

ICMA Master Carvers Series

A resource for discussion and information.

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17 The jamb panels of the Bourges south porch (1128)

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The capitals discussed here may be examined in larger format in vols. 3-5 of *The Ark of God*, and his full *œuvre* will be published in volume 7.

This is number 17 of an on-going series describing Early Gothic carving masters for discussion and comments

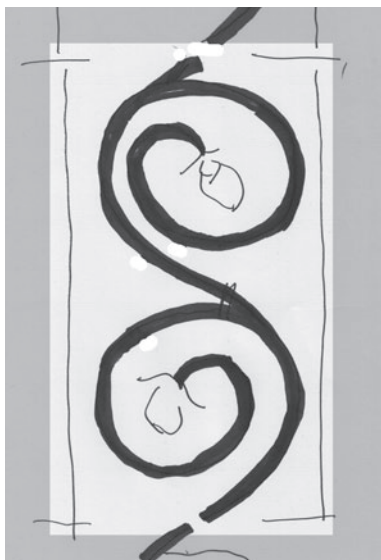
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Bourges south portal

The jamb panels of the Bourges south porch (1128)

In the porch of the southern entry of Bourges cathedral the decorated jambs of the doorway consist of eight stones on each side. They have giant animal heads at the top and bottom, and between them panels carved with rinceau scrolls, radiating fronds and a central leaf or berry. The primary design, being linked spirals finishing in berries, is very simple [b1]. At the joints between the blocks the vines are arranged to meet each other, a little like that children's game of 'Head, body, legs' [arrow b2].



Typical template Bourges south jamb panels



Joint between jamb panels Bourges south porch



Bourges south portal right jamb, lower panels

DRAFT

I have attempted to identify the carvers through minute changes to detailing. The study offers an insight into working methods by examining the way two crews approached a single design element.

Not everybody specialised. In any building plain ashlar had to be carved by somebody. It is my impression that, except perhaps for the most talented and well-renowned carvers, everybody shared in carving all the stones, be they for walling, bases, ribs or capitals. The investigation into the Laon gallery certainly suggested this. ^{See ch. 10.}

In the jambs there are two groups of designs, six panels in one and seven in the other, and a single stone that does not fit into either category. Those in the G-group have two or three fronds per spiral arranged haphazardly, with intricate and drilled outlines to the foliage, some of which hug the vines [b1]. The centre of the spiral is a large, even exuberant, flower supporting a berry. I think I can identify four carvers who were involved in this group.

The second H-group has four heron-like fronds symmetrically placed to occupy the corners, and the centre is less emphasised [b2]. There seems to be more space between the elements in the first, while the other is more compact. Three carvers worked on this template.



Bourges south jamb panel R3 by the G-team



Bourges south jamb panel L3 by the H-team

In the distribution of these two designs nearly all six panels from the G-group are at the bottom, and nearly all seven from the H-group are at the top. The odd-one-out on the right is marked with an 'R' [r]. The arrangement suggests that the G-team had left the site at one point and been replaced by the H-team. Of course, they may have moved on to work on another part of the porch such as the archivolt, or perhaps the later men were more senior in some way, or many other possibilities.

The distribution affirms that there were two separate teams of carvers under different leadership using different templates. I will argue they could not have been working on the jamb panels at the same time.

The later team agreed to follow the primary design established before they arrived, that of the S-shaped double spiral with fronds and a central knob of some description. They also agreed that the vines from an upper panels should continue to meet and be connected to the vines in the lower in the same way. Thus visual and geometric continuity was retained.

The more rigorous four-way layout for the fronds in the upper group was much more satisfying to the H-team than the freer organisation used for the foliage in the G-team. Their respective leaders were clearly very different men with their own personal artistic and geometric preferences.



Bourges south porch jamb panels

DRAFT

The only panel that does not fit into either of these groups is the fifth on the right jamb, R5. It is altogether simpler, with only a couple of fronds that do not have stalks to connect them to the spirals, and with an enlarged and assertive support to the berry [b1].

Removal and rebuilding in the early 1200s.

It is reasonably accepted that when the main body of the cathedral was rebuilt, starting in the crypt around 1181,^{v.1:294-99} the portal was removed from its original location in the older church, stored carefully away, and re-erected as the aisle walls were being installed some time later. The two epochs in the south portal are obvious when we examine the capitals, those near the door being from the earlier work, those supporting the porch being later.

The torus moulds under the column statues were also part of the re-erection process and thus later than the sculpture of the portal [r2]. The design is more recent, with a small opening into the scotia that hints at the squeezing motion that became more apparent towards the middle of the century.⁹ Also, as the photo shows, the surfaces of the stone indicate that the jambs came from a different source to the bases. From the torus down all was later work. From the torus upwards all was earlier, with the capital under the far left column-figure being the one exception.

The other five capitals under the statues are part of the original portal, including the three on the right with rinceau patterns. The first by the door was most probably by the master who carved the upper H-group jamb panels [r3]. The second is somewhat humorous, even to the half-head on the left that is gazing forlornly through the door, with thin branches and acorns encased by intricately cut foliage with small drilling [r4].

This was by the master of the G-group, who loved weaving living forms into an arboreal network. The third capital is flanked by birds with tails that merge into branches that feed out of the mouth of a curlicue head [r5]. The leaves are small and tight, and the edges of the branches deeply square-cut into the basket. I have used these three capitals as benchmarks that define the essential styles of three carvers I have named respectively Héron, Grégoire and Félix.

In the chart I list the more obvious characteristics of each of the jamb panels. Under ‘petals’ the ‘uu’ represents those with the most pointed petal-like fronds under the berries.

Characteristics of the Bourges jamb panels

group	carver	panel	branches	leaf	plate	berry	petals
G	Grégoire	L1	1+	drilled	P	bent	plus assistant
G	Grég-a	L2	3 2		P	bent	
H	Héron	L3	4 4	heron	p		best heron
G	Grég-b	L4	1 1+	drilled	P		uu
H	Héron	L5	4 4	heron	P		uu
H	Félix	L6	4 4	heron		none	small
H	Félix	L7	4 4	heron		none	
G	Grégoire	R1	2 2	drilled	P		uu
G	Grég-x	R2	2 2	drilled	P		
G	Grég-a	R3	2+ 2+	drilled	P	bent	uu one berry
H	André	R4	4 4	heron			uu
H	Rameau	R5	2 2	triple-tip	P		uuu no upper link
H	André	R6	3 4	heron	P		uu
H	André	R7	4 4	heron			uu



Bourges south jamb panel R5 by Rameau



Bourges south porch torus, early 13th century



Bourges south porch R1 capital by André



Bourges south porch R2 capital by Grégoire



Bourges south porch R3 capital by Félix

The G-group: Master Grégoire and his men

R1

The second capital on the right of the doorway is by a master I have not yet written a paper on, but possibly one of the most important carvers from this prolific period - Grégoire [r1]. He also carved the lowest adjacent stone of the jamb, as the leaves, tendrils and sockets were formed in the same way [b1].

The jamb has a double spiral with berries in the centre emerging from skirt-like leaves that cover the lower part of the berry, and behind it a plate-like support. The leaves are extremely complex with drilling between the lobes and sharp-edges with unusually complex outlines [b2]. The softly-curved tips turn back with little twirls. The stalks that support the leaves bend down and back and connect to the tendrils with a socket. The sockets are formed from grooved bands that cut across the main stem. There are only two sockets with fronds in each spiral. These same elements are found in the capital [b3].

It is worth paying particular attention to the leaves [r2,b]. They are intricate and wide, with many sharp lobes, and are drilled along the edges, and the tips turn back on themselves. The drilling bespeaks a very personal view, for there are nearly always two per leaf and the serrations are arranged between them with no order - which is like saying he followed more the true nature of the leaf than any idealised vision. The individuality in them is unique for this period, and is one of his most important characteristics.

Both the jamb panel and the capital have similar heads [b3 and next page]. The proportions are swollen, the nostrils carefully cut to enhance the nose with deep grooves that link it to the cheeks, the frown is furrowed, the cheeks rounded and the bridge of the nose is deeply curved and emphasized.



Bourges south porch R2 capital by Grégoire



Bourges south jamb panel R1 detail by Grégoire



Jamb panel R1 by Grégoire



Jamb panel R1 by Grégoire, detail



Leaf on R2 capital by Grégoire

DRAFT

There are sharp curves on the eyebrows as if puckered and the eye lids are thick folds of skin. The iris is drilled. The hair is formed from small triangles that lean in varied directions and each is incised with two lines. The vine emerges from the mouth without a visible jaw [b1,2].

I will argue in a later piece that Grégoire contributed to one of the panels in the jambs of the Zodiac Portal of the Sacra di San Michele [r1]. This was while on a working tour in Lombardy a few years earlier. The hair is different and the ears a powerful addition, but the froward eyebrows connected across the bridge, drilled eyes and the nostrils give him away.



Bourges south porch R1 jamb head reversed



Bourges south porch R2 capital by Grégoire



Sacra di San Michele Zodiac portal, reversed



Bourges south jamb panel R2 by Grég-x

R2

On a cursory view the next jamb panel above that, R2, would also have been by Grégoire [r2]. Both stones have only two fronds and sockets per spiral, the stalks are not triangular in section, but stretched and grooved, and thin as in the capital. The leaves hug the sides of the tendrils. One stalk is bent. The berries in the centre of the spirals rest on top of a semi-circular disc. However, there are small differences in workmanship and in the handling of the chisel.

The fronds are complex and drilled, the tips are turned back and the edges serrated in the complete Grégoire manner, but when we look at them closely we have to ask ourselves, could the finishing have been his? There is a chunkiness about these fronds, a massive solidity that is reflected in the stalks that expand to become as wide as the tips. They provide a stolid earthiness lacking in Grégoire's work. Compare the fronds on the two panels [b] and in the capital [r3,4]. The differences lie in the way the chisel snipped off the edges and cut square-edged grooves, as well as in the forms.

The overall design is Grégoire's, but the finishing was by another whom I shall refer to as Grég-x. There was a similar situation ten years later at Chartres that I described in *Master Carvers Series* "11".



Leaf on capital R2 by Grégoire



Leaf on jamb R1 by Grégoire



Leaf on jamb R2 by Grégoire and Grég-x reversed



Leaf on jamb R2 by Grégoire and Grég-x

DRAFT

This man was working under Grégoire and accepted his manner and, as much as he was willing, his detailing. Ten years later he carved one of the colonnettes on the Chartres west portal with his thickset leaves, tell-tale stalks and assertive dentils along the tendrils [r1]. The design is not unlike Bourges.

Many years earlier he may have carved a couple of impostes in the Angers cloister, recognisable in part by the dentils and the width of the upper leaf that grips the top of the loop [b]. His use of heron forms and strict symmetry at Bourges suggests he may at that time have been connected to the Héron Master.

This illustrates another issue on building practice that we know little about: How did a junior carver without the reputation that would allow him to demand that others follow his template, manage to create a template for the first time? Before that he would have attached himself to those that had



Angers, Aubin cloister Chapter House entry, impost



Chartres west portal colonnette W.cL3m

acquired that right. Both Grégoire and Héron were relatively young yet became the leaders in setting out the jamb panels. Perhaps another group was involved with the other sculpture in the portal - the lintel and tympanum and the column-figures - and they, as the junior teams, were given the job of making the panels. Would this offer an alternative explanation, I wonder?

The lowest panel on the left jamb was also by Grégoire, though it lacks a little of his panache [left]. The head has not been sculpted with the same confidence, the fronds are less clearly delineated and not as intricate. All-in-all I would say that Grégoire set it out and began work but left it to an apprentice I have called Grég-b to finish it off. This may be why the stone has a flatter less plastic feel to it compared its opposite on the right jamb.

I have noted my names for the masons working on these fourteen jamb panels in the diagram [r2].

Higher up on the left jamb there is a panel in the fourth row with the same arrangement. It lies above one by the later H-team [arrow]. The leaves are in the Grégoire manner, being long, drilled and complex, but the execution and the silhouettes are simpler, the berries



Bourges south jamb panel L1 by Grég-b



Bourges south porch jamb carvers

LI

DRAFT

L4

are smaller and the plate under them edged [b1,2]. This seems to have been by a companion I will call Grég-b. There is also more space between the elements, a subtle difference that is best compared with the lower right jamb stone on a previous page, L1.

The uneven serrations on the leaves and the drilling, and the general feeling of sharpness may link this panel with one of the capitals [r1,2].



Bourges south jamb panel L4 by Grég-b



Bourges south jamb panel L4 detail by Grég-b



Bourges south jamb panel L4 detail by Grég-b



Bourges south porch L1 capital by Grég-b

L2

The last two in the G-group were placed in the second row on the left and the third on the right. The workmanship is similar to the others, except for the berries dangling off long and thin stalks [b]. The stalks are not straight, but are bent with sharp corners that look like broken lollypops. There are two sockets per spiral with additional leaves that were added as the spaces needed them. The tendrils are a little coarse. I have called this man Grég-a.

R3

Except for these small adjustments all the panels in the G-group could conceivably have been carved by Grégoire himself, but were assuredly not. The value of this study lies in the detail, not in the generalities.



Bourges south jamb panel L2 by Grég-a



Bourges south jamb panel R3 by Grég-a

DRAFT

I have credited the G-template to Grégoire rather than to any of the other three men who worked with him because he was by far the best craftsman and the ideas he used can be found in his other jobs. This is, of course, a somewhat circular argument, because it is by these details that I have recognised him, and yet I write that these same details certify his authorship.

I can say only that after years of study there is a feel in the detailing and in the overall command of the design that is recognisable. I am not able, and may never be able, to find the words to describe this in a way that would satisfy everyone. I am increasingly recognising moments in the process of making identifications where the validity of a detail or template cannot be separated from one's own subjective views. Yet I propose there is validity in my subjective and personal appreciation because I have spent so much time with these men and their works that their reality merges into my consciousness in a way that transcends verbal argument. This not to say I do not recognise the limitations of these identifications.

Nevertheless, I believe the attempt must be made as they offer the potential of greatly enriching medieval studies in both architecture and sculpture.

When I come to write Grégoire's story I will illustrate his connections with Italy and the south of France in these years. Some three years earlier he had carved a number of intricate capitals in the cloister of La Daurade in Toulouse, and some time after Bourges returned to carve some more. One in particular exhibits his fascination in the detailing of leaves and the combination of drilling and complexity [r1]. That is evidenced in the spread-eagled and drilled fronds encasing the berry in Toulouse and in the capital and one of the panels at Bourges [b1-3].



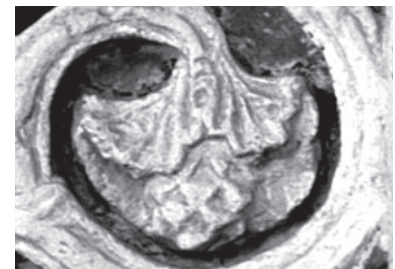
Toulouse, la Daurade, Musée d'Augustins



Toulouse, la Daurade, Musée d'Augustins



Bourges south porch R2 capital by Grégoire



Bourges south porch R1 jamb detail

The H-group: The Héron Master and his men

The upper group of jamb panels in the H-group can be divided into four varieties. The attribution of one has already been published in detail in the *Master Carvers Series*, "10 Félix the Traveller", while the other two are waiting their turn, André and Héron.

The key to the Héron Master is his use of a particular frond, shaped like the neck and head of a heron and placed so that it passes alternatively over and under the tendril [r3]. The stalk starts with a narrow neck where it joins the main branch, and then expands to meet both ends of the folded tip. The lobe at the bottom is bent over, establishing the frond's three-dimensionality. At the top the end lobe meets the stalk in a point that was twisted back in emphasis. The counterpoint in the curves is extremely pleasing.

There are seven panels with heron fronds, and two of them I would ascribe to Héron himself [r4]. As with Grégoire, I have not yet published the analysis of his work. Héron's are on the left jamb, L3 and 4. One associate André carved two panels on the right, R4 and 7, and the third Félix carved the uppermost stones on the left. All utilised the heron motif; all three were to have major impacts on the sculpture of the period.



Heron-leaf detail

Felix	8	8	Felix
Felix	7	7	Andre
Felix	6	6	Andre
Heron	5	5	Rameau
Greg-b	4	4	Andre
Heron	3	3	Greg-a
Greg-a	2	2	Greg-x
Gregoire	1	1	Gregoire

Bourges south porch jamb carvers

DRAFT

Both may have been slightly younger than Héron. When I make any mention of relative ages this is based on the earliest carving I could associate with each man. In this case, Héron worked at Bury and Lhuys before teaming up with the others at Notre-Dame in Etampes. However, the age differences are too slight to be meaningful. It leaves the unanswered question of why did these two men follow the heron-based design and not do it their own way? Was Héron in charge for some personal reason, or were they good friends who enjoyed playing with the same motif? Or had they been trained by the same master carver?

This study on Bourges could not have been written without the more complete picture that I have acquired from other sites. In a normal publication I would refer you to chapters on these men, but that is not possible in these drafts as the other relevant chapters have not yet been finalised. Also, in the orderly progress of this study I had to analyse these panels before I could finalise the waiting pieces on Héron or André, or for that matter, others such as Grégoire. I hope these reports will appear soon.

All the H-team carvers altered the Grégoire template that would have already been in place in the lower stones, discussed on page 3. The most important design change was to add four fronds out of each spiral, instead of two. The fronds mark the four corners, locking the design into a square block where Grégoire's was more fluid.

L₃ In the centre Héron continued to use the berry supported by a pair of petals. These rest on plates with a drill-hole in between. The vines are decorated with the same three grooves and the fronds emerge from similar sockets [r].

L₅ As mentioned, the characteristics of the Héron Master will be most readily defined by the capital he carved next to these panels [b1], being the fronds, the sockets, the collars, the central unit sitting on a plate, and so on. He did not wrap figures into the vines. His work is relatively straightforward.

From consistency with the rest of his *œuvre*, he would also have carved one of the short shafts under the capitals with the same fronds and curled-back tips [b2]. It is decorated with a embryonic *fleur-de-lis*.



Bourges south jamb panel L3



Bourges south jamb panel L5 by Héron



Bourges south porch R1 capital by Héron



Bourges south porch R1 shaft by Héron

DRAFT

Félix was one co-worker. He also used four fronds from each spiral, but not all were herons [b]. The centre of the spiral has no berries, but only a small turned leaf. The centre is found in the adjacent capital [arrow r]. The design is tight, with long fronds that hug the vine with their fingertips. The tails of the birds merge into the vines, so all are brought into union.

There is a certain looseness in this attribution. In the piece on Félix I used this capital as the foundation of his style, and through that attributed other sculpture in the porch to him, including some in the archivolt. As the capital was most probably carved in the same campaign as the jambs I infer a connection, though mainly from the slight evidence of the central frond without a berry. This connection lacks the same level of evidence as the others.



Bourges south porch R3 capital by Félix

L6

L7



Bourges south jamb panel L7 by Félix



Bourges south jamb panel L6 by Félix

If he did the two upper stones on the left he may also have carved the lion's heads at the top that frame those carved by Grégoire at the base [r2]. They are softer versions, though they do include the drilled eyes, bulbous nose and so on of Grégoire's. However there are creases across the cheeks, softly wavy hair, little fronds instead of ears in the upper corners and the corner of the mouth turns round in a curve to indicate the lower lips, quite unlike the truncated heads in Grégoire.

Compare with one of his heads at Aulnay-sous-Bois [r3]. He used wavy tufts of hair rather than little triangles, the nostrils were drilled rather than split and the eyelids are simple grooves elongated towards the outside.

To bring Felix's work into perspective I include three similar capitals carved by him between 1130 and 1143 [b]. The centres of the spirals are small with only a leaf and the fronds combine herons with other forms. There is in my mind quite a strong possibility that Félix was the designer of the H-group template rather than Héron, and time will tell.



Bourges south porch R8 jamb panel by Félix



Aulnay-sous-Bois WN2(a) by Félix

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Chef-du-Pont En2 by Félix



Aulnay-sous-Bois WN2(a) by Félix



Châlons, Notre-Dame south porch impost

The third Héron companion was André with three panels on the right side [b]. He too followed the H-template with four fronds emerging from each spiral, some in heron-style and some not. In this he is like Félix. The major difference lies in the centre where there are small yet well-defined berries with sharply turned-down leaf tips that curl backwards. Perhaps this was inspired by Grégoire's panels that had already been carved.

R₄
R₆
R₇



Bourges south jamb panel R4 by André



Bourges south jamb panel R7 by André



Bourges south jamb panel R6 by André

1

Comparing André with Héron, the central pair of fronds meet at their tips, whereas in the latter they turn away from each other [arrows r1,2]; the fronds enclosing the berries are clearly separated from the vines whereas Héron tucked them in so there is no space around them. Héron had strict symmetry along the vertical axis. The ends of these fronds end in sharp tips where the latter had rounded them off. Both have plates under the berries but Héron's are not set as far back and the edges are very close to the vine.

Though he did not carve any of the capitals he did complete one of the shafts in the left embrasure [b1]. It is in the same manner as a similar shaft he carved in the south portal at Le Mans a few years later [b2] and the repetitive panels in left jamb [b3]. There is constancy in this set of motifs and in the openness of all these works.



Bourges south jamb panel L3 by Héron

1

DRAFT



Bourges south porch L2 column shaft by André



Le Mans south porch shaft by André, rotated



Le Mans south portal left jamb by André

R5 *The Rameau panel*

One stone has no heron-fronds. Instead the carver added distinctive tri-lobed leaves without stalks to attach them to the vine [arrow r1]. Under the upper berry the tips to the fronds are even more starkly turned down and back than the others, an emphasis that matches the turned tips of the leaves. The plates under the berries are straight-sided, almost triangular in shape. Though the vine ‘grows’ out of the panel underneath, at the top there is no provision for the continuation of the tendrils into the next stone.

The leaves with the turned tips connect this stone to Rameau, who was somewhat older than the other men. Large turned tips are uncommon forms, being too stylised for most people [arrows b]. Though he came from the Paris region, he had been working in the central part of France for a while. One earlier carving was on the gigantic capitals in the Etampes nave carved just after the Crusade [b1], with a wild combination of motifs and entangled vines. A little later he carved another very large stone, now in the Musée de Cluny, from Sainte-Geneviève in Paris [b2]. Locally he had worked at Cunault and Marignac [b3], possibly just before coming to Bourges.



Bourges south jamb panel R5 by Rameau



Etampes Notre-Dame nave WS2(a) by Rameau



Paris, Sainte-Geneviève (Musée de Cluny) by Rameau



Marignac choir by Rameau

Since preparing the first draft on this man, I realise he also worked on the north porch at Bourges on one of the capitals in the right embrasure. The entanglement of stretched figures and the tri-lobed leaves are all indicative of his presence [arrow b]. The artistic development of his carving style may help to date the north, and since he worked on both portals they may have been carved and erected at about the same time.



Bourges north porch capital R2 by Rameau

DRAFT

Consequences for portal construction

It would be unreasonable not to presume that these masters were on hand while the porch was being erected. They would not have carved in a vacuum. I am not sure whether they had a hand in carving the tympanum, and am pretty convinced they were not involved with the column-figures or the delicate capitals over them. This work may already have been accomplished and was waiting in the shed to be erected. They do appear to have carved some of the archivolt figures and its outer frame of identical units not unlike the pattern Héron used in the shaft [r].

I example below three items of upper sculpture that I have tentatively ascribed to some of the men who carved the jambs: André and Félix in the left-hand archivolts and the SS Master on parts of the lintel [b]. The latter is alongside one of his capitals at the junction between two stones.



Bourges south archivolts W-s,L^2

André



Bourges south archivolts W-sL^1

Félix



Bourges south portal outer archivolt



Bourges south portal lintel

SS Master

From this discussion we can say that the leading sculptor in each group carved a couple of panels, and that they were associated with other men who followed their templates. Unlike capitals where the carver and template-maker was one and the same, the latter panels were the work of different carvers to a common design, and who could be isolated through small differences in execution and detailing. I have argued from the basic principles evident in the designs that the templates were prepared by two individuals, Grégoire and Héron.

This sort of repetitive work in which designers would share their templates with others highlights the problems inherent in making identifications. Is it any wonder we cannot distinguish the masters by the finer details of the cutting alone but, as in this case, have to rely primarily on the template - and only then can examine the small individual variations? The boundary between control and freedom poses fascinating and perhaps unanswerable questions.

I would imagine that at the beginning the initial design for the jambs would have been determined by one man, being the side to side flow of connected vines spiralling into central berries. As I have said, I think this was Grégoire in charge of the G-team. This design was modified on the

arrival of the H-team. They radically altered the foliage and arranged it with geometrical precision, though they continued with the major alternating spirals of the initial concept.

For the H-team to have taken over and changed the template Grégoire must have already left the site. It is hard to believe that having been given the position of designer he would have relinquished that role after only six stones. As I have found his sculptural work elsewhere, in Italy, Toulouse, Saint-Denis and Chartres, I was on the lookout for signs of his figures here, but found none in the archivolts. The lintel and the tympanum are other matters, and I will return to them in a moment.

This suggests that when Grégoire arrived at Bourges with three other men the builders were in the process of erecting the lower 7-8 courses of the embrasure and needed a few skilled carvers to keep up with the masons. Once above the plinths they needed stones for at least the lower carved jamb panels, the capitals under the column figures and the squat shafts that support them. The G-team provided some, though not all of these before they left. It is not in the nature of any activity for people to leave while there is still work for them to do and money to pay. It is therefore likely that the G-team left with their task incomplete because work had stopped on the site rather than for any other cause.

Presumably the builders left at the same time, having erected much the same number of courses as was, on average, erected in any job during one year.^{ICMA 08} Was this due to lack of funds, or to the onset of winter or bad weather? Who knows?

Though there is a clear separation between the two groups of carvers, one of the H-group panels is placed below one by the G-group and a couple of the squat shafts carved by the H-team lie below some panels by the G-team [r1]. I therefore surmise that the level of the capitals marks the approximate location of a break in the erection process. Straw would have been placed over the stonework to protect it until the next team of builders arrived.

The upper G-group panels could not have been in place when work stopped because there is an H-group panel underneath one by the G-team. Also unerected were two capitals by Grégoire and Grég-b, which could be erected only after the H-group had arrived, and therefore would have been left lying in the shed waiting for placement. These are marked by arrows [r2].

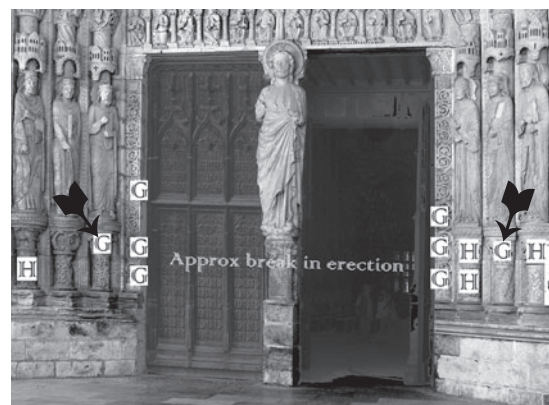
When the builders returned the H-group would have arrived about the same time to support the masons who were erecting the remaining courses of the embrasure. They would have been needed on site straight away to carve these two capitals and two shafts.

It is puzzling how men obtained work, whether they were sought, or heard about it on the grape vine or just turned up. Whichever it was, there is a moment in the construction process when one team had left and another taken over. In short, the sculpture for the portal was carved and erected course by course with the aid of whoever was available at that time. Understanding the order of the work is therefore crucial in sorting out the hands responsible.

In this it is obvious that the column figures would have to be carved before the embrasure walls could be completed. But what of the tympanum? Again, it seems obvious that these stones would normally have been carved before the upper archivolt figures that rest on them. If so, then the archivolts by André would have been carved after the tympanum. In logic, these crucial stones would have been carved in an earlier campaign, perhaps even by the H-team.



Bourges south porch jamb panels



Bourges south porch with some carvers noted

Moving up to the lintel, there are a number of capitals on it that correspond with designs under the baldachins over the column-figures. I illustrate one pair to show their similarities [b]. They could have been carved with the column figures, and this could have been when the embrasures were being erected, or they could have been carved just before they were to be erected, which would have been after the H-team's jamb panels. From years as a builder my personal preference is the latter, as carving will more accurately fill space when that space can be measured, and delicate pieces of stone are least safe when left in a shed waiting for the masons to catch up.

However, the works by Félix and André in the archivolt suggest these two were still on the job after or while the lintel and tympanum were being carved. After all, why would anyone work too far along the archivolt if the tympanum on which they were to sit had not been completed? Indeed, on the occasions when this has happened, as in the Chartres west portal, the consequent alterations to earlier carvings to make them fit has been major fuel for scholarly debate ever since.

The *Maiestas* tympanum at Bourges was constructed from five very large blocks, one for the central Christ and one for each for the Evangelists [b]. There are two visible design flaws that suggest that the stone on the lower right with the bull was carved first and the other four afterwards. Perhaps this marks another pause in the construction process.

Firstly, the lower section of the mandorla on the Christ stone is misaligned along the vertical joint [arrow b]. The central panel is thicker than the others at the bottom, presumably to provide more support for this massive piece of masonry. The misalignment occurs in the thickness of the outer edge of the mandorla.

Secondly, under the bull the wave-like ground and the plain frame under that are much thinner than under Christ or the lion on the left. The difference



Bourges south portal baldachin over R1 figure



Bourges south portal lintel capital



Bourges south portal, tympanum with joints marked

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has been made up at the bottom of the central stone where the waves and frames are not the same on each side of the footrest [arrows b]. The need for this adjustment shows that the central stone was carved after the bull.



Bourges south portal, bottom of tympanum

I find it hard to imagine this happening if everyone carving the tympanum had been on the site at the same time. If the bull had been carved earlier and left standing in the shed, the next group could easily have made a mistake in copying the curve of the mandorla. This observation has two consequences: Firstly, that the carving on each panel was only going to be made by whichever carvers were present when it was needed, and secondly that the design had been determined at some earlier stage in the work on the portal, whether by the clergy or by the masons, and executed by the best men available to the contractors running each campaign.

These are important consequences for a historian. In particular, that looking for a Head Master - as has been endlessly done at Chartres - is a futile operation. The originator of the *Maiestas* design may have left the site before the last stone was carved, and his identity could have been submerged into earlier campaigns. Thus, on a great project executed by many men over significant periods of time, the designer is not necessarily to be found in the sculptural style of any of those who carved it.

Medieval carving is not necessarily the product of single geniuses but of co-operation between independent professionals towards a common yet changing goal. When many men are assembled to execute a project the emphasis of everyone's attention is on the project so that no part may be allowed to lag behind as that would delay the whole. Thus, when a head was needed the most competent available man may have been chosen to carve it, who need not have been the creator of the template. A master carver completed the head of Christ at Chartres, but he need not have worked on the feet or the Evangelists [r1]. Indeed, he need not have been on the site when the latter were carved. When we compare all the *Maiestas* heads there is enough individuality to spread among many men.

There are no indications of permanence, in either the crews or the workshops. Everything was fluid in a way that is hard to imagine today, and certainly different to later centuries.



Chartres portal, W.c tympanum, head of Christ



Bourges south portal, tympanum, head of Christ



Angers cathedral W.c tympanum, Head of Christ



Saint-Loup-de-Naud, tympanum, head of Christ



Le Mans south porch, tympanum, head of Christ

The argument is valid in all the other portals. It explains why the posture of Christ with hand raised over billowing drapery, the book resting on the knee and the folds of the dress could be found in each place but, as the heads show, were not all carved by the same man. And though one might make a case for prominent ears, curled moustaches and so on, any identification of carvers hands would have to be based on a much more careful and close-up analysis of detail than can be attempted here.^{Armi}

Preliminary dating of the Bourges south portal.

The dating of the south portal sculpture to 1128 has been raised before in the article on Félix, and will be discussed in more detail in the piece on Grégoire. Both these masters worked on the Zodiac Portal at the Sacra di San Michele in the early 1120s, and I have found where Grégoire may have worked in northern Italy on the same trip. He was twice in Toulouse, both before and after Bourges from the evolution of his carving manner. This also shows that Bourges should be placed before he appeared on Saint-Denis western doors around 1132. These dates are confirmed in the artistic sequence of Félix who also worked at many of the same sites.

Though the argument will become somewhat more detailed and complex than this, the date of 1128 lying between the Sacra and Saint-Denis offers a fair basis for an estimate of time.

The work of the Héron Master is less easy to arrange in time, but his sequence is quite comfortable with this date, and the same applies to the SS Master, as well as three others I have tentatively uncovered there.

Until more evidence from the sculptors comes to light I shall stick with this date. As I argued in the previous ICMA piece on Victoire, the dates of all these great portals need to be reassessed in their relationship to Chartres, and shifted back in time.

Postscript: A local sculptor?

At Bourges the second capital on the right has a pair of birds with tails that morph into the foliage. The fronds are long and hang, the berry has round seeds rather than the more usual diamond shapes.

There is a very similar arrangement in the little church of Vereaux. Interestingly it also has column-statues and a *fleur-de-lis* that had just been used at Bourges. Can we presume that this was some local artist who adapted the monumental ideas at Bourges to this small church? Could we date it just after Bourges to say 1130? After all, Vereaux is not much more than 30 kilometres to the south-east of the cathedral.



Vereaux west portal

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Bourges south porch L2 capital



Bourges south porch L2 capital



Vereaux W.c.R