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NOTES ON OTHER SIGNACULA OF ST. JAMES OF COMPOSTELLA.

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Since the publication of our Thirty-sixth Volume, in which, at page 33, will be found a short notice of a *signaculum* of St. James of Compostella formed of jet, I have had an opportunity of examining other examples preserved in museums and by private collectors, and have myself had the good fortune to secure two of unusual size, and also a figure of St. Andrew formed of the same material. The closing of numerous monastic institutions in Italy has brought to light many objects of interest and rarity, which had been carefully preserved in their secluded treasuries and churches—votive gifts, in many instances, to the chapels of those saints to whom they more immediately had reference, or were the patrons of the donor. As might be expected, the monasteries and nunneries of the Neapolitan territory and of Sicily have yielded objects of Spanish origin, and the three fine examples which I was fortunate enough to obtain were brought from that island.

A short description of these, and some notice of other examples, may not be without interest, and will be rendered more so by the addition of some memoranda on the subject of Jet and its use as an ornamental material, the more important of which have been obligingly furnished to me by my friend the Baron Charles Davillier, whose investigations among numerous archives, and energetic researches on various subjects of artistic handicraft and archæological reference (particularly in respect to Spanish art), have been so fertile of valuable results.

To commence with the examples before me: the first is that figure of St. James the Greater, which has been figured and described in my former notice.

The second is the largest and finest figure of that saint cut from a single piece of jet which has fallen under my

observation. It is 8 inches high by $3\frac{7}{8}$ inches wide, and is pierced laterally for suspension by a cord; the dress and attributes are varied only in arrangement from those of the smaller figure; the gourd is on his right side; the arms are crossed, the right hand holding a rosary, the left his staff, from which unfortunately the small pennon has been broken; he does not carry the book, nor is the wallet attached to the staff, but is fastened to his left side; the feet are bare. On his left is the kneeling figure of a male pilgrim, bearded but bare headed, his hat hanging behind upon the back; from his hands, uplifted together in the attitude of prayer, a rosary hangs, his *bourdon* being supported by the arm on his right shoulder. I find no trace of gilding upon this carefully executed and unusually fine figure of St. Giacobe.

The third is carved from a thinner slab of jet, but is even in more perfect preservation; it is $7\frac{1}{4}$ in. high and 3 in. wide. The open book is in the left hand, the staff with *gibecière* and rosary is held by the right, the gourd at the left side, the feet in boots. On his right a kneeling male figure clings to the saint's staff, he is bearded and hooded, but the hat hangs behind. On the left a hooded female also kneels with hands in prayerful attitude; her hat also hangs backwards. This *simulacrum* is attached to a surbase evidently made for it, but from another piece of jet, and which bears the incised inscription in two lines

ORA PRO NOBIS
BEATE GACOBÆ.

This group, not quite so highly finished as the last, though perhaps by the same hand, has been enriched with gilding, remains of which are seen in various parts, the inscription and its bordering lines among the rest.

The fourth figure I secured, though probably carved at Compostella, is not a *signaculum* of the saint of that great sanctuary, but probably represents St. Andrew clad in flowing robes, standing and holding to his right side the saltire formed cross, emblem of his martyrdom. His head is bare, the long hair falling behind; the left hand, gathering up the folds of his outer mantle, supports at the same time, some insufficiently defined object. This figure stands upon an ornamental square base in three stages, the upper lobed to represent an eight petalled and flat-

tened flower; the middle corded, the bottom incised with scroll foliage. It is probably of somewhat later date than those described of St. James. Including the base it is $5\frac{1}{2}$ in. high.¹

Among other examples of Spanish sculpture in jet, second only in size and excellence to the larger one I have described, is a fine pilgrim's effigy of St. James preserved among other objects of the Farnese collection in the National Museum at Naples. Including a surbase, ornamented with an escallop shell, it is nearly 9 inches high.

In the Kircherian Museum at Rome are two small jet figures of St. James and some fragments, two small figures of men, one of a woman, also a coarsely executed figure, probably of St. Francis, of larger size.

Signor Alessandro Castellani has a St. Giacomo which differs in having the head turned towards one side. It is large and is accompanied by a male and female pilgrim.

In the Museum at Perugia is a jet St. James with male and female pilgrim; it is of medium size.

The Baron Davillier in Paris has a small St. Giacobe, and a small cleverly sculptured group, a *pieta*, in the same material; also a female figure of somewhat later date.

Mr. Nesbitt has recorded one which has been introduced as an ornament in a book cover.²

In my former notice I referred to that at Edinburgh, to one in the British Museum, and to the two smaller ones found and preserved at Zurich.

I have also noted another figure of a saint ornamented with silver filligrane which was in the hands of a dealer, and another of a female—a Magdalen (?)—of later date which I saw at Rome.

Jet and amber, cousins of one family but of different complexion, has been more or less known in various places from prehistoric times; its closeness of grain, brilliant surface, and intense blackness would soon attract attention, and although easily splintered and broken it yields to the knife and is a ready material for carving into ornaments, as beads, rings, whorls, &c. We find such among prehistoric remains in this and in other countries; again

¹ The above examples of carvings in jet were exhibited at the Monthly Meeting of the Institute, November 4, 1880.

² Vide "Arch. Journal," vol. xxxvi, p. 285.

in Saxon graves and occasionally with Roman remains, when, it has been observed, it has generally been found accompanied by objects connected with the worship of Isis. A finger ring of this material, with key-like projecting bezel, of Roman origin, is preserved in the Museum at York, in which neighbourhood it was found. Abundant in certain localities of England it seems to have been more rare upon the Continent, except in Spain, where from an early period it was adopted for the fabrication of beads and amulets, of small figures of saints and various ornaments, and later of coffrets and inkstands.

The name by which it is known in Spain is identical with that used by the Moors—*Azavache*—*Azabache*.

M. de Laborde ("Notice des émaux du Louvre," II^e partie, p. 349, sub voce "Jayet") writes:—

"La France (Ande e Arrége), la Saxe, et l'Espagne fournissent tous le jais qu'on porte. (He omits England). Les anciens l'ont connu ; au moyen âge on lui a attribué une grande puissance curative, surtout à cause de sa vertu attractive. On en faisoit un grand usage en crucifix, en amulettes contre le mauvais sort, en petits tableaux portatifs, en petites statuettes, en vases, en patenôtres, et en ornements de broderies pour les vêtements."

He refers to various objects in inventories, &c., of dates varying from 1328 to 1599, such as crosses, a mirror, candlesticks, paternosters, and "*un petit Saint Jacques taillé de geitz noir, assis sur un pillier de mesme, à trois coquilles en chiefs*, 1524," &c.

The Moors in Spain used jet, or "*azavache*," for amulets potent against the influence of the evil eye, "*il mal de ojo*," mounted in gold, silver, and copper. This usage was so general that his most Christian Majesty Charles V., in 1525, issued a "*pragmatica*" prohibiting the custom.

One of these, of early date, formed as a hand closed with phallic significance and mounted in gold is in the possession of my friend the Baron Charles Davillier, who kindly furnished me with a copy of the following curious extract from the "*Tesoro de la lengua Castellana*," by Covarrubias, 4to, Madrid, 1611:—

"AZAVACHE, es una piedra negra lustrosa, y no muy dura; y en España hay algunos minerales della, de la qual en Santiago de Galicia hazen algunas efigies del

Apostol, cuentas de rosarios, higas para colgar de los pechos de los niños, sortijas con sus sellos, y otras muchas cosas. El nombre azavache es Arabigo, y dize el Padre Guadiz que viene de cebecha, que significa piedra negra. Diego de Urrea la pone en su terminacion arabiga ezzebejn, del verbo zebege, que significa negro. La cosa muy negra comparamos a él, y dezimos ser negra como un azavache."

Which, being translated, reads: "Azavache (Jet) is a lustrous black stone and not very hard; in Spain there are some mines of it, from which, at Santiago of Galicia, they make certain effigies of the Apostle (Saint James), beads for rosaries, amulets for hanging on the breasts of children,¹ rings with seals, and many other things. The name *azavache* is Arabian, and the Padre Guadiz says it comes from *cebecha*, which means a black stone."² Diego de Urrea puts it in the *terminacion Arabiga, ezzebejn*, from the verb *zebege*, which means black. The blackest things are compared to it, and we say Black as *azavache*."

The veneration for the shrine of St. Giacobbo of Compostella is well known, and in the neighbourhood of the cathedral of that city is still to be found the *Azabacheria*, or place of jet, where "*rosarios de azabache*," jet rosaries, are sold. In some of the inventories of Queen "*Isabel la Catolica*" we find mention of such beads of jet of which the rosaries were composed. These inventories date from 1475 to 1500, but no entry occurs of figures of St. James. They are now in the possession of the Baron Davillier.

Other objects of more recent date, 17th century and later, made of this material and occasionally to be met with in Spain, are caskets of open work, inkstands, and some figures. To these I have already referred, but the earlier and more interesting *signacula* of St. James the Greater, which date, as we have seen, from at least as early as 1524, are more interesting to us from an archæological point of view.

¹ Could this be a modified form, derived from or indicative of the phallic emblem, or *figus*, in use among the Romans as a charm against the influence of the evil eye and other fascination? It is true that *higa*, an amulet, differs in its terminal from *higo*, a fig, but are they not both derived rather from the Latin *figus*, than

from the Arabic *hamalet*, suspended? Such suggestion is confirmed by the example belonging to Baron Davillier.

² Probably the hard jet-black stone used by the Arabs for making small charms of the form of arrow heads, of which I have some examples.