

# Romanesque Art and Craftsmanship in Central Europe, 900-1300



Romanesque Art and Craftsmanship  
in Central Europe, 900-1300:  
Artistic Aspects of the Style

By

Herbert Schutz

**CAMBRIDGE  
SCHOLARS**

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P U B L I S H I N G

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# INTRODUCTION

The images made during the Romanesque period were intended for symbolic use. Consequently, to determine the character of Romanesque, the emphasis should rest on the examination of such related material cultural indicators as history, literature and architecture. The concern would then lie with the mosaic of visual cultural aspects which can be assembled under the term Romanesque and which offer a variety of vantage points from which to consider the period. As a transmitted assembly, they form a “language”, which circumscribes and helps to define the transmissions concerning the nature of cultic things, and to constitute the bridges which link the parallel concepts, which underlay and animated the period from c.900 to c.1300.

By necessity, the discussion focuses on that region of Central Europe, which came to be contained within the Medieval Empire in Central Europe. To some readers Central Europe is located further east. However, very little information can be provided here for East-Central Europe - Poland, Bohemia and Hungary, as before the 13<sup>th</sup> century, most of the evidence is of a sparse archeological sort, reflecting assortments of portable objects and artifacts reminiscent of the migration period, an earlier archeological and historic period, rather than the later period of monumental expression.

Because man is a maker of images and symbols, the examples of his artistry, skilled craftsmanship reflected in the robust construction of so many architectural monuments with their seemingly infinite variety of artistic and architectural ornamentation are staggering in their display of a vibrant imagination, largely in the service of the church, its dogma and the faith. It was the religious community, which largely promoted and carried this European culture – Romanesque. The amount of scholarly reconstruction is quite beyond any attempts at summarization.

The works of art which once embellished the cathedrals and churches of the Romanesque period illustrate the perception that architecture can be seen as the synthesizing frame within which all the arts are assembled. These inventories demonstrate the gradual stylistic enriching transition of artistic forms within the increasing complexity of Romanesque ornamentation evolving from rudimentary decorations towards the stylistic sophistication of Gothic. As has been shown elsewhere, with astonishing splendor and

majestic proportions, Romanesque contributed to the projection of the elating image of an ideal space quite successfully, as it transformed the real space of the church interior into an ecstatic vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem. In this regard, the arts, within the context of church architecture, are tools of the faith. In their tectonic majesty Romanesque religious edifices could have persuaded the worshipper, that the imperious structures were at the same time instruments of the state, thus presenting a reconciled image of the *Imperium Christianum* as its fulfillment on earth. It can be imagined, that the progressive and ambitious artisans and decorators, responding to the urgent dynamism of things, were made to feel the restraints and censorship of more conservative ecclesiastics, traditionally hesitant regarding the use of images within the cult. Although it is too early to speak of audio-visual methods, ideal spaces, such as the anticipatory vision of Jerusalem, were created by liturgical means, projected through sight and sound. Seeing was reinforced by hearing. The mystifying activities of the initiates, shrouded in a mysterious language, enveloped in the fragrant haze of incense, contributed to the creation of a place of great mystery, for those kept beyond the roodscreen. The artistry of such vocal music as that of monastic chant and especially the ethereal vocalizations of Hildegard von Bingen, dealt with elsewhere, combined with the visionary mysteries to offer a unifying spiritual and sensory experience.

This book continues chronologically the survey of Central European cultural history from prehistoric and early historic beginnings in the region, such as *The Carolingians in Central Europe, their History, Art and Architecture*, more recently with *The Medieval Empire in Central Europe: Dynastic Continuity on the Post-Carolingian East Frankish Realm, 900-1300*, more recently with *Mystic Women and Lyric Poets in Medieval Society: The Literary View of Medieval Culture during the Romanesque Period in Central Europe, 900-1300*, and most recently with *Romanesque Architecture and its Artistry in Central Europe, 90-1300*. As was apparent in the earlier books, it will be found here too, that man's images were intended for symbolic use. Consequently the primary emphasis rests on the examination of related material cultural indicators with ties to archeology, but mainly to anthropology. Here the concern lies with the innumerable images and objects, textual illustrations, designs and monuments, serving as artifacts and material cultural instruments, which offer a variety of vantage points from which to consider the Romanesque period. As a transmitted assembly, they form a "language", which circumscribes and helps to define the transmissions concerning the nature of cultic things,