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Luc Bourgeois, ed. *Une Résidence des Comtes d'Angoulême autour de l'An Mil: le castrum d'Andone (Villejoubert, Charente). Publication des fouilles d'André Debord (1971-1995)*. Publications du CRAHM-Caen, 2009. 560 pp. 52.25€ (cl). ISBN-10: 2902685661.

Review by Bailey K. Young, Eastern Illinois University.

This is one of the most important monographs of a medieval site published in France in recent years for two reasons. First, André Debord's excavations between 1971 and 1995 of the *castrum* of Andone, located near Angoulême in southwestern France, were the most thorough and systematic work done on a significant early castral site by a major medieval historian with close ties to the Centre de Recherches d'Archéologie Médiévale, the pioneering center for medieval archaeology established in Caen by Michel de Bouard. Most modern archaeology is rescue work—only able to study part of a site, often under intense time pressure. This was a careful research excavation which was able to study the entire fortified area over a quarter century and to recover an enormous number of well-documented artifacts, grist for many a scholarly mill for years to come. Second, with Debord dying in 1996, the publication is the outcome of a decade-long project led by Luc Bourgeois, an archaeologist-historian of the current generation attached to the Centre d'Etudes Supérieures de la Civilisation médiévale at the University of Poitiers. As two disciplines with differing methodologies, perspectives and, some would say, different interests, archaeology and history have not always had an easy relationship over the past fifty years, especially in the Anglo-American world. In France, these antagonisms have been more muted, but the dialogue has been, as Luc Bourgeois puts it, “non exempte de méfiance réciproque” (p.507). With this book, he and his collaborators provide a striking example of what can be gained from a critical collaboration between the two.

The project got underway when André Debord connected some dots. He found in a charter in the cartulary of the monastery of Saint-Amant-de-Boixe (which he was subsequently to edit and publish) a reference to the abandonment by Count William IV Taillefer of his residence at Andone in order to build a new one nearby at Montignac. The place-name led him to a hilltop with overgrown ruins. With the charter providing a reliable date (the 1020s) for the abandonment (a *terminus ante quem* in archaeological parlance), he had a chance to study a castral site of the very early feudal period connected with a historically important dynasty. Little was known about the genesis of the first castles or their material culture, but one hypothesis connected them with the network of fortified rural sites (*castra*) dating to the Late Roman period. Debord soon came to the conclusion that this was the case here—that there were Late Roman ceramics and coins in connection with the masonry foundations—and preliminary reports, as well as subsequent scholarly papers, practically consecrated this reading of the material evidence as fact. But it was wrong. More careful stratigraphic work in the early 1990s proved that the Roman material was residual. The fortification was post-Carolingian from the outset. The careful re-sifting of the evidence by the Luc Bourgeois team, which included targeted excavation and new drawing on the site in 2003-2004, have now confirmed this important revision of the original interpretation. This evidence is comprised of excavation notebooks, plans and stratigraphic drawings, thousands of photographic slides, more than 9086 artifacts individualized for the catalogue; and much more grouped by lots (for example, 75,924 animal bones have been identified; there are more than 140 large boxes of pottery). All this material, about

six linear meters in volume, is now conserved at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Angoulême.

Twenty-three authors contributed to this volume, which is divided into six chapters. Chapters one (“Histoire des recherches et méthodes d’approche”), two (“Structures et stratigraphie”) and five (“L’histoire du site dans son environnement”) were written by Luc Bourgeois, who is also the principal author of chapter six (“Vivre à Andone: architecture, activités, critères de distinction”). Chapter three discusses the artifacts from the site (in nineteen subsections); chapter four, the flora and fauna recovered. The quality of the illustrations, always critical in a serious archaeological publication, is excellent overall. The plans are done in color so that the eye of even a neophyte in archaeological graphics can readily grasp the difference between a post-hole and a fire pit, between masonry walls belonging to one phase and vestigial stone foundations from an earlier time. Photographs of particular structures under excavation are generally clear and readable, as are those of important individual objects like coins (Fig 3.1) or the handsome enameled round brooch (Fig 3.2) whose elite quality is brought out by an enlarged-scale color photo. The technical data studies, whether of glass beads, iron spurs, mammal bones, or parasites identified in coproliths, are supported by good-quality drawings and photographs, charts and tables, and graphs. Few readers will have the time, the stamina, or the interest to make their way through all of this. But the materials so carefully assembled and analyzed, so lucidly presented, will serve as an invaluable resource to which specialists and others interested in the quality of everyday life in a late Carolingian castle will return again and again. This density of scrupulously-vetted data can be taken as a kind of retrospective “thick description” of many of the material aspects of the life ways of the community packed within the walls of this fortified elite residence in the decades on either side of *l’An Mil*. [1] Luc Bourgeois and his colleagues offer their reading of it in chapter six. The historical end of the dialogue is developed in chapter five, where Bourgeois fits Andone into what he terms the story of the *décomposition-récomposition* of power in the region as royal authority weakened and the rising Taillefer dynasty sometimes struggled with and sometimes collaborated with the other major player, the Bishop.

With the chimera of a Late-Roman *castrum* banished, the fortification of this hilltop in the tenth century (Bourgeois endorses, on historical grounds, Debord’s suggestion that it could have been the work of Count Arnaud Manzur during the 970s, but the archaeology could support a somewhat earlier date) thus appears more as a structural readjustment in a game of regional power relations long in the making than evidence of a widespread “feudal transformation” (*mutation féodale*) championed by some historians. Count William IV’s decision to abandon it in favor of a new residence at Montignac in the 1020s combined, Bourgeois argues, potent symbolism and practical considerations. Earlier antagonism with the Bishop was replaced by a new policy of cooperation. Not only did Count William accept vassalage to the Bishop at Montignac as part of the new arrangement, the two of them collaborated to create a new regional player, the Abbey of Saint-Amant de Boixe. How fitting it seems that the charter, the point of departure for André Debord’s thirty years of excavations at Andone, was drawn up to record this intention. Medievalists everywhere, as well as scholars with a particular interest in southwestern France, owe Luc Bourgeois and his team a great debt, not only for making accessible the results of those painstaking labors, but demonstrating how indeed very *enrichissante* the dialogue between medieval archaeologists and historians can be.

NOTES

[1] “Life ways” is a much-used expression in anthropology, especially ethnography. Its associations convey a more fluid and dynamic sense than the traditional term, “material culture.”

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