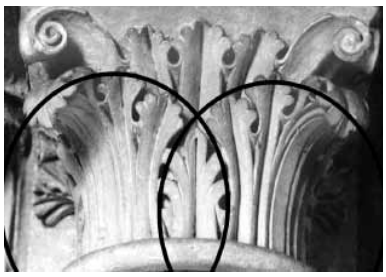
Laon cathedral gallery ES2w(g) by Cyprian

Laon gallery - Cyprian and Hugues

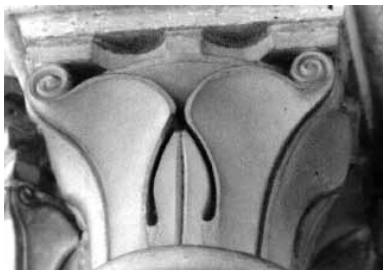
One of the most common designs for capitals at this time was created by drawing two arcs to define the outlines of the major leaves [r1]. Where they intersected located a visual centre. In one manner, as here, the central leaf was in the middle of the block, in others it was on the corner with the major leaf on the face. The two arcs provided the formal framework for an enormous range of ideas. It must have been very satisfying to produce capitals of often astounding complexity from such a simple geometry.

The basic shape of Cyprian's geometry, in its two arcs, is illustrated in the adjacent capitals by Clément [r2]. The upper segment is pushed higher, as is the point of intersection, and the radius of the upper arc is smaller than that of the lower. The 'force' of the upward push culminates in the back-turned terminal. It is the most natural movement of the hand is setting out. You only have to try it out to see how inevitable it is.

The outlines of the flanking fronds have been added onto a similar design by Hercule on the opposite wall pier [r3]. Here the lateral fronds, somewhat truncated, lie on each side of the central plate, with the unusual terminal that emerges from a small frond as on one of the Cyprian capitals [b].



Most commonly used geometry in EN5n by Joseph



First geometric arrangement in ES2s by Clément

Second geometric detailing in Es3n by Hercule

Laon cathedral gallery ES2e(g) by Cyprian or a mate

There are four capitals in the 'public' face of the ES2 pier with this design. None are three-dimensional as no frond overlaps or peers out from behind another. The elements follow the form of the cone, and the terminals do not project beyond the square of the abacus.

In addition there are two shaft caps with similar arrangements of large decorated central fronds and with the same approach to the junctions and the stalks [b]. The one with the turned back terminals has the same details as the smaller capitals by Cyprian, and the carver of the other with the large hanging buds I have called Hugues.

Fanning in the leaves is emphasised. Stalks are moulded without clearly defined ribs. They are uneven in width and rise from the astragal. There are no drill-holes, as junctions are lozenge-shaped. Each leaf lobe is defined by a dished gouge and the tips touch only at the ends. There are no straight pastry-like edges, instead all elements are hollowed out behind. Except at the central apex the form of the fronds follows the shape of the cone.

Most employ the *énchancré*, and some upper cones have a scotia. All have the unusual feature of a small separate leaf under the terminal. One has little parallel grooves under the junction, some have herringbone along the curved ribs.

The difference between Cyprian and Hugues lies in the detailing, not in the geometry. Both have exceptionally large and long central leaves with many lobes radiating out of a scooped spine. In both, this leaf is enfolded by curved flanking elements that project outwards at the top like a shield. In one all three meet at a point, in the other with delicate hanging fronds. The corner leaves split into three parts, and these are supported directly from the astragal by long parallel folds. Cyprian has an empty space in the upper centre, Hugues inserted a pair of fronds with knobbly tips over the central leaf. Along the bottom the fronds are joined, the middle one connecting near the base, the others above the half-way mark.

Cyprian carved terminals that turn backwards, either in curls or in very pointed fronds, while Hugues used hanging bouquets [b]. There are three distinct ways to finish these corners. Either a small leaf is placed under the reversed crocket, or a small frond merges into the turned-back terminal or the lateral leaves in the bouquet are swung back into the stalk. The connections with the above-mentioned broadleaf wall capitals is obvious [b+].

Laon gallery EN6+ by Hugues

Laon gallery EN7+ by Cyprian

Cyprian terminal ES2w

Cyprian terminal ES2wnw

Hugues terminal EN6+

C;ément terminal ES2s

Hercule terminal Es3n

Were the five Cyprian capitals the work of one man or more? There are minor differences which could indicate two men, or merely the variations of one. I have mentioned these small changes earlier, being the two terminals, the little fronds underneath and the detailing along the edges and spines. The latter are most clearly distinguished in the small capitals [b]. If there were two men, in which case each would have carved for about 15 days. For this discussion I have tucked them in together under the one name, Cyprian.

Cyprian

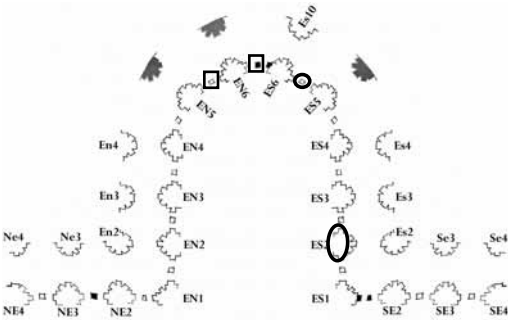
Location	Days to carve
ES2ene	4.70
ES2e	10.80
ES2w	10.80
ES2wnw	4.70
EN7+	14.85

Hugues

Location	Days to carve
EN5+	14.30
EN6+	15.40


Cyprian ES2ene


Cyprian ES2wnw



Five capitals by Cyprien, the ES2 pier and one shaft cap in 46 days
Two shaft caps by Hugues in 30 days, indicated with squares

Work in other parts of the Paris Basin

In order to follow Cyprian elsewhere I have assembled here every capital in the Paris Basin with these three basic characteristics: tall, almost full-height central leaf, flanking fronds with lobes facing outwards that start halfway up the capital, and two-dimensional setout. It may seem odd, when we consider the plethora of capitals with a central leaf and flanking plates supporting the corners, but this is all there is. And they stretch from the late 1130s to the early 1160s, a working life of less than three decades.

When they are all arranged the earlier designs are more densely packed than Laon, and the gaps between the elements ore open I have located only two capitals, one in the Musée de Cluny from Corbeil-Notre-Dame and the other from nearby Saint-Spier in Corbeil-Essonne. The trend in the design is towards greater openness in the points and between the fronds.


Laon gallery ES2w(g) by Cyprian


Corbeil-Notre-Dame, Musée de Cluny 19032


Corbeil-Essonne, Saint-Spier Wn4

I am looking only for reasonably exact replicas of the Cyprian template, and will look at variations when the study proceeds more deeply into these men. On this thought, and Cyprian being such a creative sculptor, I became interested in a possible connection at Notre-Dame in Paris. One in the ambulatory wall had two layers like the Laon aisle, tall leaves flanked by fronds that are joined along the bottom and with tall stalks in the corners. It is only marginally like those in the Laon gallery, but suggestive when we consider the forces at work at that time towards eliminating formal


Paris, Notre-Dame En5s(a)

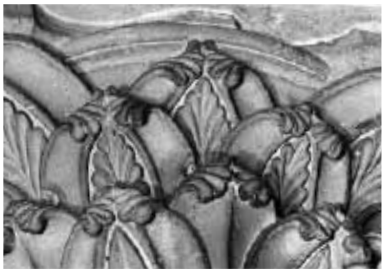
designs and replacing them with the foliate patterns of the next generation.

There are also interesting connections in the piers [r]. They are only indicative of a possibility at this stage, and I would need to find the connecting capitals in other buildings to show that Cyprian may have had an influence. Or maybe it was the other way round, where the bulky broadleaf designs of this period in the construction of the cathedral had a significant impact on his style. I show them as possibilities at this stage.

There are many capitals with leaves flanked by fronds, but only two where the fronds and their tips are separate, and the design is layered and not three-dimensional [r]. If Cyprian had worked in Paris he would have been directed to modify his designs to suit the broadleaf character of all the other capitals. The correlations are not close enough to do more than make the suggestion.

I have discussed elsewhere the two stages in the carving of the Notre-Dame wall capitals. Those in the second phase have the same characteristics as the great stones over the piers and in this stylistic matter many carvers were clearly being directed in the style to use. Cyprian could have been here under direction, but information is lacking and I have not yet made a detailed study of this collection of capitals.


Paris, Notre-Dame AN1(a)


Paris, Notre-Dame ES5+(a)

Working backwards

Moving back in time from the Laon gallery is not only the easiest but the more convincing procedure. There is a group of capitals in the aisle level at Laon with the same qualities, though with two differences: a band of fronds across the bottom and the central leaf has been split into three [b1,3]. However, I do think this was Cyprian's work from the long outward-turned fronds that flank the middle, the *énchancré* and the shape of the tips, though it could have been Aubert. The possibility becomes stronger as we examine the connections with earlier work from a very creative master.


Laon choir aisle ES4ne(a), restored.


Laon gallery for comparison ES2w(g) by Cyprian


Laon choir aisle terminal detail ES4n(a), restored.

There is also a replaced capital in the clerestory at Domont that has long fronds flanking a tall central leaf, but in the recarving was detailed in a most unsympathetic manner [r]. The jagged tips are unlike Cyprian's arrangement and, indeed, unlike anything else in the period. More like a serrated saw than the mellifluous rounded edges in other work.


Domont (c) 1155


Domont (c) 1155

In the same area lies the exquisite little apse at Courmelles. It has two very small capitals on the inside of the eastern windows with thin flanking fronds with lobes on only one side encasing a tall central leaf [b]. One very similar capital sits on the outside of the apse [r].


Courmelles apse windows


Courmelles apse windows


Courmelles apse exterior

In *The Ark* I wrote "a cunning constructional order (was used at Courmelles) in which the walls of the apse and the two transepts were built around an earlier building and the crossing inserted later, presumably after the older work had been demolished."[v.4:442] In spite of the massive destruction during the war the traces of this order are still apparent in the stonework along the inside faces of the walls.

The eastern crossing capitals from this later campaign have a similar design with the long leaf, though the flanking fronds are not as attenuated and have long fingers and lobes facing in every direction rather than on one side only [b].

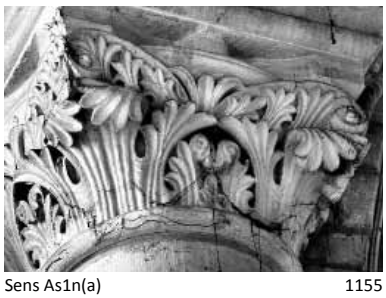

Courmelles crossing EN1


Courmelles crossing ES1


Courmelles crossing EN1

In the 1150s Cyprian worked on the Sens cathedral aisle with a simple pattern across the top [r]. Two others worked in the same manner. Their designs have similar flanking fronds, but the central leaf has been divided into three parts in one and has been simplified into a slab in the other [b].

These may both have been by associates or pupils. I think there would have been a real difference between a Recognition and a copying. The former was where usually more than three senior men took on a template. When someone copied an idea I might presume he was a pupil and therefore the quality of the work would be relatively poor [b2] a partner [b1]. Though I must say that I do not see the contractual difference between a master carver and an associate. I discussed this in #11 between Grégoire and two assistants. "The gang master incised his pattern onto the outer surface, and required those under his authority to populate the spaces in between. The amount of information that could be displayed on the original block in the rough-hewn stage was the work of the master. In those instances where he


Sens As1n(a) 1155

did not carve the details himself, his assistants were able to determine how the next level would look, including the arrangement of foliage and most of the detailing." From that I would assess one of these at Sens being by a skilled coworker, and the other by an apprentice.


Sens An1sw(a) 1155


Sens AN2(a) 1155

Recognition in Meulan?

In the large unfinished choir of Meulan there are a number of capitals by Cyprian, noted in the captions. As with most of the others on this site the surface is flatter, and the carving not as deeply cut, so there is none of the emphasis found in later work. This may have had something to do with the type of stone used.


Meulan Es3n by Cyprian


Meulan E4 by Cyprian


Meulan As1 by Cyprian


Meulan ES4e possibly by Cyprian

In addition there are three others with large central leaves, encasing laterals with lobes sticking outwards, but with utterly different ways of handling the outlines and the tips [b]. Notice the width of the leaves, the size of he lozenges where they join and the straighter stalks. Admittedly, these are minor items compared to the repeated template. There are similar differences in detailing among the small capitals of the same piers.

I do not consider they were carved by Cyprian, but by other sculptors sharing his template. As with the Laon Cog Masters and the Fabrice gang, and with Gamma at Orbais, was this an initiatory moment for Cyprian? The moment when his entry into the 'Guild' was celebrated?"The Recognition"


Meulan ES4s possibly by Cyprian


Laon C ES4(a) 1


Meulan ES4 by a companion


Meulan ES4w by a companion


Meulan ES3s by a companion

Cyprian before the Crusade

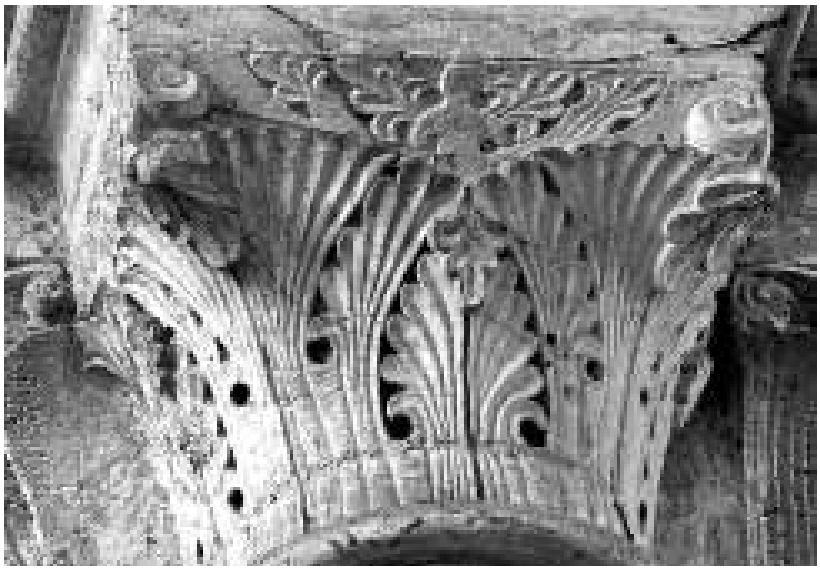
In the apse of Acy-en-Multien, among the plastered-over and painted capitals is one with the Cyprian form. It is hard to be sure from the insensitive plaster that covers the stonework and the painted decoration, but the form is recognisable [r]. I calculate from this and the other capitals in the apse that they would have been carved just before the Crusade. These earlier examples show a much younger man whose progress in the skills of his craft were thwarted by the loss of funding for some years to pay for the expedition. ref

Before this I would consider the crossing at Champeaux [b]. As in the Laon aisle, the arrangement is complex and densely packed. Also the upper range has been filled with an intricate pattern that has little connection to the design underneath. In this earlier work there are strong connections to designs by Victoire. Consider Victoire's signature stone at Lavilletertre with emphasis on the central leaf, the long stalks on the lateral fronds, the lack of strong corners and fluid way all the elements connect along the base [r2]. At Saint-Denis, Victoire had used a similar decorative device under the abacus as Cyprian did at Champeaux [r3,4]. Did he train Cyprian and any others of the next generation? In the addendum to Victoire I suggest that the template belonged to the team and was used by many men. In which case, Cyprian was showing his individuality in breaking with the team design.


Acy-en-Multien apse ES1


Lavilletertre nave by Victoire


Saint-Denis narthex XN2nw(a-) 1130


Champeaux crossing EN1w(c)


Saint-Denis narthex XN2nw(a-) decorative frieze

Not far from Laon lies the little church of Urcel, massively damaged in 1918. Most of the original capitals were saved, if knocked about. On the walls of the crossing and on the corner of the north chapel a number of capitals have the long flanking fronds with outward facing lobes and a stretched leaf underneath [r,b]. They are linked at the base. The purely foliate capital to the left in [b3] suggests another way of carving with a purely foliate template. I will need more detailed photos than these to be able to follow whether he or another such as Joseph was the carver.


Urcel NCr


Urcel EN1s


Urcel Wn1


Urcel Ws1n

Among the drip moulds over the Chartres west portal there were three variations with long fronds flanking the central leaf. One is eminently Cyprian with tips pointing outwards [b1]. Two others are a little rough in the carving with thin flanking fronds more like an assistant than Cyprian himself [b2,3]. This was just one stage in the erection of the Portal, and I wonder if either he or Victoire were involved in any of the figurative sculpture.


Chartres W.nR impost


Chartres W.cL impost


Chartres W.sL impost

A stint in the crypt of Saint-Denis in 1140 was also possible [r]. Notice the decorative frieze under the abacus and the outward-pointing tips, though in other respects the design has been turned inside-out by placing the main fronds under the corners.

One of these capitals I had already credited to Victoire [b], and where master and pupil were concerned how can we separate them? Did either create the design, or modify it, or try to be independent but sought advice from an elder craftsman? At the moment these are only possibilities.


Saint-Denis choir crypt As4w(u)


Saint-Denis choir crypt As4w(u)

The earliest I can find of his may have been this confident work in the apse of Noël-Saint-Martin [r]. The structure and the spread fingers of the flanking fronds are Victoire's, but with an unusually tall, almost full-height, central leaf with a gashed spine as in the Chartres impost. The flanking fronds are part of the corner plates, also gashed, and with radiating lobes, rather than ones that hang onto one side of the spine [b1]. There is also a slightly simpler design without the same stress on the central leaf in the WN pier [b2]. It is the tall central leaf that picks out these capitals in comparison to the more common Victorine layout with a more pleasant balance between the central leaf and the larger plates one each side, as exampled in Poissy [b3].


Noël-Saint-Martin ES1n

He was working here in the company of some very strong carvers, Palmier, the SS Master and the Rampant Master. The split stalk was a Palmier signature detail at this time and may have been sourced from him, as were the strongly projecting inner tips on the flanking fronds.


Noël-Saint-Martin ES1ne


Noël-Saint-Martin ES1n


Poissy N1e(a) by Victoire

Possibilities within the Paris city walls

We might also consider a richly finished capital in the Paris, Notre-Dame aisle from the first campaign that seems to have been terminated by the call to arms in 1146. The major characteristic of the up-turned ends of the fronds do not exist in Cyprian's work at Laon, though this does not mean that he would not have carved this detail under other circumstances elsewhere. I am drawn to include this as there are flanking fronds that face outwards and they connect at the base.


Paris, Notre-Dame aisle Es1n(a), corner


Paris, Notre-Dame aisle Es1n(a), front face

If the angels with outstretched wings were his too, then this offers a further line of investigation. In the south chapel of Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre, on the left bank of the Seine, there is a large capital in the south chapel with a similar arrangement [b].

There is also one in the Bougival crossing [r]. From the very close connections in the detailing with the other two stones I would say that this was a faithful copy of the original. A useful item of knowledge for any discussion of the other capitals in this building.


Paris, Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre ES2(a)


Paris, Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre ES2(a) detail

Possible chronology for Cyprian

1130	Saint-Denis	narthex (a-)
1134	Urcel	apse
1135	Champeaux	crossing (c)
	changes made ex Urcel Sept 2014	
1138	Sens	ambulatory
1139	Noel-Saint-Martin	apse
1140	Saint-Denis	choir (u)
1141	Chartres cathedral	west portal imposts
1142	Bougival ??	crossing
1144	Paris, St-Julien-le-Pauvre	choir (a) ??
1145	Acy-en-Multien	east
1146	Paris, Notre-Dame ??	choir (a) walls phase I
1146	*Second Crusade called*	
1154	Domont	clerestory
1155	Meulan	choir aisles
1157	Courmelles	east ext
1158	Laon cathedral	choir (a)
1159	Courmelles	crossing (a)
1161	Laon cathedral	choir (g)
1162	Corbeil-Notre-Dame	Cluny 19039
1162	Corbeil, Saint-Spire	nave(a)s4-7, porch
1163	Paris, Notre-Dame	choir piers
1170	Paris, Notre-Dame ??	choir gallery


Bougival crossing EN1w(a)