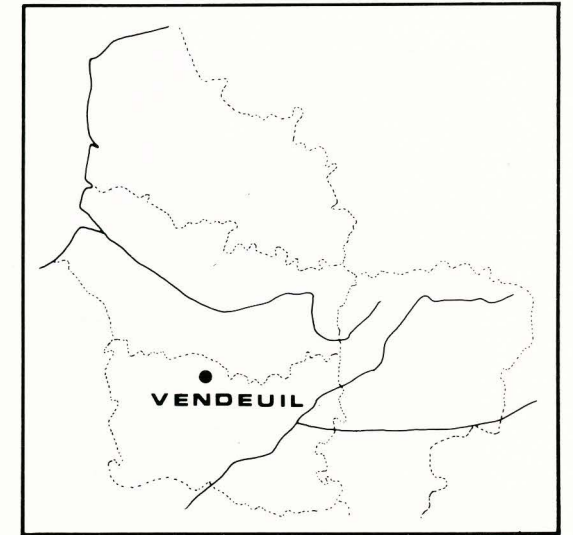


Nord-Ouest Archéologie



The Vendeuil-Caply Glass Horn

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The **Vendeuil-Caply** horn (fig. 1 ; *Foy* and *Sennequier* 1989, 140-1, 148) with a maximum diameter of c. 5 cm and a length of about 24 cm, is comparable in length to some of the smaller glass drinking horns (*Evison* 1955 ; *Evison* 1975). Its black appearance, with a translucent light green visible only at the breaks, suggests the devitrified state usually associated with potash glass. The form with a flattened tip belongs to type II of the drinking horns which has been found in the **Rhine** and **Meuse** valleys and in **Scandinavia**. The earliest were found in contexts of the late fourth century, and up to now the latest occurrence was in the middle of the sixth century, so that this is the first indication that the form continued later in Europe into the Carolingian period.

This horn differs in being very narrow, so that it could only have held a small quantity of liquid. It is, of course, possible that some of the horns found in pagan graves were used as containers of liquids other than drink. One of the horns was regarded as a misfit amongst the Merovingian drinking horns because of its unusual shape, and this is, in fact, comparable in some respects (fig. 2 ; *Evison* 1975, 78, fig. 11, 86, N° 40). It is in very light green glass, of no provenance and kept in **Rouen** Museum. The body is narrow with a small capacity, and it also has a flat terminal. The rim is dissimilar in being cupped and not flame-rounded, but the contour is close to that of some funnel beakers. Both have rims unsuitable for drinking, the **Rouen** rim is sharp, and the **Vendeuil-Caply** horn rim is made uneven by unmarvered trails, both circumference trails for decoration, and a loop trail for suspension. Therefore they were both probably used as

inkhorns, reflecting a demand for ink containers which must have accompanied the change to the Christian religion and the consequent production of manuscripts.

The pattern of decoration by applied trails spiralling round the body on the **Vendeuil-Caply** horn is very common on many other glass forms as well as on horns. Horizontal indented trails as on the rim came in with the bag beakers, squat jars and claw beakers of the seventh century (*Evison* forthcoming a). The trail at the rim is the same colour as the vessel, but the trail dropped on at the top and spiralled to near the tip is an opaque rust red. This colour did not occur in the Merovingian period except when streaked with light green glass, but marvered and feathered red trails appeared on some cups and drinking horns in the **Italian Lombardic** graves (*Harden* 1975 ; *Stiaffini* 1985), and a limited number of examples of red trails have occurred in Carolingian contexts in durable, presumably soda glass (*Evison* forthcoming b). The double horizontal trail at the rim had occurred on earlier horns. New, however, is the manipulation of the trail to form a loop for hanging at the point on the rim where gravity would probably ensure that the level of the liquid contained would be horizontal and not spill. Suspension loops occasionally occurred on some drinking horns, but these were in pairs on the inner curve, no doubt intended for storage when the vessel was empty rather than when it was in use (*Evison* 1955, pl. LXVc, d, LXVIa, c-e, LXVIIa, b).

Relevant information is to be derived from contemporary illustrations for in a number of Carolingian and Ottonian manuscripts evangelists

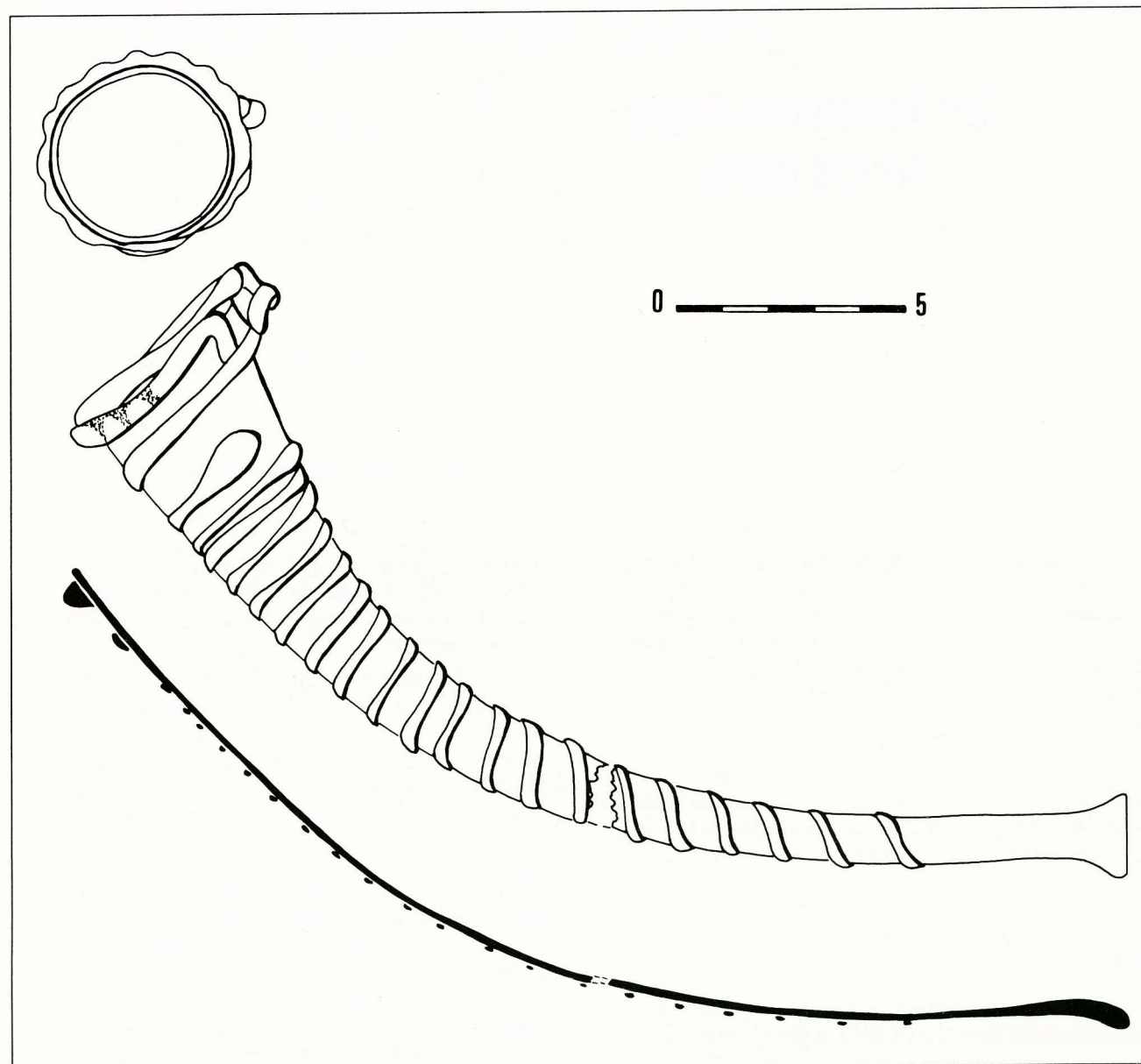


Fig. 1 : The Vendeuil-Caply glass horn. Grave 52, Clos de Vendeuil. Dessin D. Piton.

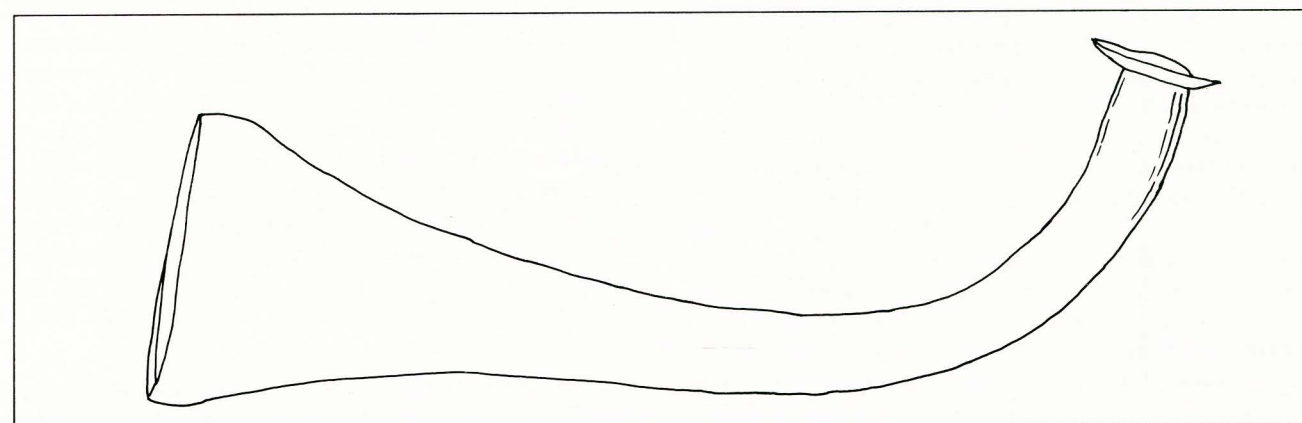


Fig. 2 : Rouen Museum

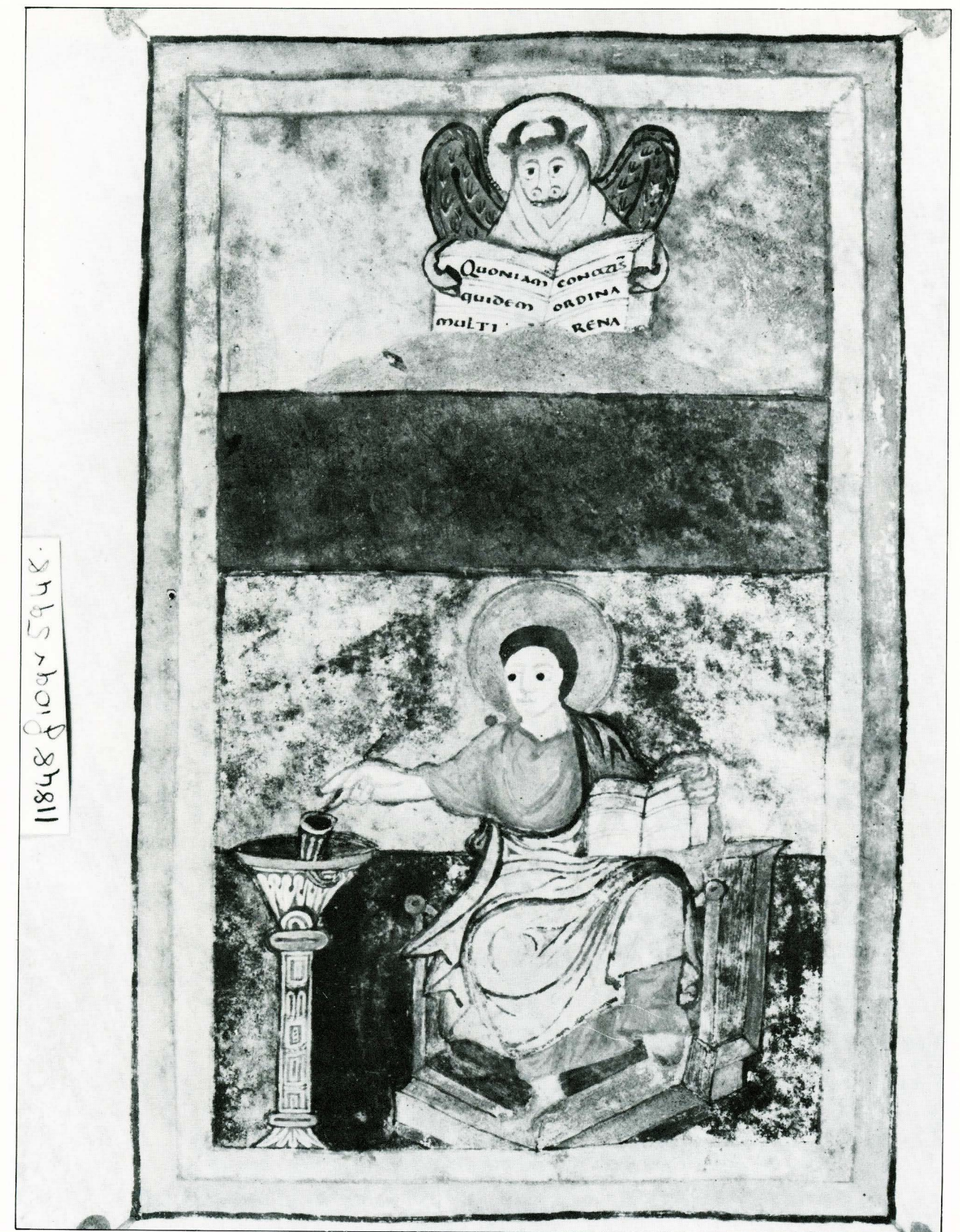


Fig. 3 : Tours gospel book of AD 807-834, British Museum MS Add. 11848, folio 109, verso. Reproduced by permission of the British Museum.

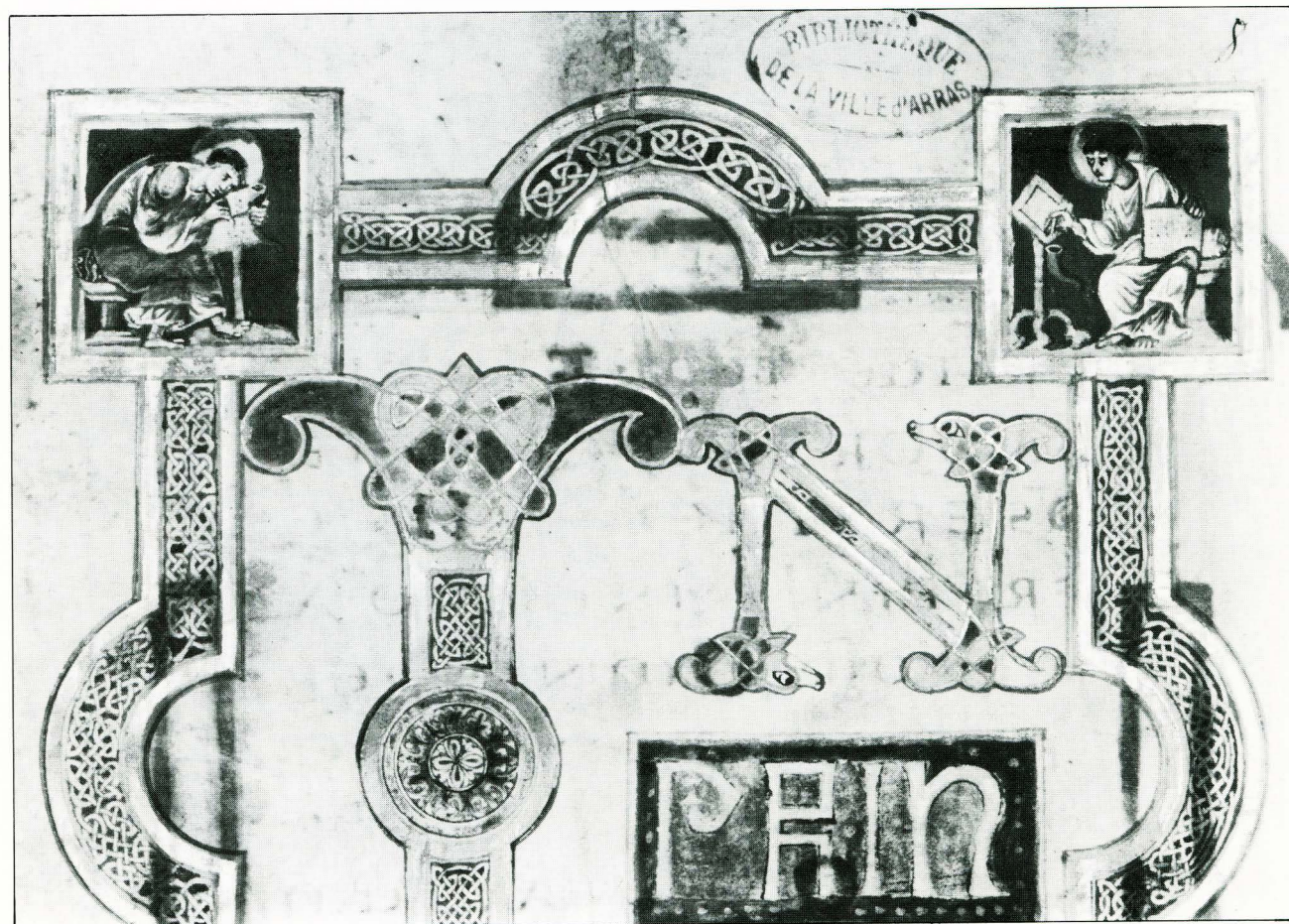


Fig. 4 : Bibliothèque Municipale d'Arras, MS 233 (1045), second half of the ninth century.



Fig. 5 : Bibliothèque Municipale d'Epernay. Evangiles d'Ebon. Saint Luc. MS 1, folio 90, verso.



Fig. 6 : Bibliothèque Municipale d'Épernay. *Evangelium of Ebbon*. Saint Luc. MS 1, folio 18.

are portrayed in the act of writing, and an ink container is to be seen beside them. The apparent transparency of some of these show that they were made of glass (Hubert *et al* 1970, N° 105 and 136). A considerable proportion are in the shape of horns, and no doubt some were actually made from animal horn, although even a pottery horn is possible (Fremersdorf 1953, Taf. 36). Many of them are illustrated held in the left hand of the scribe, but where the tip is visible it is always pointed. Stable holders were sometimes provided, as may be seen from a portrait of **St. Matthew** in a manuscript of the late eleventh century where the horn was slotted through a hole in a board-table (Temple 1976, fig. 48). In another evangelist portrait, this time of **St. Luke**, an inkhorn is thrust into the circular top of a highly ornamented pedestal table. As the tip of the horn is shown in front of the ornament on the side of the table, it seems that it must be secured to the rim of the table by a red-brown strap which passes across the middle (fig. 3 ; **Tours** gospel book of AD 807-834, **British Museum** MS Add. 11848, folio 109 verso). However, lack of perspective technique confuses interpretation, and later illustrations show that horns were inserted in a hole near the edge of the table e.g. Gospels of **St. Geneon** of the end of the tenth century (Schnitzler 1957, colour plate IV), and Gospels of **St. Pantaleon** of the middle of the twelfth century (Schnitzler 1959, N° 72).

One illustration shows a red horn with yellow rim suspended by the rim from a square-topped pedestal table in the same manner in which the **Vendeuil-Caply** horn must have been suspended (fig. 4 : Bibliothèque Municipale, **Arras**, MS 233 (1045), second half of the ninth century, folio 8, top right panel, Grabar and Nordenfalk 1957, 156). This horn and two others are depicted in colours and patterns which correspond to some in use for glass vessels in the Carolingian period. The horn held in the left hand by **St. Matthew** in the Gospel book of **Ebbo** (before AD 823) is blue with yellow horizontal lines round the mouth and vertical yellow lines below. These details attract credibility as, beside the contemporary glass colours and pattern, further realism has been added by dots indicating the ink spilling out of the horn (Grabar and Nordenfalk N° 146, folio 90 verso). The horn held by **St. Luke** in the same manuscript is similar in design, but three colours were used, a basic light brown horn with vertical blue lines and a yellow horizontal line below the rim (fig. 5 ; Hubert *et al* 1970, N° 93). The colouring of yet another horn, this time with **St. Luke** in the **Tours** Gospel book, is closer to that of the **Vendeuil** horn, for it is a light blue with red-brown lines (fig. 3). As inkhorn illustrations do not

appear in Greek manuscripts nor in antiquity, but extend from the eighth to the twelfth centuries (information P. Mc Gurk), it seems likely that the scribes were copying from contemporary models. Examples in later manuscripts are probably of animal horn for the decoration would appear to be in metalwork, i.e. studded strips and especially a vandyked rim as on **St. Matthew's** horn in the **St. Pantaleon** Gospels mentioned above of the twelfth century (Schnitzler 1959, N° 73). This method of decoration of animal horns had already begun in the pagan period with a row of triangular mounts as on the **Sutton Hoo** and **Taplow** horns (Bruce-Mitford 1983, figs 233 and 279). Continuation into the ninth century is shown by the **Trewhiddle** mounts and **Burghead** rim (Wilson 1961, pl. XXIIIa, b, pl. XXIX, b), all of which have a vandyked shape.

Comparable glass vessels of the Carolingian period are scarce, and in north-west Europe only a fragment found at **Tours** in a tenth to eleventh century context might possibly be regarded as part of a horn (Motteau 1985, N° 151). In spite of the fact that the form of the glass drinking horn is a direct product of Germanic taste and custom and not normally used by other peoples, there is one horn produced in the Near East technique of lustre-painting, albeit with a Scandinavian form of horn with a ball terminal. It has been suggested that this horn is a product of the Near East, possibly Egypt, in the ninth to eleventh century (Corning Museum 1970, 174-5, fig. 23 ; Evison 1975, 84, 87, N° 59, fig. 19). There is also a report of a newly-found drinking horn at **Raqqa**, Syria which is of aquamarine glass with thick yellow trails near the rim in diamond pattern (information A. von Saldern). The form of the decoration is that of the blue or green horns found in Lombardic graves (Harden 1975, 16, 18 ; Stiaffini 1985, 677-8), but the colouring suggests a date later in the eighth century. It is said to have been found in a pit of the ninth century.

The evidence for the date of the unique **Vendeuil-Caply** horn, therefore, apart from its stratification, may be summarised as follows. The form with button tip is rare after the sixth century, but there is one other probable inkhorn of the same shape. There are a few known examples of the use of red trails in the seventh and eighth century, but they are in durable, soda glass. Examination has confirmed that the **Vendeuil-Caply** horn is in potash glass. The change from the use of soda to potash has been noted at **Tours** and **St. Denis** at the end of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century, so that this is the earliest date possible for the **Vendeuil** horn.

At the time that *Barrelet* was writing in 1953, it was necessary to admit that no piece of Carolingian glass had survived (*Barrelet* 1953, 19). Nevertheless, he was able to cite a number of documentary sources which made it quite clear that glass was being manufactured in France at that time. In AD 675 **Benedict Biscop** sent to France for glass-makers, repeated prohibitions against the use of glass for chalices indicates the widespread use of glass in churches, and even recorded are the names of two glass-makers, **Baldricus** and **Ragenulfus**, working in the Departements of North and Aisne in 863.

No other glass horns of the period are known in north-west Europe with which it may be compared, and although there are potash glass vessels of other shapes in northern France, none examined so far are decorated with red trails.

Nevertheless, manuscripts produced in northern France in the eighth and ninth centuries depict inkhorns in some of the patterns and vivid colours produced by glass-blowers at the time, so that it seems likely that the illustrations reflect the actual vessels in use in the locality. The remains of colourful glass vessels of other shapes have, indeed, been found recently in Carolingian contexts at **St. Denis** (*Foy and Sennequier* 1989, 6, pl. VI), and **Visemarest (Quentovic)** (*Heyworth* 1988 ; *Evison* 1989, 140). There is also some physical evidence to suggest that glass-working was being carried on in the area in the form of a crucible fragment containing swirled red and green glass at the presumed site of **Quentovic** (*Heyworth* 1988). It is fortunate that the excavation of this grave at Vendeuil-Caply has directed attention to a probably thriving centre of Carolingian glass production in north-west France.

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