Miszellen

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ARTISAN PRODUCTS OF THE VAL DE LOIRE:
THEIR FORMATIVE ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
MEDIEVAL ART OF CENTRAL FRANCE
(Plates I–IV)

At any one time, civilization, that state wherein man lives within an environment characterized by a common set of mores, a shared technology, and an agreed upon set of aesthetics, is the net result of long-standing traditions altered in varying degrees by external stimuli. The pervasive and deeply rooted patterns of a civilization are the products of a long cultural evolution, often preconditioned by geographical or climatic factors. These can in turn be altered, modified, or even radically changed by irregular or sudden influences that have been introduced from foreign centers. Thus one notices throughout history the appearance of »new« cultures which in reality have their basis firmly rooted in a preexisting culture, but which, because of extrinsic agents, evolve into something new. We have seen this repeated time and again: civilization altered by warfare and defeat, trade, colonisation or, more recently, mass communication. Society, however, reacts selectively to particular situations. We find that a broadly based group will respond regionally or locally to its surroundings, thus sub-dividing the culture. Depending upon the severity of fracturing, either geographically, linguistically or politically, these smaller groups form their own sub-cultures which become dependent but individual parts of the basic cultural group.

Politics, geography and colonisation do not, however, always function as divisive factors, as all have often been instrumental in the formation of large cultural units that have remained intact for centuries. It is in this light that one can view the development of the Loire Valley during the early Middle Ages. The period from the mid-fifth through the ninth century, when this area of France was under the political domination of the Franks: Merovingian then Carolingian, was the time when the often violent political and societal divisions of Frankish rule found a comfortable compromise and assimilation along the Val de Loire.

The geographical disposition of the Loire Valley facilitates a close examination of cultural development to the north and south. Linguistically, economically and artistically the Loire Valley provided a natural boundary. During the period of Roman occupation of Gaul, the Loire and its affluents formed a convenient conveyor of goods, owing to its proximity to the then important commercial centers situated on the Rhône River.[1] This seems to have continued well into the period of Frankish occupation, as the source of the Loire, beginning about 40 kilometers southeast of Le Puy (Haute Loire), cuts the high uneven terrain of the Massif Central

[1] Louis Bonnard, La navigation intérieure de la Gaule à l'époque gallo-romaine, Paris 1913 p. 28 and Archibald Lewis, Commerce atlantique de la Gaule du Vᵉ au VIIIᵉ siècle, in: Le Moyen Age 59 (1953) pp. 265–270.

in two as it flows northward through the Nivernais to Orléans and then westward to the Atlantic.

It has long been recognized that the territory south of the Loire: the former Roman province of Aquitania, was considered a special area by Frankish kings. Beginning with the partition of the kingdom after the death of Clovis in 511, Aquitania was always treated as a territory separate from the rest of the realm; it being specially divided by the surviving male heirs, thereby retaining a preferred and select placement in the geo-politics of the Frankish period.[2] Aquitania had managed to hold onto its Roman heritage, and it was in this area that trade, learning and the arts continued without interruption well into the late sixth century. Furthermore, the power and resources of the landed Gallo-Roman aristocracy, who remained essentially unmolested and unharrassed during the Visigothic occupation, were wooed after 507 by the victorious Franks, resulting in a relationship that proved to be mutually beneficial.[3] Frankish development – Merovingian and Carolingian – must therefore be viewed in terms of attempting to coordinate two large cultural areas: Gallo-Roman Aquitania and the remaining parts of the *regnum Francorum*, into a relatively uniform political unit. This was not successful, for the various and ever-expanding regions of Frankish domination were to prove too diverse and unwieldy for early medieval administration. For a time, however, the ecclesiastical and the intellectual resources of the predominantly Gallo-Roman southwest were instrumental in providing the more Frankish areas of the kingdom north of the Loire with the tools with which to forge a more cosmopolitan culture.

Frankish penetration in the form of settlements terminated at the Loire, and the heartland of Frankish occupation and power was the region between the Rhine and the Loire Rivers. Large residences, palaces, and royal courts were situated on the lands of the former Roman fisc. We see, moreover, that the region between the Seine and the Loire formed a vital bridge between the Gallo-Roman southwest and the Frankish northeast.[4] The fluctuating nature of political divisions necessitated the formation of an access to Aquitania; thus the Loire became the natural solution. Royal partitioning, particularly after 561, emphasized direct access to Aquitania through the prospering towns of the middle and lower Val de Loire.[5] Works of art, religious cults, and mercantile goods of the southwest passed through this region during the »Reromanization« of the northeast.[6]

Despite the constant flow of ideas and goods, the two regions remained, until relatively recent times, separate units. The Loire Valley thus became the line of demarcation and the region of transition between two cultures that are reflected in the organization of later medieval society.

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[2] Eugen EWIG, Die fränkischen Teilungen und Teilreiche (511–613), in: Spätantikes und Fränkisches Gallien, ed. by H. ATSMA, Paris 1976 (Beihefte der Francia, vol. III, part 1) pp. 120–128, and ID., L'Aquitaine et les pays rhénans, ibid., pp. 533–572.

[3] Rolf SPRANDEL, Der merowingische Adel und die Gebiete östlich des Rheins, Freiburg 1957 (Forschungen zur oberrheinischen Landesgeschichte, 5) pp. 10–4, 29, 35; A. VAN DE VYVER, Clovis et la politique méditerranéenne, in: Etudes d'histoire dédiées à la mémoire de Henri Pirenne, Bruxelles 1937, pp. 367–387 and ID., La chronologie du règne de Clovis d'après la legende et d'après l'histoire, in: Le Moyen Age 53 (1947) pp. 177–196.

[4] F. PETRI, Der Rhein in der europäischen Geschichte und den europäischen Raumbeziehungen von der Vorzeit bis zum Hochmittelalter, in: Das Erste Jahrtausend, vol. II, ed. by V. ELBERN, Düsseldorf 1962, pp. 594–601.

[5] EWIG, Teilreiche 511–613 (see n. 2) pp. 135–138.

[6] Harald KELLER, Die Kunstlandschaften Frankreichs, Wiesbaden 1963; Jean HUBERT, Les grandes voies de circulation à l'intérieur de la Gaule mérovingienne d'après l'archéologie, in: VI⁰ Congrès internat. d'études byzantines, vol. II, Paris 1952 pp. 183–190 and ID.,Les routes du moyen âge, in: Les routes de France depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours, Paris 1959, pp. 25–49; and F. PRINZ, Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich, München 1965.

First of all there are the two major language groups of France: to the north the ›langue d'œil‹ and to the south the ›langue d'oc‹.[7] Second, the evolution of jurisprudence followed nearly the same pattern: written law based on Roman traditions in the south, and the implementation of common law in the north.[8] Third, the development of the ›champs allongés‹, the result of plowing fields with a wheeled plow and the auxiliary development of crop rotation, which indicates a highly compact society that perceived itself in terms of communal organization, were, according to M. Bloch, indigenous to the territory north of the Loire and in Burgundy,[9] areas fully penetrated by Frankish settlements at an early date.

In language, law and economy, therefore, the Loire River became the important demarcation between the cultures of northern and southern France. This division, which at first glance might appear unbreachable, proved to be symbiotic through the vital position of the Loire and the regions contiguous to it. For we shall see that this river valley truly became the hinge-pin of France, providing a vital conduit during the fifth through ninth centuries and creating in the process an artistic climate along its banks that mirrored the totality of Gallo-Frankish culture.

To illustrate our thesis three types of objects: sarcophagi, personal ornament, and architectural decoration in terra cotta, will be analyzed by examining their manufacture and their commercial roles as well as their artistic character.[10] In this manner, we shall be able more fully to understand the relationship between the objects mentioned above and the specialized society of the Val de Loire.

Establishing an artisan environment that can withstand political and economic upheaval requires a period of germination and stable traditions. These criteria were satisfied within the Val de Loire by the seventh century, if not earlier. Despite perennial warfare, the settlement and assimilation of the Franks among the diverse peoples of Gaul progressed so that by ca. 600 we begin to see the emergence of a culture north of the Loire that is best termed Gallo-Frankish. An important element in the formation of this new cultural entity was the Roman Church. Unlike their Germanic counterparts, the Franks were initially converted to orthodox Christianity, which forged immediate and long-lasting bonds with the powerful Gallo-Roman ecclesiastical hierarchy based in the southwest. This alliance of faith, whether it was prior to or after the acquisition of Aquitania,[11] stimulated the flow of ideas to the regions north of the Loire Valley.

As the collecting point for south-north movement, the Loire, especially the mid and lower stretches, received and incorporated stimuli from contiguous regions. The Loire not only separates the north from the south, but during the Frankish period wound its way through large

[7] W. VON WARTBURG, Umfang und Bedeutung der germanischen Siedlung in Nordgallien im 5. und 6. Jh. im Spiegel der Sprache und der Ortsnamen, in: (Extrait) Deutsche Akademie der Wiss. zu Berlin 36 (1950) pp. 3–34 and KELLER (see n. 6) pp. 131–132.

[8] KELLER (see n. 6) pp. 35–49.

[9] Marc BLOCH, Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française, 2nd ed. Paris 1952, pp. 35–49.

[10] The Loire was a conveyor of goods, such as Aquitanian marble sarcophagi and capitals, that were manufactured in the southwest and which had a wide area of diffusion reaching well into the northeast. Likewise the fabrication and transport of the so-called grey paleochristian sigillata ware of the late fourth through the sixth century, although found at a few sites in conjunction with the Loire, appears to have been essentially a product of the south. Because we are concerned at this stage with a newly emerging artisan component in the Loire Valley, the occurrence of these objects, although indicative of a desire for luxury articles, does not help determine the sources for the Gallo-Frankish style of the Loire Valley. For bibliography see: Denise FOSSARD, Répartition des sarcophages mérovingiens à décor en France, in: Etudes mérovingiennes, Paris 1952, pp. 117–126 and J. RIGOIR, Les sigillées paléochrétiennes grises et orangées, in: Gallia 26 (1968) pp. 177–244.

[11] VAN DE VYVER (see n. 3) pp. 195–196; Georges TESSIER, Le Baptême de Clovis, Paris 1964, pp. 116–126; SPRANDEL (see n. 3) pp. 9–14; and EWIG, Aquitaine (see n. 2) pp. 567–72.

portions of what was then the Frankish kingdom of Burgundy,[12] which for a time had as its capital the town of Orléans. An intricate network of water routes and roads, maintained since Roman times, converged at Orléans, making it one of the important centers of the Merovingian economy. All mints, without exception, that operated during the sixth and seventh centuries were located on the roads leading to this important town.[13] These combined with the navigable river to form a tightly coordinated mesh that links the towns of Tours, Nevers and Orléans, thus outlining a great northward pointing triangle[14] which aimed straight at the Paris Basin and which acted like a great funnel. This orientation coincided exactly with the heaviest concentration of ateliers producing objects which are distinctively characteristic of the Loire Valley but which assimilate Aquitanian and Franco-Burgundian attributes. Thus Aquitania, Burgundy and the Paris Basin were pulled into close coordination by the »Loire Triangle.«

Westward extensions of the water and road system provided the Basse Loire and its adjacent territory with the same connection. Although less is known concerning the settlement patterns of this region, there is ample reason to conclude that ancient transportation routes linked the important towns of the Poitou with the Basse Loire and hence the Paris Basin.[15] The existing Roman network of road and water routes therefore became the basic structure through which goods, ideas and people were organized and made mobile. By recognizing the invaluable potential of this system and utilizing it, the Franks were able to consolidate their kingdom.

Evidence of the persistence of Gallo-Roman traditions can be found in several areas and in varying degrees throughout the *regnum Francorum*. Christianization was a relatively rapid process, superficially at least, and the spread of Christian burial practices combined with Germanic customs is proof that in matters concerning the proper burial of the dead, Frankish Christians readily adopted the use of sarcophagi. The work of Denise Fossard[16] has shown that sarcophagi, although widespread, had evolved into relatively compact regional types, with the most highly valued seeming to be those produced by ateliers near the Pyrenean quarries of Fos and St. Béat. While scholarship which emphasizes the continuing antique traditions of the south has exhaustively examined the uninterrupted production of these centers,[17] other sarcophagus types exhibit varying degrees of »classicism.« Antique acroteria and Mediterranean

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[12] EWIG, Teilreiche 511–613 (see n. 2) pp. 158–165.

[13] Jacques SOYER, Les Voies antiques de l'Orléanais, in: Bull. de la Soc. arch. et hist. de l'Orléanais, supplément, Orléans 1971, pp. 104–106.

[14] Alain FERDIÈRE, Le Cher voie de relation est-ouest en Gaule, in: Actes du 97ᵉ Congrès nat. des soc. savantes Nantes 1972, Paris 1977, pp. 165–179, makes the point that Orléans, Bourges and Tours form a triangle. Ferdière, however, is concerned with commerce during the prehistoric and Roman periods and with the utilization of the Cher as a detour from east to west. Thus far, this situation does not appear to have existed during the Frankish period.

[15] A. CHAMPIGNEULLE, Voies antiques entre Nantes, Angers et Poitiers, in: Actes du 91ᵉʳ Congrès nat. des soc. savantes Rennes 1966, Paris 1968, pp. 241–259 and ID., Contribution à l'étude des relations routières antiques entre Poitiers, Nantes et Rezé, in: Actes du 97ᵉ Congrès nat. des soc. savantes, Nantes 1972, Paris 1977, pp. 123–146.

[16] FOSSARD (see n. 10) pp. 117–126.

[17] The bibliography on the topic is extensive and includes the debate over chronology. See J. B. WARD-PERKINS, The Sculpture of Visigothic France, in: Archaeologia 87 (1938) pp. 79–129 and ID., A Carved marble Fragment at Riom and the Chronology of the Aquitanian Sarcophagi, in: Antiquities Journal 40 (1960) pp. 25–34; and Edward JAMES, The Merovingian Archaeology of South-West Gaul, Part I, Oxford 1977 (BAR Supplementary Series 25) pp. 29–61, for a fifth century chronology. B. BRIESENICK, Typologie und Chronologie der südwestgallischen Sarkophage, in: Jahrbuch des röm.-german. Zentralmuseums Mainz 9 (1962) pp. 76–82, places the development of the sarcophagi within the sixth century. Denise FOSSARD, La chronologie des sarcophages d'Aquitaine, in: Actes du Vᵉ Congrès internat. d'arch. chrétienne, Aix-en-Provence 1954 (Rome and Paris 1957), pp. 321–333 and Jean HUBERT, L'Art pré-roman (Paris 1938), pp. 145–146, assign a date of the seventh century.

decorative motifs contributed to the creation of Poitevian sarcophagi,[18] while crosses, palmettes and other Christian symbols adorn Frankish trapezoidal sarcophagi in the northern and eastern areas of the Frankish realm.[19]

The regions contiguous with the Loire were not without their own particular type of sarcophagus. Multiple crosses, some with a stylized leaf pattern, were the favorite decorative motif of this region. In style they appear to be related to a much larger group that was popular in the regions north of the Loire and especially in Paris. Decoration in all cases is confined to the head of the large monolithic sarcophagi, which are trapezoidal in shape and slope from head to foot. Varying in number from two to seventeen, the crosses are often placed in a balanced arrangement, composed of large and small crosses when a great number are used. Certainly the most well known examples of this group are the six multiple-cross sarcophagi found under the destroyed church of Ste. Geneviève in Paris (Fig. 6).[20] The most simplified have a double pattern of crosses, having either two or three ›croix pattées‹ or two Latin crosses connected by a horizontal bar at their bases. This decorative motif had a wide area of diffusion stretching from Nantes (Loire-Atlantique)[21] to Chartres (Eure-et-Loir)[22] and the Nivernais.[23] Although dating for this group is imprecise, we can infer a common consensus of taste, at least for sarcophagi, which radiated from Paris to the lower and middle Loire. The area including the Paris Basin and the Loire was characterized by a single stylistic school of sarcophagi decoration: the Seine-Loire.

The development and diffusion of the most elaborate of the multiple-cross sarcophagus type are more regionally restricted and iconographically related. The earliest examples are the sarcophagi of Chaletric, bishop of Chartres (d. ca. 573), and of Agricola (Arigle), bishop of Nevers (d. 594). Both were embellished with three large and four small crosses, although the former is said to have been adorned with ivory plaques on which smaller crosses were engraved rather than being in relief.[24] The predilection for seven crosses was likewise shared by many sarcophagi within the ambit of the Loire from the Nivernais to the Atlantic.

Until recently it has been agreed that some amount of elaboration ensued and that by the end of the seventh century the Val de Loire had developed a more elaborate variant of the multiple-

[18] Camille DE LA CROIX, Cimetières et sarcophages mérovingiens du Poitou, in: Bull. archéologique 1886, pp. 256–298; G. TRATHNIGG, Merowingische Sarkophagplatten, in: Festschrift für Rudolf Egger, vol. II, Klagenfurt 1953, pp. 322–339; J.-C. PAPINOT, Les sarcophages, in: Le Baptistère Saint-Jean de Poitiers, Poitiers 1976, pp. 39–45; and JAMES (see n. 17) pp. 68–90.

[19] FOSSARD (see n. 10) pp. 119–122 and G.-R. DELAHAYE, Les sarcophages mérovingiens à décor de croix et palmier en région parisienne, in: Bull. du Groupement arch. de Seine-et-Marne 12–13 (1971–72) pp. 33–52 and ID., Le sarcophage de Saint-Martin-Chennetron. Sa place dans la typologie des sarcophages à décor de croix et palmier, in: Bull. de la Soc. d'hist. et d'arch. de Provins 128 (1974) pp. 27–37 for bibliography.

[20] FOSSARD (see n. 10) pp. 119–120 and ID., Les sarcophages mérovingiens de Paris, in: Les anciennes églises suburbaines de Paris, IVe au Xe siècles, Paris 1960 (Mémoires de la Féderation des Soc. hist. et arch. de Paris et l'Ile de France 2) pp. 232–234; A. LENOIR, Statistique monumentale de Paris, vol. I, Paris 1867, Pl. I and II.

[21] Dominique COSTA, Catalogue d'art mérovingien. Musée Thomas Dobrée, Paris 1964, nos. 217 (Saint-Donatien), 222 (Saint-Similien), and a lost example from Saint-Lupin, Rezé which carried three small latin crosses on a horizontal bar.

[22] A sarcophagus from Saint-Brice, Chartres. May VIEILLARD-TROÏEKOUROFF, Nouvelles comparaisons de quelques sarcophages mérovingiens de Nantes avec ceux de la Nièvre, in: Actes du 97e Congrès nat. des soc. savantes Nantes 1972, Paris 1977, p. 122.

[23] Ibid., p. 122; B. DE GAULEJAC, Sarcophages mérovingiens ornés du Nivernais, in: Actes du 88e Congrès nat. des soc. savantes Clermont-Ferrand 1963, Paris 1965, pp. 161–167.

[24] J. LEBEUF, Dissertations sur l'histoire civile et ecclesiastique de Paris, vol. I, Paris 1739, pp. 293–294; DE GAULEJAC (see n. 23) p. 161; and HUBERT (see n. 17) pp. 154–155.
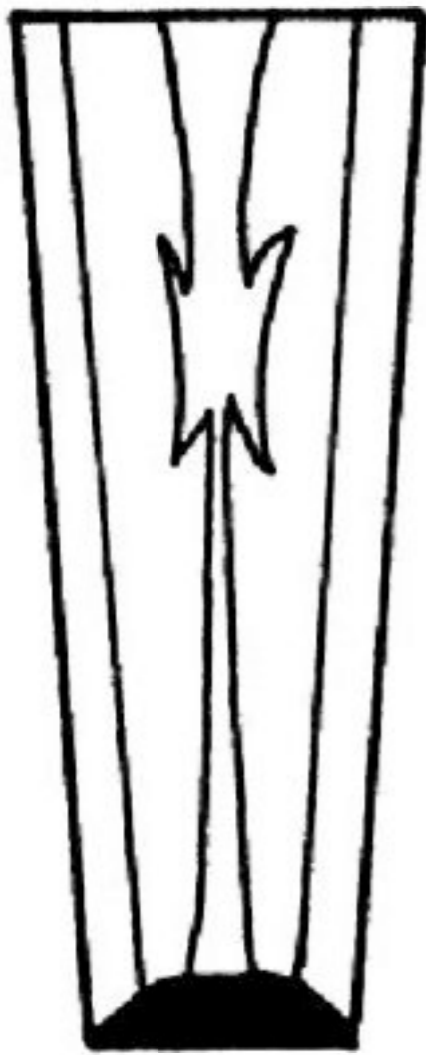
Fig. 1: Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire
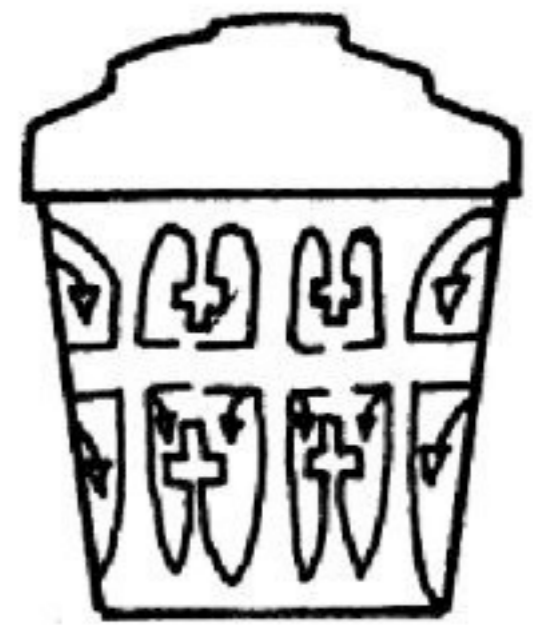
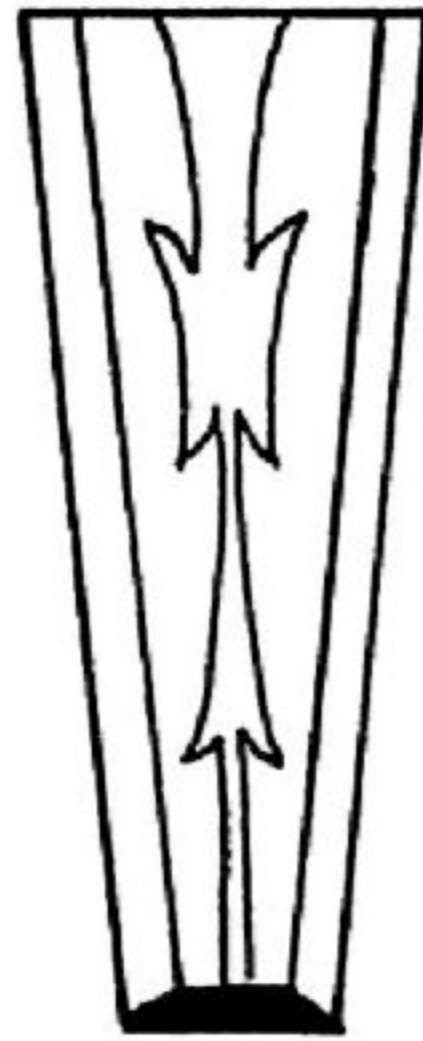Fig. 2: Saint-Parizé-le-Châtel

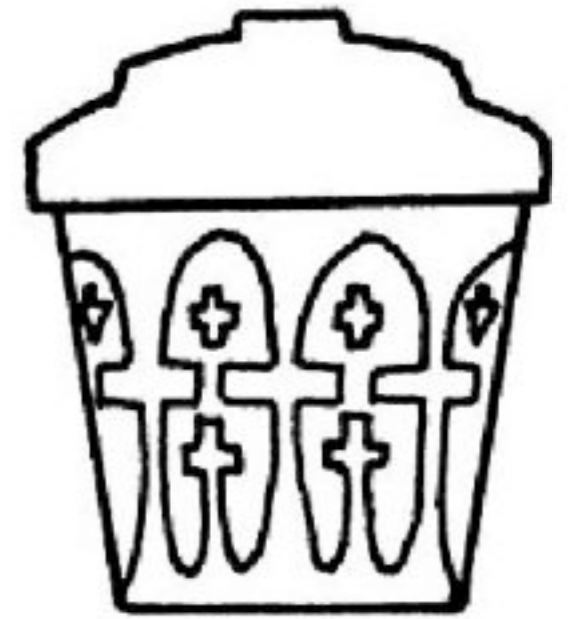Fig. 3: Nevers, former church of
Saint Martin
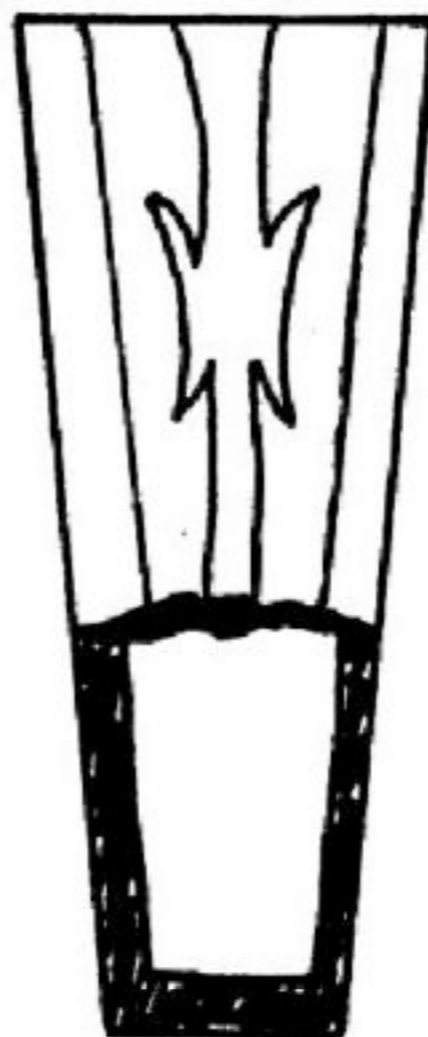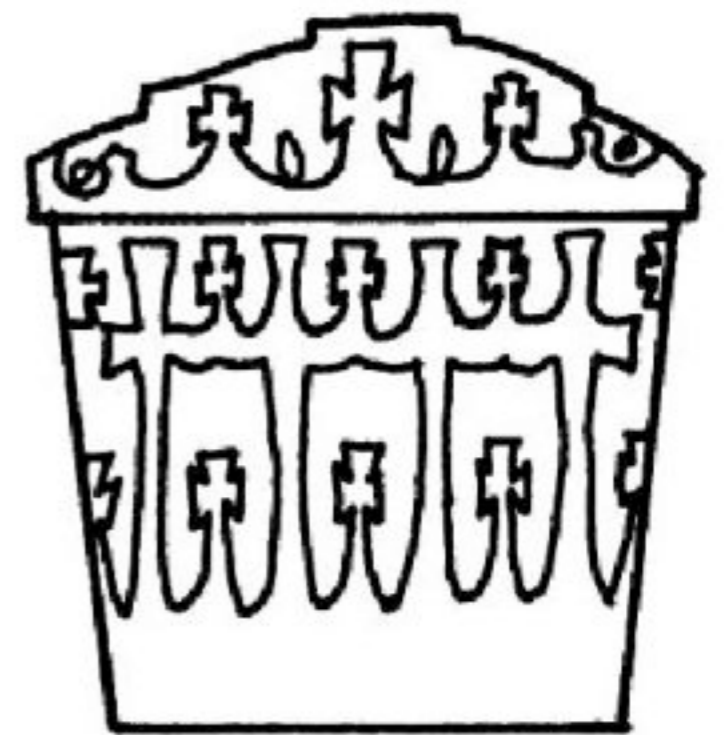
Fig. 4: Luthenay

Fig. 5: Nantes, Evêché

Fig. 6: Paris, former church of
Sainte Geneviève

cross sarcophagus. This chronology was, it seems, based upon a typographical error, and in fact elaboration of the Loire School probably dates to the late sixth century.[25] Stemming from the basic organization of the sarcophagi of Chaletric and Agricola, two variants emerge as characteristic of the Loire ateliers. One is the simple multiplication of crosses. Examples carrying any number of crosses (10–15) on their heads have appeared in and around Nevers. Fifteen crosses embellish the head of one example found under the pavement at the entrance to the main apse of St. Etienne at Nevers (Pl. I/1). Two others found nearby[26] bear elaborate designs that have close counterparts in Nantes[27] and Paris,[28] while at Saint-Parize-le-Châtel eleven crosses are to be found. Meanwhile a more inventive variant characterized by seven crosses, usually three large and four smaller, arranged in a complex pattern in which the large crosses form a vertical frame for the smaller crosses placed between them also appears. The hallmark that separates this group from the more simplified versions mentioned above is the formation of an arcaded framing device by the upper extensions of the large crosses and the addition of a highly stylized leaf motif, usually placed in the uppermost arcades. Severals examples of this particular sarcophagus have been found and their area of dispersion is consolidated along the Val de Loire: Saint-Parizé-le-Châtel (Nièvre)[29] (Fig. 2, and Pl. I/2), Nevers (Nièvre),[30] Decize (Nièvre),[31] Luthenay (Cher)[32] (Fig. 4), Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire (Loiret)[33] (Fig. 1), Orléans (Loiret),[34] and Nantes (Loire-Atlantique) (Fig. 5).[35] The preponderance of examples from this sarcophagus type indicates that the origin of this group is in the Nivernais. Jurassic limestone, the material of the sarcophagi, forms a crescent stretching around the Paris Basin from Châteauroux (Indre) to Tonnerre (Yonne) by way of Bourges (Cher) and Nevers. The Loire as it flows through Nevers provided the logical means of transportation for the sarcophagi found at Saint-Benoit-sur-Loire, Orléans and the Evêché at Nantes.[36]

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[25] The error appears in Jean Hubert's response to the report of J.-M. BERLAND, Les fouilles récentes de la basilique de Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, in: Bull. de la Soc. nat. des Antiquaires de France (1960) pp. 28–34. Hubert's response, pp. 34–35, »Le sarcophage, dont la paroi de tête est sculptée de croix, complète une serie de tombeaux découverts à Paris et sur les bords de la Loire. Moins simple que le sarcophage de Chalétric, il doit être placé à la fin du VIIᵉ siècle, comme le sarcophage de saint Arigle à Nevers.« VIEILLARD-TROÏEKOUROFF (see n. 22) p. 121 has pointed out that it should read »VIᵉ siècle«, but not before the error was taken up by J.-M. Berland, D. Costa and B. de Gaulejac.

[26] May VIEILLARD-TROÏEKOUROFF, Trois sarcophages mérovingiens découverts à Saint-Etienne de Nevers en janvier 1974, in: Bull. monumental 138 (1980) pp. 220–227 and ID. (see n. 22) pp. 120–122.

[27] COSTA (see n. 21) no. 217 (Saint-Donatien).

[28] LENOIR (see n. 20) Pl. II.

[29] DE GAULEJAC (see n. 23) pp. 162–163.

[30] Ibid., pp. 163–164 and VIEILLARD-TROÏEKOUROFF (see n. 23) pp. 121–122 mentions two examples that carry a cross transformed into a Tree of Life with large volutes.

[31] VIEILLARD-TROÏEKOUROFF (see n. 23) pp. 121–122 and ID. (see n. 26) p. 224, mentions sarcophagi found in a faubourg of Decize, but is very imprecise concerning their actual decoration.

[32] DE GAULEJAC (see n. 23) pp. 164–165.

[33] J.-M. BERLAND, Le sarcophage mérovingien à croix multiples de Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, in: Revue arch. du Centre 4 (1965) pp. 195–208.

[34] Musée d'Orléans, A 8230 – F. DESNOYERS, Séance du vendredi 9 aout 1883, in: Bull. de la Soc. arch. et hist. de l'Orléanais 8 (1883) p. 88.

[35] G. DURVILLE, Les fouilles de l'Evêché de Nantes, Nantes 1913 (Bull. de la Soc. arch. et hist. de Nantes et de la Loire-Inférieure, supplément) pp. 88–89.

[36] Jean-François BARATIN, Les sarcophages ornés ou non du Loiret, in: Actes du 98ᵉ Congrès nat. des soc. savantes Saint-Etienne 1973, Paris 1975, pp. 184–185 and VIEILLARD-TROÏEKOUROFF (see n. 23) p. 122. This is the same material used for the construction of some churches in the Loire-moyenne. Père J.-M. BERLAND, in a private discussion, indicated that the abbey church of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire was probably supplied by these same quarries.

The extraction and production of Nivernais sarcophagi was typical of the craft organization of the early Middle Ages. At Arcy-sur-Cure (Yonne), P. Poulain has revealed the almost assembly-line processes involved in the quarrying of stone for sarcophagi.[37] Implying a division of labor comprised of supervisors, quarrymen and tool makers, the organization within this enterprise reflected a developed sense of participation that probably coincided with societal organization in general. Further working and the eventual embellishment of sarcophagi were also, it appears, organized in a hierarchical manner. Moreover, the question of value arises when we examine the role of decorated sarcophagi within the context of Frankish society. Not all were ornamented;[38] and the uneven distribution of the Nivernais multiple-cross sarcophagus, outside the manufacturing locale, suggests a commercial value which escalated geometrically the farther one moves from the Nivernais.

Owing to the difficulty of establishing a chronology for the multiple-cross sarcophagus, it is impossible to determine the initial origin of the group or whether there was any specific symbolic significance to the addition of several crosses. There is, however, no doubt that the Loire variant of the multiple-cross sarcophagus had a connection with the Parisian style. For although the more northerly variety did not have an arcaded frame nor the stylized leaf (Fig. 6), both groups have covers bearing similar designs. The Parisian sarcophagus from Ste. Geneviève carrying fourteen crosses on its head was further embellished by an attenuated ›croix pattée‹ with greatly abbreviated arms running down the center of the slightly rounded cover.[39] This closely corresponds to the covers of the sarcophagi found at Nevers, Luthenay and Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, of which the latter two examples have a thinner extension projecting from the actual ›croix pattée‹ (Figs. 1, 4), almost as though the cross is on a support, while the cross of a cover from Nevers extends the whole length[40] (Fig. 3). At Saint-Parizé-le-Châtel, the cover is more geometric, yet related nevertheless. Horizontal bands with a saw-tooth design articulate the cover at the center and at the widest edge at the head. Passing through this to the narrow foot is the cross, straight in its vertical extensions and decorated with a chevron pattern. Toward the top are the greatly abbreviated arms, now exceedingly compressed and stylized (Fig. 2).[41]

In conclusion then, the diffused but restricted distribution of the multiple-cross sarcophagus with arcades and stylized leaves definitly points to a central manufacturing locale which can be assigned to the Nivernais, while the simple multiplication of crosses connects the Nivernais stylistically to the stronghold of Merovingian power located in Paris. From this we can speculate on the commercial aspect of sarcophagus production through their distribution. Quarried in blocks resembling their final shape, the sarcophagi were probably finished in a stonemason's shop not far from the quarry.[42] Although the examples now appear rough and unfinished, the small number of decorated sarcophagi and the places where they have been found indicate the special nature of these large monolithic sarcophagi.[43] Their size and their unique character of design made them valued as far west as Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, Orléans and even Nantes, at the mouth of the Loire River.

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[37] P. POULAIN, L'extraction et la taille des sarcophages dans la carrière de »la Roche Taillée« à Arcy-sur-Cure (Yonne), in: Revue arch. de l'Est 5 (1954) pp. 28–45.

[38] G.-R. DELAHAYE, Compte rendu de »L'importance donnée aux monuments funéraires à l'époque mérovingienne« par May VIEILLARD-TROïEKOUROFF, in: Bull. monumental 137 (1979) pp. 250–251.

[39] LENOIR (see n. 20) Pl. II.

[40] DE GAULEJAC (see n. 23) pp. 164–165. The sarcophagus located to the left in the apsidal chapel at Saint-Etienne has only a portion of its cover, but which has the base of a vertical support as decoration.

[41] Ibid., pp. 163–164.

[42] Paul LEBEL, Comment s'achetait un sarcophage à l'époque mérovingienne?, in: Revue arch. de l'Est 3–4 (1951) p. 170 and POULAIN (see n. 37) pp. 29–45.

[43] BERLAND (see n. 25) p. 30 for the location under the choir floor; DE GAULEJAC (see n. 23) pp. 161–166; and VIEILLARD-TROïEKOUROFF (see n. 26) pp. 221–227.

Appearing about a century after the development of the multiple-cross sarcophagus is a regional manufacturing center of bronze belt buckles situated between the middle stretches of the Loire and the Sarthe. This, more than the sarcophagi, reflects the artistic environment of the Loire Valley. Although the existence of the majority of objects that comprise this group has been known for some time, it has been only relatively recently that these bronze buckles have been analyzed according to their individual characteristics.

One finds that the bronze belt buckles centered in the Vendômois exhibit stylistic traits traditionally attributed to oriental or Mediterranean centers.[44] But whereas in the past they were generally classified with N. Åberg's Aquitanian buckles, they now have been organized to reveal their unique character.[45] About thirty examples have been uncovered, and at last a well defined group emerges. First, the shape and size are uniform. A long narrow triangular plaque with three pairs of rivets along the sides and a much larger rivet surrrounded by three smaller ones at the foot is the norm. The plaque is attached to a shield-on-tongue. All sections: plaque, shield-on-tongue, hook, buckle and rivets, were molded separately and some examples were tinned. Incised by burin, the major decorative features are placed within a trapezoidal frame on the plaque (Figs. 8, 9; Pl. II/3).

In spite of having a generalized shape and organization, the buckles incorporate a diverse repertoire of decorative motifs. Åberg's assessment of the stylistic characteristics of Aquitanian buckles stressed the incidence of similar animal types, the division of the decorated field into horizontal panels, tinning and dotted backgrounds.[46] Occasionally Aquitanian motifs are found on the buckles in question.[47] However, animal representations, especially quadrupeds with back-turned heads, are only seen now and then in the Val de Loire.[48] In fact, their subordinate rank within the decorative repertoire is remarkable, as this zoomorphic motif was extremely popular in southwestern ateliers.

Othern southwestern motifs, such as a double »S« pattern popular with Aquitanian artisans, have a restricted use in the Vendômois. This is a knotted-configuration consisting of antithetical S-curves springing form a horizontal bar, while bands of cross-hatching fill the innermost portions of each element, imparting a ribbon-like effect to the design. This appears on only one Vendômois example from Naveil (Loir-et-Cher) where two such designs have been placed in opposition within a spacious trapezoidal field.[49] It has heretofore been accepted that this motive was the final evolutionary stage of Aquitanian grill-interlace,[50] but the investigations of

[44] C. BARRIÈRE-FLAVY, Les arts industriels des peuples barbares de la Gaule du Vᵉ au VIIIᵉ siècle, vol. III (Toulouse 1901), Pls. XXXI, 3; XLI, 1 & 2; XLII, 1, 3 & 5; LI, 1; L. FRANCHET, Une colonie scytho-alaine du Vendômois, in: Revue scientifique 68 (1930) pp. 70–82, 109–117; H. ZEISS, Die germanischen Grab-funde des frühen Mittelalters zwischen mittlerer Seine und Loiremündung, in: Bericht der röm.-germ. Kommission 31 (1941) pp. 5–174; Nils ÅBERG, The Occident and the Orient in the Art of the Seventh Century, Part III (Stockholm 1947) pp. 40–64; and Edouard SALIN, La civilisation mérovingienne, vol. I (Paris 1950) pp. 310–319.

[45] Jacques RIVIÈRE, Une production d'origine étrangère: Les garnitures de ceinture mérovingiennes de la Loire moyenne, in: Revue arch. du Centre 5 (1966) pp. 221–240 and JAMES (see n. 17) pp. 111–113 and 145–146, fig. 15b.

[46] ÅBERG (see n. 44) pp. 48–57.

[47] Examples with background dotting: RIVIÈRE (see n. 45) nos. 10 (Naveil, Loir-et-Cher), 13 (vicinity of Vendôme, Loir-et-Cher), 14 (Fréteval, Loir-et-Cher), 9 (Saint-Dyé, Loir-et-Cher), 30 (Wanquetin, Belgium); and examples with transversal compartments: Ibid., no. 1 (Nantes, Loire-Atlantique), 5 (Rouillé, Deux-Sevres), 14 (Fréteval, Loir-et-Cher) and 29 (Moislains, Somme).

[48] Ibid., nos. 1 (Nantes, Loire-Atlantique), 5 (Rouillé, Deux-Sevres), 11 (Artins, Loir-et-Cher), 14 (Fréteval, Loir-et-Cher) and 29 (Moislains, Somme).

[49] Musée de Vendôme; ÅBERG (see n. 44) no. 46–2; RIVIÈRE (see n. 45) no. 10; FRANCHET (see n. 44), fig. 6; ZEISS (see n. 44) p. 70, Taf. 6,2; and SALIN (see n. 44) fig. 98.

[50] ÅBERG (see n. 44) p. 50, fig. 14: 4–11.

J. Boube have overturned this interpretation. In analyzing a rounded bronze buckle from Puycasquier (Gers), dating to the seventh century, he recognized the motif as a stylized representation of beasts at the Fountain of Life. Noting the conflation of the Daniel/Gilgamesh theme with the Fountain of Life, where one finds griffins drinking from a cantharos, Boube convincingly delineates the stages leading to the stylized cross-hatched ribbons springing from a horizontal bar. On the Naveil buckle, an example of complete stylization, two Daniel/Fountain of Life symbols have been incised, thus twice evoking the protective powers of the double symbol. The debased Daniel motif, moreover, proves the influence of Burgundian motifs on the evolution of Aquitanian metalwork,[51] and by inference on the artisans of the Loire-Sarthe.

By far the most common form of decoration adorning the trapezoidal field of the plaque is interlace. The question of interlaces, both plain and zoomorphic, and the origins of their varied styles have been an all-consuming preoccupation for some scholars. Here again, the Vendômois buckles reveal their eclectic character by carrying within their decorated fields a wide variety of forms. It is evident, furthermore, that the diversified character of Vendômois interlace is the very reason for the confusion over the proper designation for this group of belt buckles. Åberg recognized the difficulty in signalling the exact origins of the innumerable interlace combinations that appear in Frankish art, and, although more recognition is given to Roman motifs and indigenous debasement of former figurative patterns, the relationship between Aquitanian and Germanic interlace is still murky. Tight, closely woven single and double braids have by far the greatest incidence.[52] This appears to be related to the lattice-interlace that was popular in the southwest and which might have had Roman mosaic decoration as its organizational inspiration.[53] A uniform pattern is the hallmark of this type and contrasts with a few examples that present the same pattern in a highly compartmentalized organization.

Rather than being conceived as a plait, the interlace on buckles from Saunay (Indre-et-Loire),[54] Martigné-Briand (Maine-et-Loire),[55] Saosnes (Sarthe),[56] an example of unknown provenance at the Cleveland Museum of Art (U.S.A.)[57] (Pl. II/3), and a lost fragment found in the quarries at Champfleur (Maine-et-Loire)[58] is divided into cloisons in which the two-dimensional character of the design is enhanced by this treatment. The buckles from Saunay, Martigné-Briand and the Cleveland Museum further divide the design by having in the very centers of the pattern hatch marks, either perpendicular or parallel, that focus our attention on the vertical center of the trapezoidal field. It has been noted, moreover, that the cross-hatching of cloisons is shared with a square buckle from Usins (Switzerland),[59] but the use of cross-hatching on the Swiss buckle is more diffused, imparting a more loosely-woven effect to the interlace pattern.

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[51] J. BOUBE, Le motif des griffons à la source de vie sur une plaque-boucle barbare de Puycasquier, in: Bull. de la Société arch. et hist. du Gers 57 (1956) pp. 156–176.

[52] RIVIÈRE (see n. 45) nos. 2 (Martigné-Briand, Maine-et-Loire); 6, 7, 8 (all from Saunay, Indre-et-Loire); 13 (vicinity of Vendôme, Loir-et-Cher); 15 (Fréteval, Loir-et-Cher); 18 (Saint-Saturnin, Sarthe); 30 (Wanquetin, Belgium); and 31 (Resteigne, Belgium).

[53] JAMES (see n. 17) pp. 142–143.

[54] Tours, Musée de la Société archéologique de Touraine; Charles LELONG, La Touraine à l'époque mérovingienne, Tours 1975, nos. 4, 5 & 6; and RIVIÈRE (see n. 45) nos. 6, 7 & 8, figs. 2 and 12.

[55] RIVIÈRE (see n. 45) no. 2.

[56] Le Mans, Musée du Mans, no. 3–289; RIVIÈRE (see n. 45) no. 21; SALIN (see n. 44) fig. 102; and E. HUCHER, L'art celtique à l'époque mérovingienne, in: Revue hist. et arch. du Maine 8 (1880) pp. 193–210, fig. 9.

[57] Cleveland, Ohio, The Cleveland Museum of Art, no. 75.107, unknown provenance.

[58] Vᵉ S. MENJOT D'ELBENNE, Champ des Batailles à Champfleur, in: Bull. de la Soc. hist. du Maine 15 (1935) pp. 98–101.

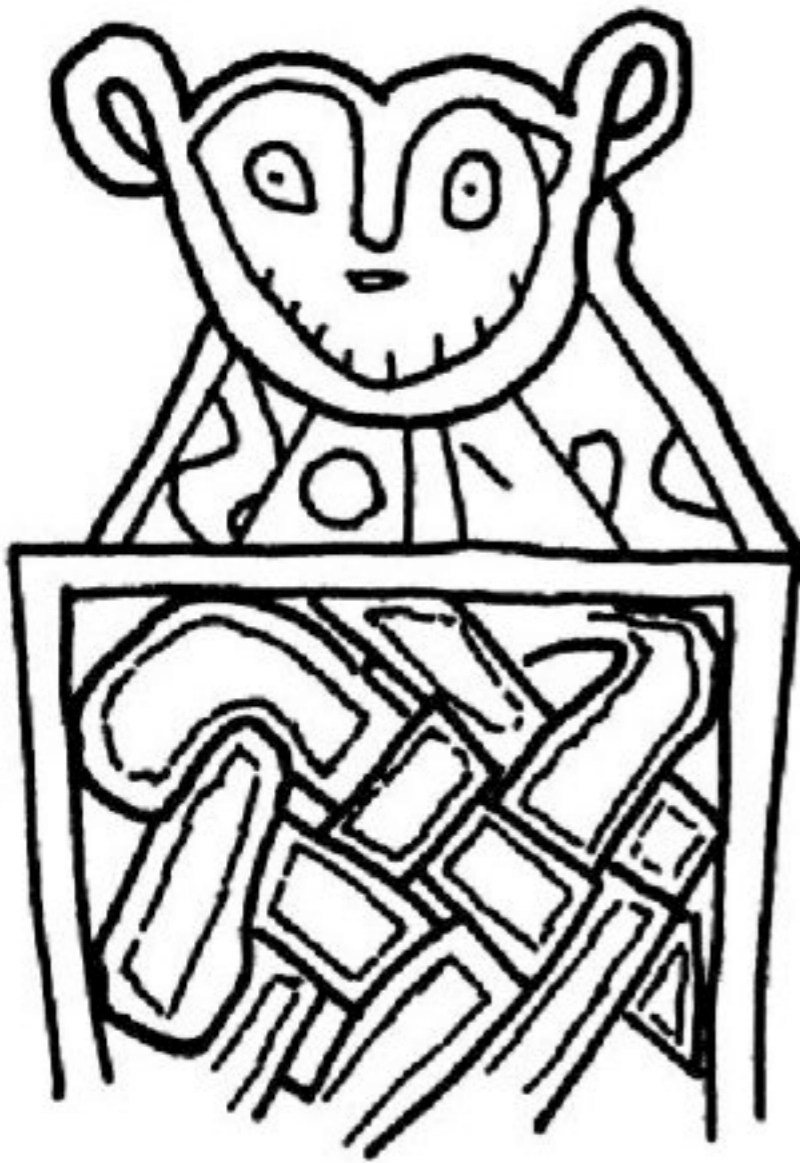[59] RIVIÈRE (see n. 45) pp. 234–236, fig. 12 and 13.

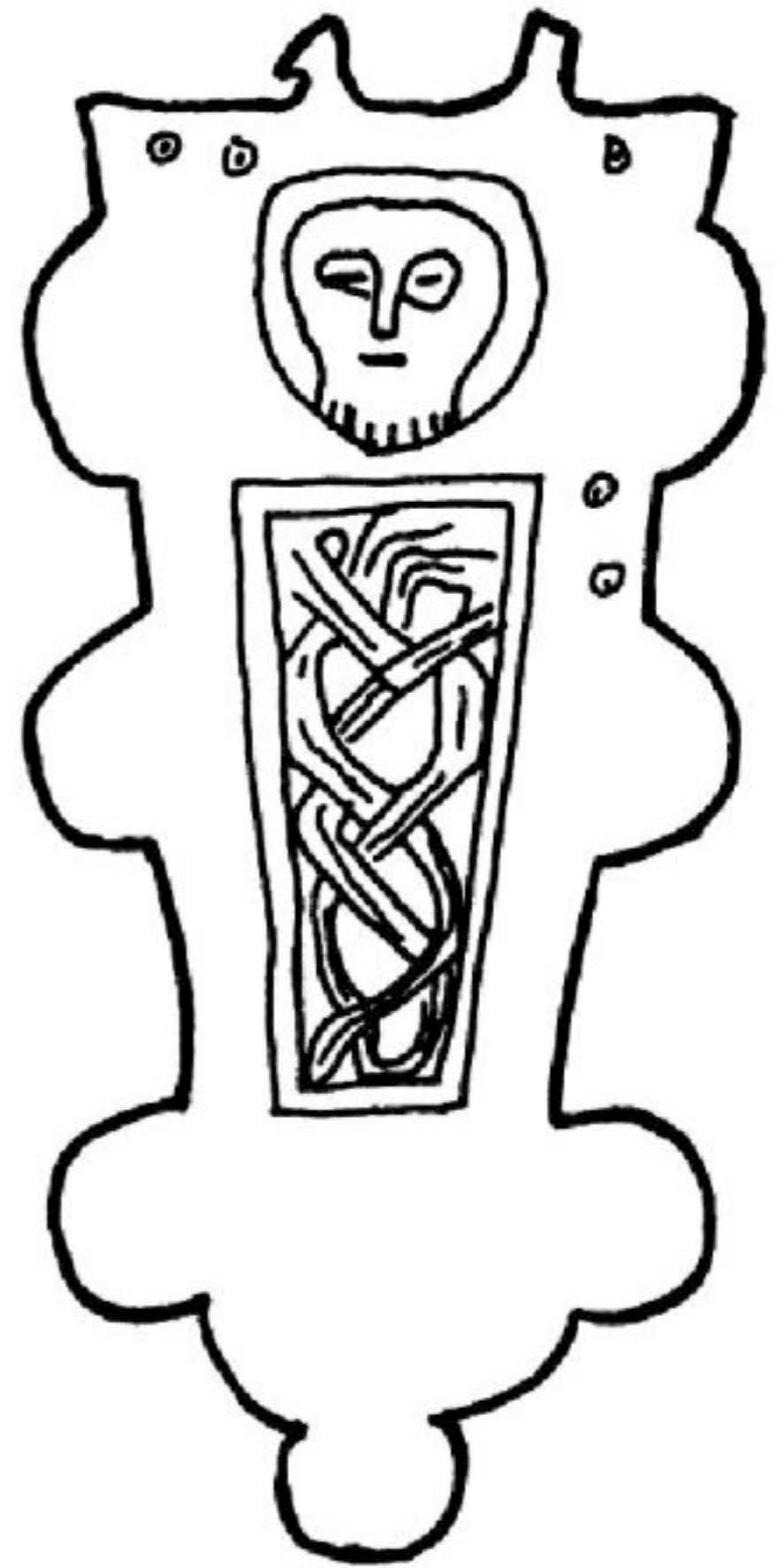Fig. 7: Saosnes (Sarthe), Le Mans, Musée du Mans

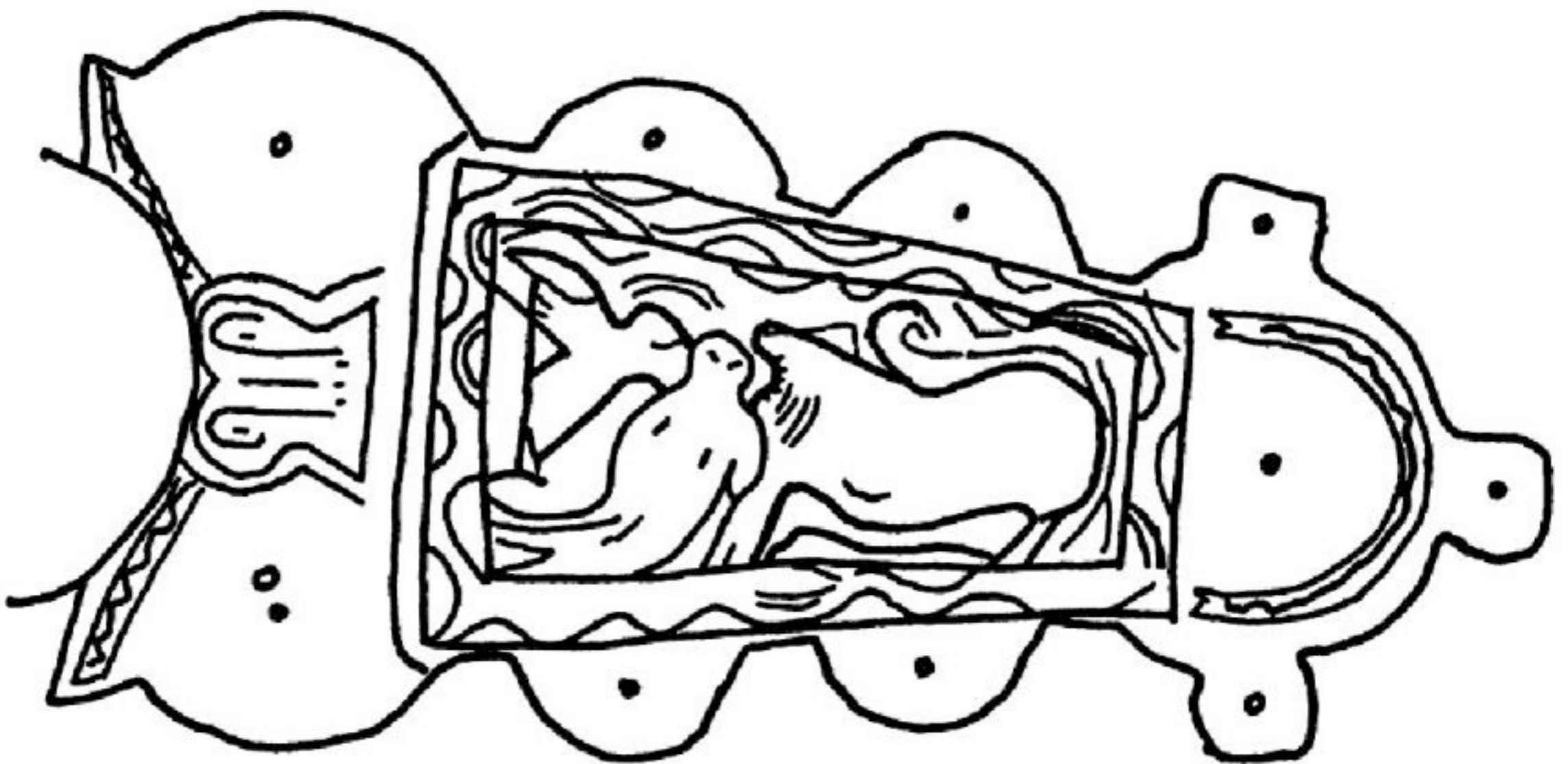

Fig. 8: Fréteval (Loir-et-Cher)

Fig. 9: Le Mans, Musée du Mans

Placing the hatch-marks in the centermost cloisons is a feature of the Vendômois buckles and illustrates the creativity of the artisans from that region. The trapezoidal field characteristic of this group, and the compartmentalization into cloisons are indicative of an emerging preference for geometrizing the field of decoration almost to the point where the trapezoid becomes the dominant element, a characteristic that is not as readily apparent in the personal ornament of other regions.

Despite the low esteem in which animal representations were held, human figures, although exceedingly debased, ornament several buckles from the Vendômois.[60] When this trait is present one finds an extremely stylized human mask (masque humain) on the buckle plaque or occasionally on the shield-on-tongue. The mask usually resembles a flat-sided oval, and the eyes and nose form one configuration, looking like two antithetical cup handels separated by a broad vertical extension projecting towards the chin. A mouth, beard and hair often appear as well. One rather elaborate example from Saosnes (Sarthe) has on its plaque a male bust that displays »cup-handle« eyes flanking a rectangular nose, a beard on the chin and a patterned garment[61] (Fig. 7). Although not as detailed, a buckle from Fréteval (Loir-et-Cher) has a similar mask poised above the trapezoidal field[62] (Fig. 8).

What was the meaning and purpose of these conceptualized human configurations? Pages of scholarship have sought to find the answer to the question of the role of the human form in Frankish art;[63] and the problem is still far from being solved. The role of the human head as an apotropaic device used by Indo-Europeans is well known. Greek and Roman oscilla, simulacra, and Medusa heads were a common element in protecting the cities, towns, sacred precincts, homes and burial monuments of the peoples of the ancient world. These features spread into the western territories through conquest and acculturation, and were assimilated by peoples who practiced their own form of cranial veneration. The indigenous peoples of Gaul decapitated their defeated enemies and nailed or placed the heads in niches around the doorways of their houses or sacred precincts.[64] Closely resembling the Roman custom of keeping the wax imagines of ancestors or painting their images on the domicile exterior,[65] the Gaulish ritual must have shared a common origin. Thus we find merging in Gaul two important religious traditions that could have been shared by the conquerors and the conquered.

The appearance of the human mask in Frankish art was not confined to the Loire Valley. The work of E. Salin[66] has clearly demonstrated the wide diffusion of this form of decoration. And P. Périn has shown that it provided the integral symbolic feature on the round bronze buckles from the Paris Basin that date to the late sixth century and which carry in their centers a human mask with stylized beard, mouth, eyes and nose. The symbolic function of the human mask in this instance in that of the face of Christ or the ›Sainte Face‹.[67]

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[60] Ibid., nos. 9 (Saint-Dyé, Loir-et-Cher); 14 & 15 (Fréteval, Loir-et-Cher), 21 (Saosnes, Sarthe); see SALIN (see n. 44) fig. 102 and HUCHER (see n. 55) no. 9 for the Saosnes example; and JAMES (see n. 17) nos. 147 (Arthenay, Loiret [Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, no. 1909.697]), 158 & 159 (Fréteval examples), 169 (Saint-Dyé), 170 (Saosnes) and 179 (Verson, Calvados).

[61] Le Mans, Musée du Mans, no. 3–289; HUCHER (see n. 55) pp. 192–210; and SALIN (see n. 44) fig. 102.

[62] RIVIÈRE (see n. 45) no. 15; FRANCHET (see n. 44) p. 75, fig. 8, and ZEISS (see n. 44) no. 50, Taf. 6, 1.

[63] Edouard SALIN, La civilisation mérovingienne, vol. IV (Paris 1959) pp. 357–420 for a good summary.

[64] A. REINACH, Les têtes coupées et les trophées en Gaule, in: Revue celtique 34 (1913) pp. 39–60, 273–285; F. BENOÎT, Des chevaux de Mouriès aux chevaux de Roquepertuse, in: Préhistoire 10 (1948) pp. 137–210; and P. LAMBRECHTS, Divinités équestres celtiques ou défunts héroïsés?, in: L'Antiquité classique 20 (1951) pp. 105–128, for a refutation of Benoît.

[65] PAULY-WISSOWA, Real-Encyclopädie, vol. 37, Stuttgart 1942, col. 1567–1578.

[66] SALIN (see n. 63) pp. 247–420.

[67] Patrick PÉRIN, Six plaques-boucles mérovingiennes de bronze à plaque ronde ornée d'un masque humain et de motifs géométriques du musée Carnavalet, in: Bull. du Groupement arch. de Seine-et-Marne 14–15 (1973–1974) pp. 71–97.

One may therefore presume the presence of the human mask on the ten-rivet buckles from the Vendômois had much the same purpose. Although references to specific Christian symbols such as the cross are absent, the abbreviated human likeness assumes a protective role nonetheless. This is especially noticeable when one takes into account its placement above the trapezoidal field. Human mask and decorated field almost duplicate traditional Roman grave stelae.[68]

A similar protective function is seen on a unique buckle of unknown provenance from the Sarthe[69] (Fig. 9), where a figurative representation of Daniel and the Lions fills the trapezoidal field. The illustration is so degenerate that the left-hand beast is bearly recognizable admidst the jumble of squiggles and arcs within the border. As for Daniel, there is little to identify him; he is off-center and is not affecting the *orans* pose. Thus one might question the efficacy of the representation if it were not for the similarity of other depictions, such as the panel of a plaster sarcophagus from the cemetery of Saint-Marcel, Paris.[70] Even the most rudimentary and seemingly casual depictions of standard symbols did not, it appears, detract from the primary apotropaic purpose of the image.

Archeological documentation is meager for the buckles comprising the Loire-Sarthe group; hence establishing a sound chronology has been difficult. The discovery of a few examples in immediate association with parish churches has, for the time being, generally assigned the Vendômois buckles to the late seventh and eighth centuries.[71] Reenforcing this dating is the appearance of decorative motifs that were popular at about that time. The appearance of the final stylization of the Fountain of Life on the Naveil buckle suggests that a long period of time had elapsed between its initial importation in the sixth century and its ultimate stylization, thus supporting a date of at least the mid-seventh century.[72]

The date, the northerly concentration of finds, and the type of decoration are indicative, moreover, of the great cultural shifts taking place during the last decades of the seventh century. Aquitania, always considered a separate entity by the Merovingian royal house, began in 657, if not earlier, to lose its stellar position in the arts and in intellectual activities in general. The establishment of a buffer zone to counteract Gascon incursions effectively paved the way for the rise of the future duchy of Aquitaine, an independent fiefdom running counter to the policies of the Frankish royal houses to the north.[73] Frankish political domination had heretofore been concentrated in Paris, with the outlying regions bound to it by centripetal force. But the disintegration of the Merovingian royal house after the death of Clovis II in 657 brought about a pronounced shift of power from the Paris Basin to the eastern realm of Austrasia. Artistically, Aquitania was not able to regain its preeminence after being ravaged first by the infidels then by the Pippinids.[74]

With this in mind, we can ascertain the connection between the Loire-Sarthe buckles and the broad cultural and political changes mentioned above. We have seen that inspiration for the

[68] LAMBRECHTS (see n. 64) pp. 111–112, maintains the »têtes coupées« of the Celts were in fact imitations of the hermes statues of the Romans. SALIN (see n. 63) fig. 147, reproduces a funeral stele now in the Museum at Bonn on which a conceptualized head rests on a trapezoidal body.

[69] Le Mans, Musée du Mans, no. 3–285; RIVIÈRE (see n. 45) no. 19; and HUCHER (see n. 55) fig. 8.

[70] SALIN (see n. 63) fig. 121.

[71] RIVIÈRE (see n. 45) p. 226.

[72] JAMES (see n. 17) p. 140 and BOUBE (see n. 51) pp. 171–176, who maintains the Naveil buckle is extremely stylized, hence its placement within the evolution of the seventh century style is late.

[73] Eugen EWIG, Die fränkischen Teilreiche im 7. Jahrhundert (613–714), in: Spätantikes und Fränkisches Gallien (see n. 2) pp. 172–230 and Archibald LEWIS, The Dukes in the Regnum Francorum, A. D. 550–751, in: Speculum 51 (1976) pp. 381–410.

[74] Pierre RICHÉ, Education et culture dans l'occident barbare VIᵉ–VIIIᵉ siècles, 3rd editon, Paris 1973, pp. 250–254.

Vendômois buckles was diverse; Aquitanian and Franco-Burgundian components have been credited with their formation. Although debate has arisen over the question of the major impetus, Aquitanian or Frankish, it seems in light of stylistic analyses of the incised decoration and the shape and disposition of the buckles, that Franco-Burgundian centers were predominantly instrumental in the formation of these objects. J. Rivière has, in fact, signalled the similarity between the ten-rivet buckles of the Loire-moyenne and an similar type produced by ateliers in the Jura, which probably anticipated the former.[75] The restrained use of Aquitanian features appears, furthermore, to coincide with the decline of southwestern domination in style. Despite borrowings from south and east, the Loire-Sarthe buckles reflect the highly individual nature of the Val-de-Loire by creating a particular motif, namely the human mask, in conjunction with the trapezoidal field of decoration, which was based upon the combined traditions of the Gaulois, Gallo-Romans, and Franks, thus creating in the late seventh century a truly Gallo-Frankish form of personal ornament.

So far manufacturing has been confined to pockets along the Val de Loire: sarcophagi in the Nivernais and belt buckles in the Vendômois. Seemingly overlying these and sharing the artisan climate of the Val de Loire, was the manufacture of objects in terra cotta. Although fabricated in other areas of France, the high incidence of terra cotta along the Loire and its affluents can easily be explained geologically, as the lands west of Nevers are almost totally devoid of strong building stone. Thus brick became a popular building material which is still extensively in use. The forms of terra cotta are manifold, including decorative plaques, modillions, cornice plaques, tiles and antefixes, all of which played an ornamental role in architecture. While the composition of the conglomerates varies greatly from location to location, or even batch to batch, all examples reflect a manufacturing process that relied upon the mold and a crude firing technique.[76]

It has often been pointed out that the terra cotta fabricated by early medieval craftsmen was inspired by late antique models. The use of this material as architectural decoration was certainly shared by the peoples along the Loire and its tributaries during Roman times,[77] and there is little reason to presume that this tradition was broken during the Frankish period. Evidence, in fact, points to the use of terra cotta as a favored medium well into the Middle Ages.

Most of these terra cotta objects constitute the etablished repertoire of architectural embellishment. Various modillion types have been found in an almost continuous line from Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire (Loiret) to Nantes (Loire-Atlantique). Usually measuring about 20 cm in length and about 10 cm in breadth, they have a decorated end portion that occupies 6 to 10 cm of the total length. Mirroring local styles and tastes, the design and specific shape of the modillions are almost as numerous as the number of examples. A graduated pattern resembling steps is most common[78] (Fig. 10), but this is by no means the only form. At St. Martin's,

[75] RIVIÈRE (see n. 45) pp. 236–237.

[76] Jean CHAPELOT, Les antefixes de terre cuite d'époque carolingienne en France, in: Revue arch. du Loiret 2 (1976) p. 46, and Dominique COSTA, Le décor architectonique à l'époque mérovingienne dans le pays nantais, in: Bull. de la Soc. arch. de Nantes et de Loire-Atlantique 98 (1959) pp. 173–193.

[77] Several good examples of Roman terra cotta, antefixes primarily, are to be seen at Châteaudun (Loir-et-Cher), Musée municipal. Two examples with the designation, »Saint Cloud« on the edges, are fragments of Roman antefixes. For bibliography see: A. NOUEL, Comment le Musée de Châteaudun contribue à l'etablissement de la carte gallo-romaine régionale?, in: Bull. de la Soc. Dunoise 18 (1964) p. 186 and Jean CHAPELOT, Un site du haut moyen âge, Moncelon (Commune de Briou, Loir-et-Cher), in: Revue arch. du Centre 10 (1971) pp. 10–13, fig. 5, for the terra cotta marine animal found by M. Marquenet of Lorges.

[78] Variations of this type of modillion are found at: Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire (Loiret), see J.-M. BERLAND, Catalogue des objets exposés dans l'abbaye au cours de la semaine d'études médiévales, in: Etudes ligeriennes d'histoire médiévale, Auxerre 1975, p. 413 and G. CHENESSAU, Découverte des sépultures anciennes dans l'église de Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, in: Bull. de la Soc. arch. et hist. de l'Orléanais 20 (1923)
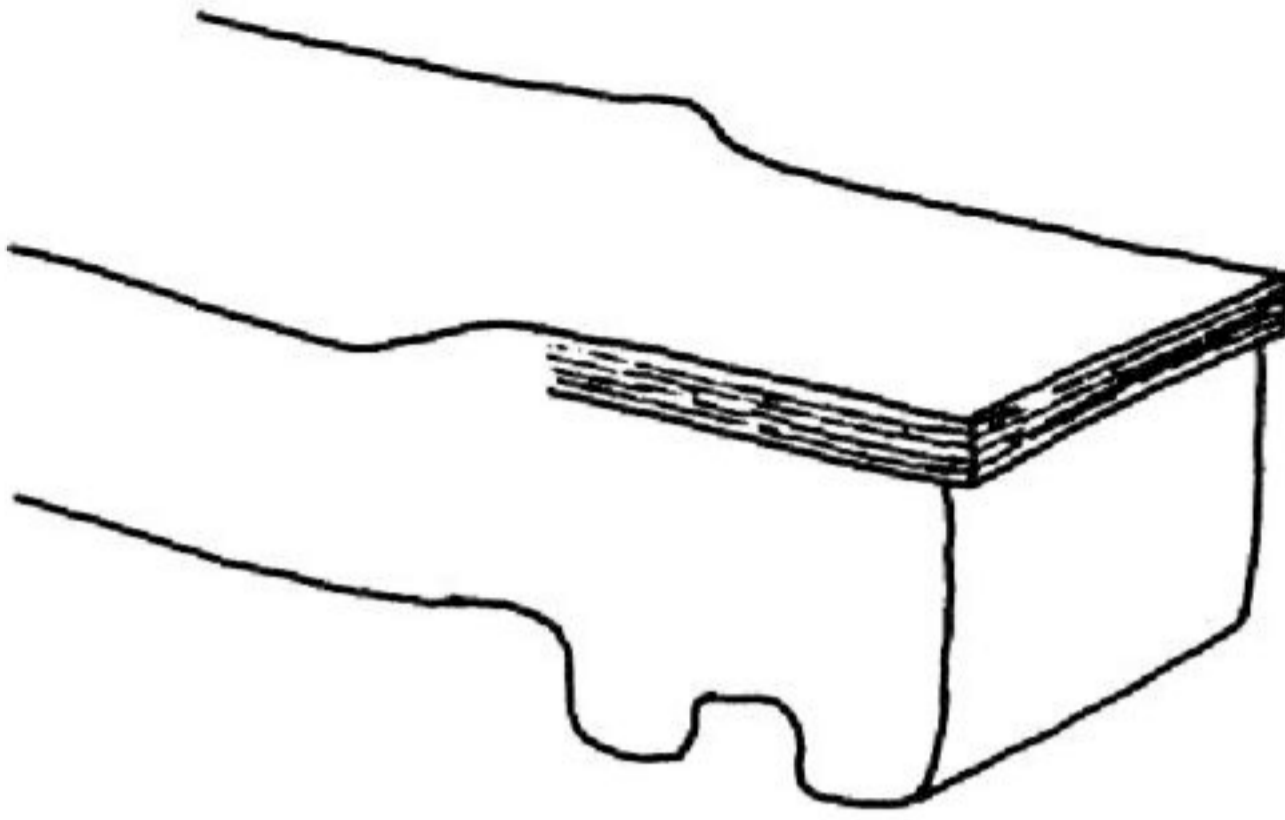
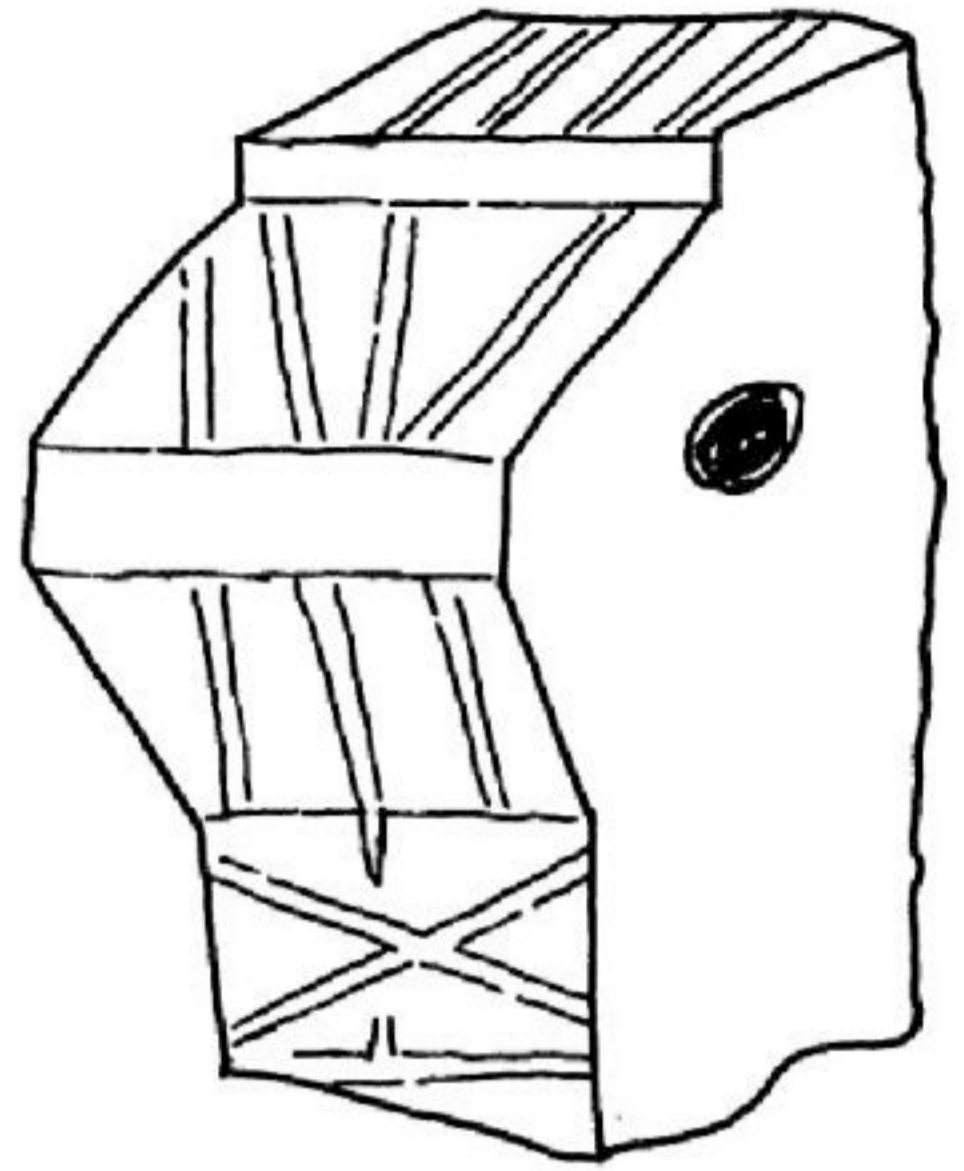Fig. 10: Tours, Laboratoire d'archéologie urbaine   Fig. 11: Angers, Church of Saint Martin

Angers, the discovery of a rounded modillion in stone painted red and a rectilinear style in terra cotta (Fig. 11) suggests an eclectic taste in decoration that appears not to have bothered medieval man.[79]

Besides modillions, Loire craftsmen manufactured an assortment of terra cotta plaques and bricks, thereby exhibiting immense creativity and fertile imagination. Large rectangular tiles with one edge beveled and carrying a stylized decoration are cornice plaques to be placed above the modillions. Although not as prevalent as the latter, the cornice plaques also exhibit a wide variety of ornamentation with a strong affinity to their antique counterparts. At Tours, a finely mixed conglomerate was poured into a sharply and evenly delineated mold to create a simple but effective example of a repetitious egg pattern framed by a narrow border,[80] while a stylized version of the antique bead-and-reel makes its appearance at Nantes.[81] Another popular yet by no means identical decorative motif is the vine scroll. Having a wide area of diffusion, various forms of the vine-scroll have been found in Nantes and in Paris. The Church of St. Similien, Nantes, has yielded several cornice plaque and brick fragments carrying rinceaux decorations composed of elegant tendrils in arabesque alternating with heavier foliate patterns.[82] One cornice fragment in particular is similar in treatment to a cornice plaque found in Paris, perhaps

p. 46. For Germigny-des-Prés, see P. JOUVELLIER, Fragments décoratifs de Germigny-des-Prés conservés au Musée historique de l'Orléanais, in: Etudes ligeriennes d'histoire et d'archéologie médiévales, Auxerre 1975, p. 434 and Jean HUBERT, Germigny-des-Prés, in: Actes du 93e congrès arch. Orléans, Paris 1931, p. 564; for Orléans, see: Orléans archéologique, in: Revue arch. du Loiret 4 (1978) pp. 77–78 for a modillion found at the site of the former church of Saint-Pierre, Lentin; and for Tours, see Barbara WATKINSON, Les objets architecturaux en terre cuite à Tours: le Château de Tours, in: Recherches sur Tours, Tours 1981, pp. 140–155.

[79] George FORSYTH, The Church of St. Martin at Angers, Princeton 1953, p. 39 and G. PLAT, L'Art de bâtir en France, Paris 1939, p. 63.

[80] Tours, Laboratoire d'archéologie urbaine, no. 3.1315.2.3, length 0.105m, width 0.08m and thickness 0.035m.

[81] COSTA (see n. 21) no. 179, length 0.215m, width 0.445m and thickness 0.065m, provenance unknown.

[82] Ibid., nos. 123–173.

at the cemetery of St. Marcel.[83] Although thought by some[84] to indicate a common atelier, the likelihood of this is remote. The wide variety of forms at Nantes and Paris and their basic dissimilarities seem to militate against any common manufacturing center.

Perhaps in part the result of the absence of building stone or in response to local taste, several varieties of tiles have been found in close association with the Val de Loire. Some of these are merely rectangular or square, while others are of curious shapes. We are only now beginning to ascertain the role of terra cotta in the decorative embellishment of the early medieval period but it seems that it figured prominantly in the aesthetics of that age. Geometrically fashioned stones and bricks appear to have been common elements in the decoration of the architecture of the Touraine and in regions related to it by trade or politics.[85] At Saint-Generoux in the Vendée, bricks were placed in the interstices of the ashlar masonry to impart an effect that is the reverse of early medieval cloisonné. Likewise the church at Lion d'Angers (Maine-et-Loire) has around its main doorway an arch composed of brick tiles that form a network of cloisons in which white limestone has been placed. A more elaborate variation of this same design is found on a wall in Tours on the rue Néricault-Destouches. Incorporated within the early tenth-century wall around St. Martin's, this structure must date to the ninth century, if not earlier.[86] The most fascinating aspect of this wall is the application of standard rounded tiles of the Roman type (*imbrex*) within the mortar fabric of the wall. These tiles have been placed so that their semi-circular ends are almost flush with the surface; and are arranged in triangles and rows of undulating tiles, while flat tiles provide a colorful foil as the interstices of the cut masonry of ›tuffeau Touraine‹. Obviously in this instance the terra cotta was meant to play a decorative role that presupposes a highly imaginative application of the medium. The same can be said of the bricks from the château at Tours. Found within the matrix of a destroyed wall dating to ca. 800, these bricks have a strange shape: a trapezoidal body with a vertical projection at the top and an horizontal base (Pl. II/4). Since a structural function is dubious,[87] one must conclude therefore that they were conceived as a decorative feature. Their unique shape precludes any arrangement other than placing them in opposition. Therefore, they were most likely placed in horizontal courses, perhaps under a cornice line. At Vertou (a suburb of Nantes), similarly designed bricks in a graduated pattern have been found within the rubble of the piers of the tenth-century chapel of St. Martin.[88] These are not exactly the same shape, but they too must have been placed in

[83] Ibid., no. 163, from Saint-Similien, length 0.19m, width 0.195m and thickness 0.06m; and May VIEILLARD-TROÏEKOUROFF, Saint-Germain-des-Prés, in: Les anciennes églises suburbaines de Paris, IVᵉ au Xᵉ siècles, Paris 1960 (Mémoires de la Féderation des Soc. hist. et arch. de Paris et l'Ile de France 2) p. 96, Pl. VIII a, Musée Carnavalet, A. C. 2546, length 0.21m, width 0.15m and thickness 0.06m and another unnumbered fragment marked »Fouilles de Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Mars 1876« measuring: length 0.40m, width 0.40m and thickness 0.06m. Two other cornice plaque fragments are also in the same collection: A. C. 2541: length 0.12m, width 0.15m and thickness 0.05m, and an unmarked fragment: length 0.12m, width 0.15m and thickness 0.06m, neither carry any indication of provenance.

[84] Charles LELONG, Les modillions de terre cuite carolingiens du Val-de-Loire, in: Revue arch. du Centre 3 (1964) pp. 247 and 257, »il semble donc que l'on soit en droit de supposer l'existence, dans le Val-de-Loire, d'un atelier de briquetiers, assez actif pour diffuser sa production sur de nombreux chantiers contemporains du centre de la France, . . .«.

[85] PLAT (see n. 77) and F. LESUEUR, Appareils décoratifs supposés carolingiens, in: Bull. monumental 124 (1966) 167–186.

[86] Charles LELONG, L'enceinte de Castrum Sancti Martini (Tours), in: Bull. arch. N.S. 6 (1970) pp. 43–56.

[87] Tours, Laboratoire d'archéologie urbaine, nos. 3.1315.2.3–18; 3.00.2.2; 3.1235.2.1; 3.1243.2.1; 3.1248.2.2; 3.1429.2.1; 3.1599.2.1; 3.1549.2.2; 3.2063.2.1; 3.6408.2.3; 3.6721.2.1; and 3.9083.2.1; and WATKINSON (see n. 78).

[88] Charles MARIONNEAU, Collection archéologique du canton de Vertou, in: Bull. de la Soc. arch. de Nantes et Loire-Inférieure 15 (1876) p. 33, no. 48 and COSTA (see n. 21) nos. 17, 19 and 20.

opposition in order to achieve a tight fit. The visual effect for both types would have been reminiscent of cloisonné, the red brick being the major color contrasted with the light color of the mortar joints.

Besides the obviously architectural objects, several other examples of terra cotta plaques adorned with figural images have been discoverd. Stylistically the plaques range from relatively sophisticated to crude; and they run the gamut of images from pagan to thoroughly Christian. Again it is in the Basse Loire, at Nantes and its suburbs, that the most expanded repertoire of images and the most polished form of figurative representation are to be found.[89] The combination of pagan and Christian motifs at the church of St. Similien causes one to marvel at the still active imagination of the early medieval mind. Nude figures in flight, holding either crowns or shields, marine animals, and animal chases make up a collection of images that appear to have been taken directly from antique sources. Sharing the same stylistic characteristics, Christian symbols – the Chrism, a Latin cross with suspended alpha and omega, a standing figure holding a shepherd's crook (St. Similien), and Adam and Eve flanking the Tree of Knowledge – complete the inventory of figural or symbolic representation found at the mouth of the Loire.

This expanded stock of images does not appear to have been used by ateliers farther in the interior,[90] yet isolated plaques have been found at the château in Tours (Pl. III/5, 6)[91] and nearby Rochepinard[92] (Pl. IV/7) which have on their decorated faces standing figures with raised hands – the standard orans pose – surmounted by a cross. Although the symbolic connotation is similar, there are obvious differences of conception. The Rochepinard orant is a highly energized figure which almost jumps off the face of the plaque, while the château example is static and extremely abbreviated, having no visible appendages. Whatever the reasons for the shift in figural conception, the actual execution of the bricks is simular, and there is ample reason to believe the bricks were produced within the same geographical area – Tours. Note the similarity in the delineation of the eyes and nose, hair and beard. All betray innate qualities that strongly suggest a single manufacturing center. Even the manufacturing aspects are the same: conglomerate, height of relief, and the flat border that runs around three sides of each plaque, which could only have been made after removal from the mold, imply an intimate relationship between the Rochepinard and Tours plaques.[90]

The appearance of the cross and the gable formation of the Tours plaques relate them with another group of terra cotta objects – the antefix with human mask. These have been found scattered in southwestern France,[93] in and around Paris,[94] and in Normandy,[95] but have a heavy

[89] COSTA (see n. 76) pp. 173–190 and ID. (see n. 21) nos. 21–122.

[90] Angers, Musée d'Angers has within its collection several examples of tiles carrying variations of the chrism design: nos. 2542, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, AMD 2884 and ten fragments of chrism plaques bearing no markings. Also there are two plaques with stylized marine animals: AM 2885 and AM 2909, the latter corresponds to a fragment found in the chapel of Saint-Martin, Angers, see FORSYTH (see n. 79) fig. 139.

[91] Tours, Laboratoire d'archéologie urbaine, nos. 3.00.2.4; 3.4133.2.1; 3.1347.2.2; 3.1650.2.3; and 3.1926.2.1; their original dimensions averaged: length 0.23m, width 0.14m and thickness 0.02m.

[92] Tours, Musée de la Société archéologique de Touraine; LELONG (see n. 54) no. 34 and ID., Brique de Rochepinard, in: Bull. de la Soc. arch. de Touraine 31 (1957) pp. 469–472; length 0.21m, width 0.145m and thickness 0.04m.

[93] F. DE MELY, Tuile avec figure du Christ trouvée à Perigueux, in: Bulletin de la Société nationale des Antiquaires de France (1924) pp. 162–167, 191–196 and ID., Des encolpia funéraires . . . trouvés à Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges, in: Bull. de la Soc. nat. des Antiquaires de France (1931) pp. 89–91.

[94] Saint-Denis, Musée municipal, found on the site of the church of the Trois Patrons and Paris, Musée Carnavalet, A. C. 1000/279, A. C. 1160, A. C. 1050/672, A. C. 1000/673, A. C. 2566 and an example from Saint-Pierre de Montmartre, Sondage 4. SALIN (see n. 63) pp. 278–281; Patrick PÉRIN, Jardin du Calvaire abords de l'église Saint-Pierre de Montmartre, in: Bull. monumental 137 (1977) pp. 159–160; Bailey YOUNG, Archaeology in an Urban Setting: Excavations at Saint-Pierre-de-Montmartre, Paris 1975–

concentration within the Loire-moyenne.[94] Although there are very few instances where duplication exists, all antefixes share common traits. The dimensions are roughly uniform (about 17 cm by 11 cm), and the human mask is characterized by large horizontal eyes, a large gaping mouth and a long trapezoidal nose. The entire image is surmonted by a cross and placed within an architectural frame composed of columns, while the plaque has either a gable or arched top. The antefixes have been assigned a special architectural function, as their unique combination of Christian and pagan elements[97] and the presence of a small *imbrex* attachment on the reverse strongly suggest that they were utilized as protective devices on funerary monuments.[98]

The diffused area of distribution of the antefixes, moreover, links the Loire with regions to the north and south. A glance at the map (Fig. 12) will indicate the heaviest concentration is indeed found in close association with the Loire Valley. Orléans and the ceramic works just to the north at Saran (Loiret) appear to have the most concentrated finds, while the region around Châteaudun (Eure-et-Loir) has provided almost as many examples. Note, however, that there is very little duplication of images. In the region between Orléans/Saran and Châteaudun, there are perhaps only four antefixes that are of the type manufactured at Saran (Fig. 12, Pl. IV/8). Export from Saran is probable, therefore, but we find some noticeable variations within this geographical region that presupposes local manufacturing centers other than Saran.

Perhaps owing to their versatility and to the relative ease in manufacturing, terra cotta objects, either those of a general decorative nature or the antefixes, had a long period of use. Dating for this group has recently been thrown into debate, with some scholars advocating a date in the Merovingian period,[99] while others stand firm with a Carolingian attribution in the late ninth century.[100] The former school of thought largely bases its arguments on the discoveries

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77, in: Journal of Field Archaeology 5 (1978) pp. 323–324, fig. 51 and Denise FOSSARD, Cimetière St. Marcel, in: Les anciennes églises suburbaines de Paris, IV' au X' siècle, Paris 1960 (Mémoires de la Féderation des Soc. hist. et arch. de Paris et l'Ile de France 2) pp. 155–156.

[95] Séez (Orne), Paris, Musée du Louvre; F. DE MELY, De Périgueux au fleuve Jaune, Paris 1927, pp. 12–13; and SALIN (see n. 63) p. 278.

[96] The examples are almost too numerous to list: Saint-Mathurin (Maine-et-Loire), Angers, Musée d'Angers no. 2546; V. GODARD-FAULTRIER, Inventaire du Musée d'Antiquités St. Jean et Toussaint, 2nd edition, Angers 1884, pp. 430–431. Moncelon, commune Briou (Loir-et-Cher); CHAPELOT (see n. 77) p. 10. Bazoches-les-Hautes (Eure-et-Loir), Musée de Châteaudun; NOUEL (see n. 77) p. 181. Saint-Péravy-la-Colombe (Loir-et-Cher), Musée de Châteaudun; ibid., pp. 186–187. Saran (Loiret), Orléans, Direction régionale des antiquités historiques du Centre; J. DEBAL and A. FERDIÈRE, La découverte du site de la Médecinerie à Saran (Loiret), in: Bull. de la Soc. arch. et hist. de l'Orléanais N. S. 5 (1969) pp. 311–338 and Jean CHAPELOT, L'atelier céramique carolingien de Saran (Loiret), in: ibid. N. S. 6 (1970) pp. 63–65. Saran (Loiret), present location unknown; J. CHAPELOT, L'atélier céramique, see above, pp. 63–65 and ID., (see n. 76) p. 55, no. 38. Orléans, Musée historique d'Orléans, A 1072. Sainte-Colombe (Yonne), location unknown; G. JULLIOT, Une visite au Musée de l'Abbaye de Sainte-Colombe, in: Bull. de la Soc. arch. de Sens 19 (1900) pp. 49–58. Saint-Palais (Cher), Musée du Berry, Bourges (Cher); H. PONROY, Note sur une brique historiée découverte à Saint-Palais (Cher), in: Mémoires de la Soc. des Antiquaires du Centre 13 (1885) pp. 155–166 and F. DE MELY, Encolpion funéraire de Saint-Palais (Cher) et tuile chinoise, in: Bull. de la Soc. nat. des Antiquaires de France (1929) pp. 149–153. Musée du Mans (Sarthe), provenance unknown and present location unknown; Paul CORDONNIER, Musée céramique de la Reine Berengère. Catalogue des poteries gallo-romaines, Le Mans 1939–46, p. 5, no. 13.

[97] The Christian element is apparent in the cross. Pagan characteristics are noticeable in the use of the human mask. For the origins and significance of this device see above.

[98] CHAPELOT (see n. 76) pp. 49–50.

[99] COSTA (see n. 76) pp. 191–193; PÉRIN (see n. 94) pp. 159–160; YOUNG (see n. 94) pp. 323–324; SALIN (see n. 63) pp. 278–281; and PLAT (see n. 79) pp. 162–165.

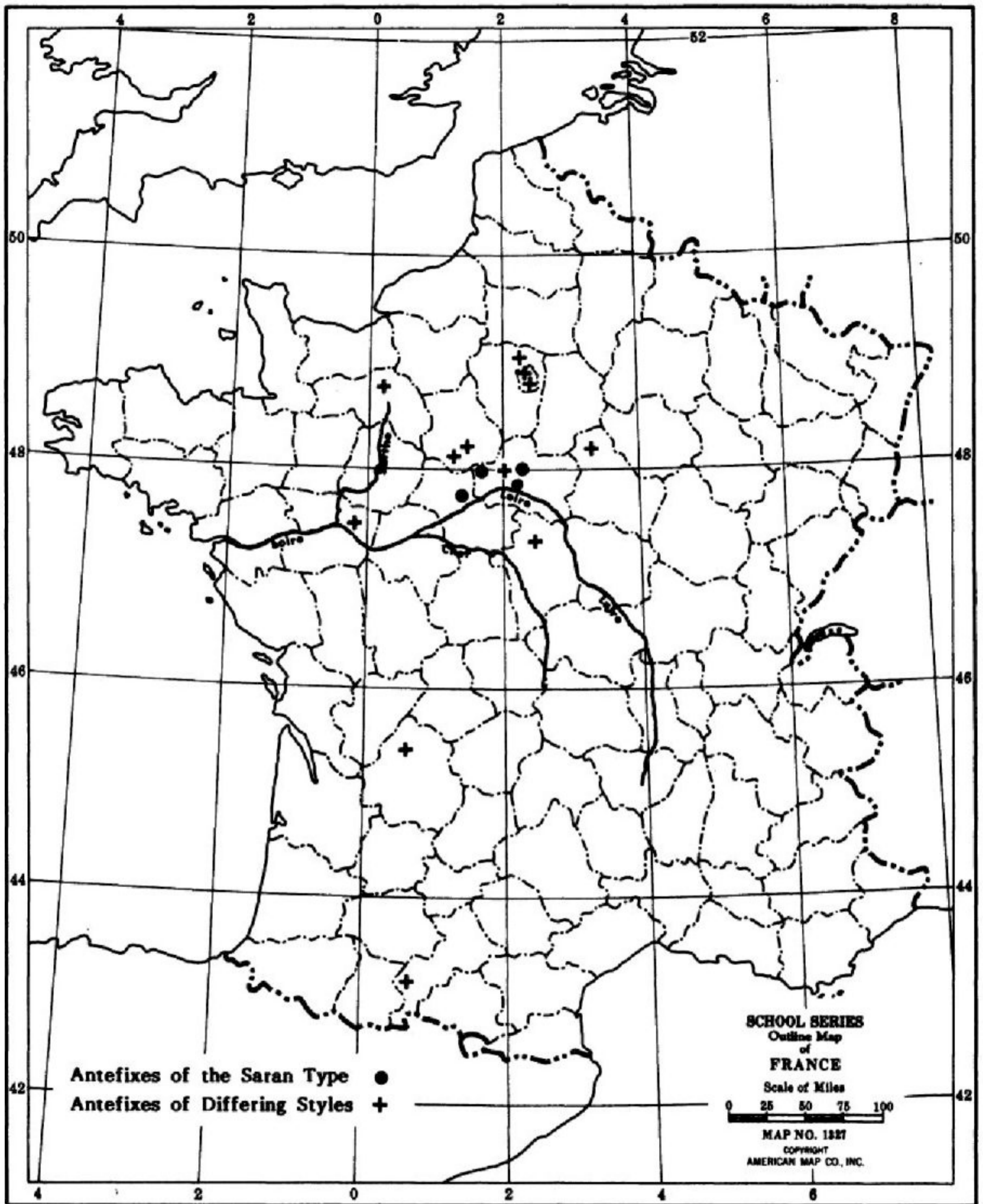[100] CHAPELOT (see n. 76) pp. 50–53 and LELONG (see n. 84) pp. 258–260.

Fig. 12: Antefixes

at the Nantes suburb of Vertou, where terra cotta fragments have been found together with marble capitals carved in Aquitanian ateliers, which many believe cannot date later than the early decades of the eighth century. The Carolingian school, on the other hand, looks to the destructions of the Vikings, particularly in Tours, as a direct cause for the quick and easy fabrication of terra cotta. This date has, it must be added, been substantiated by the excavations at the ceramic works at Saran (Loiret).[101]

Whatever the specific dates of individual objects, it is evident that terra cotta production as a whole was not confined to either period, but could conceivably have bridged the Merovingian and Carolingian ages by providing an important ornamental medium will into the twelfth century in the Val de Loire. Excavations at the château of Tours have yielded several pieces of terra cotta ornament: decorative plaques, modillions, and the curious trapezoidal bricks, which must have a terminus ante quem of ca. 800, thereby placing them well before the major onslaught of the Vikings in Tours beginning in 856. As all objects were found as rubble or in conjunction with refuse areas, they might, moreover, date to a time well before the construction of the early ninth-century building of which they were a part.[102] It seems more logical, then, to view the production of terra cotta as one that was probably never forgotten by the people living close to the Loire and its tributaries and which was used as a decorative medium not only for its inexpensive and easy manufacturing properties, but also for the coloristic varieties it afforded the early medieval builder. The use of terra cotta as a decorative medium has been, furthermore, shown to extend into the twelfth century. The churches at Souesmes and Brion-sur-Sauldre (Cher), although located on tributaries of the Cher, had as embellishment terra cotta modillions of a simplified nature that were put in place during the early twelfth century.[103] Thus we see an almost continuous use of terra cotta as decoration from the Late Antique through the Romanesque period.

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Whatever the political consequences resulting from the ever-changing power alliances in and around the Loire Valley, the tenor of artisan production appears not to have been affected, first under the Merovingians and then during the Carolingian age. Trends initiated under Merovingian domination, especially in personal ornament and terra cotta decoration, continued uninterrupted well into the ninth century or even later. We have seen also that the phenomenon commonly called the Carolinian *renovatio* really had little impact on the work of the craftsmen of the Loire. This is largely due to the manner in which artisan workshops were conceived in economic terms.

Throughout Frankish Gaul, craftsmen were organized into collectives. For instance, for the majority of Germanic peoples, the fashioning of metalwork was, on the whole, regarded as a skill relegated to serfs. The Germanic law codes indicate that the metalworker, whether skilled as an *aurifex, faber ferrarius* or a worker in other metals, was not a freeman. The role and rank of the *aurifex* in Merovingian society was fixed and immobile. Chapter 10, Section 6, of the *Pactus legis Salicae* and Chapter 11, Section 2, of the *Lex Salica* levied the fine of 25 *solidi* for the murder of a metalworker. This was duplicated in the *Lex Burgundionum*, the *Lex Romana Burgundionum* and the *Pactus Alemannorum*.[104] Helmut Roth has pointed out that the

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[101] CHAPELOT (see n. 96) pp. 3–10 and DEBAL/FERDIÈRE (see n. 96) pp. 311–338.

[102] WATKINSON (see n. 78).

[103] P. BAILLY, Découverte d'un modillion roman en terre cuite à l'église de Brion-sur-Sauldre, in: Cahiers d'arch. et d'hist. du Berry (1975) pp. 33–35 and PLAT (see n. 79) p. 165.

[104] Lex Salica, 11, 2 and Pactus legis Salicae, 10, 6 (M. G. H. Leges nationum germanicarum, Sectio 1, ed. by K. ECKHARDT, vol. 4, part 2) p. 48. *Si quis serum aut ancilla perdiderit ualentes solidus XXV (farauerit), se porcario, se uenatore, se fabro, se carpentario, se stratore, ualentes solidus XXV farauerit aut occiserit;* Leges Burgundionum, 21, 2 (M. G. H. Leges, Sectio I, vol. 2, part 1, ed. by L. Rudolf DE SALIS), pp. 60

production of Merovingian metalwork in general was handled according to an economic system based upon a fixed local supply of manpower.[105] There was almost no mobility within the rigid framework, as each goldsmith, silversmith or other craftsman was tied to the property of his master. So too one must assume that the production of metal objects gradually became consolidated in the hands of those who had access to a large metal supply and artisans – perhaps powerful magnates who could count on booty and slaves. This was not necessarily a uniquely German development, for we find this tendency to tie manpower to a fixed place in the law codes of the late Roman Empire. Labor was a commodity with a fixed value which determined the way of life in all of Gallo-Frankish society.

The heavy concentration of Vendômois buckles undoubtably reflects a similar organization. Similarities of form, style of decoration and iconography signify a shared set of aesthetics that is specifically regional. Occasional examples have, nonetheless, been discovered as far south as Pamplona (Spain), and in the north at Resteigne and Wanquetin (Belgium).[106] But because of the extremely limited number of examples, it appears unlikely that these were the result of direct trade. More likely, they found their way to these distant place by private gifts or other personal means. Whatever allure the buckles exerted for peoples outside the Loire-Sarthe area, appreciation of their style and efficacy was manifest in the region of their origin. Thus we can assume that in spite of a few examples the Loire-Sarthe ateliers producing the ten rivet buckles were organized by local magnates and manufactured their goods for a local clientele.

Presumably the same organization was the basis of the production of the Loire multiple-cross sarcophagus. Owing to the bulky nature of the material and the large size of the sarcophagi, the quarrying process alone must have necessitated a hierarchical organization. Even though the Germanic law codes are not explicit on this point, one must assume that foremen, quarrymen, *fabri ferrarii*, stonemasons and auxiliary personal comprised the normal work force of a sarcophagus workshop.

Originally part of the more diffused two-and three-cross sarcophagus type, the design was quickly elaborated by artisans in the Nivernais, usually by sculpting seven or more crosses in relief on the head panel. Demand was high, as evidenced by the numerous quarries providing the monolithic blocks, and the expanded area of diffusion, as far as Nantes, signifies their exclusive character for long distance clients. Transport to towns down the Loire, difficult because of the size and weight of the sarcophagi, was by boats.[107] For the nearby clientele, carts were the normal conveyances.[108]

The concentration of finds for the Vendômois buckles and the Nivernais sarcophagi strongly suggest the establishment of workshops under the tutelage of a figure having the manpower and resources at hand. This could only been performed by agents of the crown or important

and 127, *Quicumque vero servum suum aurificem, argentarium, ferrarium, fabrum aerarium, sartorem vel sutorem in publico adtributum artificium exercere permiserit et id, . . . dominus eius aut pro eodem satisfaciat aut servi ipsius, si maluerit, faciat cessionem,* and Leges Alemannorum, LXXIV, 3 (M. G. H. Leges, 2nd ed., ed. by K. ECKHARDT) p. 139, *Faber, aurifex aut spatarius, qui publice probati sunt, si occidantur, 40 solidus conponantur.*

[105] H. ROTH, Handel und Gewerbe vom 6. bis 8. Jahrhundert östlich des Rheins, in: Vierteljahresschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgesch. 58 (1971) pp. 344–345 and J. DRIEHAUS, Zum Problem merowingerzeitlicher Goldschmiede, in: Nachrichten der Akademie der Wiss. in Göttingen, phil.-hist. Kl. 7 (1972) pp. 399–402, confirms some of Roth's theories.

[106] RIVIÈRE (see n. 45) p. 256.

[107] BARATIN (see n. 36) pp. 195–196. For a charter of 751 which gives the abbey of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire exemption of tolls for four boats navigating the Loire, see: M. PROU und A. VIDIER, Recueil des chartes de Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, Paris 1907, pp. 33–35, n. XV.

[108] LEBEL (see n. 42) p. 170.

magnates. This would, furthermore, correspond to correlary economic changes: the appearance of rectangular fields and crop rotation, which were becoming the norm in these very areas. Therefore the societal immobility evident in metalsmithing and agriculture must have had counterparts in all manufacturing enterprises, for the rigidity of society had permeated all facets of economic life.

Taking this into account, one presumes that the fabrication of terra cotta was managed roughly in the same manner. The absence of manufacturing sites, however , makes analysis difficult. At Saran (Loiret), J. Chapelot has systematically excavated a ceramic works that was in operation from the eighth through the tenth century. The large number of kilns, their specialized form, and the general organization of the complex (outbuildings and domiciles) suggest a large operation that necessitated a division of labor, from the extraction of raw clay to the final firing.[109] This required a large source of manpower which seems possible only under a personage with the financial and administrative resources granted to only a few.

It has long been recognized that beginning in the seventh century the actual management of the economic life of Frankish Gaul was gradually relegated to the large landholders, both royal and monastic.[110] Extrapolating slightly, we can place our artisan centers within this context. First we have evidence of trade, especially in the sarcophagi and, to a lesser degree, in the terra cotta decoration. Next, each group requires several steps in the manufacturing process. As we have seen in the Germanic law codes, metalsmithing was organized according to workshops and, thanks to archaeology, we know that stone quarrying for sarcophagi[111] and terra cotta manufacturing were conceived as broadly-based enterprises that were probably responsible for all phases of production. The emergence of a closed economy is therefore readily apparent.

Beyond being able to ascertain the economic organization of artisan ateliers along the Val de Loire, we can note some important stylistic characteristics of this region that underline its fundamental role in the evolution of Frankish culture. Basically the Loire Valley proved to be a great assimilator of Gallo-Roman and Franco-Burgundian styles. After the establishment of Frankish settlements north of the Loire, we find an almost wholesale adoption of some antique objects: sarcophagi and terra cotta ornament, by the new ruling class in northern Gaul. Decoration, while emphasizing Christian symbolism, was derived from antique sources. The question of personal ornament is a wholly different matter, however. Here we are faced with a buckle type that drew inspiration more from Franco-Burgundian centers than from the southwest. Motifs emanating from the latter are evident, but the majority of motifs are from the Germanic areas of the realm. While readily adopting Gallo-Roman objects to comply with the conventions and rituals of Christianity, the Franks of the Loire-moyenne held on to their own forms of personal ornament and designed the ten-rivet buckle to their own liking.

Nothing, particularly in the assimilation of cultures, is completely black and white. We have seen throughout this study that even though a strong reliance on either Gallo-Roman or Frankish traditions is prevalent in our objects, aspects of the opposite culture are also evident. Perhaps even more than the Vendômois buckles, the terra cotta ornament of the Val de Loire illustrates this condition. Despite the marked classicism of much of the architectural terra cotta, »barbarisms« appear, especially on the plaques from Tours and Rochepinard as well as the antefixes. On the orant plaque from Rochepinard we have a figural style similar to Burgundian

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[109] Jean CHAPELOT, L'Artisanat de la terre cuite dans l'Europe du Nord-Ouest à l'époque carolingienne (VIIIᵉ–Xᵉ siècles): Saran I (Thèse de troisieme cycle, Ecole pratique des Hautes Etudes, VIᵉ section) Paris 1972, p. 131.

[110] H. LAURENT, Aspects de la vie économique dans la Gaule franque: Marchands du palais et marchands d'abbayes, in: Revue historique 193 (1939) pp. 281–297.

[111] POULAIN (see n. 37) pp. 29–45.

buckles of Daniel,[112] while at Tours and on the antefixes the conceptualized heads almost have the character of the »têtes coupées« of the Celts.

Last, the ateliers in the Val de Loire, by virtue of their situation along this important dividing line, literally formed a hinge between the north and south. Intimate contacts between the Loire ateliers and the Paris Basin were present in almost every case. But we find that it is in association with the Loire that the heaviest concentration of finds is to be found. The manufacturing of these special items exhibits, moreover, no real break between the Merovingian and Carolingian periods. Thus, not only was the Val de Loire a fertile region for the assimilation of the diverse styles of the early Frankish period, but the sarcophagi, bronze buckles and terra cotta architectural ornament of the Val de Loire are expressions of a truly Gallo-Frankish art form that bridged the gap between the Late Antique and the Romanesque styles of central France.

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[112] H. KUHN, Die Danielschnallen der Völkerwanderungszeit, in: Jahrbuch für prähist. und ethnographische Kunst (1941–42) pp. 140–170.