

MEROVINGIAN PERIOD EQUESTRIANS IN FIGURAL ART

DIETER QUAST

Abstract

Naturalistic figural art is rare in the Merovingian period. However, during the period of Christianisation (late sixth/seventh century AD) one can observe a considerable increase. One of the motifs – a victorious equestrian – arrived north of the Alps in the late sixth century, most probably with Frankish warrior groups who took part in the wars in northern Italy. Image carriers were part of prestigious horse equipment. However, north of the Alps the motif was transformed completely from that of the warrior's world into the female world.

Key words: Warrior saints; sixth/seventh century AD; Phalerae; Italy; South-West-Germany; France.

Introduction

In July 2008 Gerhard Fingerlin, the former chief of the archaeological heritage in Freiburg in Southwest Germany was able to celebrate a large success. After years of effort he won a famous object back from a private collection for the public. It is a phalera from Hüfingen (Schwarzwald-Baar-Kreis; Germany) (Fig. 3.2) which came via confidential agents from an anonymous person to the archaeological heritage (Fingerlin 2008). It is part of set of three phalerae (Fig.3) – the others were found during a chaotic excavation in the year 1966 in a wooden chamber grave which had exceptional conditions for the conservation of organic material. The report of the accidental discovery looks like an archaeological nightmare (Fingerlin 1974, p.591ff). The preserved chamber was destroyed with a large digger! When the archaeologists arrived, not a single object was found *in situ*, some other objects has been “collected” by private persons. The third phalera was one of those. It is of high interest, because of its figural decoration which is very rare in Merovingian period. Tens of thousands of graves are known from present day France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg and Germany but only a handful of figural designs have been noted.

Images of Horses and Horsemen in the fifth until mid sixth century AD

The horse as an important symbol in the migration period is clearly demonstrated by many of the articles in this volume (additionally cf. Wagner 2005). Especially in the fifth century AD a pair of horse heads is – next to birds of prey - a widely distributed decoration in central Europe. These can be found e.g. on strap ends combs and purse-mounts, all elements of the world of

the male. To females belong small brooches used in pairs to close a cloak on the shoulders. They derive from circum-Mediterranean examples (Martin 1995, pp.646-652). A few of them are in form of horses and horsemen. Particularly these seem to be forms from regions with a continuity in population and culture from the Roman period, the so called Romani (Marti 1990, p.57ff). The meaning of these horsemen is not clear. Under discussion is an example from Xanten in the lower Rhine region. For a long time it was accepted as an equestrian from around AD 600, but as Kurt Böhner (1997) has shown it could be also Samson killing the lion.

Also rare are hunting scenes, even though they were common in the Mediterranean world, many mosaics demonstrate such (e.g. Daltrop 1969; Catalogue Arles 2003, p.134 Nr.55 and 185). The very few examples could be diffused as ornaments of imported weapons. Especially the helmets of the so called Baldenheim type shown in two cases hunting scenes (Ament 2003). The specimen from Chalon-sur-Saône (départ. Saône et Loire; France) has a headband made on a die (Sperber 2006, p.133 with fig.49). Stylistically it is from a Mediterranean early Byzantine workshop and shows hunting scenes with horsemen. The second helmet with a chase is from Montepagano (Prov. Teramo; Italy) (Sperber 2006, p.127 fig.47), but here the scenes are embossed in the parts of the calotte. In the Merovingian world only the bronze pressing plates from a wooden bucket from Giberville (départ. Calvados; France) are ornamented with a hunt (Pilet *et al.* 1990, p.23ff with plates 10-11). However, the exact contents as well as the exact meaning of the illustration is unclear, and every interpretation will always be uncertain. The same is true for a stamp which was used on pottery found in Banthelu (départ. Val-d'Oise; France) (Périn, Feffer 1997, p.272).



Fig. 1. Reconstruction of a tack with phalerae and set of phalerae from Ittenheim in Alsace (France). 2-4 scale 1:2 (1 after Werner 1943, p.12 fig.4; 2-4 after Schnitzler 1997, p.54).

As far as I know, these are the only hunting scenes in the Merovingian world.

More common than figural art is the animal style. In sixth century AD animal style I was widely distributed, not only in Scandinavia, but also in the Rhineland and in south western Germany. It is obvious that this style seems to be used mostly on female's dress accessories like brooches.

Prestigious goods with figural art from Mediterranean World

In the last quarter of the sixth century AD an enormous amount of objects from Italy has been noted especially in south West Germany, the Alamannia. Even military equipment like spearheads, body armour, helmets of the lamellae type, belts, stirrups and horse gear arrived

in larger amounts, and additionally female dress accessories (Oexle 1992, p.99ff; Koch 1997; Graenert 2000; at least and summing up Keim 2007). But also kinds of religious believe – demonstrated by the use of foil crosses – connected Italy and the Alamannia (at least Riemer 1999). They were made of thin sheath of gold and used for funerary purposes only. In addition the documented features show that these crosses were attached on a piece of cloth and deposited on the faces of the dead. The impact of the influences is so great, that scholars are talking about the “Lombard horizon” (Werner 1935, p.23 [without using this item]; Oexle 1992, p.102 used the term “Kontaminationshorizont”; Graenert 2000, p.417ff with further reading in footnote 3).

To the most interesting aspect of this horizon belongs the phalerae. They were use in sets of three – one cen-

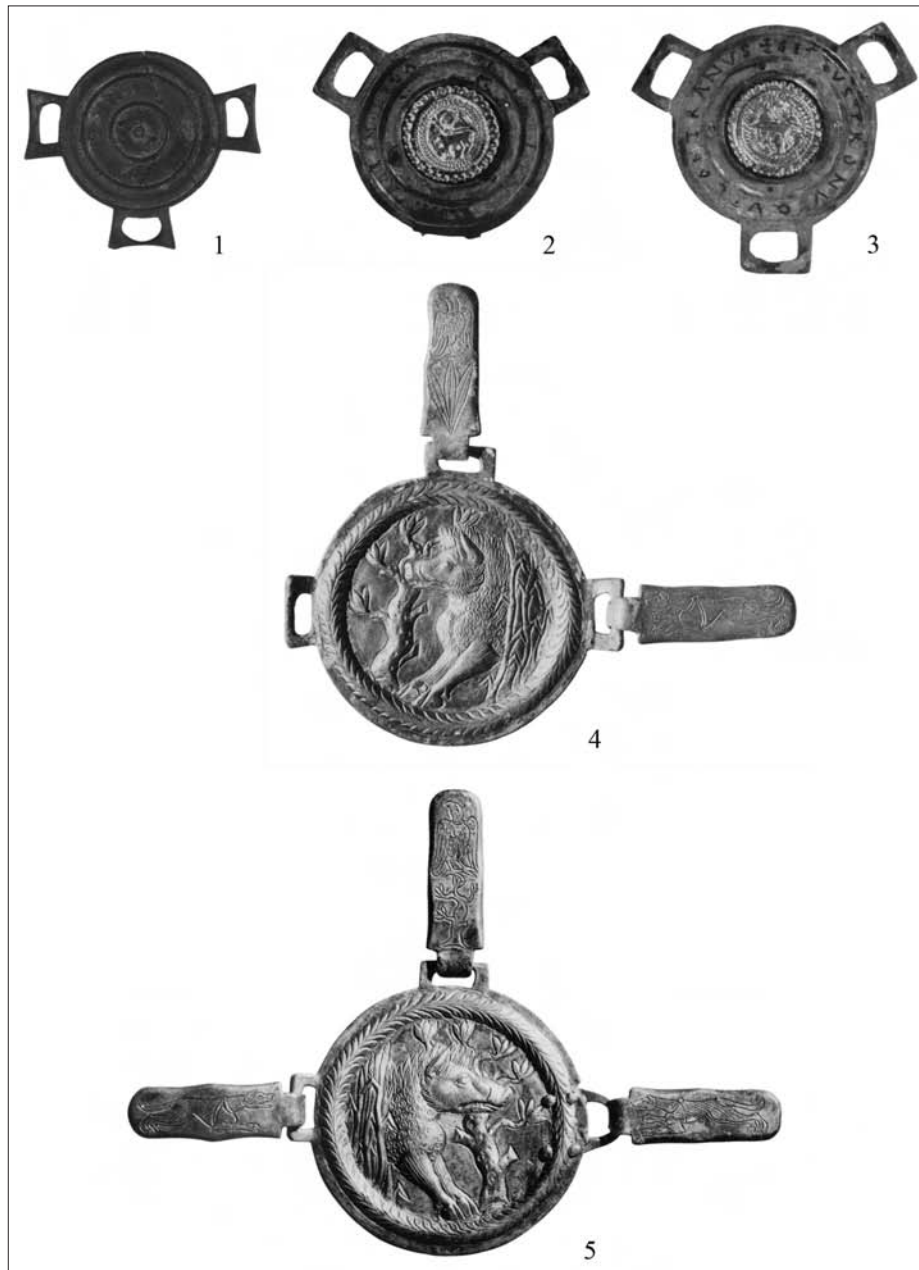


Fig. 2. Phalerae from Lombard period Italy: 1 Cividale (province Udine); 2-3 Reggio Emilia (province Reggio Emilia); 4-5 „Italy“, without exact provenance. Scale 1:2 (1 after Menis 1990, 382 no. X.38; 2-3 after Werner 1952, plate 9.1-2; 4-5 after Greifenhagen 1975, p.102 Taf. 71.1-2).

tral and two laterals – on the chest strap of the saddle (Fig. 1.1). Their diameter is around 9 to 12 cm. The base plates were of copper alloy but on the front is normally a sheath of silver attached with an image. Even though these illustrations were made with a die, no identical sets are known until now. The phalerae from Ittenheim in Alsace (Fig. 1.2-4) (Werner 1943, plates 4-5; Schnitzler 1997, p.53ff Nr.10), and from an unknown find place in Italy (Fig. 3.4-5) (Werner 1943, plates 6-7; Greifenhagen 1975, p.102 Taf. 71.1-2), seem to have the same “programme”, maybe a hunt for boars, which are on the lateral plates but orientated to the warrior (personifying force and courage?) on the centre plate (from the Italian set the central plate is missing). The origin of

these phalerae in the Mediterranean, especially in Italy, is significant by specimens from Lombard period Italy (Fig. 2) (Werner 1943, plates 6-7; 1952, plate 9.1-2; Brozzi 1971, plate B.5; Greifenhagen 1975, p.102 Taf. 71.1-2; Menis 1990, p.381ff Nr.X.38), and by stylistic arguments, in one case additionally by an inscription (Fingerlin 1974, p.617). Furthermore in Italy naturalistic figural art with equestrians was common, e.g. on ivories (Volbach 1976, plates 26.48 and 39.67), coins, finger rings (Quast, forthcoming), and silver dishes like in Isola Rizza (Prov. Verona; Italy), with a combat scene (at least Catalogue Bonn 2008, p.362), or in the Vatikan with a hunting scene (Werner 1943, plate 9). The motive survived also on Lombardic period shield



Fig. 3. Phalerae with images of equestrians: 1-3 Hüfingen (Schwarzwald-Baar-Kreis; Germany); 4 Seengen (Kt. Aargau; Switzerland); 5 Nendingen (city of Tuttlingen; Kr. Tuttlingen; Germany) grave 36. Phalera: a bronze sheath with lateral decoration (impressed corded wire), b the same sheath in the iron frame; 6 Pliezhausen (Kr. Reutlingen; Germany) grave 1. Scale: 1:2 (1 and 3 after Fingerlin 1974, plate 40; 2 after Fingerlin 2008, p.69; 4 after Mossbrugger-Leu 1971, plate 20.4; 5 after Fingerlin 1993, 224 fig.158; 6 after Böhner, Quast 1994, 389 fig. 4c).

appliqués, for example (at least Giostra 2007, p.328ff and Catalogue Bonn 2008, p.366 no. 176).

Regarding the Merovingian period equestrians in figural art, most of the known sets of phalerae are of interest¹. Significant is the Christian programme in Hüfingen – now completed with the third plate (Fig. 3) (Fingerlin 1974; 2008). In the centre is Mary, with the child, on a throne; next to her on the lateral plates are

¹ Cf. amongst others Böhner, 1995; Quast 1993, p.457 (List 1).

equestrian saints. Noticeably both the lateral phalerae are not made with the same die. The left one shows the horseman in battle with a snake or worm with human head, which demonstrates the evil. The equestrian kills it with his lance. On the right phalerae (the new discovered one) the cavalier lifts his right hand as a sign for victory. This ties in clearly with the late antique gesture of the imperial *adventus* (Stutzinger 1983). An incomplete inscription in Latin on the left phalera may

refer to the former owner, probably an officer of the Italian-Byzantine army (Fingerlin 1974, p.617).

Next to other imported objects from Italy of the so called “Lombard horizon” the phalerae must have been highly prestigious objects north of the Alps. Adjacent to Ittenheim and Hüfingen a single find from Seengen (Kt. Aargau; Switzerland) (Fig. 3.4) must be mentioned here, because it shows a warrior in body armour (Moosbrugger-Leu 1971 Taf. 20.4) in battle with a dragon or large snake (Hauck 1957, pp.10-11). All of them occur in a short period around 600 AD. Hüfingen is dated by dendrochronology to AD 606 (Billamboz, Becker 2001, p.846 tab.2 no.8 and p.858 no.8). The Italian phalerae initiate North of the Alps, in the Alamannic region, local imitations. In 1992 in Nendingen, city of Tuttlingen, such a set was discovered in a male grave (Fig. 3.5) (Fingerlin 1993, p.224 Abb. 158; Koch 1997, p.413 fig.470). Only one of the three ornamented bronze-sheath plates is published with an illustration, but following the description in the preliminary report all three are identical. This is the first difference to the Mediterranean sets which consist always of one central and two antithetical lateral plates. The second advice for a local imitation is the style of the illustration. Fingerlin (1993), who analysed the Nendingen grave, thinks that it is obvious that the ornamented sheath had already been in use, because a lateral ornament – an impressed corded wire – and lateral parts of the horseman were hidden by the iron frame of the phalerae (Fig. 3.5b). So it seems to be very probable that the sheaths were manufactured tens of years prior to burial with the equestrian. The snaffle enables to put the date of the burial in the third quarter of the seventh century AD (Oexle 1992, p.76ff; Fingerlin 1993, p.225).

The transformation of the motif into the female world

The most prominent imitation of a Mediterranean phalerae is the golden specimen of Pliezhausen (Kr. Reutlingen; D) (Fig. 3.6). It is in two ways a “key find”, because it demonstrates not only a local imitation, but also shows the transformation of a late antique image into a “Germanic” one, even if it is still a victorious equestrian². What is, in my opinion, much more fascinating is the transformation of the equestrian motif

from warrior’s horse equipment into the female world³. The golden sheath of Pliezhausen was found in a female grave of the first half of the seventh century AD. Even if brooches with pressing plate (“pressblech”- or “bracteate brooches”) are not exceptional during this time (Klein-Pfeuffer 1993), the Pliezhausen sheath is singular, because it is much larger than the usual ones. Analyses in the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum in Mainz have shown that the sheath must have been larger, because it was cut at the outer edge. Hence, Kurt Böhner (Böhner, Quast 1994, p.388ff) points out, that the sheath of Pliezhausen primarily was the ornament of a phalera and later reused on a brooch.

At any rate the Mediterranean motif of the equestrian saint became popular in seventh century AD in female dress⁴. An original import is known from Strasbourg – unfortunately, without context and therefore not precise as regards to date. From the late sixth century AD an interesting “original” was discovered in a wealthy lady’s grave in Güttingen (Community of Radolfzell; Kr. Konstanz), grave 38. The requirement for the image of an equestrian saint was large enough to cut the central part of a Mediterranean silver bowl and add a fastening on the backside (Fingerlin 2006).

The popularity of the motive and the “steps of imitation” can be demonstrated by different brooches from the seventh century AD. While the specimens of Oronle-Châtel „La Copelenaz“ (Kt. Vaud; Switzerland) (Fig. 4.1) (Baum 1937, plate 17.46) and Rouen (départ. Seine-Maritime; F) grave 15 (Fig. 4.2) (Périn 1989, p.34 fig.13) are naturalistic, the next step - Pramay (Kt. Vaud; Switzerland) (Fig. 4.3) (Laur-Belart 1943) and Hilterfingen (Kt. Bern; Switzerland) (Fig. 4.4) (Moosbrugger-Leu 1971, plate 48.27) – is a little bit “in solution”. Finally in grave 12 from Saint-Jean-de-Gonville (départ. Ain; France) (Fig. 4.5), the equestrian is only schematically imaged in the centre of the plate (Baud, Hublin 1999, p.354 fig. 4). Particularly in the Burgundian part of the Merovingian Empire, Christian scenes often illustrate buckle plates. Equestrians are shown on the specimens from La Balme (départ. Ain; France) (Fig. 5.1) and Ladoix-Serrigny (départ. Côte d’Or; France) (Fig. 5.2). In the first case the entrance of Christ into Jerusalem is pictured (Barrière-Flavy 1901 plate 40.1; Cartier 1911); in the second case Christ as a armed horseman of the Apocalypse (Gaillard de Sémainville 2003). In Burgundy buckles with rec-

² The iconography is not part of my article. It always will be a little bit uncertain, because we have no Merovingian period written sources for the interpretation. To use sources hundreds of years later written after the religious change to Christianity contains problems. For possible interpretations of the Pliezhausen motif cf. Hauck 1957 and at least Böhner 1995, pp.707-717 (with further reading).

³ A similar observation was made for the motif of men wearing a helmet with a pair of up-curved horns which was transformed from Vendel to Viking period also from the male to female world (Helmbrecht 2007, p.166ff).

⁴ Cf. in this context also the brooches with equestrian saints from Avarian period Hungary: Garam 1993, pp.99-101, 125 and 127-129; Daim 2002, p.117; Glaser 2002, p.147ff; Tóth 2005, p.184ff. – Cf. additionally for the motif in the Mediterranean area Quast, forthcoming.



Fig. 4. Brooches with images of equestrians: 1 Oron-le-Châtel „La Copelenaz“ (Kt. Vaud; Switzerland); 2 Rouen (départ. Seine-Maritime; France); 3 Pramay (Kt. Vaud; Switzerland); 4 Hilterfingen (Kt. Bern; Switzerland); 5 Saint-Jean-de-Gonville (départ. Ain; France). 1 without scale, others scale 1:1. (1 after Baum 1937, plate 17.46; 2 after Périn 1989, p.34 fig.13; 3 after Laur-Belart 1943; 4 after Moosbrugger-Leu 1971, plate 48.27; 5 after Baud, Hublin 1999, p.354 fig.4).

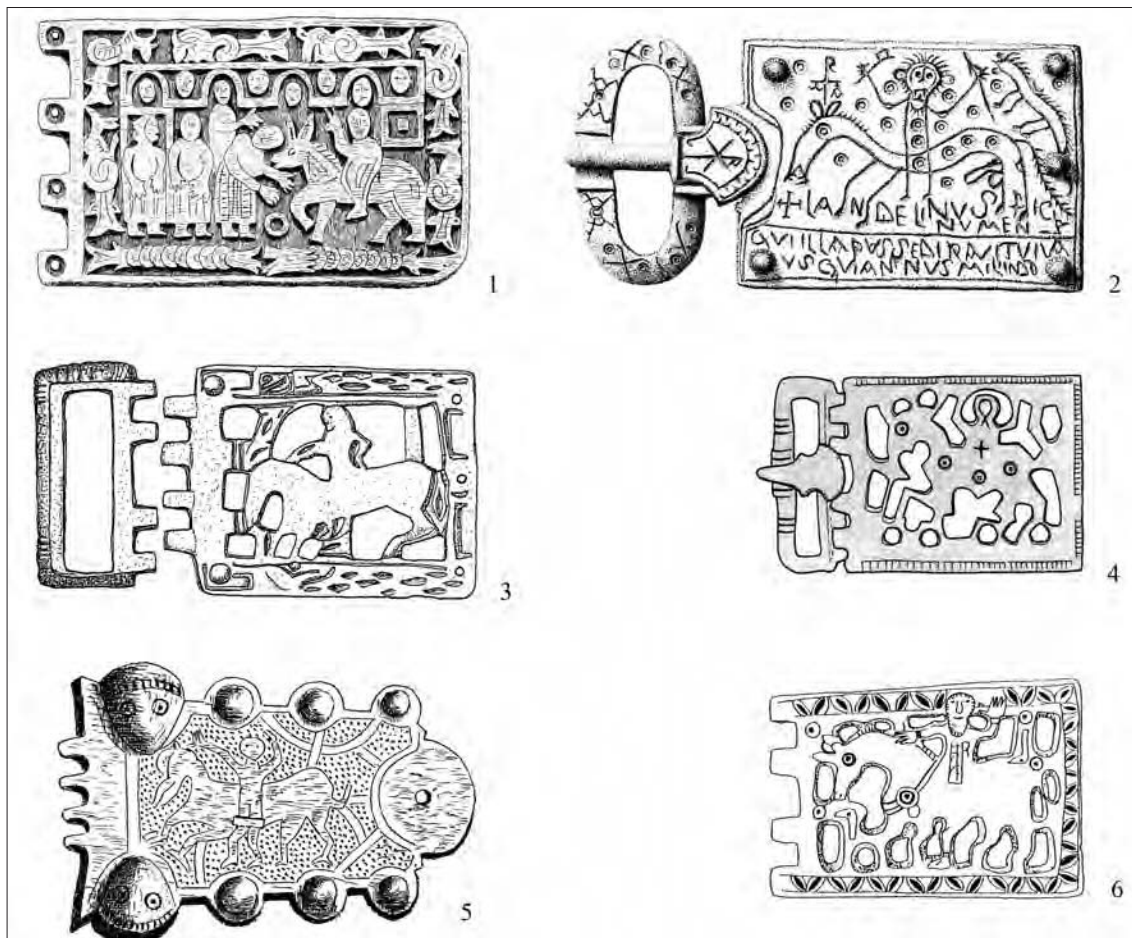


Fig. 5. Buckles from Burgundy with equestrians: 1 La Balme (départ. Ain; France); 2 Ladoix-Serrigny (départ. Côte d'Or; France); 3 Noiret-Cruseilles (départ. Haute-Savoie; France); 4 Prahins (Kt. Vaud; Switzerland); 5 Saint-Jean-de-Losne (départ. Côte-d'Or; France); 6 Dietersheim (city of Bingen; Kr. Mainz-Bingen; Germany). Scale 1:2 (1 and 5 after Barrière-Flavy 1901, p.394 fig.118 and plate 40.1; 2 after Gaillard de Sémainville 2003, p.303 fig.2; 3-4,6 after Frey 2006, p.69 fig.49).

VII

IMAGES
OF THE HORSE
IN ANCIENT
ART



Fig. 6. 1. Disc of gold sheath from Cividale (province Udine; Italy) and 2a. Vendel (Uppland; Sweden) grave 1, fitting of a bridle, with an equestrian lost in animal style; 2b. Suggestion of an equestrian dissolved out of the netting of animal style. Scale 1:1 (after Roth 1973, p.239 fig. 142; 2 after Stolpe, Arne 1927, plate 9.8; 2b modified after 2a).

tangular plates (“D-Schnallen”) seemed to be used usually by women (Treffort 2002, p.39ff; Frey 2006 p.131 with footnote 552. – cf. contrary Gallard de Sémainville 2003, p.319).

Just as a short excursus, two examples from the South and the North should be included. In Cividale (Prov. Udine, Italy) (Fig. 6.1) (Brozzi 1971, plate D; Roth 1973, fig.142 and plate 31.5; Catalogue Bonn 2008, p.356ff) a small disc of gold sheath shows a horseman, comparable, for example; to the one from the Nendingen phalerae (Fig. 3.5a-b). The lateral zone is ornamented with animal style II. But also some elements of the equestrian are performed in that style: the head of the horse and of the cavalier. In Vendel (Uppland; Sweden) grave 1 (Fig. 6.2a) clearly on the fitting of a bridle (Stolpe, Arne 1927, plate IX.8) the horseman seemed to be completely lost in animal style, which is of course one of the characteristics of animal style. A suggestion for the “last step of the motive transformation” is shown in Fig. 6.2b.

But let us go back to the Merovingian female dress accessories. Not only on brooches was the equestrian saint a popular image. On the so-called open worked

ornamental discs exist a group with “horses” (Renner 1970, p.38ff “Type XII” with map 21). The type C on the distribution map is out of interest for our context, because it shows only a horse (Fig. 7). On the contrary types A and B show horsemen⁵. One of them with uplifted arms is distributed mostly in North-eastern Gaul, the other one with a lance in Switzerland and South-Western Germany (Fig. 7). All of them are dated to the seventh century AD. Comparable motifs can be found on some buckle plates from the Burgundian region which are also open worked, e.g. Noiret-Cruseilles (départ. Haute-Savoie; France) (Fig. 5.3), Prahins (Kt. Vaud; Switzerland) (Fig. 5.4) and as “western import” in Dietersheim (city of Bingen; Kr. Mainz-Bingen; Germany) (Fig. 5.6) (Frey 2006, p.68ff with fig.49; Barrière-Flavy 1901, p.394 fig.118) or on a tongue shaped specimen with nine rivets from Saint-Jean-de-Losne (départ. Côte-d’or; France) (Fig. 5.5).

⁵ The motif of the horseman with uplifted arms seems to be also adopted from the Mediterranean area like some check pieces from Visigothic period Spain suggest (at least Aurrecochea, Ager 2000, pp.281-286 with fig. 3.2).

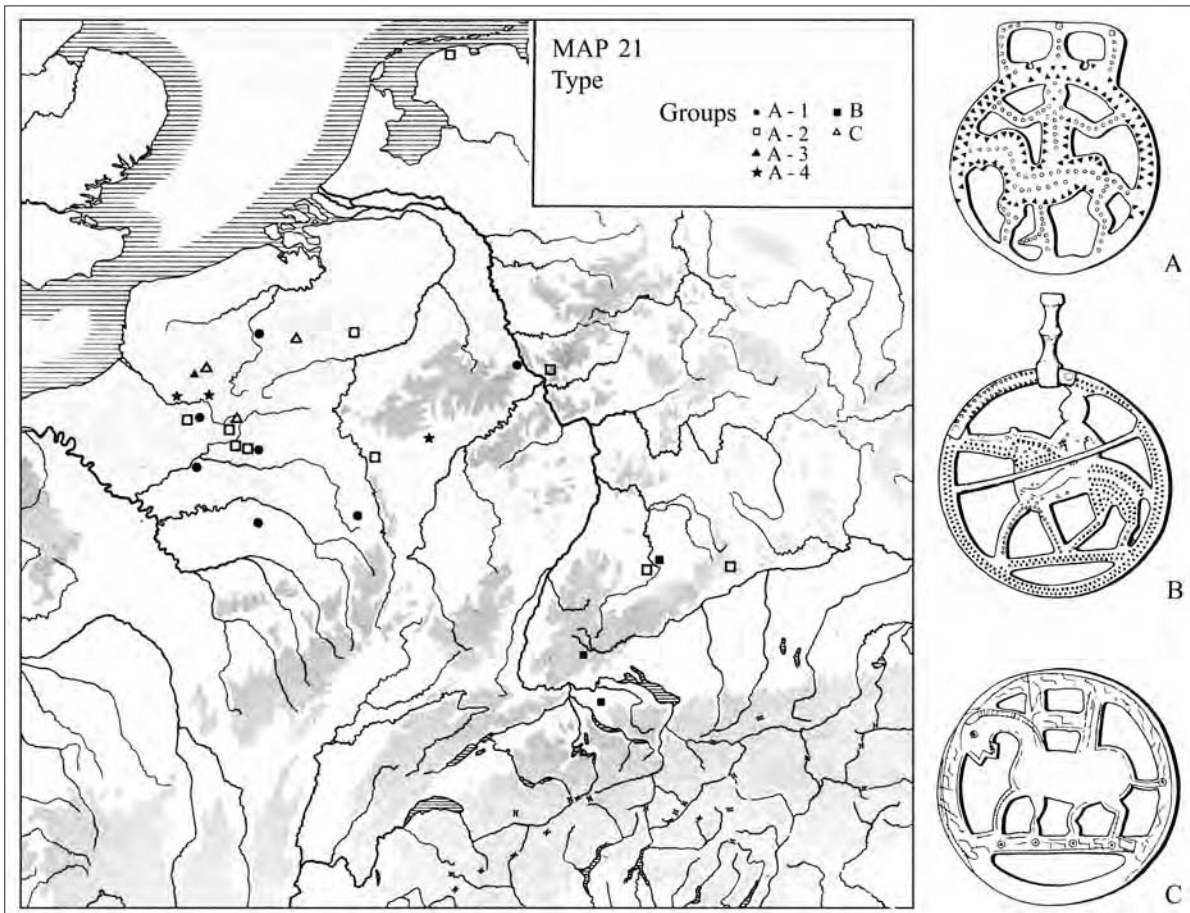


Fig. 7. Distribution of open-worked ornamental discs of the type XII (Group A = horseman with uplifted arms. Group B = horseman with lance. Group C = horse only (after Renner 1970, map 21 and plate 30 no. 616 and plate 31 no. 639; 640).

Images of Merovingian period equestrians in ecclesiastic contexts

Even if the equestrian saint disappeared from the male world after a very short time, he was not only part of the female world. As part of Christian iconography he expanded, of course, also in Merovingian ecclesiastic art. On a small reliquary from Ennabeuren (Alb-Donau-Kr.; Germany) he dominates the right side (Fig. 8.1). It is the oldest reliquary from Merovingian region and dates to the mid of the seventh century AD. The small casket was made most probably in the region of Burgundy, and the different stamps used on it demonstrate a Christian programme, in which the victorious horseman plays the central part (Quast, forthcoming).

Another example of an equestrian in an ecclesiastic context is the carved stone from Hornhausen (Bördekreis; Germany) (Fig. 8.2). It did not show the "classical" Mediterranean saint but a north-alpine transformation like, for example, the Nendingen phalerae or the open worked ornamental discs. Though he is also riding over a snake carved in animal style and has two heads. As Kurt Böhner pointed out, the stone from Hornhausen was - together with other fragments from

the same place - part of a choir screen of a church (Fig. 8.3) (Böhner 1976/77).

The Christian meaning of the motive of the equestrian saint is underlined by some golden finger rings. The grave 164 of a child buried in Chelles (départ. Oise; France) (Fig. 9.1) (Vallet 2008, p.192 with fig.100 and p.412 with plate 37.4) contains one of them. The golden plate was decorated with a horseman with uplifted arms, but additionally with alpha, omega and a cross. From Lauchheim (Ostalbkreis; Germany) grave 38 (Fig. 9.2) (Stork 1995, p.23 fig.20) exists a ring with a horse and a cross. Just as "excursus" two related golden rings should be added. The first with unknown provenance shows a fish under a cross with alpha and omega (Fig. 9.3)⁶. The second is from Boppard (Rhein-Hunsrück-Kr.; Germany) (Fig. 9.4) from a late seventh century AD grave and is decorated with a bird under a cross (von Berg, Wegner 2001, p.198 fig.199).

It is obvious that on the Merovingian coinage the motif of the horseman was with one exception (Depreyot 1998 vol. 2, pl. 17,1) never used to image the reverse;

⁶ The knowledge of the object, and the photograph of it, I owe to Dafydd Kidd.



Fig. 8. (1) Equestrian saint from a small reliquary from Ennabeuren (Alb-Donau-Kreis; Germany); (2) Hornhausen (Bördekreis; Germany); (3) Reconstruction of the fragments of Hornhausen as a choir screen of a church. 1 scale 1:1; 2 scale 1:15; 3 without scale (1 after Quast, forthcoming; 2-3 after Böhner 1976/77, 124 fig.7 and plate 14).



Fig. 9. Golden fingerings with Christian motives: 1 Chelles (dép. Oise; France); 2 Lauchheim (Ostalbkreis; Germany); 3 Unknown provenance; 4 Boppard (Rhein-Hunsrück-Kr., Germany) without exact scale (circa 1:1) (1 after Vallet 2008, 192 fig.100; 412 plate 37.4; 2 after Stork 1995, p.23 fig. 20; 3 photograph Dafydd Kidd; 4 after von Berg, Wegner 2001, p.198 fig.199).

there the cross itself was the most usual Christian icon (Depreyot 1998; 2001).

Images for warrior group's identity

As mentioned the image of the equestrian – the meaning is a warrior saint – was for only a very short time part of the male world in the Merovingian Empire, especially in the Alamannic region. Just for one generation it was in use, because it was a part of prestigious objects, of imports from Italy. Maybe it had quite the character of a sign for warrior groups who acted in the South in the Frankish – Lombardic wars. However, north of the Alps it lost this function. It is possible, that the Christian meaning was not applicable for Alamannic warriors. Maybe there was no understanding of the contents of the images or just for the naturalistic images as a modus of communication. In any case there was an alternative form to demonstrate warrior's group identity and maybe religion. It was animal style II, which was very popular especially in South West Germany and the Rhine region. It appears in most cases on fittings of male dress, armament and horse equipment. Karen Højlund Nielsen (1997; 1998) has pointed out ten years ago, that this style was a “political badge”.

It is obvious that even or particularly on the fittings of horse's harness made north of the Alps “Flechtband” was used in silver on iron. There were some objects used in the same function as the phalerae to underline this (Quast 1993, p.446ff and p.458ff [List 1b and c]). It was absolutely not because craftsmen in this region were unable to produce naturalistic figural art. Above mentioned local imitations of phalerae, and of course the brooches, illustrate that. Additionally a completely conserved wooden lyre with figural scene from Trossingen (Kr.Tuttlingen; Germany) clarifies that Mediterranean motives were adopted (and maybe as regards content transformed) north of the Alps (Theune-Grosskopf 2005; 2006). To be honest there are very few naturalistic images in the male world, which were distributed from Northern Italy to Uppland in Sweden, e.g. dancer with weapons and horned helmets (at least Helmbrecht 2007; cf. now additionally Müller 2008, p.235 fig.2.2.) and so called “Ulfhednar” warriors wearing a wolf's skin. These images illustrate the networking of Merovingian period warrior elites (Quast 2002 with figs. 3b and c).

Why was the equestrian saint popular in the female world? A conclusion

The distribution of the motif of the victorious equestrian continued in the regions north of the Alps in the late

sixth and seventh century AD. This was the time, when in the territories of the Franks and the Alamanns the process of Christianisation happened. Of course this was a long process which was even in the eight century AD not completed in all rural regions. It was not only a religious change but also (or more) connected with political organisations. The emergence of Christian symbols in daily life of higher social groups was opposed by non-Christian symbols of other but also higher social groups (Quast 2002, p.273ff).

The equestrian saint must have been known as Christian content because it was used in ecclesiastic contexts. Firstly, it arrived north of the Alps with the Mediterranean warrior's equipment, but there may be other “mediums” e.g. like textiles (c.f. Fingerlin 1974, p.620 with footnote 100). Nevertheless, the motif was very quickly transformed into the female world. This does not mean that women prefer Christianity⁷ while men remain with their pre-Christian beliefs. If we are looking at grave furniture, e.g. to other objects of the “Lombardic horizon”, the foil-crosses, we get different information: they were used more often in male graves (Christlein 1975, esp. p.79 with fig. 5). However, this was an act of showing “wealth” during the funeral. The demonstration in daily life seems to exemplify a difference in mentality between men in women in Merovingian period.

Far away in Scandinavia the motif of the horseman with a lance was only used in the male world, namely on the helmets of Vendel (Stolpe, Arne 1927, plate 5.2 and 6.1; Böhner 1995, 715 fig. 28) and Valsgärde (Böhner 1995, pp.712-714 figs. 23-27), both in Uppland (Sweden), and centuries before already in the art of the bracteates (Axboe 2007; Pesch 2007; Quast 2002). It seem to be very probable that the illustration had another (no Christian) meaning and was a badge of elite warrior's identity.

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Author's English revised by Andrew Brown

⁷ Gräslund (1997) had shown that in the Viking period Birka Christianity was preferred by women because of different reasons.

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MEROVINGŪ LAIKOTARPIO RAITELIŪ ATVAIZDAI

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Santrauka

Merovingų laikotarpio (apie 450–750 m.) figūrinė puošyba yra labai reta. Šių dienų Prancūzijos, Belgijos, Nyderlandų, Liuksemburgo ir Vokietijos teritorijoje žinoma dešimtys tūkstančių kapų, bet rasta labai mažai figūrinės puošybos pavyzdžių. Bet per paskutinį VI a. ketvirtį kažkas pasikeitė: didžiulis kiekis daiktų – net ginkluotės: ietigalių, šarvų, šalmų, sudarytų iš siaurų pailgų plokštelių, diržų, balnakilpių ir žirgo aprangos

VII

IMAGES
OF THE HORSE
IN ANCIENT
ART

reikmenų – iš Italijos pasklido ypač pietinėje Vakarų Vokietijoje, Alemanijoje. Labai gali būti, kad šiuos daiktus atsigabeno karių grupės, grįžtančios iš Italijos po frankų karų su lombardais. Kartu su šiais daiktais atkeliavo gana daug figūrinių kompozicijų, ypač krikščioniškais motyvais (1; 3–5 pav.). Ypatinga šių motyvų vaizdavimo vieta buvo faleros (phalera). Jų komplektą sudarė trys vienetai – viena per vidurį ir dvi iš šonų – ant krūtininio balno diržo (1.1; 3 pav.). Jų skersmuo – apytikriai nuo 9 iki 12 cm. Pagrindas buvo gaminamas iš vario lydinio, o viršus paprastai dengiamas sidabro plokštele su atvaizdu. Nors tie atvaizdai gaminti kaland spaudais, iki šiol nėra žinoma vienodų komplektų. Dauguma falerų puošta krikščioniškais simboliais, vienas dažniausių yra šventasis raitelis (3:1–3 pav.). Į šiaurę nuo Alpių faleros turėjo būti prestižiniai daiktai, alemanų regione paskatinę atsirasti imitacijas, kurios buvo populiaros tik labai trumpą laiką. Faleros buvo naudojamos vos vienos kartos. Galbūt tai buvo tik išskirtinis frankų kare su lombardais pietuose kariavusių karinių dalinių ženklas. Tačiau į šiaurę nuo Alpių jos neteko šios paskirties. Gali būti, kad jų krikščioniškas pobūdis buvo nepriimtinas alemanų kariams. Galbūt čia nebuvo suvoktas paties įvaizdžio turinys arba pats realistinis įvaizdis kaip komunikacijos būdas. Kad ir kaip būtų, čia turėta alternatyvių karinių grupių identiteto ir galbūt religijos demonstravimo formų. Tai gyvūninis stilius II, buvęs labai populiarus, ypač Pietvakarių Vokietijoje ir Reino regione (6 pav.). Tai ypač

pastebima ant vyrų drabužių, ginkluotės ir žirgo aprangos reikmenų. Prieš dešimtį metų K. H. Nilsen (Karen Høilund Nielsen) taikliai apibūdino šį stilių kaip „politinį simbolį“.

Tačiau įdomiausia yra šventojo raitelio motyvo transformacija nuo kario žirgo aprangos detalės į moterų pasaulį: papuošalus ir amuletus. Šiaip ar taip, Viduržemio jūros regiono šventojo raitelio motyvas tapo populiaria VII a. moterų drabužių detale (7 pav.). Motyvo populiarumą ir „pritaikymo pakopas“ puikiai rodo įvairios VII a. segės (4 pav.). Bet ne tik ant segių šventasis raitelis tapo populiariu atvaizdu, dar jis išplito ant vadinaujamųjų kiauraraščių ornamentinių diskų (7 pav.).

Net jei šventasis raitelis labai greitai išnyksta iš vyrų pasaulio, jis netampa tik moterų pasaulio dalimi. Kaip krikščioniškosios ikonografijos dalis jis, žinoma, išplinta merovingų bažnytiniame mene (pvz., Ennabeurenno relikvijorius; Homhauseno bažnyčios presbiterijos baliustrada).

Labai toli, Skandinavijoje, raitelio su ietimi motyvas buvo naudojamas tik vyrų pasaulyje, būtent ant Vendel ir Valsgärde šalmų, abu iš Upplando regiono (Švedija), o šimtmečius prieš tai – dar brakteatų puošybai. Labai tikėtina, kad įvaizdis turėjo kitą (ne krikščionišką) prasmę ir buvo visuomenės elito išskirtinis simbolis.

Vertė Audronė Bliujienė