

The Warrior of Lattes: an Iron Age statue discovered in Mediterranean France

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Antiquity is pleased to present a preliminary report on the stone statue of a Celtic warrior recently discovered at the celebrated excavation at Lattes, southern France, and dating to around 500 BC.

Key words: Celts, France, Lattes, sculpture, warrior

A distinctive series of human sculptural representations found at Iron Age sites in Mediterranean France over the past century has occupied an important place in broader discussions of "Celtic" art, religion, and colonial encounters and cultural entanglements in Western Europe (cf. Py 1990, 1993; Arcelin *et al.* 1992; Dietler 1997; Megaw & Megaw 2001). Moreover, images of these statues appear in virtually every popular book or general scholarly synthesis on "the Celts". This is both because these statues constitute the richest source of indigenous self-representation found in any Celtic-speaking region of Europe prior to the Roman conquest, and because they appear to offer many tantalising clues toward understanding regional subtleties in various cultural practices, self-image and identity, status iconography, and cross-cultural consumption. However, very few of these works have actually been recovered from secure, precisely dated archaeological contexts using modern excavation techniques.

This article provides a preliminary consideration of a very recent addition to this group of sculptures: a life-size stone statue of a warrior discovered during the excavation of the ancient town of Lattara (modern Lattes) on the Mediterranean coast of France, about 8km south of Montpellier, in the Hérault Department of Languedoc (Figure 1). Although the excavation of the zone from which the statue was recovered is still in its early stages, it was thought useful to present immediately a description of this Iron Age sculpture because of the interest of the piece itself, its archaeological context, and the questions it raises in several domains. Equally relevant is the fact that the group of statues from Languedoc is, curiously, far less well known in the non-Francophone literature than is the somewhat different Provençal group from the other side of the Rhône River, which is often treated as typical for southern France as a whole. It should be emphasised that the statue itself has not yet been subjected to the full range of technical analyses that will be undertaken to complement the contextual and descriptive information offered here. Hence, this brief note should be considered as a preliminary set of observations.

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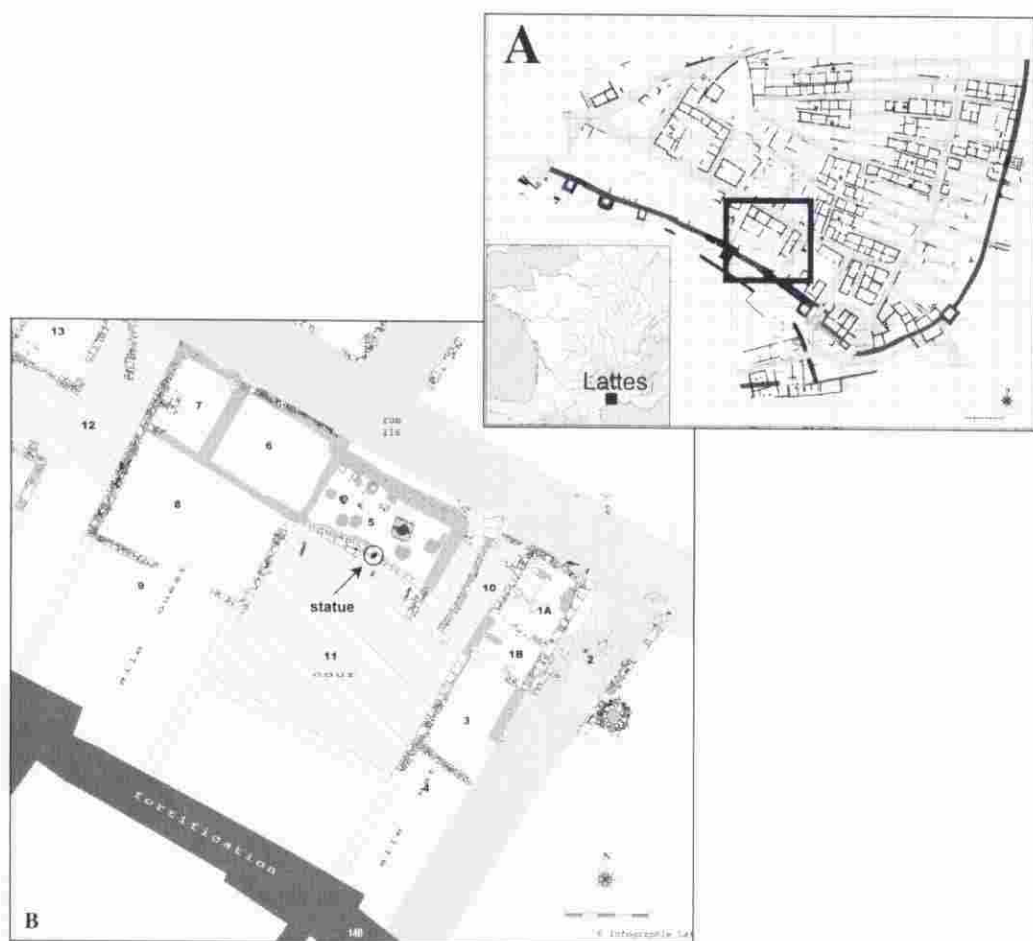


Figure 1. (A) Location of Lattes in Mediterranean France and location of the house of Zone 52 within the site of Lattes, Saint-Sauveur; and (B) plan of the house with its central courtyard, showing the position of the statue.

Circumstances and context of discovery

The statue was discovered as a reused architectural element in an Iron Age domestic structure of which the surface outline had been identified during the 2001 campaign of a long-term program of urban landscape topography at the site of Lattes. The excavation of the structure began in July 2002.

This house, constituting Zone 52 of the site (Figure 1), is one of the largest buildings yet identified in the pre-Roman town. It is situated between the internal façade of the southern rampart and, on the north, street 116, one of the major axes of circulation, which runs parallel to the rampart. It covers a surface of about 640 m² and has a large internal courtyard (Sector 11). Access to the central courtyard of the structure was through a wide passageway (Sector 10) paved with pebbles and having an axial stone-lined gutter designed to drain rainwater accumulating in the courtyard into a collection basin under street 116 (Figure 2). Surrounding the courtyard were various living and storage rooms with walls of stone topped by mud-brick, the common construction technique at Lattes. Unfortunately, part of the southern wing of the

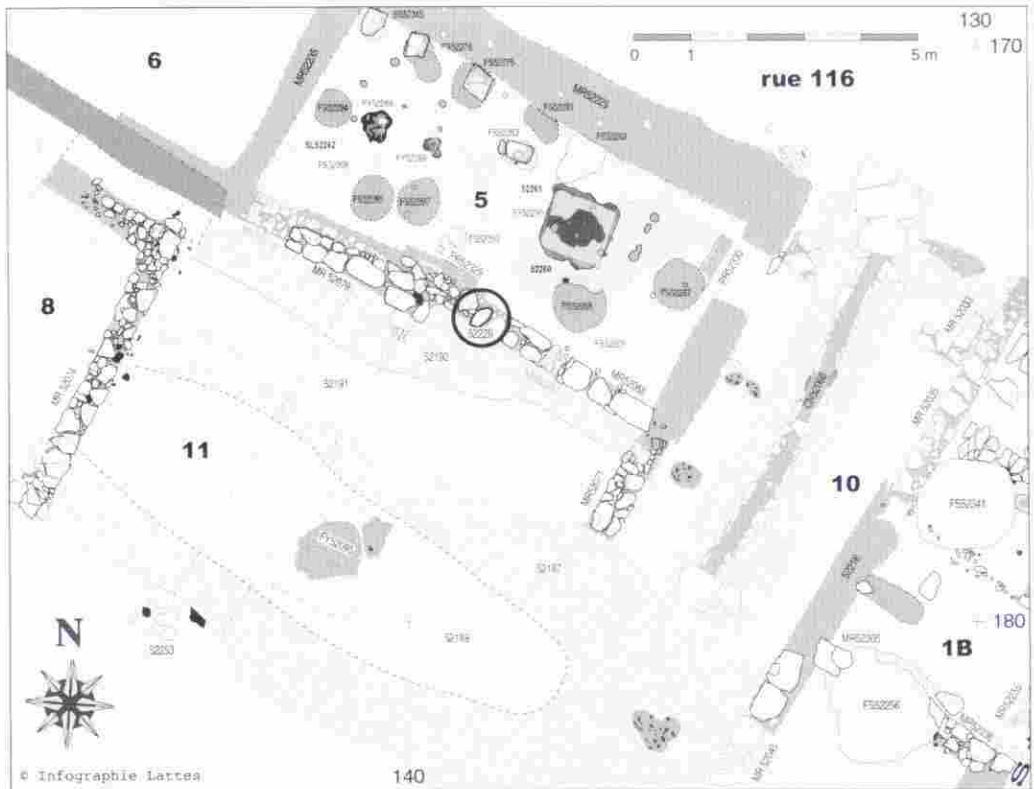


Figure 2. Detailed plan of the courtyard (Sector 11), the passage (Sector 10), and Room 5 of the house of Zone 52 at the level of the most recent intact floors (end 3rd century BC); the circle indicates the location of the statue (52229).

house was destroyed by modern agricultural activities, and only the east, north, and west wings, and the courtyard have synchronous levels preserved.

The sculpture was discovered during the concurrent excavation of Room 5 (forming the northern façade of the house bordering Street 116) and the central courtyard (Sector 11) immediately to the south. A wide door connected the courtyard to Room 5. The reused statue served as a doorjamb along the base of the eastern side of this door, and has been reworked for this purpose (Figure 3). It



Figure 3. The statue of a warrior (52229) in situ, serving as a doorjamb of door PR52416/52329 (to the left of the statue) and embedded in the wall MR52349 (to the right).

was buried progressively by subsequent acts of remodelling and raising of the threshold (Figures 4 & 5).

The foundation for the statue consisted of a concentration of sherds of *dolia* (very large storage jars) placed slightly under the first course of stones of the wall (MR52349) in which the statue was included. This wall was very finely crafted of small flat stones with an earthen matrix and it followed closely the profile of the statue against which it abutted. It was originally

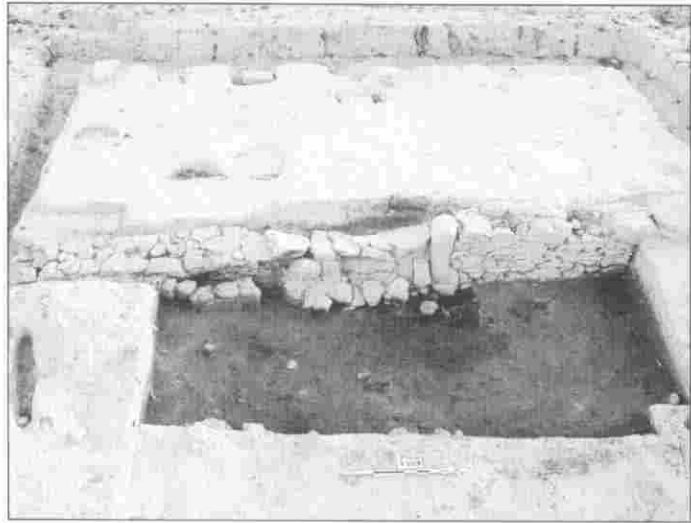


Figure 4. General view of Room 5 (to the rear) and the excavated portion of the courtyard, Sector 11, (in front): showing the ensemble of successive walls and door sills that covered the statue employed as a doorjamb (photograph taken from the south).

plastered with clay, at least on the side of Room 5. Shortly after its construction, the threshold of the door was outfitted with a row of embedded stone slabs that were capped on the courtyard side by a series of rounded blocks of stone, all of which was probably designed to protect Room 5 from the infiltration of rainwater. This system is already well known from several Iron Age hillforts of the nearby Nîmes region (see Py 1990:656, 683).

This first phase of construction and refurbishment is clearly dated by several superimposed levels of rubble, of packed earth floors, and of domestic sedimentation which were identified in the initial extensive excavation of the courtyard (Sector 11), and which abut directly against most of the southern wall of Room 5. These levels all yielded a homogeneous assemblage of artefacts dating to the third quarter of the third century BC. Hence, the construction of the wall and the act of emplacement of the reutilised statue can be securely dated to approximately the middle of the third century BC.

During a second phase, the threshold was refashioned using flat blocks of limestone (Figure 5, stones with hatched lines). Then, the walls between Room 5 and the courtyard were rebuilt with a different material and appearance (large blocks of conglomerate with fairly

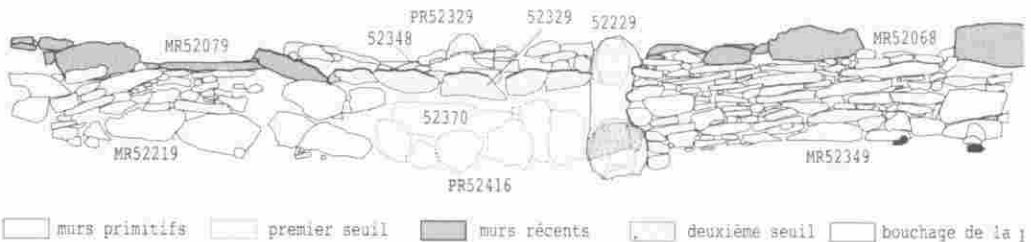


Figure 5. Elevation drawing of successive walls and door sills separating Room 5 from the courtyard, Sector 11 (southern face of the wall).

coarse granules were used: figure 5, stones marked in dark grey). Finally, this raised second threshold was covered over by a little wall of small stones which probably served as the foundation of a yet later threshold, as seems to be indicated by a step made of mud-bricks on the interior of Room 5. These acts of successive remodelling are linked to a process of continual elevation of both the rooms and the courtyard (the latter was resurfaced multiple times by pavements of pebbles) that eventually resulted in the complete burial of the sculpture. The chronology of this second phase can be situated broadly during the last quarter of the third century BC, as is indicated by the artefactual material recovered in the corresponding strata of the courtyard and the last floors preserved in the room.

The levels created by later occupation were destroyed by modern ploughing, and especially by the deep ploughing of 1963 that led to the discovery of the site of Lattara. The traces of furrows corresponding to this episode of deep ploughing have been identified over the upper surface of the intact levels throughout the excavation; and one such groove can even be seen engraved across the right shoulder of the statue, the top of which is at the same level as the highest strata preserved *in situ*.

Description of the statue

The statue was removed from its archaeological context at the end of the excavation campaign of 2002 and deposited at the Musée Henri Prades at Lattes where it awaits a series of analyses by technical specialists. For example, delicate remnants of painted decoration on a few other pre-Roman statues of the region (Gérin-Ricard 1927, Barbet 1987, 1991:63, 1992, Py 1990:816) suggest the possibility that similar traces may be preserved on its surface. Hence, cleaning of the statue has been delayed pending analysis by specialists. Similarly, the precise origin of the stone (a fine-grained limestone) has not yet been determined by petrological analysis, nor has the stoneworking technique been studied in detail. Consequently, this article is intended only to present the general state and dimensions of the statue as well as its pose and its representation of clothing and armour.

The sculpture was substantially mutilated after its initial creation. This occurred most obviously at the time of its reutilization as a building stone, but also probably before then. The most crisply defined marks of destruction indicate that its reutilisation as a doorjamb resulted in at least the reworking of the right arm, which was trimmed away to be flush with the southern face of the wall MR52349. This operation was probably carried out when the stone was already set in place (Figures 3 & 7B). In contrast, the lateral face of the right leg (which also projected beyond the vertical plane of the torso) was not damaged, probably because it was intended that this lower part of the statue would be partly buried with the base of the wall. It was probably also during the act of reutilization that the left leg was cut flush with the plane of the torso, that the tail of the crest of a helmet trailing down the dorsal side and the pectoral plate on the ventral side were effaced, and that the base (or perhaps plinth?) was reshaped. Other traces of damage, including the removal of the head, the left arm, and the right knee, show a smoother, more worn surface and may be older, perhaps before the episode of reuse. They might, for example, be the result of an intentional mutilation during a process of "desacralisation" of the statue.

The fact that the Lattes statue was found in a context of reutilisation is hardly unusual: the same is true of most of the Iron Age carved stone pieces found in the region, at least in the

case of those for which there is any secure archaeological context at all (Py 1990; Arcelin *et al.* 1992). What this means in terms of the significance of the statue over the course of its "social life" is not clear. At least three alternative scenarios are possible:

- that the statue had lost any sense of sacral or memorial aura it may have possessed and was viewed simply as a convenient piece of recyclable raw material for building, or
- that it had retained some symbolic significance and was mutilated and reused in building precisely as an iconoclastic act, as a way of desacralising or denigrating it, or
- that it was reused in building precisely because it retained some attribute of social memory or sacral status that would thereby be invoked and incorporated into the new building.

It has been suggested that the frequent reutilisation of carved stone stelae in the foundations of ramparts or retaining walls at various sites in the region may be an indication of the latter practice – and perhaps even a sign that such settlements were intentionally founded on the site of previous sacred spaces (Garcia 2000). Whatever the debatable credibility of this hypothesis, the excavation of the rather unusual domestic context in which the Lattes statue was found is not yet sufficiently advanced to evaluate the relative plausibility of these alternative interpretations. At present, one can simply observe that the statue appears to have been significantly mutilated before its secondary reuse in construction, and that its further trimming to fit the contours of the wall does not immediately suggest a particularly reverential attitude towards its form. The continuing excavation may help to clarify this issue.

In the state that the statue exists, it measures 79cm in height. This constitutes a near life-size representation. The minimum body width at the top of the belt is 39.5cm, at the shoulders it is 45cm, and at the base of the statue it is 49cm. The minimum ventral-dorsal thickness is also at the level of the waist and measures 25cm. The pose of the statue is unique among the series of Iron Age sculptural representations of warriors in Mediterranean France. Most of these are seated in a cross-legged (or "lotus") position. However, the Lattes statue is in a semi-kneeling position, with the right leg folded under the body and the left leg projecting forward

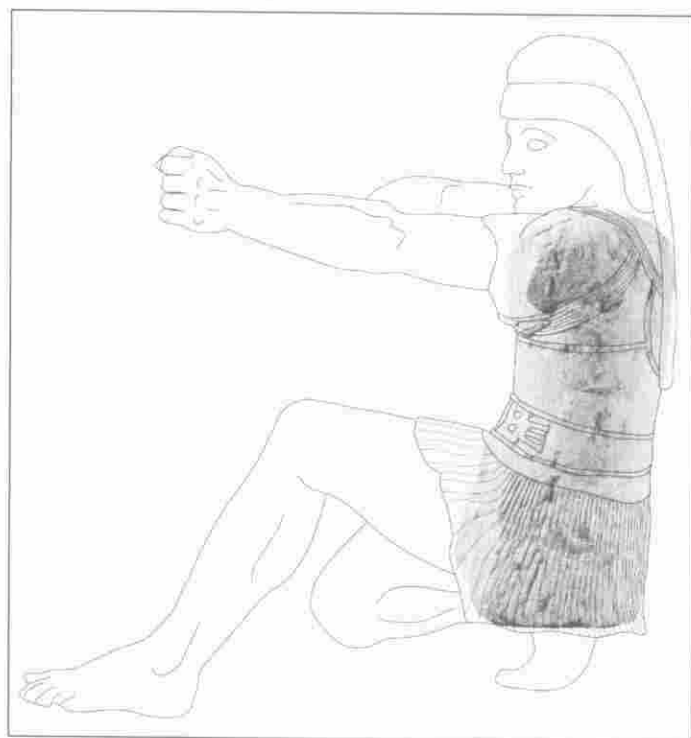


Figure 6. Hypothetical reconstruction of the original pose of the Lattes statue as an archer based upon similarities of preserved indications of posture to representations such as the Greek statue of an archer from the eastern pediment of the temple of Aphaia at Aigina.

(although the leg itself is missing, the profile of the top of the left leg clearly indicates this). In addition to this configuration of the legs, the position of the torso, with the shoulders sloping and turning slightly to the right, is reminiscent of the "pose of the archer" (Figure 6) illustrated, for example, by the well known Greek statue from the eastern pediment of the temple of Aphaia at Aigina (Charbonneaux 1938: fig. 81). However, it could just as well represent a spear-carrier, which is a weapon much better represented than the bow in the repertoire of the Gauls of Mediterranean France.

The clothing and armour, although unevenly preserved, are fairly complete (Figure 7). For the former, the pelvis and thighs are covered by a pleated skirt, represented by fine grooves that become progressively wider from top (0.9 cm on average) to bottom (1.1 cm on average). The skirt falls vertically at the back and in front between the legs (9 pleats in an 8cm width), while on the sides it follows the outline of the thighs. The surface of the torso and shoulders is uniformly plain. However, there is a short expanse of material (3.2 to 3.3 cm high) projecting from under the belt and superimposed over the skirt. This undoubtedly represents the presence of a piece of apparel made of cloth or leather. In contrast, the lower part of the right leg, which appears folded back under the skirt, is clearly naked.

The waist is circled by a wide belt (average width of 8.5cm on the ventral side and 8.2 cm on the dorsal side) visible around the entire body with a smooth middle section bordered at the top and bottom by a hem in relief (of 0.8 to 0.9 cm in width). The belt is fastened on the left side by a buckle with three hooks and an attachment plate (Figure 8) of 12.5 cm length. The lateral extensions of the buckle overlap against the hemmed borders of the belt, while the three hooks are fastened directly into the belt itself, without a receptacle plate. This is a

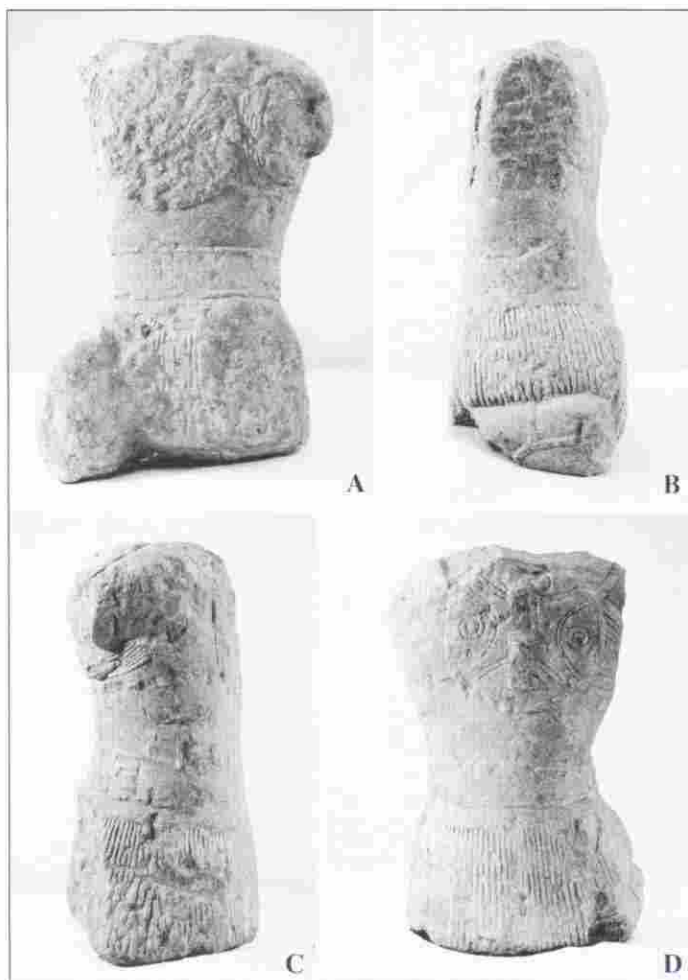


Figure 7. The statue of the warrior of Lattes seen from its four sides.

possible indication of a bronze belt. A wide ridged strap passes around the shoulders and under the arms. This has seven ridges in a width of 5 to 7cm. Scars of mutilation prevent tracing precisely the path of this band. However, it appears to be arranged in a figure-of-eight pattern, passing under the arms and crossing behind the neck where it intersects both under the dorsal plaque and under the rear base of the helmet. The function of this ridged strap is unclear. It is attached under the left armpit by a single-hook clasp with an oval-form element and central triangular ridged tongue (Figure 9). The hook appears to be attached into the strap without any visible guard-plate.



Figure 8. Detail of the belt with hemmed border and the triple-hook buckle of the statue of the warrior of Lattes.

Two flat round discs are carved in marked relief on the chest and back. These measure 26 and 29cm diameter, respectively. They are attached to each other and held on the body by four smooth cords which vary in width between 1.8 and 2.2cm (Figure 7, A & D). These cords are superimposed over the ridged strap and pass over the top of the shoulders and along the middle of the torso, thus encircling the arms. The function of a wider smooth strap on the left shoulder that is connected to one of the cords is difficult to interpret.



Figure 9. Detail of the ridged strap under the left armpit with its triangular-headed clasp.

The dorsal disc-plate is well preserved (Figure 10). The decoration, which is executed in bas relief channels set off by two deep incisions, is clearly defined. It is composed of four opposed semi-circles each encompassing a small circle. The rim of the disc-plate is bounded

by a channel. The surface of the ventral disc-plate, which would have served as pectoral armour, was heavily damaged by hammering and its decoration is poorly preserved (Figure 7A). However, what can be discerned suggests a composition similar to the dorsal disc-plate. The whole apparatus appears to represent a "cardiophylax" type of body armour composed of two (probably) bronze plates secured by leather cords.

On the surface of the dorsal disc, along a length of 26 cm, the trace of an effaced tail of the crest of a helmet is visible. It ends in a blunt point just above the base of the disc. At the top of this element one can detect the beginning of the rim of a helmet which would have rested on the neck but not covered the shoulders (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Detail of the decorated dorsal disc-plate and the effaced tail of the helmet crest.

On the right flank one can discern another linear trace of an effaced object (Figure 7B) that is of trapezoidal form and runs over the belt and the top of the skirt at an angle. The length is 23 to 29cm, with a width of 8cm at the top and 3.5cm at the base. This may be the remains of a representation of a dagger or sword.

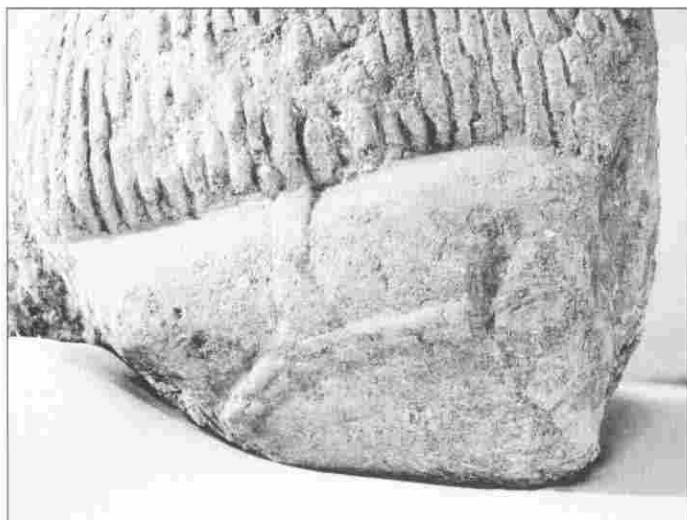


Figure 11. Left leg folded back under the pleated skirt, wearing a greave with a decorated rim.

Finally, the right leg, which is folded under the body, is equipped with a tibia protector of oval form fixed in the middle by a strap of 1.7 to 1.8cm width that encircles the calf. The rim of this greave is decorated with a double line of oval bosses (average width of 1.7cm) sculpted in shallow relief (Figure 11).

Reflections on the sculpture and the material culture of the Lattes Warrior

Given the still early stage of analysis, only a few preliminary observations that establish directions for further research are possible here. Turning first to a consideration of the style of the statue, one must emphasise, on the one hand, its original aspects and, on the other hand, its evident place within the distinctive regional set of Iron Age sculptures of Eastern Languedoc. Representatives of this group of sculptures are found scattered over the area between the Rhône and the Lez rivers and they exhibit only occasional similarities to the group found on the other side of the Rhône, in the Provence. Several phases of development can be discerned. Although the precise chronology of these phases is still a subject of debate, recent finds in secure stratigraphic contexts are beginning to clarify this issue.

In schematic fashion, one can distinguish the following somewhat hypothetical stages (*contra* the proposals of Guillaumet & Rapin 2000:80-83 and Rapin 2002:223-228). An *Initial Phase* would include the busts on a column of the type found at Beaucaire (Benoit 1969:38; Py 1990:819-821), Sainte-Anastasie (Py 1990:816-819, 282-283), Substantion (Bonnet 1924:107-113; Benoit 1969:pl.32; Richard 1973:128 & figure 20), and Marduel, with the latter clearly dating to before 500 BC (Py & Lebeaupin 1994:251-256, Arcelin 2000:284). An *Archaic Phase*, dating to the fifth and fourth centuries BC, is exemplified, most notably, by the bust of a warrior from Grézan (Espérandieu 1907:295, no. 47; Déchelette 1914:1534-1536; Benoit 1969:42 & pl. 31; Lasalle 1981:226-230; Py 1990:813 & doc. 280-281). A *Recent Phase*, dating to the third and second centuries BC, is illustrated by sculptures such as the cross-legged figures of Nîmes (Guillet *et al.* 1992:79, figure 30) and Marbacum (Benoit 1969, p.44 et pl.4; Py 1990, p.219 and doc. 284), the lintels with carved severed heads or cephaliform niches of Nages (Espérandieu 1907:335, no. 515; Déchelette 1914:1538; Benoit 1969:25, 32-33, figure 5 & pl.12; Py 1990:821 & doc.287), les Arènes (Benoit 1969:22; Lassalle 1981:223-226; Py 1990:821 & doc.288), and la Fontaine de Nîmes (Barbet 1992:97, figure 1). Finally, a *Late Phase*, dating to the first century BC, would include the statue of la Tour Magne (Lassalle 1981:229-230; Py 1990:819 & doc.285) and probably the warrior of Corconne (Chazelles 1991).

The Lattes statue can be attributed to the *Archaic Phase* on the basis of several criteria. In the first place, the unusually secure contextual dating of the statue would indicate its belonging to this phase. In effect, if the statue was reused as an architectural element in the mid-third century BC (providing an incontrovertible *terminus ante quem*), then the original act of its creation has a good chance of being significantly older. This interpretation is further supported by the typology of the clothing/armour represented on the statue.

For example, the cuirass of double-plate form is known from Italy as early as the eighth century BC, was common there during the sixth century (see especially the Capestrano warrior), and is extremely rare after the fifth century BC (Colonna 1974; Stary 1981; Kurtz 1985). Similarly, in Spain one finds this same type of armour represented on statues and included in funerary equipment during the late sixth and first half of the fifth century BC: for example, on the statues of Porcuna at Jaen (Negueruela Martínez 1990:141f) and at the cemeteries of Cabecico del Tesoro, La Serreta, La Solivella, Puig de Benicarló, etc. (Quesada Sanz 1997:571-577). Oval greaves, often with decorated rims, are also generally dated in the

western Mediterranean to the seventh and sixth centuries BC (Dehn 1988). They are well represented in Italy, in diverse forms, but also on the eastern coast of Spain from about ten cemeteries (Aranegui *et al.* 1993:126-127) and on archaic statues such as La Alcudia, Porcuna (Gonzalez Navarrete 1987:206-209). According to Quesada Sanz (1997:586), the date of their use does not extend beyond the first quarter, or first half, of the fifth century BC. In Mediterranean France, one can cite examples at Roquefort-les-Pins (Vindry 1978:65), Aups (Boyer 2000:257), the cemetery of Pézenas (Giry 1965; graves 147, 172, 250, 251), and Mailhac (Taffanel & Taffanel 1960). Even closer to Lattes are the probable fragments of greaves of Saint-Martin-de-Londres (Dedet 1995:281) and the hoard of Launac at Fabrègues (Hérault). Finally, belt buckles of the triple-hook type, although they are later than single or double-hook forms found in sixth century BC graves, do not extend much later in time than the beginning of the fifth century BC (Taffanel & Taffanel 1960: fig. 12 & 13; Solier *et al.* 1976; Pons 1976; Cerdeño Serrano 1977, 1978; Mohen 1980:78-79 and carte figs. 130 & 131; Passelac *et al.* 1981; Janin 2002:117, fig. 47, graves 14 & 15). These separate strands of evidence collectively argue for a likely date for the sculpting of the Lattes warrior around 500 BC, or during the first few decades of the fifth century BC at the latest.

One can also point to multiple similarities to the warrior statue of Grèzan, a work considered until now as the piece demonstrating the greatest artistic mastery of all the statuary of the region. Aside from the comparable quality of the workmanship and finesse in executing the clothing and armour, one can point to the broad belt with a hook buckle, the ridged straps encircling the arms and crossing behind the back, the presence of decorated breast and back plates, and a helmet with a long crest descending over the dorsal plate. There are, to be sure, a number of differences as well. For example, the Grèzan warrior, which was probably a full-length figure, has a pose that is less naturalistic. Moreover, the helmet is hood-like and flows over the shoulders in a style similar to the statues of Substantion and Sainte-Anastasie. The breast and back plates have different decorative motifs, they are rectangular rather than circular, and they are suspended from the neck and not attached to each other (see Connolly 1981:93 and Quesada Sanz 1997:576 for dating of such plates). Finally, the belt has undulating edges and its buckle has four rather than three hooks. Some of these differences are probably due to a more recent date for the Grèzan statue. For example, the four-hook buckle suggests the end of the fifth century or early fourth century BC (Jannoray 1955:396, no. 1; Taffanel & Taffanel 1960:33; Schüle 1969:pl.23, no. 10 & pl.71, no. 7; Jehasse & Jehasse 1973; Lassalle 1981: 228, fig. 101).

Given that the Lattes statue fits stylistically within the sculptural group of Eastern Languedoc, and assuming (pending petrographic analysis of the stone), that it was the product of a local or regional artist, it is also necessary to consider the various extra-regional influences that the sculpture suggests. Comparisons point far more toward the Mediterranean realm than toward the Hallstatt or La Tène zones of Continental Europe.

The most numerous and closest points of reference are with the Iberian area in the Levant region and its northern extension into the Roussillon and Western Languedoc regions of Mediterranean France. In terms of its repertoire of objects (helmet, disc-plate armour, shoulder straps, belt with buckle, greaves), the military equipment points toward numerous funerary contexts within an area extending from the region of Alicante in Spain to the Hérault river in France. Significant in this sense are associations with the cemetery at La Solivella, in the

Castellón region (Fletcher Valls 1965; Padro Parcerisa (1974), which has yielded decorated bronze disc-plates of the same type as those of the Lattes statue (fig. 12/1-2), bronze fragments that may be of a belt with cast edges (fig. 12/5), triple-hook buckles with lateral protuberances (Fig. 12/6), a ridged strap similar to the shoulder straps of the Lattes statue (fig. 12/4), and fragments of a greave (fig. 12/3). Other partial associations can also be found for the sixth and beginning of the fifth centuries BC in the graves and cemeteries of Western Languedoc. Examples include the grave of Corno-

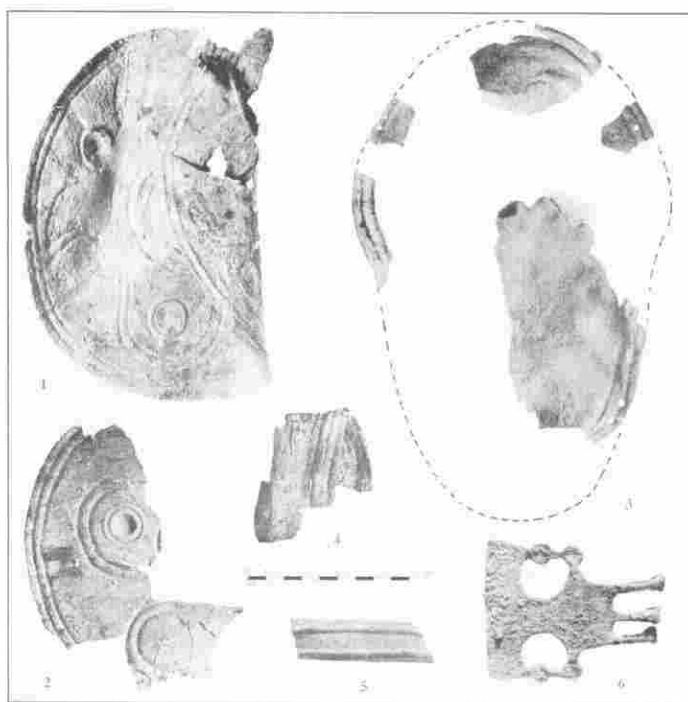


Figure 12. Pieces of armour from the cemetery of La Solivella (Aicab. de Chiveri, Spain) (after Fletcher 1965). 1-2: Decorated disc-plate armour; 3: greave; 4-5: ridged straps; 6: belt buckle with three hooks.

Lauzo (helmet, body-
armour, greaves, triple-hook buckle: Taffanel 1960:figs. 8-12), the cemetery of Couffoulens (the bronze disc of grave 22 and the triple-hook buckle of grave 75: Solier 1976:fig. 36; Passelac 1981: fig. 24), and especially the cemetery of Pézenas (bronze disc-plates, buckles, greaves, etc.) (Nickels 1990, G. Marchand personal communication).

These comparisons, to which one should add the references already cited to the statues of Porcuna dated to the first half of the fifth century BC, might well lead to an interpretation of the Lattes statue as being of "Iberianising", if not actually Iberian character – the sculptural style is still quite different from genuine Iberian statues (see Connolly 1981:124 for just such an interpretation of the Grèzan statue). This conclusion would be interesting because the site of Lattes is otherwise completely integrated within the distinctive material culture domain of Eastern Languedoc, which recent research has distinguished clearly from the Ibero-Languedocian zone further west. In particular, Iberian elements are a marginal aspect in the former region, whereas, as the label suggests, they are common in the latter. Hence, the unusual "Iberianising" aspect of the Lattes statue could easily lead to diverse speculations about its socio-political implications. One might, for example, hypothesise that, although the mass of the population remained attached to their traditional customs and tastes, an élite group may have adopted certain exotic cultural models. More precisely in this case, they may have looked to the Iberians for weapons and armour with which to adorn themselves. A comparable phenomenon has been proposed for later in the Iron Age, with La Tène arms from temperate Europe serving as the source of exotic models in that case (Py; in press).

Pushing this idea further, one might even entertain the hypothesis of the presence of a foreign aristocracy in eastern Languedoc during the sixth and fifth centuries BC. A few historical references and pieces of archaeological data might be interpreted as supporting this idea. For example, a passage of Pseudo-Scylax (*Periplus*, 3-4) indicates, somewhat enigmatically to be sure, that (during the fourth century BC) “*beyond the Iberians, Ligurians and Iberians live mixed up to the Rhône.*” The Tumulus B1 of Frouzet at Cazevieille (second half of the sixth century BC), which has often been interpreted as a “princely” grave (by the relatively modest standards of burials in southern France), might appear, by this logic, to be an



Figure 13. Painted representation of an Etruscan warrior with disc-plate body armour. From a grave at Ceri, Italy (after Connolly 1981:98, figure. 14).

“Iberianised prince” (Py 1993:146; Dedet 1995:280-282). The warrior equipment interred with him (a spear point, a *falcata* type dagger, and a greave with embossed decoration) was accompanied by bronze vessels, buttons covered with gold and silver, and a gold bracelet with round terminals with decoration that has long been compared to Iberian goldwork (Louis *et al.* 1953:99).

Such hypotheses about the implications of the Lattes sculpture would, in fact, be typical of earlier interpretive perspectives. However, although they cannot be dismissed out of hand as being inherently implausible, they are ultimately unconvincing because they do not pay sufficient attention to the local context of the statue. That context is of an indigenous coastal emporium, largely open to the wider Mediterranean from the period of the statue’s creation. Two observations permit a more nuanced consideration of this issue, which should not be trapped in a simple model of bilateral relations of the kind that underlies the hypotheses raised above.

In the first place, during the period in question (and indeed for a long time before that), metal objects circulated widely along the north-west Mediterranean coast in the context of trade relations. Iberian objects were no exception to this pattern, as is shown by the presence

of belt buckles of the type on the statue as far west as the Provence (Vindry 1978:fig. 25, no. 15) and Liguria (Piera Melli, personal communication), if not beyond (Verger 2000, fig. 7 & 9). The same was probably true of weapons and armour (see the earlier discussion of greaves). Secondly, it should be emphasised that several of the types of weapons and armour that, in Languedoc, are commonly attributed to an Iberian typology are, in Spain, considered to be derived from models of central Italian origin, or sometimes even imported from Italy. The disc-plate cuirass, greaves, and falcata-type swords are prominent examples (see Dehn 1988:186; Quesada Sanz 1997:126-161, 575-577).

Given this perspective, another kind of hypothesis can be ventured. Rather than envisaging an Iberian influence in eastern Languedoc, would it not be more plausible (and economical) to suggest that the inhabitants of this region, as the Iberians themselves, adopted certain arms of Italian origin which then served as models for the production of local objects? In other words, might it be possible that the similarities between the arms in eastern Languedoc and Iberia may be the result of parallel processes of trade and adoption in the two regions? From a typological perspective, comparisons with Italy, and especially Etruria, are not lacking. This is true for both objects and figurative representations (figure 13). Among the points of similarity one can cite the clasp that hooks under the left arm and the ridged strap that encircles the shoulders of the Lattes statue (figure 9). To our knowledge, there is no known parallel for this in southern France or Spain, but the triangular head is very reminiscent of so-called "Samnite" buckles in Italy (Rebuffat 1962:344-349). Such comparisons with Italian arms and armour have generally not been pursued in studies of the Early Iron Age in Languedoc (despite frequent comparison of bronze vessels), probably in part because cemeteries of this period, which might contain such objects, are lacking on the littoral plain of the region. However, the Lattes statue would certainly seem to indicate that this is an issue that deserves further scrutiny.

As far as the specific site of Lattes is concerned, especially in view of the chronology of the statue, it would seem difficult to avoid confronting a rather specific Italian hypothesis suggested by other kinds of archaeological evidence. That is, that several of the features of the statue may reflect the influence of Etruscan merchants, probably from Caere, who may have been living at Lattes as part of a trade enclave, perhaps since its origin, and who were apparently still present until about 475 BC (Py 1995; in press), when the site shifted into the Massaliote sphere of trade relations. Such questions emphasise the crucial importance of a careful analysis of the specific context of the statue, in conjunction with the more traditional analysis of form, style and iconography, and they underline the interest of a find such as the warrior of Lattes. Needless to say, the provocative questions raised by the statue are far from being resolved, but they open several paths for future research.

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The statue itself constitutes stratigraphic unit 52229 of Zone 52 and has been accessioned by the Lattes Museum under the inventory number 002.02.16.

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Prehistoric trade between Ecuador and West Mexico: a computer simulation of coastal voyages

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The author studies prehistoric sea travel along the coast between West Mexico and Ecuador using a computer simulation incorporating the performance characteristics of sailing rafts. The model predicts that while northward voyages may have taken as little as two months, southward voyages would have entailed at least five months and may have required a strategy that took the rafts offshore for as long as a month.

Keywords: West Mexico, Ecuador, trade, sailing rafts, navigation

A variety of evidence shows that contact occurred between Ecuador and West Mexico (Figure 1) from 400 BC to the sixteenth century, even if such contact was not necessarily continuous. The evidence comes from metallurgy (Hosler 1988; Hosler *et al.* 1990), shaft

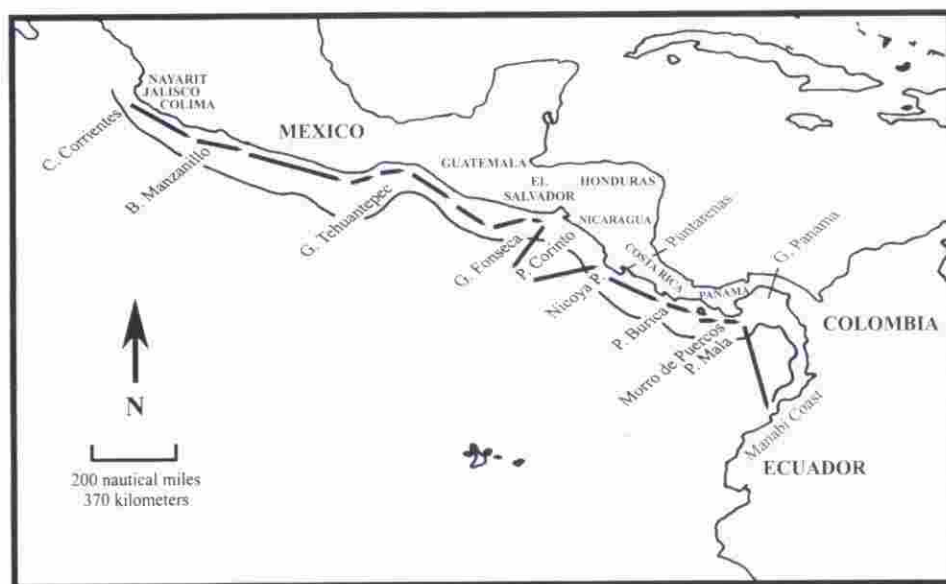


Figure 1. Pacific Coast from West Mexico to Ecuador showing suggested return voyage to the Manabí Coast and maximum sighting distances of land.

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