

## THE TARASQUE DE NOVES \*

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Pictographically, the "Tarasque de Noves" is one of the most well-known statues from what is considered Pre-Roman Gaul. It is odd that, in spite of this, the Tarasque has hardly ever been subjected to a thorough study. (Benoit 1945:30; Clébert 1966: 248-9; Espérandieu 1907: 102; Eydoux 1961: 33; Filip 1960: 158; Hodson and Rowlett 1973: fig. 108; Hubert 1912: 220; Pobé and Roubier 1958: 72 (no. 31); Reinach 1908: 279 ff; Megaw 1970: 78 (no. 76) ).

The following is an attempt at a contribution which, we hope, will offer firstly, a well-founded dating context, secondly a cultural context and finally a complete interpretation of the Tarasque itself.

*Description*

The Tarasque de Noves is about 1.12 m. tall and is made of local limestone, quarried in the vicinity of the statue's find-site.<sup>1</sup> It represents a creature sitting in an upright position and is portrayed on a rectangular, unfinished pedestal from which its hindlegs are partly modelled. Two human heads, balanced on the hindleg-claws, also serve as a claw-rest for the creature's frontlegs. A human arm, ornamented by a bracelet, dangles from its jaw towards its right frontleg.<sup>2</sup> Its head is long and wide and very squat, with

\* *English version: W. P. Gesner van der Voort. University of Amsterdam.*

<sup>1</sup> The 'Tarasque de Noves' can be seen at the 'Musée Lapidaire', a branch of the 'Musée Calvet' in Avignon. 'Tarasque' might well be a misnomer, as, strictly speaking, the term refers to a medieval man-eating dragon from the Provence, which is said to have been tamed by Ste. Marthe (fig. 1). Noves, the findsite of the statue, is situated along the Durnace river, approximately 15 km. east of Avignon.

<sup>2</sup> Benoit (1945:30) is wrong to call this armlet a 'torq', as fig. 2 clearly shows that neither the characteristic knobs or ends, nor the break in the armlet can be seen. In our opinion it would be better to call it a bracelet. It can be pointed out at this stage, without anticipating the following inter-

small ears, and barely perceptible eyes. On the other hand, its wide mouth, with large fangs, is extremely pronounced. Both sides of its mouth show clear fracture-marks (fig. 3). The fracture on the left is considerably larger than its counterpart on the right side of the statue. Judging by the texture of these fracture-marks, one may assume that appendages originally were part of the statue. Benoit has suggested that a human head originally constituted the appendage on the right side (Benoit 1945: 30; Clébert 1966: 248-9). The rough end on the outer leftside of the left frontleg might be the result of a broken appendage, one joined from the mouth to the left frontleg. Possibly this appendage was formed as a human leg (fig. 3; Pobé and Roubier 1958: 72). The creature's back is sculpted so as to render an impression of a scaly skin, running in a V-shape from its shoulders to its tail, which in turn is curled around its right hindleg (figs. 7-8). The flanks are incised so as to represent ribs (fig. 3) and the incision along the front- and hindlegs are intended to accentuate muscles. Both front and hindlegs end in four sharp talons (figs. 4-5). A very prominent, erect phallus, which extends along the creature's underbelly, has been pierced through in the middle; possibly in order that some kind of object could be attached to it (fig. 6). The human heads are adorned with long curly moustaches and beards, which, contrary to the headhair, have been rendered in a very pronounced fashion. The eyes of the severed heads are closed, as are the straight mouths. The rough end of the creature's left paw is a sure indication that the Tarasque was not entirely finished (fig. 3). The creature's pose and the way it rests its frontpaws on the severed heads suggest an unchallenged victory rather than a triumph after a struggle.

#### *Circumstantial evidence*

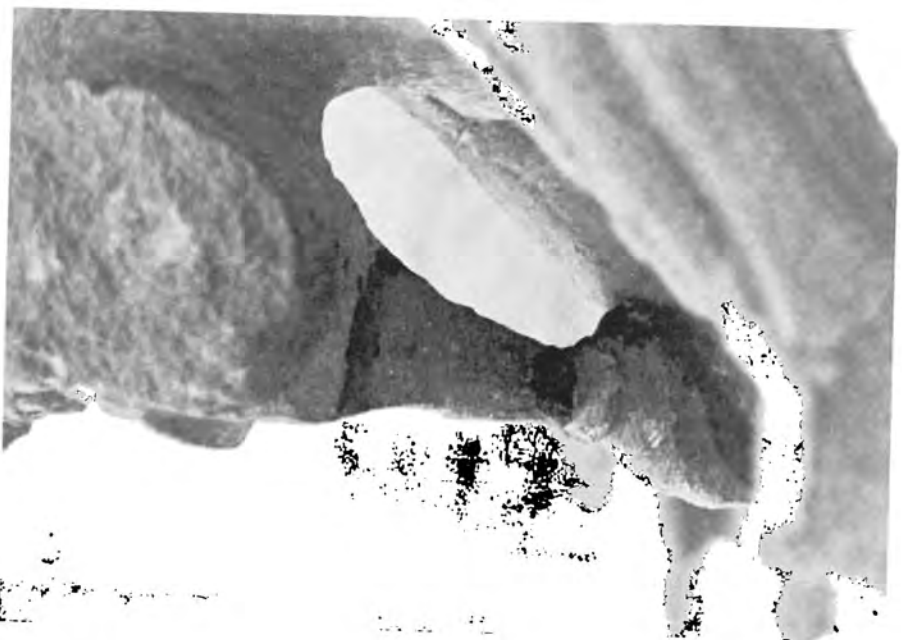
Not very much is known about the circumstances or context in which the statue was found. Espérandieu refers to two sources: Michel and Gilles (Espérandieu 1907: 121). According to Michel it was uncovered in 1849 at a depth of 2.50 m. near Noves "... au milieu de débris de poteries antiques". (Michel 1889: no. 51). Gilles, however, maintains that it was found in 1826 at a depth of 1.50 m. He also makes the interesting interpretation, that the Celts are often depicted wearing neckbands (torqs) and bracelets. (Polybius II. 29, 18).



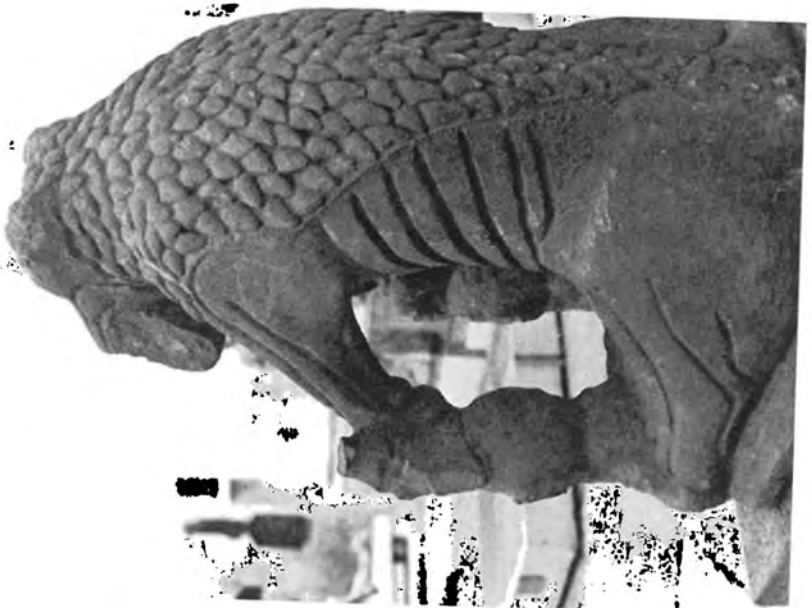
*Photographs by P. A. van Dorp*



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of 1 m., but also mentions the fact that its context was full of broken pottery, which he called "... poteries celtiques, grecques et romaines". (Gilles 1896-8 II: 305).<sup>3</sup>

The site, according to Gilles was at the foot of "le Puech": "... podium, ... d'environ 15 mètres d'altitude est à 500 m. plus à l'Est du château (i.e. the château de Noves). Il est parsemé de petits débris de poteries celtiques, grecques et romaines, accusant une longue habitation". (Gilles 1896-8: 305) As there are no other known sources which might offer further clarification as to circumstances and context of the find, we have to be content with Michel and Gille's information.

### *Dating*

Thus, all we may go by is that the Tarasque can be associated with Celtic, Greek or Roman sherds, or that the Tarasque was made in Celtic, Greek or Roman times; this implies a very broad time scale. "Au milieu de débris" can mean that the Tarasque was sculpted anywhere between approximately 700 B.C. and 500 A.D. in Noves or near vicinity.<sup>4</sup> As a matter of fact, the earliest datable Greek pottery from the region between Rhône, Durance and the Mediterranean dates from the second half of 7th. century B.C. (Benoit 1965: 137 n. 1), Roman pottery remains in use well into late antiquity.

We will now try to offer some suggestions which might contribute towards the eventual pinpointing of the Tarasque within this broad time range. This might be possible if we can combine two exterior characteristics of the statue with the given findsite. The 3-dimensional form of the Tarasque and the way the severed heads are modelled—e.g. jutting cheekbones, the narrowing of the faces, the straight mouths—constitute the two characteristics in question.

The first characteristic implies that the statue can not have been made before similar 3-dimensional statues were made in or about Noves, i.e. the Rhône delta. Likewise, the severed heads

<sup>3</sup> 'Poterie celtique' as such, can not be associated with a known type of pottery. If one is implying Hallstatt or La Tène pottery with this term then this type of pottery does not occur before 8th. century B.C. in this region.

<sup>4</sup> This assumption is based on remarks on 'local stone' (Espérandieu 1907: no. 121; Filip 1969:934; Pobé & Roubier 1958:72 no. 31).

can not have been modelled, after such a fashion disappeared entirely from the environs of Noves (see below p. 38). A large number of statues from the Rhône delta area have been recorded and are described in Benoît's "L'art primitif de la vallée du Rhône". According to Benoît the statues—including the Tarasque—are mostly works from local 'studios'. (Benoît 1945: 11) But these local 'studios' were subject to a strong influence from a 'mediterranean koinè, i.e. a way of sculpting "... dont il est souvent difficile de préciser les points de diffusion, étant donné les similitudes de style en Grand Grèce et en Etrurie". (Benoît 1945: 432) In view of the pseudo-archaic style common to many of the statues until the Roman period, it is very difficult to assign dates to these locally made statues. (Benoît 1945: 11; 1950: 431-3; Entremont: 66-7)

All that can reasonably be adduced is that these statues must have been sculpted after Greek influence became predominant in this area, i.e. after the foundation of Massilia in 600 B.C.

Benoît's descriptions include the so-called "Torso of Grézan" (Gard), (Benoît 1945: 34 pl. XXXI) It is a very large, free-standing 3-dimensional stone statue of a warrior. The warrior's waist is adorned with a special kind of belt-hook, which first appears in the Mailhac III culture. (Hodson & Rowlett 1973: 175, ill. 78; 177, fig. 5 no. 12) Mailhac III can be dated by finds of imported Attic pottery; judging by this, the beginning of this culture can be put at approximately 540 B.C., implying that the Grézan torso can not antedate 540 B.C. (Hodson & Rowlett 1973: 160-77) Therefore, as long as no earlier example of 3-dimensional sculpture is found in the south of France, this kind of sculpture can be extant after 540 B.C. The date 600 B.C. is a possible 'terminus post quem' for the sculpting of the Tarasque, the date 540 B.C. however, is an indisputable one.

The second characteristic—i.e. the modelling of the severed heads—enables us to determine the Tarasque's 'terminus ante quem'. Many examples of so-called 'severed heads' have come to light in the settlement at Entremont, near Aix-en-Provence. It is remarkable that these severed heads are all rendered without neck and throat, the head ending abruptly beneath the skull or chin. Photo 3 clearly shows a deep cleavage at the bottom of

the skulls, at the back of the heads under the Tarasque's claws. The surface stone directly beneath this cleavage has hardly been touched. This suggests that the sculptor was not concerned with the shaping of the neck, implying that these chunks only served as supports.<sup>5</sup>

These details can only imply that the severed heads from the Tarasque must belong to the above mentioned type from Entremont. Close study, with special attention to the shaping of the heads of Entremont, reveals the following features: prominent cheekbones and hollow cheeks, giving the heads a triangular appearance, and tight, straight lips (Benoit Entremont: 85-6 figs. 70-2). The large statue from the sanctuary of Entremont, rendered sitting in a "Buddha" position, shows such a severed head with all the features mentioned above, upon which rests a hand (Benoit Entremont: 87 fig. 73). We know that Entremont was settled by approximately 300 B.C. and that the Romans destroyed it during their campaigns of 124 and 122 B.C., after which it has never been inhabited. (Benoit Entremont: 16). This does not imply however, that severed heads were not portrayed together with statues in 'Buddha position' elsewhere in the vicinity of Noves after 122 B.C.

Glanum (modern St. Rémy de Provence) is approximately 18 km. from Noves; no specific geographic barriers would impede contact between the two places. Contrary to Entremont it remained inhabited after 100 B.C. Three periods can be distinguished: Glanum I consisted of a local settlement and a Greek trading post; few traces from this period remain however. (Rolland 1946: 16-9) The first period ends at approximately 100 B.C., and is succeeded by a second period (Glanum II), which can be termed transitional, after which an unmistakable Roman period (Glanum III, after 50 B.C.) follows. (Rolland 1946: 20) Much of the remains from Glanum I were destroyed by building activities of later date. But statues rendered in a "Buddha" position from Glanum I contexts have been found in the vicinity of a native sanctuary. (Rolland 1958: 55; 1963: 307; Sqlviat 1969: 444) Architectural remains with hollowed-out cavities for the placing of skulls have

<sup>5</sup> In more northerly regions in France this kind of sculpture appears a few centuries later. (Piggott 1965: 230; Lambrechts 1961: 12)

also been found in association with these statues. (Rolland 1958: 55) Entremont and Glanum are not alone in revealing such "Buddha" like statues, they have also been found in Roquepertuse in association with skulls. In addition, pillars with hollowed out cavities for the placing of heads have come to light in Roquepertuse. (Filip 1969: 1163) Such pillars originating from a sanctuary have also been found at Entremont and had been reworked into a sanctuary of later date. (Benoit Entremont: 23 fig. 13, 53-5)

Besides "engraved" severed heads (Benoit Entremont: 54-5) Entremont has also revealed reliefs of severed heads. (Benoit Entremont: 57, fig. 48; 59, fig. 50; 85, fig. 70) A number of these severed heads have been portrayed with a human (or divine) hand placed upon them. (Benoit Entremont: 85, fig. 70-1; 86, fig. 72; 87, fig. 73)

In summary we can say that statues in 'Buddha position', skulls and niches for skulls and renditions of severed heads, revealing such salient features as jutting cheekbones, tight lips and triangular faces, belong to a certain tradition or are at least aspects of a certain culture group. It would be acceptable to assume that this culture and the 'severed head style' also existed in Glanum I<sup>6</sup> as finds of statues in 'Buddha' positions appear to suggest.

Unfortunately, excavations at Glanum have as yet not revealed examples of this type.<sup>7</sup> Like Entremont habitation of the settlement at Roquepertuse ceased after Roman conquest and destruction (ca. 123 B.C.). Consequently, it is difficult to assess the degree of romanization brought about by the Roman domination. This applies especially to the effects this might have had on this culture and 'severed head style'. This style disappeared at Glanum where habitation continued, even after the advent of the Romans. Here sculpture was superseded by unmistakable Hellenistic shapes and Augustean forms. Traces of archaic Greek style in sculpture, which are noticeable in the sculpting of statues in a 'Buddha' position, are no longer perceptible after Roman domination became a fact.

<sup>6</sup> The heads sculptured on the column from Glanum I do not represent severed heads, but heads portrayed with a complete neck. (Rolland 1963: 307-14; Salviat 1969: 435 et seq.)

<sup>7</sup> However, remains of a very slight relief representing a head—which might be of the severed head type—have been found. (Rolland 1962: 1345 pl. CCLXXII fig. 12)

Traces of local influence, which are noticeable in the shape of the severed heads are no longer perceptible either. Sculpted heads following the Hellenistic and Augustean traditions are known for their oval shape, soft, fleshy cheeks and full, curving lips; this also applies to locally manufactured examples. (Pobé and Roubier 1958: 183, 186; Rolland 1969: pls. 61, 74). In view of Noves' proximity to Glanum it is improbable that the disappearance of the 'Buddha' and severed head style and its substitution by new Hellenistic and Augustean traditions, should not have had its effect in Noves as well.

If we take into consideration a margin of about a century and assume that this change in tradition was completed between 100 B.C. and the beginning of our era, we can state that in all probability the severed heads from the Tarasque cannot have been sculpted after this period of transition. In summary, the implication of what has been said above is that the Tarasque must have been sculpted between 540 B.C. and the beginning of our era. We feel that within this frame of reference any attempt to reach a more precise date would be premature.<sup>8</sup>

### *Cultural context*

We will now try to assess the possibilities of a cultural setting for the statue, considering its findsite and date. In order that this be done lucidly, a brief synopsis of cultural developments in France, with particular attention to the Provence, is imperative. Almost the entire area of France and part of Spain (Catalonia) was dominated by the "Urnfield culture" from approximately 1000 to 800 B.C. (Briard 1973: 151-4) Cayla de Mailhac is the most important archeological site in the south of France, its oldest urnfields dating from the decades between 750 and 700 B.C. (Briard 1973: 154; Hodson and Rowlett 1973: 159-78)

From the eighth century B.C. onwards new immigrations from regions north of the Alps marked the beginning of the Hallstatt

<sup>8</sup> Various dates—e.g. Eydoux: "periode de l'indépendance" (Eydoux 1961: 33), Filip: "vorrömische Zeit" (Filip: 1969: 934) also given at the Lapidaire museum; Benoit (1954: pl. XXI) and Reinach (1908: 290) La Tène II—are not elaborated on. They do all fall within the period mentioned above however.

culture. The new elements introduced by this culture were the use of the horse as a beast of burden and as a draught animal, and the knowledge of iron working. Large parts of France "were rapidly and thoroughly occupied". (Briard 1973: 155) The Hallstatt culture penetrated the Massif Centrale from where "its bearers could look down on the earlier-arrived communities, still without iron and burying in old-fashioned urnfields along the coastal plain". (Hawkes 1963: 63)

During the first half of the fifth century important developments were materializing in the Northwest European Iron Age region. The region centered between the Rhine, Moesel and Marne rivers was becoming the focal point of the European Iron Age, asserting its superiority over the old center further south-east. Most important factor in this shift is the appearance of a new style, La Tène. As far as is apparent the transition was not accompanied by large scale migrations. (Hodson and Rowlett 1973: 186) Most regions in France were sooner or later influenced by this transition (Hodson and Rowlett 1973: 183-91); to such an extent that by the time of Caesars' conquest of Gaul La Tène was by and large in complete domination. (Hodson and Rowlett 1973: 184, 195-8)

As for the south of France, the Provence in particular, we have seen that the Urnfield culture had spread along the southern seaboard between 1000 and 800 B.C. It has also been noted that the advent of the Hallstatt culture in the north did little to alter the culture of the inhabitants in the coastal region. The contiguity of Hallstatt and Urnfield cultures lasted until the beginning of the sixth century B.C. Although mediterranean imports have been attested in Urnfield cultures before this date it may safely be assumed that mediterranean influence was intensified by the founding of the Greek colony Massilia (ca. 600 B.C.). The resulting influx of mediterranean import was of extreme importance to the inhabitants of the coastal regions. It has been pointed out that due to the "status value" of these imports an expansion of Urnfield products in Hallstatt areas is perceptible. The expansion materialized in the sixth century, during Mailhac III. (Hodson and Rowlett 1973: 178)

Contrary to the Hallstatt culture before 500 B.C., the La Tène culture did spread to the Urnfield area during the third century



B.C.. Ensérune's necropolis, dating from 4th. and 3rd. centuries B.C., comprises an urnfield with embedded urns. The gravegoods are typologically related to wares from the old Urnfield culture. But especially after 250 B.C. this burial ground has revealed an abundance of La Tène-ware, i.e. fibulae, swords and shields. (Hodson and Rowlett 1973:188-9) Entremont has also revealed material which shows clear traces of La Tène influence. (Benoit Entremont: 39) According to Hodson and Rowlett, there is, however, no disruption as far as habitation of the Languedoc-Roussillon coastal region is concerned, the continuity spanning a period of the most ancient Urnfield culture up to Roman times. It must be added that the influence of Massilia was felt more by Entremont and the region east of the Rhône and south of the Durance than by the region west of the Rhône.

We have already mentioned the Greek trading-post at Glanum. Entremont was a large "oppidum" with a fortified wall, containing single-roomed houses. In terms of culture it is clear that local traditions merged with Greek traditions, e.g. local pottery, pottery from Massilia and from the Aegean. This hybrid local culture is often termed Gallo-Greek. (Piggott 1965:223)

Now that we know that the region, and period in which the Tarasque was made, is related to the Urnfield and La Tène cultures and mediterranean influences, it is important to consider the possibilities of combining the above mentioned archaeological data with historical evidence.

According to early sources—Herodotus (V. 10) and Hecataeus (in Stephanus of Byzantium: Massalia)—Massilia was founded in the territory of the Ligurians. Hecataeus adds that these Ligurians lived in an area south of the Celts. Herodotus (II. 3; IV. 49) and Ephorus (Jacoby II App. 50-52) place the Celts in the "far west". If we assume that Hecataeus was also familiar with this fact (Pearson 1939: 34) it is of the greatest significance to discern the distinction, made by Hecataeus, between Ligurians and Celts. Justinus (XLIII, 3), though of much later date, makes a similar distinction. Scylax (Peripl. 3), who drew largely on sixth and fifth century sources, mentions Iberians and Ligurians inhabiting the Franco-Spanish coastal region. Modern research on Ligurian placenames has shown that the Ligurians should be situated west

of the Rhône river too (Weiss 1926: 526ff.; Hawkes 1963: 79-80). It is interesting to find corroboration in Polybius (III 37.9; 39.4; 41. 1; 41. 6) who places Iberians in the coastal region in Spain controlled by Carthage, Celts between the Pyrenees and Massilia, and finally Ligurians between Massilia and Italy. Justinus' description of Massilia's fortunes mentions the struggle against Ligurians (Justinus XLII). Later he mentions Celts and Ligurians disturbing the tranquillity of the colony (Just. XLIII). Strabo also mentions that the inhabitants of the region around Massilia (between Rhône, Durance and Alps) were first called Ligurians and later on Celto-Ligurians by the Greeks (Strabo IV 6.3). Therefore, the most obvious conclusion from these sources would be that the southern coastal region was first inhabited by Ligurians and then by Celts or Ligurians with a Celtic admixture.

If we attempt a correlation of the archaeological evidence with the historical evidence, then we should be able to state the following hypothesis: the early archaeological material (Urnfield culture) corresponds with the early inhabitants, the early mentioned Ligurians. Archaeological evidence from younger strata (La Tène) corresponds with the later Celts. In the region between Rhône, Durance and Alps the emergence of the new Celtic influence can be placed in the 3rd century B.C. (Benoit Entremont: 8; Hawkes 1963:72) There is some information referring to Massilia's influence on the surrounding areas. It is especially important to know that the Massiliots controlled some of the surrounding countrysides, but were mainly engaged in maritime trade. Massiliot tradingposts were mostly situated along the coast, not in the interior (Strabo IV 1. 5). According to Justinus (XLIII, 4) the Massiliot colonists taught the barbarians civilization: a townlife, the cultivation of mediterranean crops, and finally the rule of law. Thus this part of Gaul became a part of Greece, rather than merely a region where a Greek colony was founded (Justinus XLIII 4; Strabo IV 1. 5). The Roman campaign against the Salyes—a collective term denoting the Celto-Ligurians living around Massilia—however, was no more than an action against some inconsequential barbarians ("Salyes atroces" Avienus, *Ora maritima* vs. 701; App. Hist. Rom. IV 12; Diod. Sic. XXXIV/XXXV 23; Livy Epit. LXI). In sum-



mary, we can remark that, if the Tarasque was sculpted in Noves between 540 B.C. and the beginning of our era, a number of cultural influences can be traced: Ligurian, Celtic,<sup>9</sup> and mediterranean.

### *Interpretation*

Bearing in mind the above mentioned results, we shall now offer an interpretation. This interpretation will consist of two parts: a brief observation of the appearance of the Tarasque, and a more thorough appraisal of the statue's meaning. The most remarkable characteristic is the juxtaposition of sophistication and primitiveness of the sculpting. The way in which the monster asserts itself in space, the detailed and perfect finish of its back (fig. 7) and the rendering of the muscles in the legs is reminiscent of the work of a mediterranean sculptor. The detailed perfection of the back is especially reminiscent of Etruscan lions and chimaera's (Llewellyn Brown 1960: pls. XLIV d3, XLIX b1; LII b; LIII 1.2; LV b.c; LVII a). On the other hand, use of simple, shallow incisions to demarcate parts, or to distinguish one part from the other, reveals a more primitive procedure (special attention should be paid to head and jaws and the hair on the severed heads) (figs. 3-5, 8). Incisions on stone are usually avoided by more sophisticated sculptors, who shape rather than carve. Incisions on stone are also revealed on the Buddha-image of Entremont. (Benoit Entremont: 68 fig. 52; 70 fig. 54)

As far as the appearance is concerned the statue does not represent a creature known from Greek or Etruscan mythology. This leads us to conclude that the statue was sculpted by a Celt or a Ligurian, using techniques learned from a Greek or an Etruscan in order to give shape to a topic for which there was no Greek or Etruscan prototype. Alternatively, the statue might have been sculpted by a Greek or an Etruscan trying to execute, as well as he might, an unknown topic explained to him by a Celt or a Ligurian.

Any interpretation of the meaning of the Tarasque must take into account the limitations inherent in the sources called upon to attempt such an interpretation. The Ligurian and Celtic cultures

<sup>9</sup> The postulated date 540 B.C. as a "terminus post quem" is not likely as Hallstatt influence in this area was minimal and does not allow for recognizable Hallstatt traces in the Tarasque. It would be more reasonable to accept La Tène influence after 300 B.C.

were both non-literate; there is no written information on the Celts other than that of classical antiquity and of Christian Ireland. As for the Ligurians there is even less information available, other than knowledge of their existence and probable place of domicile.

This incompleteness necessarily implies a degree of speculation in our interpretation. Our interpretation will rest partly on material gleaned from medieval Irish texts and from classical literature, partly on archaeological evidence from the Celtic and Ligurian cultures, and finally on methods used in social anthropology. The human heads, the creature's phallus and its anthropagus character will be our primary concern.

### *The human heads*

Severed heads occur frequently as a theme in Celtic La Tène art. (Lambrechts 1954:20) The best preserved representations are depicted on bowls, armlets and other metal objects. They are shaped in a triangular form—i.e. broad at the top, tapering down towards the chin. Clearly, extra attention has been devoted to the accentuation of the cheekbones.

Objects representing severed heads have been found in a wide area, spanning a very long period. (Bianchi Bandinelli 1973: 59, 113, 114-5, 128-132; Bretz-Mahler 1971: 49-50) Examples have been found in Entremont, modelled not only in metal (Benoit: Entremont 96, fig. 80) but also in stone (see above p. 36)

It is apparent that these representations must be related to the real skulls found at Roquepertuse (Filip 1969: 1163) and Entremont. (Benoit: Entremont 55-58) Diodorus Siculus refers to the Celts' preoccupation with severed heads: "When their enemies fall they cut off their heads and fasten them about the necks of their horses; and turning over to their attendants the arms of their opponents, all covered with blood, they carry them off as booty; singing a poem over them and striking up a song of victory, and these first fruits of battle they fasten upon their houses, just as men do, in certain kinds of hunting, with the heads of wild beasts they have mastered. The heads of their most distinguished enemies they embalm in cedar-oil and carefully preserve. . . ." (Diod. Sic. V. 29. 4 transl. C. H. Oldfather, cf. Polybius II. 28; III. 67; Strabo IV. 4, 5; Livy X. 26, 11; Justinus XXIV, 5) As

finds of skulls have borne out, these descriptions are authentic pieces of ethnography, not mere tales of the atrocities of 'barbarians'. Besides the skulls from the sanctuary mentioned above, Entremont has also yielded a skull in which a hole, through which a nail was driven, can clearly be seen. (Benoit, Entremont: 24, fig. 14) These rituals must not be regarded as phenomena on their own, but as an integral part of a larger meaning which the human head held for the Celts, embodying "the soul, centre of emotions as well as of life itself. . . ." (Megaw 1970: 20) Head-hunting and sacrifice of prisoners (Diod. Sic. V: 32, 6; Strabo IV: 4, 5) by the Celts is also not without meaning. Van Baaren refers to the importance of similar rites for contemporary illiterate, 'primitive' peoples, i.e. that it is related with the belief that new life is generated by the bloody killing of a victim. (Van Baaren 1960: 81 et seq.)

In the region under study here the relationship between severed head and fertility symbol can be archaeologically attested. Above the architectural remains containing the severed heads at Roquepertuse a waterbird is represented; a representation from the late Urnfield period known as "one of the prominent symbols of fertility. . ." (Gimbutas 1965: 342). A stone from the "sanctuaire aux crânes", on which a relief of a double ear of corn, was found at Entremont. (Benoit, Entremont: 53)

Returning now to the Tarasque: the severed heads, with their downcast expression, upon which the creature rests its claws in such a victorious manner, surely expresses a combination of triumph and trophy. If we take Diodorus Siculus' description, this experience was certainly not without meaning for the Celts. Besides, it is not unlikely that the heads, associated with a bloody death, are symbols of fertility.

### *The phallus*

Most authors have neglected to pay attention to this part of the creature's anatomy in their description and interpretation of the statue. Probably this can be ascribed to the fact that on most photographs the phallus can hardly be noticed as it is partly hidden by the heads. Although the phallus is fairly conspicuous, if the statue is seen *in natura*, it is possible that at one time it was made to appear even more prominent by having some kind of object

attached to it. This would be likely if one regards the pierced hole as once having served this purpose.

In studies on Celtic art the phallus is a neglected topic. Jacobsthal remarks in his, now classic, study of La Tène art that "on the whole the Celts are decent" (Jacobsthal 1944: 3). This remark deserves further qualification as there are numerous examples of Celtic woodcarving which show the genitals very explicitly (Piggott 1974: 71; Megaw 1970: 165 no. 281). Wooden images have also been found with holes for, in all probability, a "detachable penis" (Megaw 1970 no. 280; Piggott 1974: fig. 31 b + c).

For a general discussion in depth on the symbolic values of the phallus Vanggaard's book contains useful information. The author concludes, using evidence from historical, ethnological, psychiatric and zoological research, that the penis as a symbol has two main meanings. Firstly, as a fertility symbol, and secondly, as a symbol of aggression and dominance (Vanggaard 1971: *passim*).

Excavations near or in lakes and springs have revealed countless wooden images, e.g. images from the springs of the Seine, near the Lac Leman, near springs in Ireland, and also in Central Europe. Many of these images are phallic. Waterwells, which were probably used as ritual shafts, have also revealed phallic wooden images. (Piggott 1974: 64-69; Megaw 1970: 165 no. 281). Bearing in mind that springs and lakes are symbolic of fertility this might well imply that the abundance of phallic representations is of a related nature.

A sandstone statue of a warrior, found in Hirschlanden dating from the end of 6th century B.C. (Megaw 1970: no. 12) is clearly a representation of an ithyphallic warrior.

Polybius' remark that the Celtic warriors used to go into battle naked also supports the view that the association between war and phallus was meaningful in Celtic imagery (Polybius II 29, 8; III 114, 3; cf. Diod. Siculus V 30, 3). It is likely that the phallus played a dual role in Celtic culture, i.e. as a symbol of dominance but also as a fertility symbol. Should the phallus on the Tarasque reflect both meanings, then the dominance symbolism is well suited with the trophy-like character of the severed heads and the victorious pose of the creature's claws on them. If, on the other hand the phallus is symbolic of fertility as well, then it shares this association with the severed heads.

*The anthropophagus character*

A discussion of this aspect must make a distinction between the creature's shape and its devouring nature. The main purpose of this distinction is that the statue's shape might contain an indication which would be relevant for an understanding of its devouring nature. If the Tarasque was an obscure creature existing only in the imagination or in phantasy, it would be almost impossible to find parallels.

On an interior panel in the Gundestrup-bowl a pair of animals has been depicted (Piggott 1965: 219 pl. XXXIX b). They have long claws, clearly incised ribs, a long tail, manes across neck and shoulders and monster-like jaws. It is apparent however, that these are wolf-like animals. These 'Gundestrup-wolves' are not portrayed as man-eaters. But man-eating wolves are represented on other objects in Celtic art. Reinach shows a number of unambiguous examples of man-eating wolves, or wolf-like creatures, with human limbs<sup>10</sup> dangling from their jaws (Reinach 1908: 279 fig. 1-4).

If we compare the Tarasque with the animals on the Gundestrup-bowl it is possible to perceive some similarities; e.g. deeply incised ribs, the mane which is set back across the shoulders and back and not under the chin as is always done in the case of lions (Llewellyn Brown 1960; passim), the claws, the wide monster-like jaw and the small ears. The creature's broad torso and its short, stocky legs are reminiscent more of a lion than of a wolf (Hatt 1970: 27).<sup>11</sup> Assuming that the Tarasque contains wolf-like traits we will try to assess in which way this has relevance for the interpretation of its man-eating aspect.

Reinach's book "le carnassier androphage" contains the conclusion that the wolf served a totemistic purpose for the Celts: a similar purpose was fulfilled by the lion for the Lydians (Reinach 1931: 163-9).<sup>12</sup> The Lydian totem is clearly endowed with a man-

<sup>10</sup> The setting of a human arm, dangling from the jaw instead of jutting out from the jaw, is not unusual. (see 'Oxford Bronze' Reinach 1908: 279, fig. 1)

<sup>11</sup> The recurrence of lions as symbols of powerful beings in Etruscan and Greek art might have, consciously or unconsciously, influenced the sculptor. (Greek, Etruscan or Celt?)

<sup>12</sup> Reinach's use of the term 'totem' is no longer tenable after Lévi-Strauss'

eating aspect; Reinach concludes, when referring to the Celtic wolf-totem that "il est à fois le père des hommes et leur tombeau; ils viennent de lui et ils retournent en lui" (Reinach 1908: 279).

Hubert's observation throws further light on this subject; according to Hubert the Gundestrup-bowl contains a panel in which the god Manannan—who is connected with the sea and rebirth—is portrayed with a two-headed, man-eating, serpent-like creature (Hubert 1912: 222 pl. Dillon & Chadwick pl. 2). Hubert calls this creature the "gweil-gi", a mythical serpent, but also a mythical representation of the sea. In Gaelic "gweil-gi" means "wolf-bitch" (Hubert 1912: 222). This taken together would seem to imply that a mythical creature associated with a wolf-like being has been portrayed in combination with a "god of rebirth".

Both cases betray a relationship between death, rebirth and a wolf-like being. Should the Tarasque have wolf-like traits it might possibly mean that the monster was supposed to characterize a being associated with transmigration of souls and rebirth. A representation along these lines fits well with the image of metempsychosis with which the Celts were familiar (Diod. Sic. V 28, 5-6).

A review of the Tarasque bearing this aspect in mind, with special attention to the meaning of the severed heads and the phallus, will doubtlessly reveal the following:

- the human heads symbolize death and defeat, but are also associated with fertility
- the phallus symbolizes domination, and also fertility
- the Tarasque is a man-eater, yet also a life-giver.

Clearly then the Tarasque can be seen as a divine, mythological being, with power over life and death; a power which is more than apparent.

How well such a creature fits into the Celtic way of thinking is admirably summed up in the following passage:

analysis. (Lévi-Strauss 1973) It is possible however to assume that the wolf was an important and meaningful animal for some groups of Celts, and was possibly a god to them. Whether the multifarious animal representations in Celtic art are in any way related to a totemistic tribal organisation is beyond the scope of this study; any statement to that effect would need thorough research. (Lévi-Strauss 1973:79)



"... there is no indication that they (the Celts) ever thought that the world had a beginning and, in consequence, probably would have an end also (. . .) The Earth, the soil spread around "without end" (. . .); the seasons, the crops, the animals return in predictable sequence (. . .) the idea of metempsychosis must have seemed a logical potentiality to the more thoughtful individuals of a civilization which regarded the world and "nature" as without beginning and without end, and everything in it subjected to an "éternel retour" when circumstances were the same" (Draak 1969:644-5).

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