

Liturgical Arrangements of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages in Provence*

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From the Early Christian buildings in the Provençal region, a considerable number of liturgical furnishings—most often in a fragmentary state—have survived. This discussion focuses primarily on decorated plaques, which are commonly identified as chancel screens. An examination of stone fragments from sites such as Marseille, Fréjus, and Riez reveals shared characteristics that raise the question of whether these represent imports or reflect connections with styles external to the region, such as those of the East, Rome, and southwestern Gaul.

A significant number of openwork plates should be noted among the examples under consideration. At the cathedral of Fréjus, for example, out of the eleven fragments reported, ten come from openwork plaques¹. Five fragments of this kind were discovered at the site of the funerary basilica on Rue Malaval in Marseille, which was excavated in 2004². In the abbey of Saint-Victor de Marseille, two richly decorated plaques are known today only through ancient drawings and a nineteenth-century copy. These two plaques have a similar decoration, consisting of vine scrolls escaping from a crater surmounted by a chrism. On one (fig. 1-a)³, the vine is inhabited by two doves facing each other on either side of the chrism, whereas the other is devoid of this motif (fig. 1-b)⁴.

* This is the English translation of my article published in *Annales du Midi*, no. 294, 2016, pp. 167–178, entitled «À propos des aménagements liturgiques de l'Antiquité tardive et du haut Moyen Âge en Provence». In view of the considerable inaccuracies in the figure numbering of the original French edition, this revised English version has been prepared to facilitate its accurate use by scholars. I wish to offer my apologies for the errors in the French article and to express my sincere gratitude to Hélène Débax, co-director of *Annales du Midi*, for kindly granting permission to make this English translation publicly available.

¹ Fixot (M.), en coll. avec Narasawa (Y.), « Entre Antiquité tardive et époque carolingienne, les vestiges du mobilier lapidaire », in Fixot (M.), *Le groupe épiscopal de Fréjus (Bibliothèque de l'Antiquité tardive 25)*, Turnhout, 2012, p. 307-313.

² Moliner (M.), « La basilique funéraire de la rue Malaval à Marseille (Bouches-du-Rhône) », *Gallia*, 63, 2006, p. 131-136.

³ Millin (A.-L.), *Atlas pour servir au voyage dans les départements du Midi de la France*, Paris, 1807, pl. LVI, 7.

⁴ Ruffi (A. de), *Histoire de la ville de Marseille*, Marseille, 1696, II, p. 131.



Fig. 1 – Decorated openwork plaques documented in the crypt of the Abbey of Saint-Victor in Marseille: a. Millin (A.-L.), *Atlas pour servir au voyage dans les départements du Midi de la France*, Paris, 1807, pl. LVI, 7; b. Ruffi (A. de), *Histoire de la ville de Marseille*, Marseille, 1696, II, p. 131.

Some of the elements recovered from the sites in the region appear to have borne ornamentation related to that of the plaques from Saint-Victor. Of the fragments of openwork plaques recorded in Fréjus, for example, three must have come from vine foliage: two show a stem (fig. 2-a, b)⁵ and the third a leaf with pointed lobes, each lobe marked by a vein (fig. 2-c)⁶. Another fragment from Fréjus, now lost and known only from a drawing by P.-A. Février⁷, is likely part of a wreath decorated with foliage that encloses a chrismon or cross (fig. 3-a). From the funerary basilica of Rue Malaval, an element, discovered reused in a modern wall built above the apse, bears the braid of a vine scroll with a stem and its bifurcation, a tendril, and a leaf (fig. 4-a)⁸. This fragment retains a molded doucine frame, and the decorated field is carved in openwork. Another fragment from the same site, of the same thickness as the previous one, may have belonged to the same plate, if not to another plate of the same set (fig. 4-b)⁹. Presenting a semi-circular part 5-cm wide, it bears a decoration of laurel leaves and we can easily restore the motif of a wreath with *lemniscus*. Towards the inside, the wreath has a protruding part from which one can recognize either one of the branches of a chrismon or one of the ends of a monogrammatic cross. In Arles, at the site of the “Tour des Mourgues”, F. Benoit had found a fragment of marble which is also part of a laurel wreath enclosing a chrismon or a

⁵ Fixot (M.), en coll. avec Narasawa (Y.), *op. cit.*, p. 311, « Fragment 8, 9 ».

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 309, « Fragment 4 ».

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 311, « Fragment 7 ».

⁸ Inv. no. 324. Fine white limestone. Thickness at the border: 11.5~12.5 cm; thickness at the openwork part: 8.5 cm; width preserved: 25.5 cm; height preserved: 14 cm. I thank Mr. Moliner who authorized me to examine the lapidary elements from the site.

⁹ Inv. no. 23. Fine white limestone. Thickness: 6.5~7.5 cm; width preserved: 11 cm; height preserved: 19 cm. The element was discovered at the abandonment level, outside the apse.

cross¹⁰. In the ancient cathedral of Marseille, among the lapidary elements recorded by F. Roustan, we can note a fragment “in white marble from Italy”¹¹ which is the corner of an openwork plaque, comprising the winding of a stem (fig. 3-b).

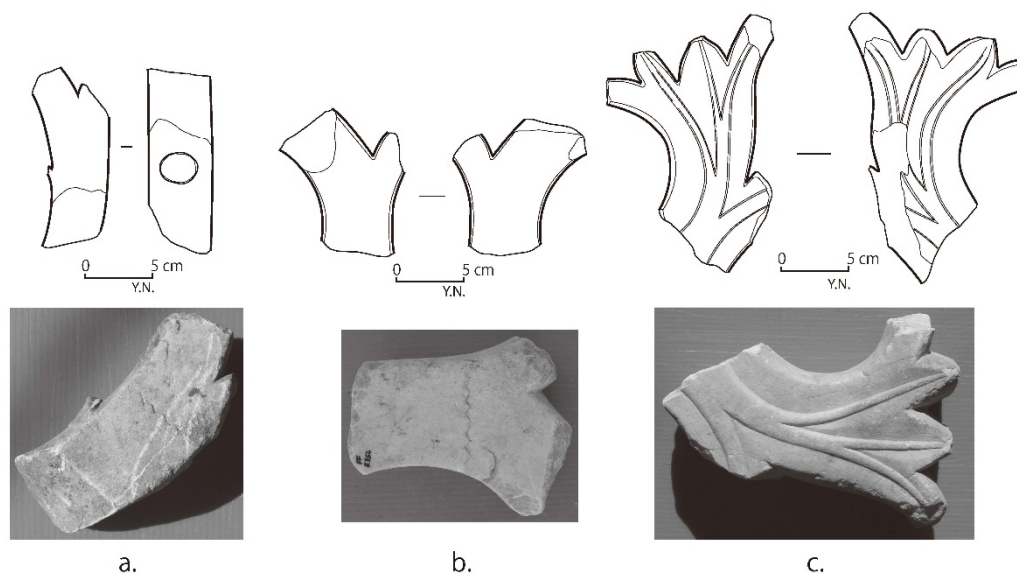


Fig. 2 - Fragments of openwork plaques from Fréjus Cathedral (Photos & drawings by author)

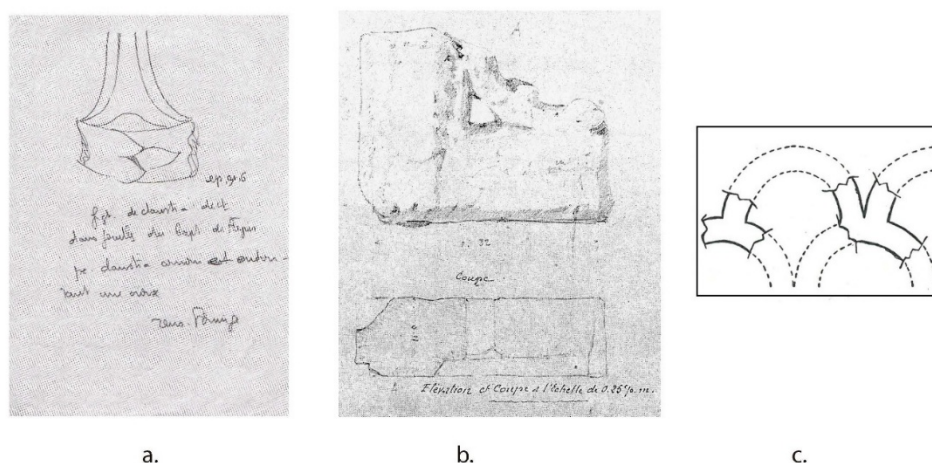


Fig. 3 – a. Fragment found by J. Formigé during the excavations of the baptistery of Fréjus Cathedral, drawn by P.-A. Février; b. Fragment from Marseille Cathedral, known through F. Roustan; c. Fragments discovered at the site of the “Tour des Mourgues” in Arles by F. Benoit.

¹⁰ Benoit (F.), « La tour gallo-romaine de l’enceinte d’Arles et l’abbaye de Saint-Césaire », *Gallia*, 1, 1943, p. 280-281, fig. 3 ; Rothé (M.-P.), Heijmans (M.), *Carte archéologique de la Gaule : 13/5 Arles, Crau, Camargue*, Paris, 2005, p. 327, fig. 245.

¹¹ Roustan (F.), *La Major et le premier baptistère de Marseille*, Marseille, 1905, pl. 25.

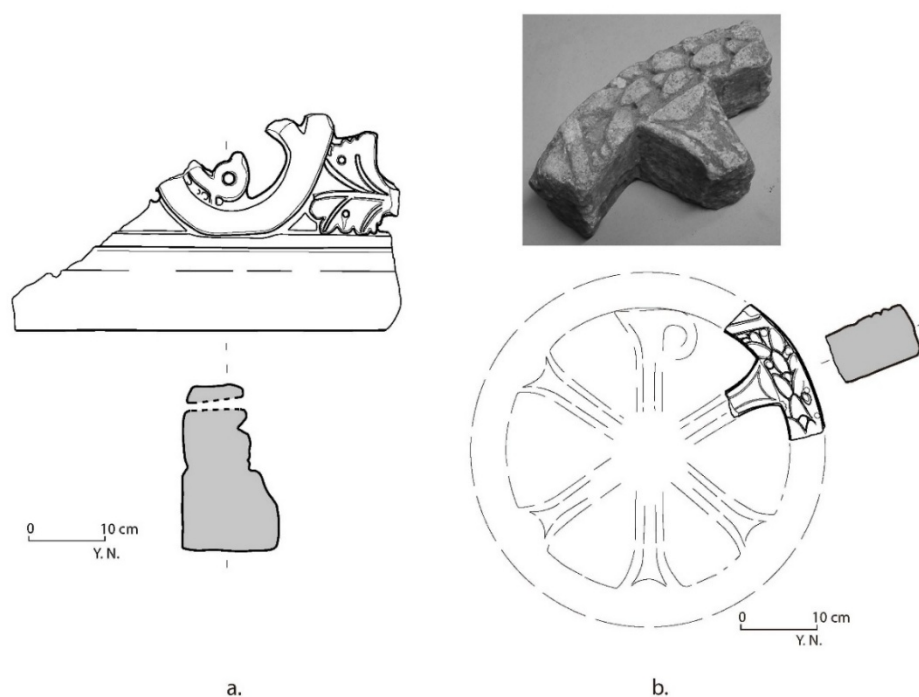


Fig. 4 – Fragments of openwork plaques discovered at the site of the funerary basilica on Rue Malaval in Marseille (Photo & drawings by author)

It can be assumed that, in the region, the decoration common to these elements, composed of a large Christological sign surrounded by undulating vine scrolls, was often used for the ornamentation of the sanctuary. A number of examples of non-openwork chancel plaques testify to this predominance, such as those of the cathedral of Aix,¹² Vaison¹³, Seillans¹⁴, and Limans¹⁵, as well as a group of typically Provençal altars¹⁶.

¹² *Atlas topographique des villes de Gaule méridionale, 1, Aix-en-Provence*, Montpellier, 1998, I, p. 98, fig. 151.

¹³ Two sculpted elements of this type are known. One is embedded above the entrance door of the church of Saint-Quenin : M. Provost (M.), Meffre (J.-Cl.), *Carte archéologique de la Gaule : 84/1 Vaison-la-Romaine et ses campagnes*, Paris, 2003, p. 355. The other was reported in the cloister: Buis (M.), *La sculpture à entrelacs carolingienne dans le Sud-Est de la France : Les motifs qui l'accompagnent et ses survivances à l'époque romane*, Thèse de 3^e cycle sous la dir. de Démians d'Archimbaud (G.), Université Aix-Marseille I, 1975, p. 159 (F. 209, I. 237).

¹⁴ Février (P.-A.), « Sculptures paléochrétiennes de Saint-Julien d'Oules (Var, canton de Fayence) », *Cahiers archéologiques*, 12, 1962, p. 89-97 ; Barruol (G.), Codou (Y.), in *D'un monde à l'autre. Naissance d'une Chrétienté en Provence IV^e - VI^e siècle, Catalogue de l'exposition 15 septembre 2001 - 6 janvier 2002*, éd. par Heijmans (M.), Guyon (J.), Musée de l'Arles antique, Arles, 2001, cat. no. 48, p. 171, 213.

¹⁵ This is the plaque decorated with a monogrammatic Latin cross inscribed in a laurel wreath and two lit candlesticks, which served as baptismal fonts in the parish church of Limans: the most recent study is that of G. Barruol, in *D'un monde à l'autre...*, p. 144-146.

¹⁶ Narasawa (Y.), *Les autels chrétiens du Sud de la Gaule : 5^e-12^e siècles*, Turnhout, 2015, Bibliothèque de l'Antiquité tardive 27, p. 403-430.

Other decorative motifs were employed in openwork chancels. From the site of the basilica on Rue Malaval in Marseille come three openwork fragments of limestone quarried at Cap Couronne: one of them has intersecting circles determining quatrefoils (fig. 5-a)¹⁷, another has squama decoration (fig. 5-b)¹⁸. The third is a corner plaque in which the two sides are preserved (fig. 6-a)¹⁹. One of the sides was decorated with an alignment of water leaves sculpted in bas-relief and the interior field would have been composed of an openwork lattice whose lateral ends terminated in loops. This last fragment must be compared with a plaque found in the old sacristy of the crypt of Saint-Victor, which is also carved from limestone from Cap Couronne (fig. 6-b)²⁰. A marble fragment from the cathedral of Fréjus partly preserves a decoration composed of two joined loops (fig. 7-a)²¹. Another marble fragment from the same cathedral appears to have been part of a lattice (fig. 7-b)²². In Arles, F. Benoit discovered two fragments of "stone" which were part of a decoration of scales (fig. 3-c)²³.

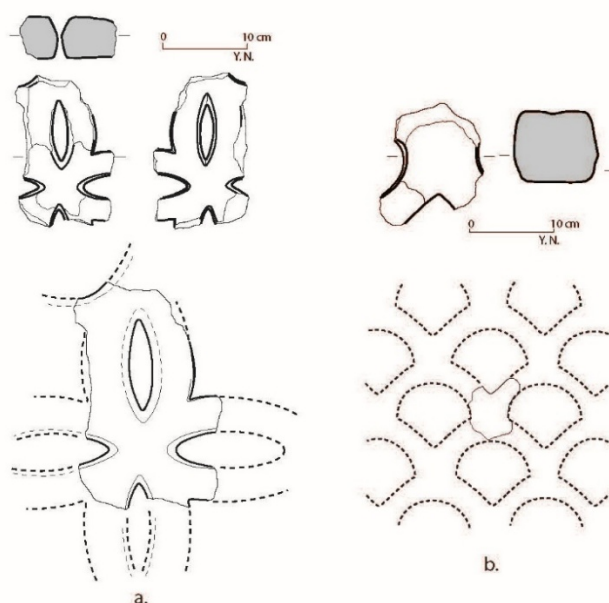


Fig. 5 – Fragments of openwork plaques discovered at the site of the funerary basilica on Rue Malaval in Marseille (Drawings by author)

¹⁷ Inv. no. 322. Thickness: 4.6 cm; retained width: 11 cm; retained height: 18 cm.

¹⁸ Inv. no. 615. Thickness: 8.5 cm; width retained: 12 cm; height retained: 13 cm.

¹⁹ Inv. no. 51. Thickness: 11.5 cm; retained width: 46.5 cm; retained height: 29 cm.

²⁰ Buis (M.), *op. cit.*, I, p. 90, fragment 89; Fixot (M.), in *Carte archéologique de la Gaule : 13/3 Marseille et ses alentours*, éd. Rothé (M.-P.), Tréziny (H.), Paris, 2005, p. 646, fig. 916.

²¹ Fixot (M.), en coll. avec Narasawa (Y.), *op. cit.*, p. 309, « Fragment 3 ».

²² *Ibid.*, p. 309, « Fragment 5 ».

²³ Benoit (F.), *op. cit.*, p. 281, fig. 4.

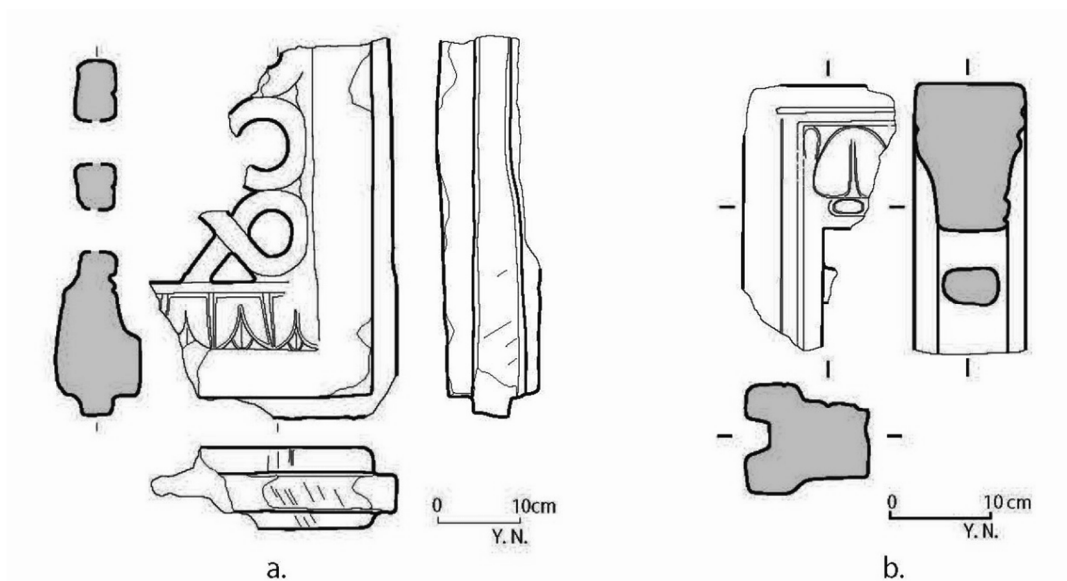


Fig. 6 – a. Fragment of openwork plaque discovered at the site of the funerary basilica in Rue Malaval in Marseille; b. Fragment of openwork plaque discovered on the site of the Abbey of Saint-Victor in Marseille (Drawings by author)

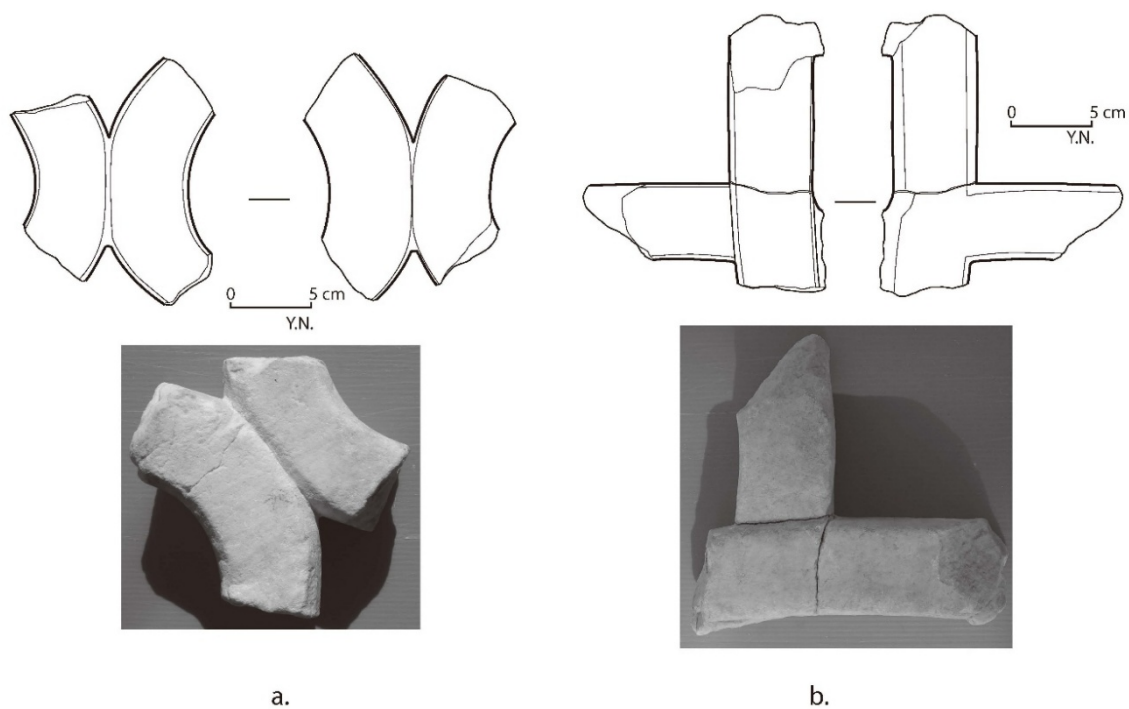


Fig. 7 - Fragments of openwork plaques from Fréjus Cathedral (Photos & drawings by author)

In Late Antiquity, *cancelli* made of latticework or decorated with *squamae* were frequently employed to enclose privileged spaces, both in the sphere of secular power and in

strictly religious contexts, as attested by iconographic evidence²⁴. Such arrangements were generally constructed of metal or wood, but extant examples, dating from Christian places of worship of the fourth to sixth centuries, are stone chancel screens adorned with this type of decoration. In Rome, in both catacombs and churches, openwork chancels decorated with *squamae*, generally marble, were employed in various contexts: to partition surfaces, enclose a sanctuary, protect a holy tomb, and close the opening of a *confessio*²⁵.

Latticework and imbrication were thus common in early Christian sanctuaries, and these motifs also frequently appeared on non-openwork chancels, sculpted in relief. It may be assumed that scale decoration was primarily assigned to spaces intended for the worship of saints, as this type of ornamentation has been familiar to funerary monuments since antiquity.

In Rome, Early Christian chancels decorated with vine scrolls are relatively rare. In contrast, along the Adriatic coast there are examples comparable to those in southern Gaul. For instance, a plaque in the church of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna is carved in bas-relief with vine scrolls issuing from a *kantharos*, surmounted by a monogrammatic cross²⁶. A similar decoration is also found on a chancel plaque in the Basilica of Santa Eufemia in Grado²⁷, and vine scrolls are frequently found on Ravennate sarcophagi²⁸.

Therefore, one may raise the question of a possible relationship between Provençal sculpture and Ravennate-Byzantine art. The well-attested decoration of several sanctuaries in the region, consisting of a Christological symbol combined with vine scrolls, can certainly be seen as a reflection of the decorative vocabulary of the Ravennate-Byzantine sphere. However, it is difficult to assert that this resulted from the import of actual pieces. To our knowledge, it is more plausible to regard this as an iconographic transmission rather than a material import²⁹.

²⁴ In the scene depicted on the pedestal of the obelisk erected by Theodosius I in the hippodrome at Constantinople, for example, the emperor and his entourage watch the race from behind a lattice barrier with interlocking decoration. On the ivory diptych of Lampadius, the *cancelli* separating the magistrate's box from the arena are composed of three decorated plaques: one with imbrication and two with latticework.

²⁵ Cf. *Corpus della scultura altomedievale, Diocesi di Roma*, VII, Centro italiano di Studi dell'alto Medioevo, Spoleto, 1974-1995.

²⁶ Angiolini Martinelli (P.), *Corpus della scultura paleocristiana bizantina ed altomedioevale di Ravenna. I. Altari, amboni, cibori, cornici, plutei con figure di animali e con intrecci, transenne e frammenti vari*, Roma, 1968, n. 77.

²⁷ *Diocesi di Aquileia e Grado*, a cura di Tagliaferri (A.), *Corpus della scultura altomedievale*, X, Centro italiano di Studi dell'alto Medioevo, Spoleto, 1982, n° 515.

²⁸ Valenti Zucchini (G.), Bucci (M.), *Corpus della scultura paleocristiana bizantina ed altomedioevale di Ravenna. II. I sarcofagi a figure et a carattere simbolico*, Roma, 1968, n°s 15, 16, 24, 31, 32.

²⁹ To address the question of importation, we must await further progress in marble analysis. However, since reuse became a very common practice from the 5th century, determining the provenance of a marble block will not necessarily identify the place where it was carved.

As we have already seen, the remains of chancels known in the region are made of marble³⁰ or local limestone. In the 5th century, Provence was home to lively artistic activities in the field of sculpture. The importation of Roman sarcophagi ceased. On the other hand, a relationship with the Orient could also be suggested, as evidenced by the remains of the Rue Malaval site, by the development of a specific arrangement intended for the veneration of the saints and by the discovery of a *mensa* that, for its part, must have been an imported piece³¹.

Christological sign motifs surrounded by vine scrolls are also common in the funerary monuments of southwestern Gaul³². How can this affinity be interpreted? Can a connection be inferred? Chronologically, the production of decorated liturgical furnishings in Provence appears to have slightly preceded that of the so-called “Aquitaine” sarcophagi, which are characterized by vegetal ornamentation. The plaque from Seillans, which is slightly later than the liturgical elements from Marseille, presents a more obvious similarity with the sarcophagi of the southwest in terms of sculptural style and motifs. Unlike southeastern Gaul, few remains of liturgical furniture are preserved in the southwest; however, these precious examples reveal a clear preference for plant decoration, especially vine scrolls³³. Can it be deduced from this that in the whole of southern Gaul, to the west and to the east, each of the regions developed its own artistic activity under the influence of Ravennate-Byzantine art and that the sculptural decoration derived from the same artistic tendency?

In the early Christian world, openwork chancels were widely used to enclose sanctuaries. This would also be the case in the provençal region. However, as the openwork elements were very fragile, especially if they were made of local limestone, it is possible that many fragments have remained unidentified³⁴.

Openwork and non-openwork plaques generally employed similar decorative vocabularies: latticework, scales, circles, and scrolls. However, openwork ornamentation was evidently

³⁰ Most of the marbles are not analyzed, but a few are identified as Carrara marble.

³¹ Narasawa (Y.), *op. cit.*, cat. n° 203.

³² *Les sarcophages d'Aquitaine, Antiquité tardive 1*, Paris, 1993.

³³ For example, we should mention the altar table of Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges: Gavelle (R.), « Sur une table d'autel inédite trouvée à Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges et sur les relations de son décor avec la basilique chrétienne du même site », *Revue de Comminges*, 1982, p. 489-516 ; Narasawa (Y.), Schenck-David (J.-L.), « Une table d'autel pour Convenae ». *Monuments et objets de Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges*, Musée municipal de Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges, 2010.

³⁴ For example, I recently identified three small fragments of openwork plaques from the Saint-Victor site in Marseille, preserved in the municipal archaeological repository, which had previously gone unnoticed. Two of these may derive from scrollwork decoration, and one from a lattice. It is likely that debris of this type, stored in excavation repositories, has not attracted attention.

regarded as richer and more precious; for the sculptor, it demanded greater skill and a more substantial investment in labor. In a Christian place of worship, certain locations were particularly suited by virtue of their function to accommodate plaques with openwork decorations —such as a *confessio* or windows. This was also true of the sanctuary (altar area), which was distinguished by furnishings that combined technical skills and symbolic richness. The openwork plaques found in Provence can be attributed to sanctuary enclosures. The refined care of their shape prevents them from being placed on windows³⁵.

Some early Christian sanctuaries preserved chancel supports. In the basilica on Rue Malaval in Marseille, six blocks with a longitudinal groove on the top, 3~6 cm wide and 3~5 cm deep, have been discovered³⁶. At one end of each of these blocks, the groove joins a square-shaped recess, 11 cm on each side and 5.5 cm deep. It is possible that these blocks were chancel supports in the first state of the sanctuary. However, we do not know where to place them. They were reused, forming part of the alignment placed against the *memoria*, probably for consolidation in the last state of the sanctuary. Meanwhile, in Arles, in the church unearthed in the "enclos de Saint-Césaire", a series of blocks similar to these, with similar longitudinal grooves and recesses, was discovered in its original place. These blocks were part of an enclosure that surrounded a square area, richly paved with marble, to the west of a semi-circular construction interpreted as the presbytery bench.

The substructures of an enclosure were also preserved in the basilica of the Saint-Blaise site (Saint-Mitre-les-Remparts). A straight line of blocks, 60 cm high, separates the nave from the sanctuary. The ground level of the latter corresponds approximately to that of the top of the blocks. On their upper faces are mortises intended to receive chancel posts (fig. 8). In the middle, a podium extended the sanctuary. It is composed of large blocks that are flush, with the same height as the chancel support. It is assumed that this podium was used similarly as an ambo, from which a member of the clergy would read and preach. The four rectangular cavities cut into the podium are interpreted as mortises of a four-column structure, similar to ciborium, which highlights the location of the lector. From the sanctuary, the lector had to take the podium through a gate approximately 75 cm wide³⁷, likely situated in the central part of the chancel,

³⁵ For windows, the use of wood is well attested, as in Saint-Apollinaire-le-Neuf in Ravenna. As an example for this function, we can cite a fragment of a gypsum plate, 10 cm thick, discovered by F. Benoit, with fragments of glass plates: Benoit (F.), *op. cit.*, p. 281-282, fig. 5. Its decoration made of two-thread ribbons dates it to the Carolingian period.

³⁶ Inv. n^{os} 362-366, 613. In limestone from La Couronne.

³⁷ On H. Rolland's plan (1951), the arrangement of the mortises is ambiguous for detecting this central

aligned with the axis of the nave. Two plaques, each approximately one meter wide, must have been placed on either side, as indicated by the grooves between the recesses. The plaques placed at this location must have had beautiful decorations, because, beyond them, the ritual act took place around the altar. Of the enclosure, H. Rolland discovered "de nombreux fragments" of which "le motif décoratif ajouré terminé, en haut, par une main-courante ornée de feuillage, se composait d'imbrications en demi-cercles, coupées de distance en distance par un cercle complet contenant une croix pattée"³⁸. He compared this decoration to that of the fragments found by F. Benoit in the excavations of the "Tour des Mourgues" in Arles³⁹, or to the openwork altar front of the church of Saint-Alexandre, in Rome. Thus, the chancel of the basilica of Saint-Blaise was open and decorated with scales, similar to the aforementioned regional examples.

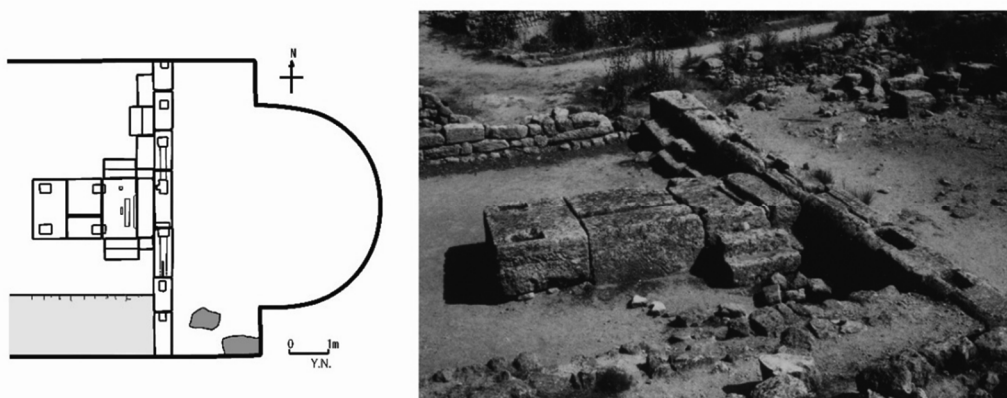


Fig. 8 - Sanctuary of the basilica at the Saint-Blaise site, Saint-Mitre-les-Remparts (Photo & drawings by author)

It is known that, from the eighth century, openwork stone decoration was generally less used for the chancel. Openwork remains from the Carolingian period, found mainly in Italy, are frequently attributed to monuments linked to the cult of saints.

Lapidary elements from Christian buildings in the Provençal region are generally classified into two groups: those dating from the 5th to 6th centuries, those dating from the 9th to 10th centuries. The second type is characterized by interlacing decorations. The Carolingian period

opening. But, on site, it can be recognized despite the cracks marking the block surfaces.

³⁸ Rolland (M.), *Fouilles de Saint-Blaise (Bouches-du-Rhône) : Fouilles et monuments archéologiques en France métropolitaine*, Paris, 1951, p. 164.

³⁹ *Op. cit.* (voir n. 23)

undoubtedly witnessed major renewals in the arrangement of sanctuaries. At that time, these decorations were adopted, showing similar motifs. The choir gained more prominence than before, and the sanctuary has been enlarged. A barrier with contemporary decoration would have replaced the earlier one, and new installations, such as an ambo, would have been erected. Furnishings produced during this period were often made of local stone or reused materials. Almost no openwork plaques have been discovered in this region.

There are two cases in which an early Christian chancel plaque was reused as a Carolingian plaque. One comes from the Abbey of Saint-Victor in Marseille⁴⁰: it is a non-perforated marble plaque, decorated on both sides (fig. 9). One side, dating to the 5th century, is decorated with a grid, each square filled with a cross with an oblique axis. The fragment on this side likely corresponds to parts of the upper border. The border is softened by a molding it with a doucine profile. The other side is sculpted with an eight-petalled rosette and a vine cluster, motifs that were widespread in the Carolingian period. The carving is less deep than that on the first side. A flat border is preserved on two edges. Thus, the fragment, in its Carolingian state, appears to have come from a corner: the early Christian chancel plaque was subsequently recut to create a new one. Another example of reuse was discovered at Riez Cathedral, during the 2009 excavation conducted by Ph. Borgard and C. d'Annoville⁴¹. It consists of a fragment of marble plaque that is not open. It is broken on all sides⁴². One face is sculpted with a type of trellis composed of flat, straight and curved strips (fig. 10). The preserved decoration is partial, making it difficult to reconstruct the original design, which appears to consist of a grid associated with scales. In contrast, in the Carolingian period, twin-strand ribbons were interlaced in an irregular manner, and the carving is less precise.

⁴⁰ The element is composed of two joined fragments, from the excavations of F. Benoit and M. Fixot. Height preserved: 0.35; width preserved: 0.34; thickness: 0.07. Cf. Fixot (M.), in *Carte archéologique ...*, p. 645-649, fig. 912, fig. 930 (with a detailed bibliography).

⁴¹ Borgard (Ph.) *et al.*, *Riez (Alpes-de-Haute-Provence). Pré de Foire - Pré du Chapitre : Fouille programmée - Campagne 2009*, Report presented to the PACA SRA in 2009, p. 18.

⁴² Preserved length 0.21 m; preserved width: 0.14 m; thickness: 0.115 m. Number of the excavation repository of the Ministry of Culture of Riez: N° 2009-927-09-01.

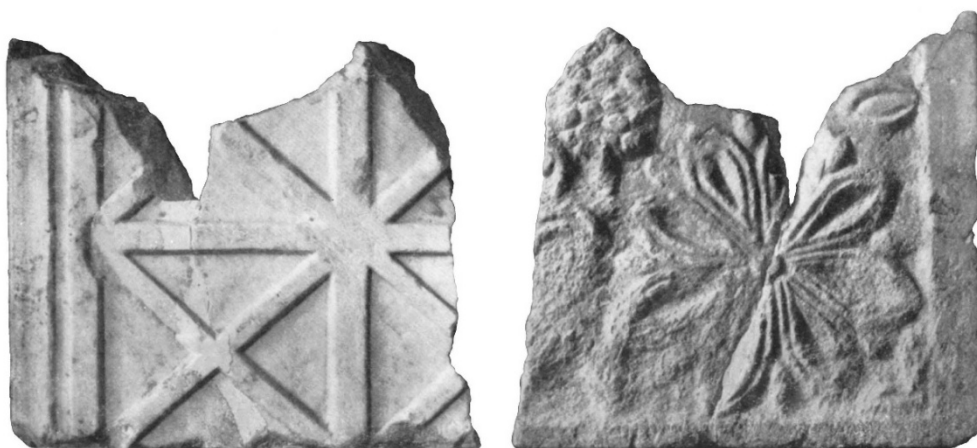


Fig. 9 - Fragment of plaque from the Abbey of Saint-Victor in Marseille: obverse and reverse (Photos L.A.3M.)

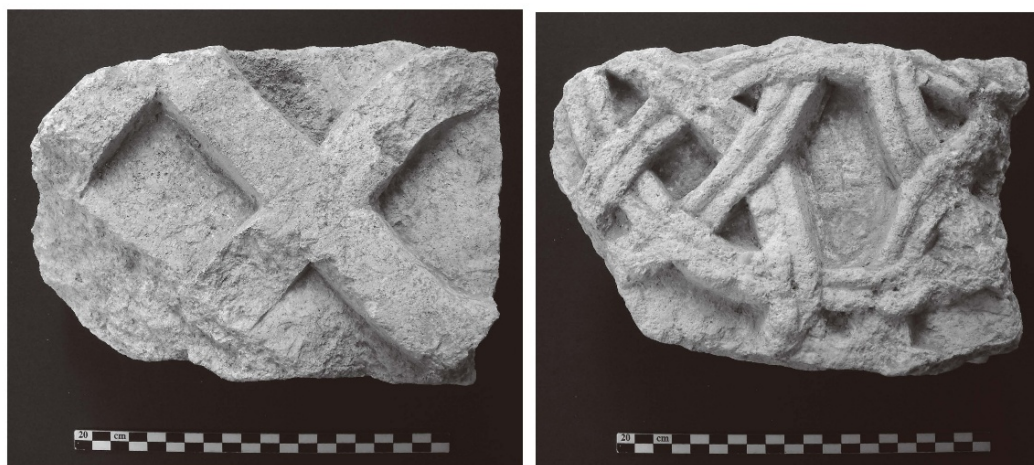


Fig. 10 - Fragment discovered at the former cathedral site of Riez: obverse and reverse (Photos T. Mukai)

Thus, numerous remains of liturgical furnishings bear witness to the renewal of sanctuary arrangements during the Carolingian period, although few architectural changes have been attested. In the ancient cathedral of Riez, for example, several fragments with interlaced decorations uncovered by excavations are the only evidence of the continuity of liturgical function during the early Middle Ages, before the Romanesque period, when substantial architectural renovations were undertaken⁴³.

Meanwhile, the foundations of a vast choir were discovered in Digne Cathedral during the

⁴³ Borgard (Ph.), Michel d'Annville (C.), « Le groupe épiscopal de Riez : insertion et évolution des bâtiments au sein de la ville à la fin de l'Antiquité et au Moyen Âge », *Urbanisme et architecture en Méditerranée antique*, Tunis, 2013, p. 293-305.

excavations of G. Démians d'Archimbaud⁴⁴. Built in front of the old presbytery, the choir's space would have been enclosed on all sides. Several elements of a chancel decorated with interlacing discovered during the excavations must have belonged to it⁴⁵. On the other hand, since the early Christian sanctuary, no element of a chancel has survived to this day, although two fragments of altar from the 5th century have been preserved. Was the early Christian altar still used in the Carolingian sanctuary? This is plausible. In the 11th century, a time of radical change in the building, a *jubé* with a double row of columns would have been built to isolate a large liturgical space, including the old Carolingian choir⁴⁶.

To reconstitute an early Christian sanctuary and its Carolingian transformation, the surviving evidence is quite fragmentary but significant. Compared with the major transformations of the Romanesque period, a certain continuity must be admitted in the region between these two periods. The typological characteristics of liturgical elements—namely, the altar and the low chancel screen—remain fundamentally unchanged, although the “transparent” chancel is no longer attested in the Carolingian sanctuary in the region. Moreover, the early Christian chancel fragments discussed here demonstrate the predominance of decorations featuring central Christological symbols and vine scrolls. This distinctive decorative scheme in southeastern Gaul and the influence of Adriatic art evident in a contemporary series of decorated altars from the region⁴⁷. Further research is necessary to clarify their relationship with sculpture in the Southwest. Continued studies, together with new discoveries, will provide greater precision regarding the issues discussed here.

⁴⁴ Démians d'Archimbaud (G.) *et al.*, *Notre-Dame du Bourg à Digne : Fouilles, restauration et aménagements liturgiques : une chronique monumentale du 20^e siècle*, Digne, 2010, p. 63-65.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 68-73.

⁴⁷ Narasawa (Y.), *op. cit.*