The Cult of Saints at Orléans in the early Middle Ages: The Case of the Cult of St Anianus

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Introduction

The cult of saints, that is the veneration for Christian heroes, is not only the ecclesiastical matter. According to Thomas Head, the cult of saints 'was organized and controlled by the clergy, but also embraced the laity of both high and low standing [...]. Monks and canons composed the texts which described the saintly identities. [...] Laypeople, for their part, went to the shrines [...] as pilgrims, donated property to their [saints'] monasteries, and worked the monastic lands as their [saints'] servants'.[1] Relics, which embodied the saints, were vital in the secular world as well as in the ecclesiastical one in the early Middle Ages or afterwards. Patrick J. Geary argues that 'from the church where they were a required equipment of alters, to the court of law where they were necessary for oath taking, to the battlefield where they helped bring victory [...], relics were an indispensable part of daily life'.[2]

   In the Orléanais, Bishop Walter of Orléans let us know the saints venerated in his diocese. He instructed his priests as follows (25 May c.870):

> [The priests] should observe the celebrated feasts of the saints with solemn cult and should know them beforehand to let people observe them: That is the natal day of Lord, [the feasts] of Blessed Stephen, of St John the Evangelist, of the Innocents, the nativity of Holy Mary [...], [the feasts] of St John the Baptist, of St Peter, of St Paul, of St Martin, and of St Andrew, as well as [the feasts] of our fathers, by whose pious local patronage we are supported in the presence of Lord, [that is] of the death of Blessed Evurtius, of the death of Blessed Anianus, of Blessed Benedict, of Blessed Maximinus, similarly of the death of Blessed Lifardus, and of the invention of the

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[1] T. Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of Saints: The Diocese of Orléans, 800–1200* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 3.

[2] P.J. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*, rev. edn (Princeton, 1990), pp. 4 and 37–8.

Cross bringing eternal bliss.[3]

On the list above, the city of Orléans had the relics of the Holy Cross, St Evurtius, St Anianus, and temporarily St Maximinus. This paper focuses the cult of St Anianus and examines how to be evolved in the early Middle Ages. Anianus was the bishop of Orléans and is well known as defender of the city against the attack of Attila in 451.[4]

The entrepreneurs of the cult

As mentioned above, if the cult of saints could involve various positions of people, the communities holding their relics should not have been the sole organisations concerning about the development of the cult. In the case of the cult of Hubert, who is the local saint in the diocese of Liège, 'it had the support of the emperor [Louis the Pious] and the archbishops, and the bishops of other dioceses co-operated with it'.[5]

The cult of Anianus had already gained a reputation by the seventh century but experienced a great progress in the Carolingian period. Charlemagne and Bishop Theodulf of Orléans seem to have refurbished and extended the shrine of St-Aignan (Sanctus Anianus). Such behaviour did not merely mean material re-foundation but did contribute the veneration for saints because shrines were thought as the extension of their coffins. In 814 and 818, Louis the Pious visited St-Aignan and asked the saint for his own protection.[6] The visitation of the emperor must have raised the saint's reputation. Sometime in the first half of the ninth century, a canon of the Orléans' church wrote the *First Life of St Evurtius* and Subdeacon Lucifer of Orléans compiled the *Second Life of St Evurtius*.[7] These lives admire the deed of Anianus alongside of Evurtius.

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[3] Walter of Orléans, *Capitula*, ed. P. Brommer, *MGH Capitula episcoporum* I (Hanover, 1984), pp. 185–93, at pp. 191–2, c. 18.

[4] Sidonius Apollinaris, *Letter to Prosper of Orléans*, ed. C. Lütjohann, *MGH AA* VIII (Berlin, 1887), p. 147, liber 8, c. 15.

[5] S. Tada, 'The Creation of a Religious Centre: Christianisation in the Diocese of Liège in the Carolingian Period', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 54.2 (2003), pp. 1–19, at p. 19.

[6] Ermold the Black, *Poème sur Louis le Pieux et épitres au roi Pépin*, ed. and trans. E. Faral, 2nd edn (Paris, 1964), p. 62, line 791; p. 118, lines 1536–9.

[7] *[First Life of St Evurtius=] Vita sancti Evurtii episcopi [Aurelianensis]*, ed. Bollandists, in *Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum latinorum antiquiorum saeculo XVI qui asservantur in bibliotheca nationali Parisiensis* II (Brussels, 1890), pp. 312–9; Lucifer of Orléans, *[Second Life of St Evurtius=] Vita fabulis foedata s. Evurtii*, ed. J. Stiltingus, in *Acta Sanctorum*, September III ([Antwerp], [1750]), pp. 52–9.

In 854, Bishop Agius of Orléans gave St-Aignan permission to build a new churchyard at the east suburbs of the city.[8] This new cemetery could accommodate the gradually increasing people who wished to get to an eternal sleep with Anianus. Around 870, Walter instructed his priests to observe the feast of Anianus, as mentioned above. The historians of Orléans stated around a century ago that Charles the Bald reconstructed the shrine of St-Aignan in those days, though we do not have such evidence any longer. In the second half of the ninth century, a canon of St-Aignan composed the *Second Life of St Anianus*; sometime from the second half of the ninth century to the tenth century, another canon of St-Aignan compiled the *Third Life of St Anianus*.[9] Scribers copied the good deeds of Anianus. St-Aignan, Fleury, St-Maur-des-Fossés, and Marmoutier had possessed their products.

There is no evidence for the relation between the cult and the lay abbots of St-Aignan from the mid-ninth century. However, all of them were not the stern usurpers on the saint's property. Hugh the Abbot, the *dux Francorum*, gave a serf his freedom in order that he could accept the priesthood in 885.[10] Count Robert, the son of Robert the Strong and future King Robert I of west Franks, interceded for St-Aignan in order to get back a usurped land around 900.[11]

In the early Capetian period, the cult of Anianus went on the next stage. Robert II the Pious sponsored to reconstruct the shrine of St-Aignan and attended the consecration on 14 June 1029.

The cult subordinate to the church of Orléans

The episcopal church of Orléans seems to have been enthusiastic entrepreneur of the cult, as mentioned above, rather than the community of St-Aignan itself. On the other hand, however, it may be curious that the Orléans' church hoped to subordinate the cult of St Anianus to its authority.

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[8] Agius of Orléans, *Diploma*, ed. R. Boucher de Molandon, *Mémoires de la Société Archéologique et Historique de l'Orléanais* 11 (1868), pp. 483–6.

[9] *[Second Life of St Anianus=] Vita s. ac beatissimi Aniani episcopi et confessoris*, ed. A. Thénier, in A. Thénier, *Saint-Aignan, ou le siège d'Orléans, par Attila: Notice historique suivie de la vie du saint, tirée des manuscrits de la bibliothèque du roi* (Paris, 1832), pp. 27-33; *[Third Life of St Anianus=] Sermo de adventu s. Aniani episcopi*, ed. A. Thénier, in A. Thénier, *Saint-Aignan*, pp. 34–6.

[10] Hugh the Abbot, *Diploma*, ed. A. Vidier, *Le Moyen Age* 20 (1907), pp. 315–6.

[11] Eb[bo], *Diploma*, ed. A. Vidier, *Le Moyen Age* 20 (1907), pp. 316–7.

The legend of Anianus was already collected in the *First Life of St Anianus* written from the end of fifth century to the beginning of sixth century. The saint had been thought to be a healer, releaser of prisoners, and defender of the city.[12] The Carolingian canons of the Orléans' church, the authors of the *Lives of St Evurtius*, created a new legend of Anianus: 'In those days, in the city of Orléans, the great noble families flowered not only among the clergy but among the people, and then each [family] wished to help itself and relatives [wished to aid] their friends. At [Anianus's] ordination to the bishop, the seeds of dissension were sowed and the party began to be hostile to each other.'[13] Consequently, three candidates applied. The solution taken was the *sortes biblicae* or *sortes sanctorum*. 'We gathering together shall keep a vigil tonight with singing hymn and reading the Bible. And we shall write the three names into three single lots accepted, whose names are to be concealed under the altar all night. When the time of election comes after the Mass in the next morning, we shall bring an innocent boy, who shall withdrew the lots from the altar'.[14] 'An innocent and yet illiterate three-year-old boy' was taken to everyone,[15] drew the lot indicating Anianus, 'began to cry like a prophet, and clamoured and said that "Anianus, Anianus, Anianus, who is now only the suitable person for the bishop of this city with honour"'.[16] After that, they wished to confirm that this act was in conformity with the divine will. When they opened the Psalms at random, they found the passage that 'Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts.' When they open the Gospel, they found that 'you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'.[17] Thus they were convinced of the legitimacy of this procedure. 'Now, we know this election was done by God, and therefore we hope he is the bishop whom Christ predestined'.[18] This episode of a sacred procedure would help to enhance Anianus's sanctity.

The *sortes biblicae* were unfamiliar in those days in the Orléanais. However, Bishop Jonas got a chance to know such lottery. Bishop Waltcaud of Liège asked him to revise

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[12] *[First Life of St Anianus =] Vita Aniani episcopi Aurelianensis*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* III (Hanover, 1896), pp. 104–17.
[13] Lucifer of Orléans, *Second Life of St Evurtius*, p. 57, c. 18.
[14] Lucifer of Orléans, *Second Life of St Evurtius*, p. 58, c. 18.
[15] *First Life of St Evurtius*, p. 319, c. 15.
[16] Lucifer of Orléans, *Second Life of St Evurtius*, p. 58, c. 19.
[17] Psalms LXV. 4; Mattew XVI. 18.
[18] *First Life of St Evurtius*, p. 319, c. 15.

the *First Life of St Hubert*, written shortly after his elevation in 743. The *sortes biblicae* were portrayed in this *Life*.[19] Between 825 and 831, Jonas completed the *Second Life of St Hubert* in which the episode of the *sortes* remained as it was.[20] It is possible that Jonas suggested, or forced, this idea on the hagiographers of Orléans.

When we examine this episode, we must take into account the fact that the hero of these *Lives* is St Evurtius. Evurtius was the bishop of Orléans in the fourth century and his relic had been under the control of the church of Orléans. According to the *Lives*, it was Evurtius who recommended Anianus as his successor. 'I [Evurtius] persuade you [followers of Evurtius] that you should appoint brother, fellow priest and abbot Anianus, whose life you know from many evidences, as bishop by yourselves shortly after my death'.[21] However, as mentioned above, two other candidates appeared. Then, Evurtius proposed the *sortes biblicae* as way of the solution. After the election, 'St Evurtius, with great pleasure, said farewell to everyone, committed the clergy and people to Anianus, and made over the church to him, and [Evurtius] told him how to govern and reign over this church'.[22] Therefore, Evurtius was a guardian, tutor, 'kingmaker', and thus spiritual father of Anianus. The oldest survival list of the bishops also indicates that Anianus is the successor of Evurtius.[23]

However, this succession was impossible because Evurtius was a subscriber of the synod of Valence (374) and Anianus defended the city against Attila (451). Thus we hardly think they are contemporaries. Did the authors of the *Lives of Evurtius* unaware the fact or intentionally distort it? The Merovingian tradition says that after the death of Evurtius, 'long times had passed by and many bishops had fallen dead',[24] and finally Anianus took the bishop's chair. This passage had been reproduced as it was at least by the tenth century and thus the authors could consult it and would do so for getting information to the deed of Anianus.[25] In conclusion, Lucifer and an anonymous canon of the Orléans' church created the fictitious lineage. They did so clearly because they

[19] *Vita Hugberti episcopi Traiectensis*, ed. W. Levison, *MGH SRM* VI (Hanover, 1913), pp. 471–96, at p. 494, c. 18

[20] Jonas of Orléans, *Vita secunda sancti Huberti et corporis ejus translatio ad monasterium Andaginense*, ed. C. de Smedt, *Acta Sanctorum*, November I (Paris, 1887), pp. 806–18, at p. 815, c. 24.

[21] Lucifer of Orléans, *Second Life of St Evurtius*, p. 57, c. 17.

[22] *First Life of St Evurtius*, p. 319, c. 15.

[23] L. Duchesne, *Fastes épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaule* II (Paris, 1899), pp. 453–60.

[24] *First Life of St Anianus*, p. 108, c. 2.

[25] Paris, BN, lat. 11748, fol. 70ʳ–70ᵛ; Munich, BSB, clm 18546, fol. 91ʳ.

wished to give Evurtius spiritual parenthood to Anianus. In such a sense, the church of Orléans subordinated Anianus to Evurtius, who is the delegating saint of the Orléans' church.

Why did the church of Orléans forge such spiritual lineage? We cannot understand the reason unless we ignore the great presence of the cult of Anianus in the early Middle Ages.

The independence of St-Aignan to the church of Orléans

Anianus had been the most traditional and popular saint at Orléans. The shrine called St-Aignan was already witnessed in the sixth century and presumably went back to the fifth century.[26] It became one of the representative shrines in seventh-century Gaul as well as St-Denis, St-Médard at Soissons, and St-Martin at Tours.[27] The shrine of St-Aignan is located east outside the late ancient–early medieval city wall. Such location had been the focus of the Christian worship in the West. The Roman law prohibited a dead person from being buried inside the city wall and thus the graveyard was built outside. The faithful gathered together there in memory of a martyr on the anniversary of his/her death. From the end of the fourth century, they began to build the shrine on his/her grave, which had developed into the destination of pilgrimage such as St-Martin at Tours.

In many cases, bishops did not have any rights to the shrine outside the wall. The case of Orléans is no exception. St-Aignan had been out of jurisdiction of the bishops since the seventh century. Clothar III or Childeric II, with the intercession of his mother Queen Balthild, gave St-Aignan the immunity in 657–673 or 673–675.[28] In the Carolingian period, Pippin III the Short and his successors also did so.[29] On the other hand we cannot find St-Aignan in the list of possessions of the Orléans' church. Charles the Bald confirmed them at the request of Bishop Jonas in 840–843. According to the

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[26] Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum X*, p. 432, liber 9, c. 18; Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita Germani episcopi Parisiaci*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* VII (Hanover, 1920), pp. 372–418, at p. 413, c. 67; *Vita Genovefae virginis Parisiensis*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* III, pp. 204–38, at p. 232 c. 42.

[27] Fredegar, *Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii Scholastici Libri IV cum Continuationibus*, ed. B. Krusch, in *MGH SRM*, II (Hanover, 1880), pp. 18–193, at pp. 147–8, liber 4, c. 54.

[28] *Vita sanctae Balthildis*, ed. B. Krusch, *MGH SRM* II, pp. 475–508, at pp. 493–4, c. 9.

[29] J.F. Böhmer and E. Mühlbacher, *Regesta imperii* I: *Die Regesten des Kaiserreichs unter den Karolingern 751–918*, 2nd edn (Innsbruck, 1908), pp. 245–6.

charter, the church of Orléans had possessed 'the shrine of St-Euverte, St-Avit, St-Mesmin […], St-Jean, St-Marceau […], St-Martin near the city wall, St-Laurent, St-Gervais [later St-Phallier], St-Vincent, St-Serge, St-Pierre-des-Hommes [later St-Pierre-en-Pont], and St-Pierre-le-Puellier'. The list contains almost the shrines in the city except St-Aignan. After that, Leo VII (938), Lothar (956), Benedict VII (974–980), Louis V (979), Hugh Capet (990), and Robert the Pious (991) gave the Orléans' church no permission to possess it.[30] In conclusion, the church of Orléans did not have any rights to St-Aingan, and thus to the cult of Anianus. St-Aignan was the blind spot in the city for the bishops.

On the other hand, Gallic bishops had generally hosted the cult of less popular saints than the local ones and thus had failed to exhibit the centripetal force in such a sense. Cathedrals were usually dedicated to universal saints such as Lord, Holy Mother, the Apostles, and martyrs. Gallic people may have respected them but thought them as strangers, who had slept far beyond the Alps. They were familiar with local saints, who had slept in the shrines near by and had fulfilled their common desires. For the ordinary people, local saints were the successors of pagan gods and their relics were substitutes for magical stones, trees, or springs. The cult of universal saints had emerged among the transalpine faithful since the eleventh or twelfth century.

The first cathedral of Orléans seems to have been dedicated to the protomartyr St Stephen. The bishops and the canons had abandoned it early and moved to the new cathedral dedicated to the Holy Cross, which is the relic of the first-rank universal saint. The first evidence of the cathedral of Ste-Croix is the confirmation by Louis the Pious dated 814.[31] The patron saint of the bishops' church was apparently yet unfamiliar and unpopular to people of Orléans in the Carolingian period. The cult of the Holy Cross was far less competitive one than that of Anianus. Probably, more citizens and pilgrims were attracted to Anianus and made much donation to him with praying for someone or something. On the feast day of Anianus (17 November), merchants and customers would join a flock because the market was often held on such days.

The bishops must not have welcomed such a situation because they aimed to establish

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[30] J. Thillier and E. Jarry (eds.), *Cartulaire de Sainte-Croix d'Orléans (814–1300)* (Orléans, 1906), pp. 63–6, c. 33; pp. 37–43, c. 19; pp. 519–21, c. 376; pp. 44–5, c. 20; pp. 125–9, c. 64; pp. 78–86, cc. 39 and 40.
[31] Thillier and Jarry, *Cartulaire de Sainte-Croix*, p. 67, c. 34.

the spiritual hierarchy from the top. They wished to do organizationally as well as geographically. Theodulf instructed his priests that 'the clergy and people living in the city and the suburbs should gather at one place in order to celebrate the public Mass'.[32] In the city of Orléans, 'one place' must be the cathedral of Ste-Croix, which is ten minutes' walk from St-Aignan. Economically, the bishops of Orléans would be jealous of the success of Anianus's cult of if they had also hosted markets. Theodulf forbade a trade in churches. Does it mean his envious expression against the market of St-Aignan?[33]

Conclusion

The episcopal church of Orléans was the enthusiastic supporter of the Anianus's cult and at the same time it tried to subordinate the cult to its authority. We must recollect the multiple functions of the Carolingian bishops in order to understand such an apparent contradiction. They were often the members of the royal court and indispensable for the politics of the Carolingian empire. Locally, they were the organisers of the dioceses and leaders of the episcopal churches. Moreover, they assumed responsibility for the city. They had retained some secular functions even after the collapse of the late Merovingian 'episcopal republics'. The Carolingian bishops managed the administration of cities, supplied citizens with foods, controlled markets, and normalised weights and measures.[34]

On which function a bishop laid stress depended upon times, locality, and so on. As heads of the episcopal church, the bishops of Orléans should have evolved the cult of the Holy Cross alongside St Evurtius and St Avitus. The cult of Anianus was a rival to them. As 'mayors' of Orléans, the bishops faced with major communities outside the city: Ferrières, Meung-sur-Loire, Micy, and Fleury. Among these monasteries, Fleury was the most formidable rival because it had gained the relic of St Benedict of Nursia by the seventh century. In fact, hagiographers reported the conflict between Fleury and

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[32] Theodulf of Orléans, *Capitula I*, ed. P. Brommer, *MGH Capitula episcoporum* I, pp. 73–142, at p. 142, c. 45.
[33] Theodulf of Orléans, *Capitula I*, pp. 108–9, c. 8.
[34] *Capitulare Suessionense*, ed. A. Boretius, *MGH Capitularia* I (Hanover, 1883), pp. 28–30, at p. 30, c. 6; *Admonitio generalis*, ed. A. Boretius, *MGH Capitularia* I, pp. 52–62, at p. 60, c. 74.

the bishops.[35] Anianus was only the competitive city saint to Benedict, the father of the Western monasticism. As diocesan organisers, the bishops should have looked after the every saint in his diocese especially in an emergency. Walter did so, as mentioned above. According to Head, 'Quite possibly Walter's insistence on the celebration of these [saints'] feasts and on the *patrocinium* which these "fathers" provided was in part a response to the havoc which had been wrecked in the fabric of social life by the Norman raids'.[36] St-Aignan, standing on the bank of the Loire without the wall, was one of the victims on the raid.[37]

The creation of the new legend of Anianus was a possible way of the solution. The episode of his sacred ordination would raise his sanctity. At the same time the saint of Orléans' church became his spiritual father. In doing so, the bishops could save their own face and, if fortunately, the father could take advantage of popularity of his son, Anianus.

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In the times of Ambrose of Milan, the cult of saints may have been of ecclesiastical elite. However, the cult came to provide the efficient social band for the people of higher and lower rank, or the laity and the clergy in the early Middle Ages. In the case of the cult of St Anianus, the most eager entrepreneurs were the bishops of Orléans. They were the ecclesiastical elite in those days but we can hardly classify their aims and targets into ecclesiastical or secular because of the multiplicity of their functions.

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[35] Head, *Hagiography*, pp. 235–81.
[36] Head, *Hagiography*, p. 50.
[37] Hincmar of Rheims, *[Annales Bertiniani, pars tertia]*, ed. F. Grat, J. Vielliard, and S. Clémencet, in *Annales de Saint-Bertin*, pp. 84–251, at p. 177, a. 865.

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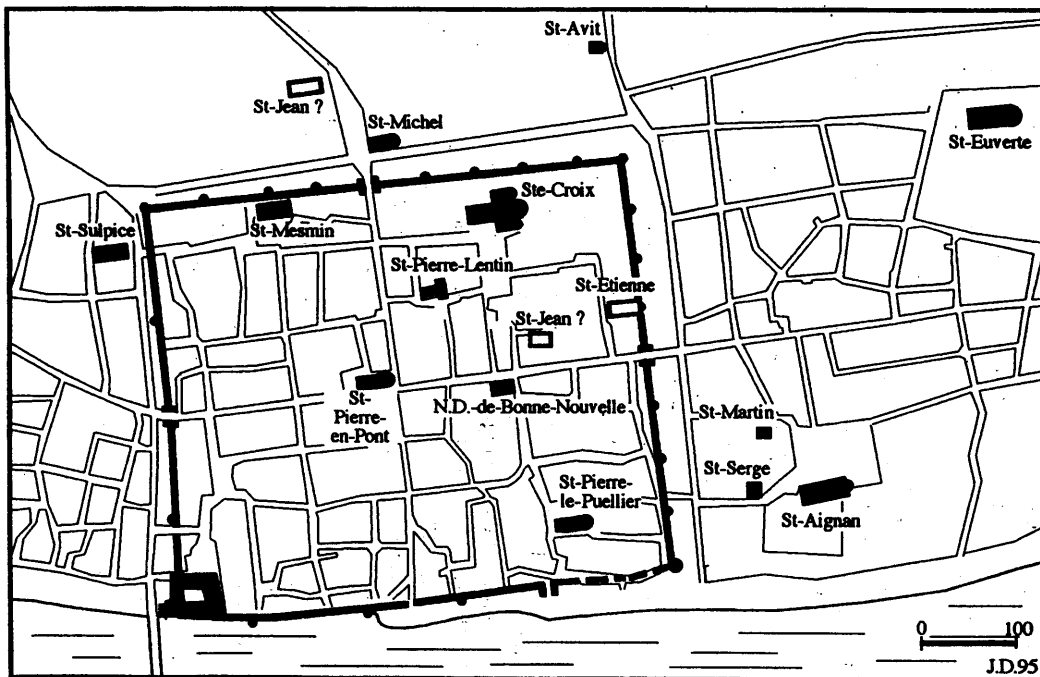
J. Debal, *Cenabum — Aurelianis — Orléans* , p. 129.

Les églises dans la ville du IXe siècle
(sur un plan reconstitué de la ville médiévale)
Hors champ : à l'est, Saint-Marc, Saint-Phallier, saint-Vincent ;
à l'ouest, Saint-Laurent ; au sud, Saint-Marceau