

**Streams of Living Water:  
The Strigil Motif on Late Antique Sarcophagi Reused in Medieval Southern France**

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## **Abstract**

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(Under the direction of Dorothy Verkerk)

In this thesis, I argue that medieval viewers understood the strigil motif as a fountain of living water, a sign of rebirth in both Biblical verses and medieval legends. Despite the medieval prevalence of this pattern (a repeated “S” shape) on reused late antique and newly carved sarcophagi, no in-depth study of the motif exists. In arguing for a richer analysis, I examine strigilated sarcophagi used in the province of *Gallia Narbonensis* (southern France) from the ninth through thirteenth centuries, drawing on Biblical texts and exegesis, contemporaneous history and hagiographies, and baptismal and funerary rites in my interpretation. When the strigil motif was applied to medieval tombs, it indicated the Christian triumph over death. This was especially true for the sarcophagi of saints, as my thesis shows, since saints’ ability to intercede with God on behalf of devotees was trumpeted by the strigils’ affirmation of their continuing vigor.

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## Introduction

The strigil, a wavy line like a shallow ‘S’, is repeated anywhere from half a dozen to a dozen times on the front panels of sarcophagi (Figure 1). Strigilated sarcophagi first appear in classical Greece and are popular in the Roman Empire beginning around the second century CE and are ubiquitous there until the sixth century.<sup>1</sup> At this point, strigilated sarcophagi disappear from the archaeological record. Around the end of the ninth century, when the last of the sustained conflicts with the Saracens in southern France ended, late antique sarcophagi with strigils were moved into reconstructed crypts and church porches in Arles, Marseille and Avignon.<sup>2</sup> New sarcophagi were also carved using the strigil motif. On sarcophagi, the ‘S’ of the strigil is reflected and repeated the same number of times on the opposite half, so that the two sets of nested shapes surround

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<sup>1</sup>Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1967).

<sup>2</sup>I use the term “Saracen” in this thesis because that is the term most frequently used by medieval writers, who rarely specified which Muslims they were fighting, which had the effect of tying the conflict in Northern Spain, France and Italy to the conflict in the Holy Land. Although it is possible in some cases to determine the groups with more specificity, my thesis deals with the time after such conflicts were (mostly) settled, when they were remembered as being against a single enemy. I am thus more concerned with the re-telling of this history, which refers to the enemy consistently as “Saracen,” than with the original experience and understanding of Islam and its varied adherents in medieval Europe.

Throughout this thesis, I will use the phrases “late antique” and “early Christian” to emphasize a contextual difference, not one of temporal or geographic distinction. I will use “late antique” to describe the condition of being from the Roman Empire in the third through fifth centuries, and will use “early Christian” to distinguish the particular situation in which objects or conditions of the same time period and location were emphasized in light of their position at the beginnings of Christianity as an organized religion. The sarcophagi themselves might thus be “late antique,” while their position in the medieval perspective would identify them as “early Christian.”

a space at the center of the front of the sarcophagus. The strigils cover anywhere from forty to eighty percent of the front panel of a sarcophagus, with the rest of the exterior covered by crosses, garlands, figural or animal imagery. Their relative simplicity and lack of known symbolic content has led to their treatment as solely decorative elements in scholarship on sarcophagi from both the late antique and the medieval periods.

While some carved motifs on late antique and medieval sarcophagi have been carefully considered in the circumstances of burial and afterlife, scholars' focus on figural compositions has meant that strigils are only brought up in passing, despite both the large quantity of surviving examples and the fine carving on many. These features alone give reason to question how viewers saw such sarcophagi; the accepted importance of other simple motifs as highly symbolic also suggests that strigils should not be dismissed without analysis. No scholar seriously doubts the purposeful and thoughtful inclusion of the cross or of grapevines in Christian burials, in part because their symbolic associations still carry weight in modern symbol usage. Other vegetal or abstract patterns and shapes on Christian structures that are not sarcophagi have also received some consideration.<sup>3</sup> This thesis addresses these imbalances by analyzing strigilated sarcophagi in the context of their medieval use and presentation and offering a probable interpretation of this pattern. The high rate of reuse and copying of strigilated sarcophagi in southern France suggests that medieval viewers recognized the strigil motif as significant and desirable. In this context, the strigil pattern both identified the

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<sup>3</sup>Gillian Mackie, "Abstract and Vegetal Design in the San Zeno Chapel, Rome: The Ornamental Setting of an Early Medieval Funerary Programme," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 63 (1995): 159-182. Mackie discusses the non-figural designs of the San Zeno Chapel in light of the designs' history in manuscript and monumental design, finding that they are as carefully considered in placement and style as the figural content. In general, though, abstract motifs in particular have been considered only for purposes of classification, not analysis.

sarcophagus as being related to the potent sanctity of the first Christians and depicted an abstracted view of the fountain of life or streams of living water, which had complex associations with baptism, miracles, and resurrection.

The medieval reuse of strigilated designs in particular speaks to reasons beyond expediency for strigil carvings, which were not necessarily interpreted the same in the late antique period as they were in the medieval era. There are no known records of how the late antique sarcophagi of this type came to be carved and few examples where an epitaph provides enough detail to identify a pattern of use or association in late antiquity, but the medieval reappearance of the same design in both new and reused instances offers a greater context for considering possible interpretations. Treating strigilated sarcophagi as spolia draws attention to their medieval use as purposeful, allowing me to derive meaning from their context despite the lack of evidence for the original meanings of the strigil motif. Scholars have generally studied only the period at which the late antique sarcophagi were first created and considered primarily their figural elements, ignoring their use and the way that their carving both inflects and informs their reuse.<sup>4</sup> While results from such a study of medieval strigilated sarcophagi cannot be applied directly to the original context of the late antique sarcophagi, this approach provides a framework to encourage further examinations of them. This thesis may also offer an approach that

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<sup>4</sup>A few scholars have mentioned the need for this sort of analysis briefly. Isa Ragusa, *The Reuse and Public Exhibition of Roman Sarcophagi during the Middle Ages* (New York, New York University Institute of Fine Arts, 1951), called for acknowledgment of the frequent reuse of classical sarcophagi in 1951, though she limited her study to recording the existence and patterning of reused sarcophagi without consideration of their circumstances of reuse or whether this was related to visual characteristics. Some years later, Dorothy Verkerk, “Life after Death: The Afterlife of Sarcophagi in Medieval Rome and Ravenna,” in *Felix Roma: Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome*, eds. É. Ó Carragáin and C. Neuman de Vegvar (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 81-96, called for the need to study the multiple “lives” of sarcophagi, which had been ignored as a result of the focus on visual details. I use the visual details to help reinterpret the later “lives” of the sarcophagi, understanding that a static carving does not have a static meaning.

could be used to discern the medieval reading of other abstract designs that were previously considered solely decorative.

Examining strigilated sarcophagi in a strictly medieval context also means the pattern is at its most consistent and developed, when it had been codified, to a degree, and when its regular use was firmly established in carving. The medieval context allowed greater consistency of meaning, or at least of visual experience, as strigilated designs were encountered on sarcophagi known to be from the early days of Christianity and alongside certain stock scenes that were repeated with minimal variation.

Strigilated sarcophagi were used throughout the core of the Roman Empire, as well as in the part of southern France known to the Romans as *Gallia Narbonensis* (Figure 2).<sup>5</sup> As Rome's first permanent territory outside the Italian peninsula, it had a closer economic and cultural contact with Rome than many of the more remote provinces. The area was already thoroughly populated with prosperous major settlements like Marseille when it became Roman. In the third and fourth centuries, the province had thriving craft industries, including stone-carving workshops that made sarcophagi using stone from local quarries or imported from Rome. Finished sarcophagi were also imported from Rome in considerable quantity, and many local designs were based on the Roman styles, including the strigil pattern. The area's upheaval after the fall of the Roman Empire did not destroy the archaeological record of sarcophagi; in fact, the late antique sarcophagi of Gallia Narbonensis seem to have been moved less, and moved with

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<sup>5</sup>I will use this term throughout the thesis to describe the area of southern France highlighted on the map. Although it was not always called by this title, often being fragmented into small locally-governed parcels of land, the area was united by certain features, including a road network, common enemies and landscape constraints that tended to create similar conditions throughout the region. This area is sometimes also called *Gallia Transalpina* or, by the Romans, *Provincia Nostra*, which denoted its special position as Rome's first colony.



more ceremony and record-keeping, than the sarcophagi in Rome. Regional large-scale crafts workshops declined and there was minimal monumental stone carving for several centuries, which preserved the late antique landscape, since its cities could not undergo the repeated reconstructions and remodeling that defined Rome's peculiar co-existence of old and new.

As Gallia Narbonensis became stable in the ninth century after Charlemagne helped roust the Goths and the Saracens, southern France again developed local practices of carving sarcophagi, frequently using existing late antique models, like the strigilated sarcophagus, for motifs. The late antique sarcophagi themselves were put to new use: some, either now empty or never inhabited, were used to bury medieval bodies. Others were "discovered" to have held saints or prominent early Christians, and local parishes promoted their newfound special dead. The sarcophagi holding these saints were also reused, despite their continuous occupancy, since they were moved to more prominent locations and frequently given new or enhanced biographies or legendary origin stories. These early Christian sarcophagi were newly visible in this context, and were shown off in rebuilt crypts, church porches, or formal graveyards.

Gallia Narbonensis thus had a large collection of available sarcophagi and showed a concerted effort to showcase its early Christian sarcophagi. As importantly, France was becoming an area of influence in western Europe, so the patterns of use and associations of strigilated sarcophagi in this area may have been the source for depictions of strigilated sarcophagi that appear later in other parts of Europe. The proximity of the Gallia Narbonensis to the preeminent pilgrimage site of Santiago de Compostela, newly established in the ninth century, may have aided this dissemination; certainly, medieval

pilgrimage guides emphasize the role of late antique style sarcophagi in their descriptions of potent relics. Pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela had to cross southern France; even the smaller number of pilgrims coming from Italy by boat usually landed at Marseille and took passage overland from there. While three of the main pilgrimage routes from the north passed to the west of Gallia Narbonensis, the Via Tolosana conveyed pilgrims from the central and eastern parts of Europe as well as the Mediterranean, so that the pilgrims passed directly through areas saturated with late antique sarcophagi, some strigilated, newly recast as shrines (Figure 3).

Southern France was also a hotbed of lay devotion and female mystic piety, which encouraged discussion and contemplation of Christian doctrine and the forms and symbols used to express it. This sometimes resulted in charges of heresy, but encouraged a conscientious consideration of the visual and textual expressions of religion. As the most visible signs of death, sarcophagi were an essential part of expressing both new and traditional doctrines. Bishops in Marseille, Avignon, Narbonne, and Arles gained power in the church hierarchy through their importance in crushing heresy and the wealth brought by pilgrimage in this central region. By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, southern France had considerable power in Rome, and several of the local bishops became popes. Gallia Narbonensis not only had a significant corpus of late antique sarcophagi, but also had enough religious influence to disseminate its interpretation of strigilated sarcophagi throughout western Christendom. Thus, looking at strigilated sarcophagi from Gallia Narbonensis between the ninth and thirteenth centuries not only shows the significance of these objects in southern France specifically, but because it is

based on a wide sample size and an influential region, the conclusions I draw here are likely to be applicable to a wider range of areas and periods.

The regular reappearance of subject matter and compositional styles in the sarcophagi present in southern France beginning in the ninth century helps me to reconstruct a visual environment even in the absence of data about individual sarcophagi, as well as to describe the prevailing mindset surrounding the relationship of medieval viewers to their early Christian cultural ancestry. Sarcophagi played a major role in defining attitudes toward both the past and the dead, and strigilated sarcophagi in particular played a highly visible role in the construction of these attitudes.

It is difficult to prove definitively just how many of the late antique sarcophagi that medieval viewers saw were reused, though a number of factors suggest that reuse was common in the Middle Ages. Some sarcophagi were re-inscribed at the time of their reuse, but this is not always the case; some sarcophagi that are mentioned as reused in legends have no signs of additional carving. Although some records explicitly mention the reuse of sarcophagi, there also exist cases where a known medieval saint, in his or her original burial site, has only in the past few years been identified as being interred in a late antique sarcophagus. In her doctoral thesis on reused sarcophagi, Isa Ragusa limited her analysis to sarcophagi that she felt could be unequivocally proven reused, but noted that the many stories about reused sarcophagi suggests that they were “neither unknown nor repulsive to the medieval mind,” and that likely there were many more that had been reused.<sup>6</sup> Heijmans used a feature that Ragusa ignored, suggesting that sarcophagi with

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<sup>6</sup>Ragusa, *The Reuse and Public Exhibition of Roman Sarcophagi during the Middle Ages*, 32 n.1.

non-original lids had probably been reused.<sup>7</sup> It seems that many of the aboveground sarcophagi at Alysamps were reused at some point; Heijmans even singles out strigilated sarcophagi in this reuse, commenting on their frequency of reuse without further examination.<sup>8</sup> Regardless of how the sarcophagi were changed in their reuse, whether they were re-carved or only moved, the medieval owner and viewer appropriated and reinterpreted the sarcophagi and their stories or interpretations to fit new requirements of religious thought.

It seems that these burials were recognized as involving reused sarcophagi in the medieval period, but that this information was not recorded in extant texts and at some point the knowledge disappeared. The presence of a reused, recognizably early Christian sarcophagus does not necessarily indicate the burial of a medieval saint; although this is one possibility, the sarcophagus could also have been reassembled and displayed as the sarcophagus of an early Christian, whether it contained a body or not. Nevertheless, it seems to indicate a reframing, in which the sarcophagus is given greater prominence in the medieval period. Some reuse is thus functional reuse where the sarcophagus holds a new body, but reframing without a new body can also be seen as reuse.<sup>9</sup> The frequency of this reuse all over Gallia Narbonensis and in Italy as well makes it reasonable to consider reuse a pattern, and to investigate its visual features.

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<sup>7</sup>Marc Heijmans, *Arles durant l'Antiquité Tardive: de la Duplex Arelas à l'Urbs Genesii* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 2004), 310.

<sup>8</sup>Heijmans, *Arles durant l'Antiquité Tardive: de la Duplex Arelas à l'Urbs Genesii*, 298.

<sup>9</sup>This reuse does seem to always maintain the connection to the body; the only reuse I have found that wasn't as a body container before the sixteenth century is as an altar, a use that was common from the earliest Christian burials. Later periods sometimes emphasized the aesthetics of sarcophagi above their bodily function, and denied their burial purpose by using sarcophagi as fountain bases or planters.

My analysis shows that strigilated sarcophagi were used in contexts focusing on death, as would be expected of burial objects, but that the strigil motif was particularly focused on resurrection, both for the average Christian and in the special cases of the saints, who existed in a kind of semi-resurrected half-life after their deaths. The use of strigilated sarcophagi to emphasize the early Christian origins of early Christian bodies as saints and confessors, as well as medieval bodies' connections to early Christianity through typology, is important in this context: the strigilated sarcophagus essentially makes visible the active relationship between the dead, remote and recent, and the living. This dynamic interaction was visualized through the familiar motif of water, which had important transformative and transitional qualities.

The strigil pattern is thus more than “filler” on medieval sarcophagi, serving to mark the grave as belonging to someone connected to the early Christian era, closest to Christ and the apostles and ready to be resurrected first. Both formally and through their contextual associations, the strigils visualize life, despite their appearance on a grave, making visible the deceased's baptism into new life in Christ as well as the saint's ability to interact with the living and the immortal simultaneously. Sarcophagi make up a small element of the medieval obsession with death and the afterlife, but they are one of the most visible parts of an otherwise abstract concept, and they help re-evaluate how medieval viewers saw signs and symbols on multiple levels, both literal and abstract. I elaborate on these ideas in what follows, suggesting one way in which an overlooked motif on a functional object has a complex interpretation, with both aesthetic and utilitarian purposes providing impetus for the retention and re-elaboration of the strigil design.



## **The Visual Presence of Late Antique Sarcophagi in Medieval Gallia Narbonensis**

Gallia Narbonensis, the southern part of France closest to the Mediterranean, was settled well before the area became a Roman province, but the area's medieval inhabitants took particular note of their late antique history (Figure 2).<sup>1</sup> They repeated legendary foundation stories and described Roman roads, sacred structures, and sarcophagi in pilgrimage texts, letters and later hagiographies. Both the medieval texts describing late antique burials and sarcophagi, as well as the extant late antique remains, show that Roman sarcophagi, including strigilated sarcophagi, constituted a major part of the visual landscape of medieval cities and towns along the Mediterranean. Some of the sarcophagi in the area were buried or otherwise hidden until found by modern excavations, but hundreds more were aboveground or otherwise accessible. While the records that exist are rarely detailed enough to match specific sarcophagi, late antique sarcophagi were mostly of particular iconographic types that make it possible to reconstruct the scenes and styles the medieval viewer would have found most familiar.

### **The Geographic Distribution of Late Antique Sarcophagi**

There are late antique sarcophagi spread across southern France, as well as some areas outside my focus, but certain sites possessed particular concentrations of

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<sup>1</sup>Marseille is France's oldest city, founded around 600 BCE by the Greeks as a trading post.

sarcophagi. These sites, particularly Marseille and Arles, were important centers of Roman commerce which had their own carving workshops producing sarcophagi and which also imported sarcophagi from Rome directly.<sup>2</sup> In the ninth century, when these cities were slowly recovering from repeated conflicts with the Visigoths and Saracens, some particularly valued sarcophagi were restored and moved to nearby churches and monasteries. Other sarcophagi were left in large graveyards, where their collective presence provided a potent link to the Christian past that had almost been severed by the threat of Muslim occupation.

Outside the walls of ancient Arles there was a large graveyard, Alyscamps, where many sarcophagi were exposed and pilgrims could walk or even sleep among the early Christians buried there. Although many sarcophagi now there were buried, medieval visitors describe walking among the hundreds of sarcophagi that were aboveground (Figure 4).<sup>3</sup> About ten percent of the sarcophagi excavated at Alyscamps had dates on them or are otherwise precisely datable, and, like the rest of southern France, most of them were carved in the fourth century.<sup>4</sup> Many of these sarcophagi are still present at Alyscamps. Arles' churches also had numerous late antique sarcophagi, so that as a group, sarcophagi created an inescapable reminder of and connection to Arles' early Christian founders.

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<sup>2</sup>Marc Heijmans, *Arles durant l'Antiquité Tardive: de la Duplex Arelas à l'Urbs Genesii* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 2004). See also attributions of provenance in Musée du Louvre, *Catalogue des Sarcophages en Pierre d'Époques Romaine et Paléochrétienne*, ed. Catherine Metzger (Paris: Ministère de la Culture, Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1985).

<sup>3</sup>This cemetery was a significant and unmistakable feature of the local landscape for over a thousand years. Texts consistently mention it, including the poets Ariosto and Dante and a more recent inhabitant, Vincent van Gogh. Although it has been considerably cleaned and organized, the area still gives the same effect of being a true necropolis, a city of the dead.

<sup>4</sup>Heijmans, *Arles durant l'Antiquité Tardive: de la Duplex Arelas à l'Urbs Genesii*, 298.



Marseille's sarcophagi were displayed in smaller groups, but were still collected and displayed so that their antiquity and their relation to the area's Christian background were emphasized. Marseille's bishops and abbots arranged to have sarcophagi moved from rural locations, especially vulnerable monasteries in the hills on the edges of town, to more defensible locations within the city. Unmoved sarcophagi that escaped their sites' destruction were moved in later centuries as religious power coalesced in the cities under the growing power of the bishops. This process started in the ninth century, but continued throughout the next five hundred years as the threat from Muslim military destruction gave way to the threat posed by the Cathars and similar local heretical groups.<sup>5</sup> The opportunity this gave for Marseille's churches to emphasize their sites as pilgrimage points encouraged the translation of the sarcophagi, which were installed in the porches and crypts of churches like Saint-Victor. Many of the sarcophagi remained in these locations until the French Revolution, long enough for the oral legends about the local saints in the sarcophagi to be recorded.

Avignon was not a major center during the Roman Empire, but the medieval city gained power due to its military prowess and collected sarcophagi, which enhanced its growing religious clout. Other cities too emphasized their early conversion to Christianity, with the recognizable antique sarcophagi as proof of their connection to the glorious days of the first martyrs and confessors who brought Christianity to France. While many of the sarcophagi now in southern French museum collections are of uncertain provenance, they help establish the categorical types that are apparent from the sarcophagi with more reliable origins. Sarcophagi required extensive manpower to move,

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<sup>5</sup>The Cathar sect was particularly dangerous for sarcophagi, since Cathars denounced the material world, and particularly anathematized the veneration of relics.

so that after the Roman Empire had ended, even short translations were often recorded. These sarcophagi may then also be considered as part of the late antique record of sarcophagi in southern France.

### **The Early Christian Connotations of Sarcophagi**

At Alysamps, the largest collection of sarcophagi in France, the medieval visitor would have seen many of these sorts of sarcophagi, both strigilated and other types that were common in late antiquity, certainly enough to form an impression of their normal format and to associate them with a pattern of use that recognized their antique origins and their important connections to early Christianity. This made them especially valuable as holy relics from a time when all Christians were martyrs and confessors. Some late antique sarcophagi were given new inscriptions alongside, rather than replacing, their original inscriptions, suggesting that their initial use and circumstances were both recognizable and valued.<sup>6</sup> The *Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela*, a French guide that was widely distributed throughout the twelfth century, emphasized the sensation of walking among the sarcophagi at Alysamps. The marble tombs are “of various workmanship and bear antique engravings” and they exist in such quantity that “the farther into the distance one looks, the lengthier the rows of sarcophagi become.”<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere in the *Guide* and in other pilgrims' texts, the effect of seeing sarcophagi of

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<sup>6</sup>Dorothy Verkerk, “Life after Death: The Afterlife of Sarcophagi in Medieval Rome and Ravenna,” in *Felix Roma: Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome*, eds. É. Ó Carragáin and C. Neuman de Vegvar (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 83-85.

<sup>7</sup>William Melzer, trans., *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela* (New York: Italica Press, 1993), 95.

past religious heroes is stated explicitly. The pilgrim who has the Eucharist said at Alysamps

may be certain to have those pious deceased lying there intercede for his salvation in the presence of God at the final Resurrection. In effect, the remains of numerous holy martyrs and confessors are resting there, while their souls rejoice already in the paradisiacal realm.<sup>8</sup>

This use of the early Christian dead, whom medieval Christians valorized for having been Christian during a period of persecution, took the visible presence of the recognizably late antique sarcophagi as proof of the special efficacy of praying to the inhabitants of the sarcophagi. Although opinions varied on the exact nature and location of the body and soul after death, there was a general consensus that at least some bodies had the power to act as though they were living. As the Abbot of Cluny, Peter the Venerable (1092-1156), wrote around 1109, “you ought not to feel contempt for the bones of the present martyrs as if they were dry bones, but should honor them now full of life as if they were in their future incorruption.”<sup>9</sup> The bodies of martyrs might *seem* as if they were dead, but they were still potent, shown by the many miracles they wrought, including their own temporary resurrections or exuding oil or milk with curative properties.

Although saints and martyrs were particularly valuable for intercessory prayers, the entire community of the dead formed a connection between earth and Christ, a connection that was centered at the sarcophagus. The living prayed to martyrs and for

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<sup>8</sup> Melczer, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela*, 97-98.

<sup>9</sup> Peter the Venerable, “Sermo in honore sancti illius cuius reliquiae sunt in presenti,” ed. Giles Constable, “Petri Venerabilis Sermones Tres,” *Revue bénédictine* 64 (1954): 224-72. Peter the Venerable is referring to the story of the dry bones in the desert from Ezekiel 37, in which God resurrects skeletons and has Ezekiel prophesy to them.

their deceased family members, and expected to receive a tangible return; these activities and their effects were concentrated and most effective at the location of the tomb. The now-invisible body, in some sense made re-visible by the sarcophagus, consecrated its immediate environment. A sarcophagus was the first type of reliquary, which was sanctified by its contact with the body, so much so that contact with the reliquary was potentially as effective as being in contact with the body itself.

Three significant tombs ensured the importance of a tomb as the point of contact between the medieval viewer and the holy dead. The Holy Sepulcher was possibly the most important site in the Christian landscape, and although burial at the time of Christ would not have involved a separate sarcophagus, only the cliff-side niche described in the gospels, medieval manuscripts and carvings consistently depict the site of Christ's resurrection as containing an empty sarcophagus.<sup>10</sup> This is particularly important for the position of the sarcophagus in interactions between living and dead, since it positions the grave itself, and not necessarily the body, as a site of power. The most important moment in Christianity is visualized as a sarcophagus, and in the absence of Christ's resurrected body after the Ascension, the empty grave was the sole relic of the event (Figure 18).

The body of Saint Peter, at Rome, the center of the most important pilgrimage site in Europe, was reachable, but not directly visually accessible. Pilgrims praying in Old St. Peter's may have been able to direct their thoughts toward the burial place with the help of a fresco, now destroyed and known only from a seventeenth-century sketch, but which

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<sup>10</sup>Examples include the early thirteenth century window in the ambulatory of the cathedral of Bourges, France; fol. 193v of the Pamplona Picture Bible (Amiens Bibliothèque de la Ville 108); fol. 9v of the late twelfth century Psalter of Amiens, Saint-Fuscien (Amiens Bibliothèque de la Ville 19); and hundreds of others of manuscripts in the collections of the Morgan Library and the British Library.

was probably painted before 1300 (Figure 5).<sup>11</sup> This fresco placed the strigilated sarcophagus holding Peter's crucified body in the foreground, and would have been the primary visual impression of Peter's burial. The burials *ad sanctos* at St. Peter's also included a large number of strigilated sarcophagi, which would have helped to associate this sarcophagus type with early Christian martyrs.

The final site, "discovered" in the ninth century, was the tomb of Saint James, the discovery of which led to the development of Santiago (Saint James) de Compostela, the most important pilgrimage site in Europe after Rome. This site centered on a sarcophagus as well, though not a strigilated one. Pilgrims from across Europe approached and laid their hands directly on the sarcophagus of James, offering their prayers or petitions while within sight and touch of the blessed sarcophagus. Although as the pilgrimage tradition grew stronger, the pilgrim engaged in other rituals before approaching the sarcophagus, this point of contact remained the central and culminating act of a journey that could take almost an entire year.

Since access to the Holy Sepulcher was limited throughout the medieval period, except for 90 years in the twelfth century and a brief period in the early thirteenth century when the Western Christian army occupied Jerusalem, these latter two sites were particularly important to Christians from Gallia Narbonensis. Rome was the center of Western Christianity, home of the unbroken line of popes who had followed Peter, so that St. Peter's with its prominent image of the strigilated sarcophagus served as an important inspiration to the development of pilgrimage sites in southern France. With St. Peter's providing the model, Santiago de Compostela's position at the northwest corner of Spain

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<sup>11</sup>Jens T. Wollesen, *Pictures and Reality: Monumental Frescoes and Mosaics in Rome around 1300* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 65.

ensured that virtually all traffic to this new pilgrimage site came through France, providing a ready stream of new pilgrims and increasing veneration at local sites. The Via Tolosana, which officially began at Arles and ran directly across southern France, brought large numbers of pilgrims from central Europe and Italy through the heart of Gallia Narbonensis. Unlike other pilgrimage roads, the Via Tolosana had pilgrims moving in both directions, since it was also a primary access route from France to Saint Peter's in Rome.<sup>12</sup> Some Italian pilgrims also traveled by sea to Marseille and then traveled overland from there. Cults on the primary pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela achieved huge renown and led to the development of continually larger churches, the better to accommodate the pilgrims who came to touch the sarcophagi of saints, and even to sleep under the sarcophagi to be more assured of receiving heavenly intervention. In all these interactions, the body of the saint was the central focus, but mediated through a case of some sort, usually a sarcophagus. Although reliquaries have received the most attention in scholarship, many more saints, especially before the thirteenth century, maintained their contact with the living world through their sarcophagi. The sarcophagi, usually late antique, were thus the point where the viewer could reach the living power of the saint; the sarcophagi were new holy sites and their carving provided visual confirmation of the interred saints' power.

### **The Power of Early Christian Martyrs and Their Sarcophagi**

Recent scholarship on medieval hagiography has tended to focus on medieval saints, and in particular their integration into local social communities. However

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<sup>12</sup>Derry Brabbs, *The Roads to Santiago: The Medieval Pilgrim Routes through France and Spain to Santiago de Compostela* (London: Frances Lincoln Limited, 2008), 114.

medieval hagiography of the ninth and tenth centuries emphasized saints “conjured from a distant, late antique past.”<sup>13</sup> These ancient saints were distant in from the current time, and their distance was emphasized as being both from the current time and also from daily existence even when the saints were alive. The saints had always been somewhat separate from daily existence in their ability to withstand pain, to go without sustenance and to resist temptations. Their after-death existence was then not much of a change from their earthly existence, which seems to have made them more conceivable as heavenly beings than some more recent saints. The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine, perhaps the most widely circulated hagiographic text of the medieval era, recorded the lives and the extremely violent deaths of the earliest Christian martyrs.<sup>14</sup> The dates of these saints’ deaths and martyrdoms were frequently moved closer to Christ’s lifetime than earlier stories, emphasizing their connection to the birth of Christianity and creating a sense of historical and spiritual continuity between that time and the present day.<sup>15</sup> Hagiographies emphasized both the acts of the saint while alive and the acts of the saint’s relics after death, uniting their current state in a sarcophagus or reliquary with their former life. Such saints were almost dead while living, separated from ordinary human

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<sup>13</sup>Peter Brown, “Enjoying the Saints in Late Antiquity,” in *Decorations for the Holy Dead: Visual Embellishments on Tombs and Shrines of Saints*, ed. E. Valdez del Alamo and S. Lamia, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 13.

<sup>14</sup>Caroline Walker Bynum discusses this in considerable detail. Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 309.

<sup>15</sup>Melczer traces this tendency as especially true in France, where there was a concerted effort to trace a direct line from the apostles, especially Peter, to the evangelizers of Christ. Arles, in fact, was said to have been founded by Martha and Lazarus – the two figures with such prominence on strigilated sarcophagi. Melczer, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela*, 157, 267. See also the description of the reuses of the stories of the early Christian dead described in Dorothy Hoogland Verkerk, “‘The Font is a Kind of Grave’: Remembrance in the Via Latina Catacombs,” in *Between the Living and the Dead: Strategies for Commemoration in the Middle Ages*, ed. E. del Alamo and C. Pendergast (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 158.

desires and pains.<sup>16</sup> After their deaths, they seemed more alive than they had been during their lifetimes, emitting blood, milk, or oil that followed normal human patterns of expulsion, except that these excretions had a healing power.<sup>17</sup> Paradoxically, then, the saint was most powerful when dead and far from his or her original era.<sup>18</sup> The interaction with these special dead was necessarily moderated through the highly visible sarcophagi that were given prominence in the churches and pilgrimage sites of southern France. In such an environment, a late antique sarcophagus provided the visible “proof” of both the saint’s antique pedigree and the saint’s current potency.

The desirability of connections to early Christianity led to the use of early Christian markers for later saints. The association with early Christian objects increased the new relics’ efficacy and prominence, and to some degree their credibility. Medieval hagiographies emphasized new saints’ similarity to early Christian saints, and often emphasized that a new saint came from the same place or otherwise had a connection to a previous saint. The concept of burial *ad sanctos* is well established; the burial of a deceased person near a saint allows the person to share in the saint’s glory and to achieve resurrection first at Armageddon. Less recognized, however, is the way that this sanctity was transmitted not only between normal person and saint, but from saint to saint and

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<sup>16</sup>Martyrs were said to feel no pain during their martyrdoms, and many saints were known for not having bodily excretions of any sort. It was not uncommon to describe particularly holy ascetics as though they were already dead, and even those taking the holy orders were sometimes considered legally dead, with their heirs allowed to inherit immediately.

<sup>17</sup>Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336*, 221, 224.

<sup>18</sup>More details of this in Brown, “Enjoying the Saints in Late Antiquity,” 11.



between body and object. In this context, an early Christian sarcophagus visualized the contemporary saint's typological association with the first saints.<sup>19</sup>

The local workshops producing sarcophagi in Arles died out at the end of the fifth century, the ones in Marseille slightly later. Excavations in Arles have also shown that the number of sarcophagi imported from Rome dropped sharply at this point.<sup>20</sup> Despite the small numbers of sarcophagi available at this time, reuse seems to have been limited, not appearing with regularity until the ninth or tenth century, when local stone carving workshops had already begun to recover. This suggests that reuse was not simply a matter of exigency, since the reuse occurs precisely when the workshops are again capable of producing new sarcophagi. The new sarcophagi were often carved with late antique patterns, particularly strigils, thereby reusing designs as well as the objects themselves. The new and reused strigilated sarcophagi were not used just for lesser burials whose occupants could not afford the "better" carving of a figural sarcophagus. Late antique sarcophagi, either originals or reproductions, were thus consciously adopted to connect the newly deceased to an early Christian tradition, suggesting that the deceased was a committed Christian of the same level as the early martyrs and saints.

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<sup>19</sup>The idea of the saint receiving honor by his sarcophagus' association with earlier saints has not been elaborated as such in scholarly literature, but the use of late antique sarcophagi, even ones not explicitly Christian, for significant medieval figures, has been so frequently noted that it seems that reused sarcophagi were almost as common for saints as new ones. Charlemagne, who was sanctified in the tenth century in France for his efforts to keep Muslims out of northern Spain and southern France, is perhaps the most famous, buried in a Persephone sarcophagus. Charlemagne's complex use of late antique spolia makes this example less convincing on its own, but when seen in the context of the dozens of others, the reuse of late antique sarcophagi for beatified or sanctified medieval bodies shows a clear pattern of association. See particularly Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1964), 48m, which has a list including St. Lusorius at Déols and St. Agilbert at Jouarre; any number of others show up in the Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1967).

<sup>20</sup>Heijmans, *Arles durant l'Antiquité Tardive: de la Duplex Arelas à l'Urbs Genesii*, 298.

## **The Prominence of Strigilated Sarcophagi**

Within the corpus of reused late antique sarcophagi, strigilated examples are particularly prominent, and the strigils on reused examples stand out even when they form only part of the composition. On carved sarcophagi, the front panel is always carved, usually along its full length; sometimes the sides and more rarely, the back, are carved as well (Figure 6). It is not uncommon for the front of the sarcophagus to have strigils while figural motifs cover the sides; indeed, I have been unable to find strigils anywhere but the front of sarcophagi. This indicates that, contrary to the conventional assumptions, the strigils were more important visually than at least some of the figural carving, since sarcophagi were often placed in niches that concealed all but the front panel.

There were conventions for carving strigilated sarcophagi, which are remarkably consistent given the long period of time and geographic range of their production. This regularity of depiction suggests that there was a “right” way to carve strigils, which would indicate that they were an important element of the design; mere decorative filler would require only that the design be pleasing to the eye, not that it conform to such a specific composition and layout. The strigils are always carved so that the top curve of the strigil opens toward the center of the sarcophagi and the lower part opens toward the side scenes, as in Figure 1. They are always found in equal numbers on both sides of the center panel, whether they then extend all the way to the panel’s corners or are flanked by scenes at the edges. It is rare for late antique sarcophagi to have only strigils; generally they are found as the second and fourth panels of a five-panel layout, but medieval strigilated sarcophagi occasionally have only a central figured panel and stretch the

strigils all the way to the corners. Their similarity of appearance, along with their masterful carving, shows strigils' importance in sarcophagus programs.

Strigilated sarcophagi use scenes that are also found on other types of sarcophagi, but many common scenes on sarcophagi do not occur with strigils. Late antique sarcophagi frequently have figures that predate Christianity, with garlands, cornucopias or a central figure surrounded by a clipeus among the most common. By the medieval period, these were interpreted as Christian regardless of their original status, and strigilated sarcophagi seem less likely than other third, fourth, or fifth century sarcophagi to have had undeniably pagan scenes, so that they in particular would evoke associations with the first Christians.<sup>21</sup> As might be expected, favored scenes also included stories or themes connected to salvation or victory over death, and there were many Biblical stories that had been interpreted in this context.<sup>22</sup> Strigilated sarcophagi, however, almost exclusively show only three of these scenes: Jonah and the sea monster, the raising of Lazarus, and either Peter or Moses striking the rock.<sup>23</sup> These scenes have a particular importance to the understanding of strigils, as I discuss in Chapter 3, but their consistent

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<sup>21</sup>Wischmeyer found only 2 of 13 strigil sarcophagi in a set from Arles to have even possibly pagan scenes, a lower percentage than that of frieze or architectural sarcophagi. Wolfgang Wischmeyer, *Die Tafeldeckel der christlichen Sarkophage Konstantinischer Zeit in Rom : Studien zur Struktur, Ikonographie und Epigraphik* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1982), 12.

<sup>22</sup>The most common scenes are: Noah and the ark; Daniel in the lion's den; the three Hebrew youths in the fiery furnace; Jonah and the fish; the raising of Lazarus; and Peter or Moses striking water from the rock. For the association of these scenes with death and salvation or resurrection, see Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336*, Gerhart B. Ladner, *God, Cosmos, and Humankind: The World of Early Christian Symbolism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 1, 236. The *commendatio animae*, a prayer for the dying, made the association of many of these scenes with death explicit.

<sup>23</sup>It is extremely difficult in the absence of other clues to determine whether a scene is of Peter striking the rock-cut wall of his prison or of Moses striking the rock of Horeb (Exodus 17). Since it seems that the apocryphal story of Peter developed as an allusion to the story of Moses, it is likely that distinguishing the particular actor would have been minimally important. *Picturing The Bible: The Earliest Christian Art* (New Haven; Fort Worth: Yale University Press; In association with the Kimbell Art Museum, 2007).

pairing with the strigils certainly indicates that, at the very least, the strigils were considered more appropriate for some scenes than others, something that would not occur if the pattern were largely an afterthought or insignificant.

Gallia Narbonensis was thus filled with late antique sarcophagi and their medieval replicas, among which strigilated examples were particularly prominent. These sarcophagi were not just part of a distant past, remaining visible in the landscape solely as records, but were actively reused, copied and integrated into medieval life. Among the many late antique sarcophagi, valued for their ability to put the viewer in direct contact with Christ via the bodies of the early Christian martyrs, strigilated sarcophagi were certainly noticeable. In the next chapter, I will argue that strigilated sarcophagi were more than just noticed; instead, they were actively selected for prestigious burials and were copied with great dexterity.

## **The Unique Pairing of Strigils and Sarcophagi**

In the first chapter, I established that late antique sarcophagi, particularly strigilated sarcophagi, were ubiquitous in the medieval landscape. The clear importance of late antique sarcophagi in Gallia Narbonensis after the ninth century made strigilated sarcophagi valuable through their visible connection to early Christianity, but the strigil pattern was significant beyond its evocation of antiquity. Although all late antique sarcophagus designs seem to have been reused from time to time, strigilated sarcophagi were reused at a particularly high rate, and in the prominent spaces on the front of the sarcophagus even when figural images are then relegated to the sides (Figure 6).<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I explore the features that show how strigilated sarcophagi were selected for reuse instead of other late antique sarcophagi, especially for highly visible burials like those of saints. This prevalence of strigilated sarcophagus reuse suggests that strigils had connotations besides the ones given to other late antique forms, which may have been related to the frequent appearance of strigils on medieval saints' sarcophagi. The strigils must have served a purpose that narrative figure carvings could not, so that connections to early Christianity could not have been the primary reason for reusing strigilated sarcophagi. The popularity of the strigil pattern on newly carved medieval sarcophagi,

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<sup>1</sup>For other examples, see Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarcophage* v. 1 (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1967), T148; Musée du Louvre, *Catalogue des Sarcophages en Pierre d'Époques Romaine et Paléochrétienne*, ed. Catherine Metzger (Paris: Ministère de la culture, Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1985), 325, plate 220.

despite its absence on other types of carving, confirms the importance of the strigil pattern as itself a meaningful motif.

### **Strigilated Sarcophagi Preferred for Reuse**

In 1951, Isa Ragusa catalogued all the Greek and Roman classical sarcophagi that were reused in the Middle Ages through the beginnings of the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Her definition of reuse was very narrow, consisting only of sarcophagi whose reuse could be definitively established by textual documentation or epigraphic evidence. As she acknowledged, reuse attested to by oral tradition, placement, or other types of circumstantial evidence was thus ignored in her analysis. Nevertheless, Ragusa developed a list of 120 sarcophagi whose reuse in western Europe was beyond doubt.<sup>3</sup> Of these 120, 25 were strigilated.<sup>4</sup> The same set has only 30 that fall into Ragusa's category of "mythological," the largest category, and only 15 "biographical or narrative."<sup>5</sup> Thus, despite scholars' focus on figural sarcophagi, strigilated sarcophagi are being used at as high or higher a rate than other late antique sarcophagi. The thousands of late antique sarcophagi scattered across Europe, especially in Italy and France, suggests that reused strigilated sarcophagi were selected as being appropriate in some way for their occupants, not that they were the only ones available.<sup>6</sup> While some of this preference may have

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<sup>2</sup>Isa Ragusa, *The Reuse and Public Exhibition of Roman Sarcophagi during the Middle Ages* (New York: New York University Institute of Fine Arts, 1951).

<sup>3</sup>Ragusa, *The Reuse and Public Exhibition of Roman Sarcophagi during the Middle Ages*, 4.

<sup>4</sup>Ragusa, *The Reuse and Public Exhibition of Roman Sarcophagi during the Middle Ages*, 26.

<sup>5</sup>Ragusa, *The Reuse and Public Exhibition of Roman Sarcophagi during the Middle Ages*, 28.

<sup>6</sup>Dorothy Verkerk notes that beginning in the tenth century, papal tombs frequently included reused late antique sarcophagi, and that "they are, for the most part, simple strigilated sarcophagi with limited figural decoration." Dorothy Verkerk, "Life after Death: The Afterlife of Early Medieval Sarcophagi," in *Felix*

been a result of the early Christian associations discussed in Chapter 1, the choice of strigilated sarcophagi specifically suggests that it was the design itself, and not merely the late antique pedigree, that led to this preference.

The re-appearance of the strigil motif is sometimes attributed to medieval carvers' lack of ability. The wide variation in the skill with which strigils are executed shows that this cannot always have been, if it ever was, the driving force for using the design. Some strigils are simple incised lines, but the ones used for high-prestige burials seem to require a greater degree of skill than figural carvings. Figural carvings were based on patterns that varied little, so the format does not show a greater degree of artistic virtuosity than strigils do, and strigils at their best also require technical expertise. The lines are close together and must be absolutely the same distance apart to achieve the effect of movement seen on many examples (see Figures 1,7). The strigils are often in a sort of relief, with shallow raised lines providing a rich play of light and shadow. These features allow no room for error; a mistake requires starting over and cannot simply be worked into the design, as would sometimes be possible on figural scenes.

The tomb of St. Eusebia at Saint-Victor in Marseille shows the choice of a strigilated sarcophagus in an environment where other early Christian sarcophagi were available (Figure 8). The unverifiable details of its situation make it ineligible for Ragusa's rarefied collection, but its medieval reputation of having been reused for a saint is clear. Eusebia, the legend explains, was abbess of a nunnery just outside Marseille in the eighth or early ninth century. Upon hearing of the approach of Saracen invaders, and

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*Roma: Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome*, eds. É. Ó Carragáin and C. Neuman de Vegvar (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 92. The use of these sarcophagi for papal tombs in particular suggests the degree to which this selection was a choice rather than a necessity.

knowing that other nuns had been raped and killed, Eusebia cut off her nose and encouraged her forty nuns to do the same. They were then disfigured enough to deter their potential rapists, so that although they were killed, they reached heaven with their virginity intact.<sup>7</sup> This sort of legend was extremely popular in the period after the ninth century, when Marseille emphasized the saintly heroes of its campaigns against the Saracens in an effort to regain dignity after having almost succumbed to non-Christian enemies.<sup>8</sup> Victories against the Saracens, even minor ones, reaffirmed their conviction that God was on the side of the Marseillaise.

The choice of a strigilated sarcophagus for this important saint when other late antique or medieval sarcophagi were available is significant. Previous work on this sarcophagus has indicated a fourth century Italian provenance.<sup>9</sup> The excavation of the crypt at Saint-Victor revealed dozens of marble sarcophagi in the same church, mostly from the fourth century (Figure 9), which could have been used for Eusebia's tomb.<sup>10</sup> Most were empty; many had more elaborate figural decoration than the displayed

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<sup>7</sup>Gonzague De Rey, *Les Saints de l'Église de Marseille* (Marseille: Société Anonyme de l'Imprimerie Marseillaise, 1885).

<sup>8</sup>Jean Adhémar, *Influences Antiques dans l'Art du Moyen Age Français* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1939).

<sup>9</sup>Paola Borracino, *I Sarcofagi Paleocristiani di Marsiglia* (Bologna, Italy: Stabilimento Editoriale Pàtron, 1973), 87.

<sup>10</sup>Gabrielle Demians d'Archimbaud, Michel Fixot and Jean-Marie Allais, "Découvertes Récentes a Saint-Victor de Marseille," *Archaeologia* 44 (1972): 15. Eusebia was likely not buried in the sarcophagus originally. Regardless of the story's veracity, Eusebia would have died at a time when the tumult of local events made elaborate burials difficult. It was not uncommon for a saint or revered local figure to be simply interred initially, then reburied or moved later. Certainly Eusebia, with or without her sarcophagus, was at some point between the ninth and thirteenth centuries moved from Saint-Cyr, her original site just outside Marseille, to Saint-Victor at Marseille's center. This translation might have provided an opportunity to move the saint to a more suitable burial monument. There are similar stories in medieval texts, like Gregory of Tours' description of how St. Felix of Bourges was given a more elaborate sarcophagus lid some years after his original burial. Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, translated by Raymond Van Dam (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1988), 76.



strigilated sarcophagus of Eusebia, so there were plenty of figural options available for reuse.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, among the sarcophagi from Saint-Victor that have been published, none of the strigilated examples were hidden in the wall or under the floor, suggesting that none of them were reused for ordinary burials.

While Eusebia's existence itself is questionable, both the legend and the designation of a strigilated sarcophagus as her tomb seem to have been in place by the beginning of the thirteenth century.<sup>12</sup> The niche holding her sarcophagus precisely fits the its length and depth (Figures 10, 11). Since late antique and medieval sarcophagi were of inconsistent dimensions, it appears that the early thirteenth-century niche was built with this sarcophagus in mind, and that the epitaph naming Eusebia in the wall above the sarcophagus was put in place at the same time. The placement of Eusebia's sarcophagus next to the sarcophagus of St. Cassien, the founder of the monastery and the primary relics of the monastery, shows that the thirteenth-century planners of the crypt considered Eusebia's tomb among the most important in the crypt, prioritizing its placement above that of other notable relics at Saint-Victor.<sup>13</sup>

The choice of a strigilated sarcophagus for a prominent saint was not limited to Saint-Victor; such sarcophagi were used for other saints and revered figures in Gallia Narbonensis. Arles, with its large assembly of late-antique sarcophagi, also has several

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<sup>11</sup>Raymond Boyer et al. *Vie et Mort à Marseille à la Fin de l'Antiquité: Inhumations Habillées des Ve et Vie Siècles et Sarcophage Reliquaire Trouvés à l'Abbaye de Saint-Victor* (Marseille: Imprimerie Municipale, 1987).

<sup>12</sup>According to the dating of the masonry in recent excavations, the crypt at Saint-Victor was rebuilt at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Michel Fixot and Jean-Pierre Pelletier, *Saint-Victor de Marseille: Étude Archéologique et Monumentale* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2009), 212 (figure 165), 234.

<sup>13</sup>Saint-Victor's relics included remains virgins martyred with St. Ursula, who was venerated throughout Europe, as well as of the four sleepers, whose cult was local but long-standing, appearing as early as the ninth century. Jean Boissieu and Eric Arrouas. *Saint-Victor: Une Ville, Une Abbaye* (Marseille, France: Editions Jeanne Laffitte, 1986), 37, 76.

strigilated sarcophagi that were used for preeminent leaders from southern France. The sarcophagus of St. Honoratus in Arles, for example, has strigils (Figure 12).<sup>14</sup> Honoratus, who had grown up in Marseille, was the bishop of Arles at the beginning of the fifth century, so he may well have been buried in this sarcophagus originally. The veneration of St. Honoratus achieved particular prominence as pilgrimage increased in the tenth century, and the relics of St. Honoratus were mentioned as a necessary stop in the *Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela*.<sup>15</sup> His sarcophagus achieved greater visibility with its inclusion on the must-see list, and pilgrims thronged to it to pray before the strigilated tomb. The church dedicated to St. Honoratus was on the edge of the necropolis of Alyscamps, so that St. Honoratus' late antique sarcophagus was surrounded by early Christian sarcophagi that visually emphasized his connection to his spiritual forebears.

St. Honoratus was not the only Arles clergyman to be venerated in a strigilated sarcophagus: one of his successors, St. Caesarius, who died one hundred years after St. Honoratus, was granted the same distinction (Figure 7). The strigilated sarcophagus with Caesarius' relics was made into the altar of one of the churches of Arles, surrounded by other strigilated sarcophagi, sometime after the ninth century.<sup>16</sup> Like St. Honoratus' relics, the sarcophagus of St. Caesarius was described as an essential sight on the pilgrimage tour of Arles.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Deichmann, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage* v. 3, T 28, #77.

<sup>15</sup>William Melczer, trans. *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela* (New York: Italica Press, 1993), Ch. viii 96-97.

<sup>16</sup>Deichmann, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage* v. 3, #79.

<sup>17</sup>Melczer, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela*, Ch. viii, 96-97.

Saints' sarcophagi were generally placed in highly visible locations in churches, either in crypts where they were the focus of pilgrimage or on the covered porches by the church portals. Examples of strigilated sarcophagi in places of prominence outside Marseille and Arles exist, but they are more difficult to associate with particular historic figures or legend, as are the strigilated sarcophagi that acted as altars in a number of medieval churches (Figures 13, 21, 23). Medieval altars usually contained relics, but in these cases, the relics' original source and definitive association with the sarcophagus has been lost. Nevertheless, the close association between altars and sarcophagi would have ensured that the strigilated altars were recognized as associated with a deceased saint.<sup>18</sup>

### **Medieval Efforts to Reconstruct or Replicate Strigilated Sarcophagi**

The examples discussed above show that strigilated sarcophagi were not just present in the medieval visual landscape, but were emphasized and sought out for reuse, even when other high-quality antique sarcophagi were available. In fact, the strigil pattern was so desirable that medieval craftsmen found it worthwhile to reconstruct strigilated sarcophagi from fragments or to carve replicas from newly quarried stone. One of the sarcophagi at Marseille shows the effort that might be made to use a strigilated sarcophagus. The sarcophagus of Arduinus, an eleventh-century abbot at Saint-Victor, is

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<sup>18</sup>Although these examples might suggest that strigilated sarcophagi were reused most frequently for saints, this may be misleading. Texts rarely describe a sarcophagus in detail at the time of interment, so most of the information available comes from many years after the interment. Such later discussion primarily occurs in saints' hagiographies. The visibility of saints' sarcophagi also meant that strigilated examples would have been primarily associated with these holy figures. Nevertheless, there were exceptions, the sarcophagi of people who might have wanted to assume some of the characteristics of model Christians. One secular figure, a wealthy nobleman called Pons, was buried in a fifth-century strigilated sarcophagus in 1061 according to Deichmann, *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage* v.ii, 552. Pons was the Count of Toulouse, on the western edge of Gallia Narbonensis. I have found other examples of strigilated sarcophagi reused for wealthy but secular individuals in northern Italy, especially around Pisa and Milan. Although not in Gallia Narbonensis, these cities were less than two hundred miles from Gallia Narbonensis by land and a little over half that distance by sea.

carved with a simple central cross and strigils (Figure 14). The end panels are uncarved. The style of carving is even and low relief; the sarcophagus seems quite plain, making Arduinus and his sarcophagus both seem unexceptional. Yet, closer attention reveals that Arduinus' sarcophagus, while made of late antique elements, is an eleventh-century pastiche.<sup>19</sup> Since a strigilated sarcophagus was desired when none was available, it had to be made. It seems that such a sarcophagus was indeed worth resorting to fragments over using one of the other, non-strigilated late antique sarcophagi available at Saint-Victor (Figure 9).

In many other cases, sarcophagi were indeed carved anew for laypeople, clergy and saints. Ragusa looked only cursorily at imitations of Roman sarcophagi, but she still noted that most of the new versions used the strigil pattern.<sup>20</sup> Hincmar, archbishop of Reims (d. 882), Frederick II, Bishop Arnulf of Lisieux (d. 1181), and the first abbot of Airvauld are among the prominent, though not sanctified, religious figures buried in new sarcophagi carved to resemble late antique forms.<sup>21</sup> Although generally these newer sarcophagi were carved with less skill than the late antique sarcophagi that were reused, they appear no worse than the overall quality of late antique sarcophagi; some of them are excellently carved with even and closely spaced strigils. I have not been able to find anything suggesting that the carvers of new sarcophagi attempted to pass them off as late antique originals, and since the medieval tendency to have strigils cover almost the entire sarcophagus diverges from the late antique use of the strigils between figural panels,

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<sup>19</sup>Gabrielle Demians d'Archimbaud, "Les Fouilles de Saint-Victor de Marseille," *Comptes Rendus des Séances* (1971): 103; Michael Greenhalgh, *The Survival of Roman Antiquities in the Middle Ages* (London: Duckworth, 1989), 199.

<sup>20</sup>Ragusa, *The Reuse and Public Exhibition of Roman Sarcophagi during the Middle Ages*, 29.

<sup>21</sup>Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1964), 48.

there doesn't seem to have been an effort made to copy the late antique models precisely. This indicates that, while the late antique associations of strigils were significant, the strigil design itself had acquired meaning based on its form and not just its provenance.

### **The Sarcophagus-specific Context of Strigils**

The reuse of the strigilated pattern has a unique aspect that separates it from other late antique motifs. While many patterns and motifs used on sarcophagi were reused on other objects, I have not been able to find any circumstances where medieval carvers used the strigil pattern anywhere but on sarcophagi.<sup>22</sup> Foliate patterns similar to the ones on sarcophagi show up on column capitals and many of the other popular images on sarcophagi also appear on architectural sculpture or church furniture like pulpits, but the strigil pattern seems to be reserved for sarcophagi.<sup>23</sup> Panofsky noted a particular interest in abstract motifs and symbols on eleventh and twelfth century funerary artifacts, but while the other motifs continue to be carved frequently on both sarcophagi and other works, the strigil is the only one that seems to be restricted to the sarcophagus.<sup>24</sup> Given their ubiquity on sarcophagi, and that the same craftsmen were carving sarcophagi and

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<sup>22</sup>The only exception I have been able to find so far is a very early medieval trend of using a similar pattern on silver patens. This practice, which seems limited to Italy in the sixth and seventh centuries, adapts the strigil pattern to a round base, so that the strigils are all nested in one direction around a central boss (Figure 15). Strigils were not common on objects in the late antique period, but were found on objects besides sarcophagi at times. Objects like the Antonine vase (Figure 16) seem to have had a funereal association, given the chthonic elements appearing on them, like the vase's snake handles.

<sup>23</sup>Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture* discusses the use of sarcophagus motifs on other carved objects, while Nicola Coldstream, *Masons and Sculptors* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 63-64 addresses the workshop setup where architectural carving and sarcophagus carving were united until the thirteenth century. A gold altar dedicated to St. Ambrose in Milan has a strigil-inspired pattern of s-shapes on the front. Ragusa, *The Reuse and Public Exhibition of Roman Sarcophagi during the Middle Ages*, 9, 203 mentions the sarcophagi of St. Aphrodise and St. Ambrosia both being turned into baptismal fonts sometime before the twelfth century.

<sup>24</sup>Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture*, 50.

other sculpted objects, this omission must be purposeful. This exclusivity shows that by the medieval period the strigil pattern was understood in a way that made it unsuitable or inappropriate for use on objects that did not have the same use or connotations as sarcophagi.

However, strigils do appear in other media when they adorn a representation of a sarcophagus, further suggesting that strigils were particularly and exclusively associated with sarcophagi. Some Italian altar candlesticks from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Figures 17 and 18) depict the Resurrection, with Christ's sarcophagus having strigils as its only decoration. An English manuscript illumination from about 1130 showing the burial of St. Edmund shows the saint's shrouded body being lowered into a sarcophagus with elaborate strigils (Figure 19), while the eleventh-century Irish manuscript of John the Deacon's *Vitae S. Gregorii* shows Gregory the Great being entombed in a strigilated sarcophagus in the atrium of Old St. Peter's (Figure 20). Although these examples are not from Gallia Narbonensis, the significant number of examples showing the strigil as a prominent motif on depictions of sarcophagi suggests that it is the most recognizable motif associated with tombs. Since England did not have many late antique sarcophagi itself, it is likely that the association of strigilated sarcophagi with saints came from continental sources, probably as a result of pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and Rome, which would have taken them through Gallia Narbonensis' thicket of strigilated sarcophagi.

This exclusive use of strigils on sarcophagi, coupled with the preferential reuse of strigilated sarcophagi even over more elaborate figural late antique sarcophagi, points to a medieval focus on strigils' visual and symbolic associations and not just their evocation

of late antiquity. While the large number of extant sarcophagi and some of their reuse could be attributed to their ubiquity in the southern French landscape or their associations with the dynamic days of early Christianity, their selective reuse and replication shows that the pattern itself was significant. I address the interplay of associations strigils developed in the next chapter.





## **The Strigil Motif as the Fountain of Life**

Having demonstrated that strigilated sarcophagi were purposely selected for reuse and for prominent display, I consider here what the strigils might have meant in the medieval period. A primary feature of an abstract, non-figural motif like the strigil is that it encourages multiple readings, some of them held simultaneously by different viewers or by the same viewer under different circumstances. Medieval art and text frequently work on multiple levels: literal, metaphorical, and anagogical. Since a detailed and specific scene can have these multiple interpretations simultaneously understood, the abstract nature of the strigil design would allow for even more varied interpretations than those allowed by a figural composition.<sup>1</sup> These interpretations would have arisen based on the visual impression the motif makes, the associations suggested by the scenes frequently occurring alongside strigils on the sarcophagi, and the rituals and interactions in which the sarcophagus played a main role.

By suggesting that multiple interpretations would likely have been held at once, I do not mean that the strigils are an empty symbol, which the viewer would interpret randomly. Rather, the strigils allow for a constellation of related interpretations without specifying one level of interpretation over the others. Most strigilated sarcophagi, especially those from the early Christian era, are intermediary panels surrounded by other

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<sup>1</sup>The interpretations made by viewers would certainly have changed, depending on the viewer's education and status. However, most associations were based on a shared set of basic understandings about

scenes, but later copies do not necessarily require such framing since previous sarcophagi and established ritual interaction provided the necessary context.<sup>2</sup>

This same flexibility of meaning that allows multiple understandings to be held simultaneously can lead to misinterpretation without holistic consideration of the visual evidence. While it is reasonable to associate strigils with death, given their near-exclusive appearance on sarcophagi, some concepts associated with death are more appropriate than others. The repetitive and dynamic shapes of strigils encourage their association with ideas of death as a transition or alteration, rather than stasis or termination (Figures 1, 21).<sup>3</sup> There is evidence in hagiographies and legends that shows a distinction between different types of death. The just person's death is described as a journey, cycle, or transition between states, while words like *finis* and *extermium* emphasize the death of the unjust as a termination.<sup>4</sup>

The visual cues of liveliness in the strigils, then, lead to interpretations that have a basis in known medieval views about death, and may have themselves influenced medieval ideas of death.<sup>5</sup> In the situation faced by medieval viewers the sarcophagi came

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<sup>2</sup>See, for example, the sarcophagus of Arduinus at Saint-Victor de Marseille, Figure 14.

<sup>3</sup>For discussion of death as a transitional phase, see Dorothy Verkerk, "Life After Death: The Afterlife of Early Medieval Sarcophagi," in *Felix Roma: Formations and Reflections of Medieval Rome*, eds. É. Ó Carragáin and C. Neuman de Vegvar (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) and "'The Font is a Kind of Grave': Remembrance in the Via Latina Catacombs" in *Between the Living and the Dead: Strategies for Commemoration in the Middle Ages*, eds. E. del Alamo and C. Pendergast (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), as well as A. van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. G. L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

<sup>4</sup>Debra Hassig, "He Will Make Alive Your Mortal Bodies: Cluniac Spirituality and the Tomb of Alfonso Ansures," *Gesta* 30:2 (1991): 149.

<sup>5</sup>This is, perhaps, an unexpected approach, since medieval sarcophagi have often been approached in light of a fully articulated framework of medieval death theory. This leads to using the sarcophagi as illustrations, seeking to force them to fit an existing view based far too often in the idealized doctrine promoted by medieval texts. See Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1964). The works that start from the sarcophagi, on the other hand, rarely get beyond cataloguing the extant artifacts.

first, visible in the landscape throughout the Middle Ages, whether used or not. Christian doctrines about death, however, underwent changes throughout the medieval period, including major reconsiderations of such basic issues as the nature of the resurrected body and the existence of purgatory.<sup>6</sup> Many of these changes were based on pressure from sects like the Cathars, who denied that anything material could be good and in particular scorned relics and the intercession of saints. In this context of shifting doctrine and threats to the viability of relics, the visible liveliness of strigilated sarcophagi both inspired and confirmed medieval understandings of the ability of the deceased to intercede in the living world.

The strigils have three basic visual effects: the s-curve, a sinuous line that is at odds with the angularity of the sarcophagus shape as a whole; the repetition of this basic shape in nested groups of half a dozen or more; and the reflection of two sets of repeated s-curves across a center element to both punctuate the center and move the eye evenly to the edges of the stone panel. The wavy effect of the s-curves is continues in the rise and fall of the depth of relief, as the alternation of light and dark show another wave-like effect. All of these effects enhance a sense of movement from the top to the bottom of the front panel, across its face and into its depth, enlivening the stone. As the viewer moved toward the sarcophagus and across in front of it, then knelt before it, the surface would change in the half-shadow of a candlelit church or crypt or in the slanting sunlight

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<sup>6</sup>A complete discussion of many of these issues appears in Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) and in Madeleine Jeay and Kathy Garay, "Sanctification of the Body: The Stages and Staging of Death in High Medieval Europe" in *Heroes and Saints: The Moment of Death in Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Koichi Shinohara (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2007). Purgatory was a development of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The medieval period continued to discuss and disagree about whether the soul of a saint awaited resurrection in heaven or with its body, whether martyrs would bear scars and deformities suffered in their martyrdoms after they were resurrected, and whether the flesh of the resurrected body was the same as that covering the body in life, or whether it was different material gathered into the same form.

outdoors, seeming to shift and flicker in movement that echoed the viewer's.<sup>7</sup> It is difficult to imagine this effect from photographs such as those presented here, which are generally taken from a static frontal position and in sharp light that flattens out the effect of the relief, but even the two-dimensional photograph captures some of the strigils' vitality. This motion centered on the sarcophagus, but its seeming response to the viewer's movements would make it interactive, recognizing the viewer's tribute and prayer and perhaps indicating a positive response.

From a purely representational approach, these lines seem to gush out from the stone of the sarcophagus, suggesting a waterfall or geyser of cascading water. The lines might also recall flames, or even the scudding clouds that appear as elongated, repeated curves on some Romanesque architectural sculpture (Figure 22), but these did not have the visual similarity to strigils or the death-related interpretations that water did.<sup>8</sup> Water had a significant history as an image and as a concept in the medieval Christian understanding of death. It appears on hundreds of late antique sarcophagi, whether Christian or not, but it is easily interpreted as a Christian symbol.<sup>9</sup> Although most of the water on sarcophagi is shown as horizontal wavy lines, sometimes stretching the length of the sarcophagus lid, there is one common scene, appearing on hundreds of late antique

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<sup>7</sup>Little has been written on this sort of effect in medieval art in the western Church, but a number of scholars of Byzantine art have suggested this approach to icons, which likewise used relief and the alternation of carved surfaces to enliven raw material with an internal spirit. See, for example, Bissera V. Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010).

<sup>8</sup>See, for example, the relief carving on a corbel at Jaca, San Pedro and an abacus at Saint-Caprais. Terpak relates these to strigils, but she also admits that they were by the same sculptor and finds no evidence of this element anywhere else. Frances Terpak, "Pilgrimage or Migration? A Case Study of Artistic Movement in the Early Romanesque," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 51:3 (1998): 425.

<sup>9</sup>This is especially true in the context of baptism. Verkerk discusses the way that baptism was interpreted as a passage through spiritual death into a spiritual rebirth in Verkerk, "'The Font is a Kind of Grave': Remembrance in the Via Latina Catacombs, 157; here we see that the grave is also shown as a kind of font.

sarcophagi in which the water closely resembles the strigil pattern: Peter or Moses striking water from a rock (Figures 8 left panel, 23).<sup>10</sup> This is the most common scene to appear alongside strigils, suggesting that it was closely associated with the motif, and the depiction of water in it closely resembles the strigils. In the usual composition of this scene, an outcropping of rock forms one edge of the panel. The large, primary figure stands at the other edge, a wand or staff in his outstretched hand, having just caused a stream of water that cascades down the height of the sarcophagus. This is water that is active and potent, contrasted with the passivity of the two men kneeling at the bottom, faces upturned into the stream. The depiction of the water is as regular as the rest of the scene's iconography. It is consistently shown by half a dozen or so upright, parallel, undulating lines. In many cases, as in the sarcophagus of Eusebia (Figure 8), the strigils and the cascading water are adjacent to each other, emphasizing their similarity through their close juxtaposition. Given its frequent occurrence on strigilated sarcophagi it is improbable that the similarity between the representations was either accidental or unnoticed. This would seem to suggest that the strigils are an indication not just of water, but of a particular type of water: not the horizontal tides of the ocean, but the gushing cascade of miraculously falling water.

The story of Moses striking water from the rock appears in Exodus 17. The Israelites, having escaped from slavery in Egypt, are wandering in the desert dying of

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<sup>10</sup>It is extremely difficult in the absence of other clues to determine whether a scene is of Peter striking the rock-cut wall of his prison or of Moses striking the rock of Horeb (Exodus 17). Since it seems that the apocryphal story of Peter developed as an allusion to the story of Moses, *Picturing The Bible: The Earliest Christian Art* (New Haven; Fort Worth: Yale University Press; In association with the Kimbell Art Museum, 2007), it is likely that distinguishing the particular actor would have been minimally important. For identification as Moses, see Jean Boissieu & Eric Arrouas, *Saint-Victor: Une Ville, Une Abbaye* (Marseille, France: Editions Jeanne Laffitte, 1986), 24; for both, see Paola Borracinno, *I Sarcophagi Paleocristiani di Marsiglia* (Bologna: Stabilimento Editoriale Pàtron, 1973), 18.

thirst. God tells Moses to go to the Rock of Horeb, where “thou shalt strike the rock, and water shall come out of it that the people may drink.”<sup>11</sup> The story of Moses was well-established from the early days of Christianity, when it was described as a prefiguration of the coming of Christ, the rock who provided access to the water of eternal life (Figure 24). In the fifth century, this story was used as a model for another, the apocryphal story of Peter striking the rock of his prison wall, which was circulated in Pseudo-Linus’ *Martyrium beati Petri apostolic a Lino episcopo conscriptum*. Peter is jailed before he is martyred, but does not allow these last few minutes of life to be wasted. He converts the soldiers guarding him, who ask him to baptize them. Peter strikes the wall to release a fountain of water, with which he baptizes the soldiers.<sup>12</sup> Medieval writers described the scene as showing Peter as akin to Moses, so that the scene with Moses was reinterpreted as prefiguring the salvation offered by baptism.<sup>13</sup> In both cases, the focus was on the “living water” that saved men from literal or spiritual death. Psalm 113:7-8, which was read at both funerals and baptisms, emphasized the miracle of life coming out of death, of the fountain emerging from solid rock: “At the presence of the Lord the earth was moved, at the presence of the God of Jacob: Who turned the rock into pools of water, and the stony hill into fountains of waters.” On the sarcophagus, itself a rock-like symbol of death, the appearance of lines of water out of the stone would be a particularly potent sign of God’s ability to transform death into life.

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<sup>11</sup>Exodus 17:6.

<sup>12</sup>“fonte precibus et ammirabili signo cruces de rupe producto.” R. A. Lipsius and M. Bonnet, eds. *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, vol. 1 (Darmstadt, 1959), 6.

<sup>13</sup>David R. Cartlidge and James Keith Elliott, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha* (London: Routledge, 2001), 138.

This scene is perhaps related to another one that appears regularly on sarcophagi and in sepulchral imagery: the crossing of the red sea in Exodus, which was read at funerals as well as during Easter Vigil when most catechumens were baptized.<sup>14</sup> Several sarcophagi in Arles show this scene, and Louis the Pious was also buried in a sarcophagus depicting the Parting of the Red Sea. It requires little imagination to associate the story, so frequently pictured on sarcophagi and recounted in funeral liturgies, with the dividing line of the strigils on the sarcophagi. The dead have passed through the Red Sea and achieved new life in the Promised Land on the other side. The presence of the scene of Moses striking water from the rock is not only similar in emphasizing a miracle of flowing water but also occurs just a little later in the same Exodus narrative.

### **The Medieval Meaning of the Living Waters**

To the medieval Christian viewer, water was not a simple liquid. Water is a key feature in some of the most popular biblical and medieval saints' stories and water imagery permeates the writing of religious scholars of the early Christian and medieval period. Many of these texts explicitly refer to fountains or pouring water, often called "living waters" in medieval exegesis, of the sort depicted by the strigils.

The applicability of the fountain-like imagery to both death and baptism was visible immediately in front of the viewer in images including the scene with the striking of the rock, but it would have been a likely interpretation of the strigils by themselves. Verbal and visual imagery of baptism and flowing water being connected to death was

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<sup>14</sup>Verkerk, "The Font is a Kind of Grave": Remembrance in the Via Latina Catacombs," 160.

ubiquitous in medieval experience, for both the educated and the general populace. Among the verses that frequently figured in sermons and treatises were the “fountain of water, springing up into life everlasting” of John 4:14, the “fountain of living water” in Jeremiah 2:13 and a story from John 3:5, that states, “unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” These all emphasize flowing water that cascades out of a spring or fountain, not merely the presence of liquid, as having the power to overcome death. Baptism was the ritual in which the initiate overcame death through the ritual pouring of sanctified water. The baptismal sacrament was further connected to the overcoming of death by its usual performance on Easter or Easter vigil, when, enabled by Christ’s triumph over death, initiates would themselves die to the world through their baptisms and be reborn as Christians.<sup>15</sup>

Another very common image on strigilated sarcophagi is the figure of Jonah, usually shown reclining under a tree after he has been spit out of the fish (Figure 8).<sup>16</sup> The story of Jonah was associated both in the gospels of Matthew and Luke and in medieval exegesis as prefiguring death and resurrection, especially that of Christ, because Jonah spent three days in the whale’s belly before being cast onto land.<sup>17</sup> The story was told at both baptisms and funerals, emphasizing that both these experiences were alike in being periods of transition, not termination.<sup>18</sup> While Jonah frequently appears on late antique sarcophagi in general, he is shown in a variety of scenes from his story,

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<sup>15</sup>Gerhart B. Ladner, *God, Cosmos, and Humankind: The World of Early Christian Symbolism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 234.

<sup>16</sup>Jonah 2:11. This and all other biblical references taken from the Douay-Rheims version.

<sup>17</sup>Yvonne Sherwood, *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 11, 15.

<sup>18</sup>Verkerk, “‘The Font is a Kind of Grave’: Remembrance in the Via Latina Catacombs,” 161.



especially his harrowing ejection from a boat during the storm; the strigilated sarcophagi, however, show only the calm scene after Jonah has passed through the waters and been reborn onto land (Figures 8, 25). A dolphin or whale among waves often appears on sarcophagi lids found with strigilated sarcophagi in Arles.<sup>19</sup> Although Wischmeyer studied a small number of sarcophagi, he reports that four of the thirteen sarcophagi lids he found with strigilated sarcophagi had dolphins, and this frequency seems to occur in other collections as well.<sup>20</sup> The depiction on strigilated sarcophagi emphasizes the resurrection aspect of the story in particular, showing Jonah separate from the waters that enabled his victory over death, having already passed over them.

It is not surprising, then, that the symbol of flowing water was associated closely with the imagery on sarcophagi, and it seems that the association went in both directions. Thus, although sarcophagi were more commonly reused for altars, they were also turned into baptismal fonts.<sup>21</sup> This use would visualize, as did the strigils, that the death represented by the sarcophagus itself was counteracted by the promise of resurrection through baptism.

Lest this interpretation of strigils seem wholly victorious and celebratory, I would suggest that the vitality of the strigils on saints' tombs is partly concentrated in its continual evocation of suffering. The fountain of life was intimately joined with the blood of Christ since it was Christ's death that had made resurrection through baptism

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<sup>19</sup>Wolfgang Wischmeyer, *Die Tafeldeckel der christlichen Sarkophage Konstantinischer Zeit in Rom: Studien zur Struktur, Ikonographie und Epigraphik* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1982).

<sup>20</sup>Wischmeyer, *Die Tafeldeckel der christlichen Sarkophage Konstantinischer Zeit in Rom: Studien zur Struktur, Ikonographie und Epigraphik*, 12.

<sup>21</sup>Isa Ragusa, *The Reuse and Public Exhibition of Roman Sarcophagi during the Middle Ages* (New York: New York University Institute of Fine Arts, 1951), 9. Unfortunately, it is not clear how many of these, if any, were strigilated.

possible.<sup>22</sup> The sixth- and seventh-century patens that have the only appearance of non-sarcophagus strigils support this interpretation (Figure 15). As patens, they are designed to hold the body of Christ, whose sacrifice and resurrection are simultaneously celebrated in the Eucharist. The appearance of strigils in this context celebrates the Resurrection, certainly, as do the Italian altar candlesticks I mentioned in Chapel 2 with the resurrected Christ standing in a strigilated sarcophagus or the three Marys visiting the empty tomb (Figures 17, 18). The use of sarcophagi as altars, in which they support the Eucharist, also fits this theme (Figure 13). The patens' appearance during the Eucharist emphasizes the sacrifice of Christ's body as much as the triumph over death. Likewise, the placement of the strigil on a sarcophagus emphasizes the saints' dual experiences of sacrifice and triumph. It was the suffering of martyrs that guaranteed them their entrance into heaven without waiting for Armageddon.<sup>23</sup> A popular twelfth-century view held that the perfection of bodies achieved at the resurrection did not mean that martyrs would be healed. Not only would they have the scars to indicate the suffering they endured for Christ, they would also keep the wounds themselves as badges of honor, bleeding eternally without pain.<sup>24</sup> The story of Eusebia discussed in Chapter 2 emphasizes her wounds; she is more glorious for her pain and eventual death than she would have been if she had lived. The strigils on her sarcophagus may show the way the blood she shed for

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<sup>22</sup>Paul Underwood describes this association in detail in Paul A. Underwood, "The Fountain of Life in Manuscripts of the Gospels," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5 (1950), 41, 43-108.

<sup>23</sup>See Peter Brown's discussion for further detail about the correlation between greater suffering and greater saintly legitimacy. Peter Brown, "Enjoying the Saints in Late Antiquity," in *Decorations for the Holy Dead: Visual Embellishments on Tombs and Shrines of Saints*, ed. E. Valdez del Alamo and S. Lamia (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002).

<sup>24</sup>Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336*, 136.

Christ eased her transition past death.<sup>25</sup> The wounds of martyrs were suffered as *imitatio Christi*, and the martyrs' similarity to Christ while living ensured their proximity to him in death. Since this proximity ensured martyrs' ability to intercede with Christ for the medieval devotee, the association of strigils not only with the liveliness of the saints but also with their pain gives the sites of the sarcophagi additional impact. The more pain the martyrs had suffered in defense of Christianity, the greater their ability to intercede with Christ on behalf of their petitioners.

### **Local French Emphasis on Living Waters and Sanctity**

While the relationship among baptism, death and living waters was explicit and popular throughout the Christian west, it appears to have been especially emphasized in Gallia Narbonensis and at Santiago de Compostela in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Water-related miracles abound in the *Pilgrimage Guide*, including the creation of a bridge over the most dangerous part of the river and any number of healing springs and fountains. One of the first things pilgrims are told to do upon reaching Compostela, immediately before they approach the sarcophagus of Saint James, is to visit the adjacent fountain at the hospice of St. James. After washing in the fountain as a ritual purification, a sort of self-baptism, they approach the sarcophagus below the Cathedral altar. This process stresses the interrelationship between the fountain and the sarcophagus, between baptism or anointment and death, showing that the association was not only theory but was enacted through ritual.

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<sup>25</sup>Blood and water were often conflated in Christian theology; among the most prominent examples of the association is the combined blood and water expelled from Christ's side when Longinus pierces him with a lance during the Crucifixion.

The association of baptism and death was a key feature in a popular story that appears in a number of medieval chronicles, including the widely-circulated Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine, concerning the conversion of Avignon. According to most versions, Lazarus, whose resurrection figures prominently on strigilated sarcophagi, was run out of his hometown after having come back to life. With his sisters Mary and Martha, as well as a varying group of associates, he is put in a boat and cast out to sea, presumably to his death. Miraculously, they make it to the southern coast of France and travel up the Rhone to Avignon, where they convert a crowd. A young man desires to hear them so much that he attempts to swim across the rushing river to be nearer to the saints. He promptly drowns. Martha prays that this new believer will come back to life; he does and is immediately baptized. Baptism and death are closely related, with baptism distinguished from his mortal immersion in the river, marking his resurrection. Sarcophagi do not appear directly in this story, but the raising of Lazarus, with Mary kneeling in prayer before Lazarus' tomb, is second only to the scene of Moses/Peter striking water from the rock in its frequency of occurrence on strigilated sarcophagi, and its similar narrative trajectory evokes the same concepts of resurrection.

Another regional story seems to arise from depictions on strigilated sarcophagi. St. Honoratus of Arles, whose strigilated sarcophagus I mentioned in Chapter 2 (Figure 12), was known for a miracle that recreated Peter striking water from the rock. Having no water available to baptize new converts, Honoratus prays that God will cause a fountain to spring out of a cliff. It does, and thus Honoratus striking water from the rock becomes a local image type.<sup>26</sup> It is impossible to tell from records whether the story developed

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<sup>26</sup>Drake, Maurice and Wilfred Drake. *Saints and their Emblems* (London: T. W. Laurie, 1916), 58.

before Honoratus' burial, with the strigilated sarcophagus selected as appropriate for such a figure, or whether the legend developed later after the sarcophagus was already in place. Nevertheless, the use of a strigilated sarcophagus that did not include the scene of Peter striking water from the rock for a man who was closely associated with this legend seems to suggest that by this time, the strigil motif indicated the miraculous production of a fountain of water without requiring the depiction of the entire story.

### **The Use of Strigils to Emphasize the Dynamic Saint**

At this point, I have shown that there was an association among baptism and resurrection, and that strigilated sarcophagi sometimes mediated this association. While some strigilated sarcophagi may have used the strigil as something akin to a marker of belief and commitment to Christianity, like making the sign of the cross, this does not accurately represent the way medieval viewers interacted with reliquary sarcophagi. There is reason to think that, at least for the strigilated sarcophagi associated with saints and kept in prominent locations, the strigils may have signaled ongoing activity; the strigil was also a reminder of miracles and perhaps a recollection of the baptism that ensured the eventual resurrection of the interred person. The saint's sarcophagus was a site of commemoration, certainly, but it was more important as a point where the living person could interact with the living soul of the saint. The entire pilgrimage cult was based on the idea that the site of the saint's body was uniquely able to produce miraculous cures and effect forgiveness for the penitent visitor, so that the saint not only continues to interact with the living, but does so at the site of his or her sarcophagus. The sarcophagus then becomes the visible, tangible external body of the saint, the earthly extension of the saint's heaven-centered soul. The strigils are significant in

communicating the continued activity and vitality of the saint, marking the body as living in spite of the material evidence of dead flesh contained by the sarcophagus. Contrary to modern understanding, then, the sarcophagus does not mark the dead body of the saint but the living presence of the heavenly intercessor.

The bodies of saints and confessors were referred to in early Christian and medieval texts as being themselves like springs. Such a reference occurs in a verse in John, which, as I mentioned, is the main source for biblical imagery about baptism's association with resurrection. John 7:38 states, "He that believeth in me, as the scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The believer is here both the recipient of the waters of baptism, but also the source of the same redeeming spring. As early as the third century, Origen was remarking that "river is not a bad name for the body" in a commentary on the Psalms.<sup>27</sup> The most popular saint in medieval Arles was Trophimus, whose relics are the first mentioned in France in the *Pilgrimage Guide*. The *Guide* records that Trophimus had converted Arles, and that "it is out of this most lucid spring, that the whole of France has received the stream of faith."<sup>28</sup> If the sarcophagus is associated with the material remains of the body, and acts as a conduit for the saint's intercessory power, the strigils on the sarcophagus would represent the fountain of living water pouring out of the believer's body for the benefit of the viewer. This is an ongoing

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<sup>27</sup>Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336*, 113. Origen was often considered a heretic, but this does not seem to have prevented him from greatly influencing medieval thinkers. This particular reference was part of a commentary on Psalm 1.

<sup>28</sup>William Melczer, trans. *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela* (New York: Italica Press, 1993), Ch. viii.

event; death does not stop the active participation of the believer.<sup>29</sup> The death of the saint is marked by continuous action, marked by miracles and by association with a flowing fountain. In the *Chronica sive Historia de duabus civitatibus*, the early-twelfth-century bishop and writer Otto of Freising compared death to dryness, reminding readers of the dry bones described in Ezekiel and the earth's dryness in winter, which is enlivened by the "kindly moisture of spring."<sup>30</sup> The prominence of strigils on saints' (and other believers') sarcophagi then emphasizes this continued life, so that the viewer knows that, contrary to the appearance of death, the saint's soul is still living and active, and therefore capable of interceding on behalf of the viewer.

This interpretation accords not only with the images of water that the strigils resemble, but also with the nature of strigils themselves, which are dynamic and give the impression of movement. The strigil motif is life *perpetuus*, life not only being prolonged but continuing to be enacted through the saint's place of death. The mirror effect of the strigils emphasizes this location-specific vitality; the life the strigils represent is shown to emanate in waves from the center of the sarcophagus, encouraging the viewer to use the sarcophagus, and the shrine where it rests, as the focus for prayers and tribute.

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<sup>29</sup>Panofsky noted the distinction between *aeternus* and *perpetuus* in descriptions of saints, suggesting that the preferred use of the latter suggested continual movement and action, while the former denotes stasis, mere existence. Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture*, 45.

<sup>30</sup>Otto von Freising, *Otonis episcopi frisingensis Chronica; sive, Historia de duabus civitatibus* (Hanover: Impensis Bibliopolli Hahniani, 1912) book 8, paragraph 11.





## Conclusion

Strigilated sarcophagi were a consistent and noticeable presence in the medieval landscape of death. As I have shown, they were often preferred for medieval burials, especially those of saints. The strigil pattern evoked a continuous fountain of living water, closely associated with both baptism and with the fonts and springs of biblical texts and medieval miracles. This emphasis transformed the sarcophagus into a site that, instead of commemorating the deceased's demise, announced perpetual life through reiterations of the baptismal resurrection in contradiction of the material remains within the sarcophagus. The strigilated sarcophagus provided a place where the central Christian tenet of triumph over death was constantly played out for devoted viewers. Each sarcophagus became a new epicenter of vital power transmitting both Christian tenets and intercessory power, features that were especially important when the original holy sites of Christianity were inaccessible. The strigils then redefine Christian funerary art as centered not on the living or the dead, but on the perpetually alive. Christianity itself is shown as a religion not of commemoration, but of creation, interaction and triumph over death.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1964), 39 described this tendency by saying that Christian funerary sculpture was rarely retrospective or eulogistic, but rather future-oriented, emphasizing the afterlife and the steps to get there. Panofsky was speaking of the tombs of Christians generally, rather than those of specific people or specific types, but the observation is even more apt for the bodies of saints, who are role models of Christian behavior, even in death. This is different than how scholars of late antiquity contrast the Christian focus on sites of the dead with Roman pagan distaste for

There is a great deal of work still to be done on this motif. Although newly-carved strigilated sarcophagi rarely appear in Gallia Narbonensis after the thirteenth century, this should not be mistaken as a disappearance of the motif, but perhaps the transference of this motif to other areas where it was used for ordinary people as well as saints.<sup>2</sup> The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries increasingly emphasized the importance of commemoration of the dead, with frequent masses for all souls, not just saints. Further exploration of this later period may yield further information about the application of the strigil motif after its flowering in Gallia Narbonensis, especially regarding the connection between sarcophagi and masses for the dead. The development of the idea of Purgatory around the thirteenth century, and particularly the idea that having masses said for a soul shortened its stay in Purgatory, encouraged late medieval donors to ensure that their names were remembered and repeated in prayers.<sup>3</sup> In particular, a work focusing on thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italy would be a useful addition to my study, since more strigilated sarcophagi attributed to the laity appear in this area.<sup>4</sup> In Italy a unique

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and distancing from bodies frequently describe Christianity. However, the Christian consideration of the dead as not truly dead alters this perception.

<sup>2</sup>It is likely that the growing use of shaped reliquaries, especially body-part reliquaries, influenced this switch away from using strigilated sarcophagi for saints. For more information on this practice, see Caroline Walker Bynum and Paula Gerson, "Body-Part Reliquaries and Body Parts in the Middle Ages," *Gesta* 36:1 (1997): 3-7 and Cynthia Hahn, "The Voices of the Saints: Speaking Reliquaries," *Gesta* 36:1 (1997): 20-31.

<sup>3</sup>Debra Hassig, "He Will Make Alive Your Mortal Bodies: Cluniac Spirituality and the Tomb of Alfonso Ansures," *Gesta* 30:2 (1991): 153.

<sup>4</sup>Isa Ragusa, *The Reuse and Public Exhibition of Roman Sarcophagi during the Middle Ages* (New York: New York University Institute of Fine Arts, 1951). The use and reuse of late antique sarcophagi, including strigilated ones, was more continuous around the heart of the Roman Empire, and with more sarcophagi in the area originally, it is extraordinarily difficult to distinguish late antique sarcophagi that were undisturbed from those that were reused in the early and high middle ages. However, there is a significant corpus of sarcophagi whose reuse can be dated from the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries by inscriptions or by inclusion in datable constructions.

The tendency of Italian reuse to include new carving is itself interesting, suggesting that the sarcophagi

Nativity type also appears, in which Christ's manger is shown as a strigilated sarcophagus (Figure 26). Such a study might suggest some of the ways the significance of the strigilated sarcophagus was transmitted and altered beyond the confines of Gallia Narbonensis in the high and late medieval periods.

It is also important to consider the use of the strigil motif in areas that did not have local early Christian sarcophagi, since the appearance of strigilated sarcophagi in depictions in these areas must have come from an area where they were more common. Pilgrimage played an extensive role in inciting and popularizing the cults built around many of the strigilated sarcophagi. Central to pilgrimage is the return home, with signs of the change that the journey has wrought in the pilgrim's spiritual outlook as demonstrated by pilgrimage tokens or small replicas. The pervasiveness of the strigil motif along the Via Tolosana and other pilgrimage routes should have an effect beyond the confines of Gallia Narbonensis. I have already noted the manuscripts depicting strigilated sarcophagi that were produced in England, whose design might have been influenced by their designers' continental pilgrimages, but a wider look at the traces of strigilated sarcophagi in manuscripts and other representations could determine how pilgrims experienced the strigil motif on their excursions and replicated it later.

An intriguing variation on the strigil that might elaborate their meaning is the use of the wavy line by itself as a symbol. Carl G. Liungman notes, without suggesting any relationship to sarcophagi, that the single strigil appears in genealogical contexts to signify that a person has been baptized; however, he does not note when or where this

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may have demonstrated a different relationship to the early Christian past where the locations themselves had early Christian associations, lessening the need for the sarcophagi to trumpet their connections to the first martyrs.

practice first appears. He also records this symbol as frequently representing saintliness, a complete cycle, or, when used by alchemists particularly, the spirit or essence of a material.<sup>5</sup> These ideas are all related to the idea of rebirth that I have tied to the strigil, and it would be interesting for an additional study to see if any such uses could be tied either to the strigil motif or to an earlier common source.

The most important step, however, will be for scholars to acknowledge that decorative motifs can acquire and lose associations over time. I have shown that the strigil motif had a particular interpretation based on appearance and use in the medieval period, but it likely had other interpretations when produced in late antiquity and when travelers depicted strigilated sarcophagi in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, its potential associations then and lack of relatable meaning for a modern viewer have little bearing on its effect on the medieval viewer. This situation does not apply to the strigil motif alone, although it would be presumptuous to say that all decorative motifs have associative meanings. Interpretations of abstract designs must be made only when there is clear evidence of a purposeful emphasis on a motif. With this in mind, however, more medieval imagery should be re-examined, paying attention not only to its perceived artistic originality or to its seeming naturalism, but to its demonstrated preferential use on important and visible works.

As I have shown in this thesis, the visual simplicity of an image does not necessarily correlate with a lack of content. The straightforward strigil motif was able to host a complex set of meanings that complemented the multilayered and evolving ideas of eternal life in medieval Gallia Narbonensis. In this situation, abstract depiction was a

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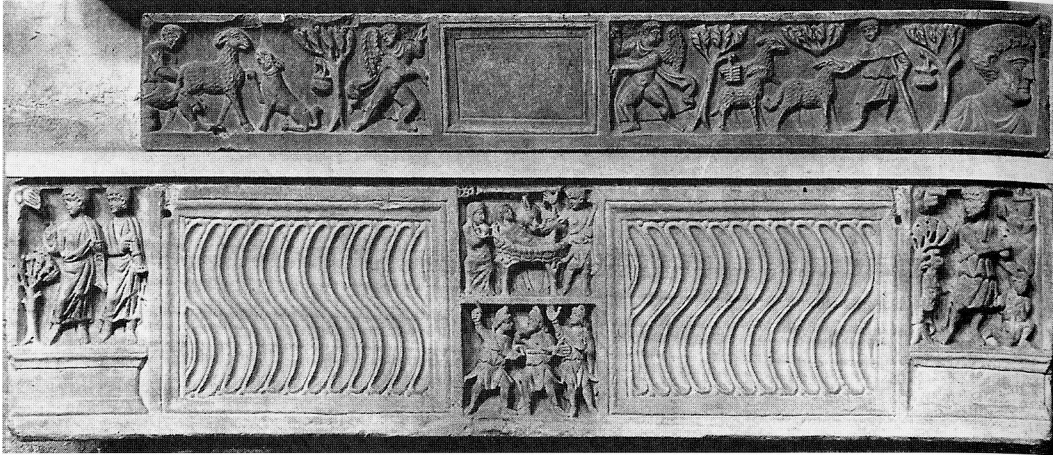
<sup>5</sup>Carl G. Liungman, *Dictionary of Symbols* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1991): 167.

boon, allowing dynamic impressions associated with the central concept of a fountain coupled with the associations the sarcophagus had with early Christianity. Rather than being limited to a precise rendering, the viewer's movement around the sarcophagus and engagement with it through ritual and personal devotion rendered the strigils as shifting in both appearance and meaning, from supporting the renderings of Jonah or Moses/Peter striking the rock to conveying the vitality of the saint's relics and the viewer's own unending life through baptism.



## Figures

Figure 1. Early Christian strigilated sarcophagi from Gallia Narbonensis, fourth and fifth centuries CE. Source: Guntram Koch, *Frühchristliche Sarkophage*. Munich: Beck, 2000, plates 156-158.



Sarcophagus in Arles (Benoit Nr. 96, 73)



Sarcophagus in Avignon



Sarcophagus at Church of Saint-Maximin, Arles

Figure 2. Map showing Roman Provinces of Gaul, including Gallia Narbonensis, first century BCE. Source: Feitscherg, WikiCommons, Accessed 26 January 2011.





Figure 3. Pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela, with parts of Via Tolosana at South. Source: Alison Raju, *The Way of St. James*. Cicerone, 2003, p. 7.



Figure 4. Rows of Sarcophagi in the necropolis of Alyscamps, outside church of Saint Honorat, Arles. Image courtesy of Hartill Archive of Architecture and Allied Arts.



Figure 5. *The Entombment of Saint Peter*, “Album” fol. 43v. Seventeenth century engraving of thirteenth century fresco in the portico of Old St. Peter’s, Rome. Source: Jens Wollesen, *Pictures and Reality: Monumental Frescoes and Mosaics in Rome around 1300*. New York: Peter Lang, 1998, fig. 28.



Figure 6. Late Antique strigilated sarcophagus with figured ends from Arles, ca. fifth century CE. Source: Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Repertorium der Christlich-antiken Sarkophage*. Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1967, Bd. 3, Plate 80.





Figure 7. Sarcophagus of Saint Caesarius, Arles. Source: Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Repertorium der Christlich-antiken Sarkophage*. Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1967, Bd. 3, Plate 79.



Figure 8. Sarcophagus of Saint Eusebia, Church of Saint-Victor, Marseille. fourth century CE, reused ninth or early tenth century CE. Source: Index of Christian Art, 20 M36 ChVi S24,006.



Figure 9. Cross-section of wall of crypt at Saint-Victor, Marseille, showing sarcophagi buried behind crypt wall not later than thirteenth century CE. Source: Geneviève Drocourt-Dubreuil, *Saint-Victor de Marseille: Art Funéraire et Prière des Morts aux Temps Paléochrétiens (IVe-Ve Siècles)*. Marseille: Diffusion de Boccard, 1989, fig 178.

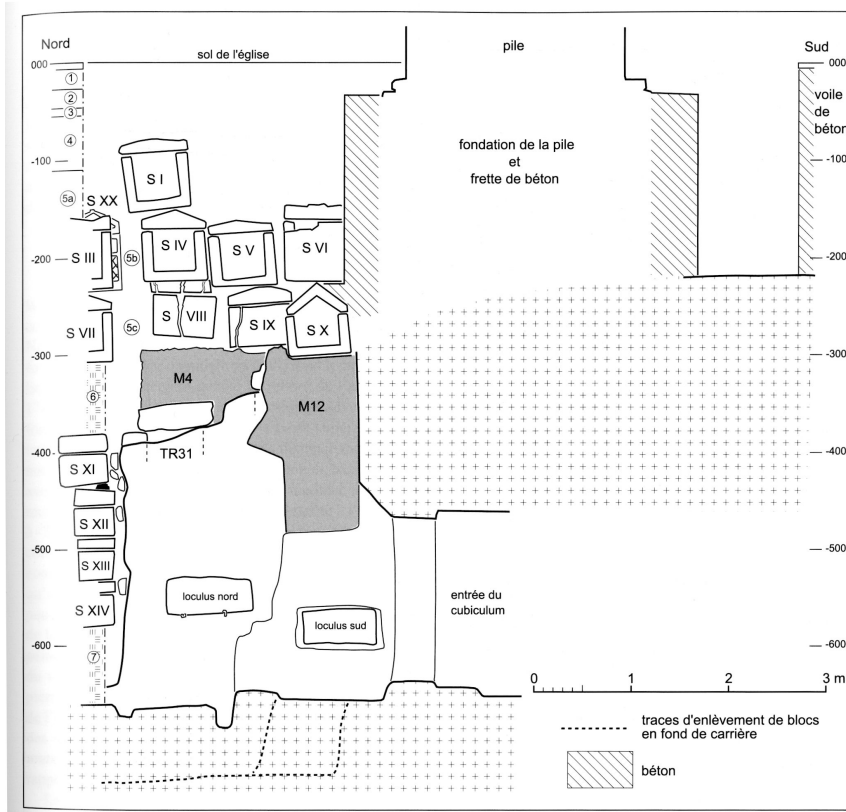


Figure 10. The sarcophagus of Saint Eusebia in its niche in the thirteenth-century crypt wall at Saint-Victor, Marseille. Source: Geneviève Drocourt-Dubreuil, *Saint-Victor de Marseille: Art Funéraire et Prière des Morts aux Temps Paléochrétiens (IVe-Ve Siècles)*. Marseille: Diffusion de Boccard, 1989.



Figure 11. Cross section of wall behind sarcophagus of Saint Eusebia, showing thirteenth century masonry at precise depth of sarcophagus. Source: Geneviève Drocourt-Dubreuil, *Saint-Victor de Marseille: Art Funéraire et Prière des Morts aux Temps Paléochrétiens (IVe-Ve Siècles)*. Marseille: Diffusion de Bocard, 1989, figure 185.

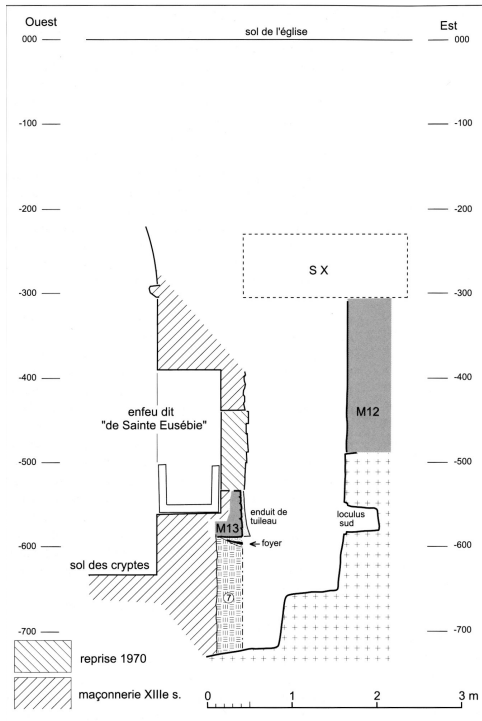


Figure 12. Early Christian sarcophagus of Saint Honoratus, Arles. Source: Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Repertorium der Christlich-antiken Sarkophage*. Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1967, Bd. 3, Plate 77.





Figure 13. Tomb of Doña Sancha, Church of Saints Cosmas and Damien (on pilgrimage road to Santiago de Compostela), Castile-Leon, Covarrubias, Spain, third century CE. Reused in the tenth century CE. Photograph by William Keighley. Source: New York University, Institute of Fine Arts, Visual Resources Collection.



Figure 14. Sarcophagus of Arduinus, assembled eleventh century from late antique parts, Church of Saint-Victor, Marseille. Source: Michel Fixot and Jean-Pierre Pelletier, *Saint-Victor de Marseille: Étude Archéologique et Monumentale*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2009.



Figure 15. Strigilated patens from Italy and Russia. Left: sixth century, found at Canoscio, Italy. Source: Index of Christian Art, 50 C4982 CFA P,003. Right: early seventh century, Rome. Source: St. Petersburg, Hermitage, Inventory Omega 281.

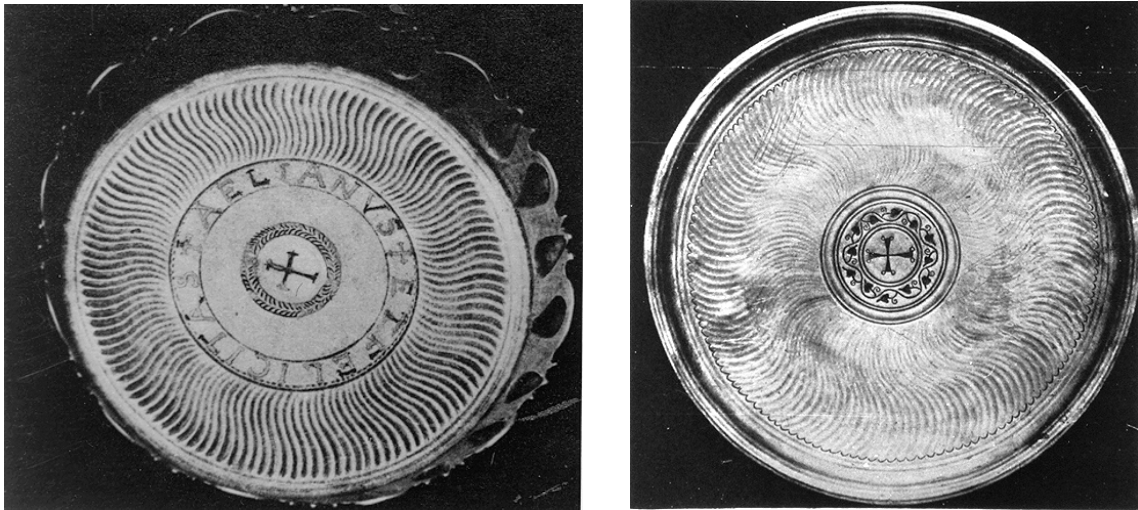


Figure 16. Antonine Roman Vase with snake handles and lid, second half of second century CE, Rome. In collection of Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund (2007.31a,b). Source: [www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/2007.31a,b](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/2007.31a,b), (February 2008).





Figure 17. Altar candlestick with resurrected Christ standing in strigilated sarcophagus. Marble, sculpted Nicola d'Angelo or Pietro Vassalletto, late twelfth century. Rome, Church of San Paolo Fuori le Mura. Source: Index of Christian Art.



Figure 18. Candlestick relief with three Marys at empty tomb, shown as a strigilated sarcophagus. Marble, thirteenth century. Gaeta, Cathedral of Saint Erasmo. Source: Index of Christian Art.



Figure 19. Burial of Saint Edmund, *Vita Sancti Edmundi*. Morgan Library MS 736, fol. 18r, ca. 1130. Source: Image of Christian Art, 32 N56 LM 007,018a.



Figure 20. Funeral of Saint Gregory the Great, *Vitae Sancti Gregorii*, John the Deacon, eleventh century. Eton College MS BL3.10, fl. 122r. Source: Dorothy Verkerk, "Pilgrimage *ad Limina Apostolorum* in Rome: Irish Crosses and Early Christian Sarcophagi," in *From Ireland Coming: Irish Art from the Early Christian to the Late Gothic Period and its European Context*, ed. Colum Hourihane. Princeton: Index of Christian Art in association with Princeton University Press, 2001, figure 1.

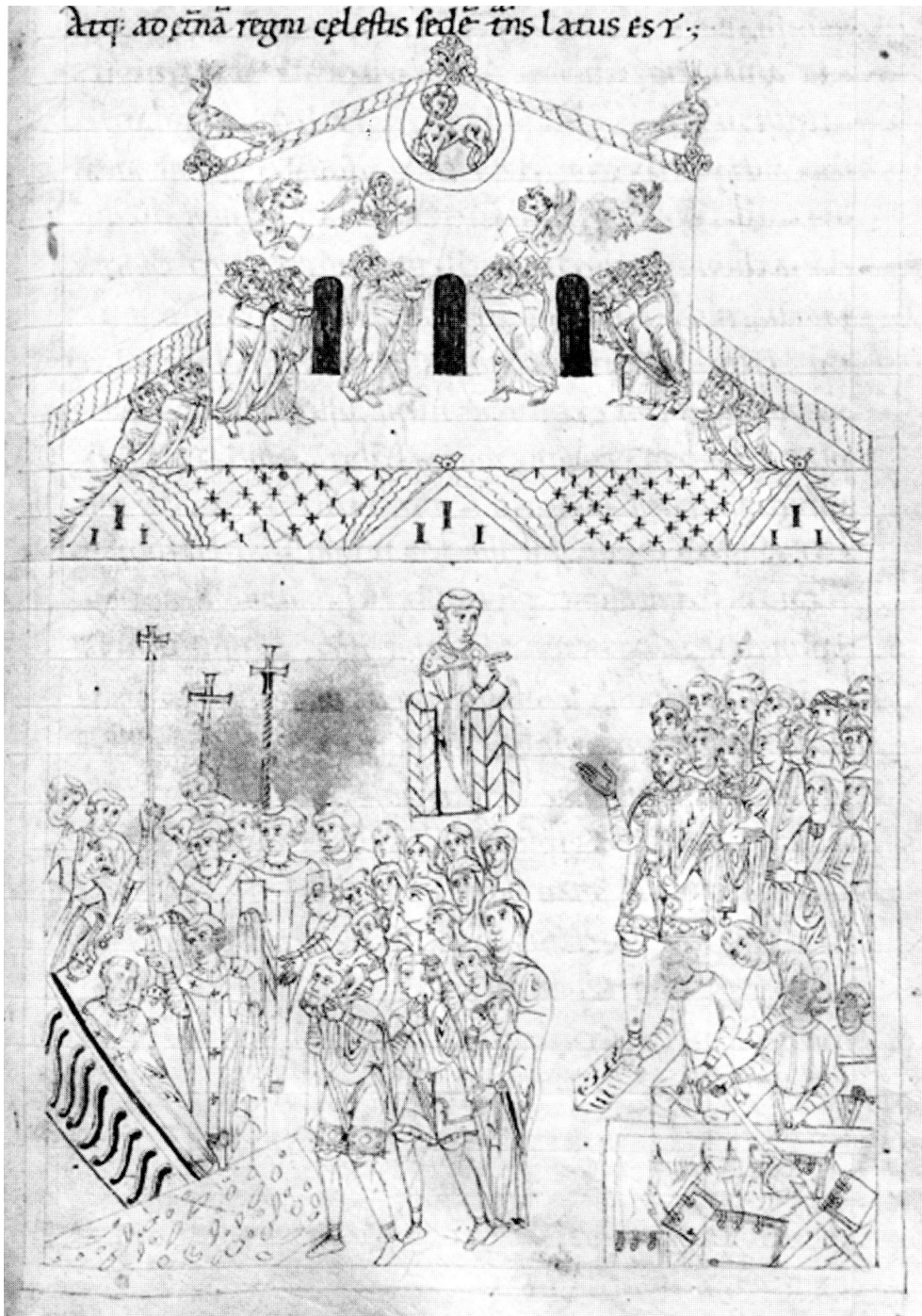




Figure 21. Fragment of an altar at Viviers, France, made from a late antique sarcophagus. Source: Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Repertorium der Christlich-antiken Sarkophage*. Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1967, Bd. 3, Plate 592 fragment A.

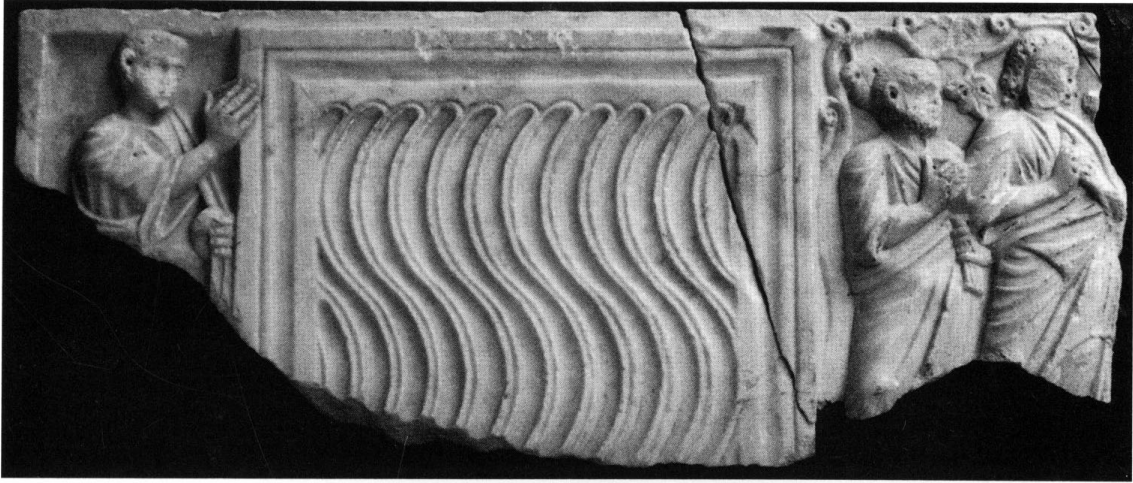


Figure 22. Tympanum, Abbey Church of Saint-Pierre, Moissac, showing clouds dividing the 24 elders into separate registers. C. 1115-1130. Source: Eric Lessing Culture and Fine Arts Archive, 15-04-03/12.



Figure 23. Detail of sarcophagus showing strigils alongside scene of Peter striking water from the rock, later used as an altar. Vatican Museo pio christiano 86. Source: Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Repertorium der Christlich-antiken Sarkophage*. Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1967, Bd. 1, plate 25.

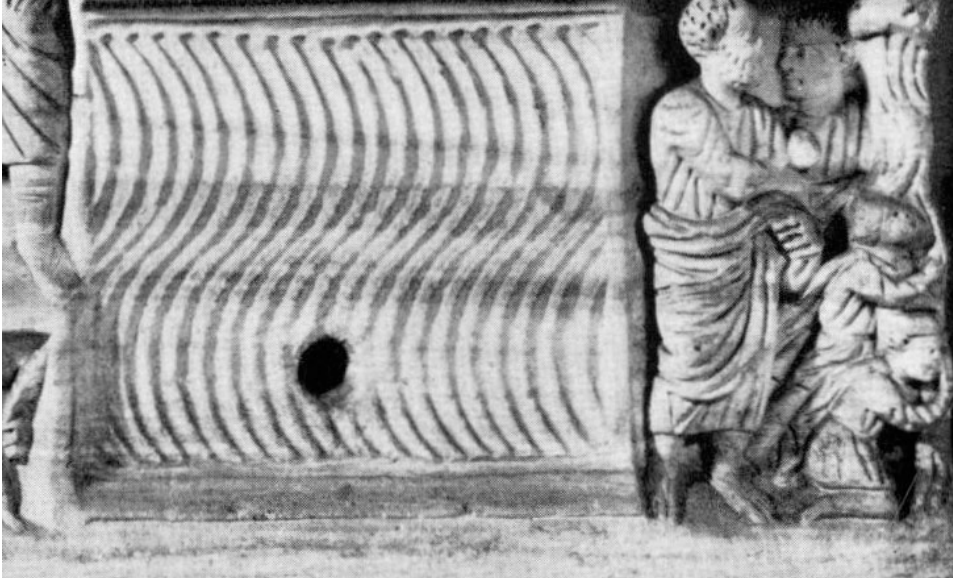


Figure 24. Moses striking water from Rock of Horeb, Fresco, Via Latina Catacombs, fourth century. Source: Index of Christian Art, 31 R76 CyNVLn 26,003A.





Figure 25. Early Christian sarcophagus with depictions of Jonah. Third century CE, Vatican Museo Pio Cristiano 199, Inv. 31448.



Figure 26. The Nativity, third pilaster, façade of the Duomo, Orvieto, Italy. Ca. 1310-1331. Source: Francis Ames-Lewis, *Tuscan Marble Carving, 1250-1350: Sculpture and Civic Pride*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing, 1997, figure 82.





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