

2012

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Canejo, Cynthia Marie. "The Yonne Valley Builder: An Identifiable Master Introducing a Unique Blend of Cistercian and Non-Cistercian Northern Burgundian Design to the Oise." *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* 3, 3 (2012). <https://digital.kenyon.edu/perejournal/vol3/iss3/2>

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The Yonne Valley Builder: An Identifiable Master Introducing a Unique Blend of Cistercian and Non-Cistercian Northern Burgundian Design to the Oise¹

By Cynthia Marie Canejo, University of North Carolina, Asheville

Most builders seem to have worked within a fairly small region, but nearly every master so far identified has left some examples of his work at no inconsiderable distances from his “base.”

John James, *Pioneers of the Gothic Movement*²

Staggered along the Yonne and Serein rivers in northern Burgundy, France, are group of five small and large Early Gothic structures.³ The design of these twelfth-century churches is concurrent with trends in the northern Paris basin, indicating a desire to incorporate the latest “modern” styles in Early Gothic rural construction south of Paris.⁴ Even more intriguing, the distinctive configuration—consistent not only in the profiles of specific parts, but also in the integration of these parts into the whole—seems to point to the design of a particular builder. As will be clarified, this unusual manner of assembling the individual elements in all five structures draws attention to the work of this skilled, yet unconventional designer who, even though

¹ This research was funded by a UNCA University Research Council Intramural Faculty Fellowship, a Bourse Chateaubriand, and a Borchard Foundation Fellowship in Western European Studies. Special thanks to John James, Caroline Bruzelius, the anonymous reader, and the editors (for stimulating comments on versions of the manuscript); as well as C. Edson Armi; George Dexter; David Bates; Christian Sapin, and the Centre d’Études Médiévales; Jean-Luc Benoit; Madame Guëllou; Monsieur Archenault; Fabien Giclat; Péro Chesnel; Mayor Michaut of Beines; Antoine Leriche, Architecte du Patrimoine; the Archives Départementales de l’Yonne, Auxerre; the Bibliothèque Municipale, Auxerre; the Médiathèque des Monuments Historiques, Paris; Monsieur Aymar de Virieu, Administrateur, and Monsieur Vasseur, Archéologue, at Châalis; and, especially, to Robert Branner whose work in northern Burgundy inspired my investigation.

² John James, *The Pioneers of the Gothic Movement: Interim Report I* (Mandorla Publications, 1980), 9.

³ In contrast to a focus on the sequence of builders and campaigns at one cathedral or large church, this research emphasizes the value of examining smaller and larger churches together. Without the data collected from small structures, the correspondence between the architectural elements within the central Yonne group of buildings could not have been made.

⁴ All of the smaller structures in the group were constructed with up-to-date rather than *retardataire* or outmoded elements. For more information on scholars who have implied that builders of smaller rural churches often use out-of-date forms, see Cynthia Canejo, “Evidence of an Innovative Master Builder in Northern Burgundy: The Early Gothic Construction of the Parish Churches at Gurgy and Beines,” *JSAH* 64 (Sept. 2005), 281-291.

seemingly well-traveled and well-versed in contemporary modes of practice, was inclined to add a unique signature to his work.⁵ In presenting both Cistercian and non-Cistercian structures as initiated by the same designer, a new relationship becomes apparent that forces us to reevaluate past and present notions about architectural practice in the northern and southern Paris basin during this period.⁶ As will be shown, the data collected indicates that the designer created a unique North Burgundian austere blend from both non-Cistercian and Cistercian elements. By arguing that Cistercian design developed in a more complex and eclectic manner than previously believed, this research offers a new way of viewing the existing architectural forms.

In tracing the characteristic aspects of this builder's work, distinct northern Burgundian systems of construction are perceived in the northern Paris Basin at the Early Gothic Cistercian church at the Royal abbey of Châalis.⁷ In other words, even though the majority of this builder's work can be located at the five non-Cistercian churches in a small microregion of the Yonne Valley, his characteristic style can be distinguished at a Cistercian building some distance "from his 'base.'"⁸ Evidence suggests that this builder worked at these five non-Cistercian sites before he traveled to the Oise to design the Cistercian church at Châalis. In consideration of two matters—one, this builder seems to have designed a Cistercian church; and second, the Cistercians are often noted for constructing their own churches—it would be logical to inquire whether this builder was a Cistercian.⁹ While we have evidence that Cistercians were employed

⁵ Evidence that the builder traveled outside the Yonne Valley is indicated by his knowledge and use of elements consistent with structures significant in size, standing both in and around the Île de France. Even though this builder uses parts with profiles similar to churches in the region of Paris, his work overall is not the conventional northern Parisian design.

⁶ The uniformity and restraint observed in Cistercian architecture is often explained by the transmission of their ascetic monastic ideals (in line with the philosophy of the Order) along with the dissemination of their architecture (through a simplification or reduction of a regional architectural vocabulary). A reassessment of this general conception is in order.

⁷ Centering on a micro-region within the Yonne Valley and spiraling outward, a wide range of buildings of various sizes were studied in order to arrive at informed conclusions. The initial investigation included Romanesque and Gothic architecture from Burgundy to the northern Paris basin. On identifying individual hands of Medieval masons and sculptors, see, for example John James, *The Contractors at Chartres* (Chartres: Societe Archeologique, 1977-1981); John James, *Chartres, The Masons Who Built a Legend* (London: Routledge, 1982); and C. Edson Armi, *Masons and Sculptors in Romanesque Burgundy* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1983).

⁸ James, *Pioneers of the Gothic Movement*, 9.

⁹ In separating themselves from Benedictine monks, such as the Cluniacs who devoted the majority of their day to liturgical services and relied on the use of serfs for manual labor, the Cistercians chose to return to a stricter observance of the original Rule of Saint Benedict in which physical labor was an important requirement. Their devotion to hard work led to a rapid economic expansion (enabling them to become a powerful monastic Order). In a short time, the Cistercians decided to accept lay brothers (*conversi*) rather than serfs into the monastery to help with the increasing workload. Louis Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1977), 443-450; Chrysogonus Waddell, *Cistercian Lay Brothers: Twelfth-Century Usages with Related Texts* (Belgium: Brecht, 2000); and Brian Noell, "Expectation and Unrest among Cistercian Lay Brothers in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," *Journal of Medieval History* 32 (2006): 253-274.

While many twelfth-century texts indicate that both Cistercian monks and *conversi* constructed Cistercian buildings, a number of twelfth-century writers stressed that the monks themselves built their churches. A good example is William of St. Thierry, friend and biographer of the noted Cistercian Bernard of Clairvaux, who mentioned that the monks at Clairvaux supplied the labor. *Saint Bernard of Clairvaux: [The Story of his Life as*

on non-Cistercian sites, it is not very likely that a Cistercian would have been permitted to work at as many non-Cistercian churches as attributed to this builder.¹⁰ In pushing to discern the extent to which Cistercian architecture actually was the work of Cistercian monks or laborers (as often believed in the past), the conclusion drawn from this study indicates that this specific builder/designer may not have been a Cistercian at all.

Using knowledge acquired from his past building experience (specifically at non-Cistercian sites in northern Burgundy), the builder seems to have designed the Cistercian church at Châalis as a hybrid (rather than merely the result of either a “Cistercian style” or regional developments in the Oise).¹¹ Even though Châalis was previously perceived as following the design of the Cistercian mother-church of Pontigny, this investigation further demonstrates that Châalis is a unique blend of Cistercian characteristics along with features of a specific *parti* found in non-Cistercian northern Burgundian structures and attributed to this builder in the Yonne Valley.¹² By indicating that Cistercian architecture may have developed more eclectically

recorded in the *Vita Prima Bernardi* by certain of his contemporaries, William of Thierry, Arnold of Bonnevaux, Geoffrey and Philip of Clairvaux, and Odo of Deuil, Trans. Geoffrey Webb and Adrian Walker (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1960). In contrast to these texts, early twelfth- and thirteenth-century manuscripts show Cistercian monks only as workers (cutting trees, harvesting, etc.), not constructing buildings. In regard to examples of architects who were Cistercians, John Bilson emphasized that the Cistercian Geoffrey of Ainai was “sent by Bernard to Fountains” where “their earliest buildings were erected according to his counsel;” Archard was “sent to many French and German monasteries to direct their building operations” (e.g., at Himmerod, 1138); and Robert to Mellifont in 1142. John Bilson, “The Architecture of the Cistercians, with Special Reference to Some of their Earlier Churches in England,” *Archaeological Journal* (1909): 196.

While written sources indicate that Cistercian monks as well as *conversi* worked on Cistercian architecture, written accounts, including deeds or statutes of the General Chapter, document the Cistercians practice of hiring outside labor (non-Cistercian workers). See David H. Williams, *The Cistercians in the Early Middle Ages* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 196-199. The existence of a non-Cistercian work force in Cistercian monasteries has become a more widely accepted as many recent scholars have proposed that there were teams of itinerant skilled masons who worked with the lay brothers under the supervision of a Cistercian master mason or architect. Peter Fergusson, “The Builders of Cistercian Monasteries in Twelfth-Century England,” in *Studies in Cistercian Art and Architecture*, v. 2, (ed.) Meredith Parsons Lillich (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 22, 24.

¹⁰ For evidence of Cistercians working at outside or non-Cistercian sites, see Williams, *The Cistercians in the Early Middle Ages*, 197. Even though it has been suggested that non-Cistercian laborers worked alongside the Cistercians, scholars generally have not allowed for the possibility that the builder/architect may not be a Cistercian.

¹¹ The possible existence of a “Cistercian style” has been the subject of frequent scholarly debates. Notable texts include: John Bilson, “The Architecture of the Cistercians, with Special Reference to Some of their Earlier Churches in England,” *Archaeology Journal* (1909), 184; Père M.-Anselme Dimier, “Architecture et spiritualité des cisterciens,” *Revue du Moyen-Âge latin* III (1947), 255-75; Henri-Paul Eydoux, “Les fouilles de l’abbatiale de Himmerod et la notion d’un ‘plan bernardin,’ » *BM* (1953): 29-36; Marcel Aubert, « Existe-t-il une architecture cistercienne ? » *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, I (1958), 153-58; François Bucher, “Cistercian Architectural Purism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* III (1960-61), 89-105; Caroline A. Bruzelius, “The Transept of the Abbey Church of Châalis and the Filiation of Pontigny” in *Mélanges à Dimier*, vol. 6 (Arbois: Pupillin, 1982), 447-455; and Peter Fergusson, “The Builders of Cistercian Monasteries in Twelfth Century England,” in *Studies in Cistercian Art and Architecture* v. 2, (ed.) Meredith Parsons Lillich (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 15.

¹² A *parti* is the overall conception and design of the building. The detection of a distinct *parti* is an important step toward recognizing the work of an individual builder. In this case, the design is attributed to this builder because he used standardized parts placed in a distinct and repeatable arrangement.

than previously acknowledged, this research expands on current conceptions regarding the inner workings and means of construction of the Cistercian Order and modifies existing perceptions and preconceptions related to Cistercian interactions with outside laborers. Following scholars in other fields, it is hoped that this research will increase our awareness that the Cistercians were not as secluded as once believed and compel us to look for new scenarios to explain the integration of regional techniques in Cistercian architecture.

The Connection of the Structures in the Central Group in the Yonne

The late twelfth-century portions of the four Early Gothic parish churches—Beines, Gurgy, Saint-Bris, and Chitry—and the chapel at Fyé show a direct correspondence in construction that is often hidden by later additions or reconstructions (see **fig. 1**, in pink).¹³



FIGURE 1. The location of the microregion in the Yonne Valley in relation to the Oise

Since the overall layout and individual elements follow similar patterns, even though the churches were conceived with slight variations, one must consider the possibility that these Early Gothic structures were originally designed by one man.¹⁴ For convenience of identification, and

¹³ In this regard, all five buildings have been enlarged between the thirteen and nineteenth centuries (this is clarified in the plans). All photographs and drawings are by the author. After taking precise measurements, existing plans have been adjusted as clarified in the text, captions, or footnotes.

¹⁴ The particular areas that remain of the twelfth-century churches are: Chitry (nave), Fyé (two eastern bays), Gurgy

in reference to the unique style found in the Yonne Valley, this designer is referred to as the Yonne Valley Builder.¹⁵

We can begin to delve into this investigation by looking at the ways in which all five Yonne Valley churches are related. One of the most apparent aspects of this group of buildings is the tendency to employ a single nave with no aisles or transept.¹⁶ Another twelfth-century aspect is the polygonal or multiple-paneled apse found at Beines and Gurgy. In the case of Saint-Bris and Chitry, the chevets (east ends) were destroyed and without an excavation, the setup of the original chevets remains merely conjectural.¹⁷ Fyé, being obvious exception, was built initially as a small chapel with a flat east end. In each church, a type of construction is used that takes advantage of local resources and corresponds to a common regional method: frame and fill (i.e., ashlar “quoining,” or framing, is employed with rubble fill of stone collected nearby).¹⁸ With the use of rubble fill, the number of large stone blocks required is reduced to a minimum. While frame and fill construction may have been used for convenience and to cut costs, an equally important economic factor is the increase in labor costs due, particularly, to the extra time needed for laying these smaller stones.¹⁹

(chevet and first bay), Beines (chevet and nave), and Saint-Bris (westernmost bays).

¹⁵ For more information on the Yonne Valley Builder, see Canejo, “Evidence of an Innovative Master Builder...Gurgy and Beines,” 281-291; and “Transforming Early Gothic Form: The Cistercian Church of Pontigny, Saint Martin at Chablis, and Northern Burgundian Architecture” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2005).

¹⁶ Saint-Bris, however, has a nave with side aisles (although it does not have a transept). As a sizeable church, aisles were probably incorporated into the design for structural reasons.

¹⁷ Even so, the possibility that chevets of Chitry and Saint-Bris may once have been polygonal will be discussed briefly below.

¹⁸ The choice of frame and fill over all ashlar (squared dressed or prepared stone blocks) construction could be due to a limit on monetary resources: the desires, knowledge, or skill of the architect; or, possibly, the practicality of the method itself. This rubble fill, set between the dressed blocks and coursed in regular layers with roughly rectangular stones, varies by the kind available in the vicinity.

¹⁹ French medieval scholars, Christian Sapin and Daniel Prigen have discussed the choice of material, which not only “dépend de la nature des roches, de leur disponibilité à proximité du site, du type d’exploitation, mais aussi de données socio-économiques souvent complexes” (depends on the nature of the rocks, their availability near the site, the manner of fabrication, but also on socio-economic factors that are often complex). See “La construction en pierre au Moyen-Age,” *La construction: la pierre*, Alain Ferdière (dir.), Collection Archéologiques (Paris, Éditions Errance, 1999), 108-111. Regarding the reason for using *moellons* (small irregular rocks), they note that “l’utilisation de moellons présente différents avantages. Elle ne nécessite pas la même qualité de pierre que pour le moyen ou le grand appareil. Il n’est donc pas nécessaire de rejeter le matériau fracturé et la perte est réduite lors de l’extraction. Le coût en carrière est ainsi bien moindre que celui observé pour la pierre de taille” (the use of *moellons* has various advantages. This type of construction does not require the same quality of stone as needed for the medium or large ashlar construction. As a result, it is not necessary to discard the broken material and the overall loss during extraction is reduced. The cost at the quarry is consequently quite a bit less than observed for dressed stone). Furthermore, “quand le constructeur souhaitait utiliser en parement une pierre importée, le blocage étant constitué de moellons d’origine locale, le volume éventuel de bon matériau à transporter était plus faible que dans le cas d’un parement réalisé en moyen ou grand appareil” (when the constructor/builder wished to use an imported stone as facing, the rubble fill was made up of *moellons* of local origin, the possible volume of good material to be transported was lower than in the case of a facing constructed with medium or large ashlar blocks). Even so, it must

These Early Gothic works—the chapel at Fyé and the parish churches at Chitry, Gurgy, Beines, and Saint-Bris—lie within ten kilometers of one another in a microregion defined by the intersection of the Yonne and Armançon Rivers (**fig. 2**, in pink). In these five buildings, the remains of the twelfth-century structures display a distinct *parti* that, except for a special case in

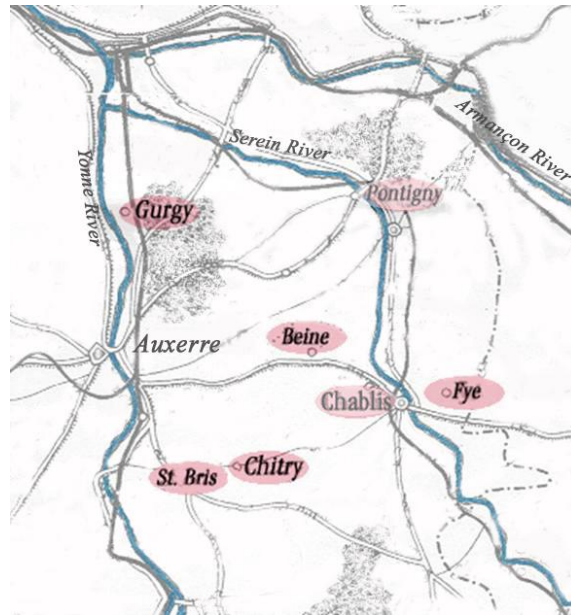


FIGURE 2. The microregion showing the villages of the central group between the forks of the Yonne, Serein, and Armançon Rivers as well as in relation to Pontigny and Chablis

the Oise (the Cistercian abbey church of Châalis), has not been found outside of the Yonne Valley.²⁰ Since none of the churches can be securely dated, evidence will be put forth to link these works to dates between 1175 and 1200. These dates support two interrelated points: that these elements appear earlier than previously believed south of the Ile-de-France and that the central Yonne group of churches can now be recognized as constructed during the same period as the Parisian works (rather than considered outmoded works).

The Layout of the Parish Churches of Chitry and Fyé

Onsite evidence indicates that Fyé and Chitry may have been the earliest constructions of the Yonne Valley Builder, with evident basic consistencies between the twelfth-century portions of each building in the central Yonne group. The village of Chitry is situated on the route from

be taken into account that “le petit appareil nécessite un temps de pose non négligeable quand les moellons de parement sont posés à la main” (the small ashlar block requires a considerable amount of time to assemble while the *moellons* of the facing are placed by hand).

²⁰ Not only are the designs and templates for the sculptural elements (rib and molding profiles as well as capitals and bases) found in these five churches relatively consistent but also the size, position, and shape of the lancets, buttresses, socle layouts and elevations, and overall pier designs are comparatively uniform (i.e., within allowable medieval standards of deviation).

Chablis to St.-Bris between the Yonne and Serein Rivers.²¹ (**figs. 1, 2**) The town, set low in the valley at the heart of the vineyard-lined hills, was part of a thriving viticulture community in the twelfth century.²² Not far from Chitry and surrounded by choice vineyards is the tiny village of Fyé which was also a significant producer of wine during the period.²³

The chapel at Fyé was once the private chapel of the Priory Saint-Antoine, dependency of Saint-Pierre of Montier-la-Celle, the grand Benedictine abbey.²⁴ (**fig. 3**) The exterior, consistent with the nave of the church of Saint-Valérien at Chitry, is constructed in frame and fill with roughly squared stone coursed between ashlar blocks (**fig. 3**, above, and **fig. 4**, right).²⁵ The irregular gray stone that fills the exterior wall of the church at Chitry appears to have been extracted from the layered rock of the surrounding hills, whereas the rubble fill at Fyé is the result of the kind of brown/black stone typical of buildings adjacent to the chapel.

Almost indistinguishable from these attached monastic buildings, the chapel at Fyé is tall and narrow (the height to the top of the gable is not quite double the width).²⁶ (**fig. 3**) Chitry is a

²¹ Chitry was noted in fifth-century texts as *Castoriacus*; as *Castriacus* in 1275; as *Chistri* in 1196; as *Christy* in 1485; as *Chitry-Dessus* and *Chitry-Dessous* in 1549. Maximilian Quantin traced the origins through multiple documents in *Dictionnaire topographique du département de l'Yonne, comprenant les noms de lieu anciens et modernes* (Paris: Imp. Impériale, 1862), 36.

²² During the twelfth century, grapes were cultivated in all five villages surrounding the central Yonne group of churches. Even so, a direct link between wine production and architectural construction has not been found. The economic benefits of the production and distribution of wine, while not easy to connect directly to architectural construction, could have spurred growth in the region. The relatively prosperous conditions of the period suggest that these small villages would have had ample resources to employ a group of finely skilled regional workers. Chitry is located between the Chablisien and Auxerrois *vignobles* (vineyards). Fine rosé and red wines are produced at Chitry and St-Bris (one of the greatest regional producers of the century). The vineyards at Gurgy are noted (but their value during the period is uncertain). Chablis Grand Cru and Premiers Crus are produced at Fyé. During the twelfth century Beines contained important vineyards and is today one of the more important producers of Premier Cru in the Chablisien region.

²³ Fyé was one of the small communities incorporated into the village of Chablis in 1970. Medieval documents verify Fyé as a desirable viticulture community. For example, an 1131 accord between the Cistercian abbey of Quincy and the abbey of Montier-la-Celle refers to the *dimes* of four *muids* of wine on the *finage* owned at Fyé (the dependency of the latter abbey) and, in 1191, there was a controversy between Quincy and Montier-la-Celle over those fourteen *arpents* of vineyards at Fyé. L'abbé Charles Lalore, *Cartulaire de Montier-la-Celle*, Collection des principaux cartulaires du diocèse de Troyes (Paris: Thorin, 1882) vol. VI, 59, n° 51. Quantin noted that Fyé, in the canton of Chablis, was identified as *Fiacus in pago Tornotrinsi* in 850; *Fieum* in 1116; and *Fiacum* in 1536. Quantin, *Dictionnaire Topographique*, 58. Robert Fèvre, "Histoire de Fyé," *Yonne Républicaine* (January 23, 1981) added that Fyé was called *Fiez-lès-Chablis* in the seventeenth century.

²⁴ The abbey of Montier-la-Celle, situated near Troyes, had seventeen dependant priories (including two in the Yonne Valley). The abbey was completely demolished after 1789 Revolution. Fèvre, "Histoire de Fyé," 6. The chapel at Fyé is not yet protected by the Monuments Historiques.

²⁵ The church at Chitry was classified by the Monuments Historiques on December 30, 1905 (Archives départementales de l'Yonne [ADY] 74 T 10).

²⁶ The size of the chapel is 16.6 meters x 5 meters (the highest part of the vault may have risen to around 7-8 meters).



FIGURE 3. Fyé, chapel, France, exterior, northeast corner (above) and interior, toward east end (below)



FIGURE 4. Saint-Valérien, Chitry, France, nave (view from the twelfth-century nave to the late Gothic chevet) (left) and the exterior west facade and towers (right)

bit taller: with a nave vault height of around 10 meters, it is quite high for a small town parish church.²⁹ (**fig. 4**) Constructed at the corners of each building are crossed buttresses, a distinctive element of the production of the Yonne Valley Builder and his workers (compare **fig. 5** and **fig. 6**).³⁰ These buttresses, slightly over three-feet wide, are constructed in two levels (with a chamfered glacis, or sloping projection, at each juncture) and extend as high as the roofline.

Numerous features demonstrate the correspondence between the two structures. One example is the cornice at both Fyé and Chitry which is lined with quarter-round Burgundian

²⁹ In comparison, Saint-Bris is 18 meters but has an aisle to help support the nave vault.

³⁰ This plan of the chapel at Fyé is based on that of Alain Creac'h, *Devis* (Auxerre, Bâtiments de France, Dossier on Fyé, 1990). Dotted lines show projected rib vaults and transverse arches. The choice of a square chevet rather than a polygonal apse probably reflects the needs or resources of the monks. This plan of Chitry is based on the 1986 plan by Bernard Collette, Architect of the Monuments Historiques. Adjustments have been made to piers, windows, and various buttresses in accordance with onsite measurements. Dotted lines indicate vault ribs or openings (e.g., arcades, arches, or windows). As clarified in the plan, the square west tower is off-center from the nave (**fig. 6**, plan, A3-A4 to AA 3-AA4). This is due to the addition of an alternative entrance in the northwestern corner of the nave. This small and somewhat hidden passageway was devised in the interest of security.

corbels.³¹ At Fyé, the corbels are evenly spaced along the north face of the chapel.³² On the south side, they continue beyond the first two bays (except for a short space where the buttress would have been located at the intersection C3 on the plan **fig. 5**).³³ West of this second buttress, the wall and corbels are set back about six inches. This arrangement, consistent with the re-plastered interior wall, denotes areas of restoration work on this end of the building.³⁴ (**fig. 5** between A3 and B3 on the plan) Another characteristic that the two buildings share is that neither church originally had aisles or a transept. While this configuration is still apparent at Fyé, evidence of an original single nave at Chitry lies in the *comble* (interior roof) at the top of the tower stair where a few quarter-round corbels are intact -- now encapsulated by the addition of the fourteenth-

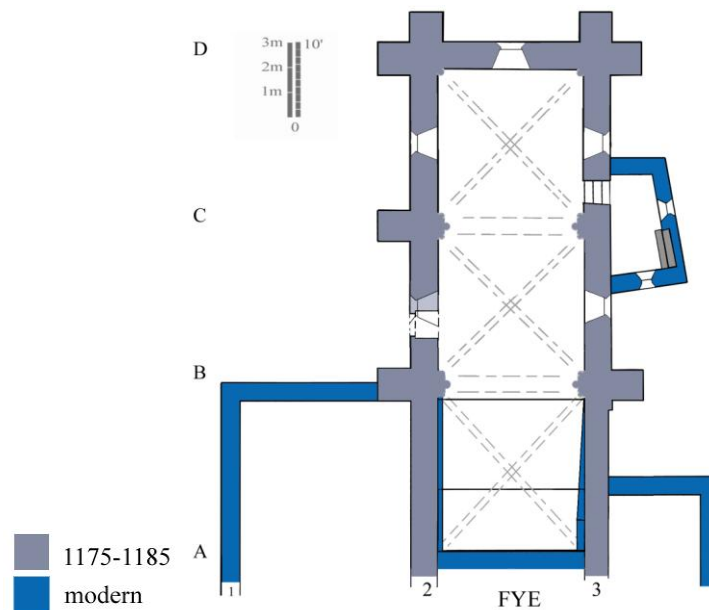


FIGURE 5. Fyé, chapel, plan (based on plan by Alain Creac'h)
(NOTE: Crossed buttresses at D2 and D3)

³¹ In this case, the corbels supporting the cornice and roof are comparable to those at Beines and Gurgy (discussed in the following section).

³² The roof over the north side has been reconstructed due to a modern addition.

³³ This buttress was removed in order to add a small modern room.

³⁴ The chapel was directly connected to the monks' building at the west end. Documents on repairs and restoration at Fyé before the twentieth century are scarce. When reports exist, the damage is not described in any detail, so it is unclear when these repairs were made. See the Archives départementales de l'Yonne, Auxerre, ADY 2 O 1757 and the Dossier on Fyé at the Bâtiments de France, Auxerre.

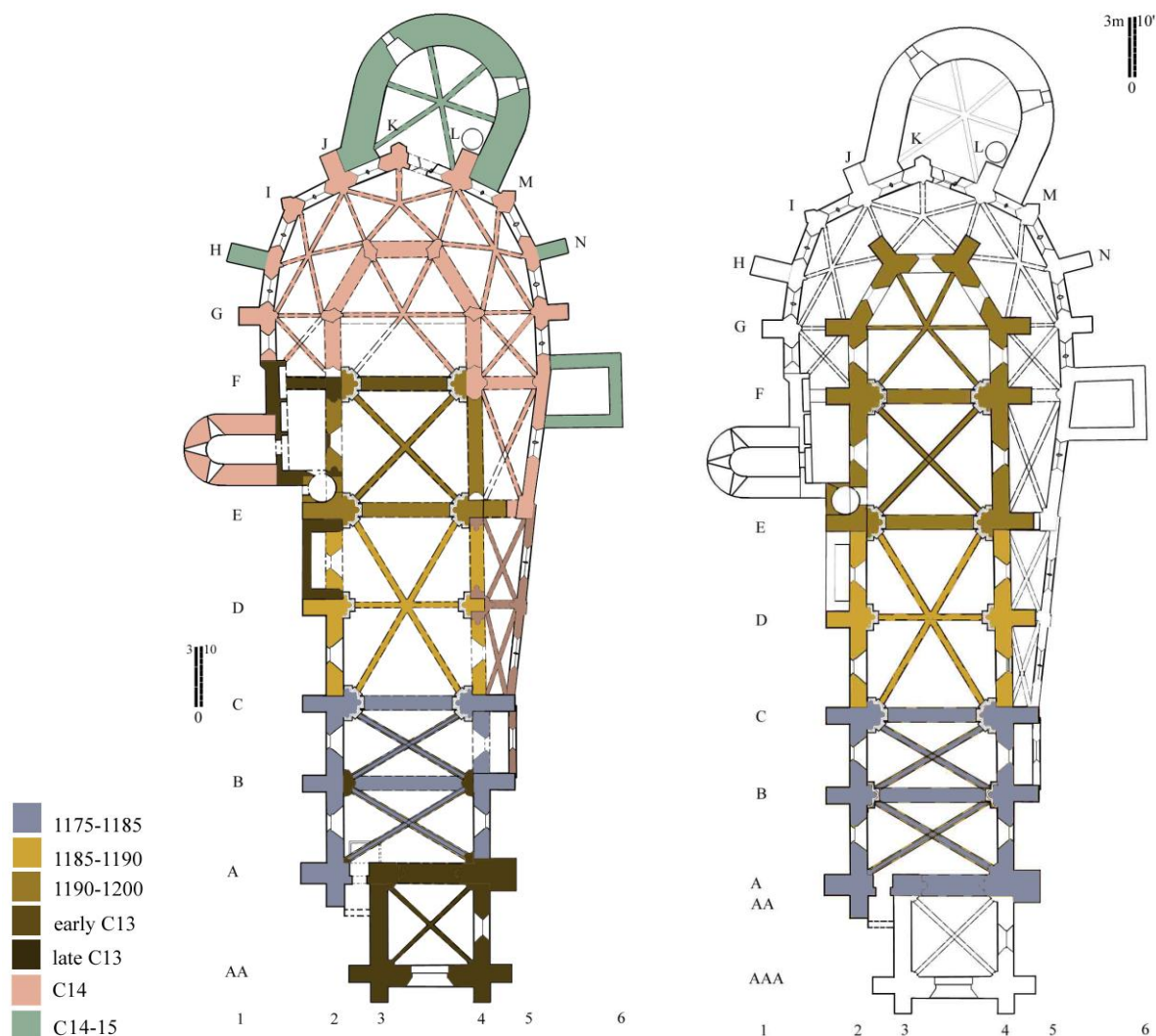


FIGURE 6. Saint-Valérien, Chitry, plan (after Collette) (left) and speculative twelfth-century plan (note possible apse layout) (right) (NOTE: Crossed buttresses at A2, AA3, and AA4)

Century chevet (**fig. 6**, speculative plan, at right).³⁹ On the interior north wall, a bricked-up window (between E2 and F2 on the plan **fig. 6**) in the design of the other twelfth-century broken-arched nave lancets reveals the known limit to the extension of the original walls to the east.⁴⁰

While both structures initially employed rib vaults, today only Chitry is vaulted. Observing that the chapel of Fyé is two-thirds of its original size, Alain Creac'h maintained that

³⁹ Note that the possibility of a three-panel apse would further relate Chitry to the other Yonne Valley churches in the group (see the speculative plan at the right in **fig. 6**).

⁴⁰ There is a corresponding window on the south wall (above the fourteenth-century arcade) (EF4), but only the arch remains.

no more than two bays had once been vaulted.⁴¹ Although the vaults at Fyé are destroyed, several blocks of the rib and transverse arch positioned atop the capitals confirm the original layout. **(fig. 3)** As perceived in this recent reassessment, the existence of a transverse arch as well as the three-column piers located at B2 and B3 on the plan **(fig. 5)** confirms that the vaults continued to the west (the westernmost column on the pier would have supported the rib of the third bay) and, accordingly, indicates that there were probably at least three rib-vaulted bays in the chapel.⁴² **(fig. 5)** The blocks of the rib and transverse arch that remain in their original position above each of the piers, in conjunction with the wall indentations above the windows that mark the height of the demolished vaults, give us an idea of their initial shape.⁴³ **(fig. 3)** The rib blocks mortared atop the piers are set at an angle outward from the transverse (as springing) and confirm the previous existence of quadripartite vaults.

On taking measurements and profiles, it was surprising to realize that the rib profile at Fyé—a pointed torus flanked by two cavettos—is carved in the same geometric configuration as the one in the twelfth-century nave at Chitry (compare **fig. 7**, left and right).⁴⁴ On the rib at Fyé,

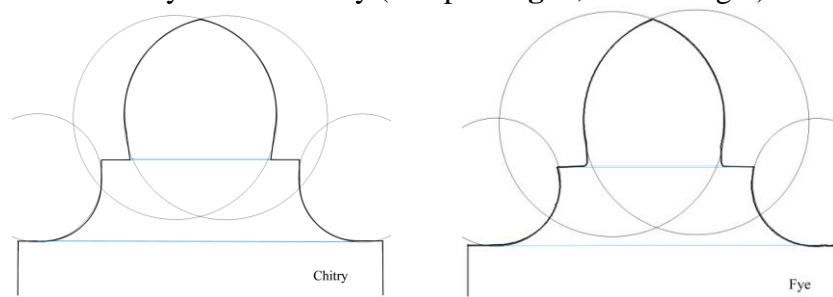


FIGURE 7. Saint-Valérien, Chitry (left), and Fyé, chapel (right), rib profiles with geometric schemas

the cavettos are each derived from a circle of 8 cm in diameter (approx. 3.15 inches) and the pointed torus developed from overlapping circles with a diameter of approx. 17 cm (approx. 6.7 inches). In comparison, at Chitry, the cavetto circle diameter measures 9.89 cm (approx. 3.9 inches) and the circles that form the central pointed torus have a diameter of 15.83 cm (approx. 6.23 inches). In other words, the geometrical design schema shows that the smaller circles

⁴¹ Alain Creac'h, Architect at Auxerre, in his report on *L'Eglise de Fyé*, 1990 (Auxerre, Bâtiments de France, Dossier on Fyé). Fèvre, "Histoire de Fyé," proposed that the church had four bays, but that only two were vaulted.

⁴² If the chapel had ended at this point, the piers would have been single-column piers as at the east end (D2 and D3), moreover, there would be no need for a transverse arch if there was a wall here; the piers would have marked the placement of the west wall.

⁴³ The rectangular profile of this transverse arch may indicate that Fyé is an earlier work than Chitry.

⁴⁴ The rib has a profile consistent with those in the churches of the central group. As clarified in the general design schema, **(fig. 7)** the circles that form the central pointed torus of the rib at Fyé are a bit farther apart than at Chitry making the pointed torus a bit thinner. All profiles were carefully measured (taken full scale) and recorded using a grid layout. Accurate measurements were taken from sculptural and architectural elements in order to illustrate uniformity or deviations.

(cavettos) are around 3-4 inches in diameter and the larger circles (tori) are between 6-7 inches in diameter; that is, the small circles are roughly one half the size of the larger circles. While the rib profiles and angles found in the principal churches of the group differ slightly, the proportion of the central pointed tori to the filets and rounded tori at each side shows a consistency lacking in other similar ribs in northern Burgundy.⁴⁵

In spite of the various reconstructions, innovations in the structure of Chitry and Fyé are apparent. A marked experimental feature of the interiors is the continuous molding that underscores and frames the lower portion of the window (**fig. 8**, molding in red, **fig. 9**). The molding crosses the capitals as abaci runs horizontally until it hits the window blocks, then drops vertically down until it squares and encloses the lower edge of the chamfered windowsill.⁴⁶ Not only are the blocks of this molding sturdy slabs that extend into the wall, but also the stones of

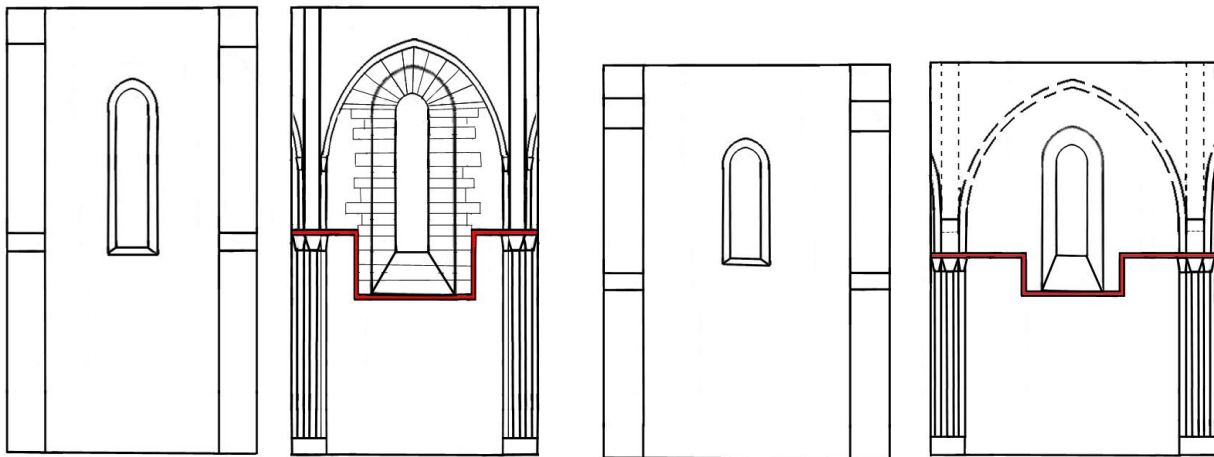


FIGURE 8. Saint-Valérien, Chitry (left) and Fyé, chapel (right), general scheme of the exterior and interior walls (highlighting the continuous molding in red)

the lower window-ledge are wedged between the ashlar blocks of the molding in a square-edged frame-like border.⁴⁷ Even though the molding, visible at Chitry near a reconstructed area, reaches

⁴⁵ In contrast, the ribs at Pont-sur-Yonne and Bar-sur-Aube, for example, have a central rounded torus flanked by rather small rounded tori.

⁴⁶ In searching the northern and southern Paris basin for similar use of the continuous molding that encircles the blocks of the lower portion of the window sill, only one example was even close—the apse of the church at Épineuil in the Yonne. Even so, the individual sculpted and structural elements are significantly different. For example, the capitals and profiles are not consistent with those at Chitry or Fyé: the polygonal apse has five panels, while the buttresses have only one glacis and are generally a different shape, and the thin lancets are flanked by quite slender colonnettes on the interior and exterior. Elements including capitals and profiles suggest a later date for Épineuil church (often placed in the first half of the thirteenth century).

The impact of the style of the Yonne Valley Builder is indicated by the later reintroduction of the distinct *parti* (with the continuous molding framing the window sill) of the churches of the Yonne microregional group at the High Gothic church of Épineuil in the thirteenth century, as well as at the Gothic Revival church of Quincerot (also in the Yonne Valley) designed by Emile Amé, Architect of the Monuments Historiques, in the nineteenth century.

less than halfway through the wall, the stones may still function as a solid base that would stabilize and perpendicularly align the heavy blocks of the ashlar window above.

Consistent with contemporaneous Early Gothic profiles encountered both regionally and around the Île-de France, the molding profile reveals the exchange of ideas between Paris and Burgundy (rather than a delayed use of outdated styles as proposed by previous scholars).⁴⁸ (fig. 10) Among the numerous existing profiles of this type, dated by Jean Bony, is a comparable Early Gothic molding profile at Soissons Cathedral between 1177 and 1180.⁴⁹



FIGURE 9. Saint-Valérien, Chitry nave, north wall (left) and Fyé, chapel, south wall (right), interior, continuous molding

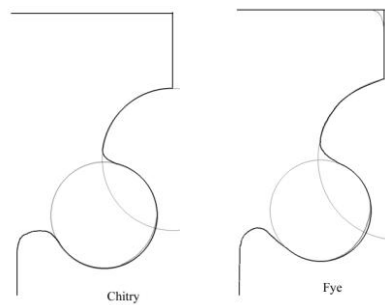


FIGURE 10. Saint-Valérien, Chitry (left), Fyé chapel (right), molding profiles with geometric schemas

⁴⁷ The stones of the molding are approximately 15 cm in height (approx. 6 inches) and, from measurements taken, approximately 30.5 cm in depth (approx. 12 inches).

⁴⁸ The slight difference in the profile at Fyé from that at Chitry is, in part, due to the heavy layers of paint. The larger circle diameter follows the cavetto curve (Fyé: 8.86 cm /3.53 in.; Chitry: 7.82 cm /3.08 in.) and the smaller describes the lower torus (Fyé: 5.55 cm /2.137 in.; Chitry: 5.88 cm /2.396 in.). The profile is a variation of the ancient cyma recta molding. A variant with a smaller torus is found in the north of France in Early Gothic churches.

⁴⁹ Jean Bony, *French Gothic Architecture of the 12th and 13th Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 164. Bony's focus is often on larger churches, especially in the Paris region. In contrast, this research reveals the value of smaller churches in northern Burgundy suggesting that they are just as innovative as Parisian developments.

The specific construction techniques and patterns used by the Yonne Valley Builder can be seen in the arrangement of the remaining twelfth-century nave bays of Chitry.⁵⁰ The original bays employ a detached shaft (*en-délit* column) set below the window rib (formerette) and above the continuous molding creating a bracket in each corner that is almost hidden by the blocks of the rib.⁵¹ (**fig. 11**) No evidence exists to indicate the use of this type of corner brackets with encased columns at Fyé, however, there would have been room for both above the upper blocks of the capitals (abaci).

In all five Yonne Valley churches, the lower elements of the piers (including the continuous base) repeat the layout of upper arrangement (the engaged columns and continuous capitals). Although the blocks (socles) at the foot of the bases in the chapel at Fyé have been destroyed, it is still possible to assemble a partial speculative layout of the original twelfth-century design derived from other elements of the piers. As clarified in **figure 12** (dotted lines reflect speculative areas), the piers with three attached, or engaged, columns match the general form of those at Chitry but would have had a wider socle.⁵² At Chitry, little remains of the lower blocks in the western bays.⁵³ As noted by Maximilien Quantin, the construction of a moat around the church during the fortification may have considerably increased the moisture on the lower level and deteriorated the socles.⁵⁴ Still, ample elements, found in-situ behind the stalls at the east end of the church (at F2 and F4 on the plan **fig. 6**), allow for a reconstruction of the base/socle arrangement (**fig. 12**, center and right). Even though the base profile—a torus, a scotia

⁵⁰ The standardized geometric patterns imply the use of templates. For a discussion of templates in medieval construction see John James, *The Template-Makers of the Paris Basin: Toichological Techniques for Identifying the Pioneers of the Gothic Movement with an Examination of Art-Historical Methodology* (Leura, Australia: West Grinstead Press, 1989), 33-36, 119-120. During the twelfth century, templates or patterns were a practical means of transferring innovative design from one medieval building to another. As described by James, the mason who was in charge designed the templates, thus, a group of related templates signals the work of a master mason or builder. On profiles, see Richard Morris, "Moldings and the Analysis of Medieval Style," in *Medieval Architecture and Its Intellectual Content: Studies in Honour of Peter Kidson* (eds.) Eric Fernie and Paul Crossley (Hambledon Press, 1990), 239-247.

⁵¹ The corner bracket with an encased column was used in earlier periods for an entire pier (e.g., Sens Cathedral). The bracket with column has a history in the Nivernais but was also used in northern France. The combination of the columns with *en-délit* shafts encased in a bracket and the continuous molding that frames the lower chamfered window sill is an unusual feature which will also be seen in the churches of Beines and Gurgy.

⁵² In the nave at Fyé the compound piers have three engaged columns, while in the east end they are fitted with only a single column. The vertical masonry supports in the east are consistent with the arrangement at Beines and Gurgy, where a single column pier is placed in each corner of the polygonal chevet. Beines and Gurgy will be discussed below.

⁵³ Piers were reconstructed at A2, A4, B2, and B4. These piers no longer have the square-edged layout of the twelfth century, but are carved in a continuous, curvilinear form used on the fourteenth-century piers.

⁵⁴ The church was fortified between the late thirteenth and early fifteenth centuries. See ADY F24 and E548 as well as Quantin, "Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des communes du département, Chitry," *Annuaire historique du département de l'Yonne* (1841), 47-62 and Nicholas A. R. Wright, "The Fortified Church at Chitry," *Fort*, vol. 19 (1991), 5-10. Fèvre, "Histoire de Fyé," mentioned that a low moat also once surrounded the chapel at Fyé. It is possible that the water destroyed the socles (as at Chitry).

(a concave moulding separating the tori on a base), and a somewhat flattened torus (a variation of the classical attic base)—is typical of the structures in the Yonne group, it also parallels contemporary trends in base profiles at Notre-Dame, Paris, in the north aisle of the nave dating to the late 1170s.⁵⁵

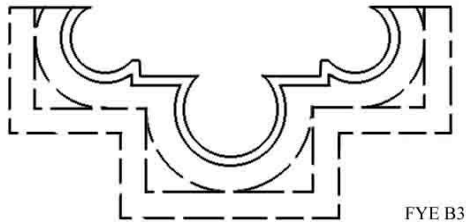


FIGURE 11. Saint-Valérien, Chitry, original rib and capital (C2)

⁵⁵ Caroline Bruzelius, "The Construction of Notre-Dame in Paris," *Art Bulletin* 69 (1989),: 556, figure 21, b [profiles N5-N8]) dated the base profiles in the north aisle at Notre-Dame, Paris, after 1170. Socles in the same area were dated after 1178 by Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, *Notre-Dame de Paris* (NY: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1998), 88. The socle setup at Bar-sur-Aube, in contrast, has small secondary engaged columns.

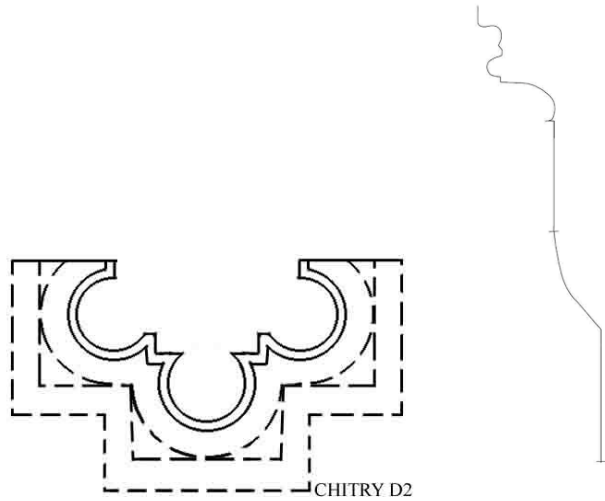


FIGURE 12. Fyé, chapel, base/socle plan (B3) (left); Saint-Valérien, Chitry, base/socle plan (D2) (center); and Saint-Valérien, Chitry, base and socle profile (partially speculative elevation) (F2) (right)

At both Chitry and Fyé, a single long thin lancet is positioned in the upper half of the wall between two buttresses. The layouts of these windows have a simple rebate design to hold the glass, not recessed grooves, that is, the glass is pressed against the small vertical lip on the window jamb rather than lying firmly in a carved slot (compare **fig. 13**, left and right). As will be



FIGURE 13. Fyé, chapel (BC2) (left) and Saint-Valérien, Chitry (CD2) (right), window plan

evident in the other churches of the microregional group, the interior window jambs and sill are deeper than the exterior.⁶⁰ The ashlar blocks at both Chitry and Fyé have wide *brettüre* marks (from a toothed axe) that are particularly visible on the chamfered (bevelled) window sills. These marks, indicating the use of an axe with thin spaces between wide teeth, are consistent with traces encountered at the other Yonne churches in this group. This broad tool mark, typical of the earliest medieval use of the *brettüre* in the Yonne Valley, seems to be a sign that these are Early Gothic works.⁶¹

⁶⁰ The wider angle of the interior window jambs at Chitry may show that it is a later work than Fyé. (**fig. 13**, compare left and right).

⁶¹ In other words, the *brettüre* or toothed-axe marks, measuring between 3:1.7 and 3:1, seem to reinforce the late twelfth-century date. Jean-Claude Bessac, Ingénieur au C.N.R.S., *L'outillage traditionnel du tailleur de pierre de l'antiquité à nos jours*, Revue Archéologique de Narbonnaise, Supplément 14 (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1993), 67, has reviewed the state of the question on the use of the *brettüre* noting the significance of the evolution of the tool: specifically, the teeth become progressively narrower from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. For a discussion of early *brettüre* work in northern Burgundy, see the two works by Arnaud Timbert, "Emploi du marteau taillant bretté

Further evidence showing the relative uniformity of the two churches appears at the peak of the window arch where a single centered voussoir is placed as keystone rather than two voussoirs split down the centerline as seen at numerous local churches (**fig. 14**, right, #1; **fig. 15**, left, #1). A small rectangular hole was carved on each side of the arch, usually between the third and fourth voussoirs (**fig. 14**, right, #2 and #3; **fig. 15**, left, #2 and #3).⁶² These holes match up with the two on the interior of the window arch and reveal a typical technique of the Yonne Valley Builder and his workers.⁶³ Not only is this manner of assembling the window relatively

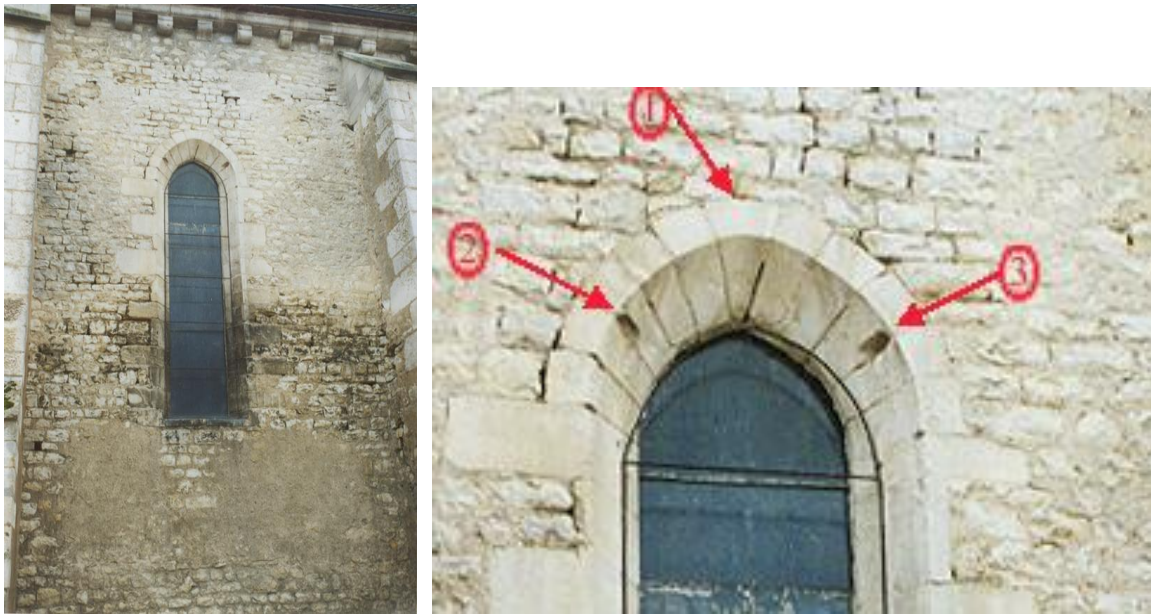


FIGURE 14. Saint-Valérien, Chitry, north wall, window (CD2) (left) and detail (right)

uniform in all five churches in the Yonne group, but also, according to John James, it is likely “that the formwork for the arch centering was tongued into these holes;” if so, this construction method would have “saved a great deal of timber.”⁶⁴

en Basse-Bourgogne avant 1200,” *Bulletin de la Société des fouilles archéologiques monuments historiques de l’Yonne* n. 16 (1999), 67-70, and *Vézelay: Le chevet de la Madeleine et le premier gothique bourguignon* (Rennes : Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2009), 190-194.

⁶² The small, carved, rectangular-shaped, recessed holes are approx. 8-10 cm (3-4 in.) wide and 5-8 cm (2-3 in.) deep.

⁶³ In comparison to windows of the Yonne group, windows of other regional churches of the same date may not have holes in the arch voussoirs or the holes may be lower. Note that these holes are similar to putlog holes in being designed to hold wooden supports but they are designed as an alternative to framework (not to hold horizontally placed log or beam braces that support scaffolding boards as would be the case for putlog holes).

⁶⁴ Email correspondence, June 7, 2010. Lancets in the five churches are relatively homogeneous and distinct from other windows of buildings in the region; specific aspects include the use of a similar shaped broken arch as well as a standardized width to depth ratio. For example, at other churches, the lancets can be thinner and taller or shorter and broader. Additionally, there may be attached columns or the arch may be more rounded or pointed.

The design of the capitals is the final connection to be demonstrated between Fyé and Chitry. The focus on these capitals will help, ultimately, to link the sculptor to the various buildings as well as confirm dates of construction. The continuous twelfth-century capitals decorating each compound pier have large leaves, stretching from the lower neck to the upper lip of the bell and covering the basket (compare **fig. 16**, left and right). At Fyé, in particular, these



FIGURE 15. Fyé, chapel, a single keystone and two holes (left) and window on the north side (BC2) (right)



FIGURE 16. Fyé, chapel, capital (B2) (tri-foil flat leaf on capital in background) (left) and Saint-Valérien, Chitry, tri-foil flat leaf capital (D2) (right)

large leaves have been carved in either one or two rows, whereas at Chitry, the leaves are found only at a single level. The ribs that divide these large leaves into regularized segments are

generally of two basic types: one, a raised rib that runs flat along the basket with low relief veins (**fig. 17**, left), and, the other, a rippled rib that is a concave circular curve between almost pointed ridges (**fig. 17**, right). Within all five Yonne churches, the two kinds of ribs seem to have been used interchangeably (i.e., either type rib can be found with crockets of various styles).



FIGURE 17. Raised rib (left) and rippled rib (right), general schema

Specific to these churches in the central Yonne group, the large leaf at the upper corners of each capital seems to spiral seamlessly into a crocket with a small spiral form (or volute). In contrast to similar capitals at other churches which have a break between the crocket and the leaf, the crocket ball or bud is a continuous part of the large leaf.⁶⁶ An example which may help clarify the design at Chitry and Fyé was observed at the chapel in the Prieré de Cours (Noyers, Yonne Valley) where the large ribbed leaf does not smoothly curve into a spiral -- instead, the leaf ends abruptly before the crocket ball begins.

A number of capitals have a flat tri-foil or three-lobed leaf applied to the front of the capital bell at Chitry that is found at other churches in the Yonne microregional group, including Fyé.⁶⁷ (compare **fig. 16**, left, capital at right, and right) These leaves, while close in design, have slight modifications suggesting that the pattern may have been copied either freehand or by different masons. Similar tri-lobed leaves noted in the nave at Notre-Dame, Paris, and dated by Denise Jalabert to the fourth quarter of the twelfth century indicated that the work was a current design.⁶⁸ In a recent text using a larger collection of capital types, John James was able to be more specific, dating this form of the three-lobed leaf around 1180.⁶⁹

Découpée (cut-out) leaves of different species are applied to the surface of the larger leaves on the bell (some run up the large leaf; others are set between two large leaves).⁷⁰ (**fig. 18**) These appliqué leaves protrude from the capital surface as if they were a later addition. The designs of the leaves are taken from local species, such as the oak, columbine, or chrysanthemum. Although resembling leaves in nature, they are rather abstract; the general

⁶⁶ The ratio of capital to crocket is fairly consistent at Chitry and Fyé. Similar capitals at other churches in the region have tiny or very large crocket balls. On the other hand, at the Church of Pontaubert, the proportion of capital to crocket is close to that at Chitry yet the molding and rib profiles in the church are completely different and not all capitals are ribbed.

⁶⁷ The leaves may be clover, strawberry, or grape. These types of leaves are also found on capitals at Beines discussed below.

⁶⁸ These leaves were referred to as *feuilles composées généralisées* (widely-used composite leaves) by Denise in *La flore sculptée des monuments du Moyen Age en France* (Paris: Picard, 1965), pl. 61.

⁶⁹ John James, *The Creation of Gothic Architecture: An Illustrated Thesaurus: The Ark of God, Part A - The Evolution of Foliate Capitals in the Paris Basin 1170-1250*, vol. 1 (Hartley Vale, Australia: West Grinstead Publications, 2002), 20.

⁷⁰ *Découpée* is also a term used by Jalabert. These *découpée* leaves seem to be cut to a simple shape and then applied to the surface of the capital.

characteristics are retained, but some details are dropped (for example, sometimes the small veins were eliminated and the central low relief stem is accentuated).



FIGURE 18. Saint-Valérien, Chitry, capitals (D2)

Denise Jalabert placed the *feuille découpée* in the second Gothic period dating to 1170/1200, noting that the first Gothic period capitals had Corinthian-derived compositions with Roman motifs including large simple leaves with volutes.⁷¹ The capitals at Chitry employ elements—the appliqué leaves and the Roman motifs—from the two periods and would seem to date around 1175/1185. Closely confirming these dates, John James has set this type of capital, similar to those at Beaumont-sur-Oise in the aisle or the apse at Ouerre to the 1180s.⁷²

Gurgy, Beines, and the Yonne Valley Builder

Turning to two parish churches situated along the Yonne River in the quaint villages of Beines and Gurgy, the importance of an assessment of the developments in the region and the unique elements taken by the itinerant builder and his workers to the north will be addressed.⁷³

⁷¹ The study by Denise Jalabert, “La flore gothique, ses origines, son évolution,” *Bulletin monumental* 2 (1932), 190-193, 203, concentrated on forms from the cathedrals in the Île-de France.

⁷² John James, *Ark of God*, vol. 1, 22, 453, chart, 796-97, (located in the church, as per notation of James, at N2se), and email correspondence, June 7, 2010.

⁷³ The Church of Beines, in the canton of Chablis, is dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin. Beines was known as *Baina*, *au pagus d’Auxerre* in 990, *Bania* in 1149, *Baina* in 1161, *Banna* in 1225, *Bena* in 1250, *Benne* in 1379, *Beine* in 1459, *Beynes* in 1550, *Besne* in 1637, and *Bennes* in the eighteenth century. Gurgy, in the canton of Seignelay, was called *Gurgiacus* in the 11th century and *Gurgy* in 1114. Quantin, *Dictionnaire topographique*, 11, 65. The parish church at Beines has been protected by the Monuments Historiques since 1984, but Gurgy is not.

Through a focus on smaller works (including the chapel at Fyé and the nave of Chitry), information is gained—from the twelfth-century profiles and construction techniques—that allows for new conclusions on the significance of Early Gothic architecture in the Yonne Valley. Even though the correspondence of the design of these churches, Saint-André at Gurgy and Notre-Dame at Beines, has been presented as the work of the Yonne Valley Builder in an earlier text, this article is the first to indicate the relation of Beines and Gurgy to a larger group of Yonne construction (compare **figs. 19 and 20**, left and right).⁷⁴



FIGURE 19. Notre-Dame, Beines, France, chevet (left), Saint-André, Gurgy, France, chevet (right)

Of the five Yonne Valley buildings, only Gurgy and Beines have surviving twelfth-century polygonal chevets. Elements, including the profiles and the assembly of the three-panel apse, indicate that the two parish churches were constructed using nearly identical plans and templates.⁷⁵ (see the regions in yellow ochre in **fig. 21**, plans) In fact, the similarity of the plan

⁷⁴ For more in-depth information on Gurgy and Beines and specific images, see Canejo, “Evidence of an Innovative Master Builder...Gurgy and Beines,” 281-291.


⁷⁵ The plans of both churches, shown at the same scale, were drafted from onsite measurements and demonstrate geometric arrangements. As clarified in the plan, the twelfth-century chevet at Gurgy was constructed onto an existing Romanesque nave; this alignment explains the small differences in the plan of the two apses. The height of the vault at Gurgy diverges from that at Beines by only 10 cm (Gurgy: 8.5 m; Beines, 8.4 m). I would like to thank Antoine Lerich, Architecte du Patrimoine, for copies of his recent plans and elevations for reparations at Beines as well as for his invaluable comments.

and elevation of the twelfth-century portions make these structures a curious pair. A single lancet, found in each of the three panels of the apse is flanked by double glacis buttresses which



FIGURE 20. Notre-Dame, Beines, chevet (left); and Saint-André, Gurgy, chevet (right)

end at the roof.⁷⁷ The rib and molding profiles as well as the socles and base configurations are close enough to be from one set of templates.⁷⁸ (figs. 22, 23) Richard Morris observed that “It is rare to find the same templates reused at two different sites, especially in direct conjunction with other identical features in both places.”⁷⁹ In other words, even though the geometric layouts correspond closely to those at Chitry and Fyé, that the apses at Gurgy and Beines are almost indistinguishable is quite a rare occurrence (compare figs. 22 and 23 to figs. 7 and 12).

⁷⁷ The type of crossed buttresses at Fyé and Chitry may have once existed at Beines. In the case of Gurgy, there was no need for crossed buttresses since only the east end was reconstructed. On the plan, the angle of the triangles formed by the ribs is 60°. Although the choice of this angle may seem obvious for a three-panel chevet (60° x 3 = 180°), not all three-panel apses use this division, nor are the buttresses aligned so closely. In comparison to the schematic plan of Beines or Gurgy (right), the chevet of the church of Obazine (left) has an arrangement of one smaller and two larger panels: .

⁷⁸ The general geometrical schema shows that, at Beines, the larger circle diameter of this molding is 16.5 cm (6.5 in.) and the smaller is 9.5 cm (approx. 3.8 in.). At Gurgy the large circle has a diameter of 16 cm (approx. 6.3 in.) and the small has one of approx. 8.6 cm (approx. 3.4 in.). As at Chitry and Fyé, the upper curve of the cavetto is nearly double the size of the lower torus.

⁷⁹ Morris, “Mouldings and the Analysis of Medieval Style,” 240.

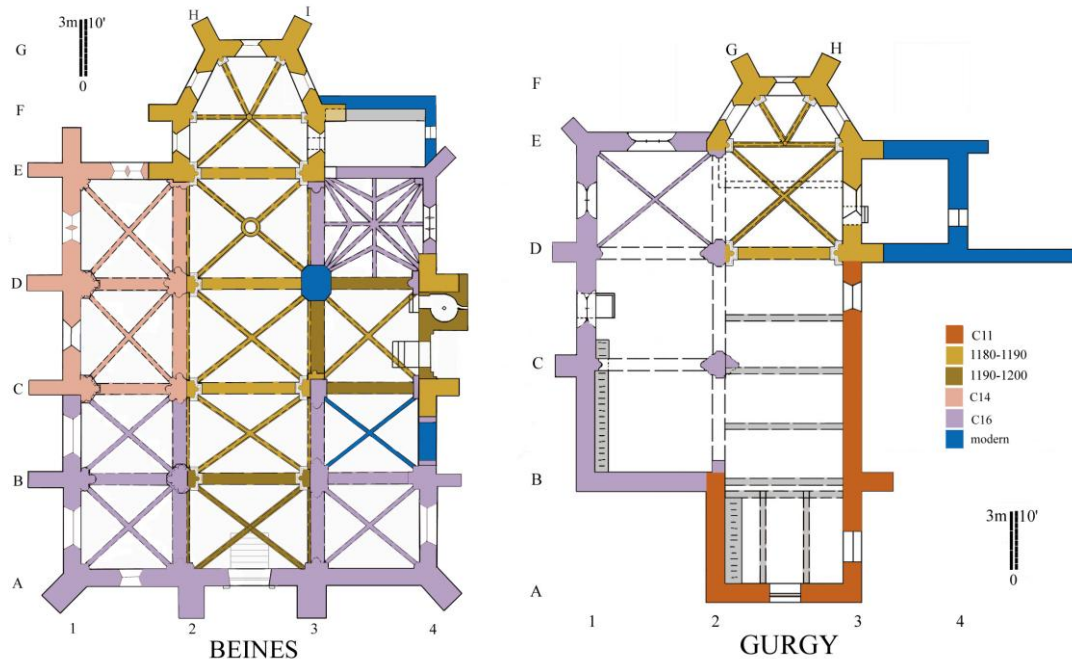


FIGURE 21. Notre-Dame, Beines (left), and Saint-André, Gurgy (right), plans

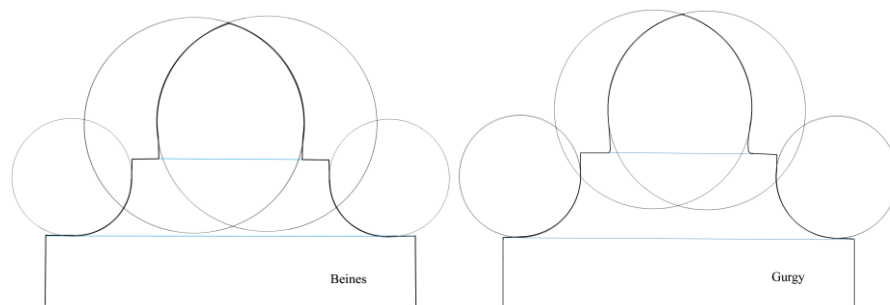


FIGURE 22. Saint-André, Gurgy (left), and Notre-Dame, Beines (right), rib profiles with geometric schemas

And yet, there is another element which appears equally unusual and striking: the continuous molding that runs up over the capitals and down to frame the lower section of each lancet (**fig. 24**, in red, and **fig. 25**). The dressed stones of the lower window sill are contained by blocks of the molding frame. Capitals with the continuous molding as their upper block (abacus)

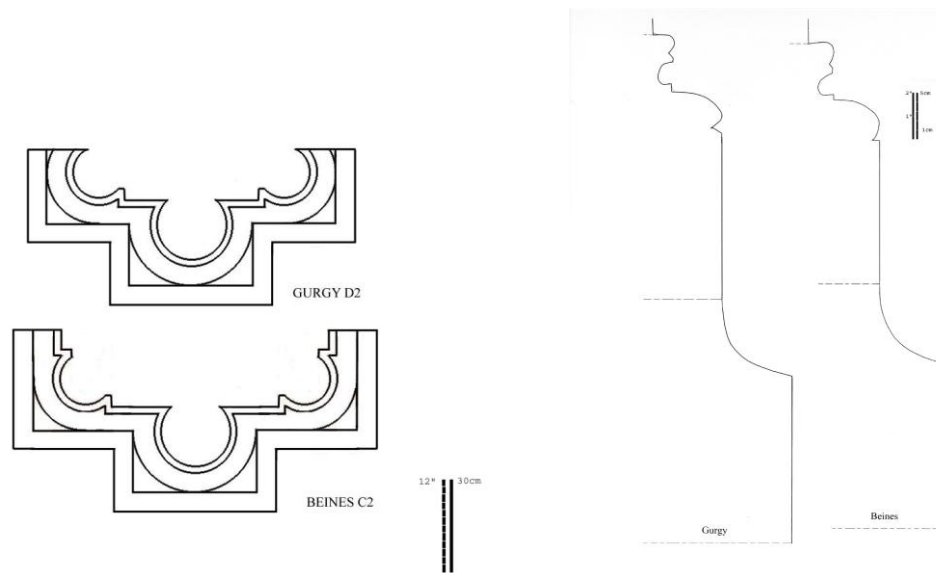


FIGURE 23. Saint-André, Gurgy and Notre-Dame, Beines, base/socle plans (left) and profiles (right)

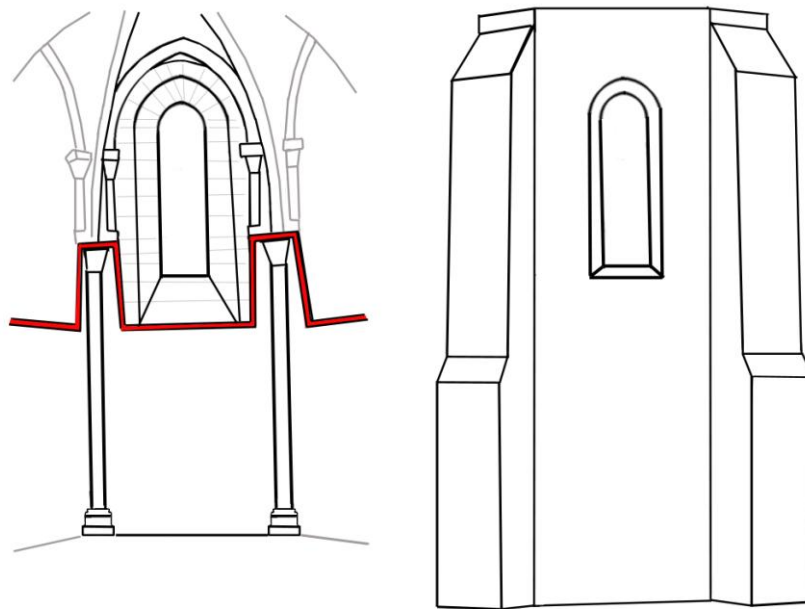


FIGURE 24. Notre-Dame, Beines and Saint-André, Gurgy, general scheme of the exterior and interior walls

support the thin rib connecting the vault to the chevet panels. Employing a setup analogous to Chitry, small columns complete with miniature bases and capitals, catch the window rib

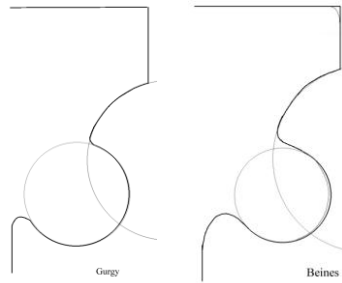


FIGURE 25. Saint-André, Gurgy (left) and Notre-Dame, Beines (right), molding profiles with geometric schemas



FIGURE 26. Saint-André, Gurgy (G) (left) Notre-Dame, Beines (H) (right), rib supports, brackets

(formerette).⁸⁰ (fig. 26) These slender columns with *en-délit* shafts are set in a corner bracket and flank (and perhaps reinforce) the rib at the springing.⁸¹ The window blocks of the chevet are, in

⁸⁰ The interior shows evidence of the use of the *bretture*. The ratio of the width of the tine to the intervening spaces of this tool is between 3:1.2 and 3:1.7. This Early Gothic wide mark is very similar to those found at Chitry and Fyé.

⁸¹ The slender columns, *en-délit* shafts, at Gurgy and Beines differ by very little. At Gurgy, they have a diameter approx. 10.4 cm (4-4.25 in.) and a length of approx. 66.5 cm (approx. 27 in.), while at Beines the shafts feature a

this way, completely bound within the adjacent blocks of the continuous molding, the formerette, and the corner brackets, that is, these windows are surrounded by solid ashlar blocks in an otherwise rubble-filled construction.

The configuration of the church of Beines—presenting a variation on the plan, templates, and elevation of Gurgy—points to the design of one master builder who could have carried the templates from one church to the other. (**figs. 27, 28**) The work at Gurgy and Beines follows the



FIGURE 27. Saint-André, Gurgy, chevet, easternmost window (left) and Notre-Dame, Beines, chevet, south side, window (right)

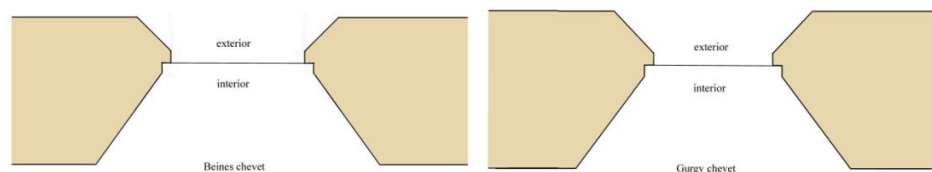


FIGURE 28. Notre-Dame, Beines (left) and Saint-André, Gurgy (right), window plans

diameter approx. 11 cm (4.25-4.5 in.) and a length of approx. 83 cm (32 in.).

parti of Chitry and Fyé confirming aspects—standardized production techniques and support elements (including the continuous molding framing the lower portion of the window sills)—that link the work to the construction methods of the Yonne Valley Builder and leads us to the discussion of the only remaining work in the Yonne, the church of St.-Bris-le-Vineux.

St.-Bris-le-Vineux

Saint-Bris, dedicated to Saint Prix and Saint Cot, is the final church in this rich wine-growing region to be discussed.⁸² Jean Vallery-Radot pointed out that the churches of Saint-Bris and Chitry, contemporaries of the first quarter of the thirteenth century, have capitals in the same style.⁸³ This investigation confirmed Vallery-Radot's assertion of similar capitals while further identifying the lower portions of the western bays at Saint-Bris as contemporary with portions of the late twelfth-century nave at Chitry.

Robert Branner believed that the construction at Saint-Bris was begun in 1210, while Lucien Prieur simply noted the “*belle unité de style de XIII^e siècle*” (beautiful unity of the thirteenth century style).⁸⁴ In contrast the profiles of the bases, the consistency in the ribbed capitals, and the use of broken arches in the arcade level of the westernmost bays indicate an earlier date. Onsite physical evidence discussed below will aid in establishing that the church at Saint-Bris was probably begun at the west end between 1190 and 1200. Given these dates, the construction would overlap with the final erection of other works in the central Yonne group.⁸⁵

With the installation of the fifteenth century chapels, much of the exterior aisle walls were destroyed between the piers; in spite of this, the twelfth-century *parti* still exists in the westernmost bays (**fig. 29**, B1-D1 and B4-D4).⁸⁶ Containing nine bays, Saint-Bris is presently a fairly large edifice. In order to attach a grand chevet in the sixteenth century, the original east end was demolished leaving the easternmost nave bays in the middle of the church. The nave seems to have initially had at least six bays in addition to, perhaps, a polygonal apse that may

⁸² Saint-Bris, in the canton of Auxerre, was recorded as *Sanctus Priscus* in the fifth century, *Sanctus Briccius*, *Briccius* from 1152-1167, *Sanctus Britius* in 1198, *Sanctus Bricius* in 1229, *Saint-Briz* in 1339, *Saint-Bris* in 1530, *Saint-Pris* in 1637, and *Bris-le-Vineux* in 1793. Quantin, *Dictionnaire topographique*, 112. The Church of Saint-Bris has been classified by the Monuments Historiques since March 30, 1904.

⁸³ Jean Vallery-Radot, “Aspects et tendances de l’architecture religieuse dans les pays de l’Yonne jusqu’au début du XVII^e siècle.” *Congrès archéologique, Auxerre* (1958), 192.

⁸⁴ Robert Branner, *Burgundian Gothic Architecture* (London: A. Zwemmer Ltd, 1960), 16; and Lucien Prieur, “Eglise de Saint-Bris-le-Vineux,” *Congrès archéologique, Auxerre* (1958), 170.

⁸⁵ This would be just five years or so later than construction at Fyé.

⁸⁶ This plan of Saint-Bris is designed after that of the architect Louziers, who was working on Saint-Bris in the early twentieth century. Like the other churches in the central group, the method of twelfth-century construction is frame and fill (with squared-rubble fill) -- the exception at Saint-Bris is the west facade which is coursed in ashlar; and crossed buttresses flanking the west end originally extended all the way up to the roof. However, two types of Burgundian corbels were used in the cornice: on the lower level, the quarter-round corbels remain only at the tower (similar to Chitry, Fyé, Gurgy, and Beines); on the upper level, the corbel is a concave type found at Saint-Martin at Chablis, Saint Cosme at Chablis, and Pontigny.

well have been designed like those at Beines and Gurgy (see the speculative plan, **fig. 29**, right). How does Saint-Bris compare to the other churches in the central Yonne group? First, the windowsills in the twelfth-century aisles are framed by a continuous molding in the same manner as smaller churches at Beines, Gurgy, Fyé, or Chitry. (**fig. 30**) These windows, existent in the westernmost bays (AB1-4), are consistent with the layout of the group, and the overall design of the molding profile is geometrically based. (**fig. 31**, window layout, left, and molding, right) Second, capitals with large leaves that spiral into crockets are in abundance at Saint-Bris and

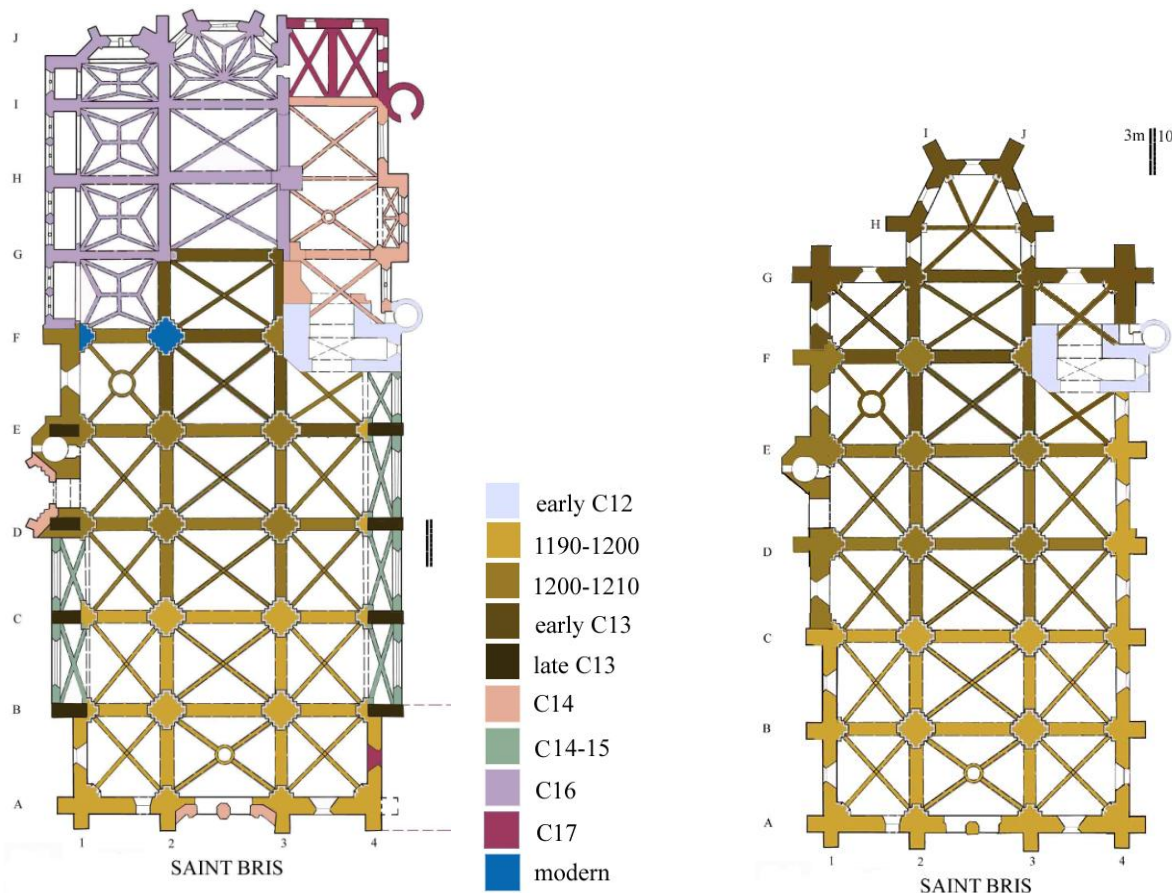


FIGURE 29. Saint-Prix and Saint-Cot, Saint-Bris, France, plan (after Louzier) (left) and speculative plan (right) (NOTE: Crossed buttresses at A1)

resemble those in the four other Yonne churches.⁸⁷ (**fig. 32**) Viollet-le-Duc described one type of crocket—appearing somewhat like an animal with large eyes on each side of its head—as the flower of a snapdragon.⁸⁸ The slight divergence in carving, especially at Saint-Bris, suggests that these capitals may have been carved by different sculptors. Finally, the piers at Saint-Bris have

⁸⁷ Leaf ribs can be found in the two styles, raised or rippled, as at Chitry and Fyé. John James has suggested a date for the Saint-Bris capital of 1180 or later (in comparison to my more conservative date around 1190).

⁸⁸ Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire Raisoné de l'architecture française du XI^e au XVI^e siècle*, 10 vols. (1854 - 1861), Reprint, Bibliothèque de l'Image, (Poitiers: Aubin Imprimeur, 1997), vol. 5, 505, Fig. 22B.



FIGURE 30. Saint-Prix and Saint-Cot, Saint-Brice, west end: south aisle (left) and north aisle (right)

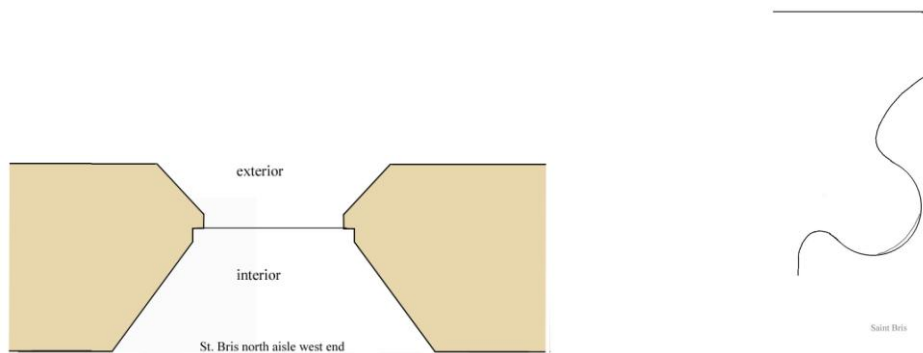


FIGURE 31. Saint-Prix and Saint-Cot, Saint-Brice, window plan (AB1) (left) and molding profile (right)

continuous bases attached to a lower block (socle) that has an elevation standard in the other churches in the Yonne microregional group (compare **fig. 33**). The square-edged respond of the piers, however, is no longer set at a 90°, but is angled at close to 110°. The highly developed setup of the pier at Saint-Brice points to a slightly later date for the first construction.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ These piers have developed from Romanesque cruciform piers but they have evolved with a Gothic diagonality. The angled responds accentuate this transformation.



FIGURE 32. Saint-Prix and Saint-Cot, Saint-Bris, nave, capital (left) and detail of the crocket (right)

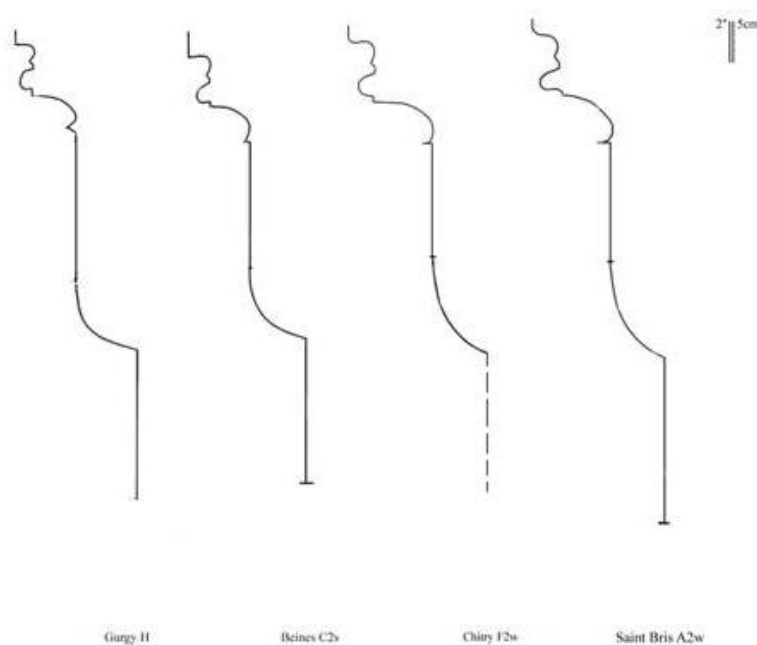


FIGURE 33. Saint-André, Gurgy; Notre-Dame, Beines; Saint-Valérien, Chitry; and Saint-Prix and Saint-Cot, Saint-Bris (no socles remain at the chapel at Fyé), base/socle profiles

The twelfth-century construction at Chitry (nave), Fyé (eastern two bays), Gurgy (chevet and first bay), Beines (chevet and nave), and Saint-Bris (westernmost bays), reflecting a unique layout of the parts set into a whole, points to the work of one individual. The distinct *parti*, indicates that the builder was not only familiar with concurrent trends—found in well-known larger churches in the Paris region—but was also able to put these elements together in a unique fashion (it is important to note that this style is not found outside of the Yonne apart from the one exception to be discussed below, Châalis). Additionally, the correspondence of the capitals, profiles, and pier layouts suggests an Early Gothic date in line with the final construction phase

at the other buildings in the central Yonne group. One feature in particular, the continuous molding encircling the windowsill, is such an unusual characteristic that it remains one of the strongest arguments for identifying these buildings with the Yonne Valley Builder.

The Northern Paris Basin and the Cistercian Abbey of Châalis, Daughter of Pontigny

As noted earlier, in searching to confirm the extent of the work of the Yonne Valley Builder, a systematic investigation was conducted spiraling out from the Yonne Valley. Only one construction was found outside northern Burgundy that can be attached to this builder, the Royal Cistercian abbey of Châalis, founded by the northern Burgundian monks of Pontigny and situated about twenty miles north of Paris in the department of the Oise (**fig. 1**, map, and **fig. 34**, ruins).⁹⁰ Although located in the north, Châalis has an important relation to Burgundian architecture. As Caroline Bruzelius previously observed, the church of Châalis is evidence that the Cistercians brought northern Burgundian design to the northern Paris basin.⁹¹

With regard to the layout of the east end of the churches affiliated with the Cistercian church of Clairvaux, early scholars—notably Karl-Heinz Esser, Henri-Paul Eydoux, and Anselme Dimier—have noted the existence of a standardized plan.⁹² Similar to the consistency noted in the design of the east end at daughters of Clairvaux, Bruzelius pointed out that the “uniformity within the filiation was strong” also under Pontigny. She emphasized that Châalis and a number of other daughters had a hemicycle, surrounded by multiple individual chapels,

⁹⁰ Originally known as *Kaeliz* or *Calisium*, the name was changed in 1136 to *Caroli locus* by the founder of the abbey, Louis VI (le Gros), in memory of Charles (le Bon). Later the abbey was referred to as Châalis, Chaâlis, or Châlis (see Lefèvre-Pontalis, “Châalis,” *Bulletin monumental*, 66 (1902), 450; and François Blary, *Le Domaine de Chaalis, XII^e-XIV^e siècles. Approches archéologiques des établissements agricoles et industriels d’une abbaye cistercienne* (Paris: Editions du C.T.H.S., 1989). The abbey was classified with the Monuments Historique in 1965. Châalis, like the churches of the central group in northern Burgundy, is also known for wine production. There is evidence that Châalis had an urban house used for sale of wine in Paris and Beauvais (by the 1240s) and that boats were used for this purpose along “the Seine, Marne and Oise.” Williams, *Cistercians in the Early Middle Ages*, 341, 393. See also Alain Michaud, “Les caves de la maison de Chaalis,” *Sauvegarde et mise en valeur du Paris Historique*, numero special (1971), 92-97; M. Hector Quignon, “L’Hotel de Chaalis à Beauvais. Étude des rapports de l’abbaye cistercienne de Chaalis du diocese de Senlis avec Beauvais et le Beauvaisis, XII^e-XIII^e siècle,” *Bulletin Historique et philologique du Committee des travaux Historiques et scinetifiques* (1914), 389-404; and François Blary, “Chaalis et ses domaines. I. Les données de l’inventaire,” in *L’Espace Cistercien*, (ed.) Léon Pressouyre (Paris: Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 1994), 431-435.

⁹¹ Caroline Bruzelius, “The Transept of the Abbey Church of Châalis and the Filiation of Pontigny,” *Mélanges à la mémoire du père Anselme Dimier*, vol. 6 (Arbois: Pupillin, 1982), 447-455. Certainly there is some connection between the elements at Châalis and those at sites in the Ile-de-France (whether Cistercian or not) but a discussion of this aspect would be too extensive for this paper.

⁹² Cîteaux, the mother-house, and her four daughters governed the Cistercian Order. Pontigny was the second daughter and Clairvaux the third. The standardized plan—related by some scholars to the influence of St. Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux—was often called the Bernardine plan. Karl-Heinz Esser “Les fouilles de l’église romane de l’abbaye cistercienne d’Himmerod,” *Mémorial d’un voyage d’études de la Société nationale des antiquaires de France en Rhénanie*, (Paris: Palais du Louvre, 1953), 171-174.; Henri-Paul Eydoux, “Les fouilles de l’abbatiale de Himmerod et la notion d’un ‘plan bernardin,’” *Bulletin monumental* (1953), 29-36; and Père M.-Anselme Dimier, “Eglises cisterciennes sur plan bernardin et sur plan bénédictin,” *Mélanges offerts à René Crozet* (Arbois: Pupillin, 1966), 697-704.

following in the line of the mother-church at Pontigny.⁹³ As early as 1928, Georges Fontaine had recognized the similarity of the sexpartite vaults in the polygonal transept chapels of Châalis to



FIGURE 34. Notre-Dame, Châalis, France, view toward the ruins of the abbey (from the gate toward east) (left) and north transept (right)

the vaults in the radiating chapels at Pontigny.⁹⁷

Today, the church at Châalis is in ruins; the majority of the structure was demolished between 1794 and 1803 and only three chapels of the north transept are still vaulted.⁹⁸ The

⁹³ Bruzelius, "The Transept of the Abbey Church of Châalis," 450.

⁹⁷ Fontaine, *Pontigny, abbaye cistercienne* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1928), 34.

⁹⁸ In 1785, the monastery was closed and the monks were sent to other abbeys. Gilberte Paulet Renault, *La Mer de Sable: Chaalis. Son abbaye cistercienne. Les cardinaux d'este. Les stalles de baron. Le maître autel de Senlis. Les Collections Jacquemart André* (Paris: E. Lanord, 1962), 30. "En 1786, Louis XVI chargea les abbés de Pontigny et Clairvaux de procéder à la liquidation des terres de l'abbaye dont les dettes se montaient à 1,400, 000 livres" (In 1786, Louis XVI put the abbots of Pontigny and Clairvaux in charge of proceeding with the liquidation of the grounds of the abbey whose debts had mounted to 1,400,000 pounds). Eugène Lefèvre-Pontalis, "Chaalis," *Bulletin monumental* 66 (1902): 450-451.

integration of the monastic buildings, elevated along the north transept, probably kept this portion of the church from collapsing (**fig. 35**, north of 13-15).⁹⁹ These remains (enough to give us sufficient information on the construction patterns) include a portion of the upper hemicycle

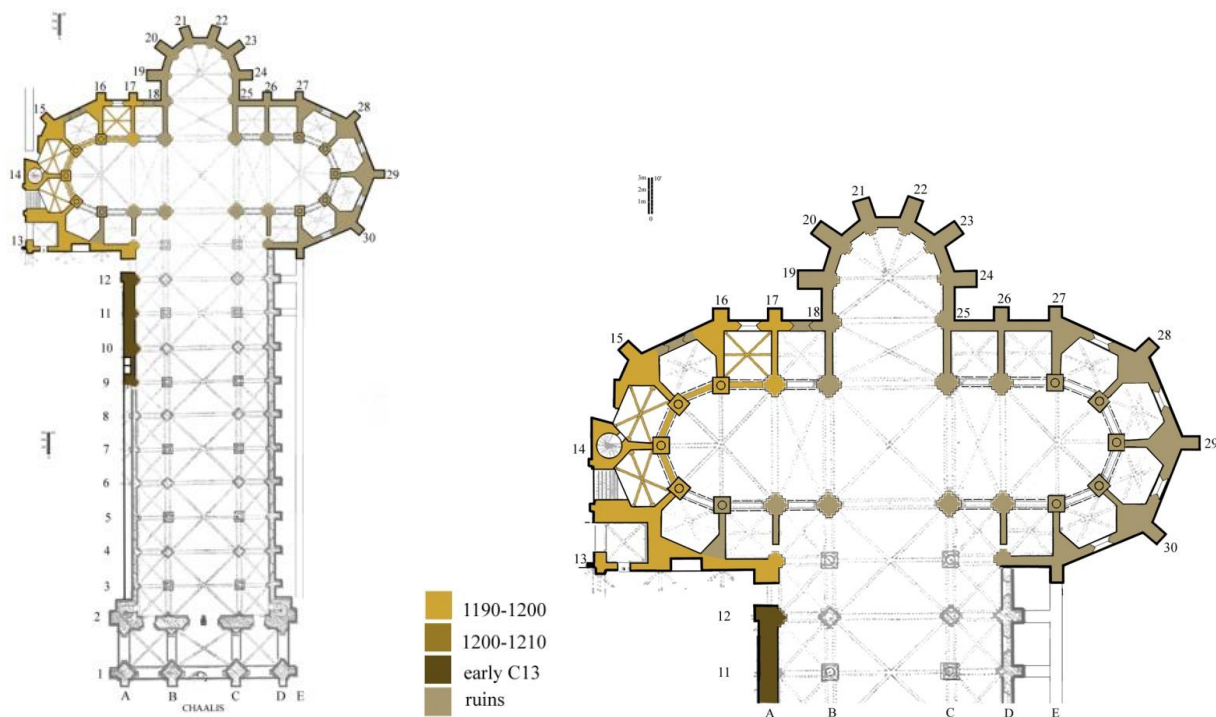


FIGURE 35. Notre-Dame, Châalis, church plans, overall (left) and east end (right) (after Lefèvre-Pontalis)

wall which is coursed in long regular-shaped blocks (similar to the upper chevet walls at the motherhouse, Pontigny). Most importantly, the existing windows, walls, and coursing confirm a close date for the clerestory level of the transept hemicycle at Châalis (1190-1200) and the chevet hemicycle clerestory at Pontigny (1190-1200).¹⁰⁰

In her assessment, Bruzelius pointed out that the projecting blocks (culots) supporting the rib vaults in the square chapels and the colonnettes in the polygonal chapels repeat—with slightly updated deviations—the configuration of the rib supports in the chapels surrounding

⁹⁹ This plan of Châalis, based on that of Lefèvre-Pontalis, “Châalis,” 449-487, was adjusted to fit measurements taken on-site. This plan of Pontigny’s chevet follows the 1995 plan by Bernard Collette, Architect of the Monuments Historiques (Collette’s plan was drafted after the 1950 plan by Jean Trouvelot, Architect of the Monuments Historiques), but was adjusted after taking precise measurements on site.

¹⁰⁰ The portions dated to 1190-1200 are in yellow ochre on the plans of Pontigny’s chevet and Châalis’ transept. (**fig. 36**) According to leading scholars, the new chevet of the Cistercian abbey church of Notre-Dame and Saint-Edme at Pontigny was begun in the 1180s and completed between 1205 and 1212. These dates are based on speculation rather than on concrete physical evidence. An onsite review of the building, in clarifying the campaigns, indicates slightly earlier dates of construction between 1170 and 1190-1200. See Canejo, “Transforming Early Gothic Form,” Chapter 1, Notre Dame and Saint Edme at Pontigny.

Pontigny's ambulatory.¹⁰¹ (**fig. 36**) Measurements recently taken for this research confirm another relation of the two churches; that is, the rib used in the lower level transept chapels and nave aisles at Châalis (a pointed torus flanked by two cavettos), used in the Yonne throughout the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, resembles the geometric schema of the rib in the sacristy at Pontigny (compare **fig. 37**, left and right). In fact, the main rib at Châalis employed in the transept hemicycle vault, a pointed torus flanked by two rounded tori, seems to be a variation of the one used at Pontigny and neighboring churches in the Yonne.¹⁰² (**fig. 38**)

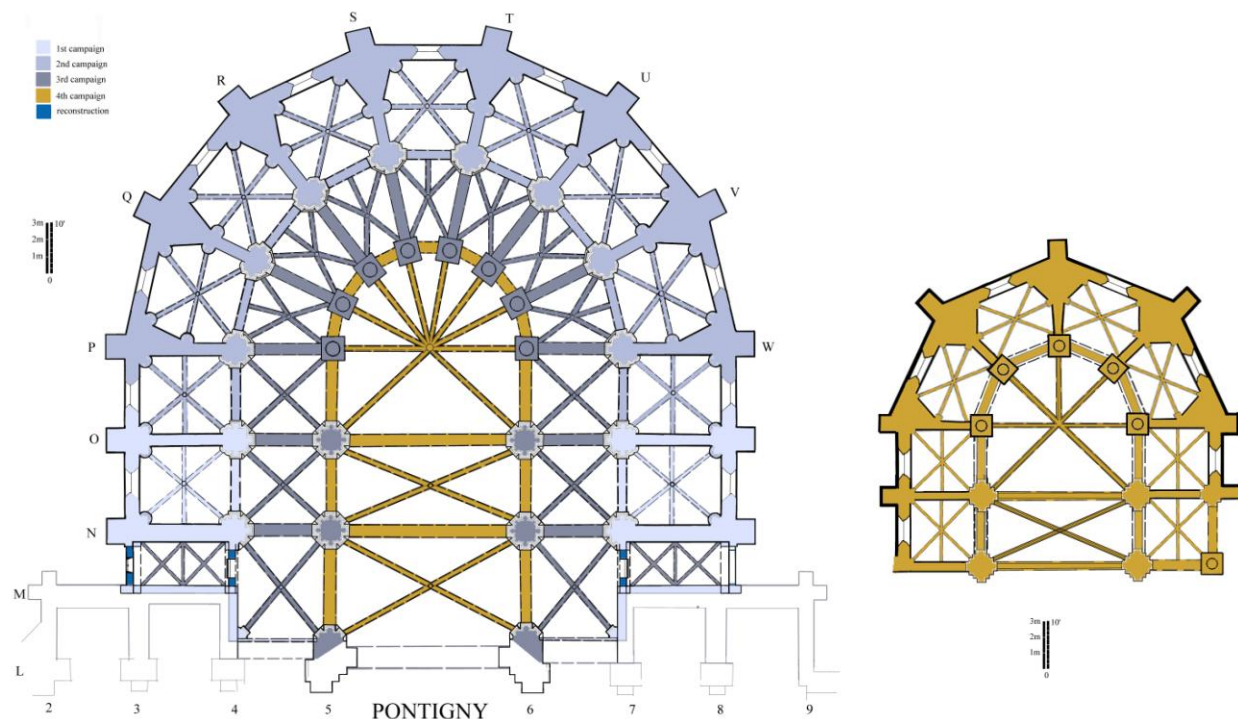


FIGURE 36. Notre-Dame, Pontigny, chevet, plan, (left) and Notre-Dame, Châalis, south transept, plan (in original state) (right)

Given the analogous layout, Bruzelius concluded that the elevation of the north transept arm at Châalis seems to have been modeled after Pontigny's chevet hemicycle.¹⁰³ (**fig. 39**) Like Pontigny, the two-story elevation is divided by a large expanse of wall positioned above the semi-circular arcade and below the long thin lancets.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, the transept arcade at Châalis repeats the setup of Pontigny with large leaf capitals with ribs, and stilted arches while

¹⁰¹ Bruzelius, "The Transept of the Abbey Church of Châalis," 452.

¹⁰² A similar rib was used in the beginning of the thirteenth century at Sainte Chapelle, Paris, but with a curved point on the central pointed torus (a style that seems to be later than the rib at Châalis. James, *Template-Makers*, 71.

¹⁰³ Bruzelius, "The Transept of the Abbey Church of Châalis," 451.

¹⁰⁴ The wall, constructed of two ashlar skins filled with rubble, is consistent with Pontigny's chevet (note that scholars have often considered the large expanse of wall as an element of "Cistercian style").

the hemicycle columns take on the appearance of monolith columns at Pontigny.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, an unusual characteristic of both Châalis and Pontigny is the tiny socle that sits on abaci of the single engaged columns placed at the joints of the polygonal panels.¹⁰⁶

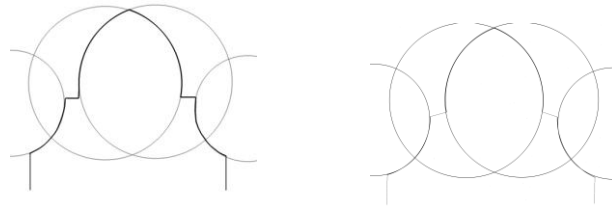


FIGURE 37. Notre-Dame, Châalis, transept chapel (left); and Notre-Dame, Pontigny, sacristy (right), rib profiles with geometric schemas

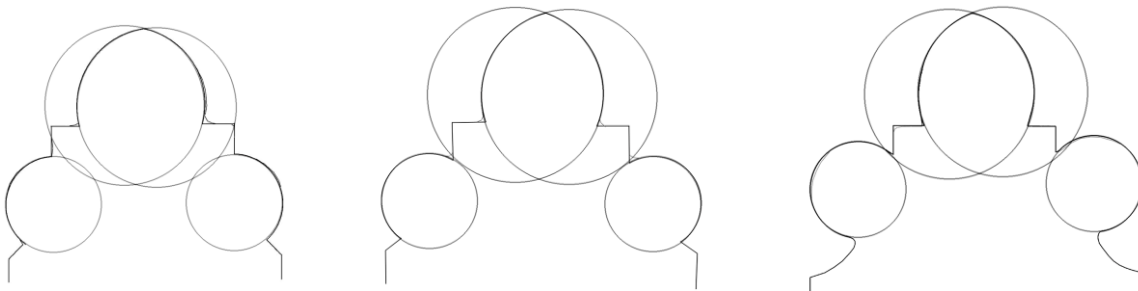


FIGURE 38. Notre-Dame, Pontigny, chevet (left); Saint-Martin, Chablis, nave (center); and Notre-Dame, Châalis, transept (right), rib profiles with geometric schemas

However, even though the transept clerestory level at Châalis looks similar to the *parti* of Pontigny's chevet clerestory, there is a distinct difference: the thin columns in brackets alongside the clerestory windows are actually coursed into the walls at Pontigny, whereas at Châalis, the slender columns flanking the lancets are *en-délit* shafts. Moreover, in spite of the similarity of the ensemble of elements to the Cistercian mother-church, Pontigny, the continuous molding that frames the window at Châalis is an unusual characteristic that, rather than having a relation to regional northern or Parisian works, appears to have been brought directly by the Yonne Valley Builder from his non-Cistercian designs in northern Burgundy to the Oise (compare **fig. 7**, molding in red, 24, 39, left, and 40).¹⁰⁷ Notably, this molding encircling the window has a profile that is in line with those of other non-Cistercian churches discussed in the central Yonne group.¹⁰⁸ (**figs. 41, 42**) In seeking to confirm a date, a comparison of profiles dating between 1180 and 1205 seems to set these moldings at Châalis in this period. For example, the profile

¹⁰⁵ The columns look like monolith hemicycle columns from a distance even though they are not really made from one single stone but are coursed to the chapel walls.

¹⁰⁶ The difference at Pontigny is that a small capital sits under a tiny socle.

¹⁰⁷ Bruzelius, "The Transept of Châalis," 453, compared the design to Nouvion-Vingré in the Aisne in which the molding, continuous from the abaci of the capitals, extends upward and over the arch of the window (rather than under the windowsill as support).

¹⁰⁸ Although flying buttresses are found on the chevet at Pontigny, Châalis (like the two-story construction at the other churches built by the Yonne Valley Builder) does not seem to have had flyers.

taken from the molding at the church of Dannemoine in the Yonne Valley with Gothic diagonality has been dated slightly later to after the turn of the thirteenth century.¹⁰⁹ (fig. 42)



FIGURE 39. Notre-Dame, Châalis, north transept hemicycle (left) and Notre-Dame, Pontigny, hemicycle (right)

Other elements support connections to the Yonne Valley group of churches; for instance, the *en-délit* columns encased in brackets supporting the wall rib at Châalis follow construction patterns at Beines, rather than Pontigny. Attached or engaged columns as employed at Pontigny are typically used in Cistercian works; whereas, *en-délit* shafts were used in the non-Cistercian structures of the Yonne Valley Builder (compare fig. 40, above and below).¹¹³ In addition, the capitals with ball crockets at the end of each broad leaf are close in style and date to those in the central Yonne group (notice that they are particularly close to capitals at Saint-Bris, (compare fig. 45 and fig. 32).¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ The profile at Châalis could be compared to profiles of the abaci at Notre-Dame, Paris, that were dated to ca. 1190-1220. See Bruzelius, "The Construction of Notre-Dame in Paris," *Art Bulletin* (1989), 563, figure 25, e.

¹¹³ Of importance is the fact that the lower chapel window layout and the simple rebate holding the glass at Châalis are analogous to those at Beines as well as Pontigny. See figs. 43, 44.

¹¹⁴ In regard to capitals, John James has placed Châalis in the 1180s section, vol. 1, noting that "the buds are tightly formed and reminiscent of some of the Soissonaise churches of the 1180s and early 90s, such as Longpont and

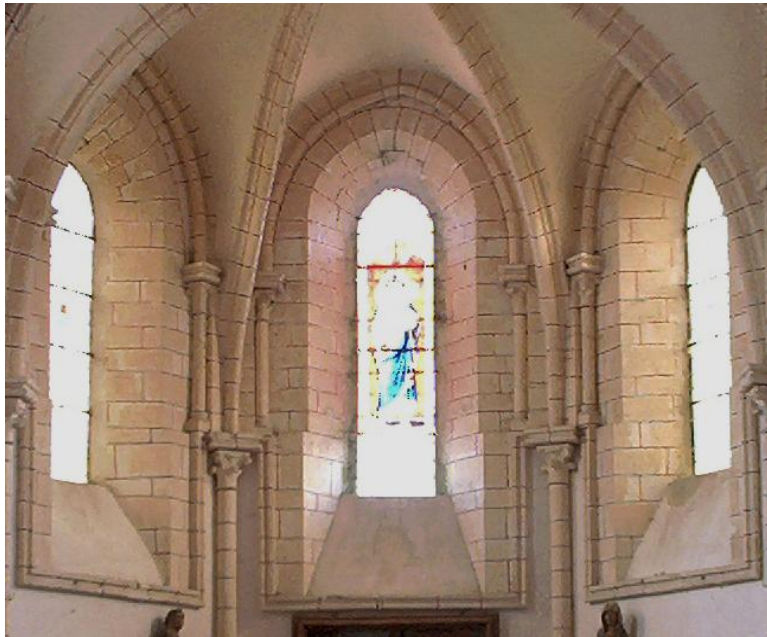


FIGURE 40. Notre-Dame, Châalis, transept (above) and Notre-Dame, Beines, chevet (below), interior, continuous molding

Braine," *The Ark of God, Part A* (2002), 356. If this is the case, Châalis would have been contemporary with the other churches in the central group and, consequently, the builder could have been sent to work on Châalis while constructing portions of the Yonne churches.

In light of this new evidence, it can be seen that the layout and elevation of the transept hemicycle at the Cistercian abbey church of Châalis is consistent with chevet types found in non-Cistercian buildings in northern Burgundy designed by the Yonne Valley Builder. The overall correspondence of the profiles and plans in the Yonne structures cannot be dismissed as merely a coincidence or regional style (the *parti* is not found in earlier works as would be expected if that were the case). Given that the style seems to be limited to a small number of buildings found only in two particular regions, it is concluded that the five Yonne churches and Châalis appear to be the distinctive work of the Yonne Valley Builder.¹¹⁵ In acknowledging that portions of the plan and elevation of Châalis can be linked to the east end of Pontigny, evidence suggests that the transmission of these elements seems to be through the Yonne Valley Builder.¹¹⁶



FIGURE 41. Notre-Dame, Châalis, transept, clerestory (showing depth of the continuous molding that framed the window sill)

¹¹⁵ It will be argued that even though this builder may have worked at two Cistercian sites (Pontigny and Châalis), there is no indication that he was a Cistercian.

¹¹⁶ While one might infer that this builder had been on the crew at Pontigny, it is certainly possible that the Yonne Valley Builder was an apprentice to the builder who designed Pontigny—learning the trade and adapting the style to make it his own.

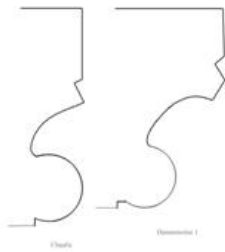


FIGURE 42 –Notre-Dame, Châalis (left) and Dannemoine (right), molding profiles

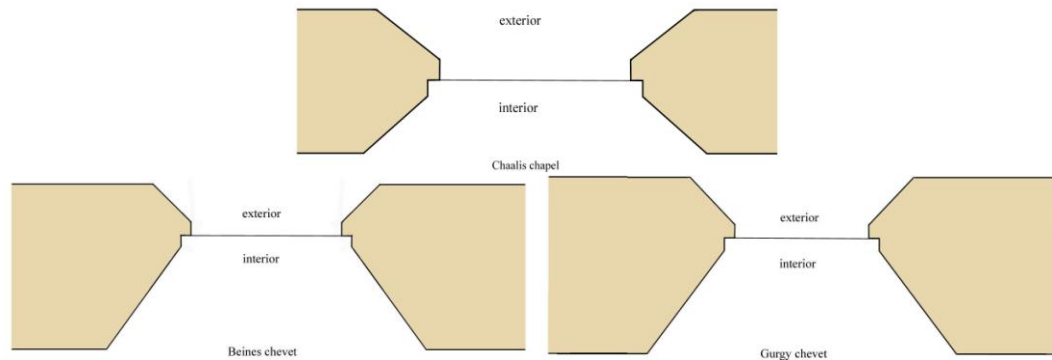


FIGURE 43. Notre-Dame, Châalis (AB25) (above); Notre-Dame, Beines (lower left); and Saint-André, Gurgy (lower right), window plans

The Central Yonne Group, the Yonne Valley Builder, Châalis, and Possible Connections

In searching for evidence that can shed light on this investigation into the five Yonne structures in northern Burgundy and the connection to Châalis in the Oise, it is necessary to address the possible connections to the builder as well as the significance of the benefactor or patron. In discussing the connection of politics and construction, Marcel Aubert has stated that, during “une grande partie du Moyen Age, l’architecte est attaché à un chapitre, un évêque, une communauté, une ville, un roi, ou un seigneur” (a large part of the Middle Ages, the architect is attached to a chapter, a bishop, a community, a town, a king, or a lord).¹²¹ Following the idea of Aubert, can these Early Gothic constructions be related to someone in power? What do the facts reveal in northern Burgundy and the Oise?

St.-Bris, Chitry, Gurgy, and Beines were, during the Middle Ages, in the diocese of Auxerre while Fyé was in the Tonnerrois (at the border of Auxerrois).¹²² The Auxerrois,

¹²¹ Aubert, “La construction au moyen age,” *Bulletin monumental* 2 (1961), 83.

¹²² According to Quantin, *Dictionnaire topographique*, 11, 36, 58, 65, 112, Beines “était avant 1780, du diocèse d’Auxerre et de la province de l’Ile de France, et le siège d’une prévôté qui ressortant à Saint Florentin et relevant en fief du seigneur de Maligny” (was, before 1780, of the diocese of Auxerre and the province of the Ile de France, and the head office of a provostship emerging in Saint Florentin under the stronghold of the lord of Maligny) and “Gurgy was a ‘seigneurie dépendant de l’abbaye Saint-Germain d’Auxerre’ which was, “au IX^e siècle, du pagus d’Auxerre, et, avant 1789, du diocèse, du bailliage et du comté d’Auxerre” (in the ninth century, in the rural district of Auxerre, and, before 1789, in the diocese, in the district under the authority of the bailiff and the count of Auxerre). Chitry was, “au VI^e siècle, du pagus et du diocèse d’Auxerre, et, avant 1789, partie de la province de

Tonnerrois, and Nivernais came under the rule of the counts of Nevers in the mid-eleventh century. Yves Sassier, using sources of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, laid out the complex divisions and struggles for power between the count, the bishop, and the seigneurs. The conflict stabilized only during reign of Pierre de Courtenay, Count of Auxerre (who was also Count of Nevers and Tonnerre from 1184 to 1199). Sassier, pointing to the presence of the Count of Champagne in the Auxerrois between 1190 and 1218, demonstrated the concomitant decline in power of the Count of Auxerre.¹²³ In relation to Auxerre, Constance Bouchard has shown that,

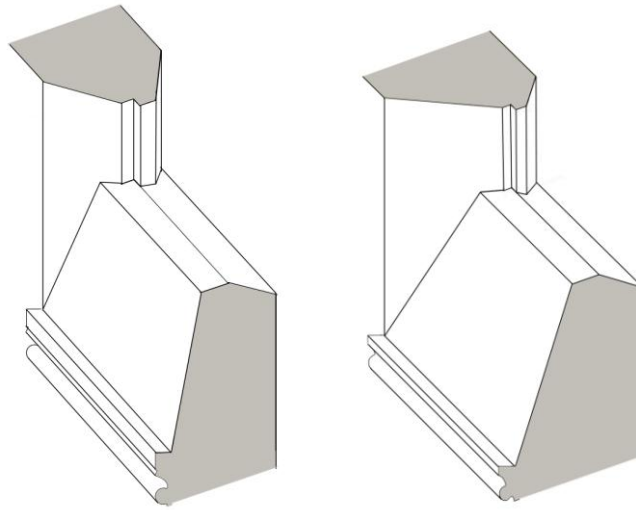


FIGURE 44. Notre-Dame, Châalis, (AB25) (left) and Notre-Dame, Beines (right), general scheme of the windows

between 1092 and 1220, the Bishop of Auxerre was, in fact, the chief authority.¹²⁶ These churches would have been under construction during this period; however, without applicable documents, the connection of the central Yonne group to any of these personages is not possible.

Bourgogne, partie de celle de l'Ile-de-France et du bailliage d'Auxerre" (in the sixth century, of the rural district and diocese of Auxerre, and, before 1789, part of the province of Burgundy, part of the one of the Ile-de-France and the bailliage of Auxerre) and Fyé was "avant 1789, du diocèse de Langres, de la province de l'Ile-de-France et de l'élection de Tonnerre, et siège d'une prévôté particulière" (before 1789, in the diocese of Langres, province of the Ile-de-France and election of Tonnerre, and head office of a particular provostship). Finally, "Saint-Bris, baronnie importante, relevant du comté d'Auxerre" (Saint-Bris, barony important, under the count of Auxerre) was, "au V^e, du pagus d'Auxerre et, avant 1789, du diocèse du même nom et de la province de Bourgogne, élection d'Auxerre; siège d'un bailliage particulier qui ressortait à celui d'Auxerre et chef-lieu d'un archiprêtré" (in the fifth [century], in the rural district of Auxerre and, before 1789, in the the diocese of the same name and the province of Burgundy, election of Auxerre; head office of a particular bailiwick emerging at Auxerre and county town of an archpriest).

¹²³ Yves Sassier, *Recherches sur le pouvoir comtal en Auxerrois du X^e au début du XIII^e siècle* (Auxerre: SFAMHY, 1980), 209.

¹²⁶ Constance Bouchard, *Spirituality and Administration: The Role of the Bishop in Twelfth-Century Auxerre* (Cambridge: Medieval Academy of America, 1979), 2.



FIGURE 45. Notre-Dame, Châalis, capitals: transept, arcade (left), and clerestory (right)

Taking into account other regional connections, Beines was located in the fief of the Seigneurs de Maligny (until the Revolution) and Gurgy was placed under the Seigneurs de Seignelay. Since Beines and Gurgy were under the authority of two different lords, it is unlikely that the builder was working under Seigniorial influence.

Considering other churches in the central group, the village of St.-Bris was in the possession of the Seigneurs de Mello (Dreux and Guillaume) during the twelfth century; the same noble house of the de Mello family that, curiously enough, originated in the Oise (in Picardie).¹²⁷ Of special interest is Renaud de Mello (brother of Guillaume, abbot of Vézelay, and stepbrother of Dreux) who founded the Prieuré de Mello in the Oise which later became the Cistercian abbey of Châalis.¹²⁸ While it is possible that the de Mellos may have had something to

¹²⁷ The de Mello family appeared in the Beauvais in the eleventh century. Henri de Faget de Castejau, "La Maison de Mello en Bourgogne," *Annales de Bourgogne* [1980]: 5) and became Seigneurs of Saint-Bris by the twelfth century (Quantin, "Recherches Historiques sur Saint-Bris et ses seigneurs," *Annuaire statistique du département de l'Yonne; Recueil de documents authentiques destinés à former la statistique départementale* (1838), 281-295. There is evidence that, in 1388, Dreux de Mello, their descendant, inherited half of the Seignior of Chitry from his mother (Faget de Casteljau, "La Maison de Mello en Bourgogne," 30.

¹²⁸ Founded originally as a Benedictine priory by Renaud de Mello, the Prieuré de Mello was a dependency of the abbey of Vézelay. As noted, King Louis le Gros (or Louis VI) converted the priory into a Cistercian monastery in the name of Charles le Bon, Count of Flanders, who died at Bruges in 1127. The abbey of Vézelay allowed the move under the house of Pontigny. The Cistercian foundation of Châalis dates officially to January 10, 1136. In 1138, the foundation was reconfirmed by Louis VII (Louis the Younger), the son and successor of Louis VI who became a patron of the abbey of Châalis (r. 1137-1180) (*Cartulaire Châalis de 1399* (Cartulaire de l'abbaye Notre-Dame de Chaalis, Chartularium monasterii Caroli Loci, Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS latin 17113, fol.11).

Neither Éric Bournazel, *Le gouvernement Capétien au XII^e siècle 1108-1180. Structures sociales et mutations institutionnelles* (Limoges: Presses Université de France, 1975) nor Yves Sassier, *Recherches sur le pouvoir comtal en Auxerrois du X^e au début du XIII^e siècle* (Auxerre: SFAMHY, 1980) mention Renaud, but Henri de Faget de Casteljau, "La Maison de Mello en Bourgogne: Une révision à partir des Archives des Chalon," *Annales de Bourgogne* (January-March 1980), 5-42, places Renaud as brother of Guillaume, Abbot of Vézelay, and step-brother of Dreux, Seigneur at Saint-Bris.

do with the construction of the church at Saint-Bris, there is no evidence that they were in a position to erect the church at Châalis in the late twelfth century.

On the other hand, Lefèvre-Pontalis placed the beginning of the east-end of Châalis before 1202 basing this date on a document from the Bibliothèque de Senlis that mentions a donation by Pierre Choisel that would continue to be made until the church was completed (signifying the date when the church would have been in construction).¹²⁹ While the Cistercian abbot and monks at Châalis may have been the primary benefactors behind the construction of the new church, contributions like this one came from patrons outside the monastery. The existence of this recorded gift as well as the patronage of Louis VII suggests the availability of alternative means of funding (possibly including unrecorded donations). Even so, we are no closer to identifying the connection to the builder.¹³⁰

Of interest is the state of affairs at the commencement of the rule of King Philippe Auguste in 1179 and the changes that take place over the years.¹³¹ Philippe was from the Champagne family; his mother was Adèle of Champagne (the wife of King Louis VII inhumed at Pontigny). The dates of his rule encompass the works of architecture of the late twelfth century in the central Yonne group. While Philippe had wanted to expand into northern Burgundy, there is no evidence that he did this through the construction of these churches.¹³² With a number of connections of powerful figures to Châalis, one does not stand out as definite.

In his investigation of Early Gothic churches, John James was unable to determine a

¹²⁹ The document states: “Gaufridus dei gratia Silvanectensis episcopus omnibus fidelibus in perpetuum notum facimus presentibus et futuris quod Petrus Choisiaus pro remedio anime sue promiserat se daturum singulis annis quinque solidos parisiensium ad opus cuiusdam nove ecclesie que apud Karolilocum fabricabatur quousque eadem ecclesia perficeretur” (Geoffroy, by the grace of God, bishop of Senlis, to all faithful forever, we make known, present and to come, that Peter Choisel for remedy of his soul promised to give five Parisian *solidos* [gold coins] once each year to benefit a certain new church to be built at Karolilocum [*Caroli locus*] until which time the church would be completed). Lefèvre-Pontalis believed that the completion of the chevet followed the consecration on Sunday, October 20, 1219, by Guérin, Bishop of Senlis (“Anno Domini MCCXIX die vigesima mensis octobris” [in the year of our Lord, 1219, the twentieth day, month of October], MSS d’Afforty, t. XV, 363). (Note that Geoffroy II [or Gaufridus] who was Bishop of Senlis between 1185 and 1213 was followed by Guérin [or Garinus]). In point of fact, the documents only confirm that the church was in production during this period (the consecration does not necessarily signify a date of completion for the entire building).

¹³⁰ On patrons and donations from outside the abbey as well as donations made on entrance of new followers to the monastery, see Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Holy Entrepreneurs: Cistercians, Knights, and Economic Exchange in Twelfth-Century Burgundy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991) and Constance Hoffman Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution: The Invention of a Religious Order in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000) as well as L. Fautrat, “Notes sur Chaâlis,” *Comptes rendus et memoires* (1919-1920), 1-24.

¹³¹ John Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus: Foundations of French Royal Power in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 35.

¹³² A document dated between 1221 and 1222 shows the later interests of the king; that is, “Philippe Auguste takes under his guard and special protection the abbeys of Pontigny and Clairvaux,” (an eighteenth-century copy is found in the Archives départementales de l’Yonne, Auxerre, document ADY H 1401, 4; and published as a supporting document in André Courtet, *Etude historique sur l’abbaye de Notre-Dame et Saint-Edme de Pontigny, au diocèse d’Auxerre, de la fondation [1114] au XVI^e siècle, suivie d’un essai sur la formation du temporel*, Positions des thèses de l’Ecole des chartes, 1920 [Auxerre, Archives départementales de l’Yonne, ADY microfilm 4MI 108]).

correlation between politics and construction in the Paris region.¹³³ The conclusion is very similar in regard to the work of the Yonne Valley Builder; while the political relations overlap at a number of the churches, no single political figure had definitive control in all communities. In regard to cathedrals, Stephen Murray wrote that, “It is dangerous to see the great projects as simply the expression of the established power of the clergy, the growing power of the king or the civic awareness or wealth of the bourgeois, because all these groups and agencies were locked inextricably together both in cooperation and in strife.”¹³⁴ Even though it is possible that the builder was attached to one or more related persons, it is impossible to differentiate among them without pertinent documents with direct references to the construction. Thus, in spite of Aubert’s belief that an architect/builder is usually attached to a patron or person in power, no evidence was found indicating that this is the case for the Yonne Valley Builder.

In regard to possible connection of the builder or the buildings to certain patrons or organizations, we must discuss the organization of the Cistercian Order in which a rather practical system was developed that allowed for better governing of the houses of the Order: all daughter abbeys were overseen by the mother-house. In the Cistercian Order, the abbot of the mother-church initially sent thirteen monks to found a daughter-house. In this case, the Abbot Guichard of Pontigny sent twelve monks and an abbot, André de Baudimont, to Châalis.¹³⁵ Following the rules of the Order, abbots of each Cistercian abbey were required to attend the yearly General Chapter meeting.¹³⁶ Specifically, under the “Charter of Visitation,” the abbot of the mother-house was obliged to visit every daughter-house annually for a regular inspection of the monastery.¹³⁷ As a result of these regulations, the two Cistercian abbeys would have been closely connected. Even though we have no documents to link the construction at Châalis to Pontigny, it is possible (even likely) that the connection of the northern Burgundian builder to the Oise may have been through its Cistercian mother-house, Pontigny.¹³⁸

While the builder may be linked to a Cistercian abbey, is he necessarily a Cistercian? In

¹³³ John James, “An Investigation into the Uneven Distribution of Early Gothic Churches in the Paris Basin, 1140-1240,” *Art Bulletin* 66 (1984), 15-46, 18.

¹³⁴ Stephen Murray, *Notre-Dame, Cathedral of Amiens: The Power of Change in Gothic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 13.

¹³⁵ Blary, *Le Domaine de Chaalis*, 8. The number of monks would be in reference to Christ and the apostles.

¹³⁶ The General Chapter is a yearly monastic general assembly of Cistercian abbots.

¹³⁷ Bruzelius has suggested that the homogeneity apparent in the architectural structures affiliated with Pontigny may be related to these connections between the mother-house and her daughters. Bruzelius, “Cistercian High Gothic: The Abbey Church of Longpont and the Architecture of the Cistercians in the Early Thirteenth Century,” *Analecta Cisterciensia* 35 (1979), 142-143 and email correspondence, June 19, 2010. Under the *Charter of Charity* amended in the late twelfth century, a “co-abbot” might take the place of an abbot (or, in the early thirteen century, a monk from the mother-house could step in every other year). Williams, *Cistercians in the Early Middle Ages*, 42-43.

¹³⁸ Indeed, it is likely that the Yonne Valley Builder or his workers were a part of the atelier working at Pontigny. For the relation of the chevet of Pontigny, see my forthcoming article “Illuminating Cistercian Construction through an Investigation of Non-Cistercian Architecture,” in the *Cistercienser-Chronik*, Forum für Geschichte, Kunst, Literatur und Spiritualität des Mönchtums, Austria/Germany, 2011 (Dr. Hermann J. Roth, Editor; published by Verlag Abtei Mehrerau Bregenz).

regard to the possibility that the Yonne Valley Builder may have been a Cistercian monk or lay brother working on non-Cistercian buildings, Williams pointed out “an early statute (1157-75)” which “forbade Cistercians from working on projects for lay-folk.”¹³⁹ That this rule was necessary implies that Cistercians had already, to some extent, worked outside the monastery.¹⁴⁰ However, since evidence of this individual builder and his design is found in a variety of buildings both Cistercian and non-Cistercian, it seems more likely that the Yonne Valley Builder was not a Cistercian since monastic limitations on his time would probably not have allowed for work on so many non-Cistercian constructions. Indeed, given that his atelier worked at five different northern Burgundian sites, it seems likely that the builder was not affiliated with any particular religious community and may have been a secular worker.¹⁴¹ Even though evidence (or even speculation) on either a non-Cistercian religious builder or a secular architect designing a Cistercian work is uncommon this research indicates that it is necessary to consider the possibility.

The Yonne Valley Builder: Northern Burgundy Non-Cistercian Design in the Oise

Through an investigation into both the northern and southern Paris basin, a new relationship between Cistercian and non-Cistercian buildings is recognized. Five non-Cistercian structures in the Yonne Valley—the parish churches at Beines, Gurgy, Saint-Bris, and Chitry as well as the monastic chapel at Fyé—have been presented as the work of the Yonne Valley Builder. By identifying both the designer and his design, northern Burgundian elements specific to this builder became apparent at the Cistercian church of Châalis in northern France. In connecting northern Burgundy to the Oise and comparing profiles to trends in urban churches in the northern Paris basin, the contemporaneity and innovation of rural churches in the southern Paris basin is emphasized.

This hands-on investigation indicates that these smaller buildings (Beines, Gurgy, Chitry, and Fyé) have a great deal in common with the larger structures (Saint-Bris, Châalis, and Pontigny). A wealth of information—including layouts, building techniques, and profiles—has been culled from the chapel or small parish church; in fact, the correspondence of the architectural elements (the profiles, plans, and layouts as well as the *parti*) within the central Yonne group is dependent on the evidence from the four small churches. Nearly identical elements link all six works to one builder responsible for the construction of both small and large structures in the Yonne Valley and the Oise. In the end, the focus on smaller works has allowed us to compare the profiles with contemporary Parisian trend, permitting a reevaluation of the value of concurrent Early Gothic construction south of Paris.

While the existence of a truly “Cistercian style” has frequently been debated, many scholars maintain that Cistercian architecture can be loosely defined through a number of

¹³⁹ Williams, *Cistercians in the Early Middle Ages*, 197. See also Aubert, “La construction au moyen age,” 81.

¹⁴⁰ For evidence, see the sources mentioned in Williams, *Cistercians in the Early Middle Ages*, 197.

¹⁴¹ There may have been six non-Cistercian northern Burgundian buildings, if further evidence someday confirms Sainte-Cosme (the priory of Saint-Cosme at Chablis, a dependency of the Augustinian priory of Saint-Cosme at Tours) as a part of the central group of works by the Yonne Valley Builder.

tendencies.¹⁴² In using elements considered typically Cistercian, the builder at Châalis and Pontigny employed contiguous but independent chapels (specifically for the private mass of the monks) and preserved a large expanse of wall.¹⁴³ Worth noting, however, is that Châalis diverges from Pontigny in assimilating northern Burgundian elements of the Yonne Valley Builder that would not be considered particularly Cistercian: *en-délit* shafts (instead of engaged columns often used in Cistercian architecture), columns encased in brackets, and the characteristic continuous molding of the framed-sill. While we may be tempted to attribute Cistercian construction to Cistercian monks or *conversi* (lay brothers), evidence suggests that a non-Cistercian builder was probably in charge at these six Cistercian and non-Cistercian sites.¹⁴⁴

Concerning workers, Caroline Bruzelius wrote that, “Although in the twelfth century the order seems to have had its own architects and masons, it supplemented them with local workmen who brought with them their own way of doing things, and who subsequently passed on to work for other local building programs.”¹⁴⁵ In the past, it has been proposed that the Cistercians tended to adopt techniques of local construction and to take advantage of neighboring workers, thus the masons and sculptors picked up regional tendencies as part of their working repertoire. For this reason, it was often believed that it was difficult to isolate Cistercian elements. Considering the likelihood that this builder may not be Cistercian, these arguments need to be reconsidered and even modified.

Through evidence collected onsite, this research indicates that characteristics of design may be transmitted through a blend of non-Cistercian and Cistercian design rather than simply through the creation of a “Cistercian style” or the emulation of regional construction. In this way, Cistercian architecture seems to have developed much more eclectically than once supposed. In pushing to reassess the relation of Cistercian and non-Cistercian construction, it is hoped that this research will inspire studies based on specific physical evidence from both Cistercian and non-Cistercian sites. This integration will lead to a better conception of Cistercian developments in construction as well as Cistercian and non-Cistercian interactions and/or exchanges.

Ultimately, it is significant that the *parti* of the Yonne Valley Builder is found in the Oise. Caroline Bruzelius has associated the architecture of the monastery of Châalis with northern Burgundian Cistercian construction at the monastery of Pontigny, the mother-church. In consideration of the complexity of the interrelated buildings, this study attempts to further identify a unique designer in the Yonne Valley and connect him to the work at Châalis. Rather than simply the result of regional construction in the Oise or the dissemination of a Cistercian

¹⁴² Even though the question of whether or not a “Cistercian style” exists is not the focus of this study, it is important to note that the two characteristics that scholars have often noted in Cistercian architecture—the lack of superfluous decoration and a relatively low two-story elevation—are also found in the non-Cistercian construction at the buildings designed by the Yonne Valley Builder.

¹⁴³ The large number of chapels reflects an increasing need for private altar space in Cistercian houses. See B. Lucet, “Les ordinations chez cisterciens,” *Analecta sacri ordinis cisterciensis* 10 (1954), 273 as cited by Bruzelius, “The Transept of Châalis,” 447-455.

¹⁴⁴ Although we may never know why the Yonne Valley Builder was called to the Oise, we may speculate that he may have needed work after completing the five churches in the Yonne, and the Cistercians would have been looking for an architect/builder for Châalis. As an innovative builder with traditional leaning who was familiar with Cistercian needs, the Yonne Valley Builder would have been a desirable option.

¹⁴⁵ Bruzelius, “Cistercian High Gothic: The Abbey Church of Longpont,” 16 (on this subject, see also 8, 59).

style, the overall design of the transept of Châalis can be seen as a complex mixture of Cistercian developments with techniques and patterns developed at non-Cistercian northern Burgundian sites; that is to say, the unique contemporary hybrid design at Châalis was quite likely transported to the north by the Yonne Valley Builder and/or his workers.