# Introduction

Saints were of fundamental importance for medieval politics, society, art, and even the economy. Their relics attracted pilgrims and formed the stable nucleus around which abbeys, churches, towns, and cities grew. Saints provided protective patronage to many kinds of clients, from members of professional guilds and religious orders to cities and entire kingdoms. Their *vitae* inspired numerous works of art and sustained both clerical and lay forms of piety. To modern people, it is often unclear how saints achieved such a crucial status and performed such vital functions. This book takes us behind the scenes of one saint's cult, explaining how the magic worked. It analyzes in depth the rise of one of the most successful saintly cults in medieval Europe, the cult of St. Martin of Tours.

St. Martin was the protector saint of the Merovingian, Carolingian, and Capetian dynasties, and all French kings up to the French Revolution were honorary abbots of the church of Saint-Martin of Tours, built upon the saint's tomb. St. Martin's cape served as the original war banner of Frankish royal armies. His city of Tours functioned as a religious center, drawing pilgrims from all over Europe. He was considered one of the founders of western monasticism. Since he was apparently the first non-martyr to receive the cultus of a saint, he can also be seen as pioneering a completely new model of sainthood. Credited with special powers beyond those of a typical intercessor saint, he inspired a lively folkloric tradition, the composition of numerous pictorial and musical works of art, and the establishment of thousands of churches and numerous confraternities all over Europe.

As Sharon Farmer notes, "the landscape of medieval Francia was dotted with the consequences and commemorations of his deeds," and even today, Martin retains a respectable footing within western European culture.[1] Lantern parades and the eating of geese are still time-honored traditions on Martin's principal feast day (November 11) in Germany, Austria, and the Low Countries. The European Institute of Cultural Routes (part of the Council of Europe) is devoting considerable efforts to promoting Martinian themes

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[1] Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin*, 14.

through various cultural programs in Tours and elsewhere.[2] The music dedi-
cated to him is enjoying a revival through the efforts of vocal groups such as
The Rose Ensemble working in the USA, and Diabolus in Musica in France.

And yet, we know little of how all this came about. The most popular
and important saints of Christendom were scriptural personages, early
Christian martyrs, or popes. The historical St. Martin was none of these. He
was the third bishop of a third-rate provincial capital in the fourth century.
His sphere of activity was mostly limited to central and northern Gaul, a
political and religious backwater. His most famous act was to give half his
cape to a beggar. Hardly enough, one would have thought, to inspire so
much devotion and gain such universal stature.

This book explains St. Martin's rise to prominence by focusing on the
crucible of his cult, the church dedicated to him in Tours. In particular, it
focuses on the music and liturgy of the cult, which proved to be the most
effective means of its dissemination, from the eleventh to the fifteenth cen-
turies. Only if we understand the instruments of the cult's formation and
the agents of its propagation – liturgy, music, hagiography – can we com-
prehend its enormous diffusion and impact.

As the story goes, Martin was born to pagan parents in a small village in
what is today Hungary. He was enlisted in the Roman army and stationed
at Amiens, in Gaul. Riding his horse on a cold winter day, Martin noticed
an unclothed beggar at the gate of the city. Concerned, he cut his cape into
two, covering the poor man with one half. In a dream the following night,
the beggar revealed himself to be Christ. This scene, recounted in countless
paintings, statues, and stories, was the turning point of Martin's life.

Following this encounter, Martin converted to Christianity, renounced
the military, and decided to become a soldier in the service of God. Inspired
by his mentor Hilary of Poitiers, in the early 360s he founded a hermitage in
Ligugé (in the Poitou in west-central France). This was the first monastery
in Gaul. In 371 he was elected bishop of the city of Tours. He did not want
the office, and was literally forced to assume the position against his will.

Notwithstanding his bishopric, Martin remained devoted to a life of
asceticism. He refused to sit on the bishop's cathedra, lived in a small cell,
and removed himself as much as possible from society. He seems to have
had very few ties to the city of Tours, preferring to be more active in his

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[2] While the coinciding of the signing of the Armistice near Compiègne on November 11, 1918
with St. Martin's Day was evidently a happenstance, Catholics have found this correlation
meaningful and profound. After all, it was only fitting that a ceasefire agreement should be
signed on a day celebrating a soldier who renounced armed conflict, choosing, instead, to fight
for God alone.

diocese and beyond.[3] He founded Marmoutier, a monastery located just outside the city, where he also served as abbot. He wandered around Gaul, from Paris to Autun, from Vienne to Chartres, preaching and converting people to Christianity. To his dying day, he remained a monk as much as a bishop.[4]

Martin's earthly existence ended in 397. Shortly before his death, he was called to the small church of Candes, to resolve a dispute among the clergy. While trying to restore peace, he fell ill, grew weak, and died. The people of Poitiers planned to bury him in their city, but the people of Tours had other plans for their deceased bishop. In the middle of the night, they sneaked into the church, lifted the corpse, and hoisted it through a window. It was taken by boat downstream to Tours, and buried there on November 11.

A few years later, St. Brice, the fourth bishop of Tours, built a chapel over the tomb of his illustrious predecessor – the church of Saint-Martin of Tours.[5] Very soon it became clear that the modest structure could not cope with the growing flood of pilgrims, and it was replaced with a more imposing basilica, dedicated on July 4, 465 by St. Perpetuus, the fifth bishop of Tours (r. 461–91). According to Gregory of Tours, the church was 160 feet long and 60 feet wide (47.36 × 12.72 meters), making it one of the most commanding churches in early Merovingian France. During the Viking incursion of 853, the basilica constructed by Perpetuus was set ablaze and ruined, a fate to which it would also succumb several other times in the course of the following centuries.[6] A new edifice, rebuilt beginning in 903 and consecrated by Archbishop Robert II in 918, inaugurated a new architectural phase in the evolution of Saint-Martin of Tours, with the succession of Merovingian structures giving way to Romanesque ones until the middle of the twelfth century, when new Gothic additions considerably altered the earlier structure.[7]

For many reasons, chief of which was the growing popularity of St. Martin, the celebrated church of Saint-Martin of Tours occupies an important place

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[3] McKinley, "The First Two Centuries of Saint Martin of Tours," 181–82.

[4] As we shall see in Chapter 2, the writings of Sulpicius Severus in the fourth century form the main source for Martin's life. The first critical edition of this *Vita* inaugurates the volumes in the series Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum. See Sulpicius Severus, *Sulpicii Severi libri qui supersunt*, 109–51.

[5] Names of saints are given in their English form, using the abbreviation "St." (St. Martin). Names of churches and monasteries are hyphenated (Saint-Martin).

[6] Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum X*, II.14. See also Vieillard-Troiekouroff, *Les Monuments religieux de la Gaule*; Boissonnot, *Histoire et description de la cathédrale de Tours*; Pietri, *La Ville de Tours du IVe au VIe siècle*.

[7] Hersey, "The Church of Saint-Martin at Tours," 2.

in the ecclesiastical landscape of the Middle Ages.[8] Transformed from a monastery into a college of canons in the course of the ninth century, it became one of the largest collegiate chapters in France, housing 150 canons in the early thirteenth century. Saint-Martin also had an impressive number of honorary canons (around thirty), lay and ecclesiastical; the latter included the archbishops of Bourges and Sens and the bishops of Poitiers, Liège, and Angers. Saint-Martin was not only the commercial center of the entire city of Tours, it also had the highest concentration of people living within its walls. Many of them were thriving merchants and artisans, catering, among other things, to the needs of the thousands of pilgrims who flocked to the doors of Saint-Martin from the fifth century on – their business was the cult of St. Martin.[9] The church also had considerable revenues from its many possessions in France and in Europe (mainly in Italy); shipments of wax, grain, wine, and leather regularly reached the banks of the Loire River by boat and were exempt from the fluvial tax imposed by the French monarchy.[10]

The *schola* of the church dedicated to St. Martin of Tours rose to fame beginning in the late eighth century when Charlemagne gave Alcuin (*c.* 735–804), the venerable Carolingian scholar and theologian, the abbacy of Tours in token of his loyal service at court.[11] Originally a monk from York in northern England, Alcuin was a teacher at the royal court of Charlemagne between 782 and 790, where he was responsible not only for the education of members of Charlemagne's family, along with members of the higher strata of the Frankish elite, and talented students from all around the kingdom, but also for carrying out liturgical and education reforms. During his short tenure in Saint-Martin (796–804), he brought the *scriptorium* to new heights, enriched the monastery's library with manuscripts that were copied under

[8]  Several excellent studies on various aspects of medieval Saint-Martin are mentioned throughout this book. Three of the most comprehensive sources, however, need to be singled out, as they form the primary point of departure for the study of this church: Noizet, *La Fabrique de la ville*; Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin*; and Vaucelle, *La Collégiale*. In contrast to the relative wealth of studies devoted to the history of Saint-Martin, cited throughout this book, the paucity of musicological studies solely devoted to this church is striking. To date, one of the most detailed accounts to examine the liturgy of Saint-Martin has been the opening chapter of a dissertation devoted to Johannes Ockeghem in his capacity as treasurer of Saint-Martin: Magro, "Jean de Ockeghem." Magro's well-crafted thesis is indicative of a more general tendency among musicologists to examine the liturgy of Saint-Martin for its potential to shed light on the careers of fifteenth-century composers and their music. See, for instance, Higgins, "*In hydraulis* Revisited," 70–76; Higgins, "Speaking of the Devil and *Discipuli*"; and Perkins, "Musical Patronage at the Royal Court of France," 523–28.

[9]  B. Chevalier, "La Cité de Tours," 243.

[10]  The exemption was extended to twelve boats. See Galinié, "La Cité de Tours et Châteauneuf," 176.

[11]  On Alcuin and his work, see Bullough, *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation*.

his supervision and with those sent to him by Charlemagne, and also edited a *vita* of St. Martin intended especially for pilgrims.[12] Moreover, it was at Saint-Martin that he would compose many of his significant works, including his revision of the Vulgate, which Charlemagne had commissioned from him.[13] Owing to Alcuin's intellectual enterprise and to the soaring reputation that Saint-Martin enjoyed as a consequence, the *scriptorium* became an important place of teaching and learning, attracting such intellectuals as Rabanus Maurus in the ninth century and Berengar in the eleventh. It specialized in the copying of Bibles, sacramentaries, and, not surprisingly, *Martinelli* – manuscripts entirely dedicated to all things Martinian.[14]

## Tours, the center of Martin's cult

There can be no doubt that the source of the city's prosperity was the church of Saint-Martin and the flourishing cult of its titular saint. Yet Saint-Martin was not the only church in Tours, a city in which two main religious poles dominated the ecclesiastical and civic landscape. Founded in the first century as the chief *oppidum* of the Gallic tribe of the Turones, the city received its first name, Caesarodunum, from the Romans. Originally comprising several haphazardly organized urbanized hubs against the backdrop of a rural landscape, ancient Tours was consolidated in the fourth century to form a small area corresponding to what is nowadays the northeastern part of the city. By that time, the status of the city was significantly enhanced, as the

[12] Delaruelle, "La Spiritualité des pèlerinages à Saint-Martin de Tours," 234. It is beyond the scope of this short introduction to give a full account of the activities of the school of Saint-Martin and the role that Alcuin and subsequent schoolmasters played in it. For a succinct and helpful point of departure, see Vaucelle, *La Collégiale*, 335–53; Lelong, "Culture et société (iv<sup>e</sup>–xii<sup>e</sup> siècles)," 66–69; and Marcault, *Le Diocèse de Tours*, Vol. I, 101–27. For the important achievements of the monastery's *scriptorium*, see McKitterick, *Carolingian Culture*, 243; Rand, *A Survey of the Manuscripts of Tours*, i; McKitterick, "Carolingian Bible Production"; Ganz, "Mass Production of Early Medieval Manuscripts." In contrast to Hilduin and Hincmar – abbots who had played an important role in expanding the liturgy in Saint-Denis and in Reims, respectively – when Alcuin arrived at Saint-Martin, the liturgy dedicated to Martin was already firmly developed. See Goudesenne, "De Tours à Rome," 383.

[13] Lelong, "Culture et société (IV<sup>e</sup>–XII<sup>e</sup> siècles)," 67. Incidentally, most of his extant letters were written immediately before and during his tenure at Saint-Martin. See Allott, *Alcuin of York*, ix; and Jullien and Perelman, *Auctores Galliae*, 171–75.

[14] Vaucelle, *La Collégiale*, 343; and Goudesenne, "Chant grégorien et renaissances carolingiennes," 150. Saint-Martin of Tours was no longer the center for learning into which Alcuin had transformed it when schoolmaster Berengar became notorious for his position on the Eucharist controversy that swept the Christian world in the eleventh century. See Maurey, "Heresy, Devotion, and Memory."

Romans transformed it into the capital of a vast administrative region, that of Lugdunensis III (Third Lyonnaise), consisting of nine cities in central-western France. By the fourth century the city, by then referred to as *civitas* or *urbs Turonorum* – Tours in the vernacular – was already endowed with its first defensive ramparts. The Gallo-Roman wall was erected after 275, a fortification that was restored and reinforced by Charles the Bald between 871 and 878 and that is still in evidence today around the city's Musée des Beaux-Arts.[15] This fortified part of town slowly developed into a religious center, the site of the first Christian church in the city – probably built by the second quarter of the fourth century – and was where all successive edifices of the Cathedral of Tours would be built. In fact, until the mid-fourteenth century, "Tours" was a topographic definition applied to just one section of the city, namely the episcopal town that sprang up around the Cathedral, which was also referred to as the Cité.[16] By the tenth century, the Cathedral was already the spiritual center of a vast archdiocese encompassing the dioceses of Le Mans and Angers, as well as a number of dioceses in Brittany in the west, and comprising some 300 parishes, 19 abbeys, and 98 priories.[17]

As in many other medieval cities, and as Roman law stipulated, the necropolis of the *civitas libera* of Tours was situated outside the city proper, west of the first urbanized center in which stood the Cathedral. Here it was that St. Martin, the city's third bishop, was buried, and the subsequent intensification of his cult gave birth to the religious and secular communities around the monastery that were dedicated to him. These communities would eventually surpass the city's original administrative and religious center, the Cité, in size and prestige.[18] The area that stretched between St. Martin's town in the west and the Cathedral town in the east was mainly composed of arable lands and vineyards, with both poles being linked by two primary roads that ran parallel to the Loire River, found just to their north.[19] Although the city owes its existence to the Romans, it was Christianity in general, and the cult of St. Martin and the pilgrimage that it stimulated in particular, that had a decisive impact on the physical and spiritual layout of the city.

Like other medieval cities with origins going back to the Roman empire, by the tenth century Tours was polycentric. To be sure, there was nothing unusual

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[15] Galinié, "Reflections on Early Medieval Tours," 57. The origin of the name is still a matter of debate among scholars today. See Audin, *Tours à l'époque gallo-romaine*, 17–19 and 85. For a clear and detailed survey of the history of Tours, see also Galinié, "Genèse du paysage urbain."

[16] Farmer, *Communities of Saint-Martin*, 16.

[17] Besse, *Province de Tours*, 8; and Longnon, *Pouillés de la province de Tours*, i–xiii.

[18] Theureau, *La Population archéologique de Tours*, 20.

[19] *Ibid*. In 943, Archbishop Theotolus refounded the abbey of Saint-Julien in the above-mentioned area (the previous edifice was destroyed by the Vikings in 853). See Galinié and

about this polarization, as the internal configuration of medieval cities was often an "urban incarnation" of ritualistic realities.[20] It developed around the two above-mentioned religious centers, both associated in one way or another with the cult of St. Martin: the city's Cathedral could claim Martin as its third bishop, and the church erected over his tomb by Perpetuus was the most important shrine dedicated to him in the Christian world. The second decade of the tenth century witnessed the growing physical seclusion of Saint-Martin. Following the devastating Viking invasions of the early tenth century, new wooden ramparts surrounding the church and the adjoining areas were completed in 919, and when they were replaced by a stone wall several decades later, the area found within the walls became known as Castrum novum, or Châteauneuf.[21]

The Benedictine abbey of Marmoutier formed an additional, third religious pole with ties to St. Martin, who, as mentioned above, founded it in the fourth century. Although it is situated on the right bank of the Loire River – and hence is not technically part of the city of Tours – the ad hoc alliance of this prestigious monastery with Saint-Martin in the eleventh and twelfth centuries would play a significant role in the religious schism in Tours in the following centuries.[22] Drawn after 1572, Figure 0.1 shows the Cathedral on the right-hand side, with Saint-Martin facing it some 800 meters to its west. Missing is Marmoutier, which would have been depicted on the upper right-hand corner, on the opposite bank of the Loire. As we shall see in Chapter 4, the remarkable success of the cult of St. Martin in Tours effected a fierce competition between these ecclesiastical institutions, which unfolded primarily in music and ritual.

Adding a further dimension to the religious and political character of the city that affected the spread of the cult of St. Martin were various political alliances that were unfolding and crystallizing in the Touraine around the time its defensive walls were constructed. While the Cité came under the political and legal jurisdiction of the various regional counts that were in

Randoin, *Les Archives du sol à Tours*, 28; and Noizet, *La Fabrique de la ville*, 121–22. The abbey, which in the eleventh century had about forty monks, had relatively close ties with Saint-Martin, although it was dependent on the Cathedral.

[20] Le Goff, "Croissance et prise de conscience urbaine," 220.

[21] The walls were quite impressive: two meters thick, eleven meters high, and flanked by towers built about forty meters away from one another. See B. Chevalier, "La Cité de Tours," 238; and *Tours, ville royale*, 9. See also Lelong, "Culture et société (IVe–XIIe siècles)," 71, 74; and "L'Enceinte du *Castrum Sancti Martini*." By June 919, this area, together with an additional stretch of land leading to the banks of the Loire, also gained substantial financial exemptions when Charles the Bald exempted Châteauneuf from customs and police. See Galinié, "La Cité de Tours et Châteauneuf," 172.

[22] There is almost no information about the history of Marmoutier from before the ninth century. For a recent study of this establishment, see Lelong, *L'Abbaye de Marmoutier*.
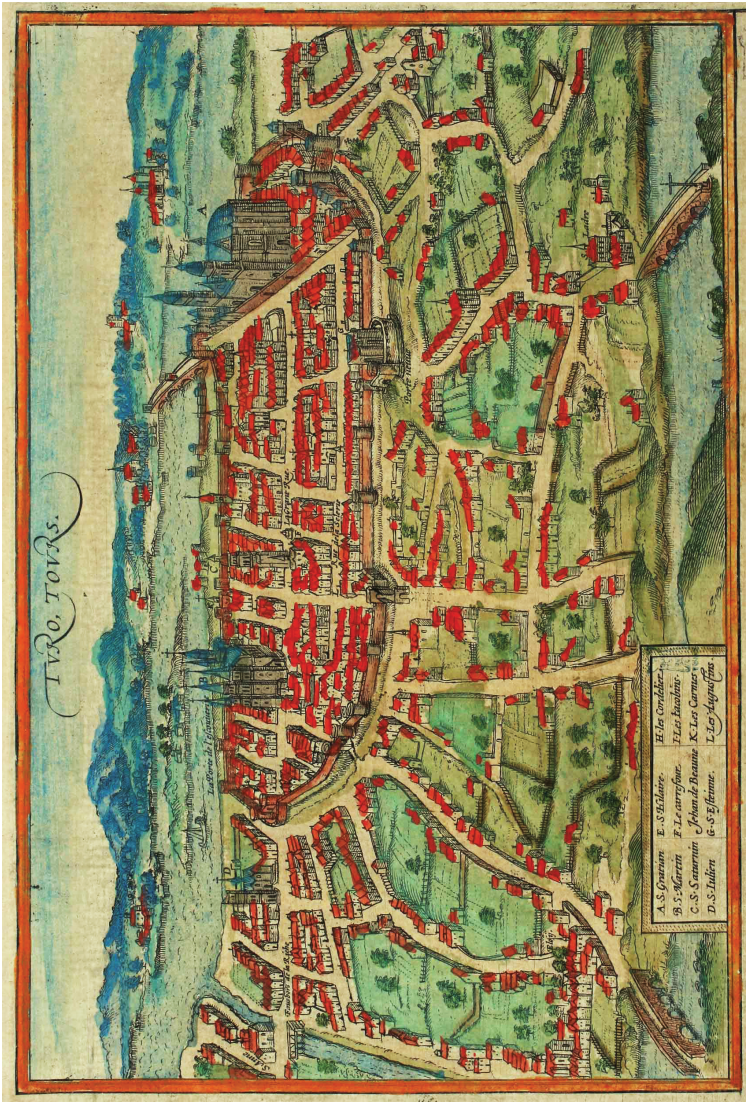
**Figure 0.1** The city of Tours in the sixteenth century. *Civitates orbis terrarum* (Cologne, 1572).

its jurisdiction, the situation of Saint-Martin was markedly different. The ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries witnessed communities in the Loire Valley, chief among them Tours, as battlegrounds between two powerful feudal lords and their entourages: the house of Anjou and the house of Blois. As the French monarchy became increasingly preoccupied with defending its estates in and around the Ile-de-France, and given that its influence was relatively weak in the countryside, the king was gradually forced to relinquish his control of cities in the Loire Valley in favor of powerful comital families and vassals, a process that intensified after the rise to the throne of Hugh Capet. Nevertheless, the Capetians, who were honorary abbots of Saint-Martin, were eager to retain their sovereignty over Saint-Martin and Châteauneuf. Overall, they succeeded in doing so despite the challenges to their rule posed by the counts of Anjou. The latter, who gained control of the Touraine from the count of Blois in the battle of Saint-Martin-le-Beau in 1044, had a complex relationship with Saint-Martin, but one that was fundamentally that of a protector. Although in some aspects the inhabitants of Châteauneuf were subject to the count of Anjou, they were for the most part under the direct control of the monarchy.[23]

Tours as a whole remained under the control of the house of Anjou well beyond the middle of the twelfth century, when Henry Plantagenet, perhaps the most illustrious count to come from this house, was crowned King Henry II of England in 1154. Indeed, his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1152, followed by his ascent to the English throne, not only gave him possession of vast territories in central and western France, but also made him the most powerful enemy of the Capetians, against whom he and his son, Richard I, the "Lionheart" (r. 1189–99), would fight numerous battles over the course of the next fifty years. Following the death of Henry II in 1189, and after the release from captivity of his son Richard, Tours suffered a number of sieges – the result of an intermittent war fought between the Capetians, spearheaded by Philip Augustus (r. 1180–1223), and Richard I together with his brother and heir John "Lackland" (r. 1199–1216). We can see in Figure 0.2 a miniature from the *Grandes chroniques de France* depicting the capture of Tours by Philip Augustus in 1189 (tellingly, only the church dedicated to St. Martin is figured prominently, pointing to its near-identification with the city as a whole). The illumination is attributed

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[23] *Ibid*., 168–70. It was a battle in which Geoffrey Martel, count of Anjou, triumphed over Thibaud III, count of Blois. For the feudal rights of the count of Anjou in Châteauneuf, see Boussard, "Enclave royale Saint-Martin de Tours," 172. Noizet has carefully documented instances attesting to the complex nature of the jurisdiction over Saint-Martin. The counts of Anjou and Blois played, on occasion, a rather major role in Châteauneuf. See Noizet, *La Fabrique de la ville*, 157–61.

**Figure 0.2**  The capture of Tours by Philip Augustus in 1189. BnF fr. 6465, fo. 223.

to Jean Fouquet, a native of Tours (*c.* 1415), and an artist famous for the miniatures he crafted in the aforementioned *Grandes chroniques* and the *Jewish Antiquities*.[24] Beginning in late summer of 1203, and especially after the death of King John in 1216, the English crown no longer controlled Touraine and Anjou. For the first time in its history, Tours was controlled not by competing vassals and comital houses, but by a single power-broker, the French king.[25] This shift was to have ramifications for the increase in the veneration of St. Martin in general, and for the royal involvement in his cult in particular.

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[24] Leveel, "Trois vues de la collégiale Saint-Martin de Tours," 85–87. Fouquet visited Tours sometime between 1458 and 1460, perhaps in order to get a fresh look at the sights he was about to paint.

[25] Lelong, "Culture et société (IVe–XIIe siècles)," 84–85; and Noizet, *La Fabrique de la ville*, 333. With the exception of Aquitaine, all French territories occupied by the Angevins had been lost to the French by 1224.