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SAINT-FLORENT OF SAUMUR AND THE ORIGIN  
OF THE »BAYEUX« TAPESTRY\*

In this paper I am presenting a new hypothesis about who commissioned the Bayeux Tapestry (commonly referred to as such although it is actually an embroidery) and where it was produced. The uncertainty about its origin comes from the fact that the tapestry itself does not identify who ordered it, nor for whom, nor when and where it was made. Complicating the affair is a second fact, that the tapestry is not mentioned by any other contemporary source, with the possible exception of a poem of about 1100. The first undisputed reference to it comes from an inventory of Bayeux cathedral of 1476, about 400 years after its production. As a consequence everything that can be known about the above questions, i.e. origin, commissioner, date, place, has to be inferred from the tapestry itself.

For almost a century scholars have believed that southern England (most likely possibility, St. Augustine's abbey, Canterbury) was the place of production of the Bayeux Tapestry on the basis of its artistic affinities with illuminated manuscripts at that abbey in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century. For a number of reasons they have also believed that Odo bishop of Bayeux and half-brother of the Conqueror commissioned it.

In my hypothesis I propose that William the Conqueror (and, perhaps, or, Queen Mathilda) commissioned the tapestry to be made at the Loire valley abbey of Saint-Florent of Saumur. There are five elements in my hypothesis, and since I am summarizing the contents of a small book I will be limited to generalities and unable to go into much detail. Still I believe it essential that all of these elements figure in my presentation so as to give an idea of the hypothesis as a whole. There will certainly be reactions to this proposal from those who have accepted the English hypothesis, and I will address these in a final section of my paper, »Anticipated objections«.

First some introductory background on the abbey of Saint-Florent of Saumur (see map, fig. 1). This abbey's history is little known today due to the lack of modern historical scholarship on it. Altogether perhaps twenty articles have been written on it, but not a single book length monograph other than Maurice Hamon's unpublished thesis from 1971<sup>1</sup>. One might think that this has been due to the lack of original

\* This is an English version of a talk given at the German Historical Institute in Paris Oct. 16, 2003. – The numbering of scenes follows *WILLOWS* (see note 37).

1 No full scale work has yet been published on this abbey. A XVII<sup>th</sup> century, *Histoire générale du monastere de Saint-Florent près Saumur*, by Dom Jean HUYNES survives in manuscript (Paris, BNF, ms. français, 19862, and at the departmental archives of the Maine-et-Loire in Angers, H 3746). Also still unpublished is the thesis of Maurice HAMON, *Les origines de l'abbaye de Saint-Florent-lès-Saumur. Histoire des monastères du Montglonne et du château de Saumur. V<sup>e</sup>/VI<sup>e</sup> siècles–1026*, École nationale des chartes, *Positions des Thèses* 1971, p. 95–102. In addition to these, several historians have recently written on selected aspects of the abbey's history of which I mention here only

sources, but in fact it is the very opposite, the overabundance of charters which has discouraged research on the subject. Mainly because most of them are unpublished, thus difficult of access (in the Archives départementales de Maine-et-Loire in Angers)<sup>2</sup>. A second factor: almost nothing remains today of the medieval abbey church and buildings, hence art historians have paid little attention to it.

A brief summary of the history of Saint-Florent begins with its foundation at Montglonne in the western Loire valley in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century. Viking invasions brought about the abandonment of this site in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and led to the monks resettling at Saumur in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. In 1026 conflict resulted in the destruction of the abbey by the count of Anjou (Fulk Nerra) and the reestablishment of the abbey community at Saint-Hilaire-Saint-Florent just outside Saumur. From the mid-eleventh through the 13<sup>th</sup> century the abbey went through a period of exceptional expansion. The monks constructed a new abbey church<sup>3</sup> known as the *Belle d'Anjou* in medieval times (see fig. 2, a late 17<sup>th</sup> century drawing of the entire monastic complex), then came the creation of a notable abbey school. At the same time the abbey began to acquire dependant priories, parish churches, lands, and rents, in England, Wales, Brittany, Normandy, Anjou, Poitou, Berry, the Saintonge, the Angoumois, the Perigord, and the Bordelais. By 1300 it owned over 100 priories, and had become the center of a great Benedictine empire in Western France rivalling that of Marmoutiers in the Touraine.

The first element in my hypothesis about Saint-Florent concerns the existence of a textile workshop at the abbey at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Everything known about this workshop comes from a 43 line passage in the *Historia Sancti Florentii Salmuriensis*, a history of the abbey written there late in the 12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>. This passage is practically unknown to textile historians and it has never been studied.

those concerned with the later eleventh-century. Maurice HAMON, Un aspect de la reconstruction monastique dans l'Ouest: les relations entre Saint-Florent de Saumur et les abbayes de la Loire moyenne (950–1206 environ), in: Bulletin philologique et historique du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques (1979), p. 87–94; William ZIEZULEWICZ, Restored churches in the Fisc of St. Florent de Saumur 1021–1118. Reform Ideology or Economic Motivation?, in: Revue Bénédictine 96 (1986), p. 106–117; ID., Étude d'un faux monastique à une période de réforme: une charte de Charles le Chauve pour Saint-Florent de Saumur du 8 juin 848, in: Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale 28 (1985), p. 201–211; ID., Abbatial Elections at St. Florent de Saumur ca. 950–1118, in: Church History 57 (1988), p. 289–297; Jane MARTINDALE, Monasteries and Castles: the priories of St. Florent de Saumur in England after 1066, in: Carole HICKS (ed.), England in the Eleventh Century, Stamford 1992 (Harlaxton Medieval Studies, 2), p. 135–56; George BEECH, Urban II, the Abbey of Saint-Florent of Saumur, and the First Crusade, in: Autour de la première croisade. Actes du Colloque de la Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East, Clermont-Ferrand, 22–25 Juin 1995, Paris 1997, p. 62–64; Barbara WATKINSON, A case study on the revival of stone quarrying in the late XI<sup>th</sup> century: St. Florent de Saumur and Notre Dame de Noyers, in: Journal of Medieval History 16 (1990), p. 113–128; Olivier GUILLOT, La renaissance de l'abbaye de Saint-Florent et la naissance de Saumur, in: Hubert LANDAIS (ed.), Histoire de Saumur, Toulouse 1997, p. 49–63; Célestin PORT, Dictionnaire historique, géographique et biographique de Maine et Loire, t. 3, Angers 1878, p. 359–363.

2 The only exception to this is the charters edited (according to region; e. g. Normandy,) by Paul MARCHEGAY (see, for example, note 20) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

3 Jacques MALLET, L'art roman de l'ancien Anjou, Paris 1984, p. 44–50, 161–169.

4 *Historia Sancti Florentii Salmurensis*, in: Paul MARCHEGAY, Émile MABILLE (ed.), Chroniques des églises d'Anjou, recueillies et publiées pour la Société de l'histoire de France, Paris 1869, p. 258–259.

Scholars of the Bayeux Tapestry are unaware of it<sup>5</sup>. To judge from C. R. Dodwell's 1994 survey of the textile arts in the early Middle Ages, it is the earliest description of a textile workshop in the medieval west<sup>6</sup>. It contains what amounts to an inventory, written in strikingly rich language, of the tapestries, textiles, hangings, etc. produced by and in the possession of the abbey under the rule of Abbot Robert (985–1011).

This inventory indicates that the local workers wove textiles of wool, *magnarum ex lana dossalium cortinarum* (the Bayeux Tapestry is made of wool on plain linen), as well as precious ones of silk and gold thread<sup>7</sup>. It also describes, »others of great length and suitable width with lions of shining appearance against crimson backgrounds, with white borders decorated with red animals and birds«<sup>8</sup>. The plain borders of the Bayeux Tapestry are decorated with animals and birds.

According to the Saint-Florent historian the distinction of its textiles made it famous well beyond the Loire valley region. He tells how that the Capetian King Robert the Pious and Queen Constance showed their admiration for the abbey's collection by making costly gifts of their own to add to it, and he relates that, »two of the finest tapestries have been commissioned by a certain queen from overseas«. In all probability this was Queen Emma of England (1002–1035)<sup>9</sup>.

The count of Anjou's destruction of the abbey in Saumur castle in 1026 presumably interrupted textile production (though some of the hangings described in the inventory survived until later times), but the workshop was reinstalled at the new site and continued to function actively until at least the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century. Given the contacts between the Saint-Florent workshop and royalty in Paris and England, it seems reasonable to believe that William the Conqueror would have heard of it during his reign as king of England.

The second element in my Saint-Florent hypothesis is the personal relationship between Duke/King William of Normandy/England, and Abbot William of Saint-Florent of Saumur, 1070–1118, which could have led to the commissioning and production of the Bayeux Tapestry. Those two men had come to know one another by the time of the campaign which Duke William led against Conan Count of Rennes in 1064 in order to protect his western frontier with Brittany. The Breton lord of Dol controlled that part of Brittany along the Norman frontier, and, as *advocatus* of the cathedral chapter he chose the bishops of Dol – who themselves had recently succeeded in persuading the papal legate (the future Pope Gregory VII) to transform their episcopal see into an archbishopric, ruling all of Brittany. In 1063 Duke William of Normandy persuaded the Breton lord of Dol, Rivallon, to become his vassal and to side with him in the defence of the frontier.

5 For an edition, translation, and discussion of this passage see George BEECH, *Was the Bayeux Tapestry made in France? The Case for St. Florent of Saumur*, New York 2005, p. 10–15.

6 Charles R. DODWELL, *The Pictorial Arts of the West 800–1200*, New Haven 1994, p. 30.

7 *Historia Sancti Florentii* (see note 4), p. 258.

8 *Item clarissima leonum specie multae longitudinis sed et latitudine competenti sanguineos gestantes campos alios fecerunt in quibus margo erat candidus, bestiae vel aves rubeae* (ibid.).

9 *Duo etiam praecipua tapeta a transmarinis partibus a quadam regina directa sunt* (ibid.); for discussion of this passage, BEECH (see note 5), p. 13–15.

In 1064 hostilities broke out between the Norman duke and Conan count of Rennes. The Bayeux Tapestry is one of the two essential sources on the Breton campaign, a subject to be discussed below. Soon after the Breton campaign Rivallon of Dol, who had fought with Duke William of Normandy, died and was succeeded by his son William. This William then abandoned his lordship shortly before 1066 to convert to the monastic life at Saint-Florent of Saumur on the Loire. In 1070 while still a young man he was named abbot of Saint-Florent where he reigned nearly 50 years and became a prelate of great distinction in the monastic world of his day<sup>10</sup>.

The 1070's witnessed a new development in the history of the Saumur abbey, its acquisition of priories, parishes, lands, and revenues in Normandy and England. This expansion was without precedent in the history of Saint-Florent, the abbey not having had possessions in either place in earlier times. Moreover the end result was that Saint-Florent was more richly endowed in both places than any other French monastery outside the duchy of Normandy with the exception of Marmoutiers. William the Conqueror played a central role in this expansion, in that he was personally involved in all the transactions concerning Saint-Florent, either as donor, or, more commonly, as confirmer of the gifts of his subjects<sup>11</sup>. The personal involvement of Abbot William in his abbey's moves into England and Normandy is equally clear. The author of the *Historia Sancti Florentii Salmurensis* wrote, »everything that we have in England we have acquired due to the merit of his (i. e. Abbot William's) religious life«<sup>12</sup>.

The personal support given by the two Williams to the expansion of the abbey of Saumur into Normandy and England suggests to me that this was the execution of an undertaking planned by the two men, and leads to the hypothesis which underlies this article and my book. To me it seems plausible that as a result of their personal relationship established at Dol two years before the Conquest, King William of England commissioned the hanging known later as the Tapestry of Bayeux, for production at the abbey of Saint-Florent. Having become acquainted with the textile workshop through Abbot William he conceived the idea of having a tapestry made to celebrate his English victory and turned the task over to the abbey. Then he compensated Abbot William and his abbey for their services by making, or encouraging others to make, the endowments mentioned above.

Since there is no proof for it, this reconstruction is only an hypothesis, but I find it otherwise difficult to explain why the Duke of Normandy/King of England should have shown such generosity to an abbey so far removed from his normal spheres of influence. His actions suggest that he felt a sense of unusual obligation to the Saumur abbey. And his was not an isolated act of the royal family. Another instance of their gratitude to the Loire valley abbey was Queen Mathilda's gift of a golden chalice to abbot William sometime prior to 1083<sup>13</sup>.

10 It is possible that he owed his meteoric rise to the abbatial office to the intervention of William of Normandy and England, who may have been seeking to extend his influence into Anjou. I develop this hypothesis in an appendix of my book (p. 103-105).

11 Ibid., p. 20-21.

12 *et quicquid habemus in Anglia merito suae religionis adquisivit*, *Historia Sancti Florentii* (see note 4), p. 303.

13 *Illum (i.e. calicem) videlicet quem eis regina Anglorum Mathildis dederat*, from an unpublished Saint-Florent charter of 1093. Arch. Dép. de Maine-et-Loire, Angers, H 3041, No. 3. Marc SACHÉ,

Here I would like to make a brief diversion to answer the question: could the Saumur region have supplied the raw materials necessary for the making of a great hanging such as the Bayeux Tapestry, i. e. the linen and the wool? The answer is an emphatic yes. A recent excavation brought to light evidence of textile production at Distre three km southwest of Saumur in the Carolingian period. In his 1982 monograph on »Les campagnes angevines à la fin du Moyen Âge (1350–1550)«, Michel Le Mené points to Saumur as a regional center of local production of both kinds of cloth in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Their unusually rich soil and a favorable location along the Loire river facilitating exchanges with the town, resulted in an exceptional concentration of small farms around Saumur where peasants raised sheep and cultivated flax widely. It seems reasonable to assume that in the 11<sup>th</sup> century the Saint-Florent workshop would have had a ready made local supply of the linen and wool needed for tapestries like that of Bayeux.

The third element in my hypothesis is the existence of artistic resemblances between the Bayeux Tapestry and romanesque art (wall paintings, sculptured capitals, and illuminated manuscripts) from western France, the regions of the West (the Loire valley) and the Center (Poitou/Charente)<sup>14</sup>. I believe these resemblances support the possibility of a Saumur provenance for the tapestry. To begin with, a mural painting from the later 11<sup>th</sup> century discovered in 1992 in the parish church of Saint-Hilaire-du-Bois near Vihiers, 38 km southwest of Saumur, pictures an unidentified saint whose head projects curiously to the right and in this respect resembles closely several people in the Bayeux Tapestry. The soldier in scene 17 listening to Duke William is an example. What is interesting about this Vihiers saint is that this church belonged to the Angevin network of parishes under the patronage of Saint-Florent of Saumur. Thus an artist from the abbey may have painted this scene. If the designer of the tapestry was then working at the abbey it is conceivable that the Vihiers artist borrowed this trait from him<sup>15</sup>.

The presentation of lions tails in the Bayeux Tapestry offers another example of its artistic affinities with the art of western France in this period. About 100 of the 150 lions in the tapestry have tails which drop down behind the animals, pass between the legs, then rise up one side to the back (and in this case into the mouth). Scholars have proposed that these curious tails – called Bayeux Tapestry lions' tails – came either from Anglo-Saxon precedents or from the Middle East<sup>16</sup>. However studies of romanesque sculpture show that they were widespread in the Loire valley and Poitou in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Such a lion's tail appears on a sculptured capital on one of

Inventaire sommaire des Archives départementales antérieures à 1790. Maine-et-Loire, Archives ecclésiastiques. Série H, t. 2: Abbaye de Saint-Florent de Saumur, Angers 1926, p. 272. For the possibility that Mathilda commissioned the tapestry see BEECH (see note 5), p. 35–36, and Appendix B, p. 107–109.

14 Ibid., Chapter IV, p. 37–60.

15 Christian DAVY, *La peinture murale romane dans les pays de la Loire. L'indicible et le ruban plissé*, Laval 1999, p. 234–236.

16 William B. YAPP, *Animals in Medieval Art. The Bayeux Tapestry as an Example*, in: *Journal of Medieval History* 13 (1987), p. 15–73 at p. 64–67; Carole HICKS, *The Borders of the Bayeux Tapestry, England in the eleventh century*, Stamford 1992 (*Harlaxton Medieval Studies*, 2), p. 251–266; ID., *Animals in early Medieval Art*, Edinburgh 1993, p. 254.

the rare columns left from the 12<sup>th</sup> century abbey church at Saint-Florent. Another one is to be found on a capital from the church of St. Nicholas of Bramber castle in Sussex. One of the first English acquisitions of Saint-Florent after the Conquest, this church was built after 1073, presumably by monks from Saumur. The presence of these lions tails in Bramber is consistent with the hypothesis of the tapestry coming from Saumur.

The man with the protruding jaw and the strange lion's tails are admittedly artistic details and have at best limited importance, but a third category of resemblances is, I believe, more significant. This is the portrayal of at least ten, and perhaps many more, of Aesop's fables in animals shown in the borders of the Bayeux Tapestry. Scholars are in agreement that the designer of the tapestry must have known of these from Latin translations of the fables made in early medieval times, and have sought to find the manuscript(s) from which he could have borrowed. On the assumption that the tapestry was designed in England the search has concentrated on manuscripts of English origin, and in 2002 Michael Lapidge and Jill Mann identified two which together would have supplied the Latin texts of the fables in question and which would have been available to the artist at the time<sup>17</sup>.

The same question to have troubled specialists assuming an English provenance for the tapestry arises in connection with my hypothesis of its origin in Saint-Florent of Saumur. What could have been the version of Aesop's fables available to a designer on the Loire valley in western France? In fact the Leiden University Library manuscript Voss Latin 815, folios 195–204, contains Adémar of Chabannes' (a monk at the abbey of Saint-Cybard of Angoulême, † c. 1034) own handwritten copy of the late antique Latin translation of the Greek original known as the Romulus version. Not only did he copy the Latin text of the Romulus version but this monk from the Angoumois, a prolific author in other genres, illustrated the fables with drawings, thereby creating a basis for a visual comparison between his art and that of the tapestry. Tapestry scholars have never taken this manuscript into consideration.

When she studied these drawings in a 1967 article, the French art historian Danielle Gaborit noticed similarities between four of the eight fable illustrations in Adémar and those in the Bayeux Tapestry, but taking for granted the hypothesis of an English origin for the tapestry, she did not examine the possibility that the designer might have borrowed from the Leiden manuscript<sup>18</sup>. Starting with what Gaborit had found I extended the comparison to take into account all the fable illustrations in Adémar's manuscript with all the drawings in the tapestry and have added six more examples to the list. In addition to these there is the fact that of the ten lions

17 Michael LAPIDGE, Jill MANN, *Reconstructing the Anglo-Latin Aesop: the Literary Tradition of the Hexametrical Romulus*, in: Michael W. HERREN, Christopher J. McDONOUGH, Ross G. ARTHUR (ed.), *Latin Culture in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. Proceedings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Medieval Latin Studies, Cambridge, Sept. 1998*, vol. 2 Turnhout 2002, p. 1–33. One of the reasons for their supposing a third version of the fables to have existed is that »no single one of the surviving literary sources – the Romulus Nilanti, the Hexametrical Romulus, Marie (de France) – corresponds in every detail to the fables represented on the Tapestry« (ibid., p. 23).

18 Danielle GABORIT-CHOPIN, *Les dessins d'Adémar de Chabannes*, in: *Bulletin archéologique du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, nouv. sér.* 3 (1967), p. 163–224 at p. 178–186.

figuring in the Adémar drawings, six have the strange Bayeux tails noted above, just about the same proportion as those in the tapestry<sup>19</sup>. Finally it should be noted that the case for the tapestry designer having borrowed from the Adémar manuscript is based on that author's own drawings accompanying his Latin texts of the fables. The English manuscripts cited by Mann and Lapidge lack any drawings and contain only the Latin texts.

One last consideration. How might an artist working at Saumur on the Loire valley have known about and had access to a manuscript written by an early 11<sup>th</sup> century monk at an abbey some 200 km to the south? The monks of Saumur had eight dependant priories in the Angoumois by 1060 and these could have furnished the occasion for relations between the two abbeys and have acquainted an artist from Saumur with Adémar's manuscript<sup>20</sup>.

The above citation of artistic affinities between elements in the Bayeux Tapestry and sculptured capitals, a mural painting, and drawings in a fables manuscript from Anjou, Poitou, and the Angoumois, is only the beginning of a large art historical examination of an impressive number of romanesque monuments from the Loire valley and Poitou/Charentes. A survey of modern scholarship on these monuments reveals that much of it is still quite new. For instance the first full scale study of romanesque wall paintings in the Loire valley came out in 1999 and the author estimated that over 50% of his illustrations had never before been published<sup>21</sup>. One striking finding was the lack of any references to the Bayeux Tapestry in the indices of the monographs and editions I consulted. This suggests that none of these authors had looked for artistic affinities between the tapestry and romanesque paintings and sculpture from the Ouest or the Centre, presumably because it never occurred to them that contacts and borrowings could have taken place. The dominance of the English thesis for the past half-century surely explains this fact. If the hypothesis I advance here proves to be a credible one, then such comparisons could be a fruitful subject for further inquiry.

The fourth, and the most important, element in my Saumur hypothesis is indications of a Saint-Florent influence in the presentation of the so-called Breton campaign (scenes 18–24) in the Bayeux Tapestry. This episode which occupies about a tenth of the whole hanging, and comes toward the beginning, is the only one which might indicate a direct relation between the tapestry and the abbey of the Loire valley abbey. The campaign takes place in northeastern Brittany near the Norman frontier and the town of Dol has a central position in it. As seen above Dol was a place of vital concern to both the Conqueror and to Abbot William of Saint-Florent. More than any other episode in the tapestry this one has troubled modern scholars in that it appears to deviate inexplicably from the established written tradition presented in the *Gesta Guillelmi* of William of Poitiers. Moreover its function in the tapestry as a whole is not obvious, thus leading to the question: why did the designer decide to include it in his story? My analysis of it has persuaded me that the designer has con-

19 BEECH (see note 5), p. 49–59.

20 Paul MARCHEGAY (ed.), Chartes de Saint-Florent-près-Saumur concernant l'Angoumois, in: Bulletin de la Société archéologique et historique de la Charente (1877), p. 5–32.

21 DAVY (see note 15), p. 6.



ceived and presented this sequence from the Breton perspective of William fitz Rivallon, abbot of Saint-Florent, who had earlier been lord of Dol, and that seen from this perspective it becomes comprehensible in a new way<sup>22</sup>.

A comparison of the tapestry's version of this episode with that of the historian William of Poitiers brings out the distinctive features of the former. In the first section of his account the Norman historian tells how, »the whole of Brittany was ... up in arms against him (Duke William of Normandy)«, and the latter responded by arming Harold (then in his custody) and his men in order to take them along with him on the campaign, the *bellum britannicum*, as he calls it<sup>23</sup>. Then he provides some background for the Breton uprising: it was a revolt led by Conan Count of Rennes who was seeking to free himself from vassalage to the Duke of Normandy by threatening to attack the Norman frontier on a given date<sup>24</sup>. After this comes a short segment describing the barbarism of Breton warriors<sup>25</sup>. Only in the fourth section does William treat the campaign itself. First Duke William's army rides to the frontier at the date announced by Conan, a move which frightens the Count of Rennes who was then besieging nearby Dol castle. The latter was defended by its lord, Rivallon, a Norman ally and father of the William who later became abbot of Saint-Florent. In an obscure passage William of Poitiers tells how Conan ignored the plea of Rivallon that he stay on the scene for two more days and instead turned to flight<sup>26</sup>. In the final segment of the *Gesta Guillelmi* Duke William first decides against any further pursuit of Conan for fear of lack of provisions for his men. But then after having crossed the frontier on his march back to Normandy, William is told that Conan, now allied with the Count of Anjou, is coming back to do battle with him, so he returns to the Dol region for that confrontation. But the report proved to be false and the campaign comes to an end with Conan and his army still intact in central Brittany<sup>27</sup>.

The tapestry designer presents the Breton war in a sequence of six scenes immediately following the portrayal of Aelfgyva and the cleric (scene 17), and it apparently has nothing to do with that enigmatic encounter. He begins with the march of the Norman army to Mont-Saint-Michel (fig. 3 and 4), and accompanies this with the inscription, *Hic Willelmus dux et exercitus eius venerunt ad Montem Michaelis* – »Here Duke William and his army have come to Mont Michael«. In contrast to William of Poitiers the artist offers nothing in the way of background to the campaign, nothing on Conan's motivations or supposed threat. Nor does the artist have anything to say on Breton barbarism as does William of Poitiers. The reference to Mont-Saint-Michel (of which William of Poitiers made no mention), has puzzled modern commentators since the army passes in front of the abbey and no meeting is taking place. Then comes a depiction of men and horses crossing the river Couesnon (fig. 5): *Et hic transierunt flumen Cosnonis* – »And here they have crossed the river Couesnon«. In a second, parenthetical, inscription placed just below the first one,

22 BEECH (see note 5) Chapt. V, p. 61–88.

23 *Gesta Guillelmi* of William of Poitiers, ed. Ralph H. C. DAVIS, Marjorie CHIBNALL, Oxford 1998, p. 70, 72.

24 *Ibid.*

25 *Ibid.*, p. 72, 74.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 74, 76.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 76.

the artist explains why he has included this scene. *Hic Harold dux trahebat eos de arena* – »And here Duke Harold was dragging them from the sand«. The picture of the horse floundering, and the soldiers wading, in the water, together with Harold carrying two men to shore, means that the Englishman came to the rescue of some who were caught in quicksand. Next (fig. 5, 6) the designer shows armed horsemen riding to Dol 25 km to the southwest. *Et venerunt ad Dol* – »And they have come to Dol«. And a second inscription adds: *Et Cunan fugam vertit* – »And Conan turns to flight«. The artist here has used the present tense for a sense of greater immediacy. With one exception William of Poitiers and the tapestry artist agree rather closely on what happened at Dol, namely, that the arrival of the Norman knights provoked Conan's flight. The exception is the unnamed figure sliding or climbing down a rope suspended from the ramparts of Dol castle to the ground. Who he is has remained a mystery to the tapestry experts, and a number of different explanations have been proposed.

After the Dol incident the designer and William of Poitiers part company completely and the last two stages of the campaign as pictured in the tapestry are absent in the *Gesta Guillelmi*. From Dol the tapestry shows (fig. 6) the army marching to Rennes, 54 km to the south, identified simply by its name; *Rednes* – Rennes, and passing the castle without any fighting. From here it reverses directions, marching 50 km to the northwest to Dinan (fig. 7), itself only 13 km from Dol. Here a battle takes place for the first time in the campaign with the Norman knights attacking the castle garrison at Dinan. The artist specifies: *Hic milites Willelmi ducis pugnant cum dinantes* – »Here the knights of Duke William are fighting (present tense again) the men of Dinan«. The battle ends when Conan surrenders the keys to the city on the end of his spear to a Norman besieger (fig. 8). *Et Cunan claves porrexit* – »And Conan has handed over the keys«. The imagery used here has both intrigued and baffled the specialists, though the basic meaning of a Norman victory and the defeat of Conan is not in doubt<sup>28</sup>.

This comparison of the two versions brings out that the two authors agree on one part of the campaign, Dol, but differ on all the rest, and particularly on the outcome. For the tapestry designer presents it as a decisive Norman victory over the Breton count of Rennes, whereas for William of Poitiers it was merely the Duke of Normandy's successful defense of the Norman frontier against Conan's threat. These differences can only lead to the question: What actually happened in the Breton campaign? Which one of these accounts is closest to the truth? In general scholars have favored that of William of Poitiers; he after all was an historian, and some have viewed the tapestry artist as a propagandist, but most continue to consider the tapestry as an indispensable source for the history of the Conquest<sup>29</sup>.

In part their divergences may stem from differences between the media they used – the one employing a basically pictorial, the other a literary narrative. It more likely, however, that they differed because they drew on different sources of information. In his narration of most of the events in the Conquest of England as depicted in the entire tapestry, the designer is in general agreement with the two principle historical

28 BEECH (see note 5), p. 74–75.

29 Ibid., p. 78–83.

accounts by William of Poitiers and William of Jumièges. It is not certain that he had actually read or was actually influenced by those two historians but, as one modern scholar has written, it seems reasonable to believe, »that the writer (William of Poitiers) and the designer were drawing on common traditions«<sup>30</sup>. As discussed above the designer certainly borrowed from written sources for his presentation of the animal fables in the tapestry borders.

For his presentation of the Breton campaign, however, the scenes at Mont-Saint-Michel, the Couesnon, Rennes, and Dinan, there can be no doubt about the designers' sources of information. No other medieval author whose writings survive today mentions them<sup>31</sup>, they are known only through the tapestry. Thus the designer must have based his presentation of these events on oral accounts, descriptions given him by people knowledgeable about what had happened<sup>32</sup>. Or, on his own personal acquaintance with what had happened. A number of different elements in his portrayal of the Breton campaign point to this latter possibility. He pictures and names five different places in this short sequence – Mont-Saint-Michel, the Couesnon river, Dol, Rennes, and Dinan. In all the rest of the tapestry he names only six more – Bosham (scene 1), Beaurain (9–10), Bayeux (25), *Anglica Terra* (27), Pevensey (42), and Hastings (three times, 45, 49, 54). Why such an exceptional emphasis on this part of Brittany? Conceivably because the English and the Normans, the peoples most likely to be interested in seeing the tapestry, were ignorant of that region and would, in the designer's view, need special guidance in order to follow the story. But more likely because he was better acquainted with this region than with any other in the tapestry. His way of referring to Mont-Saint-Michel is also of interest. He names and pictures just two other churches in the tapestry, both in England, and in each case he adds the word *ecclesia* to their names: *ad ecclesiam Bosham* (scene 2–3); and *ad ecclesiam Sancti Petri Apostoli* (scene 29–30). He can leave *Montem Michaelis* (scene 18) unidentified as a church/abbey because he's familiar with it and assumes it needs no identification, unlike the two in England. Also noteworthy is the fact that the Couesnon is the only river he takes the trouble to name in the tapestry. Moreover he knows the local topography, placing the Couesnon just where it belongs, close to the abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel, and he is aware of the treacherous quicksands at the mouth of the river, a detail of local interest. In the opinion of René Lepelley, who studied the inscriptions, his names for two of the places in the Breton campaign, the Couesnon (*Cosnonis*) and Rennes (*Rednes*) come from French forms for those names<sup>33</sup>.

30 Richard GAMESON, *The Origin, Art, and Message of the Bayeux Tapestry*, in: *The Study of the Bayeux Tapestry*, Woodbridge 1997, p. 1.

31 No Breton narrative sources exist today for this period though it is possible that there were some now lost from which the designer borrowed. It is highly improbable that a now lost Norman or northern French chronicle would have been known only to the Tapestry designer and not also to other contemporary historians such as William of Poitiers.

32 The siege of Dol is an exception to this generalization; William of Poitiers wrote on it in detail, and the similarities between their two accounts may mean that they drew upon a common source of information unknown today, or that one may have known and borrowed from the other.

33 René LEPELLEY, *A Contribution to the Study of the Inscriptions in the Bayeux Tapestry*, in: *Study* (see note 30), p. 39–45 at p. 40.

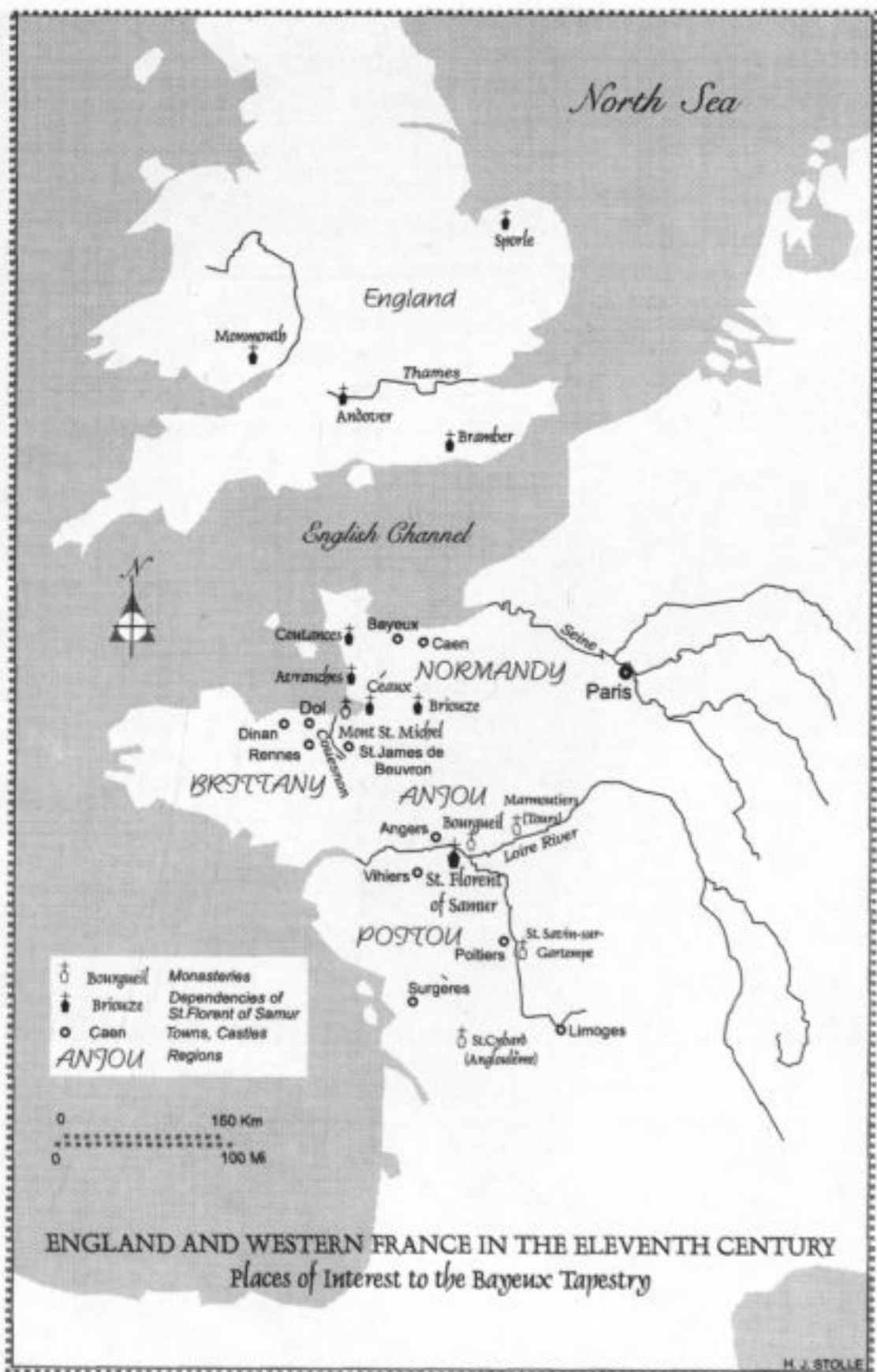


Figure 1: Map of Western France and England in the Eleventh-Century. H. J. Stolle.



Figure 2: Drawing, 1699, of the abbey of Saint-Florent of Saumur, BNF, dép. des estampes, Coll. Gaignières.

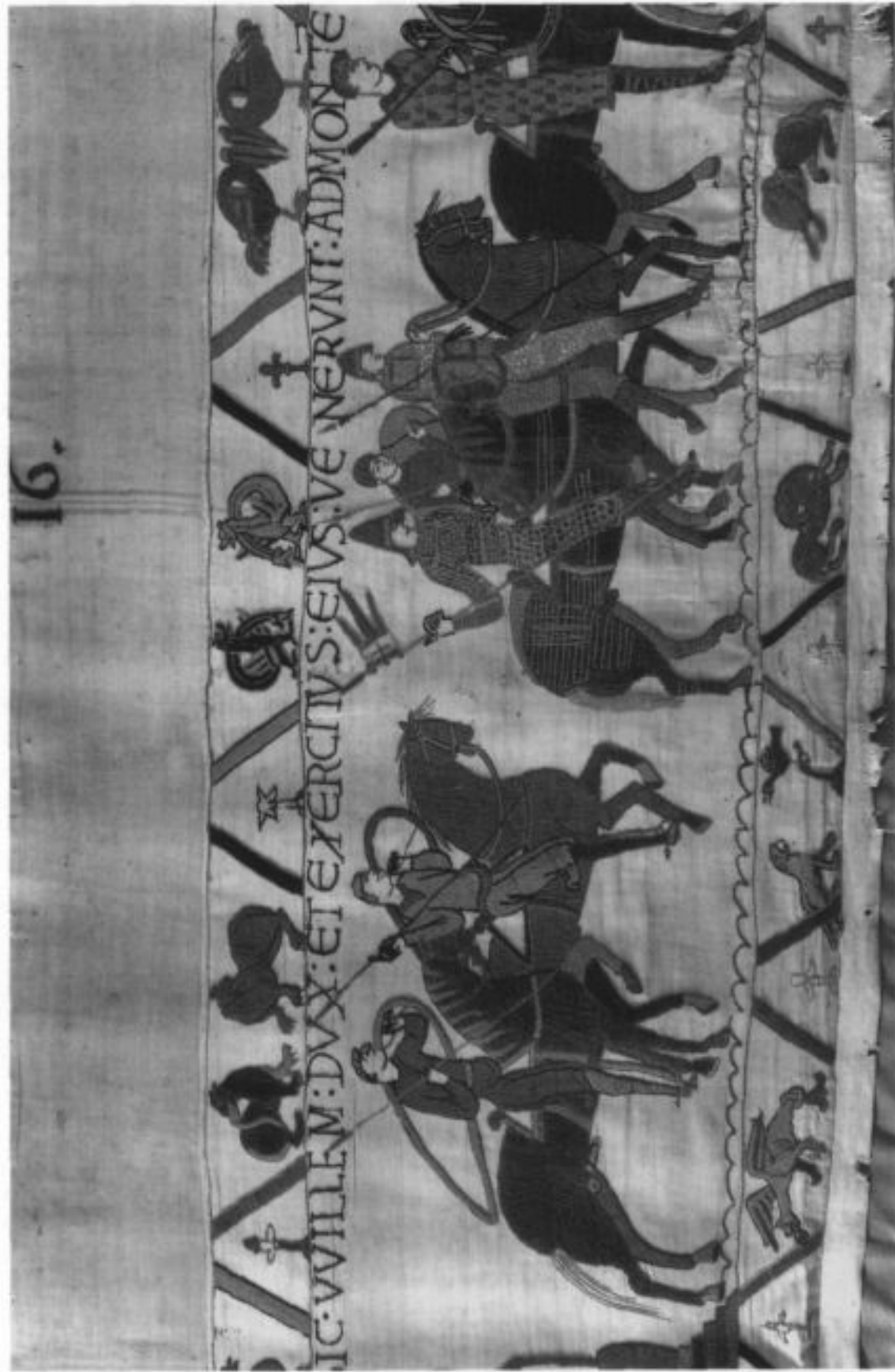


Figure 3: Breton campaign. Duke William and his men coming to Mount Saint-Michel, scenes 15-16, Bayeux Tapestry. Detail from the Bayeux Tapestry 11<sup>th</sup> century. With special authorization of the town of Bayeux.

17.



Figure 4: Breton campaign. Crossing of the Couesnon river, scene 17, Bayeux Tapestry. Detail from the Bayeux Tapestry 11<sup>th</sup> century. With special authorization of the town of Bayeux.



Figure 5: Breton campaign. Dol, Bayeux Tapestry. Detail from the Bayeux Tapestry 11<sup>th</sup> century. With special authorization of the town of Bayeux.



18.



Figure 6: Breton campaign. Rennes, Bayeux Tapestry. Detail from the Bayeux Tapestry 11<sup>th</sup> century. With special authorization of the town of Bayeux.

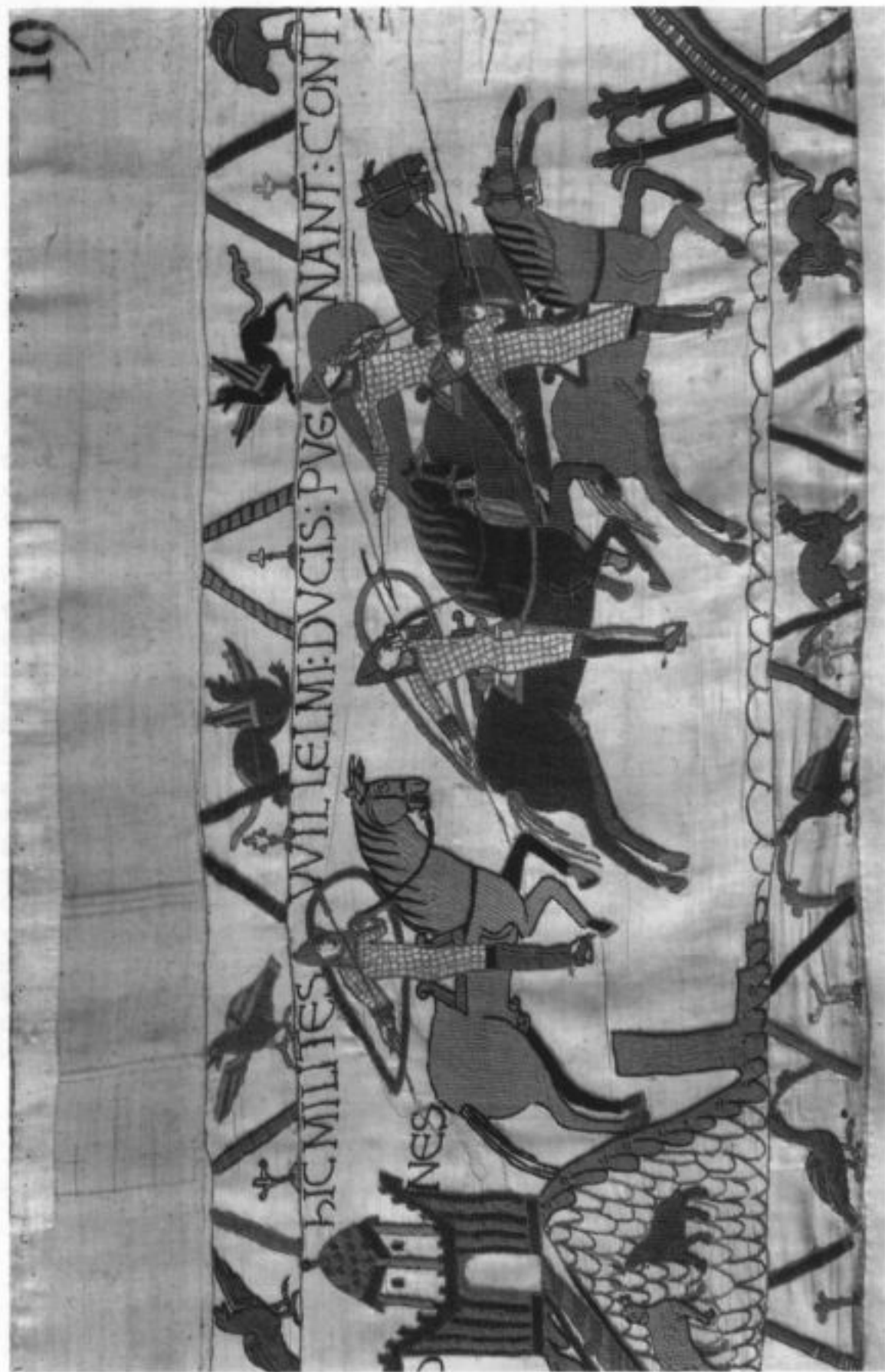


Figure 7: Breton campaign. Dinan, scene 19, Bayeux Tapestry. Detail from the Bayeux Tapestry. 11<sup>th</sup> century. With special authorization of the town of Bayeux.

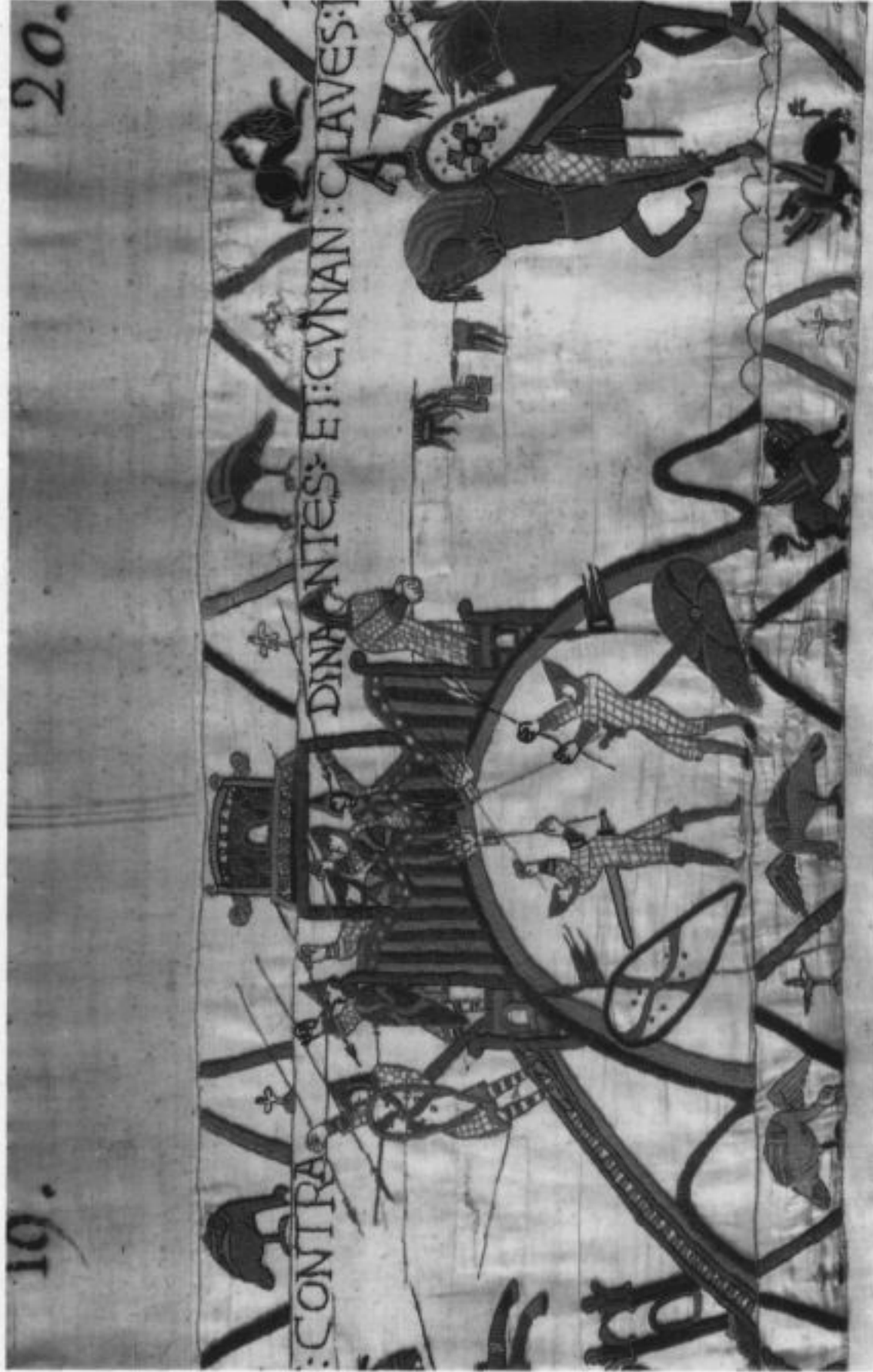


Figure 8: Breton campaign. Dinan, scene 20, Bayeux Tapestry. Detail from the Bayeux Tapestry 11<sup>th</sup> century. With special authorization of the town of Bayeux.

Another example of his close and detailed knowledge of northeastern Brittany is evident in his careful picturing of buildings in the places he names. Only someone who had seen the abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel would have known it well enough to show both the rocky promontory and the artificial foundation added in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century to support the expanded monastic complex. Modern specialists in military architecture have long been struck by the depiction of three motte and bailey castles at Dol, Rennes, and Dinan (three of five in the entire tapestry – the others at Bayeux and Hastings), each one noticeably different from the others in construction. Some have dismissed these as stereotyped representations of imaginary castles but most have been impressed by what they consider the realism of these portrayals. R. A. Brown spends considerable time commenting on the artist's detailed depiction of ditches, counterscarps, flying bridges, ascending to the mount, gates, palisades, crenellated towers, etc.<sup>34</sup> Then there are the three scenes of individuals performing unusual actions; Harold and the soldiers in the quicksand, the man on the rope at Dol, and Conan handing over the keys at Dinan (23–24). While these may be figurative allusions taken from literary texts, the possibility cannot be ruled out that one or more may portray actual events. If so, these are the kinds of portrayals one might expect of an eye witness but not of an historian writing far from the event.

The designer's closer attention to local topography, architectural detail, portrayal of individual incidents, etc., in the Breton campaign than in any other episode in the tapestry points irresistibly, in my opinion, to his having come from, or worked in that region. It seems far less likely that an English artist active far away across the channel in southeast England could have had access to such people and information. Does this not, then, lend additional weight to the hypothesis that the tapestry, or at least this segment of it, was designed and produced at the abbey of Saint-Florent of Saumur under the governance of abbot William? Though 200 km to the south this abbey had direct personal connections with the region through its abbot. As the senior member of the family of the lords of Dol, who were main characters in the Breton campaign as defenders of that castle in the siege pictured in the tapestry, abbot William fitz Rivallon would have been acquainted with that part of Brittany as well as anyone of his generation. And as abbot of the only monastic house in northwestern France known to have had a textile workshop at this time, the task of engaging and supervising a designer for the preparation of a tapestry such as that of Bayeux would have fallen to him. While there is no proof of it, the evidence favoring this possibility seems to me very persuasive and I consider it to be the single most important argument in favor of the Saint-Florent hypothesis.

34 Reginald A. BROWN, *The Architecture of the Bayeux Tapestry*, in: Frank M. STENTON (ed.), *The Bayeux Tapestry*, London 1969, p. 76–87; Michael JONES, *The Defense of Medieval Brittany: a survey of the establishment of fortified towns, castles, and frontiers from the Gallo-Roman period to the end of the Middle Ages*, in: *The Archaeological Journal* 138 (1981), p. 149–204 at p. 157–58; Lucien MUSSET, *La tapisserie de Bayeux*, Paris 1989, p. 75–76, has some reservations about them but on the whole accepts them as accurate. Although they reject Conan's surrender of Dinan as a tapestry exaggeration, both André CHÉDEVILLE and Noël-Yves TONNERRE regard the depiction of the Breton castles as accurate: *La Bretagne féodale, XI<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Rennes 1987, p. 194, 414–416.

The possibility that the designer came from Brittany and worked at the abbey of Saint-Florent is further strengthened by the way he portrays the Breton sequence as a whole, by his understanding of its overall significance. He would not have decided to include a lengthy presentation of this campaign in the tapestry unless he thought it made an important contribution to the larger theme of the Conquest of England. The question then becomes, what was, in his eyes, the significance of the Breton affair? Modern scholars have varied views on this subject. That he is demonstrating Duke William's success as a military leader is obvious, and W. Grape and S. Brown see the victory at Dinan as giving a warning that the Norman ruler will not tolerate rebellion as well as prefiguring the fate of Harold<sup>35</sup>. In the view of L. Musset the designer wants to show how William strengthened his hold on northeastern Brittany<sup>36</sup>. For several scholars one of his main concerns is depicting the relationship between William and Harold<sup>37</sup>. No one can question the prominence of Harold in the Couesnon scene in which, I believe, the designer wants to stress his contribution to William's campaign, but after this the Englishman does not appear nor is he mentioned again.

The designer's understanding of the sequence is best brought out by comparing his version of the events with that of William of Poitiers. The latter's presentation might be characterized as follows: William of Normandy puts down a Breton uprising against his rule led by Conan of Rennes by breaking the latter's siege at Dol, then returns home leaving the latter still at large. The tapestry artist presents this episode as William of Normandy's pursuit of Conan of Rennes from Dol to Rennes to Dinan where he finally captures him and breaks his rebellion. The changes in emphasis are unmistakable. For the artist this was not a general Breton uprising as it was for William of Poitiers – the name Brittany or Breton never appears in the inscriptions – but Conan's personal rebellion. Conan is the central figure in this episode, the only person pictured and named twice, both at critical turning points in the action. A better name for this affair than *bellum britannicum*, the »Breton War«, William of Poitiers' appellation for it and the one accepted by modern scholars, would be »The Quelling of Conan's Rebellion«. A second difference between the two accounts is that in the tapestry the Norman victory is complete, whereas in the *Gesta* no fighting ever took place and the Breton leader still controls his territory at the end.

What might have been the tapestry artist's source of information for this emphasis? Who might have had an interest in stressing the guilt not of the Bretons in general but of Conan of Rennes as having provoked this invasion? Hardly Conan's Bre-

35 Wolfgang GRAPE, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, New York 1994, p. 58; David BERNSTEIN, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry*, London 1986, p. 20, 115; Shirley Ann BROWN, *The Bayeux Tapestry; History or Propaganda?*, in: David PELTERET (ed.), *The Bayeux Tapestry: Synthesis and Achievement*, Waterloo (Ont.) 1985, p. 11–26 at p. 17–19.

36 MUSSET (see note 34), p. 255–256.

37 Michel PARISSÉ, *La Tapisserie de Bayeux*, Paris 1983, p. 55, believes the designer added the Breton episode to show how Harold was subject to William. Charles H. GIBBS-SMITH, *Notes on the Plates*, in: STENTON (see note 34), p. 166, reads it as showing »how the friendship of Harold and William is cemented«. David WILSON, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, London 2004, p. 198: »William is portrayed as a brave warrior and so is Harold. They are seen acting together with William as the leader and Harold as a subordinate.«

ton backers, one of the two contending parties in the Breton war, nor the advocates of the Norman position: William of Poitiers has almost certainly represented the views of the Duke of Normandy in blaming the Bretons for the war.

Instead the anti-Conan bias corresponds to the stand likely to have been taken by the only other faction involved in the Breton campaign, that of the lords of Dol, first Rivallon, ruler of the castle at the time of the 1064 invasion, then his sons, most notably William, monk, and later abbot at Saint-Florent after 1070. By supporting Duke William's rule in the border region and thereby refusing to join Conan of Rennes' uprising against the Normans, Rivallon of Dol must have incurred the wrath of the count who presumably viewed him as a traitor to the Breton cause. To punish this insubordination Conan then attacked Rivallon in his castle at Dol but the intervention of the Duke of Normandy broke the siege and his rival escaped. Rivallon's response to the charge of treason was doubtless that the real traitors were Count Conan of Rennes and his supporters who refused to accept the legitimate rule of Duke William of Normandy as earlier Breton counts had done, and thereby brought on themselves the Norman invasion of Brittany.

This hypothetical reconstruction of Rivallon of Dol's justification of his resistance to Conan of Rennes conforms closely with what the designer conveys in his depiction of this episode in the tapestry, namely, that the villain of the affair, the one who brought on the war, was Conan. Such an interpretation receives added support from the unusual omission of Conan's title of count in the tapestry inscriptions<sup>38</sup>. It is possible that the artist is hereby expressing his conviction that in rebelling against Duke William, Conan had lost his legitimacy as Count of Rennes and no longer had the right to that title.

Finally, there can scarcely be any uncertainty as to how the lords of Dol might have influenced the designer's presentation of the Breton incident. It stands to reason that if William the Conqueror commissioned the former lord of Dol, William fitz Rivallon, abbot of Saint-Florent since 1070, to produce the tapestry at his abbey in Saumur, the latter would have had a voice in the selection of the chief artist/designer, and he could have profitted from the fact that abbey workshop fell under his supervision to influence the design of the tapestry as a whole. This need not have been limited to points of detail but could have extended even to influencing the decision about whether or not to include a sequence on the Breton campaign in the tapestry.

The fifth and last element in my Saumur hypothesis concerns a poem of Baudri of Bourgueil written between 1099–1102. In this poem, dedicated to Adèle, countess of Blois, Baudri describes a hanging in her castle which showed the conquest of England by William the Conqueror. For various reasons a great majority of the scholars who have studied this poem reject the idea that this hanging could have been the Bayeux Tapestry. But in their analysis of the poem in a 1994 article, Shirley Ann Brown and Michael Herren concluded that Baudri could not have written his poem without having known and studied the Bayeux Tapestry in detail<sup>39</sup>.

38 BEECH (see note 5), p. 81, 85.

39 Baldricus Burgulianus *Carmina*, ed. Karl HILBERT, Heidelberg 1979, p. 154–164; Shirley Ann BROWN, Michel W. HERREN, *The Adela Comitissae of Baudri of Bourgueil and the Bayeux Tapestry*, in: *Study* (see note 30), p. 139–155 at p. 151–152.

I do not take a position on the validity of Brown and Herren's findings, but if they are correct, the Saumur hypothesis would provide a quick and simple answer to the question as to how and where he could have become acquainted with the tapestry. From the 1060's to 1107 Baudri was first a monk and then abbot at the Loire valley of Bourgueil just 25 km from Saumur. Abbot William of Saint-Florent was a friend who probably had a voice in securing Baudri's nomination to the Breton archiepiscopal see of Dol in 1107. If the tapestry was produced at Saint-Florent, Baudri would have had ample opportunity to see and study it at his leisure<sup>40</sup>.

The last part of this essay is a response to criticism and objections certain to be made to the airing of this hypothesis. How could it happen, it will be asked, that scholars have never found a hint of evidence leading to Saint-Florent of Saumur, nor has the latter ever come under consideration? How could a tapestry of such magnitude have been produced at an abbey utterly unknown for artistic activity at this time, one that has not been mentioned by modern historians as having had Norman connections, and one that William the Conqueror seemed to have been unaware of?

The answer to this is twofold: first, the history of the abbey has been neglected, hence little known to modern historians, not due to its historical insignificance but because most of its rich documentary sources have not been published, and secondly, because virtually nothing is left of its buildings, library, and manuscripts. Finally modern historians would seem to have proceeded on the assumption that in view of its subject matter, the tapestry had to have come from a nearby workshop in Normandy, Flanders, or England, and thereby have restricted their vision to those regions alone. At the same time it should be mentioned that at a distance of 250 km from Caen, Saumur is decidedly closer to the Norman center of power than is Canterbury in England. More precise is the question: how can the Saumur hypothesis be reconciled with the evidence pointing to the influence of a number of manuscripts from Canterbury on the tapestry, evidence so impressive that in 2000 Cyril Hart maintained that it could now be considered as established fact that the tapestry was made in that town<sup>41</sup>. Part of Hart's argument is persuasive; the tapestry designer had to have known and borrowed from those manuscripts. But his second conclusion is contestable. Having a fine collection of manuscripts does not automatically involve having a textile workshop. Hart does not dispute Richard Gameson's assertion of 1997 that no one had found the slightest evidence as to the identity of the workshop which produced the tapestry, nor does he adduce any proof of one at Canterbury<sup>42</sup>.

However that may be, the presence of a profound Canterbury influence in the tapestry is not necessarily irreconcilable with a Saint-Florent place of production. A designer working at Saumur could have sought to copy elements from mural paintings, sculptured figures, and/or illuminated manuscripts from other regions. Elements which he had seen in his travels or heard about from fellow artists. Through

40 BEECH (see note 5), p. 89–90.

41 The Bayeux Tapestry and the Schools of Illumination at Canterbury, in: *Anglo-Norman Studies* 22 (2000), p. 117–168 at p. 117. See also ID., *The Canterbury Contribution to the Bayeux Tapestry*, in: *Art and Symbolism in Medieval Europe. Papers of the Medieval Europe Brugge Conference 1987*, No. 5, Zellik 1997, p. 7–15.

42 GAMESON (see note 30), p. 161.

contacts with the abbey of Saint-Martial of Limoges he could have arranged for a local artist to furnish him with preliminary sketches of the animal illustrations from Aesop's fables in the Adémar of Chabannes manuscript in the abbey scriptorium (if that is the source of those drawings). Similarly the mural paintings at Saint-Savin and Vihiers, as well as the sculptured lions' tails from Poitou, could have been the origin of scenes and figures in the tapestry where resemblances have been detected. And Abbot William of Saint-Florent could have persuaded the designer that the Breton campaign be depicted in a manner favorable to his family, the lords of Dol, and hostile to Count Conan of Rennes.

He could also have turned to artists at St. Augustine's Canterbury for other parts of the tapestry on the basis of their reputation as illuminators. The Saint-Florent possessions in England gave the abbey direct contacts with the English, and travel is attested in both directions<sup>43</sup>. But the abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel, with which the lords of Dol (Rivallon and his son, Abbot William of Saint-Florent) had close relations would probably have been the best avenue for Saint-Florent contacts with St. Augustine's at Canterbury<sup>44</sup>. The abbot of St. Augustine's from 1072–1087, Scotland, had been a monk and scribe at Mont-Saint-Michel prior to moving to the English abbey. Abbot William could well have known him while he was still at Mont-Saint-Michel, have kept in touch with him later in Canterbury, and thereby have become acquainted with the work of illuminators in that abbey's scriptorium.

Abbot William could have engaged St. Augustine illuminators to come and work at the abbey either bringing their manuscripts with them, or drawings made to serve as models. Under the patronage of the abbot the designer could thus have assembled at Saumur the personnel, the manuscripts, and the drawings he desired for the planning of the entire tapestry. After soliciting initial sketches from his diverse sources – above all from St. Augustine's, but also from Saint-Savin, Poitiers, Vihiers, Angoulême, etc., he himself could then have gone through the entire collection to impose his own uniformity of style on the figures and scenes in the tapestry as a whole.

This reconstruction of the setting for the designing of the tapestry is purely hypothetical and it doubtless errs in details and possibly in larger matters but it may be a rough approximation of what actually took place. The other major objection to the Saumur hypothesis will ask what evidence points to William the Conqueror (or Queen Mathilda) as the commissioner of the Bayeux Tapestry when scholars today unanimously favor his half-brother bishop Odo of Bayeux. I will not attempt to summarize the case for Odo here, but simply point out that this is only an hypothesis, there is no proof. Although no scholar has ever considered the possibility (the belief in Odo goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century), it seems to me much more likely that William himself commissioned the tapestry<sup>45</sup> than anyone else other than possibly Queen Mathilda (I consider that possibility in an appendix of my book)<sup>46</sup>. Who could have had a greater interest in creating a monumental tapestry which celebrates

43 BEECH (see note 5), p. 98.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid., p. 99–102.

46 Ibid., Appendix B, p. 107–109.



William the Conqueror as the monarch who conceived, prepared, then carried out the Conquest of England? One can recognize that the artist has cast other characters in a subtly favorable light, most notably Harold of England, and also Odo of Bayeux, but all of them are insignificant compared to King William who is always on center stage. If no doubts exist about what could have been William's motivation in ordering the tapestry, the issue is less clear in assuming Odo to have been the commissioner and scholars have disagreed on why he might have decided to launch such an enterprise. Furthermore nothing in Odo's relationship with the abbot of St. Augustine hints at a transaction of the magnitude of the production of the Bayeux Tapestry. Nor have any of the scenes in the tapestry been linked in any way with members of the Canterbury community – as was the case with Abbot William and the Breton campaign.

### Conclusion

The argument in favor of Saint-Florent of Saumur as the place of production of the Bayeux Tapestry may be summarized as follows. The inquiry first identified an abbey on the Loire whose textile workshop had an international reputation extending to the Paris region and England in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It then highlighted a long term personal relationship between William the Conqueror and Abbot William of Saint-Florent, based on their interest in the town, archbishopric, and region of Dol in northeastern Brittany which could have led to the commissioning of the tapestry for production at the abbey in Saumur. It noted that Saint-Florent's English and Norman acquisitions could have been King William's way of rewarding the abbey for its work in making the tapestry. Then the inquiry pointed to some artistic affinities between the tapestry and romanesque art works from the Loire valley and Poitou/Charente regions, particularly the Adémar of Chabannes ms with drawings illustrating Aesop's animal fables. It concentrated above all on evidence of a Saint-Florent/lords of Dol perspective in the tapestry's depiction of the so-called Breton campaign. Finally it noted that the supposition of a Saumur origin for the tapestry helps to explain how the poet Baudri of Bourgueil may have come to know it.

I recognize that these elements do not prove that the tapestry came from Saumur: as is shown by the number of times I have written, »could have been«, what I have proposed is an hypothesis. Still I think the number of different arguments suggesting this possibility is significant. Could it be pure coincidence that all of them point in this direction? In any case I believe that this hypothesis is sufficiently plausible that it deserves further attention, particularly with regard to the possibility of artistic affinities between the tapestry and romanesque art from western France.