The capitals shown here (three of five) were found in Nazareth in 1908. They were never used but had been buried, probably to preserve them from Saladin, in 1187. They depict scenes from the lives of Jesus and the apostles: St Peter, St Thomas, St James and St Matthew. There is also a representation of the Virgin Mary (or of the Church as Ecclesia, or of Faith) and of devils of different kinds.

As we approach the centenary of the publication of the first account of their discovery, I venture to offer my study of these, and related masterworks. It is generally agreed that the same master worked both on the “Temptation of Christ” capital in the church of St Martin, Plaimpied, near Bourges, and on the five “Nazareth capitals”: 
However, this is not the opinion of Professor Jaroslav Folda who writes,  

“I do not believe the Nazareth Master actually came from France, but rather that he was trained by a master who did. I do not therefore agree that the Plaimpied capital was done by the Nazareth Master; actually I think they are quite different in specific details of carving, style and technique... The idea that the Nazareth Master might have come from France is not new, but I simply have not found work close enough to his hand in France to identify it as his... However, the idea is not impossible...”

But if the Plaimpied capital was carved by the Nazareth Master, which, if any, of the other sculptures at Plaimpied could be attributed to him or to his workshop? Was the Master from Berry, Burgundy or from elsewhere in France? Where else might he have left a trace?

The purpose of this article is to attempt to answer some of these questions.

An intensive study of the Nazareth sculptures has lead me to believe that there may be at least one other capital by the Nazareth or Plaimpied Master to be seen in France. While experts have speculated on an association between this capital and the work of the Nazareth Master, I believe that I am the first to suggest that he worked on some or all of it, based on a detail which I do not believe has been greatly considered by others.

I am indebted to “Editions Zodiaque” for their kind permission to reproduce the monochrome photographs from “Terre Sainte Romane”. I also thank the Musée des Monuments Français for sending me photocopies of their moulages. These are in the depot, but casts of some of the capitals may be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and Peter Hubert’s photographs of these can be seen here:

http://picasaweb.google.com/JuliannaLees/NazarethCapitalsPlasterCastsFromTheVAMuseum#

The largest of the five capitals is carved on three sides. The others have six carved surfaces each. The spectator is immediately plunged into a theatrical performance where the characters seem to act out the stories of their lives on a stage where the proscenium arches represent city walls with towers and scalloped roof tiles. The arcatures form niches within which the actors convey a variety of emotional responses to the events.

The themes are, in general, taken from the Acts of the Apostles and other, more obscure elements, as suggested by Folda in his monograph. Some may be based on Eastern legends. Eusebius of Caesarea included histories and legends of the lives of the Apostles in his “Ecclesiastical History” in the third century; Rufinus translated Eusebius’ book into Latin and brought it up to date in the following century. Nearer to the time of the Nazareth Capitals, Ordericus Vitalis 1075-1143, whose
father came from Orleans and who was a monk and writer in both England and France, continued the tradition. The stories behind several of the capitals may be found in these works.

The most mysterious of the capitals, the largest one with three faces, shows a regal-looking woman, crowned and holding a wand topped by a cross. Folda writes, "[she] represents the Virgin Mary leading an apostle though hell, imitating Christ at the Harrowing of Hell. This is Easter imagery familiar from the great Anastasis mosaic in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem." Paul Deschamps, however, described the female personage as Faith, while others have suggested that she is Ecclesia, the personification of the Church.

The Virgin Mary, Faith or Ecclesia protecting an Apostle from demons

I have juxtaposed this Carolingian Ivory seated Madonna from the Metropolitan Museum of New York:
with three views of the Nazareth capitals lady – mine from Nazareth, and one each from the V&A and the Musée des Monuments français. Initially, I was struck by the fact that both women hold a long, thin cross in their right hand. The fact that both are shown with breasts outlined with whorls of fabric, both have busy, mouvementé clothing in similar layers, similar slippers, veils and embroidered cuff bands may not be significant; the differences between them are more marked than the similarities. What interests me – bearing in mind that the Carolingian image is unlikely to be unique, given the conservatism of the genre – is the possible support it may give for Folda’s idea that the Nazareth lady is the Virgin Mary.

On the site: [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/caro/ho_17.190.49.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/caro/ho_17.190.49.htm), the author of the label writes:

**Plaque with the Virgin Mary as a Personification of the Church, carved 800–875**
Carolingian Ivory Overall 8 11/16 x 5 11/16 x 5/16 in. (22 x 14.5 x 0.8 cm)
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.49)

The spindles in Mary’s right hand often appear in depictions of the Annunciation, as she receives the news that she will bear the Christ Child. The military appearance of her costume and the cross-topped scepter she holds suggest that she should also be understood here as a personification of the Church Triumphant. The curious juxtaposition
of the figure of Mary as the Virgin Mother of Christ and as the Church is unique to this ivory plaque.

Perhaps it is not unique after all.

There are four demons on the sides of this capital, the first two drawing their bows and the following two holding a lance and a triangular shield.

The Virgin Mary, Faith or Ecclesia protecting an Apostle from demons - Archives du Musée des Monuments Français.

The four other capitals represent two appearances of Christ in Galilee and various episodes in the stories of the Apostles.

The first capital shows Christ raising his arm to show St Thomas the wound in his side. He is surrounded by eight apostles:
Two episodes are displayed on the second capital: on the right, Christ appears to several apostles on the shore of Lake Galilee as recounted in St John (ch XXI).
St Peter walking on water to join Jesus - Archives du Musée des Monuments Français.

The other faces of the capital represent St Peter raising the widow Tabitha at Jaffa:
The third (St James) capital also unites two stories: on one side St James confronts a sorcerer and frees a young woman from the demon who keeps her chained up.

On the left, St James confronts a sorcerer - Archives du Musée des Monuments Français.
Left of centre, a furry devil is made to release a girl who was in his clutches; The princess and the demon on the right, St James is being denounced to the High Priest, Abiathar.

On the other side is shown the martyrdom of St James in Judea: The high priest Abiathar denounces St James to Herod Agrippa who condemns him to death. On the way to the execution, the Apostle heals a paralytic. The scribe Josias, who is leading St James, is converted, and receives baptism. Further on, St James is beheaded by an executioner.
The beheading of St James the Greater - Archives du Musée des Monuments Français.

The fourth capital depicts the legend of St Matthew preaching in Ethiopia, where he triumphs over two magicians, Zaroes and Arphaxat. They are accompanied by a pair of terrifying dragons and are given to casting strange spells. St Matthew chases the dragons off and resuscitates the daughter of King Eglippus, where the magicians have failed.
Having converted the whole family, St Matthew then establishes the princess, Iphigenia, as an abbess. King Hirtacus succeeds Eglippus and wants to marry his niece but St Matthew opposes him and is therefore put to death. These and other tales are included in Bishop Voragine’s “The Golden Legend”. However, “The Golden Legend” postdates the Nazareth Capitals by about a hundred years. The origin of these legends dates from much earlier. The patrons or sculptors of the Nazareth Capitals may have read the work of Ordericus Vitalis who died around 1143, or even of Eusebius of Caesarea or Rufinus of Aquileia.

NB to see my photographs of the capitals taken at Nazareth, please follow this link: http://picasaweb.google.com/JuliannaLees/NazarethCapitals
THE TEMPTATION of CHRIST CAPITAL from PLAIMPIED-GIVAUDINS

The “Temptation of Christ” capital is the only illustration of a subject from the New Testament in the church of St Martin, Plaimpied. It is visible on entry to the church, on the right, before the crossing, not too high up and clearly intended to impress the viewer as a subject for meditation, and for personal preparation for the Mass. While appearing to be simple at first sight with its clean lines, uncrowded surface and lack of extraneous detail, the first impression is deceptive. This is a complex work, capable of eliciting a range of emotions in the viewer.

Christ is seated on a strange throne in an agonised attitude beneath an architectural canopy of arcatures on the corners linked by an arch decorated with billets, scales and small drilled points. On each side there is a devil: a naked one on his left tempts Christ with a loaf of bread; the devil on Christ’s right is covered in locks of fur, like a bear. Both devils have animal heads, wings and claws; the naked one also has two hoofs.

The throne is shaped like a lyre but the arms are lifelike, snarling monsters with canine heads and rear ends that taper away like shrimps. Between each monstrous arm-rest and each devil is a vegetal decoration that seems to support the architectural features. A subtle conceit on the part of the sculptor is to merge the vegetal or floral decoration with the wing of a devil so that they are linked. The flowers which slightly resemble the fleur de lys are literally “fleurs du mal”

Christ clutches a book in his left hand; his arm is stretched out as though to say, “Get thee behind me,” to the naked devil. His right arm is stretched back, revealing an embroidered sleeve hemmed with a decorative border. Christ’s posture is dramatic: his stomach is thrust forward and his knees spread wide. The knee caps have been emphasized by the sculptor with concentric circles like balls
behind the clothing. While fairly common, particularly in Burgundy, this is a prominent characteristic of the Nazareth Master.

Christ’s face, with bulging eyes and open mouth, is expressive of the agony he is suffering during this period of temptation. He has a neat beard of medium length that frames his jaw, and his long hair is parted in the middle and combed back behind the ears. Behind Christ’s head is a very large halo decorated with a cross.

A cloak, dramatically flung about his shoulders, covers most of Christ’s robe. The right sleeve, chest and the lower part of the robe are decorated with cintamani, 6 triangulated groups of small holes which have been drilled with a trepan. A trepan was also used to make the pupils of the eyes. Christ’s feet are narrow and he wears soft leather shoes like those visible on the Nazareth capitals. These are, of course, quite common.

Folda has observed that a further difference between the Plaimpied Christ and the Nazareth Capitals is that there are no cintamani on the latter. Almost none – unless you count the sets of large, triangulated dots on Jesus’ legs on the St Peter capital:

However, there exists among the many fragments found at Nazareth, the torso of a large figure of St Peter, which Folda published in his book, “Crusader Art, the art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land 1099-1291”, which has cintamani on both the tunic and the cloak:
Thus, it can not be said that cintamani are not found among the Nazareth sculptures.
Paul Deschamps noted the presence of holes in the clothing, but seems to have been unaware of cintamani.

THE ANIMAL THRONE AT PLAIMPIED

The Plaimpied throne does not seem to have been studied in any detail, but Folda and Borg mention a capital of Solomon on a dragon throne, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem, which may be linked to it, peripherally. 7

![Jesus on a zoomorphic seat at Plaimpied](image)

This seat has been described by Eliane Vergnolle as “lyre-shaped”8.

Two winged monsters facing away from each other provide the sides or arms for a low bench on which Christ appears to be seated. Each monster is snarling from an open mouth, revealing small, sharp teeth. The monsters have eyes with holes drilled for pupils and each shows a little pointed ear like a dog. The heads of the monsters are more canine than leonine and each has a pair of forepaws with claws. Their broad shoulders narrow into serpentine bodies which fuse together. Jesus appears to be resting his feet on their tails. Curved harp strings topped by beads seem to indicate a musical instrument behind the beasts.

Here are two more views of the monsters against the two devils on the sides of this capital:
The monsters have a slight family likeness to the bare devil. From where might the Master have derived his iconography?

In Tournus there is a monster head that might have an echo in the Plaimpied image:

![Monster Head](image)

(sketch by Baltrusaitis)

A similar detail of raging monsters emerging from a Satanic mouth appears on a fresco at St Chef in the Dauphiné:
A dolphin bench from antiquity might have given rise to this kind of image - in a MS, for example. Most thrones are big chairs, Charlemagne’s at Aachen being fairly typical. However, a Byzantine throne, such as this one carved on an ivory book cover may have been influential:

Ivory panel of the Consul Areobindus, 506AD, Musée du Cluny, Paris

THE DEVILS OF PLAIMPIED
Paul Deschamps, director of the Musée des Monuments Français, Paris, from 1937, was the first to suggest that all the Nazareth capitals and the “Temptation” capital were the work of the same sculptor.

Most writers on the subject agree that the fundamental point of similarity between the Nazareth capitals and the “Temptation” capital of Plaimpied is to be found in the treatment of the devils, especially the furry devil:

Père Viaud suggested that the naked man with pointed ears by the furry devil might represent the damned soul of Hirtacus being taken to Hell 10. Might the Nazareth Master have remembered this capital in the Cathedral of St Maurice, Vienne?:

St Maurice, Vienne, wild man in a bearskin
The winged, naked devil on the “Temptation” capital at Plaimpied does not have an exact counterpart among the Nazareth capitals, but we can compare him to the muscular, half-naked (but wingless) demons on the Virgin Mary (or Faith or Ecclesia) capital:
Despite the obvious differences, the naked Plaimpied devil has this much in common with the half-naked demons of Nazareth: they have distorted, animal-like heads with similar ears on muscular bodies displayed with a twist, as they are in action.

Paul Deschamps suggests the following locations in France where the Nazareth Master may have been influenced:

“Devils with spiky hair as seen on the capital of Ecclesia, can be found at Autun, Vézelay, Saulieu, Perrecy-les-Forges. . . you see the same scene at Saulieu; instead of being seated he (Christ) is standing, but as at Plaimpied he holds a book.”

Folda, however, writes, 11 “As I said before I do not think in any case that it was done by the Nazareth Master. I see the various elements of the Plaimpied capital as quite similar to the Nazareth Capitals but not the same. The head of Christ is not the same. The draperies of Christ are not the same. The throne is not the same. The devils are not the same, even the furry demon--as close as it is. This capital and some of the other sculpture you mention from St. Andre le Bas, from St. Maurice, form an artistic/cultural context that is homogeneous and interesting as a matrix from which the style of the Nazareth master may have sprung. But I do not see the specific technique, the specific shaping of forms, the stylistic finish, the cultural cross-fertilization such as the architectural union of the superstructures with the muqarnas-inspired scooped out grounds, seen in the Nazareth capitals in these other sculptures in terms of an artistic hand.”

Other similarities between the Plaimpied “Temptation of Christ” capital and the Nazareth capitals are the decorative architectural features on the corners, the way the sculptor executes human faces, especially the long hair parted in the centre and the deep-set eyes. The treatment of the robes is similar, especially around the knees and abdomen, the folds on the clothing in concentric pleats. While none of
these features is unique to the Plaimpied or the Nazareth Master, they are all in conformity with each other.

Paul Deschamps writes, “Very large halos framing the heads of Christ and the Apostles are also seen at Montceaux l’Etoile (Saône-et-Loire), at Charlieu (Loire), at La Charité-sur-Loire and at Donzy-le-Pré (Nièvre). At Nazareth, little balls pierced with a hole can be seen on a halo and on the dais of the architecture; this can also be seen in at Charlieu (Loire) and at St Julien-de-Jonzy (Saône-et-Loire); on the capital of the Miraculous Draught of Fishes, Jesus’s robe is scattered with little holes done with a trepan, these are also found on another capital. This can also be found in Burgundy. Holes also appear on halos, on crowns, on bands round neck, sleeve and hem of clothing.” 12

OTHER SCULPTURES AT PLAIMPIED

Let us consider the other sculptures at Plaimpied. 13 Are any of the other capitals and corbels inside or outside the church by the same sculptor or by a member of his workshop? The sculptures can be considered in two areas, foliate/decorative and representational of human and animal forms.

To see my photographs of Plaimpied sculptures, please click here:

http://picasaweb.google.com/JuliannaLees/PlaimpiedGivaudins

The “Temptation of Christ” capital is the only illustration from the New Testament in the church, and almost the only Biblical capital, though there is a rather strange Daniel and Lions capital high up, at the crossing. The other figurative capitals represent monsters: chiefly lions and cats, some executed in a very naïve manner, but also heads in foliage. The most beautiful of these look like women with long hair and very long necks. Griffins and harpies, so predominant in Romanesque sculpture, are not much in evidence except for a pair of hippogriffs devouring an animal on the second of the four crossings capitals. But there is one splendid siren, further embellished with a pair of fish.

Outside, some of the pilasters and colonnettes are decorated with great delicacy and sophistication, and a couple of the capitals are most unusual. I would single out a set of four small colonnettes tied together with a snake and topped with a capital depicting a litter of puppies rolling on their backs as they play with each other. To this I would add another capital which would seem to show the heads of the puppies licking their master’s face, though it would also be possible to see them as monsters torturing a sinner:
A capital from La-Charité-sur-Loire is almost identical to one at Plaimpied:

La-Charité-sur-Loire    Plaimpied

A similar capital can also be found at St Révérien, but I do not see any connection between the above-mentioned sculptures and the work of the Nazareth Master.

There remains one sculpture at Plaimpied which has been thought by Borg and others to be another work by the Nazareth Master. 14 This is the funerary
monument of the Canon Sulpice (Sulpicius) which was formerly outside, but was brought into the church and re-used on the South side wall:

Note the sets of triangulated dots on Abraham's breast: these are "cintamani", an auspicious symbol of Buddhist origin used in the West, probably to indicate silk clothing. The inscription is of later date. This sculpture is supposed to represent the Canon being borne up to heaven in Abraham’s bosom.

WHERE ELSE MIGHT THE MASTER HAVE LEFT A TRACE?
It is my belief that the Plaimpied Master (if he was a native of France), never returned after working in the Kingdom of Jerusalem. His work there is so striking and original that had he created further sculptures in France, they would surely have left a trace, despite all the destruction that has taken place in subsequent centuries.

However, if he was French, one may still hope to recognize his hand in France from the time before he left. The Master would have enjoyed a reputation that led to his being chosen for the great work that was planned at Nazareth. The capital at Plaimpied, believed by many to be his work, already indicates his mastery of the craft, while details of certain sculptures at Vienne indicate that he may have worked there.

In seeking a possible area where another work by the Master of Nazareth and Plaimpied might be found, I proceeded on two bases. Firstly, an intensive study of the Nazareth capitals in order to be able to recognize the characteristics of the Master wherever I might find them; secondly, a visit to all the churches in France where similar work was suggested by scholarly writers.

In order to understand the work of the Plaimpied and/or Nazareth Master better, I deconstructed the pictures I took of the “Temptation of Christ” capital at Plaimpied and of the Nazareth capitals. I looked first at Whole Bodies, then at Heads, Hands, Feet, Halos, Hair, Clothes, Artefacts and Architectural Canopies.

Eliane Vergnolle makes the following allusion to places in Burgundy where sculptures - in what might be termed the early Mannerist style of the Plaimpied “Temptation of Christ” capital - may be seen:

“Le Christ de la Tentation sculpté sur un chapiteau de la collégiale de Plaimpied, assis en porte-à-faux sur un trône en forme de lyre, tête projetée en avant, bras relevés latéralement, ventre saillant et genoux écartés à l’extrême, vêtu de draperies collantes rythmées de longues virgules sinuées, apparaît comme déshumanisé par un excès de violence formelle. On retrouve cette véhémence aux portails nord de Charlieu (Loire) et dans une importante série de sculptures de Bourgogne méridionale qui en dérivent. Les anges qui, au tympan de Saint-Julien-de-Jonzy élèvent la mandorle de Christ de l’Ascension, prennent frénétiquement appui sur le bord supérieur du linteau; leurs ailes s’enroulent partiellement sur elles-mêmes et leurs corps, tendus dans l’effort, sont enveloppés de draperies tourbillonnantes dont les pans flottent ça et là.” 15
Note the cintamani decoration of the seated figure’s robe and the head of the bishop on the right, with his cross-hatched neckband, all reminiscent of some of the sculptures on the Nazareth capitals. It will be observed that the head does not match the body, and sits awkwardly upon the neckband. It looks contemporary but seems to have been mis-placed. The use of the trepan on the cap and the features is striking. If, as seems likely, this head does not belong to the body, it is probably from another statue at Charlieu, an abbey which suffered massive destruction.
I have juxtaposed it with the detail of Tabitha’s cushion from the Nazareth capital of St Peter raising Tabitha. Is the resemblance merely coincidental?

Tabitha, lying ill on her bed with bared breasts, tended by a kind hand may be compared to this sculpture from St Ruf, Valence, now in the Louvre:
There are triple dot patterns or cintamani on the St Ruf sculpture, as on the Plaimpied “Temptations” capital and Canon Sulpicius slab, and the Nazareth St Peter torso, but on very few other sculptures of the period. (See [http://www.greenman-of-cercles.org/articles/cintamani.pdf](http://www.greenman-of-cercles.org/articles/cintamani.pdf)). Although there are considerable differences between the recumbent figures and the beds in these two images, are there not also some interesting similarities?

Alan Borg mentioned the influence of St Ruf, Avignon, in an article on a marble capital in the Fitzwilliam Museum, [http://www.jstor.org/pss/875611](http://www.jstor.org/pss/875611) but more particularly in “Romanesque Sculpture from the Rhone Valley to the Jordan Valley”, where he writes about the importance of St Ruf in the context of the Nazareth & Plaimpied Master. St Ruf, Avignon, was transferred to St Ruf, Valence, in 1158, but both abbeys may have influenced the sculpture of other churches.

![Tympanum of St Julien-de-Jonzy, Burgundy](image)

Note the decorated leg band below Christ’s knee.

**FURTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DEPICTION OF CLOTHING**

The necklines of many of the figures in the Nazareth capitals show an interesting variation on the more typical depiction of robes pinned on the shoulder with fibulae. One could describe them as quilted or smocked yokes, made to drop the tunic over
the head. Such garments would be comfortable and easy to wear. The yokes or collars are circular and decorated with quilting or fancy stitching, sometimes with pearls. Here is a selection:

Reluctant apostle’s neckband

pearled & quilted neckbands

Nazareth, more neckbands

St Peter

Here is an example of collars and leg bands or “garters” which seem to have a complementary function as regards the fashion. Are they typical of clothes worn in the Latin Kingdom in the 12th century?

Nazareth, more neckbands and leg bands
In Western Romanesque sculpture, with the possible exception of the Christ on the tympanum at St Julien-de-Jonzy, quoted above, the best examples of similar leg bands seen on one leg only, are to be found in the sculpture of Gilabertus.

One stylistic feature of the way that robes are sculpted by the Nazareth and/or Plaimpied Master is very striking: on the knees, on bent elbows and sometimes even on breasts or buttocks, the protuberances are so pronounced as to resemble balls behind the clothing. This feature is not unique to our Master; however, it is important among his characteristics, as I have not seen a sculpture attributed to the Nazareth Master where these bulging and perfectly circular “concealed balls” are not visible. Here are examples from Plaimpied and some from Nazareth:

Christ’s knee balls from Plaimpied

“Balls behind clothing” of a devil, Ecclesia, (or Virgin Mary, or Faith), reluctant apostle, princess and bishop
Many more can be shown, and you will observe several in the next section of these notes.

I insert a sub-section of the notes on Clothing here, as it seems to me to be a second and possibly unique characteristic of the Master or of his workshop:

GARTERS

I have called these garters but they are really leg bands or garter-like decorations applied where a garter would be worn, on one leg only, on several of the figures. Sometimes just cross-hatched to simulate quilting, they are usually decorated with beads, as on St James’s garter. This could be an attempt to make the clothes look transparent by suggesting that a garter can be seen through the skirt. It may be just decoration. Since most of the figures are bare-foot, with toes clearly indicated, there are no stockings and no need for garters, so their use must be ornamental, not practical. However, in the work of the Nazareth Master there is invariably only one “garter” visible per person. Perhaps this is the CLAVUS of which Meyer Schapiro writes in his article on Castelseprio. 16

I believe that this small but important detail may be viewed as a kind of signature since it is so common to the sculpture of the Nazareth Master while remaining rare in Romanesque sculpture generally. Garters may be seen on the jamb figures at Etampes and Chartres, but here they are always worn on both legs, the sculptures are not bare foot, and some of the garters on the jamb figures are worn on the bias, which is never seen in the work of the Nazareth Master.

Christ’s garter  (St Peter capital)

St Peter's garter (St Peter capital)
St James’s garter (St James capital)

King-bishop Polymius’s garter (St James capital)

St Thomas’s garter (St Thomas capital)

Garters of two Apostles on far left (St Peter capital)
Ecclesia’s garter
(Ecclesia capital)

Reluctant Apostle's garter
(Ecclesia capital)

Once again, Ecclesia’s garter is on the opposite leg compared to the Apostle’s.

Garter belonging to Magician (perhaps)
(St Matthew capital)

Garter of King Eglippus
(St Matthew capital)
This garter and ball below the knee, so similar to features illustrated above, will be described presently.

As a footnote to these observations, I offer this image from a capital in St Martin, Plaimpied:

Man wearing a gaiter, Plaimpied

The man is wearing a gaiter rather than a garter, but it is on one leg only and it is in Plaimpied. Probably this is just a coincidence, but it is rather a strange one.

Conventional garters worn on both legs can be seen on jamb figures at Chartres and Etampes, as I have already indicated. Some of these figures are so similar that they may well have been executed by the same sculptor.
Paul Williamson writes:

“The style of the ‘Etampes Master’ is so distinctive that it should be possible to pick it out instantly, but curiously it does not seem to be found again in any monument in the area. It is seen to best advantage in the two figures of SS Peter and Paul now inside Notre-Dame, Etampes, which were originally column figures at the far left and right of the portal, but which were displaced when the south transept was added: they are thus unweathered, but seem to have had new heads added. Their pristine condition allows a startling comparison to be made which might explain the apparent disappearance from France of the Etampes master. The articulation of the swirling drapery around the knee, with an uncarved circular area in the middle, the decoration of the garments with bands consisting of cross-hatching enhanced with pricked dots, and especially the calligraphically incised wavy lines above and below the bands below the knees, are all to be found on a fragment now in the Devonshire collection at Chatsworth, which was said to have been brought from ‘the mountainous country between Tyre and Sidon and the river Jordan’. Standing
107cm high, the fragment would when complete have been almost life-sized, and it is possible that it formed part of one of the jamb figures of the west portal of the Church of the Annunciation at Nazareth.

This portal, clearly derived from those of Etampes and Chartres, was either never completed or fell down in an earthquake of 1170, shortly after it had been constructed: this is probably the reason why the many sculptural fragments connected with it, of extraordinarily high quality, are in such good condition. It must have been carved within a decade of the Etampes and Chartres portals. The Nazareth sculpture also illustrates the link between Etampes and the workshop of Vienne, and it is possible that the Etampes master, having travelled north during the 1140s to work at Etampes and Chartres, joined up again with some of his former workshop in the Holy Land in the following decade.36 17

I append Williamson’s note 36:

“Compare, for instance, the capital of the Liberal Arts in the nave of Saint-André-le-Bas at Vienne with the Nazareth capitals (N Stratford, ‘Autun and Vienne’, in Romanesque and Gothic: Essays for George Zarnecki, Woodbridge, 1987, vol II) and especially the figure of St John the Evangelist in Saint-Maurice, Vienne, with the Chatsworth fragment”18
My own reaction to the Etampes figures and the possible involvement at Etampes of the Nazareth Master is that the connection is tenuous. There are certainly garters on the column statues and there are some balls among the folds of the clothing as well as the architectural features framing the scenes; these are really the only features
that might lead one to link the Etampes Master with that of Nazareth, in my opinion.

The architectural frames at Etampes lack the imagination and refinement of those on the Nazareth capitals; they are rather drab and standardized in their conception. The capitals (which are probably not by the same sculptor as the statues) lack the grace and fluidity of the Nazareth capitals. In particular, neither the columns nor the capitals show the imaginative and extensive use of the trepan. So it is my view that the sculptors at Etampes did not contribute largely or possibly at all to the sculptures at Nazareth, though the Nazareth Master may have seen the work at Etampes or Chartres.

Etampes, Notre-Dame, St Paul  
Etampes, Notre-Dame, St Peter

The figures of SS Peter and Paul clearly have balls behind the knees and garter-like embroidered bands below them. They are on BOTH legs and in my opinion have much more to do with the jamb figures at Chartres than with any of the sculptures at Nazareth. It will be observed that the figure of St Paul has a matching clavus on his right thigh as well as two garter-like bands, while the garters of St Peter are worn on the bias. This is not seen on any of the Nazareth figures, but it is a feature of two of the jamb figures that have remained in the original position on the porch.
Note the prevalence of garters, and the fact that the female figures (far left of the left side and far right of the right side) have theirs on the bias. Since the outermost figures were originally SS Peter and Paul, only one of whom has bias garters, this can neither be because they are women nor because they are outermost. The clothing of the women is more fashionable and elaborate than the clothes of the princess and of The Virgin Mary (or Faith, or Ecclesia) on the Nazareth capitals.

It is a great shame that all the heads were destroyed during the Wars of Religion including those of SS Peter and Paul (now inside the church, but with replacement heads). The loss of the heads makes it harder to confirm or deny the possibility of the involvement of the Nazareth Master.
My personal belief is that his involvement – if any – was slight. Paul Williamson has also written:

“On the north doorway, [of Chartres Cathedral] the three jamb figures on the left side are so clearly similar to those on the south portal at Notre-Dame, Etampes, about fifty km to the east of Chartres, that they must have been carved by the same hand.”19

Williamson continues his comparison with the suggestion that Etampes probably came first, but that the mason who carved these figures was not the head master of Chartres. It is his opinion that the mason in question might have come from Vienne and worked at St Maurice at about the same period.

PORTALS AT BOURGES, CHARTRES and ETAMPES

CHARTRES

The portals were made between 1145-1155, following a great fire of 1134 which destroyed most of the Romanesque church.
Chartres: Right side of the entrance, North portal

Ten seated Apostles on the lintel of the North portal, just to the left of the previous photograph

Here is part of the central portal:

BOURGES

The Romanesque cathedral dates from the first half of the XI century. Mostly rebuilt in 1195, the side portals are Romanesque. The Cathedral of Bourges has been mentioned as a source of influence for the canopies or architectural features of the Nazareth Master:
ARCHITECTURAL CANOPIES

Dr Emanuel S Klinkenberg of the University of Leiden, has written an interesting article on the Jerusalem Arch. He observes that around 1140 the oldest three-dimensional architectural canopies were produced to stand above jamb figures in the south portal of Notre-Dame in Etampes, with the capital frieze with narrative
scenes under relief canopies crowning the jambs for the first time; arches crown the represented biblical stories. Klinkenberg writes,

“The structural function dominates in Etampes: the canopies bind the sculpture together in a framework that emphasizes the typological relationship between the Old Testament jamb figures beneath and the New Testament images on the capitals above. The so-called Etampes Master introduced the renewal in the west portals of Chartres Cathedral. There, canopies representing palaces and temples stress the distinction between the royal and priestly ancestors of Christ, which Fulbert of Chartres had dealt with in an important sermon on Mary’s birth. Around 1185, when canopies had already become standard motifs in church portals, such specific meanings often got lost.” 20

At St Loup de Naud near Provins, Ile de France, there are Apostles seated in arcades:

The architectural features are somewhat similar to those in the Nazareth capitals.

The canopy over the Plaimpied “Temptation of Christ” capital is similar to those on the Nazareth capitals though less elaborate:
The “city-like” appearance has been reduced to two towers, one on each corner, linked by a bridge-like arch which forms the three niches.

This capital of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem is in the Cathedral of St Maurice, Vienne.
Cathedral of St Maurice, Vienne
“The Judgment of Solomon.”

The architectural detail here is on
“The Death of John the Baptist”
by Gilabertus, now in the Musée
des Augustins, Toulouse.

This architectural canopy is part of a piece of sculpture found in the church at
Carrières-sur-Seine, now in the Musée du Louvre.
Canopy (one of two) formerly over jamb figures at the church of St Pierre le Moutier, Nièvre

VIENNE AND NAZARETH

In the Cathedral of St Maurice, Vienne, where we have just seen the capital of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem with its architectural detail, there is a capital of a seated King David which Vergnolle describes in “L’Art Romane en France”.

“Certaines figures des années 1160-1170 semblent ne plus pouvoir être contenues dans les limites d’une corbeille devenue trop exiguë pour elles. A la cathédrale Saint-Maurice ou à Saint-André-le-Bas de Vienne beaucoup de personnages semblent s’évader du bloc ; leurs pieds débordent de l’astragale, leur tête frôle le tailloir et, parfois même, comme dans le chapiteau de la cathédrale représentant David, une partie de leur corps se développe en saillie par rapport à celui-ci.”

I have juxtaposed the photograph of King David with the seated King Eglippus from the Matthew capital, Nazareth, and the heads of the seated and standing King from the same capital, as well as his boots:
Heads of King Eglippus and his boots. Note the singular style of King Eglippus’ crown which I compare to the lion’s crown from Charlieu.

Despite the obvious differences there may be a link between the King David of Vienne Cathedral and King Eglippus at Nazareth, reinforced by the date, and by the coincidence of the architectural canopy on the Entry into Jerusalem capital...
being in the same church. Could masons from the Vienne workshop have worked here before leaving for the Kingdom of Jerusalem?

On 9 February, 1119, Guy of Burgundy, Archbishop of Vienne, was elected Pope at Cluny and crowned Calixtus II in his Cathedral. Soon afterwards he gave honorary primacy over six ecclesiastical provinces in the South of France to the See of Vienne, so there seems to have been a Cluny/Burgundy connection.

Around 1140-60 work in the Cathedral was resumed, in the Romanesque style. For more on the Cathedral of St Maurice, see the article by Ricki Weinberger,

“St Maurice and St André-le-Bas at Vienne: Dynamics of Artistic Exchange in Two Romanesque Workshops” published in *Gesta*, 1984.

There have been frequent comparisons between the Nazareth capitals and capitals in the Cathedral of St Maurice, Vienne, of a generation before. An excellent collection of photographs taken by the Association Cathédrale Vivante was exhibited in the cathedral in December, 2007, and has now been published.

This is the link:

http://picasaweb.google.com/JuliannaLees/VienneCathedralOfStMaurice

to see my more modest photographs of sculptures at St Maurice.
On the figure of St Michael we have a number of familiar features. Firstly, the architectural detail on the corners, which also appears on other capitals at St Maurice; then the cross and the halo, and also the way that flowing water is depicted, which I compare to the sculptural water on the St Peter capital from Nazareth:

In her article comparing and dating the Cathedral of Vienne and the neighbouring abbey church of St André-le-Bas, Ricki Diane Weinberger wrote:

“. . . St. Andre is securely dated. During its restoration, an inscription was carved onto the base of one of the nave piers, the third from the east on the south side of the nave (Fig. 6). This inscription includes a short text, the name of the mason: Willelmus Martini, and a date: 1152. The partially obscured position of the inscription indicates that it had to have been carved before the stones in the pier base were set in place. As the bases form the foundation for the remainder of the restoration work, there is no doubt that 1152 marks the approximate beginning of the nave campaign. Construction probably began slightly earlier, perhaps around
1150. The relative uniformity of the nave architecture and decoration suggests a brief construction span.”22

It is in the Church of St André-le-Bas, Vienne, that we see these two allegorical figures on one capital:

Church of St André-le-Bas, Vienne, two allegorical figures

The curiously Oriental-looking figures are clothed in a way that is familiar from the Nazareth capitals, with the characteristic balling on breasts, solar plexus and above all, knees, combined with the use of the trepan to decorate the robes of the figure on the right with cintamani. A garter can just be seen below the ball of the knee on the figure on the left.

Church of St André-le-Bas, Vienne, leg with garter
Is this capital by the Master of the Nazareth capitals and/or the Plaimpie
“Temptation” capital? If not, is it not likely that he at least visited the Church of St
André-le-Bas, Vienne, and was influenced by it? Can there be any other explanation for this unusual feature?

Paul Williamson in the Pelican History of Art volume (Gothic Sculpture 1140-1300),
related the capital in St André-le-Bas to Nazareth sculpture, (note 36 p.267) but
without actually suggesting that it was by the Nazareth Master and without giving
specific reasons. He did, however, kindly direct me to an article by Neil Stratford 23,
from which I note that Stratford linked a sculpture in the Musée Rolin, Autun,
representing “La Géométric” with the capital of Allegorical figures in St André-le-
Bas, just described.
Despite some obvious differences, comparisons can certainly be made, in particular with the head-dresses and the stances of the figures. However, the most significant detail in the context of my researches is the fact that the figure on the sculpture in the Musée Rolin, like that of the St André-le-Bas capital, has just one embroidered garter on one leg.

The sculpture from the Musée Rolin is seated in a similar way with a swathe of pleats going diagonally from one knee to the opposite ankle. Certain details are common to both figures but reversed, such as the position of the garter and the flounce at the hem; similarly, the flap of cloak by the neck. Both heads have smooth, rounded, rather plump faces with fleshy features, though the eyes are different. On the Musée Rolin sculpture, “Géométrie” is looking straight ahead with eyes wide open; the St André-le-Bas figure is looking down from her higher position and her pupils have not been drilled so deeply. The St André-le-Bas figure has her left hand on her hip, while the Musée Rolin figure has her hand holding what is probably a set-square, with her left raised in a lecturer’s position.

In the next pair of pictures I have enlarged the lower halves of the two figures and flipped the Musée Rolin sculpture over for a better comparison of the garters:
It will be noted that on the former figure the heels are close though not touching, while on the latter, the feet are planted further apart. A more marked difference is in the treatment of the joints behind the clothing. The “balls” which are such a characteristic feature of the work of the Nazareth Master can be seen on one knee of the St André-le-Bas figure, but not at all on the Musée Rolin sculpture. Both figures have – as well or instead – the more common circular whorls on joints, breasts and solar plexus, though on the former, these whorls are so exaggerated as to be differentiated from the Musée Rolin sculpture while bringing it closer to the Nazareth sculptures.

The figure of Geometry with that of Astronomy are all that remain of the seven figures of “The Liberal Arts” which were probably in the cloister of the Cathedral at Autun before being removed to the Château de Montjeu.
“Astronomy” and “Geometry” – two of the figures of “The Liberal Arts” now in the Musée Rolin, Autun.

These figures have suffered from weathering, but nevertheless I would venture to suggest on the visual evidence that the sculptor worked at St André-le-Bas and deliberately copied features from the “Liberal Arts” capital there when making his figures, probably for the cloister of the Cathedral at Autun, some time afterwards. Certain features link these cloister figures with three capitals in the Cathedral of St Maurice, Vienne, as has been indicated by Neil Stratford in his article, and it may be supposed that the sculptor who worked at Vienne and Autun kept a sketch book and picked ideas up when he found admirable features worthy of reproduction in other locations.

Jaroslav Folda comments, “With regard to your 'garter' issue, I think you have fixed on a key problem, but I would define the problem differently. In fact I have been working on this problem too, starting from a different origin. The issue here as I see it concerns "ornament". This 'garter' is an element of ornament and therefore the issue is how does the vocabulary of ornament get transmitted from one region to another in France, and then get transmitted also to the Holy Land? I think with the garment, as with other motifs, we need to look at not just sculpture, but also painting as well where we will find the same repertoire of ornament, including this 'garter' you are looking at, and another motif, namely, cintamani, which I got started with. Cintamani, or chintamani, is the three dot motif in which
the three dots are organized in triangular configuration. You see this motif on the
garter in the case of the Plaimpied Christ. I have traced this chintamani motif from
the far east along the silk road where it seems to have originated in the 5th/6th
centuries. It spread over western Europe starting with the 8th century --look at the
Virgin's cloak in the frontispiece to the Book of Kells -

and then became quite popular with Romanesque art, both painting and sculpture.
It is an element of ornament like your garter, but what is the origin of the garter
ornament design? Did it come out of Carolingian and or Ottonian
painting/sculpture? Now that you have isolated and identified it for me I must look
into it to see where it originated and how it spread. But I would guess that it was
purely western, and probably medieval. . . As for the garter motif as you present it
specifically, I think this is a great focus for careful investigation. But I must say that
the examples you show seem to be quite varied. I would not see the garter as a motif
that unified any of these works as by the same hand(s), but rather would show a
group of different artists interpreting a common motif each in their own way. If we
focus in on just how each garter is designed and carved, I think it can be argued that
they are done distinctively differently but were inspired by perhaps a common
design as might have been found in an artist's model book.”

Following Folda’s line of reasoning, I am brought up short by the paucity of
examples. Having studied several thousand photographs (and in some cases, actual
objects) – sculptures, paintings, especially in MS, enamels, mosaics, icons and
artifacts of the period and earlier, I have found few other examples.

OTHER EXAMPLES OF LEG BANDS IN FRANCE
Most of my single “leg band on bare leg” images are from the Nazareth capitals, the one capital from St André-le-Bas and the other two “Liberal Arts” capitals in the Musée Rolin. However, there is a possible early example at St Seurin, Toulouse:

![Christ by Gelduinus, St Seurin, Toulouse](image)

When looking at this “garter” on Christ’s robe, I am inclined to ask myself, When is a garter not a garter? I think it very likely (as suggested by Arthur Kingsley Porter in “Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads”) that some of these images came about as a misunderstanding of others, so that a hem can be seen as a leg band by another sculptor. Of course this could also come about by the artist deliberately changing what he has seen into a decorative feature of another kind. At St André, the band decorated with beads matches the cuff and the belt; on other examples, it may be the neck band. Certainly, the depiction of the knees as balls within whorls of fabric looks significant as an influence on the Nazareth Master, though he may equally have been influenced by other sculptures seen in Burgundy and Languedoc-Roussillon.

At La Charité-sur-Loire, however, there is a striking example of a thigh band that matches the yoke neck of the young apostles on the tympanum:
A more important influence on the Nazareth Master may have been Gilabertus, an exceptional sculptor who worked at St Etienne, Toulouse, in the first half of the XII century. What remains of his work is to be found in the Musée des Augustins, Toulouse and Solsona Cathedral in Catalonia.
Gilabertus, Madonna and Child now in the Cathedral at Solsona, Catalonia.

The Virgin has a single, decorated leg band or garter matching her circular neck band or collar.
Gilabertus – Wise and Foolish Virgins capital from the Musée des Augustins, Toulouse, photo, Daniel Martin

Christ has a garter or leg-band on one leg only, and with bare feet. Both figures have decorated yoke collars.
Mary the Egyptian capital from the Musée des Augustins, Toulouse

Mary the Egyptian has an embroidered leg-band and Christ appears to have a yoke collar similar to several on the Nazareth capitals.
The executioner has the characteristic circular neck band and matching cuff. Somewhat similar embroidered neck bands or orphreys can be seen on sculptures of St Peter at Aix en Provence, of St Paul at St Gilles du Gard, at St Trophime, Arles, and other churches in Provence.

The leg bands provide a common feature between Nazareth and the capital from St André le Bas at Vienne and to Autun, Etampes & Chartres and the work of Gilabertus that is hard to dismiss. I do not think that all these Western sculptures in France were directly linked to the Master at Nazareth; but they indicate that the garter was a Western form of adornment; I have not found it in the East with the exception of a detail on an icon of the XVth century.

When we add to this the fact that “balls behind the clothing” can be seen on every Nazareth capital where the single pseudo garter is displayed and ALSO on the St André–le-Bas capital, I find it difficult to think in terms of a genre and remain inclined to see a closer connection.

LEG BANDS IN OTHER MEDIA

I had thought the single leg-band on Gilabertus’ Madonna at Solsona was unique until Peter Hubert sent me a similar one from Shaftesbury, now in the V&A,
Mare de Deu Madonna and Child from Solsona
Madonna and Child from Shaftesbury now V&A
By Gilabertus, mid 12thc    circa 1125-1150

Details of the leg-bands

and two more from Limoges, now in America:
Enthroned Madonna & Child, 1225-50, Limoges, 
Madonna and Child, 1200, Limoges, 
Cleveland Museum of Art 
Metropolitan Museum, NY

The Virgins have a large and flamboyant leg band encrusted with pale turquoise gems which match those in their crowns. The Virgin on the right also appears to have a quilted garter or patch without jewels on the right leg. Are these garter-like bands *orphreys*, embroidered patches sewn to the skirts to embellish them? Whether this was an actual decorative band stitched to part of the clothing or some kind of garter, whether it was really worn on one side only or was only visible on one side, this seems to be a fashion that was copied by a relatively small number of artists in sculpture and enamel. It is even rarer in manuscript; this may reflect the ephemeral nature of the material compared to stone, ivory or metal. We have not found examples of this motif in wood, or in ivory apart from the Madonna and Child sculpture above.

We have here examples of three Madonnas of the mid twelfth century, each wearing a single garter in three different media: stone, walrus ivory and metal.

Here is the Shaftesbury Madonna again, juxtaposed with a page from the Shaftesbury Psalter of similar date, in which Jesus is seated in glory, showing what appears to be a leg-band:
Madonna and Child, 1125-50, from Shaftesbury Psalter, Jesus is seated in glory
Shaftesbury, V&A  1130-40, London, British Library

This psalter is said to have been produced in the West of England. Was the carving influenced by the MS as seems likely? The eyes are similar, as are the long, pointing fingers, so typical of Anglo-Saxon art. Are we seeing here related items of Insular art or work by craftsmen from mainland France? In an article in The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs, October, 1926, H P Mitchell made out a case for the existence of the art of enamelling in England based in part on comparisons with some English MS and wall paintings. Certainly, MS are easily transported, so potentially influential as notebooks and sketchbooks.

Examples of a garter or thigh band on a MS is to be seen on the St Serapion, St Amand, about 1050 and on the Bayeux Tapestry of about 1077:
St Serapion, St Amand, about 1050

King Edward on the Bayeux Tapestry, c 1077.

This is the only depiction of leg-bands on the Bayeux Tapestry but it would be possible to see them as a decorative border on an undergarment partly concealed by an overdress flopping between the seated king’s knees.

This MS from the much earlier Ambrosian Psalter also shows garters – unless they are stocking tops:
Again, I am inclined to ask, When is a garter not a garter? Usually, when it is part of an embroidered hem on an undergarment, most of which is concealed. The walrus ivory pieces representing Elders of the Apocalypse from St Bertin, now in St Omer, London, New York and Lille further exemplify the problem:
We looked at more examples of Limoges enamels to see if many more had leg bands and neck bands similar to the Madonna and Child sculptures illustrated above. In the large publication from the Louvre, “L’Œuvre de Limoges”, Peter found about twenty examples of garter-like bands across one leg from four or five hundred illustrations. The fact that there were a number of garters is interesting, but they can not be said to be common. We saw these on Christ in several cases, on Mary and on a few apostles and kings but there was no consistency in their use. We also
looked at Rhenish or Mosan enamels and at the few that could be found from Spain such as this one which may have been made at Santo Domingo de Silos:

Silos or Limoges enamel, Christ in Glory - detail of Christ’s knee c.1150-75, Musée de Cluny

Here are some later enamels of 1160-1200 showing garters: two examples of Limoges enamels which are very similar – the same expression on Christ’s slightly tilted head, the same Byzantine cushion, the same collar and a very similar patterned background:
Two Limoges apostles, before 1200
Poitiers, Musée Ste Croix

whereabouts unknown

On the second example the apostle appears to have a garter below each knee. Similar works are found in many museums including a Christ in Glory 1180-90, in the Berlin, Kunstgewerbemuseum, another in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, and a St Peter in Glory, all of similar date.
Each is subtly different from the other, but all have elements in common – notably, in these examples, the leg-band.
The regal example from the Musée de Cluny is representative of a genre: a tendency (perhaps comparable to icon painting), to conserve traditional features such as the motif of a seated figure with the knees parted to reveal a decoration – usually embroidered or encrusted with gems – on one leg or thigh. It will be noted that the neck lines of the garments are frequently decorated in a similar way to the leg bands, whether cross-hatched or embroidered. This is particularly the case with the Solsona and Shaftesbury Madonnas and again, is reminiscent of many of the neck lines and collars worn by Nazareth Capital figures.

Leg bands on standing figures are less likely to be partly-concealed hems:
Here, St John has a cross-hatched band on the right thigh as well as the left leg, similar to some seen on the Nazareth Capitals, and also an embroidered yoke collar, which is a feature seen on several of these images and on a large proportion of the Nazareth Capitals sculptures.

There is nothing equivocal about the leg bands worn by these Wise Virgins:
Both virgins have silk gowns decorated with cintamani. Their thigh bands may be compared to St Serapion’s of c. 1050 from the St Amand “Collationes Patrum”.
St Amand “Collationes Patrum”, c.1050, SS Serapion and Theodore

St Theodore, from the same MS, does not have a thigh band, but both saints inhabit a niche decorated with cintamani.

These MS illustrations are from “La France Romane” (the exhibition catalogue) Louvre 2005. They are illustrations to an XIc copy of the “Collationes Patrum” written by John Cassianus, Abbot of Marseilles, in the 390s. The Abbey of St-Amand was near Valenciennes, and this copy is now in the municipal library of Valenciennes. Charlotte Denöel, keeper of MS at the Louvre, writes:

“L’influence de l’art anglo-saxon . . . transparaît dans les silhouettes longilignes aux drapés souples . . .”

On this casket of St Martial:
most of the figures are wearing a single leg-band, even the one possessed by a devil. On the far left, St Martial’s robe is also decorated with cintamani. There is a close association between this casket, the “Wise Virgins” plaques and the “Visitation” casket in the Episcopal museum of Limoges:

In the catalogue of the 1996 Louvre exhibition, “L’oeuvre de Limoges - Emaux Limousins du Moyen Age”, Barbara Drake Boehm from the Metropolitan Museum writes of the “Vierges Sages”,

“Sur chaque plaque figure une jeune femme debout vêtue d’un luxueux costume. . . Une robe verte et jaune décoré d’un orfroi au poignet et sur une cuisse. ”

A footnote compares these wise virgins to the “Visitation”, casket (Cat.no.19, p.115) in the Episcopal museum of Limoges:
“Visitation”, casket in the Episcopal museum of Limoges

and continues, “L’élégance des formes longilignes . . . l’habit de cour des vierges sages les rattache à d’autres oeuvres associées au mécénat des Plantagenêts, tel le coffret conservé au British Museum (fig.19a). La très grande qualité de ces plaques et les liens qui les unissent au “goût Plantagenêt” confortent encore les arguments fournis . . . aux reliquaires de l’abbaye de Grandmont.”

Enamel casket from the British Museum, c.1180
detail of the Knight’s thigh band (both Knights have this) musician and dancer

In the same publication and context, Elisabeth Tabouret-Delahaye of the Musée du Louvre writes,

“Les silhouettes longilignes et sinuueuses, les gestes amples, la représentation précise des accessoires. . . ” She associates this plaque with the Châsse of St Martial where we have already noticed several leg bands. “Les vêtements, détaillés avec un soin manifeste . . . une élégance toute aristocratique: longues robes serrant le corps, dont les manches laissent entrevoir une fine tunique blanche, orfrois et fermaux rouge pourpre. . . ”

Tabouret-Delahaye continues, “Le parallèle proposé avec le luxe de la cour d’Aquitaine sous le gouvernement d’Aliénor – qui reprit contrôle direct de son duché en 1168 . . . est sans doute justifié. . . ” and mentions the British Museum casket, where the scenes of courtly love are typical of the world of Aliénor d’Aquitaine, the plaque of Geoffrey of Anjou, 1151:
plaque of Geoffrey of Anjou, 1151, Le Mans

and the frescos of St Radegonde, Chinon:
The origin of the garter as seen on the Nazareth Capitals and other sculptures could lie in a courtly style that may have been very local and short-lived but which left ripples and echoes. Might it have been Geoffreys himself who popularised it and his daughter-in-law, Aliénor, who saw it used as a court fashion? On Geoffreys’s plaque the “orfrois et fermaux rouge pourpre” appear to excess, but maybe a modified form of the style persisted for a while as shown on the Grandmont enamels discussed above. The much earlier thigh band on the MS of St Amand shows that
the motif was already in existence in the XI century.

To conclude this section, I append two of five plaques now in the V&A where we can see an arm-band, a thigh-band, similar cuffs, and most interestingly, cintamani in considerable quantities (see also, the Limoges casket of St Martial of 1165 from the Louvre, above).

St Paul disputing with the Greeks and Jews, 1170-80, V&A
St Paul let down in a basket from the walls of Damascus, 1170-80, V&A

These plaques are reproduced from the V&A web site:

http://collections.vam.ac.uk/objectid/O120942
from which I quote:

This plaque and one showing St Paul let down in a basket from the walls of Damascus (M.312-1926) almost certainly came from the same object, possibly a large altarpiece or reliquary casket. The episode depicted here (St Paul disputing with the philosophers) immediately followed his escape from Damascus, shown on M.312-1926.

Five other plaques from the same series survive in various other museums. The choice of scenes reflects the iconography of Siculo-Byzantine mosaic cycles in Sicily, probably transmitted to England via contemporary manuscripts.

The plaques are thought to be English because of their particularly close links to English manuscript illumination. Links to wall paintings in St Gabriel's chapel, Canterbury Cathedral have also been pointed out.


The reference to “Siculo-Byzantine mosaic cycles in Sicily” is interesting. Byzantine influence may have reached Western Europe by returning crusaders and their retinue or, maybe, by merchandise and loot.

We have identified a number of enamels, mostly from the Limoges workshops, that show figures of rank or status who are wearing one or more garters. As these are almost all of a later date than the Nazareth capitals they cannot have been influential; however they do confirm that they were an adornment that was included by a localized group of workshops that do not appear from the available evidence to have had links to local stone sculptors or to scriptoria at St Martial de Limoges or its local dependences.

We have not found any garters, leg or thigh bands on any work in metal with the exception of enamels.

Increasingly I see the answer to “Why are these details there?” as fashion. Fashion on two levels: actual, in the dress of Western European royalty and nobility of the twelfth century, and artistic convention in a very traditional world. Copies produced further copies, but a truly original master such as the Nazareth Master could make use of styles and details from many sources as widespread as Byzantine art from the East and the sculpture of Cluny and the Languedoc from the West. Whether this points to the Master being a native of the Levant, working in a European team or not, or whether he was actually from France remains open to debate but I have no doubt of the importance of Western art in his apprenticeship and subsequent working life. So, was the Master from Berry, or Burgundy or from elsewhere in France?
From this analysis I have drawn some deductions:

I do not think that all these Western art works were directly linked to the Master at Nazareth, but they indicate that the garter was a Western form of adornment; I have not found it in the East with the exception of a detail on an icon of the XVth century.

There seems to be an almost total absence (except for the detail on this icon) of examples of garters in any art media to be see in the Eastern Mediterranean, or in any other work from the period, in the Latin Kingdom. It is not, therefore, a motif that was adopted by the sculptor of the Nazareth capitals from Eastern sources. The small but significant number of garters to be found in several media in Western art leads me to believe that it was a Western form of adornment that was used to mark out special high rank or status and possibly associated with the Plantagenet court.

The geographical connections between the sites where the garter is to be seen on sculpture is inconclusive, though there does seem to be something of a ‘pool’ in the Burgundy and Rhone valley.

When we take account of the fact that “balls behind clothing” can be seen on every Nazareth capital where the single pseudo garter is displayed and also on the St André-le-Bas capital, I conclude that it is not a genre and I am inclined to see a closer connection between the sculptors of the works at both sites.

Works showing a leg-band that pre-date the Nazareth capitals:

The Bayeux Tapestry, 1077

Christ on slab by Gelduinus at St Seurin, Toulouse 1096

Apostles on tympanum at La Charité-sur-Loire, after 1132

“Wise and Foolish Virgins” capital by Gilabertus at Toulouse, 1120-1140
“Mary the Egyptian” capital by Gilabertus at Toulouse, 1120-1140
“Madonna and Child” sculpture by Gilabertus at Solsona, 1120-1140

Jamb figures at Etampes and Chartres, c.1145

Christ on tympanum at St-Julien-de-Jonzy, mid 12th century

“Liberal Arts” sculptures at the Musée Rolin, Autun, 1140-1160
“Liberal Arts” capital at St André-le-Bas, Vienne, 1140-1160
Other objects. These include the Shaftesbury statue c. 1125-50 and Shaftesbury MS, 1130-40

Some enamels, chiefly from Limoges, though most of these post-date the Nazareth capitals.

Gilabertus may have been among the first Romanesque sculptors to take an interest in the decorative possibilities of an embroidered leg or thigh band and he sculpted these on a couple of capitals in Toulouse, and also on the Solsona Madonna. He may have known the tympanum at La Charité-sur-Loire or that of St-Julien-de-Jonzy.

English artists from Shaftesbury also had a similar idea. There may have been a link between them or it may have been coincidental.

Arthur Kingsley Porter believes in a strong link between the Etampes/Chartres Master and Gilabertus, and in particular between the Solsona Madonna and the Etampes jamb figure with long, thin plaits – and leg or thigh bands. I agree with him: these Masters knew each other’s work and may have worked together. I do not believe that they were the same person.

There is also a very close link between the sculptor who did the “Liberal Arts” capital at Vienne and the one who made “Liberal Arts” sculptures which are now in Autun, and of which two out of the (presumed) seven survive. The same master may have made all three sculptures.

There is the closest link between the sculptor who made the “Liberal Arts” capital at Vienne and some – or all – of the Nazareth capitals. In fact, the master of the “Liberal Arts” capital at Vienne may have been the Nazareth Master.

There is also a close link between the sculptor who made the “Temptations” capital at Plaimpied and the Nazareth Master. If it was not the same person then the “Temptations” capital was made by a sculptor who went on to work at Nazareth and used a very similar image for the naked and furry devils.

In Nazareth, as in France, much has been lost. What is left is acknowledged by all who have been fortunate enough to see them as outstanding works of the highest order. Every fragment by the Nazareth Master is cherished. If the capital in St André-le-Bas can be attributed to him either wholly or even in part, it is a precious addition to the Master’s known oeuvre.

Julianna Lees – Montagrier 2010
NOTES


2 But not by Professor Jaroslav Folda.

3 In an email to me.


5 Folda, Jaroslav “Crusader Art, the art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land 1099-1291” p.63

6 I am indebted to Jaroslav Folda for teaching me the correct term for this decorative motif.

7 On p.438 of “The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land 1098-1187”, Folda writes, “In 1982, Borg pointed out the affinities between the famous Solomon capital in the north gallery of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (see Plates 7.6b-7.6e), with the “Temptation of Christ” capital at Plaimpied and the Nazareth capitals (see Plates 10.5a-10.5m, 10.6a). The Jerusalem capital has an architectural canopy over the figure of the king, seated on a dragon throne, and foliate elements at the corners. It is immediately evident that the links between Plaimpied and the Jerusalem capital are also close.”


9 Baltrusaitis, Jorge, “Formations, Déformations”, Flammarion, 1986 p82

10 Viaud, R P Prosper, “Nazareth et ses Deux Eglises de l’Annonciation et St Joseph d’après des fouilles récentes” 1910

11 In an email to me


13 I am indebted to Bernard Petit, whose “Abbatiale de Saint Martin de Plaimpied” served as a useful guide to the sculptures at Plaimpied.

14 Borg, Alan, “Romanesque Sculpture from the Rhone Valley to the Jordan Valley”, p.101 in “Crusader Art in the Twelfth Century” (ed. Jaroslav
Folda), The British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, BAR International Series 152, 1982


17 Williamson, Paul, “Pelican History of Art” volume (Gothic Sculpture 1140-1300) pp17-19

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Klinkenberg, Emanuel S, “The Jerusalem Arch”, Pallas, Faculty of Arts, Leiden University, 2006


Denys Pringle compiled this short bibliography of some of the authors who have written on the Nazareth capitals, quoted from his “The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem”, Routledge, 1998, p137:
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