Lecture 5: Gothic Cathedrals: structure and first experiments
1. Introduction to the Cathedral Projects

2. The origins of gothic structural elements: ribs, pointed arches, massive scale; longitudinal plan; light/luminous structure

3. Abbot Suger and St.-Denis:
The Great Mosque at Kairouan, Tunisia, begun 670

Pointed and horseshoe arches – on re-used Roman columns
Cairo, the Ibn Tulun Mosque

c. 876-879
Cordoba, the great mosque
Cordoba, the Great Mosque, beLate 8th century
Kairouan, plan of the Great Mosque
But: from the western tradition:

massive scale
light-filled architecture
the longitudinal plan
Old St. Peter’s: the longitudinal, or axial plan
Prospectiva partis ueteris Vaticanæ Basilicae demolitæ cum altariibus & ciborijis &c.

Paulo V. Pont. Max. novi gratia. Tempore

tectorum artificioae coniugatione.
The imperial model in the north: the Cathedral of Speyer, begun 1030 by Emperor Conrad II
William the Conqueror’s burial church
St. -Etienne (St. Stephen’s) at Caen, Normandy,
founded 1063-
A Benedictine monastery
Cefalù, Sicily, begun 1131 by the Norman King Roger II
Adrano, Sicily: The Norman-Muslim bridge
Les possessions normandes vers 1130
The Normans in South Italy and Sicily, mid-10th century onwards

The Normans Conquer England 1066

First Gothic elements appear in Norman England c. 1093 at Durham Cathedral
Although William was crowned king in 1066, it was not for some years that he was to win control of all England. He defeated a rebellion in Exeter in 1068. The next year he put down a general rebellion in the north, while in 1071 William at last defeated the troublesome Hereward the Wake in the Fens. A few months later he invaded Scotland and the king of Scotland submitted to him.
Durham Cathedral, begun
Durham Cathedral

1093
Interior
Clerestory
Passage – double wall

Quadrant arches in the tribunes over the aisles
William the Conqueror’s burial church
St. –Etienne (St. Stephen’s) at Caen, Normandy,
founded 1063-
A Benedictine monastery
William the Conqueror’s burial church
St. -Etienne
1063 +

The monumental facade
The beginning of Gothic Architecture in France
Abbot Suger and the Abbey of St.-Denis
Abbot Suger and St.-Denis

1. the cult of Saint Denis, first bishop of Paris and martyr
2. burial church of kings
3. official historians of the French monarchy
Fulrad’s basilica, consecrated 775 in the presence of Charlemagne
The 8th century church would have looked like an Early Christian basilica, such as Sta. Sabina in Rome, 422.
The annular crypt at St.-Denis from the interior
Rome, Old St. Peter’s ca. 330

Annular crypt added by Gregory the Great, ca. 590
Old St. Peter’s, annular crypt

Tomb of Peter in the confessio
Hilduin’s extension of about 830
Mausoleum of the Probi 4th century

Annular crypt confessio

Hilduin's 9th Century extension

Confessio underneath
Hilduin’s extension, ca. 830, looking into Suger’s crypt beyond
St.-Denis in the 11th and early 12th century
Suger’s preparations for the rebuilding:

1. reclaims abandoned or usurped properties
2. acquires new terrain and/or houses as a source of income
3. enhances the reputation of St.-Denis and its relics
4. brings attention to the abbey, and “monumentalizes” the façade of the old Carolingian church
5. finds materials (wood, stone) on the abbey’s own properties to economize with building expenses
6. attracts both precious materials (gems, gold) from various sources, and artists from many backgrounds
But he incorporated some of the older walls: “harmony and concordance”

And he left the apse and annular crypt below intact

Consecrated in 1144