“Types of Representation and Use”
—Renate Wagner-Rieger and the Architecture of the Mendicant Order

Renate Wagner-Rieger had a keen eye for architectural typology, which in the case of the churches of the mendicant orders made her sensitive to the adoption of Cistercian models and simple building types of older and smaller religious communities. She also recognised the Franciscan three-chapel hall in rudimentary form, although without grasping its innovative significance, and she made an interesting distinction between representational and functional types in the mendicant orders, although it remains open whether this is due more to the 19th century’s understanding of style than to medieval perceptions.

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**ABSTRACT**
Renate Wagner-Rieger hatte einen scharfen Blick für architektonische Typologie, der sie bei den Kirchen der Bettelorden sensibel machte für die Übernahme zisterziensischer Vorbilder und einfacher Bautypen älterer und kleinerer Ordensgemeinschaften. Sie erkannte auch den franziskanischen Dreikapellensaal in rudimentärer Form, ohne jedoch dessen innovative Bedeutung zu erfassen, und sie machte eine interessante Unterscheidung zwischen Repräsentations- und Funktionstypen bei den Bettelorden, wobei offenbleibt, ob dies eher dem Stilverständnis des 19. Jahrhunderts oder den mittelalterlichen Vorstellungen geschuldet ist.

**SCHLÜSSELWÖRTER**
Mendikantenarchitektur, Typologie, Methodik
APSTRAKT
Renate Wagner-Rieger imala je oko za arhitektonsku tipologiju, a u kontekstu prosjačko-propovjedničkih redova poseban senzibilitet prema cistercitskim modelima i jednostavnim tipovima gradnje ranijih manjih vjerskih redova. Prepoznala je franjevačku troapsidalnu dvoransku crkvu u njezinom rudimentarnom obliku, iako ne shvaćajući inovativnost tog oblika. Napravila je zanimljivu razliku između reprezentativnog i funkcionalnog tipa u arhitekturi prosjačko-propovjedničkih redova, premda ostaje pitanje je li to ipak posljedica shvaćanja stila 19. stoljeća ili perspektive srednjeg vijeka.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI
prosjačko-propovjednička arhitektura, tipologija, metodologija

The art historian Renate Wagner-Rieger, born a hundred years ago, was one of the first full professors of her subject in the German-speaking world. Since she died in 1980, before her 60th birthday, her name is hardly remembered in the scholarly world; if it is, then it is because of her extensive research and publications on the “Wiener Ringstraße” and thus on historicism in general, which she, like few others, helped to establish as a valid epochal style in the 1970s. But her academic career began, as few people will remember, with the study of medieval architecture; more precisely the beginning of the Gothic in Italy. This subject was hardly dealt with, since the very idea of an Italian Gothic in art history was not shared by everyone. Like no other, she pursued the subject in all its details, travelled the entire country and recorded many hitherto unknown churches and monasteries in her two-volume habilitation thesis, making the work not only a compendium but a veritable treasure trove until today.

With her broad research on the beginnings of the Gothic in Italian architecture, Renate Wagner-Rieger inevitably came into contact with questions of religious architecture, especially that of the Cistercians and the mendicant orders, which played a decisive role in Italy. While Cistercian buildings have always attracted the attention of the discipline – Hanno Hahn, for example, was working at the same time as Renate Wagner-Rieger on his still well-known treatise on the beginnings of their church architecture – art and architecture historians, on the other hand, were
hardly concerned with the subject of mendicant orders. Most of the work at that time came from the period before the two world wars and was based on stylistic criticism. In contrast to the cultural-historical views of the 19th century, they no longer regarded the Mendicant churches as mere barns and largely inartistic creations, which was undoubtedly favored by modernism, which appreciated simply designed rooms with little ornamentation. But these views, such as Richard Krautheimer’s expressionist grasp of the rooms (fig. 1 and 2) or Werner Gross’s functionalist view, fixated on the walliness of the Gothic, had already congealed into descriptive topoi after 1950. Werner Gross in particular had a considerable influence on art history’s conception of mendicant architecture as a functional architecture that was entirely subordinate to the preaching mission and, in return, set in motion a “profanisation” of the church space. This movement, according to Gross, then also took hold of so-called cathedral architecture around 1300, which of course immensely increased the importance of the mendicant churches in the discourse of stylistic history and of the Gothic in general. Its mere role as an undercurrent of high architecture, which it still held with Krautheimer, who still recognized in it the resumption of older traditions, was thus largely out of focus. Wagner–Rieger brings some of this back.
Because of her research issue, however, Wagner–Rieger initially focused on the Cistercian Order as the cause of the spread of French Gothic in Europe. Thus, her attention was focused on the order’s early church building concepts and their spread to Italy. On the Cistercian church in Morimondo near Milan, she writes: “Mit Morimondo wurde die oberitalienische Gotik geboren, eine eigene Stilform innerhalb dieses abendländischen Gesamtstils, eine Sondergotik, die von nun ab ihre eigene Gesetzmäßigkeit entwickeln sollte.” Indeed, the building bears the ground plan features of early Cistercian churches such as Clairvaux or Fontenay (fig. 3 and 4), which are rooted entirely in the Burgundian architectural circle, but have little or nothing to do with the development of Gothic cathedral architecture in the Île-de-France. Nevertheless, in the next step, she recognizes for San Domenico in Bologna (fig. 5), a central branch of the Dominican Order and the burial place of the Order’s founder, St. Dominic: “Durch den Gründungsbau des Dominikanerordens wurde das System von Morimondo vor allem für die italienischen Predigerkirchen maßgeblich; indem es damit in die Bettelordensarchitektur Eingang gefunden hat, bildete es einen wichtigen Ausgangspunkt für die weitere Entwicklung der italienischen Gotik.”

Leaving aside the question of the emergence of the Gothic in Italy, which was in the foreground at the time, Renate Wagner–Rieger made an important discovery in the comparison of Morimondo and San Domenico: the adoption of Cistercian building principles by the mendicant orders. In other words, if you will, the transformation of building forms of a Benedictine reform order facing away from the world into the architecture of an urban preaching order turned towards the world – here, specifically, the flat-closing choir scheme that was initially characteristic of the Cistercians. This is all the more exciting because the two churches were built some 40 years apart, and this is an architectural "Rückgriff" in Krautheimer’s sense. Be that as it may, the example of both buildings, which is central to the theses of Wagner–Rieger’s habilitation thesis, clearly shows her systematic view, her interest in typological imprints of church architecture and their interrelationships. Typological distinctions within the architecture of the mendicant order existed early on in research, for example in Henry Thode’s book on San Francesco for Italy and in Richard Krautheimer’s dissertation for Germany, but they were mainly related to the nave type in order to clarify questions of regional and landscape distribution. Wagner–Rieger, on the other hand, sees the importance of the chancel.
where St. Dominic worked until his death in 1221 and where he was buried. The striking reference to the old Cistercian choir scheme in Bologna, which art historians still refer to as "Bernardine", can also be interpreted as a visible indication of the significance and spiritual location of the founding personality of the new order of preachers. Especially in regard to St. Bernard, who was a powerful crusading preacher and likely the most significant churchman of his century.

Her keen eye for the typology of religious churches also allowed Wagner-Rieger to make a surprising new discovery, namely the Dominican church of San Giovanni in Canale in Piacenza, which is the oldest surviving hall church of the Order of Preachers and had been completely unknown to researchers until then (fig. 7 and 8).

But it must not be forgotten that the Dominicans had arisen in the course of the fight against heresy in southern France in succession to the Cistercians’ mission there, which had failed, and had to leave under the warlike events of the Albigensian Crusade (1209–29), specifically to Paris and Bologna, where they reconstituted themselves. Bologna in particular became the new “headquarters” where St. Dominic worked until his death in 1221 and where he was buried. The striking reference to the old Cistercian choir scheme in Bologna, which art historians still refer to as “Bernardine”, can also be interpreted as a visible indication of the significance and spiritual location of the founding personality of the new order of preachers. Especially in regard to St. Bernard, who was a powerful crusading preacher and likely the most significant churchman of his century. Her keen eye for the typology of religious churches also allowed Wagner-Rieger to make a surprising new discovery, namely the Dominican church of San Giovanni in Canale in Piacenza, which is the oldest surviving hall church of the Order of Preachers and had been completely unknown to researchers until then (fig. 7 and 8). At the time, she probably had little idea of
What fascinated her initially, however, was not so much the early use of the hall church as the question of the derivation of the single-nave hall building, which played a prominent role in both orders in Italy into the 15th century. Starting with the lower church of San Francesco in Assisi, the tomb of the founder of the order, which Wagner-Rieger quite rightly saw as the counterpart to San Domenico in Bologna, she examined its ground plan as a combination of an apsidal transept and a single-nave nave (fig. 9). For this purpose, she drew, for the first time, on an astonishing range of examples of single-nave church buildings from the 11th and 12th centuries, which also show the most varied choir ends. For the west-orientated transept with directly connected apse, she referred to Old St. Peter, among others, and for an example of the vaulted nave, she used San Lanfranco in Pavia, a single-nave church with a transept built around the same time, which served as the burial place of a local bishop’s saint.

However, there is a methodological problem with her analysis of the single-nave building type in the example of Assisi, since the church is a two-storey structure, how often the concept of the hall church determined the beginnings of the Order of Preachers, and how it was built in two- or three-aisled form at important places of study such as Paris, Toulouse and Cologne, or pilgrimage centers such as Santiago de Compostela. She suspected its importance and placed the hall alongside the single-aisled complexes of the Franciscans as a manifestation of the utilitarian type. A short time later, she published a report on the research situation, in which she outlined the problems of the hall church in Italy. She recognized the dependence of San Giovanni on the hall transepts of the Piacenza Cathedral and conceded that the Dominican church was a model for the flat-roofed hall buildings of the mendicant orders in central Italy. However, she attributed the combination of a flat-roofed hall with a vaulted choir to older traditions or to the efforts of the mendicant orders to reduce, overlooking the fact that this structural peculiarity was laid down for the Dominicans in the order’s statute of 1228 in order to clearly distinguish between the lay and monastic areas, including the locations of the altars.

The discovery of San Giovanni in Piacenza also disproved the old idea that the mendicant churches had developed from simple hall concepts into three-aisled basilicas and hall churches, running through the typology in chronological order, as Richard Krautheimer suggests. The simple hall certainly played an important role in the beginning, but it is important to see that the mendicant orders made use of all types of buildings from the beginning, depending on the place and situation. One can even see the competition between the two main orders, the Dominicans and the Franciscans, in the choice of building types in one place or region. This is reflected to a certain extent in Wagner–Rieger’s distinction between types of representation and types of use, which will be discussed later.
which was already considered a uniform building project by the majority of researchers in Wagner–Rieger’s time. Thus, in her separate examination of the lower church, she evaded the question of the two-storey nature of the building and was forced to subscribe to the outdated view of an initially single-storey plan. Her subsequent stylistic comparisons then led her, via San Lanfranco in Pavia, to an ultimately southern French provenance of the forms.25

This reveals a fundamental problem in the typological determination of medieval church buildings. What is a type? The ground plan form as a whole, its composition, or parts of it? In many definitions of type, the elevation is undoubtedly part of it. Let us think of hall and basilica, which since the early 19th century have been understood as antipodes, as it were, even by Renate Wagner–Rieger, when she writes: “Man kann einschiffigen Saal und Halle unter dem Begriff der ‘antibasiliken’ Raumform zusammenfassen und der Basilika entgegenstellen.” and further outlines monastic architecture as an area: “wo Askese, Zweckgebundenheit oder lokale Tradition die Grundlage des ‘antibasilikalen Bauens’ bilden können.”26 “Antibasilikales Bauen” here refers unspokenly to the conflict within the church between monasticism and secular clergy. In the 19th century, the contrast between basilica and hall church still reflected the social divide between the clergy and the bourgeoisie.27 The gradation of the naves was an expression of superiority and subordination, while the same height signaled equality. A nave was then, thought of more broadly, probably the unified space. But San Francesco in Assisi? Two single-nave rooms, one above the other, as an expression of an anti-basilican attitude, an opposition to the secular clergy? Just think, the building is the burial place of a stigmatised (Christ-like) saint, whose order, closely following the Curia in Rome, had the task of binding the faithful more firmly to the Catholic Church. Here, however, the typology must be defined more precisely in outline and elevation, in order not to go wrong in the interpretation. San Francesco consists of a two-storey nave and a two-storey compact transept with superimposed apses. The former has its models in the double-storey bishop’s chapels of France, of which the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris is the culmination and an appropriation by the king. A high-ranking type, it shows elaborate examples in Reims and Paris.28 The towering, block-like transept in Assisi, on the other hand, refers to Montecassino, the mother church of the Benedictine order and burial place of its founder, St. Benedict. He was buried here in a huge crypt that took up the entire space under the transept, making it two-storeyed, so to speak. This variation, to be understood from Old St. Peter’s in Rome with its apse-wide Confessio, which Wagner–Rieger pointed out in the ground plan of the lower church, was used in the famous pilgrimage church of San Nicola in Bari and numerous bishop’s churches in southern Italy.29 Just as St. Bernard was an ecclesiastical model for St. Dominic, so St. Benedict was for Francis, as evidenced by his oldest portrait in Subiaco. The case of San Francesco in Assisi shows that the building type must be determined beyond questions of architectural history. For conception and execution are rarely congruent. Renate Wagner–Rieger, however, dealt very extensively with truly single-nave church buildings of the Franciscans in Central and Upper Italy and described them, in contrast to Assisi, as simple, non-vaulted utility types of the Order.30 In fact, she was probably the first to recognize a Franciscan formation in them, and also the probably oldest example of this: San Francesco in Cortona (1245–53).31 An elongated building built out of the hillside over a small crypt and ending in three straight closed and vaulted choir chapels in the east (fig. 10). For the type, it generally refers to single-nave monastic churches of smaller orders, interestingly San Giovanni in Fiore in Calabria (fig. 11),32 the tomb built after 1202 of Joachim of Fiore, founder of the Florians, whose end-time teachings were of considerable
Rather, they usually combined the three-apsidal end with monastery churches with several naves. Thus, it seems unnecessary to look for the origin of this conception in epochs long gone. The Cortona type is an innovation in the sense described. The combination of three chapels with a hall is a genuine Franciscan concept and not a reduced variant of the early Cistercian church building.35 Perhaps in deliberate variation and also in contrast to the Dominicans, who simply adopted the characteristic Cistercian closure. With the three chapels at the narrow end of the longitudinal rectangular nave, a triple arched opening was given on the choir side of the church, which defined the impression of the room. This choir arch motif was clearly and memorably visible to those entering the church as the focal point of the layout. If one considers the choir stalls, which are mostly lost today but were usually placed in front of this wall and surrounded by barriers in the Middle Ages, the choir wall must have looked to the observer like the back wall of a stage. The relationship between monk and layman is thus brought to a new formula: the choir side, in front of which the liturgical acts take place, becomes the display side. Coloured chapel windows and paintings, which were usually placed on the choir wall, underline this showcase character. It is also possible that the faithful in the Middle Ages associated the "three-arch motif" of the choir wall with the idea of "trinity". This three-arch motif still determines the large-scale building projects of the mendicant orders around 1300, where the choir chapels have a transept in order to be able to increase the number of chapels outside the nave walls (San Francesco and San Domenico in Siena). And even where the nave has several aisles, as in the largest church of the Franciscan Order, Santa Croce in Florence, there are only three chapels in the central nave. Here, the choir wall appears particularly as a display wall.36

Santa Croce in Florence also brings us to the question of the distinction between the representational type and functional type in Renate Wagner-Rieger’s work. She uses the first designation for the two burial churches of the founders of the order in Bologna and Assisi, the second for the early Dominican hall and the Franciscan triple-apsidal hall just discussed.37 Both distinctions are very stimulating, but at the same time "questionable" in the sense of the word. The church of the Dominicans in Bologna was low and of great simplicity, the one in the vineyards outside the city looked like a plain Cistercian building and must have impressed more with the spacious cloister. The settlement was indeed an important organisational centre
or completely reinvent them by breaking the rules, whereby expediency and representation always receive simultaneous attention, depending on the place and significance. Every church represents something specific in its place, which can be a tradition or something completely new. The "size" of the projects often overlooks the financial resources that are available or not available to build appropriate architecture. This is exciting to see in the example of Santa Croce in Florence, where a large building that is indeed representative architecturally still integrates the beginnings of the three-apsidal hall, described as the "utility type", into its concept.

Thus we can revise the four points that Renate Wagner-Rieger formulates as a conclusion at the end of her essay on the typology of Italian mendicant churches as follows: the Mendicants did not invent types of representation and use, but they did take up familiar church types, and in doing so, in the sense of Krautheimer, they also fell back on older ones, usually combined them in new ways and even invented them anew, such as the three-chapel hall. There is no architecture typical of the Order that uses building types across countries, as was the case with the Cistercians. However, the sharp distinction between lay and monastic areas in the church and on the exterior can be identified as an orderotypical feature in most of the architectural formations.

Beyond her antipodean conceptualization, Renate Wagner-Rieger has greatly advanced the study of religious architecture and especially the church architecture of the mendicant orders in her time. The latter is a mixture of building types, regionally integrated, so often characterized by recourse and also functional in the confrontation between lay public and monastic community. Her manifold references have given direction to research, especially in the field of building typology, which is why the study of Renate Wagner-Rieger’s writings on religious architecture in the Middle Ages is still extraordinarily profitable today.

Translation from German into English by Wolfgang Schenkluhn and Karoline Zawistowska.
NOTES


2 Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to meet Renate Wagner-Rieger during her lifetime, although I had been working on my dissertation on the architecture of the mendicant orders since 1978 and had already intensively studied her work, which my doctoral supervisor Hans-Joachim Kunst had brought to my attention. We greatly appreciated her stimulating writings and were very saddened by the news of her sudden death.


6 Richard Krautheimer, Die Kirchen der Bettelorden in Deutschland (Köln: Marcan-Verlag, 1925); Werner Gross, Die abendländische Architektur um 1300 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1948), 290–346.

7 Gross, Abendländische Architektur.


10 Wagner–Rieger, Italienische Baukunst, Vol. 1, 94.

11 Thode, Franz von Assisi; Krautheimer, Bettelorden.


17 Wagner–Rieger, Typologie, 298.

18 Renate Wagner-Rieger, "Italianische Hallenkirchen (Zur Forschungsfrage)," Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für vergleichende Kunstforschung 12, No. 3 (1960): 127135.

19 Wagner–Rieger, Hallenkirchen, 131, an observation I developed further in my PhD diss., see: Schenkluhn, Ordines Studentes, 104–105. For the further influence of San Giovanni see: Wagner–Rieger, Hallenkirchen, 131 and Schenkluhn, Ordines Studentes, 106–110.

20 Wagner–Rieger, Hallenkirchen, 130 and the same, Typologie, 273. To the Order rule: Schenkluhn, Ordines Studentes, 92.

21 Krautheimer, Bettelorden, 13ff.


23 Wagner–Rieger, Typologie, 276.


REFERENCES


Giura, Giovanni. San Francesco di Assisi: opere, fonti e contesti per la storia della Toscan – na francesca [Firenze: Mandragora 2018]. But the special type of the three-chapel hall remains unaffected, especially as the study admits a predecessor building with a similar scheme. Here, a precise architectural investigation of the over-formed building would be urgently required. See also note 35.


Schenkluhn, Bettelorden, 177–182.

Wagner–Rieger, Typologie, 269.


ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

„Repräsentations– und Gebrauchstypen” — Renate Wagner–Rieger und die Bettelordensarchitektur

SAŽETAK

„Reprezentativni i funkcionalni tipovi”
— Renate Wagner-Rieger i arhitektura prosjačko-
propovjedničkih redova

Renate Wagner-Rieger u svojim istraživanjima gotičke talijanske sakralne arhitekture istaknula je važnost razdoblja prije i poslije 1200. godine za sakralne arhitekturu općenito, a posebno za cistercitsku. Iako se cistercitska arhitektura, osobito rane pojave, više ne smatra nositeljem gotičkih oblika u Europi, Wagner-Rieger je prepoznala važne poticaje za promjenu receptije i tipologije gradnje sakralne arhitekture u različitim regijama južno od Alpa. Između ostalog, istaknula je utjecaj cistercitskog na arhitekturu redovničko-prosjačkih redova, i posebno na preuzimanje tipova sve-tišta. U tom je procesu uvidjela i važnost jednostavnih tipova gradnje starih i manjih redovničkih zajednica za nove redove, zbog čega njezinu istraživanje i danas ima potencijala za kritičko preispitanje tradicionalne arhitektonske tipologije, koja je bila striktno usmjerena prema brodu. Prepoznala je i početke franjevačke dvoranske crkve ne shvaćajući tada njezinu inovativno značenje. Renate Wagner-Rieger je nedvojbeno posjedovala iznimnu sposobnost prepoznavanja različitih tipova arhitekture, što ju je na kraju usmjerilo prema distinkciji reprezentativnih i funkcionalnih tipova. Premda ostaje pitanje je li to ipak posljedica shvaćanja stila 19. stoljeća ili perspektive srednjeg vijeka. Namjera ovog priloga je stoga pozabaviti se konceptualizacijama, uvidima i metodološkim pristupima Renate Wagner-Rieger sakralnoj arhitekturi i ispitati njihovu važnost u suvremenim istraživanjima.

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