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Sheila Bonde
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INTRODUCTION

The records of church councils bear witness to the presence of *ecclesiae incastellatae* across the medieval landscape. The relatively common medieval practice of fortifying churches may appear paradoxical to our modern sensibilities, which tend to regard castles as secular, functional creations of feudalism, and churches as more symbolic expressions of medieval spirituality. Indeed, castles and churches are seldom considered together in the literature on medieval architecture and are normally examined by different scholars. Contrary to the rather arbitrary division of modern scholarship, however, the two sets of monuments were often closely related, sharing common patrons, technological innovations, and designs. Evidence of this association is readily available in contemporary texts as well as in surviving buildings. Patrons responsible for the construction of both military and ecclesiastical buildings can be identified from documentary sources. Gundulf, bishop of Rochester in the late eleventh century, for example, supervised the construction of both the Tower of London and Rochester Cathedral.[1] His contemporary, Benno II, bishop of Osnabrück, is also credited with both castle and church projects.[2] The forms and techniques of single-nave plan, thick-wall construction, intramural gallery passages, stair vises, machicolation, and crenellation, are often shared by castle and church buildings.

Nowhere can this fusion of the secular and religious realms be seen more clearly than in the twelfth-century fortified churches of Maguelone, Agde, and Saint-Pons-de-Thomières. As hybrid fortress-cathedrals and abbeys, these buildings have seldom been incorporated into the history of either ecclesiastical or military architecture. Indeed, they can scarcely be cast as

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Figure 1. Map of Gallia Narbonensis.

recognizable steps along the path of church evolution as that path is usually traced, and their religious nature has generally prevented their inclusion in surveys of military design. Architectural history of the medieval period has been dominated by the study of churches. Those churches tagged as Romanesque are generally related to the outdated concept of regional schools. In this enquiry, Languedoc tends to figure as a provincial backwater. Those churches recognized as Gothic tend to be compared to devel-

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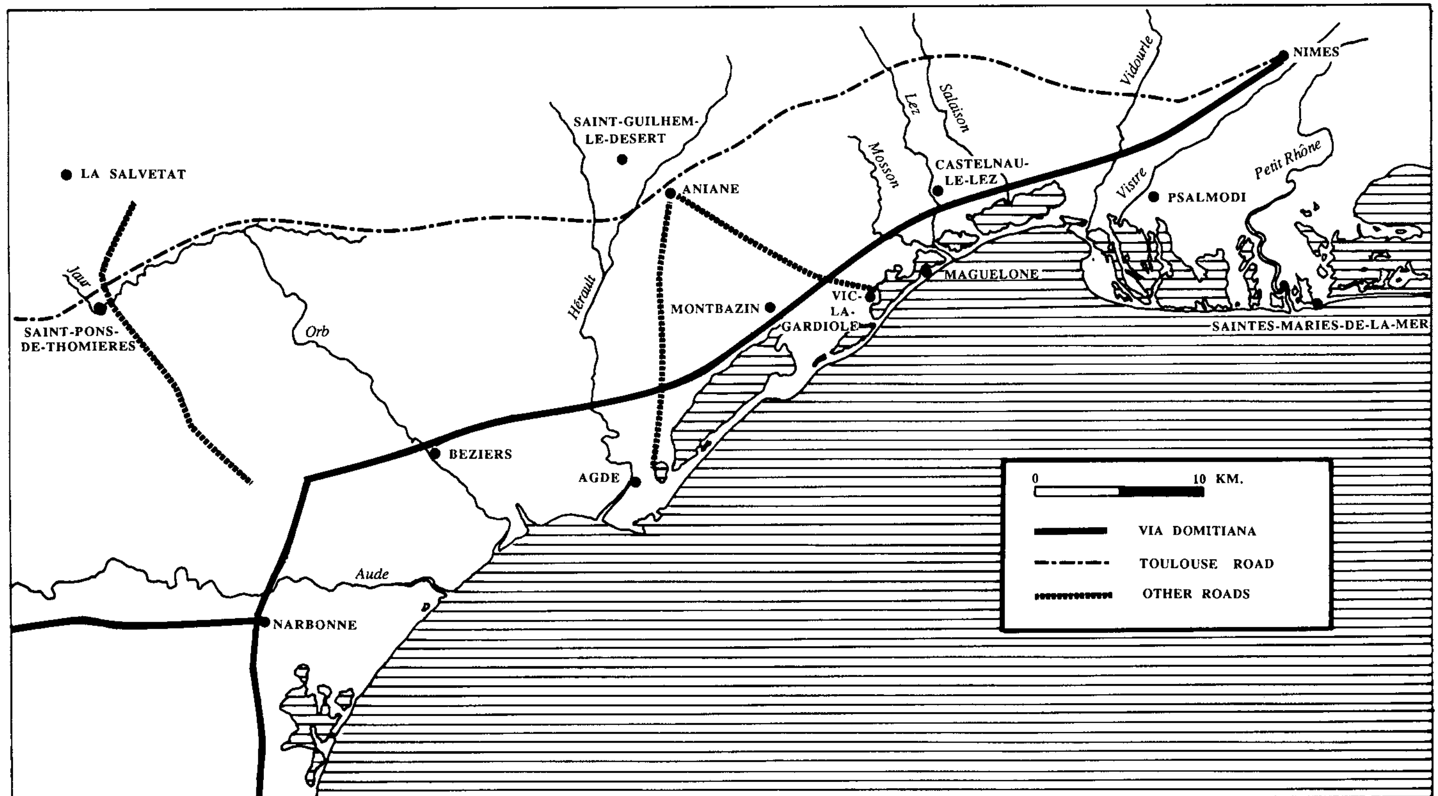

Figure 2. Map of fortification sites, roads, and rivers in Languedoc.

opments in Paris.[3] Here, Languedoc is generally held to be too remote and too tardily influenced by Parisian innovation to figure prominently. The buildings we confront in this study have thus been triply damned by their location in Languedoc, by being neither recognizably Romanesque nor Gothic, and by their military nature.

The historical circumstances in which these buildings were constructed demonstrate, however, that they participated in an intimate dialogue with important political and cultural developments. The Capetian king Louis VII, for example, began to develop contacts in the region in the mid–twelfth century. Languedoc should thus be restored to its proper status as an important political and architectural frontier (Figs. 1, 2). Our opinion of the buildings should be similarly rehabilitated. The fact that Romanesque "turns into" Gothic at a different pace and in different shapes should provide the opportunity to refine the canons of architectural history, and not simply to dismiss exceptions as aberrant. Though unusual in their specific blend of military and religious elements, the churches of Maguelone, Agde, and Saint-Pons-de-Thomières are nonetheless quite "normal" and typical of

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Figure 3. Saint-Pons-de-Thomières, exterior view of the nave, south side.

many stylistic and structural aspects of twelfth-century church architecture in the south of France. These elements often differ from those found in mid-twelfth-century Paris for specific and meaningful reasons.

Churches have generally been regarded as the receivers in any exchange with military architecture. Perhaps contrary to our expectations, the fortified churches of Languedoc form an important and independent step in the evolution of fortification design, probably marking the introduction of machicolation into Western architecture, as well as the invention of an essentially new building type: the single-nave fortress-church. As we will see in greater detail in Chapter 1, churches may be fortified by the addition of a number of elements, including precinct walls, towers, or other protective devices. The fortress-church, by contrast, fuses military elements with the church so that it forms a single unit. The fortress-churches that are the object of this study are single-naved buildings wrapped with machicolated arches (Fig. 3).

Since the term "machicolation" is important and far from commonplace, we must pause briefly to define it. As Figure 4 demonstrates, machicolation is an opening that permits the passage of projectiles, stones, or other objects to be dropped on the heads of attackers. Any number of strategies can be used to create the desired slot: from timber balconies to elaborate stone-built projections resting on corbels. The technology we confront in mid-twelfth-

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century Languedoc is the machicolated arch (or *machicoulis sur arcs*), which is just what its name says it is: a series of arches or arcades with holes or slots at their summit. We will discuss the invention and dissemination of this form in Chapter 5.

This investigation of the machicolated fortress-churches of Languedoc has three primary aims. The first is to examine each building independently to grasp its internal evolution, to clarify the chronology of construction, and to understand the relationships between military and religious aspects in each church. When these buildings have been discussed, they have generally been considered as a unified group. Though closely related by geography and design, however, they are also distinguished by several important aspects. Maguelone and Agde were cathedrals, whereas Saint-Pons was an abbey and remained so until the fourteenth century, when it, too, became the seat of a bishopric. Both Agde and Saint-Pons were located within towns, whereas Maguelone has always stood on a remote island site. The sites of Agde and Maguelone were ports on the Mediterranean coast; Saint-Pons lay 50 kilometers inland. Although all three are single-naved, barrel-vaulted structures, their plans, elevations, and scales are radically different. Agde measures only 34 meters in length, whereas Saint-Pons originally extended more than 80 meters. Agde and Maguelone are wrapped with simple *machicoulis,* whereas Saint-Pons had an elaborate triple-tiered defensive system. These differences should encourage us to reexamine the three buildings as individual structures with independent histories.

The second aim of this study is to locate the invention of the fortress-church and to trace the early motivations for its creation and continued use. The closest parallels to the fortress-churches of Languedoc are the late-eighth-century Abbasid palace of Ukhaidir, the late-eleventh-century west façade of Lincoln cathedral, and the twelfth-century Crusader castle of Krak des Chevaliers. The chronology of contact of Languedoc with Northern Europe and the East and the directions of influence are thus important issues, requiring the researcher to take a broad, comparative view (Fig. 5).

The third objective of this study is to understand the larger (and sometimes conflicting) motivations for ecclesiastical fortification in Languedoc. It is not yet our habit to ask with any great degree of sophistication *why* a church might be fortified. Is it a defensive act in response to a threat, or a statement of control? Who poses the threat, and is that threat perceived or real? Who makes the response: the bishop or the monastic community? Whose permission do they need to fortify? Conversely, why might a fortress include a church and a monastic community? These questions – and a host of others – need to be posed. They can only be answered through a careful reexamination of the larger context of fortification, protection, and architectural creation in twelfth-century Languedoc. Only a wide-ranging contextual

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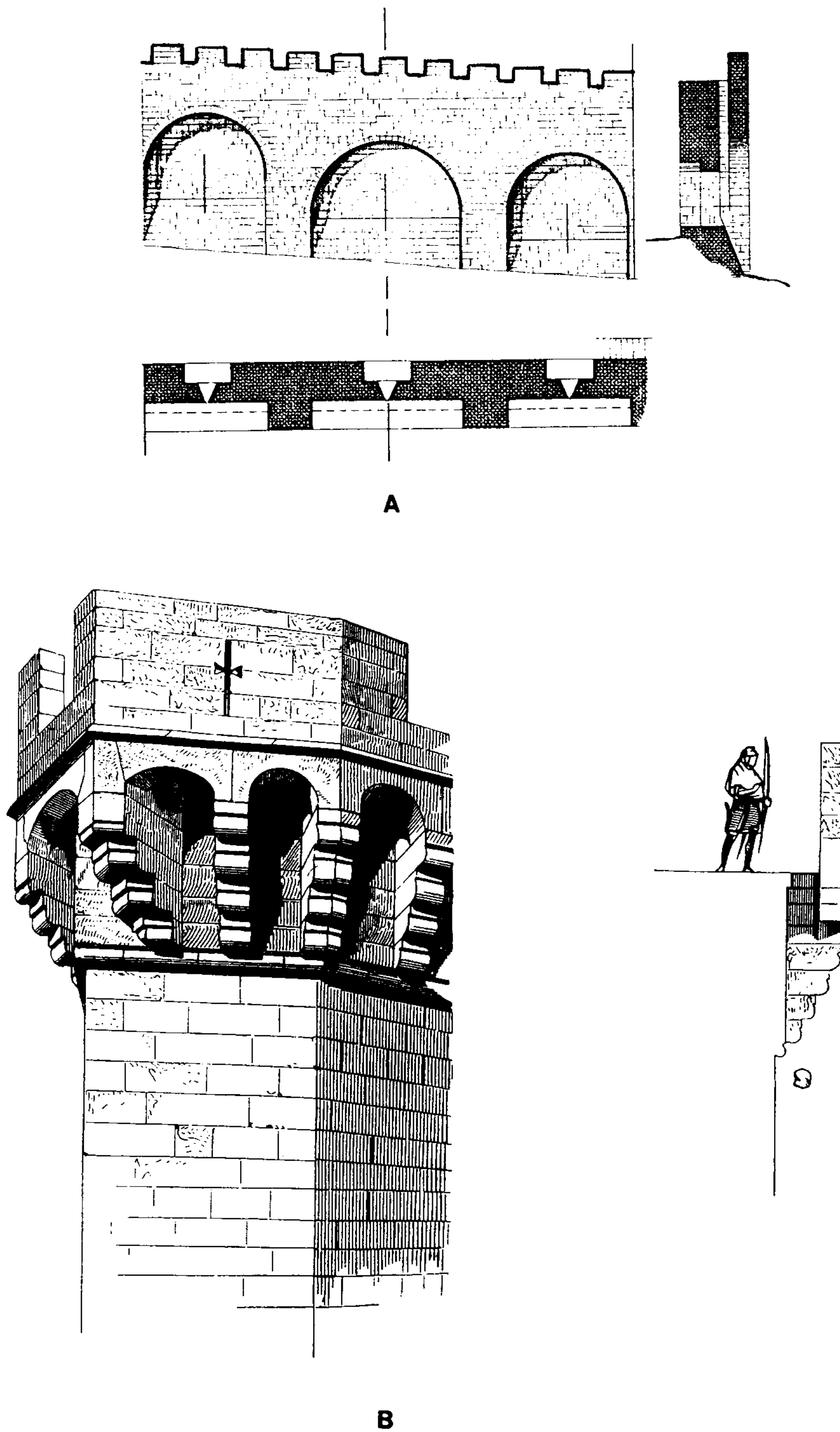

Figure 4. (A) Machicolated arches; (B) Machicolation on corbels; (C) Hoarding; and (D) Portcullis.

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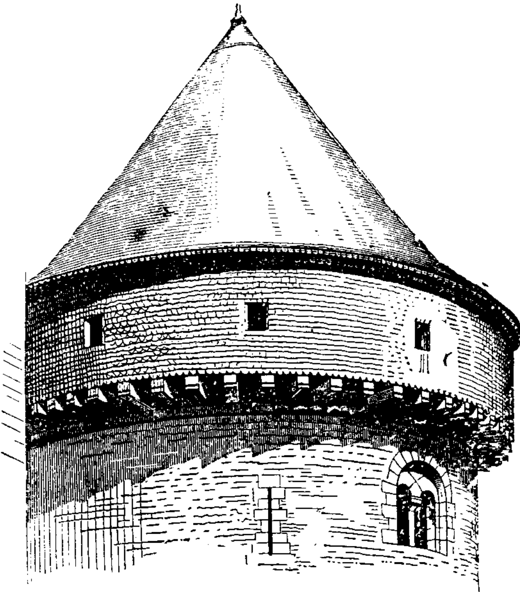

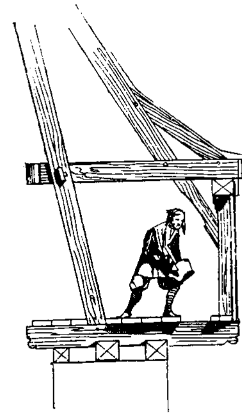

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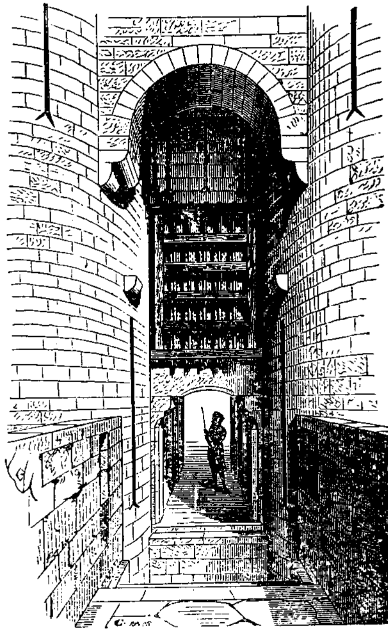

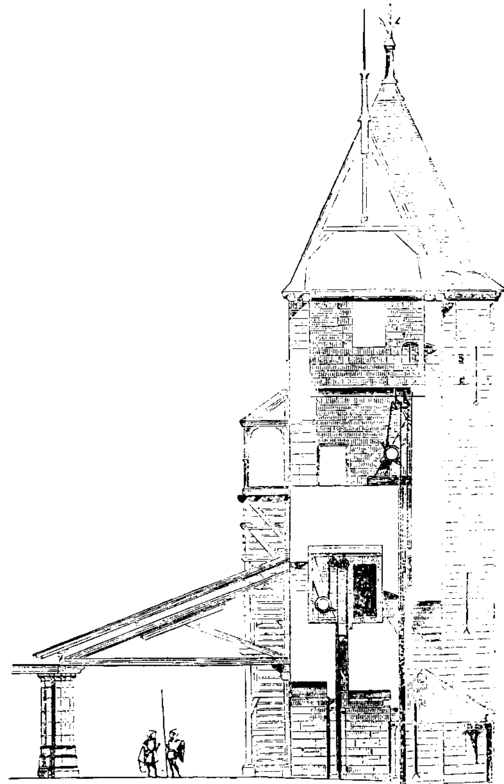

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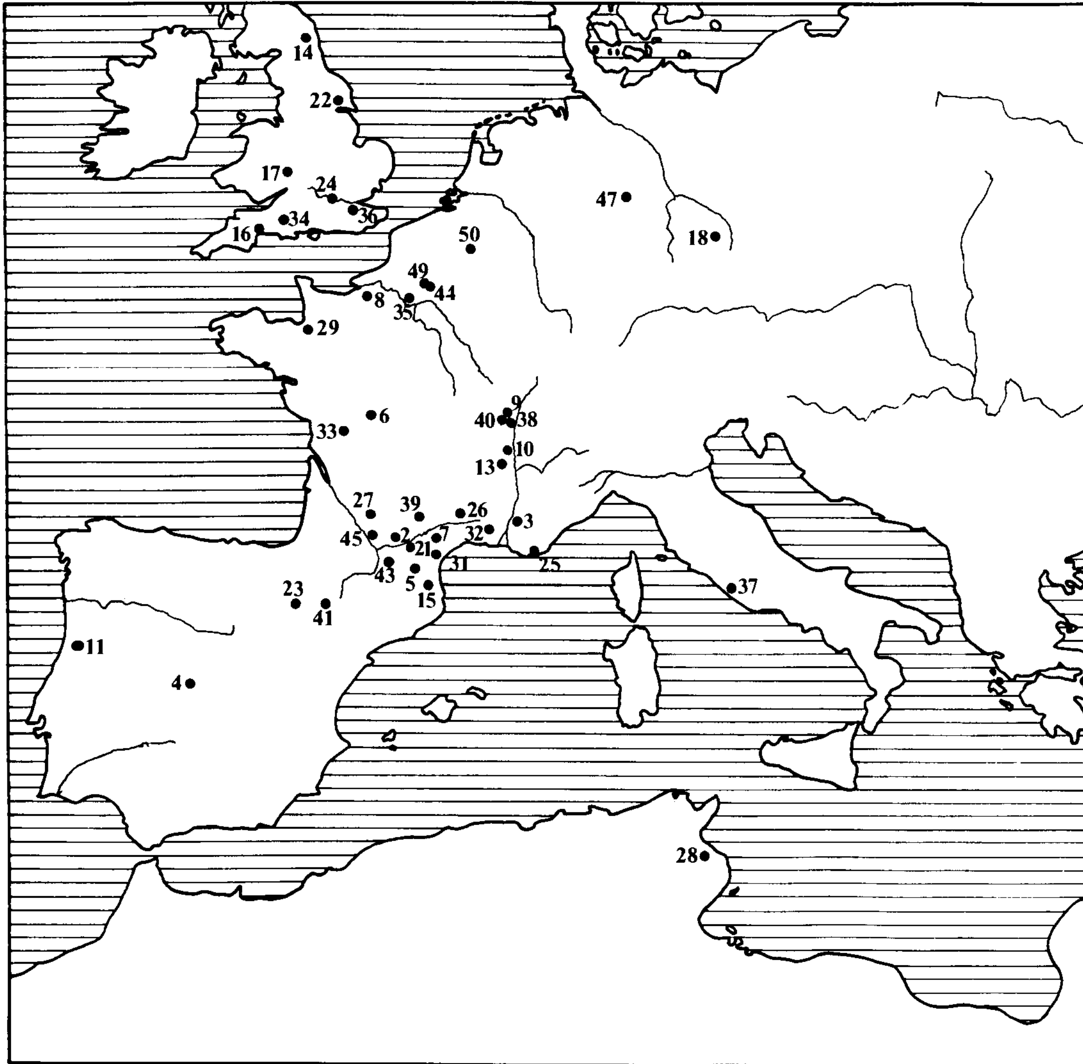

1. Abou-Gosh (Israel), Crusader church
2. Albi
3. Avignon
4. Avilà
5. Banyuls
6. Candes
7. Castelnau-Pégayrolles
8. Château-Gaillard
9. Clermont-Ferrand
10. Cluny
11. Coimbra
12. Constantinople
13. Cruas (Ardèche), fortress-church
14. Durham
15. Elne
16. Exeter
17. Goodrich
18. Gross-Comburg
19. Khirbet ed-Deir
20. Krak des Chevaliers
21. Lagrasse
22. Lincoln
23. Loarre
24. London
25. Marseille
26. Mende

Figure 5. Map of major sites mentioned in the text.

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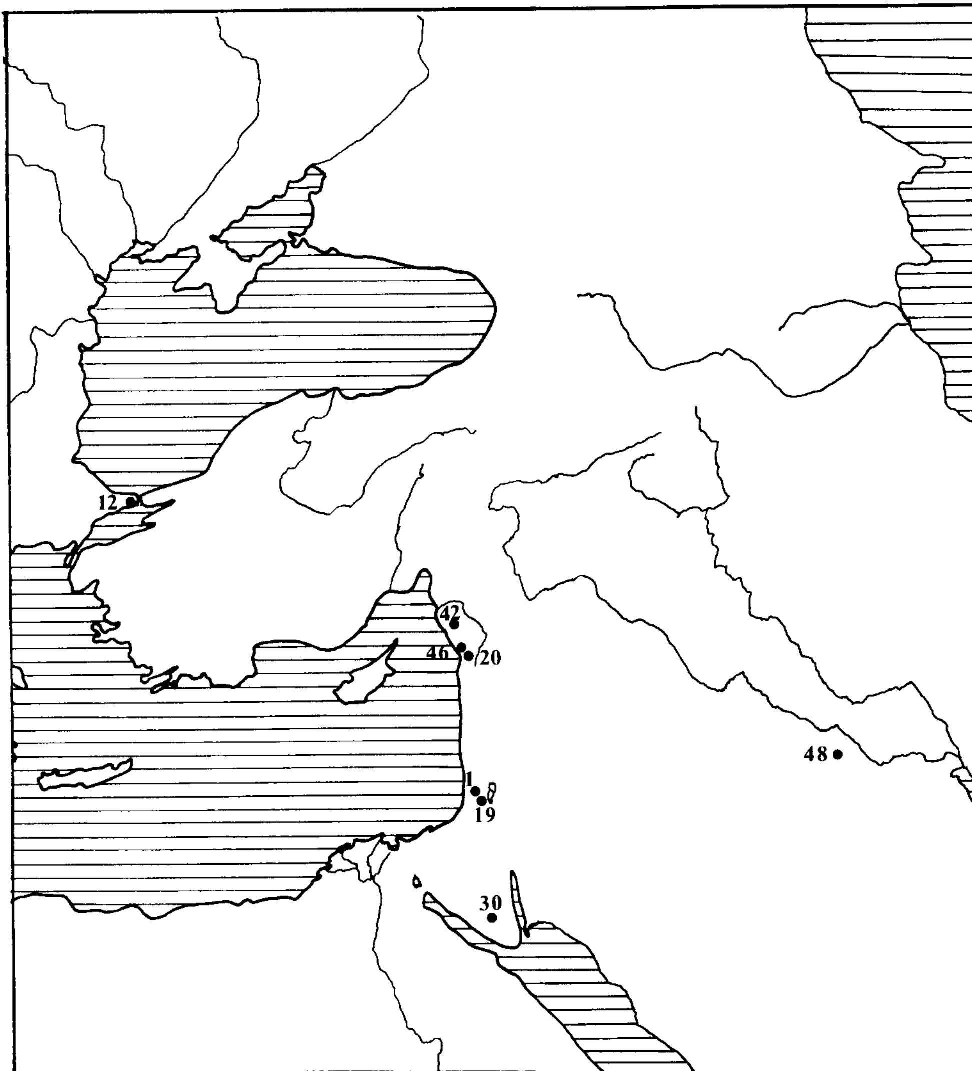

27. Moissac
28. Monastir
29. Mont-Saint-Michel
30. Mount Sinai
31. Narbonne
32. Nîmes
33. Niort
34. Old Sarum
35. Paris
36. Rochester
37. Rome
38. Royat
39. Rudelle
40. Saint-Allyre
41. Sant Miquel de Fluva
42. Saone
43. Silvanès
44. Soissons
45. Toulouse
46. Tortosa
47. Trier
48. Ukhaidir
49. Vez
50. Wimy

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approach to these buildings permits us to read them not as eccentric architectural aberrations but as monuments expressive of their historical situations.

Religious sources of the eleventh and twelfth centuries complain of "Saracens," "pirates," and "heretics." The sources also lament the pressures exerted by secular lords of the region as well as by the mercenaries these lords first invited there, but then failed to support or control adequately. Both the organized Peace of God designating places of refuge, and the less coordinated efforts of minor religious houses to limit the powers of seigneurial competition, were motivating factors in the creation of fortifications in twelfth-century Languedoc. Bishops and abbots of the region, aided by and exploiting the expanding power of Capetian influence under Louis VII, fortified their cathedrals and monasteries and also invoked the power of relics to aid them as they became the agents of order during this period. Although defensive measures were certainly an important part of their motivation, symbolic statements of the necessity for peace and the capacity to control also formed part of their intended message. The creation of the fortress-church was thus impelled by the need to find tangible as well as political solutions to the challenges faced in Languedoc in the mid–twelfth century.

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