

Press release
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The archaeology and history of Huguenin Jacquin, a 14th century Burgundian

The district of Saint-Martin-du-Mont is located thirty kilometers to the north-east of Dijon. Before the construction of two private residences in the hamlet of Cestres, at “*La vie aux Maires*”, an INRAP team is currently excavating a medieval residence of the second half of the 14th century, which was rapidly abandoned at the beginning of the 15th century. This work is curated by the State (DRAC Burgundy).

The archaeology of a place of residence, business and power

The excavations have revealed a large stone building with a flagstone roof, composed of limestone plaques typical of residences on the Burgundy plateaus. The group of buildings seems to have originated with a rectangular one measuring at least 19 x 8 m. The inside is composed of a large “living room” arranged around an imposing central fireplace measuring 7.5 m². Composed of a circle of large ring of stone slabs, this “surround heating” fireplace resembles those equipped with a hood suspended from the ceiling, called Sarrasine fireplaces. In the south, a quadrangular room was later built. The pitchers and mortars found in this room indicate that it was a kitchen. The architecture and astonishing fireplace set this residence apart from the modest habitations known in Burgundy during the High Middle Ages.

The archaeological artifacts recovered corroborate this impression. A large number of clothing decorations, a gilt bronze belt, a spur, an anthropomorphic spoon handle and numerous coins, some bearing the effigy of Eudes IV, Duke of Burgundy (1315-1349), confirm the social status of the occupants. The discovery of a seal matrix, decorated with the profile of an individual surrounded by three clasps, and that of a monetary weight, show that this residence was also a place business, or even power.

Where we learn the history of Huguenin Jacquin and his lineage

The archaeology of historic periods sometimes draws on sources other than those left in the ground. Fortunately for the Inrap archaeologists, the written archives reveal the very probably name of the owner of this residence and thus enable them to determine its socio-economic history, and perhaps even the biography of its occupants.

Descending from a lineage of mayors of Cestres, Huguenin Jacquin was a wool trader linked to international commerce through his relationship with Antonio dei Grassi, a merchant from Milan. Starting in the 14th century, the Lombardic merchants were massively present at trade fairs, where they dominated the wool, horse, and even usury markets. In 1360 Huguenin Jacquin was already the guarantor for the Lombardic merchant. In 1376, the Burgundian became his creditor and ordered the confiscation of the wools of Antonio dei Grassi. From 1383 to 1384, Huguenin Jacquin was the Châtelain of Talant and served as an intermediary between the Duchess Marguerite and her “livestock buyers”. His daughter Eglantine then married Perrenot Poinot of Saint-Seine. She pursued the commercial activities of her father during the passage from the 14th to 15th centuries, often accompanied by her son Guillaume during her widowhood. Guillaume himself would become mayor of Cestres.

Though the existence of Huguenin Jacquin has been completely lost from collective memory, the name of the land plot currently being excavated, the “*Vie aux Maires*” perpetuates one of the aspects of this family from Cestres. This excavation highlights a type of person rarely addressed in archaeology: the rural trader, who had power in many activities, acting as a merchant, chatelain and representative of the community. With strong local ties, he also participated in international commerce through the intermediary of wool, a raw material that ensured the wealth of the Châtillon plateaus during the Middle Ages. A group of buildings contemporary with the Huguenin Jacquin residence, devoted to raising sheep for their wool, was also discovered nearby.

The tragic demise of the Jacquins?

The Jacquin residence appears to have been abandoned in the early 15th century. The archaeologists are attempting to understand the rapid, and probably dramatic, demise of this residence. In 1337, the Hundred Years' War began, but the Châtillon area in Burgundy suffered a terrible demographic depression from 1380-1417. Patrice Beck, a professor at the University of Lille III, tells of the disappearance of 322 homes, or 50% of those in proximity to Saint-Martin du Mont. The Jacquins abandoned many of their personal, and often valuable, belongings at their residence. Why did they do this? Recurring Black Death infestations could be one reason. Hit by the plague, they would have abandoned their home with no hope of returning. Invasions by armed bands of ferocious crooks could also have been a cause.

Since this catastrophic abandonment, the Jacquin residence has never been reoccupied. After being partially dismantled for its stones, it was rapidly covered with a layer of colluvial earth and the land has been used for agricultural purposes ever since.

L'Inrap

With nearly 2000 collaborators and researchers, Inrap is the largest archaeological research structure in France and one of the most important in Europe. This public research institution, under the direction of the Ministry of Culture and Communication and the Ministry of Higher Education, undertakes the majority of archaeological evaluations and excavations in partnership with the developers, equalling a total of more than 2000 sites per year in mainland France and its overseas territories. Its missions also include the scientific exploitation of the results and the diffusion of archaeological knowledge to the public.

Developer **Particulier**

Curation **Service régional de l'archéologie (Drac Bourgogne)**

Archaeological research **Inrap**

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