

## **FILM 1- SOCIETY IN ROMANESQUE PERIOD**

At the Abbey of Marcillac-Lanville, accompanied by **Laetitia Copin-Merlet**, we discover how the Church affirmed itself before the lords, and how the monasteries, armed with their recently acquired power, took over the land and began building places of worship at a very rapid pace.

**Here we are before the Abbey of Marcillac-Lanville. What was the place of the church in the 11th century ?**

The church played a central role in Romanesque civilization. You have to know that the Church went through a serious crisis period in the preceding centuries, in the 10th and 11th century, mainly due to the rise of secular rulers. So it reclaimed its place. The papacy established the reforms known as the Gregorian reforms, which led to a change in lifestyle, especially for the monks. In this way, the Church reclaimed the authority it had lost.

**Marcillac-Lanville is also a resting place on a pilgrim trail. What did that mean, during that time ?**

To make a pilgrimage is to get closer to God. The final destination is not so important ; salvation is sought in moving from place to place, from one holy site to the next, worshipping relics. One can also undertake a pilgrimage for the purpose of penance, for example. Here, at Marcillac-Lanville, the mural paintings bear testimony to these pilgrims. They display cohorts of pilgrims wearing the traditional broadbrim hat and cloak, carrying sacks and walking sticks. The paintings are damaged but they give us an idea about the pilgrimages of the Romanesque period.

**A period during which churches developed and flourished...**

During the Carolingian period, there were very few parish churches. These small churches came to structure the land. In the XIIth century, these parish churches developed into a dense network. The goal in the Middle Ages was to have a spiritual aura over the population.

**Tell us about the abbeys. They were also developing ?**

Yes, they began developing to a great extent. Since these were times of economic prosperity, the existing abbeys became very rich. So they modernized and expanded, acquiring greater power. Also in the 12th century, new abbeys were built, like the one at Marcillac-Lanville and at Saint-Amant-de-Boixe, nearby. These monasteries owned arable land and they attracted a great number of peasants who came to work the land. The peasants lived around the abbey, and thus monastic villages developed.

**You mention the peasants. While there are many traces of the lords and churches, there are not many of the peasants...**

Indeed, peasants lived in houses made of perishable materials, so they left mostly only archaeological traces. But Romanesque sculpture bears interesting testimony ;

the churches depict the agricultural work of the peasants related to each month. Each month of the year is linked to an agricultural task and is associated with a zodiac sign. For example, a capital at Airvault represents a peasant reaping a field.

**Is there something in particular that moves you, here, at Marcillac-Lanville ?**

There is indeed some moving testimony here, like these 12th century inscriptions that are visible all around the abbey, at the level of the apse. They are epitaphs, in other words funerary inscriptions that mention the names of the monks who attended the founding of the abbey. They mention two brothers, the Rapace brothers, and a certain Jean d'Angers. So we have the names of some of the monks who came here to establish one of the biggest monasteries of the Angoumois region.

*Romanesque treasures of Poitou-Charentes*, Poitou-Charentes region, 2014.

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