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Topography and development of the medieval monasteries of the Loire Valley near Tours

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Abstract: From the end of Antiquity to the early twelfth century, a dozen Benedictine monasteries were founded in the ancient diocese of Tours. Most of these establishments are in a ruined state today, but a diachronic and multi-source approach enables a rendering of the monastic topography during the medieval times. The first part of the article focuses on the organisation of the monastic buildings, which are arranged around the courtyard and the cloister galleries. The second part examines in detail the functional aspects of the monastic buildings, using mainly archaeological and iconographical sources. The analysis of similarities and differences between the settlements provides useful elements to recover unknown topographical elements and to highlight modifications achieved during the modern period.

Keywords: Loire valley, Benedictine monasteries, monastic topography, St Martin of Tours, Cormery

The west of France was home to the first monastic communities founded at the end of the fourth century by St Martin in Ligugé, not far from Poitiers and in Marmoutier near Tours. These two settlements are fairly well documented, for they have been subject to several archaeological excavations in the past, especially Marmoutier, which still benefits today from a research project led by Elisabeth Lorans.¹ During the early Middle Ages, other monasteries were founded in the ancient diocese of Tours, whose territory was similar to the Roman city of the *Turones* with its chief town located at the position of the actual city of Tours. Among the six early foundations that we know of, only the monastery of St Julien, created at the initiative of bishop Grégory at the end of the sixth century, lasted after the year one thousand as a Benedictine abbey; others disappeared or changed their status.² The case of St Martin of Tours must be added to this short list because the monastery evolved into a college of canons at the beginning of the ninth century.

This first wave of foundation was followed by a second during the Carolingian era. Through the intermediary of its abbot Ithier, St Martin of Tours was at the origin of the creation of the monastery of Cormery at the end of the eighth century, located approximately twenty kilometres from Tours in the Indre valley (Figure 1). Cormery developed during the ninth century, gaining importance to the point of itself founding another monastic settlement named Villeloin in 850 further upstream in the valley. Finally, a third wave of creation of Benedictine monasteries can be seen in Touraine, and more generally in France, around the eleventh-twelfth centuries and often at the instigation of lords. This corpus includes Preuilly-sur-Claise (1001),

¹ Lorans, 'a Late Roman and Early Medieval Monastery in the Loire Valley'.

² Lorans, Simon, 'Autour de Marmoutier' p.99. About the monastic settlements identified in the *suburbium* of the episcopal city of Tours, which are not included in this analysis, see Pietri, *La ville de Tours du IV^e au VI^e siècle*, pp. 350-363.

Beaumont-lès-Tours (1002), Beaulieu-lès-Loches (1007), Noyers (1031), Seuilly (1095) and Turpenay (1127).³

All these abbeys lasted until the modern period, during which they were reformed by the congregation of St Maur to restore the strict observance of the Benedictine lifestyle. The process led to the construction of new buildings and the production of several maps and views such as the ones from the *Monasticon Gallicanum* produced by Gaignières.⁴ This documentation is a first-hand source that can, most of the time, be compared with the architectural remains and the archaeological excavation data.

The establishment of monasteries in the early Middle Ages

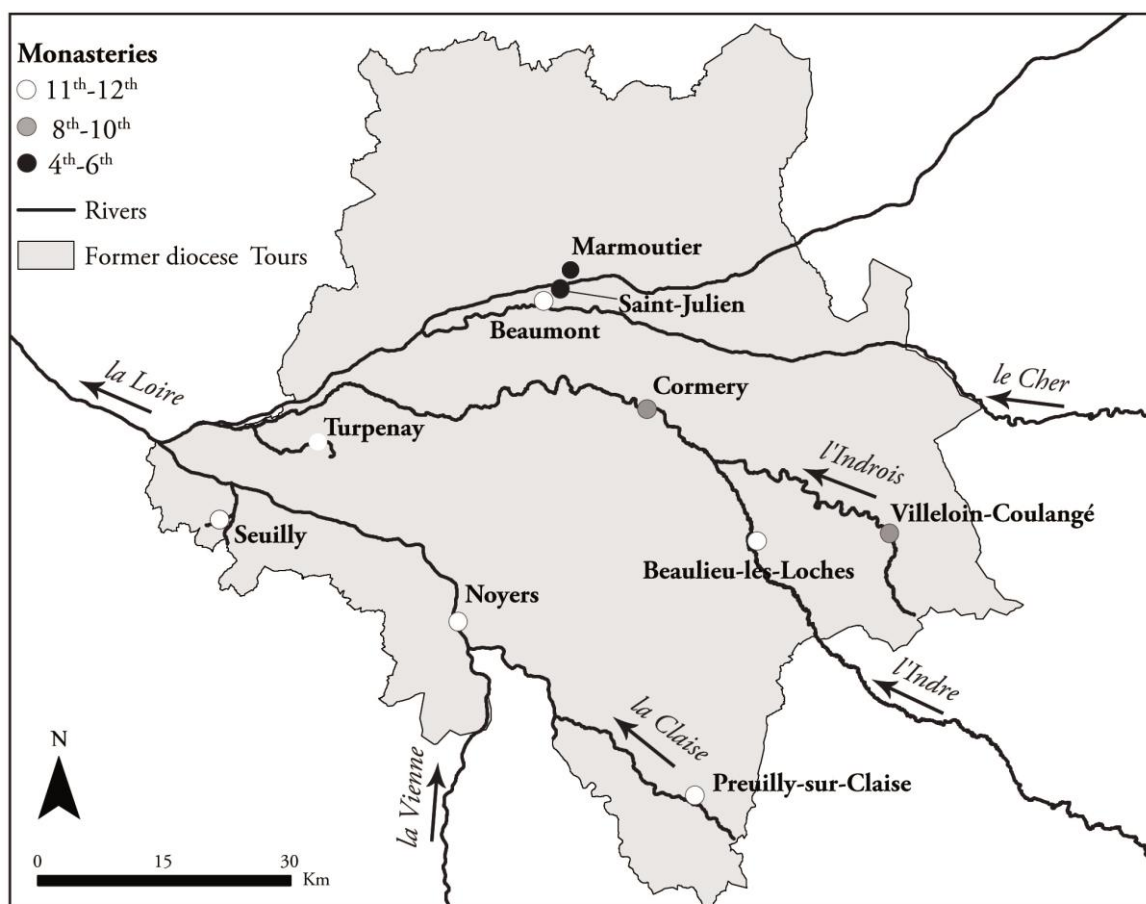


Figure 1. Location of the medieval monasteries in the ancient diocese of Tours (map by the author)

At the end of the eighth century, the three main monasteries of the ancient diocese of Tours – Marmoutier, St Martin and St Julian – were located in the Loire valley, in the proximity of the city of Tours. The establishment of Cormery by Ithier around 791 marked the first step of emancipation towards this pole: a secondary valley, the Indre, was chosen to host the new

³ Lorans, 'Abbayes et couvents d'origine médiévale'.

⁴ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), *Monasticon Gallicanum*, MS Latin 11821. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Collection Roger de Gaignières.

monastic settlement. Half a century later, it is in the Indrois valley, upstream of Cormery, that the monastery of Villeloin was established. From the eleventh century, premises founded by Benedictine communities pursued the spatial dynamic by investing the secondary valley located south of the Loire River. Watercourses of moderate or small importance like the Indre, the Claise or the Vienne River were favoured.

Within this corpus, the hydrographic context is undoubtedly a significant element in the choice of setting up a monastery. This observation is well-known in the monastic studies, Albrecht Hoffman showed that the water potential of a site was a primary criterion among the Cistercians and also for the Benedictines since the Carolingian period.⁵ It is worth noting, however, that the north side of the Loire did not host communities before the twelfth century and the development of the Cistercian order, such as the Clarté-Dieu, Fontaine-les-Blanches or Moncé. This dynamic could be explained by a hydrographic network that was less important than in the south, where several tributaries coexist. Nevertheless, this northern area was not empty before the twelfth century, the monastery of St Martin of Tours owned many properties here close to small watercourses such as the Choisille.⁶ The use of the river as an axis for travel and exchange was probably a decisive factor in the settlement of Cormery, although this theory needs to be proven with material evidence.⁷

Regarding the oldest monastic foundations, we can observe that they are located on previously occupied sites, which does not seem to be the case with the eleventh and twelfth century abbeys. In St Martin of Tours, a *domus* complete with peristyle has been identified by Henri Galinié in the position of the medieval collegiate church.⁸ In St Julian of Tours and Marmoutier, the hypothesis of a road station is proposed due to the presence of a Gallo-Roman path in the vicinity.⁹ This observation regarding the early monasticism is not new: examples are numerous, such as near Poitiers in Ligugé, where the first monastery founded by St Martin has integrated a pre-existing settlement, a Roman villa, whose pool was notably reused in the church building.¹⁰ Concerning the Carolingian monasteries, excavations carried out in Cormery in 2017 have resulted in evidence of occupation, which could be older than the period of the monastery's foundation would suggest.¹¹

A third observation can be added to this topic: the small number of monastic foundations during the early Middle Ages. Between the end of the sixth century and the eighth century, no monastic settlement is known on the ancient territory of the diocese of Tours, and yet this period was extremely dynamic for Frankish monasticism, with at least 320 monasteries founded in the 7th century alone. How can we explain this two-century hiatus? The hypothesis of a documentary gap related to the loss of the written sources cannot be excluded. For example, the ancient women's monastery of St Loup in St Pierre-des-Corps is briefly mentioned in 939, yet we do not know when it was established, neither when it disappeared.¹² A second and more probable explanation could be related to the reputation and the nearly hegemonic power of St

⁵ Hoffmann, 'L'hydrologie des sites bénédictins et cisterciens de l'Allemagne centrale'.

⁶ Noizet, 'Le centre canonial de Saint-Martin de Tours', p. 20.

⁷ Pouyet, 'Produire ou transporter ?'.

⁸ Galinié, 'La fouille du site de Saint-Martin', pp. 91-101.

⁹ Pietri, p. 420; Lorans, Simon, p. 91.

¹⁰ Boissavit-Camus, Les édifices culturels de l'abbaye de Saint-Martin de Ligugé, pp. 215-236.

¹¹ Pouyet, 'Cormery et son territoire', p. 152.

¹² Salmon, 'Notice historique sur l'abbaye de Saint-Loup près de Tours'.

Martin of Tours, which possessed plenty of land domains in the Loire valley, as H el ene Noizet has already highlighted.¹³ This analysis does not take into account the potential role of the other abbeys, such as Marmoutier and St Julian of Tours, but it seems most likely. The foundation of Cormery in the Indre valley at the end of the eighth century supports this idea, since the abbot of St Martin was its initiator. St Martin's control over the young monastery is perceptible throughout the first decades of the ninth century in the written sources.¹⁴ During the Middle Ages, it was still a source of contention between the two settlements.

The cloister orientation

The formation of the monastic complex is a process which began gradually from the Carolingian period, but it is only since the ninth century that the spatial model – whereby the buildings necessary to the monastic life were concentrated around the church and cloister – started to widespread.¹⁵ In Cormery, the excavation pits realized in the south cloister gallery revealed a mortar floor dating to before the eleventh century, which could attest to an early setting of a space dedicated to the conventual life to the north of the church. This observation refers to the question of the cloister's orientation, which has not been the subject of much research in archaeology and was often analysed at the site scale. Nonetheless, applying this question to a corpus such as the Benedictine monasteries of Touraine allows a discussion of many elements.

Among the monasteries constructed before the eleventh century, three have their cloisters located in the north (St Julian, Cormery and Villeloin), while Marmoutier and St Martin of Tours, which became a collegiate at the beginning of the ninth century, had their buildings set south of the church. In all of the Benedictine abbeys founded during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, cloister space was located south of the place of worship (Preuilley-sur-Claise, Beaumont-l es-Tours, Beaulieu-l es-Loches, Noyers, Seuilley and Turpenay). The location of the cloister south of the church is the classical model used to represent the Benedicto-Cistercian archetype, with the refectory situated opposite the church, while the capitular room and the dormitory are adjoined to it in the east wing. The meridional cloister is depicted on the St Gall map, and it was also the choice made by the builders of the greatest monastery of Christendom: Cluny.¹⁶

How can we explain that some older monasteries in Touraine had their cloister in the north? It is generally agreed that the topographical context of each settlement is at the origin of the orientation of the monastic buildings relative to the church. In Cormery, the monks established the place of worship in the highest point of the monastery. In St Julian of Tours, the restitution of the Loire banks of the ninth century shows a close proximity between the abbey and the river.¹⁷ Among the oldest monasteries, Marmoutier is an exception with its meridional cloister, but the existence of the hill and the presence of a Roman road in the north left its

¹³ Noizet, 'Le chapitre de Saint-Martin de Tours et la Loire', p. 14.

¹⁴ The first mention of an abbot of Cormery can be found in a Louis the Pious charter of 837, see *Cartulaire de Cormery*, ed. by Bourass e, n o 11 and *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Frommen*, ed. by K olzer, vol. 2, nr. 375.

¹⁵ Sapin, 'Introduction. Arch eologie et r eformes monastiques', p. 520. Heber-Suffrin and Sapin, 'L'architecture carolingienne en France et en Europe' pp. 129-139.

¹⁶ According to Carol Heitz, the location of the cloister in the south in the St Gall map is a legacy older than the monastic reform of the ninth century. See Heitz, 'Introduction : nouvelles perspectives pour le Plan de Saint-Gall', pp. 5-9.

¹⁷ Carcaud, Garcin and Burnouf, 'L'interfluve entre Loire et Cher', pp. 393-396.

builders little choice. Additional factors independent of the topographical features had to come into play. The reconstruction of the cloister of Fulda in 822 not to the south but to the east, 'in the Roman custom [...], on the model of an Early Christian atrium', reflects an architectural bias, probably disconnected from the topographical aspects of the site.¹⁸ The abbot Gasquet considered at the beginning of the twentieth century that the southern orientation of the cloister was 'the ordinary English position,' appropriate to the weather, because the church would shield the monastic buildings from the north wind, whereas the inverse disposition was appropriate in a warmer country to protect the cloister from the sun's heat.¹⁹

The existence of previous occupation could also have had an impact on the monastic organisation and the cloister orientation. In St Martin of Tours, Marmoutier, St Julian and Cormery, the presence of occupation from late Antiquity or the early Middle Ages had potentially affected the development of the monastery. This pattern has been observed in Romainmôtier, well away from Touraine, where the houses of the antique estate were reinvested by the first monks, conditioning the organisation of the monastery until the tenth century reform.²⁰ The question would need to be extended to a larger corpus in order to draw conclusions, but it will also face the lack of archaeological knowledge of these spaces between the ninth and the eleventh centuries. Views and maps from the modern period are often the only source, which allows restitution of the topography of the monastic settlements, and, in the absence of archaeological excavation, it is difficult to identify an eventual adjustment of the cloistral system.

The cloister: a multifunctional space

Cormery's cloister is rectangular (45m x 29m); it is one of the most well-preserved among the Benedictine monasteries of Tours despite the partial destruction of its circulation gallery, which measured three or four metres. In comparison, the cloisters of St Julian of Tours (25m x 30m), Villeloin (17m x 17m) and Noyers (30m x 30m) were significantly smaller, according to the plans of the modern period.²¹ In Cormery, the gallery opened into the cloister yard via a clerestory made of large apparatus stones and tiles decorated with a torus in the corners. Moulded pointed arches located under twin columns supported a framework and its lean-to roof. In the cloister angles, these columns are sometimes overlaid by masonry built inside the clerestory to create solid walls after the sale of the goods of the abbey at the end of the eighteenth century (Figure 2). The arcades were supported by buttresses arranged regularly against the columns, every three or four spans, based on the remnants standing. According to the ancient documentation, the gallery walls of Villeloin and Noyers were not vaulted in stone, like in St Julian or Beaulieu-lès-Loches.²²

¹⁸ Stalley, *Early medieval architecture*, p. 41.

¹⁹ Gasquet, *English Monastic Life*, p. 14.

²⁰ Bully, 'Rencontre autour de Romainmôtier', p. 147.

²¹ Paris, Archives nationales (AN), CP, III Indre-et-Loire, 2/3 (St Julian), 10/1 (Villeloin) and 9/1 (Noyers).

²² Collection Roger de Gaignières (BnF), 5337.



Figure 2. View of the north ambulatory of Cormery's cloister

In the south ambulatory of Cormery's cloister, the archaeological pits allowed identification of the remains of a floor in terracotta tiles and a bench seat adjacent to the church gutter wall, which dates back to the eleventh century.²³ The presence of this bench could explain the larger dimensions of the south gallery, which probably served as a meeting space for the community. Parts of the cloister clerestory date back to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but most of the remains, like the twin columns with pyramidal capitals, are earlier than the fifteenth century. In the north-east angle of the cloister, the presence on the wall of a blazon depicting two crossed keys could refer to the insignia of the Holy See. The presence of this blazon could be linked to an act of the cartulary from 1456, which authorises the abbot of Cormery to use bishop's signs:

Alanus, miseratione divina, tituli Sanctae Praxedis sacrosanctae Romanae Ecclesiae presbyter cardinalis [...] Hinc est quod nos, tuis in hac parte supplicationibus inclinati, ut tu et successores tui, abbates dicti monasterii de Cormeriaco, qui pro tempore fuerint, mitra, annulo et pastorali baculo, tunica, dalmatica et aliis pontificalibus insigniis libere possitis uti.²⁴

These elements might indicate the reconstruction of the cloister, which was in ruins and impracticable for religious ceremonies at the beginning of the fifteenth century according to the visit of two canons of St Martin of Tours.²⁵ This phase of rehabilitation is confirmed by dendrochronological dating made in the nineties by the French Heritage Inventory on the framework of the west gallery cloister.²⁶

²³ Pouyet, Miçlon, Bedecarrats, 'Le site de l'abbaye de Cormery', pp. 26-28.

²⁴ *Cartulaire de Cormery*, ed. by Bourassé, n° 136.

²⁵ *Cartulaire de Cormery*, ed. by Bourassé, n° 77.

²⁶ Saint-Jouan, Ravier, 'Cormery (Indre-et-Loire), ancienne abbaye', pp. 21-22.

In addition to connecting the different parts of the monastery via a covered space, the cloister was also a place in its own right where monks could gather as a community, as demonstrated by the bench seat against the wall church in Cormery. Enhanced by a garden, the garth usually sheltered a fountain or a well. The iconographic documentation from the modern period is contradictory in this regard. On the *Monasticon Gallicanum* view of Cormery, a well is figured in the centre of the garth, but not in the two maps of the seventeenth centuries.²⁷ For Villeloin it is the opposite: a well is depicted on the seventeenth century map but not in the *Monasticon* view, in which the garth centre has a geometrical shape without any defined function.²⁸ Generally, the cloister centre is represented in a very stylized way on the modern period views, such as for Noyer, where a rosette indicating north is represented. In the *Monasticon* views of the monasteries of Touraine, no fountain is depicted inside the cloisters and only one well is indicated in the south-east angle of St Julian.²⁹ The question of the water access in the cloistral space therefore remains difficult to assess using only the iconographic views from the modern period. In Cormery, the study of the site allows us to highlight an important number of wells spread across the monastic space, a phenomenon favoured by the nature of the rocky substrate in limestone.

We can suppose that the cloister was a place of ceremony like the one in which the abbot washed the feet of poor people on Maundy Thursday, but there are no customaries left to confirm it. However, liturgical processions in the ambulatory are described during the fifteenth century by the canons of St Martin and also in the sixteenth century source, which describes a procession progressing through the dormitory and the cloister ‘[...] *faciat processionem per dormitorium et clastra ut moris est*’.³⁰

In Cormery, the question regarding the funerary practices is worth asking, despite the limited information we had on the subject.³¹ The archaeological digs undertaken in the cloister have uncovered two burials in coffins dating from the middle of the seventeenth century to the end of the eighteenth century.³² These interments have disrupted a substantially preserved subsurface, which indicates a late use of the ambulatory as a funerary space. The same phenomenon can be observed at the abbey of Caunes in Occitanie, where two coffin burials were found in the cloister’s oriental gallery.³³ Textual sources are fairly silent about the location of the monks’ cemetery in Cormery, we can mention at most the fortuitous discovery of graves at the west of the abbey church and the mention of a cemetery near what is called in the text the chaplaincy of St Pierre on the edge of the monastery: ‘*Itur ad processionem per oppidum recta via ad domum egrorum, que eleemosynaria s. Petri dicitur, quo tendendum est ad cimiterium cantando [...]*’.³⁴ But there is no indication to say that the monks were buried here. On this

²⁷ BnF, MS Lat. 11821, pl. 161 ; AN, CP, III Indre-et-Loire, 6/1-2.

²⁸ AN, CP, III Indre-et-Loire, 10/1; BnF, MS Lat. 11821, pl. 166.

²⁹ BnF, MS Lat. 11821, pl. 164.

³⁰ BnF, Ms Lat. 9487, f° 64; see also *Cartulaire de Cormery*, ed. by Bourassé, n° 77.

³¹ The archaeological study of the monastic burials is not a thoroughly developed research field. In Cluny, for example, the cemeteries of the monks and the laity are still largely unknown, even though the site was excavated decades ago. See Cazes, ‘Le cloître roman’, p. 238.

³² Pouyet, Miclon, Bedecarrats, ‘Le site de l’abbaye de Cormery’, p. 75.

³³ Ginouvez, *et al.*, ‘Interventions archéologiques dans les murs de l’abbaye bénédictine de Caunes-Minervois’, p. 53.

³⁴ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), MS Latin 9487, f° 64.

matter, the garth of the cloister and the area located north-east of the apse of the church constitute some promising places to study in the future.

The organisation of the cloister buildings in Benedictine monasteries in medieval times could sometimes be difficult to analyse if significant changes had been made during the modern period by reformist orders such as the Maurist monks. In Cormery, three functional spaces that are still standing today date back to at least the High Middle Ages: the northern wing houses the old cellar from the twelfth century, the remains of the chapter house are located in the east wing, which has degraded significantly, and the thirteenth century refectory occupies a large portion of the western part of the cloister (Figure 3).



Figure 3. The architectural remains of the monastery of Cormery (map by the author)

The chapter house

In Cormery, the chapter house was located against the north transept. All that is left is the western wall with its three arcades in pointed, tri-lobed arches. Ancient maps depict a quadrangle whose sides measured about 13 metres entirely vaulted with ogives. The arcade's capitals had slightly protruding abacus decorated with a variety of floral patterns. The overall morphology is very close to the refectory sculpture and probably dates from the first half of the thirteenth century. A similar location of the chapter house, against the sacristy at the extremity of the transept, can be noticed in Noyers, Turpenay and Villeloin, where this room was smaller (six metres wide). The St Julian chapter house is the most well-preserved example of all the monasteries in the Loire Valley. Its plan is very similar to Cormery, with nine spans vaulted with ogives. The presence of a chapter house is attested around 1010 by the written sources,

which mention the payment of a tax to Marmoutier for its edification.³⁵ The oldest references go back to the thirteenth century for Marmoutier and Cormery, but there has probably been a chapter house in those abbeys since the eleventh century.

The refectory

Situated in the west wing of the cloister, the refectory is made up of two naves divided by a line of five supports, which constitute six spans. The whole building measured 34m x 13.5m long; slightly higher than the refectory of St Julian of Tours, according to the seventeenth century maps (30m x 11m). Cormery's refectory was extended by the kitchen in the north and the gatehouse in the south. The central columns of the building are topped with capitals with brackets, like the engaged columns of the lateral walls, which were also adorned with carved elements. The style and the various themes represented in these sculptures recall those from the chapter house of Cormery. The representation of a monk holding in his hands a jar and a plate refers to the building's function dedicated to daily meals. Other sculptures represent fantastic animals and floral patterns such as acanthus leaves. One reached the refectory by the cloister via a small door in the first span, which was composed of a splayed lintel and two chamfered abutments. The remains of a small column decorated with a bird motif indicate that the circulation level was elevated since the medieval period.



Figure 4. Griffin adorned with floral patterns carved of Cormery's refectory

³⁵ *Chartes de Saint-Julien de Tours*, ed. by Denis, n° 7.

The position of the refectory in the west wing of the cloister is rather original compared to the other Benedictine monasteries of Touraine. In the monasteries where the cloister was north of the church, the refectory was located in the north wing, like at St Julian and Villeloin. In Marmoutier, where the cloister was south, the medieval refectory built by the Maurist monks was situated at the opposite end of the church, in the south wing. The case was similar in Noyers but not in Turpenay, where the building is represented at the extremity of the west wing in the *Monasticon* view, but it is probably a late adjustment.³⁶ The presence of the refectory in the wing opposite the church is the most common placing in line with the Benedictines tendency; it is already represented on the St Gall map during the Carolingian period, and it was also the choice made in Cluny in the eleventh century.³⁷ In Cormery, the presence of the cellar in the north wing, which was already in elevation when the refectory was built, may have impacted the original position of the building in the west. On the other hand, we cannot rule out the possibility that this distribution could be older.

The dormitory

The dormitory was located in the east wing of Cormery's cloister during the modern period, above the chapter house. It was reconstructed by the Maurist monks at the end of the seventeenth century, but few elements are left of this building, which connected the cloister to the latrine building at the edge of the Indre River.³⁸ During medieval times, the building would contain the common dormitories and not individual cells as during the Maurist period. The written sources of the end of the Middle Ages did not mention the precise location of the dormitory, but we can suppose that this configuration was already in place at this period, because it was more likely the case in the Benedictine monasteries. In Marmoutier, the written sources of the eleventh century allow localizing the dormitory in the east wing, while the chapter house was supposedly situated on the ground floor of the building.³⁹ This plan is in evidence at Cluny, where the chapter house was surmounted by a dormitory with high windows, according to the *Liber Tramitis*.⁴⁰ The same configuration can be observed in St Julian of Tours for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and this design was probably similar in the twelfth century, based on a text of 1114, which mentions a large square between the Loire and the Infirmary, close to the dormitory, where people gathered to feast and disturbed the peace of monks and sufferers.⁴¹ In Villeloin, the dormitory is depicted on the last floor of the north wing, to the side of the cloister towards the west on the *Monasticon Gallicanum* view. This location is probably connected to the Maurist modifications, because on the oldest plan of the National Archive, the dormitory is represented in the east wing, above the chapter house. In Noyers, the dormitory was also located in the east wing but above the refectory.

The Chaplaincy

In a medieval monastery, the chaplain was in charge of welcoming the pilgrims on foot and distributing alms to poor travellers and to the poor of the monastic town he had to visit each week. The distinctness between the host facilities dedicated to the poor and the guest is often difficult to highlight in the medieval monasteries. Two cases can be distinguished: both statutes

³⁶ BnF, MS Lat. 11821, pl. 165.

³⁷ Stratford, Henriët, 'Les bâtiments de l'abbaye de Cluny à l'époque médiévale', p. 24.

³⁸ Archives départementales d'Indre-et-Loire (ADIL), H 81.

³⁹ Lorans, 'Circulation et hiérarchie au sein des établissements monastiques', p. 323.

⁴⁰ *Liber Tramitis aevi Odilonis abbatis*, ed. Dinter, pp. 203-206.

⁴¹ Malochet, 'Evolution topographique de l'abbaye de Saint-Julien de Tours', p. 40.

could either be hosted in the same building on a separated floor, or the poor were housed in the gatehouse or in external structures.⁴² During the Carolingian times, Cormery probably hosted pilgrims going to the St Martin's tomb in Tours in two buildings located nearby the monastery. A charter of 860 refers to two places connected to the monastery and dedicated to the host of the poor and the wealthy: '[...] *de potestate sancti Pauli, quae dicitur Aptum Villare; cum integritate de hospitale pauperum citra Agneram, totum de hospitale divitum*'.⁴³ At the scale of the monasteries of Touraine, the chaplaincy is generally located at the entrance. In Marmoutier, the abbot Goeffroy of Conam was buried near the chaplaincy's door in the thirteenth century, but it is not certain that this building was separated from the guesthouse located near the western entrance of the monastery.⁴⁴

In Noyers and Turpenay, no chaplaincy is indicated in the caption of the *Monasticon Gallicanum* view; only rooms intended for guests are mentioned, without any distinction between poor and wealthy. In Villeloin, the chaplaincy and the building linked to the office were located south-east of the cloister, in close proximity to the main entrance of the monastery, based on the seventeenth century map; but it was a single hosting place like in Turpenay and Noyers and not a chaplaincy specifically dedicated to the poor. St Julian of Tours stands apart from the others through the important place accorded to the hospitality and the relief of the poor (accommodation, courtyard, garden), which is probably linked to the urban context of the site. Positioned south-east of the cloister since at least the fifteenth century, the chaplaincy opened directly onto the courtyard situated on the Grande rue (now Colbert Street) via a passage located between the private houses contiguous to the monastery enclosure, according to a map from 1670.⁴⁵ In Cormery, the chaplaincy buildings were situated in close proximity to the main entrance of the abbey at the west, based on the written and planimetric sources of the modern period. The staircase tower building from the fifteenth century situated at this location, improperly called the home of the prior, was in reality the home of the chaplain in modern times. Presumably, the medieval chaplaincy was located near this space and a mention in a sixteenth century liturgical ritual seems to confirm it, describing a procession going close to the St Peter chaplaincy, along a cemetery that could be associated with it: '*Itur ad proces. per oppidum recta via ad domum errorum, que eleemosynaria s.petri v, quo tendendum est ad cimenterui catendo [...]*'.⁴⁶ At this period, the chaplain had to ensure that the abbot was able to distribute bread to the poor on Friday, from All Saints' Day to St John's Day.⁴⁷ In medieval times, some hosting activities took place outside the monastic walls; the existence of a poorhouse and a lazar-house is mentioned in a charter of 1443, but their location is unknown.⁴⁸

The guesthouse

In medieval times, the monastic guesthouse was intended for the hospitality of the travellers on horseback, who were from a higher social class than the pilgrims on foot. In Marmoutier, the Abbot chronicle evoked in the twelfth century the construction of a place dedicated to hosting

⁴² Gardeux, 'Les structures d'accueil dans l'espace monastique'.

⁴³ *Cartulaire de Cormery*, ed. by Bourassé, n° 23.

⁴⁴ Lorans, 'Circulation et hiérarchie au sein des établissements monastiques', p. 327.

⁴⁵ AN, CP, III Indre-et-Loire, 2/3.

⁴⁶ BnF, MS Lat. 9487, f° 64.

⁴⁷ ADIL, H 88, Aumônier.

⁴⁸ *Cartulaire de Cormery*, ed. by Bourassé, n° 132.

distinguished visitors: bishops, abbots and noblemen.⁴⁹ The building was located near the north-west door of the monastery, in order to avoid any disturbance to monastic life. The edifice was divided into two levels: a partially vaulted ground floor that served as a storage room; and the upstairs, under the wooden frame, which was for residential purposes.⁵⁰ In several medieval Benedictine monasteries, a space reserved for hosting guests was located in a cloister wing, often contiguous to the kitchen in a cloister corner and close to the refectory, like in the abbey of Jumièges, in Normandy.⁵¹ In Cormery, we can suppose that the visitors were hosted in the north-west corner of the cloister during the modern period, as is indicated on the map from 1646. There is nothing to certify that this space was already dedicated to this function during the medieval times, but it is certain that important modifications were made in this part of the building at the end of the medieval period. A second hypothesis is conceivable; the guesthouse was potentially located at this time outside the cloister, at the west of it, like in Cluny since the eleventh century, according to the Customary of Farfa.

The Infirmary

A similar problem exists with the location of the infirmary in Cormery, which is represented in the north wing of the cloister, above the cellars, on the *Monasticon Gallicanum* drawing; but it's almost certain that this configuration reflects some modifications made during the modern period. In St Julian of Tours, the infirmary was located in the northern part of the monastery in the twelfth century, near the Loire River, and close to the dormitory but in a separate building from the others: '*Erat enim platea inter Ligerim et domum infirmorum, videlicet juxta conventus dormitorium [...] ut nec infirmiri in propria domo, nec sani quiescere possent in dormitorio*'⁵². This building is still represented on the map of the abbey in 1670, while in another map of a later date the infirmary was moved outside the cloister, in the north-west part of the monastic enclosure.⁵³ In Villeloin, the orderly's home was situated beyond the cloister in the north-east, but it was shown as ruined on a seventeenth century map. In Noyers, the infirmary was located on the first floor of the west wing of the cloister, near the hosting hall; it certainly reflects the monastic organisation of the modern period. While in the view of Turpenay the infirmary is indicated in a building located aside, in the south-east, but also upstairs in the west wing of the monastery. It is unlikely to be a mistake by the draughtsman; we can suppose that the isolated building was the ancient infirmary and that the new one was upstairs in the cloister, as a result of the Maurist modifications. The position of the ancient infirmary, isolated near the road at the north of the abbey is, however, unusual. In Cormery, it is highly probable that the medieval infirmary was situated in the north-east part of the cloister space, inside an enclosed space that was probably distinct from the cellars (Figure 5). In several monasteries, the infirmary, its chapel, and sometimes a cloister, constituted a complex distinct from the main cloister, often in the east like in Marmoutier and St Julian of Tours. No buildings have so far been clearly identified inside the enclosed park located at the east of the cloister, despite magnetic prospecting work undertaken in 2021. But some written elements marked on the seventeenth century maps and some remains of a medieval bay hidden under the vegetation of the north wall enclosure indicate that this area has not always been occupied by gardens.

⁴⁹ Lorans, *Circulation et hiérarchie*, p. 325.

⁵⁰ Lorans, Marot, Simon, 'Marmoutier (Tours) : de l'hôtellerie médiévale à la maison du Grand Prieur' : § 28.

⁵¹ Andrault-Schmitt, 'Formes et fonctions des cuisines monastiques médiévales', pp. 72-74.

⁵² *Chartes de Saint-Julien de Tours du XI^e au XIV^e siècle*, ed. by Denis, n° 60.

⁵³ Archives départementales d'Indre-et-Loire (ADIL), H 550.

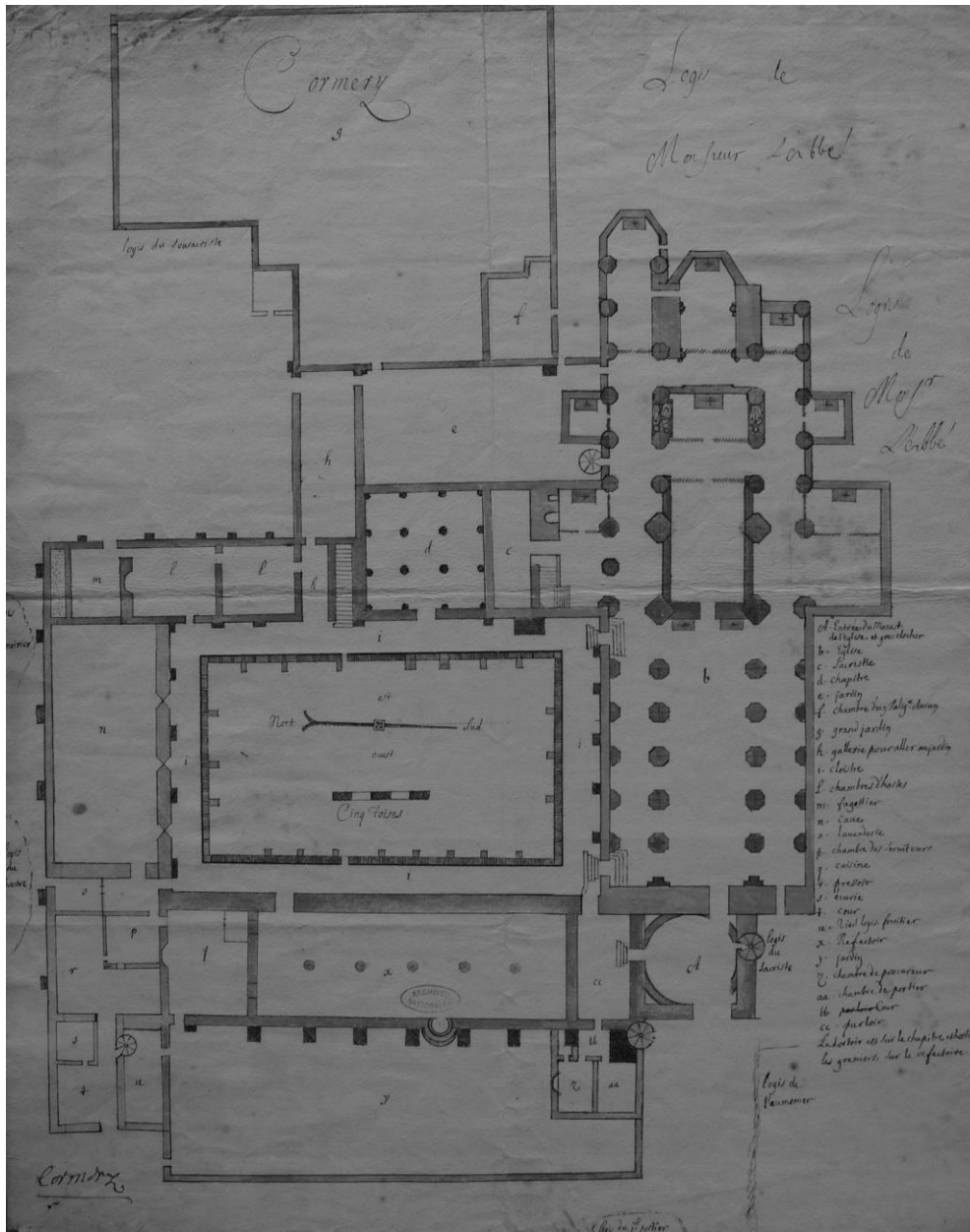


Figure 5. Map of the abbey of Cormery in 1646 (Archives Nationales, Cartes et Plans, III, Indre-et-Loire, 6-2)

Among the Benedictine monasteries of the ancient diocese of Tours, the location of the infirmary in the cloister seems mainly attributable to the Maurists, who reorganised the monastic space. The same observation was made by Monique Bugner on the scale of the St Maur congregation; she noticed that the infirmary, the guesthouse and the abbot's lodgings were often integrated within the new cloister organisation, contrary to the medieval patterns and the use of separated buildings.⁵⁴

The kitchens

Most of the time in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the kitchens of the Benedictine monasteries were located close to the cloister space and built on one level, often topped by a cylindrical roof, which served to allow smoke to escape. In the Loire valley, the best-known

⁵⁴ Bugner, *Cadre architectural et vie monastique des bénédictins de la congrégation de Saint-Maur*.

examples are the circular Fontevraud's kitchens of the twelfth century, which consist of a wide hood surrounded by eight secondary fireplaces located close to the refectory. This configuration can also be found in other monasteries of the ancient diocese of Tours, such as in Marmoutier, where the circular kitchens were also positioned in the refectory extension in the south.⁵⁵ In Cormery, the kitchen location in the western refectory wing at the beginning of the thirteenth century probably shows a practical choice but also some disconnection with the Benedictine monastic topography. Usually, the incorporation of the kitchens in the refectory wing is more common in Cistercian monasteries.⁵⁶ The alleged existence of a wide fireplace in the south-east angle of the building in Cormery is reminiscent of the Cistercians' kitchen configuration, in which a single large fireplace was attached to a wall or positioned in the centre of the room. The architectural study of this area shows that the space was drastically modified around the fifteenth century and afterwards, but the kitchen function of the building during the medieval times is still highly plausible.

Modern maps of the Benedictine abbey of the ancient diocese of Tours suggest an organisation similar to Cormery. This is notable in the case of St Julian of Tours, where the kitchens were located in the refectory wing in the document of 1651 (Figure 6); and then in the opposite building in the west in 1670. In Notre-Dame de Noyers, kitchens were also located next to the refectory in the south wing, close to the hosts room and the Maurist infirmary. In Villeloin, they were also integrated within the cloister space in the north-east angle, adjacent to the refectory. These configurations may reflect the medieval topographical state, however an archaeological excavation would be required in order to confirm this.

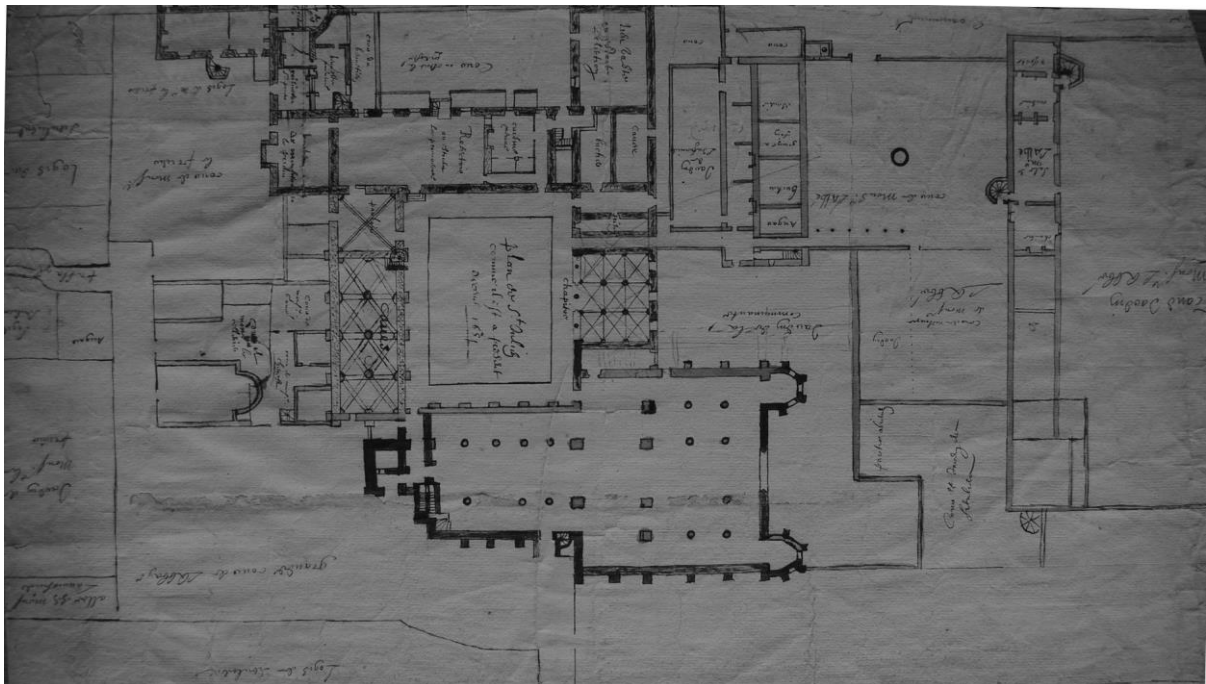


Figure 6. Map of the abbey of St Julian of Tours in 1651 (Archives Nationales, Cartes et Plans, III, Indre-et-Loire, 2-3)

⁵⁵ BnF, MS Lat. 11821, pl. 162.

⁵⁶ Epaut, Vincent, 'La cuisine de l'abbaye cistercienne de Bonport'.

The cellars

Last but not least, the cellars constitute an emblematic and particular building of the medieval monasteries. In Cormery, the twelfth century cellars, which are still standing today, are located in the north wing of the cloister. Originally, the building measured twenty-eight metres long and twelve metres wide and was composed of four partially buried spans, but only three remain now. Four buttresses in ashlar masonry supported the north and south gutter walls, counteracting the pushing of the vaults and massive double arches. Pointed arches are supported at mid-height by pillars crowned with capitals with not very prominent bells, decorated only on the main face with moulding and decorative carved flora. The morphology of the double and pointed arches recall the architectural features of the monastic cellars of St Julian of Tours, which have unfortunately largely been rebuilt.

The morphology of Cormery's cellars with four single spans differs from the model of low halls with colonnades and double spans found in Normandy, as at Jumièges in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁵⁷ The shape of Cormery's cellar is, by contrast, relatively close to that of St Julian of Tours (22m x 10m), which was built in approximately the same period in the west wing of the cloister. In Villeloin, the Maurist plan shows that the cellars were also located in the western wing and divided into three separate sets, with a staircase accessing the central room through the cloister gallery, but this division of the space is probably linked to later transformations. In Notre-Dame de Noyers, the cellars were apparently situated at the eastern end of the south wing, separated from the kitchens by the refectory. Most of the time, the positioning of the cellars in the western part of the cloister seems to have been preferred in the medieval Benedictine monasteries, like at Cluny. Cormery's cellar location in the north wing, at the opposite end of the church, could be linked to the functional challenge, in particular the proximity of the Indre River, which is supposed to have been navigable and used to transport goods until the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Conclusion

Many other functional spaces were unable to receive a mention in this article, such as the gatehouses or the abbot's residence, but the cross-checking of historical sources and archaeological data is relevant to rendering the topographical spaces of the medieval monasteries, before the major changes generated by the implementation of orders and the renovations of the Maurist congregation in modern times. Our disparate knowledge of the corpus of monastic settlements is obviously a brake to the comparative approach, but it has the merit of drawing out some interesting topics, such as the location of the medieval infirmary and its chapel in Cormery, and the purpose of what is today empty enclosed space. Other matters, such as the identification of monastic funeral spaces, which are sometimes numerous and restricted, will have to await the development of archaeological excavations to be further assessed.

⁵⁷ Deshayes, 'Topographie, architecture et utilisations des celliers gothiques de l'abbaye de Jumièges'.

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