriate.

In the first sub-group, there should be churches that were built “in accordance with the models of the French Kingdom”, as Narbonne’s canons would write, and which were built directly under the influence of the Parisian “radiant” style. Such are, first of all, the Saint-Nazaire cathedral church in Upper Carcassonne (the capital of the possessions of viscounts Trencavel). The reconstruction, while in fact the construction, of the church anew was caused by a widespread of the Cathars’ heresy in the region and, as a consequence, by complete expulsion of the citizens to Lower City (Bastida) after seizing Carcassonne.



**Figure 3:** Saint-Nazaire Cathedral in Carcassonne. South transept of the cathedral.

The new citizens (true Catholics) and the new regents (the king’s seneschal) naturally aspired to confirm the power of the King of France through ideological and artistic programs of the “radiant” Gothic, which by that time had become international. Taking into account the importance of strengthening his power in Languedoc, Saint Louis the King personally took the initiative in building the Saint-Nazaire cathedral (Figure 3). It is due to these reasons that the choir and the transept of the Saint-Nazaire cathedral in their Gothic part virtually reproduce the concept of the royal chapel of Sainte-Chapelle. The construction of the cathedral performed under the control of French kings Saint Luis and Phillip the Bold in 1269-1322, together with the double system of defensive walls of Carcassonne, was undoubtedly a realization of “the royal concept of the world” in Languedoc. That was why both specialists from the French kingdom and local masters were invited for the erection of a symbol of that power. Despite the fact that the building of the cathedral never finished, the ideological and artistic programs and constructive solutions which were applied during the erection of Saint-Nazaire had a big impact on the formation of the French-Occitan Gothic alliance in Languedoc architecture. In particular, the “radiant” Gothic of Carcassonne had an indubitable influence on religious Gothic constructions in the cities of Beziers (the cathedral of Saint-Nazaire) and Narbonne (the cathedral of Saint-Just-Saint-Pasteur).

The second sub-group should include the cathedrals of the “transitional type”; during their construction, the new Gothic design of space and masses was based on the rich inheritance of the

Romanesque architecture of Languedoc. Among them are, first of all, "the majestic Toulouse" (the capital of the Toulouse county) with the Saint-Etienne cathedral. The features of iconography due to which this religious building can be related to the "transitional" type first of all ride on the historical and cultural features of the city itself as the heart of Cathares heresy and the main center of the Occitan culture. It was in Toulouse, which until the final stages of the Albigensian wars was loyal to its suzerains (counts de Foix), that ideological and political resistance to Catholic clergy and French barons (and later to the king) prohibited erecting religious buildings in the classic Gothic style regarded as a symbol of the "occupying" power. That was why bishop Fulk (1206 – 1231), who initiated the reconstruction of the Saint-Etienne Cathedral (Figure 4), had to seek for the "architectural compromise" between the rich Toulouse's Roman tradition and the new architectural outlook of the "French Kingdom". Such was the original concept of the Saint-Etienne Cathedral's erection in Toulouse (since a tense struggle with both Cathares and local clergy and patricians, partially sympathizing with them, was carried on during the construction period).



**Figure 4:** Western facade of Saint-Etienne Cathedral in Toulouse. Photo of the author of 2011

Later, as this religious and political struggle was fading, the ideological and artistic scheme began to change. The materials given in Igor Orlov's monographs clearly show that the Cathedral of a later (second) period (after 1272) was constructed according to the "classic" plan (possibly under the influence of the Narbonne Cathedral's schemes). The bold attempt to combine the two ideological and artistic programs into one conceptual building, unfortunately, met no success. As a result, the construction of the Cathedral in Toulouse wasn't completed till the French Revolution, that is why nowadays it demonstrates a wonderful phenomenon of mixing diverse ideological and artistic programs.

Finally, cathedrals which most completely demonstrated the ideological and artistic programs of Languedoc's religious Gothic and then influenced widely Gothic architecture in other regions are to be gathered into the third group. First of all, the Cathedral of Saint Cecilia in Albi should be referred to this class.



**Figure 5:** Cathedral of San Cecil in Albi.

In researching this type of Gothic constructions, the author primarily notes the fact that the cathedrals which are considered to be classic examples of Languedoc's Gothic were built in the cities where Catharists' heresy was fought most heatedly and this contention lasted for a long time. Because of this opposition, Dominican inquisitors are appointed local bishops. Surprisingly, it is to bishops-inquisitors that we owe the creation and the design of the ideological and artistic features of a Gothic cathedral of the “indestructible fortress of faith” type. The Cathedral of Saint Cecilia in Albi (Figure 5) is the most typical example of Languedoc's Gothic, which demonstrates the “sacramental hymn” in honor of the victory over heretics and a formidable “indestructible fortress of faith”. If it comes to comparing this astonishing Languedoc's Gothic construction with Carcassonne's, Bezier's or Narbonne's cathedrals (which were erected according to the “classic” Gothic of Ile-de-France), it has to be noted that it has a peculiar ascetic and exalted beauty in it in contrast with the fervent dynamic of “radiant” style cathedrals. The oversimplification of configuration makes the Cathedral of Saint Cecilia look like a citadel, which produces an impression of sullen force, thus demonstrating the inevitability of judgment on heretics already here, on the Earth. [11, c. 163]

## 5 Conclusion

Since the period considered in our research is the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, the author regarded it necessary to apply in his monographs the general scholastic scheme of designing medieval treatises of the researched period (*secundum ordinem disciplinae*), so as to move step by step from one judgment to another, constantly informing the reader on the development of this logical process. Such methods, both simple and clear, applied to the classification of religious Gothic structures made it possible to investigate the “Occitan” Gothic knowing (or assuming) before the ideological and artistic programs which were initially stipulated by the place of an erected church in the suggested classification. As proof to support the correctness of the suggested method, which our investigation followed, it would be appropriate to quote E. Panofsky [13] as saying that “just as the scholastic movement prepared by the Benedictine doctrine and founded by Lanfranc and Anselm of Bec was carried on and perfected by Dominicans and Franciscans, the Gothic style

prepared in Benedictine monasteries and founded by Suger in Saint-Denis climaxes in city churches. The main achievements in the Romanesque period were Benedictine abbeys, in High Gothic – cathedrals, while in Late Gothic they were parish churches” [13. C. 229]

## 6 Availability of Data and Material

Data can be made available by contacting the corresponding author.

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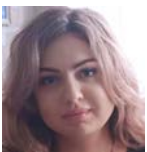
**Dr. Orlov Igor Ivonovich** is Head of the Department of Design and Technology of Artistic Processing of Materials at Lipetsk State Technical University, Lipetsk, Russia.



**Martinova Anjelika Vladimirovna** is a Senior Lecturer Department of Design and Technology of Artistic Processing Materials at Lipetsk State Technical University, Lipetsk, Russia.



**Abdullah Lutfi Saleh** is a Candidate of technical sciences at Lipetsk State Technical University, Lipetsk, Russia.  
l.abdullah71 @gmail.com



**Pavlova Olga Sergeevna** is a Candidate of Art History, Lipetsk State Technical University, Lipetsk, Russia.

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