

*DE CONSECRATIONIBUS:*

ABBOT SUGER'S CONSECRATIONS OF THE ABBEY CHURCH OF ST. DENIS

by

Elizabeth R. Drennon

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of the requirements for the degree of

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**DEFENSE COMMITTEE AND FINAL READING APPROVALS**

of the thesis submitted by

Elizabeth R. Drennon

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The following individuals read and discussed the thesis submitted by student Elizabeth R. Drennon, and they evaluated her presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination.

Lisa McClain, Ph.D. Chair, Supervisory Committee

Erik J. Hadley, Ph.D. Member, Supervisory Committee

Katherine V. Huntley, Ph.D. Member, Supervisory Committee

The final reading approval of the thesis was granted by Lisa McClain, Ph.D., Chair of the Supervisory Committee. The thesis was approved for the Graduate College by Jodi Chilson, M.F.A., Coordinator of Theses and Dissertations.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my family, who believed I could do this and who tolerated my child-like enthusiasm, strange mumblings in Latin, and sudden outbursts of enlightenment throughout this process. Your faith in me and your support, both financially and emotionally, made this possible.

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Anastasia — thank you for kicking me onto this path. I have loved every minute.

And to the Powers that Be. Thank you.

## ABSTRACT

Between 1140 and 1144, several consecrations at the newly renovated abbey church of the royal monastery at St. Denis, located just a few miles north of Paris, the capital of the Capetian kings, were carried out under the careful control of its abbot, Suger. These ecclesiastical ceremonies were of immediate concern to the king of France, a number of significant French lords, and to the French clergy for their importance in recognizing the patron saint of the monarchy, and by extension of the people of France. The consecrations used traditional elements of liturgy to introduce elements of the new “Gothic” architectural style that quickly became representative of the French church and monarch. The first of the ceremonies emphasized the long connection between monarchs and the Church in France. The last, however, not only presented dramatic architectural features emphasizing the history and significance of the abbey but also served as an occasion for settling a vicious war between the king and one of his chief vassals. Abbot Suger orchestrated this consecration to demonstrate the monarch’s acceptance of the Church as his overlord. The ceremonies were discussed briefly in small books produced afterwards by Abbot Suger, *De Consecratione* and *De Administratione*. When the ceremonies are examined within the context of the monastic, economic, and political environment of the mid-twelfth century it becomes clear that these events link the history of France from its earliest days to the dynamic changes of the high middle Ages, setting the stage for a stronger French monarchy with its associated symbols of power.

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## PROLOGUE

In early June of the year 1144, King Louis VII, with his wife, mother, and a number of retainers, rode out from the stone fortress dominating the west end of the small island that represented the center of the Capetians' feudal domain of the Île de France. This fortress, the Palais de la Cité, dated to the time of the Merovingian kings, but more recently had been built up and fortified by the king's grandfather, Philip I, and his father, Louis VI. A century and half before, the first three Capetian kings, while holding Paris as a possession and maintaining the palace there, chose to reside at Orleans from where they could keep a watchful eye on the Count of Blois, one of the Capetians' most powerful vassals and "most redoubtable enemies". By the second half of the eleventh century, the Normans had also become a formidable force to watch, leading the Capetians to concentrate their defenses in the Seine valley. Philip I made Paris his principal residence and started to build a more permanent structure on the site.<sup>1</sup> Louis VI continued strengthening the structure with several towers and a gallery, as well as a curtain wall. After an attack by Robert, the Comte de Meulan, in March 1111, who managed to seize the city while the king was away, Louis built a large cylindrical tower of stone.<sup>2</sup>

However, while this intimidating structure was the king's principal residence, in the early twelfth century it did not have the same political significance of later structures

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<sup>1</sup> Xavier De Planhol and Paul Claval, *An Historical Geography of France*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 252 – 253.

<sup>2</sup> Ian Dunlop, *Royal Palaces of France* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), 6.

that came to represent the power of France, such as the Louvre or the Palace of Versailles. For that matter, when he rode out on that sunny morning in June 1144, King Louis VII, feudal monarch of the many duchies and counties of France, including Aquitaine, which he obtained through marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1137, did not have the same power and political significance that his heirs would hold.

His destination, the abbey of St. Denis, located a few miles to the north of Paris, and the events at his destination, the consecration of the new east end of the abbey church, orchestrated by the abbot of St. Denis, Suger, would change Louis and his heirs' future, significance, and power. Consecrations served as religious ceremonies to sanctify and dedicate newly built or renovated Church properties, buildings, and objects. These occasions provided opportunities to carry out Church business and reforms. They also functioned as the backdrop for political negotiations. In 1140, the consecration of the newly rebuilt west front, with three new large portals flanked by sculpted reliefs of kings and queens standing in company with Biblical patriarchs, drew attention to the history of St. Denis and the temporal realm of Louis VII's kingdom, presenting the monarch as consecrated and supported by the monarch's patron saint, Denis, and the Church. Over the next sixteen months, smaller but equally significant consecrations of the foundation of the east end and a significant altar in the nave further emphasized the strong connection between the historical and contemporary monarchs to the abbey.

However, political events between the years 1141 to 1144 led to conflicts between the king, the Church, and one of his chief vassals, Theobald of Champagne. Louis needed to restore the prestige of the monarchy and reclaim his tarnished honor. The consecration of the east end in 1144 provided the opportunity for Abbot Suger, who had been strongly

criticized as an advisor to the king, to repair the king's reputation as well as his own. Suger used the consecration as an opportunity to present a monarch (and advisor) humble before the authority of the Church and to demonstrate to the lords and churchmen of the feudal kingdom of France that the beautiful new church building of the abbey of St. Denis, the home of the monarch's patron saint, was literally a celestial space that stood as a powerful entity among the churches of France, providing an environment in which peace could be restored and the monarchy prosper.

This thesis examines four religious ceremonies orchestrated by Abbot Suger to consecrate the renovations of the abbey church of St. Denis. To identify the importance of these consecrations, the history of the abbey of St. Denis, in the context of the historical Merovingian, Carolingian, and Capetian monarchies is explored, with emphasis on patronage and actions by significant monarchs directly impacting the abbey's status, practices, and liturgy. This thesis discusses the role of St. Denis as the holder of significant relics, the spiritual, economic and political importance of those relics, and Suger's use of the relics in his consecration ceremonies to make statements regarding the power and status of both the king and St. Denis. Political events between 1140 and 1144 strongly affecting the kingdom, as well as issues of the investiture controversy directly impacting Suger and St. Denis, are also analyzed. The ceremonies themselves will be described: the consecration of the newly built west façade on June 9, 1140, the consecration of the foundation for the extension to the east end of the abbey church on July 14, 1140, the October 9, 1141 ceremony to open an altar attributed to Charles the Bald, and the June 11, 1144 consecration of the completed east end addition. And finally, a brief look at the lavish feast hosted by Suger immediately after the 1144 consecration

ceremony demonstrates the success of Suger's efforts to assist in the brokerage of peace and cementing St. Denis' role as one of the significant churches in France.



**Figure 1**      **Statue of Saint Denis.**<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Church of St. Pierre de Montmartre, Paris. Photo by Author, June 2015.



SUGER<sup>4</sup>

The man credited with the rebuilding of the abbey church of St. Denis and with significantly building the status of the Capetian kings, Abbot Suger, is central to the story of the consecrations of St. Denis from 1140 to 1144, not just as the patron of the construction but also for his books chronicling this massive project.<sup>5</sup> From the age of ten, Suger's life centered around the abbey of St. Denis. Given as an oblate, his family took advantage of a custom where children from humble families gained an opportunity to improve themselves through service to the Church.<sup>6</sup> Benton suggests that Suger came from the minor *milites* (knights of lower status) class.<sup>7</sup> Suger himself alluded to his humble background. His low status, however, did not prevent him from becoming a notable figure in twelfth century France. William of St. Denis described Suger as physically small, generous, and pious with the ability to cheer others. According to William, Suger was an avid reader and loved to tell stories. He quickly advanced from oblate to positions of authority while still a young man. Able to argue effectively, Suger served Louis VI, Louis VII, and the abbey as an effective diplomat: "in the time of

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<sup>4</sup> See *Appendix A: A Cast of Characters* for basic information on people mentioned in this thesis.

<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of clarification, St. Denis refers to the abbey of St. Denis and its adjacent village, while Saint Denis refers to the historical person.

<sup>6</sup> Sumner McKnight Crosby, *The Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis from its Beginning to the Death of Suger 475 – 1151* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 112. Please note, "Church" refers to the Roman Catholic Church under the authority of the Pope in Rome while "church" indicates a building.

<sup>7</sup> John F. Benton, "Suger's Life and Personality," in *Abbot Suger and Saint Denis*, ed. Paula Lieber Gerson (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), 3.

wrath...he (was) the author of reconciliation”.<sup>8</sup> Upon being elected abbot of St. Denis, he threw himself into his affairs exuberantly, managing the abbey and its properties with skill. In the later years of his life, he ran the feudal domain of France as regent while Louis VII was on crusade to the Holy Land.

Suger studied at either the school of St. Denis or the nearby St. Denis d’Estree, which lay about one half mile to the west. According to William of St. Denis, Suger spoke both his “mother tongue” and Latin.<sup>9</sup> Rudolph believes that Suger also may have studied at the royal abbey of Fleury on the Loire River in the early years of the twelfth century.<sup>10</sup> Fleury was a major center of study, with a large library and famous scriptorium, from the ninth to twelfth centuries.<sup>11</sup> While there, Suger possibly read the *Vita Gauzlini*, a biography of an early eleventh century abbot at Fleury, Gauzlin, who is portrayed as a great administrator, able to improve the abbey's financial resources, and who is compared to Moses and Solomon as a patron of art in the Temple and Tabernacle. Rudolph points out that Suger's *De Administratione* bears a strong resemblance to the *Vita Gauzlini* in subject matter and structure.<sup>12</sup> Suger’s books are testimonies of his own administrative skills and role as patron of St. Denis.

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<sup>8</sup> William of St. Denis, *Sugerii Vita* in Suger, *Oeuvres Complètes de Suger*, ed. A. Lecoy de la Marche (Paris: Chez Mme Ve Jules Renouard, 1867), 385.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 382.

<sup>10</sup> Conrad Rudolph, *The "Things of Greater Importance": Bernard of Clairvaux's Apologia and the Medieval Attitude Toward Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 26. Any abbey patronized directly by the monarch was considered a royal abbey.

<sup>11</sup> John Marlin, "Virtual Ritual: History, Drama, and the Spirit of Liturgy in the Fleury Playbook," *The American Benedictine Review* 48, no. 4 (1997): 402.

<sup>12</sup> Rudolph, *The "Things of Greater Importance"*, 22 – 26. According to the *Vita Gauzlini*, the Capetian King Robert II visited Fleury on the feast day of Saint Benedict, a day for the traditional display of the famous relics, and was so overcome by the beauty of the church embellished with beautiful art created from excellent materials and craftsmanship that he cried, giving many expensive gifts to the abbey in

Suger demonstrated intelligence, a good memory, administrative and diplomatic skills, and the ability to speak effectively. He took his vows as a monk at St Denis in 1106 and almost immediately embarked on missions for the abbey, starting with attendance at a Church council at Poitiers in May of that year. The next year, Suger met Pope Pascal II at the Cluniac monastery of Charite-sur-Loire, which Pascal consecrated on March 9. While there, Suger appealed for papal intervention on behalf of his abbey in a conflict with the Bishop of Paris, who wanted to assert his authority over the monks of St Denis. In his *Vita Ludovici Grossi Regis* (hereafter *Vita Ludovici*), Suger recorded that he used “natural reasoning and canon law” to argue the abbey’s side and win the case before the pope.<sup>13</sup> Over the next fifteen years, Suger represented the abbey at Church councils and served Louis VI on diplomatic missions that took him throughout France, Normandy, Mainz in the German empire, and to Rome and the Italian countryside, including to several significant abbeys, including Montecassino, the abbey founded by St. Benedict of Nursia.<sup>14</sup> In early spring of 1122, the monks of St. Denis elected Suger as abbot. Even after becoming abbot, he continued in his service to the King, representing Louis VI at the council held in Wörms where the *Concordat of Wörms*, the official ending of the investiture controversy, was agreed to by Pope Calixtus II and the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry V. He served Louis VI until the king’s death in 1137 while also significantly improving the finances and administration of the abbey of St. Denis.

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appreciation. Suger’s books echo the theme of royal gifts that elevate his church to one of the most beautiful in Christendom, perhaps more beautiful than the famous Hagia Sophia in Byzantium.

<sup>13</sup> Ronald James Braud, “Suger and the Making of the French Nation” (PhD diss., University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1977), 18.

<sup>14</sup> Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, trans. Richard Cusimano and John Moorhead (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 126. Saint Benedict created the Benedictine order.

Suger demonstrated a strong interest in the Capetian kings' effective control of their domain, particularly in regards to properties under ecclesiastical jurisdiction. From 1107 to 1109, Suger served as an administrative prevost at the priory of Berneval in Normandy.<sup>15</sup> Here Suger had ample opportunity to study new administrative techniques as well as witness the power of the Normans. Reassigned to the priory of Toury, located on the main road from Paris to Orleans, he had to fight off local lords harassing the priory and local lands. In his biography of Louis VI, Suger admits that he joined in the fight until troops sent by Louis VI, newly crowned after the death of his father Philip I, arrived to secure the lands. His biography of Louis VI indicates that he did not think well of Philip I's failure to help Suger protect Church lands. Suger explained that Philip's request to be buried at another monastery, "separated from the burial place of the kings, his forefathers, who are buried as if by natural right" at St. Denis was due to Philip's belief that he had been less benevolent to churches in his domain than his predecessors.<sup>16</sup> Suger's writings emphasize the relationship of historical monarchs with St. Denis, showing how he strove throughout his life to ensure the continued success of the abbey through service to Louis VI and Louis VII.

Suger's outlined his relationship with the Capetians and his concerns regarding monarchical behavior in the *Vita Ludovici*. Suger wrote that he wanted this biography of Louis VI to be "a monument more lasting than bronze".<sup>17</sup> The biography, appearing contemporaneously with his building projects, served several purposes. On its most

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<sup>15</sup> Berneval lay on the coast near Dieppe.

<sup>16</sup> Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, 62.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 23. Suger got his wish. It is a rather ironic fact that the bronze-covered doors Suger ordered for his rebuilt abbey church did not survive the French Revolution.

obvious level, it is a record, in places somewhat idealized, of the life of Louis VI. Suger presents Louis as a young prince with “nobility of spirit”, valiantly fighting the greedy William Rufus of England, who demonstrated “detestable ambition” and “gave himself over lustfully to the desires of his heart”.<sup>18</sup> As king, Louis was a mighty warrior, entering battle “swinging arms as powerful as Hector's and launching attacks worthy of a giant...no one was able to hinder him.”<sup>19</sup> Louis spent a large part of his reign trying to restrict the powers of local barons while keeping the greater lords at bay through battles, alliances, and diplomacy.<sup>20</sup>

In many ways, the biography, written after the death of Louis VI, was an instruction manual written to guide Louis VII, the new young king, outlining the duties of a king and laying out the qualifications of a good king. Although his name is notably absent from royal records from the early years of Louis VII's reign, Suger continued to oversee the education of the king.<sup>21</sup> After his marriage and coronation in 1137, Louis retreated back to St. Denis to continue his studies. This would have been a perfect time to mold the young king into Suger's ideal monarch. Suger envisioned the king as a strong overlord of “our land” France, with “the crown”, the king himself, the symbol of France.<sup>22</sup> Nationalism was not yet a concept, but in his books, Suger demonstrates an emerging sense of a kingdom united under a monarch, with a specific history tied to customs and people within certain geographic borders, standing up to enemies from

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 61, 27.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>21</sup> Braud, “Suger and the Making of the French Nation,” 169.

<sup>22</sup> De Planhol and Claval, *An Historical Geography of France*, 105.

outside its border. Granted, the borders of France were nebulous, depending on the vagaries of feudal ties, and in the case of Aquitaine, marriage, but to Suger, France included the feudal domains that fell under the older denomination of “Gaul”.

In the *Vita Ludovici*, Suger laid out what he believed the duties of the French king were in regards to the Church. To Suger, the Church was the king’s overlord; anointed by the Church, the king served as vassal to the Church, required to support and protect it in every way possible. At the same time, the king was approved and consecrated by the Church, advised by bishops and abbots, and as long as he actively protected and supported the Church, any exercise of monarchical rights was allowable. To fail in protecting the interests of the Church was unacceptable. Suger hinted at the divine consequences of royal bad behavior when dealing with the Church or churchmen. He pointed out that the Holy Roman Emperor Henry V died because of a

Judgment of the ancients that anyone, noble or base, who disturbed the kingdom or the Church and because of some quarrel caused the bodies of the saints to be raised up, would not live a year but perish right away or within that period of time.<sup>23</sup>

Henry died May 23, 1125, a year within his attempted attack on Rheims in 1124.

Suger would have been concerned about his young student, who had inherited the throne at the age of seventeen. While contemporary accounts of Louis described him as humble, devout, intelligent, courteous and kind, he also cried easily and was given to irrational and violent outbursts of temper and impetuous behavior, especially in connection with his wife’s affairs.<sup>24</sup> Suger approved the Capetian’s acquisition of the extensive lands of Aquitaine brought by Eleanor into the marriage that doubled France’s

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<sup>23</sup> Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, 132.

<sup>24</sup> Alison Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999), 23.

demesne, fighting throughout his life to hold the marriage (and lands) together. However, Eleanor was the daughter and granddaughter of two dukes with unsavory reputations. The northern Franks viewed the Aquitanian court with suspicion and dislike. For over a century, the Aquitanian dukes viewed their land as a separate kingdom, despite officially paying homage to the French monarch as feudal overlord. Duke William III (r. 1058 to 1086) named himself the “duke of all the monarchy of Aquitaine” in his documents. Aside from concerns about arrogant dukes who viewed their loyalty to the Capetians lightly, contemporary accounts painted the people of southern France, the Gasçons, as pleasure loving and quarrelsome, lacking in dignity, scandalous, and with strange laws and customs. Duke William IX (r. 1086 to 1126), Eleanor's grandfather, was worldly, impious, anti-clerical, lusty, and had no problem with installing his mistress in the Maubergon tower at the ducal castle in Poitiers.<sup>25</sup> Eleanor’s father, Duke William X, quarreled with his bishops and supported an anti-pope in 1130, for which he was excommunicated and his lands placed under interdict.<sup>26</sup> Faced with a young king infatuated with his wife, and with such less-than-sterling examples of behavior in the young queen’s family, Suger needed to provide a model of good kingship. The biography, supplemented by his supervision of the King’s education, served this need.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ralph V. Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 12 – 18.

<sup>26</sup> Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 14. Bernard of Clairvaux, who reluctantly claimed kinship with William, traveled to Aquitaine in 1135 to threaten William with divine vengeance for his unruly and unrepentant behavior. The story goes that while in Parthenay, thirty miles west of Poitiers, Bernard was celebrating Mass when William stormed into the church in anger. Bernard held up the sacrament to William, who promptly fell down in a seizure. Bernard took William’s recovery to be a miracle and a triumph of the Church over secular corruption and William, ostensibly chastened, repented and embarked on a pilgrimage, dying en route to Santiago de Compostela in April, 1137.

<sup>27</sup> In his books, Suger never mentioned or even alluded to the history of the Aquitanian dukes, nor did he discuss Louis VII’s unsuccessful attempt to seize Toulouse on behalf of his wife, who claimed it through her grandmother, Philippa of Toulouse. According to Weir, Louis failed to consult his chief vassals or

Having Louis VII at St. Denis under Suger's tutelage benefitted the abbey. Suger viewed the patron saint of the monarchs, Saint Denis, through his earthly representative the abbey of St. Denis, as feudal overlord to the monarchs.<sup>28</sup> Just as Suger viewed the abbey as his "mother", nurturing him, he believed that the abbey nurtured and guided the King.<sup>29</sup> In return he expected the King, like any grateful son, to respect and support the abbey, continuing a tradition dating back centuries. In turn, he, Suger, would do all in his power to increase the prestige of the abbey and its monarch.

As representative of the Capetians' patron saint and feudal overlord, the abbey of St. Denis was the center of France, and, at least from Suger's perspective, it needed to be representative of all that was beautiful and best in France. Suger reorganized the abbey's finances in order to make life more comfortable at the abbey and to fund building projects that would realize his goal, recording his efforts in *De Administratione*.<sup>30</sup> A large part of the book lists improvements to abbey properties and profits raised from rents and census dues.<sup>31</sup> Using documents he asserted he found in the abbey's library, Suger

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advisors, who disapproved of this campaign and refused to support his requests for knights and soldiers. Without this support, the French army was poorly organized and under-equipped. When faced by the pre-warmed and prepared army of the Count of Toulouse, who had ruled for twenty years, Louis retreated. Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 37.

<sup>28</sup> The abbey claimed this status as feudal overlords to the county of Vexin, which lay within Norman territory, adjacent to Rouen. It had been given to the abbey during the Merovingian period. In the ninth century, the abbey gave it to the count of the Vexin to hold in fief. Philip I brought the county back under Capetian control but held it as a fief from St. Denis, creating the rather unique situation of a king in the position of vassal to the Church in regards to this particular county. Crosby, *The Abbey of St. Denis, 475 – 1122, vol. 1* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), 50 – 51.

<sup>29</sup> Suger, *De Administratione* XXVIII in Erwin Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, second ed. Gerda Panofsky-Soergel (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979), 51.

<sup>30</sup> Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 127. The increased fees enabled Suger to improve life for the monks. An ordinance issued in 1140 or 1141 ordered more food at meals for the monks and in the infirmary.

<sup>31</sup> Braud, "Suger and the Making of the French Nation," 40. Suger refers to a census in several places in *De Administratione*. These censuses appear to be requests for an accounting of population and assets of property upon which to determine the amount of feudal taxes to be levied. Braud notes that a document written in 1125 ordered a census on just one particular fief.



reclaimed properties and privileges that he claimed traditionally belonged to St. Denis. For example, he justified his case for the recovery of the Priory of St. Geneviève at Argenteuil with documents unearthed from a cupboard holding old charters and documents listing immunities, arguing that it had originally been granted to St Denis by the Merovingian King Pepin I but lost during Carolingian times.<sup>32</sup> Suger's main goal, however, was to decorate and rebuild the abbey, particularly the abbey church, in a manner that represented the abbey's position as the premier abbey in France.

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<sup>32</sup> Suger, *De Administratione*, III in *Oeuvres Complètes de Suger*, 160. In his *Historia Calamitatum*, Abelard refers to this event, stating that the abbey regained Argenteuil legally. Peter Abelard, *The Story of my Misfortunes*, trans. Henry Adams Bellows (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2010), 85. Although Suger dances around the issue of improprieties at Argenteuil, others were not so hesitant. Complaints from others, including Bishop Etienne of Paris, about the scandalous conduct of the nuns led by Heloise, Abelard's one time wife, had reached the pope's ears, and certainly were influential in the positive outcome for Suger. See also Braud, "Suger and the Making of the French Nation," 43.

## AN EXAMINATION OF SOURCES

### Primary Sources

The primary sources regarding the consecration ceremonies begin with the books and documents written by Suger himself. A. Lecoy de la Marche's massive 1857 *Oeuvres Complètes de Suger* includes Suger's three books, *Vita Ludovici Grossi Regis*, *De Consecratione de Ecclesiae Sancti Dionysii*, and *De Rebus Administratione Sua Gestis*, as well as charters dating from Suger's abbacy and several letters dating from 1147 to 1150 in one volume. Also included are documents written about Suger soon after his death. Several documents provide supporting evidence of Suger's work, including a "Diplome de Louis VI", in which the King granted privileges to St. Denis in 1124 after successfully challenging the Holy Roman Emperor Henry V.<sup>33</sup>

The medieval biography *Vita Ludovici*, written by Suger c. 1137 to 1143/4 sometime after the death of Louis VI, known as Louis le Gros (the Fat), portrays the early twelfth century king as a somewhat idealized monarch. In this book, Louis is depicted as fighting mightily in battle and demonstrating proper piety to visiting popes. Louis had a temper and acted rashly at times, but he was supportive of St. Denis abbey. Suger demonstrates his ability to focus on details portraying a king devoted to the abbey of St. Denis and its interests while glossing over less flattering demonstrations of the King's rather passionate personality, flaws that were excusable as long as the King "took care

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<sup>33</sup> Marche *Oeuvres Complètes de Suger*, 333.

that the churches prospered and zealously sought peace for those who prayed, those who toiled, and the poor”.<sup>34</sup> The book includes what Suger believed were significant interactions between Louis VI and several popes. He devoted attention to Louis’ stance against the English kings, the Normans, any French lord who threatened St. Denis, and Holy Roman Emperor Henry V, who threatened France as a whole in 1124. Suger used the biography to present his concept of the proper medieval monarch. Two contemporary pieces, Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History of the Kings of England* and *The Song of Roland*, along with the much older biography of Charlemagne, Einhard’s *Vita Carolingian*, demonstrate that Suger’s concept evolved from older traditions, reflecting the evolving nature of medieval kings during the twelfth century.<sup>35</sup>

Suger’s biography of Louis VI is autobiographical to some extent. Suger relates some of his travels on behalf of the abbey and the King, protecting Church properties against greedy lords, arguing cases to regain feudal and ecclesiastical privileges and rights, attending church dedications and councils in Gaul, and traveling to Rome as an emissary for the King.<sup>36</sup> He writes of how he came to learn that he had become abbot of

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<sup>34</sup> Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, 29.

<sup>35</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London, UK: Penguin Books, 1966); *The Song of Roland*, trans. Dorothy L. Sayers (New York: Penguin Books, 1988); and *Einhard and Notker the Stammerer: Two Lives of Charlemagne*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London, UK: Penguin Books, 1969).

<sup>36</sup> Gaul refers to the lands roughly corresponding to modern day France; the feudal duchies and counties within these lands were officially held in fief from the Capetian king, though many viewed this only as a formality. “France” referred to the domain directly under the king’s control, the Ile de France. To refer to a person as a Frenchman during the early twelfth century indicated that that person came from the Ile de France, as the medieval kingdom of France did not begin to take on its characteristics as a coherent entity until later in the century. The people in Gaul collectively were the Franks, but generally identified themselves with the duchy or county or even the city in which they lived. Suger often referred to the Capetian monarch as king of the Franks but also sometimes as the King of the French, the feudal overlord of all the counties and duchies in Gaul. Suger’s use of the various titles indicated the beginning of the shift from the fragmented feudal lands that viewed the Capetian as a token monarch to the medieval kingdom of France under the control of a strong king.

St. Denis abbey, noting the King's anger over his preempted royal prerogative. Suger's autobiographical sketches serve to identify his personal concerns, that of protecting the interests of the abbey of St. Denis, while also recognizing and supporting monarchical interests.

An *Ordinatio* written 1140/1141 after the consecration of the new west front of the abbey church of St. Denis presents Suger's warm and practical concern for those under his administration and his interest in promoting the historical connection of the abbey to the Carolingian monarchies. The *Ordinatio* lays out sources of abbey income and expenditures, such as for improved meals for the monks, better care of the sick within the abbey, and increased allowances for the marguilliers who managed the office caring for the poor. This document discusses renewing a monthly commemoration for the ninth century Carolingian King, Charles the Bald, dictating that "a worthy repast be served to the monks in the refectory" as part of each monthly celebration.<sup>37</sup> The *Ordinatio* also discusses revenues to finance candles and lamps around the main altar and in the new chapels of the west front, ensuring light in these areas both day and night.

Suger produced *De Consecratione de Ecclesiae Sancti Dionysii* (hereafter *De Consecratione*) shortly after the consecration of the east end of the abbey church of St. Denis in 1144. *De Consecratione* bears strong weight as a primary source for information regarding the 1144 consecration. Suger carefully crafted this book to justify his rebuilding of the east end of the church and to present information about the altars and the consecration ceremonies that supported two main ideas: that St. Denis abbey, associated with the building and its rich decorations and that the feudal monarchy of Gaul

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<sup>37</sup> Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 122.

had a long history as the patron and protector of the abbey. Suger subtly dug at his ascetic detractors noting that they too helped finance the building renovation and hinted at papal and secular support of the renovations through selective name dropping when describing donations. Suger uses the first person plural to emphasize that he had support from his monks and others but occasionally mentioned himself in the singular first person, crediting himself with inspiration granted by divine will to “so small a man who was the successor to the nobility of such great kings and abbots”.<sup>38</sup> He emphasizes the history of the abbey and its rich interaction with the Merovingian and Carolingian kings, which he learned while a young monk studying in the abbey’s libraries, presenting the abbey as the most important church in France.

Suger wrote the subsequent *De Rebus Administratione Sua Gestis* (hereafter *De Administratione*) sometime from 1147 to 1150, a period in which Suger served as regent for Louis VII while the King went on a crusade to the holy land. While offering details on the consecrations, Suger devotes the majority of *De Administratione* to a recital of his own successful administrative efforts in repairing the abbey’s finances, reflecting Suger’s need to justify his administrative actions on behalf of the King. Like *De Consecratione*, *De Administratione* selectively discusses only a few aspects of the church building and its furnishing in detail, justifying his actions with metaphors of light and spiritual knowledge derived from Pseudo-Dionysian philosophy. See *Appendix B: Pseudo-Dionysian Philosophy*.

After Suger died in January 1151 from malaria, laudatory epistles appeared. Some reflect a general respect for the abbot, like the badly written anonymously authored “De

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<sup>38</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* IV in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 99.

Nobilitate Domini Sugerii Abbatis et Operibus Eius”.<sup>39</sup> The language is general enough to indicate the author did not know the abbot directly. Suger’s successor as abbot, William of St Denis, who knew Suger very well, wrote the *Sugerii Vita* soon after Suger’s death. Obviously an admirer of his predecessor, William describes Suger as an intelligent, energetic, cheerful, witty, and charming man who liked to tell stories. William stresses Suger’s faith, humility, and simple way of living, while praising Suger’s able administration of his abbey and its properties and, at times, the affairs of the monarchy. The *Sugerii Vita* defends Suger against criticisms, indicating that Suger quietly suffered from “the malice of the world”.<sup>40</sup> This restraint is evident in Suger’s own works: he never complained about his detractors or even mentioned them. William’s biography is useful as a description of Suger’s person and personality. It provides substantiation of Suger’s interactions with kings, nobles, and significant Church leaders. Suger’s life takes on greater dimension from allusions to the detractors and controversies in Suger’s life. These allusions along with his use of Pseudo-Dionysian philosophy support interpretations of Suger’s books as justifications of his building project.

In spite of his success as the abbot of St. Denis and as an advisor to two kings, Suger had a significant critic: the extremely influential Bernard of Clairvaux. The two abbots both wielded considerable influence within the monastic world as well as on significant secular leaders. Bernard, the abbot of the Cistercian abbey at Clairvaux, was one of the most famous exponents of the ascetic perspective during the twelfth century and never hesitated to criticize what he saw as foolish, immoral, or dangerous. The

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<sup>39</sup> Suger, *Oeuvres Complètes de Suger*, 423.

<sup>40</sup> William of St. Denis, *Sugerii Vita* in Suger, *Oeuvres Complètes de Suger*, 377.

Cistercians focused on reform of what they believed to be liturgical and lifestyle excesses practiced by the regular clergy.<sup>41</sup> Soon after founding Clairvaux, Bernard rose to prominence within the Cistercian community for his ability to inspire men through powerful sermons and to present Cistercian ideals. His *Apologia ad Guillelmum Abbatem* (hereafter *Apologia*), written c. 1125 in the form of a letter to William of Saint-Thierry, a Benedictine reformer who later became a Cistercian and close friend of Bernard's, expressed strong criticism of the art and architecture utilized in Benedictine churches.<sup>42</sup>

I will overlook the immense heights of the places of prayer, their immoderate lengths, their superfluous widths, the costly refinements, and the painstaking representations that deflect the attention....to me they somehow represent the ancient rite of the Jews...let these things be made for the honor of God...the very sight of these costly but wonderful illusions inflames men more to give than to pray. In this way wealth is derived from wealth, in this way money attracts money.<sup>43</sup>

Bernard deplored “foolish things and excesses” of any kind, even complaining about the variety of methods used by Benedictines for the preparation of eggs: “beat and buffeted...cooked soft, hard and scrambled...served now fried, now baked, now stuffed, now mixed with other things, and now separately”.<sup>44</sup> This disdain for Benedictine cooking practices demonstrated Bernard's overall contempt for the traditional Benedictine life and for the abbots leading the Benedictine abbeys.

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<sup>41</sup> The Cistercians were one of a number of reforming monastic movements arising in the latter part of the eleventh century. The original foundation of Cîteaux, started by Robert of Molesme in 1098, strove to return to the original Benedictine practices. The Cistercians believed that the practice of the *Opus Dei*, with its financial rewards leading to highly decorated monasteries, liturgies loaded with excess musical elaborations, and monks enjoying rich garb and food, needed to be balanced with more physical labor and less display of wealth.

<sup>42</sup> Rudolph, *The "Things of Greater Importance"*, 6 and 173. The *Apologia*, along with his previously written *Summa Cartae Caritatis* (c. 1123/4), lay out a clear view of the Cistercian program.

<sup>43</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia* XII, 28 in Rudolph, *The "Things of Greater Importance"*, 28 – 29.

<sup>44</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia* IX, 19 in Rudolph, *The "Things of Greater Importance"*, 261, 267.

The tense relationship between Suger and Bernard of Clairvaux emerges from the pages of Bernard's letters.<sup>45</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux's letters and *Apologia* contain both criticisms and praise of Suger, directly and indirectly, allowing a more complete portrait of Suger to emerge. Bernard's language varies from humble and placating to harsh and condemning, providing insight on conflicts involving the two abbots. Bernard's writing is honest, his emotions raw and exposed at times to reveal issues affecting the authority of the Church and the preservation of the monarchy. Although some of their correspondence to each other expressed conventional expressions of respect and love, the two were never close friends. Bernard directly and indirectly took aim at Suger on occasion. In his *Apologia*, Bernard was carefully avoided naming any particular abbey or person, but one passage seemed to describe Suger, contemptuously speaking of monks who

travel with so much pomp and so many mounted men, to be surrounded with so many long-haired servants that the retinue of a single abbot would be sufficient for two bishops? If I am not mistaken, I have seen an abbot leading sixty horse and more in his train....napkins, cups, basins, candlesticks, and bags stuffed not with bedding but with embellishments for the bed are ordered to be carried about. A man can scarcely go four leagues from his home unless with all his furnishings, as if he were going to war or to cross a desert where the necessities of life are not to be found.<sup>46</sup>

Rudolph points out that the Abbey of St. Denis was four leagues from Paris.<sup>47</sup> The *Apologia* made its way around French monastic circles quickly, becoming a central document in a growing controversy between well-established, rich, and influential

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<sup>45</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. Bruno Scott James (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953).

<sup>46</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia* XI, 27 in Rudolph, *The "Things of Greater Importance"*, 277.

<sup>47</sup> Benton, "Suger's Life and Personality," 5 and Suger, *Oeuvres Complètes de Suger*, 158. The distance and time to travel was significant enough that the abbey owned a house near the northern gates of Paris to house monks and horses that came to the court.



Benedictines and the newer ascetic and reform-minded Cistercians.<sup>48</sup> Suger likely read the *Apologia* and recognized the thinly veiled reference.

A letter written by Bernard to Suger more directly comments on Suger's mode of life.<sup>49</sup> Bernard's criticisms are veiled at first:

The good news of what God has done in your soul has gone forth in our land...to be sure all those who fear God and have heard of it are amazed and full of joy as this great and sudden change...Even those who have not known you, but have only heard how great has been the change from what you were to what you are, marvel and praise God in you.

However, Bernard's tempered words soon turn harsh, comparing St. Denis to a "den of thieves" and placing the blame directly on Suger:

It was your fault, not those of your monks, that good and zealous people censured. It was against you and not against the whole community that they murmured. In fact, it was you whom they held responsible. If you had corrected yourself, there would have been nothing left to criticize. If you, I say, had changed your ways, soon all the tumult would have died down, all the talk would have subsided. As for myself, the whole and only thing that upset me was the pomp and splendor with which you travelled. This seemed to me to savor of arrogance. If you had been content to put off your haughtiness and put away your splendid attire, the resentment of everyone would easily have died down.<sup>50</sup>

Bernard finally acknowledged Suger's reformed way of life: "But you have done more than satisfy your critics, you have earned their praise, although this sudden change of so many great things should be deemed more the work of God than of yourself."<sup>51</sup> As seen later in this thesis, Bernard also criticized Suger's actions as advisor to the king during the conflicts of 1141 to 1144. Suger, whose own writings reveal a man aware of

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<sup>48</sup> Rudolph, *The "Things of Greater Importance"*, 5.

<sup>49</sup> Benton, "Suger's Life and Personality," 5.

<sup>50</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux to Abbot Suger, c. 1127, in Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, 112 – 118.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

criticisms to his work, certainly must have been stung by Bernard's sharp words. Suger's response to the 1127 letter is unknown, but his books as well as William of St. Denis's biography include information that directly refute Bernard's criticisms of Suger's personal habits and monastic administration, indicating that Suger was personally motivated to prove Bernard wrong.

Bernard's letters balance the historical perspective on Suger, who chose to generally portray himself as supremely confident and capable. William of St. Denis addressed Suger's critics when Suger himself would not: Bernard offered the criticisms to public view. However, Bernard was not Suger's enemy. His letter to Pope Eugenius II recommending that Suger serve as regent to Louis VII while the King embarked on a crusade provides evidence supporting the image of Suger as a great administrator:

If in our French church there is anyone capable of filling a place of honor in the household of the King of kings; if there is any trusty David to do the bidding of the Lord, then, in my opinion, that person is the Abbot of St. Denis. I know that he is a man loyal and prudent in temporal affairs as well as fervent and humble in spiritual matters and, what is most difficult, he concerns himself in both without cause for reproach in either. Before the king he behaves as one of the Roman court, and before God he behaves as one of the court of heaven. I beg and implore you to receive kindly the messengers of this great man and that you should write him such a letter as he deserves and as becomes yourself, showing affection and intimacy, love and esteem. By doing this, by thus showing him affection and honor, you will be honoring your own ministry.<sup>52</sup>

Bernard generally disapproved of men who served both Church and state at the same time, questioning, "who would not be indignant, who would not deplore, even if only in secret, that a man should against the Gospel both serve God as a deacon and Mammon as

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<sup>52</sup> Bernard to Pope Eugenius III, c. 1145 to 1147, in Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, 416.

a minister of state...?”<sup>53</sup> However, by the date of this letter to the pope, it is obvious that Suger overcame Bernard’s disapproval with his effective management of Louis VII and of the abbey of St. Denis. His warm letter to the pope provides supportive evidence of Suger’s impressive achievements.

Abbot Suger’s role in the renovation of the abbey church of St. Denis, as well in carrying out improvements to the abbey, is important. His personality is complex. Bernard of Clairvaux condemned the excesses of his early life, and some scholars see him as arrogant. Suger presented himself as a skilled administrator and diplomat, enthusiastically justifying his actions with accepted philosophy and Church tenets, but occasionally his writing expressed frustration and some testiness. In spite of the fact that many of his contemporaries noted his piousness and humility, he appears to be a pragmatic man more concerned with the earthly comfort, reputation, and success of the abbey and monarchy than with the spirituality of men. He was an educated man, but he was not a noted scholar, with his writings and renovations echoing the work of others. He did not analyze his own work: he simply presented it. Fortunately, scholars through the centuries provide more insight to the significance of his renovations and ceremonies.

### **Secondary Sources**

In addition to the primary sources, a wide variety of secondary sources discuss the Capetians, Suger and his contemporaries, and the architecture and art of the abbey church built by Suger, presenting a complex and at times contradictory picture of the period. A challenge posed by the passage of time forces much modern research regarding the twelfth century building to rely on histories and inventories dating from the seventeenth

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<sup>53</sup> Bernard to Suger, c. 1127, in Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, 116.

and early eighteenth centuries that provide sources of images and documents no longer extant. Notable histories referred to by a number of scholars referenced in this thesis include Dom F. Jacques Doublet's *Histoire de l'Abbaye de S. Denys en France contenant les antiquitez d'icelle, les fondations, prerogative, et privileges, ensemble les tombeaux et epitaphes des roys, reynes, enfans de France et autres signales personnages qui s'y trouvent* (1625) and *Histoire chronologique pour la verité de S. Denis Aréopagite, Apôtre de France et premier evesque de Paris* (1646), both of which preserved many of the old legends and transcripts of important documents. Three early eighteenth sources include Dom Michel Felibien's *L'abbaye royale de St. Denis* (1706), Bernard de Montfaucon's *Les monuments de la monarchie françoise* (1729 – 1733), and Dom Jean Mabillon's "Remarques sur les antiquites de St.-Denis" in his *Oeuvres Posthumes II*.<sup>54</sup> Felibien presented the chronological history of the abbey and images of the abbey church and some of its furnishings as it stood in the early eighteenth century prior to restorations carried out during the latter part of the same century that removed significant portions of the west front. Montfaucon commissioned pictures of the abbey church, including the west front's statue columns. Montfaucon's work is one of the few sources of information on the statue columns.<sup>55</sup> Mabillon edited the works of Bernard of Clairvaux, studied manuscripts and documents dating as far back as the Merovingian era, and left a record of

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<sup>54</sup> Dom Jacques Doublet, *Histoire de l'Abbaye de S. Denys en France* (Paris, 1625) and *Histoire chronologique pour la verité de S. Denis Aréopagite, Apôtre de France et premier evesque de Paris* (Paris, 1646). Both Crosby, in *Royal Abbey*, and Conway refer to *The Histoire chronologique*. Sir Martin A. Conway, "The Treasures of Saint Denis: The Abbey of Saint-Denis and its Ancient Treasures." (1915) <http://www.medart.pitt.edu/texts/Saint-Denis/Conway2.html>, 14 – 23.

<sup>55</sup> Dom Michel Félibien, *Histoire de L'Abbaye Royale de Saint-Denys en France* (Paris, 1706); Bernard de Montfaucon, *Les monuments de la monarchie Française*, vol I (Paris, 1729); and Dom Jean Mabillon, *Oeuvres Posthumes*, vol II (Paris, 1724), referred to in Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, and in Rudolph, *The "Things of Greater Importance"*.

artifacts at St. Denis. Although these sources are secondary, they often provide first-hand accounts of architectural features no longer extant in the abbey church of St. Denis but whose impact will be considered in this thesis.

Two scholars focus their biographies on Suger to examine his role as a king maker. In his article “Suger’s Life and Personality”, John F. Benton portrays Suger as a man with a “massive sense of self” who rose above his lowly roots to become heavily involved in court politics, while Ronald James Braud’s *Suger and the Making of the French Nation* examines Suger’s role as a catalyst, a shrewd man able to help move the Capetian kings from weak feudal monarchs to the stronger medieval monarchs of the high middle ages.<sup>56</sup> Braud’s biography discusses Suger’s life in detail, identifying Suger’s involvement with the monarchs and explaining political controversies hinted of in Bernard’s letters, but his assertion that Suger was the catalyst is problematic. Certainly, Suger was highly visible as an advisor to Louis VI. He proudly displayed his confidence in his ability to argue effectively and diplomatically in the biography of Louis VI. Braud explores Suger’s influence on Louis VII less directly, indicating that events in the first years of the younger Louis’ reign show less influence by Suger on the monarch. The change of the Capetian kings from weak, ineffective, symbolic monarchs to strong medieval kings took place over a period that extended from before Suger’s abbacy to well past his tenure as regent to Louis VII. It may be Suger’s biography of Louis VI, intended in part as a textbook to propound on the role of the Capetian king, served only to express

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<sup>56</sup> Benton, “Suger’s Life and Personality,” 7, and Ronald James Braud, “Suger and the Making of the French Nation” (PhD diss., University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1977).

a growing awareness in Western Europe of the need for kings to work with the other major power of the period — the Church — in order to bring about more stability.

Other sources focus on the Capetians and their interaction with the abbey of St. Denis, particularly with Suger, in their efforts to gain more political power. Gabrielle M. Spiegel focuses on the monarchy's affiliation with St. Denis in her article, "The Cult of Saint Denis and Capetian Kingship", asserting that the Capetians used claims put forth by the abbey over centuries as a means of legitimizing their rule.<sup>57</sup> Part of her argument discusses the abbey's use of documents over the centuries to support the abbey's claims. Spiegel evaluates the actual veracity of the documents and analyzes how such documents, real or forged, were accepted and used by the Capetians as historical proof of their legitimacy. Modern historians see the creation of documents by medieval monks to support legal or ecclesiastical claims as forgeries meant to defraud; however, medieval scholars rarely questioned the legitimacy of these documents. The documents were often written down from some oral tradition or were a transcription of an older document that was in their hands or merely remembered. They could have been, by modern definition, outright forgeries, but few medieval scholars ever questioned the validity of such documents. Some, like Peter Abelard, could suggest that a previous writer had confused facts, but for the most part, these documents were accepted as valid testimonies of past grants, privileges, immunities and histories. At the same time, well into the twelfth century such written records were considered inferior to the living verbal expression in a courtroom or judicial proceeding, continuing the traditional methods of trial by oath,

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<sup>57</sup> Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "The Cult of Saint Denis and Capetian Kingship," *Journal of Medieval History* 1, issue 1 (1975): 43 – 69.

combat or ordeal.<sup>58</sup> For the most part, all documents used by Suger to support claims by the Abbey of St. Denis were accepted as legitimate by his contemporaries.

In her book, *Capetian France 987 – 1328*, Elizabeth M. Hallam evaluates the history of the Capetians, specifically the reigns of Philip I, Louis VI, and Louis VII, and their interaction with the Church in general.<sup>59</sup> Hallam discusses the personalities of the kings, especially in their efforts to deal with recalcitrant nobles, and their support, or lack of, French churches. She argues that the Philip I and Louis VI literally fought their nobles to assert monarchical power, citing feudal prerogatives and rights as just cause. Although Suger complained otherwise, Hallam claims that like his son, Louis VI, Philip also aggressively sought to protect Church properties. She portrays Louis VII as weaker in personality than his father or grandfather, strongly influenced by his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, but able, with the help of Suger, to continue the consolidation of power started by his father and grandfather. Eric Bournazel discusses Suger's role as an unofficial advisor to Louis VI in "Suger and the Capetians", citing documents witnessed by the abbot, and indicating that Suger took advantage of this position to enhance St. Denis's fortunes.<sup>60</sup> Bournazel examined Suger only, but the close relationship between abbots of St. Denis and the monarchy existed long before Suger's tenure. The interactions benefitted both parties: the kings gained ecclesiastical support and the abbey received royal grants that increased its financial status, independence, and repute as one of the premier abbeys in Western Europe.

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<sup>58</sup> R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval French Literature and Law* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), 3.

<sup>59</sup> Elizabeth M. Hallam, *Capetian France 987 – 1328* (New York: Longman, Inc., 1980).

<sup>60</sup> Eric Bournazel, "Suger and the Capetians" in *Abbot Suger and Saint Denis*, ed. Paula Lieber Gerson (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), 55 – 72.

The development of the Capetian monarchy from weak secular rulers to the more powerful French kings of the Middle Age had its roots in older traditions. Janneke Raaijmakers' *The Making of the Monastic Community of Fulda, c .744 – c .900* and Anne Latowsky's *Emperor of the World: Charlemagne and the Construction of Imperial Authority, 800 – 1229* demonstrate that Suger's justification of his church as a symbol of royal power continued a historical tradition pre-dating the Capetian monarchy.<sup>61</sup> In "Suger's Views on Kingship", Andrew W. Lewis directs attention to the evolution of the king from a purely secular military leader to one who was placed by the Church at the top of an evolving political system, a monarch who, while neither holy nor divine, served the Church, publically making symbolic gestures that identified him as a vassal of the Church.<sup>62</sup> An article by Hallam, "Royal burial and the cult of kingship in France and England, 1060 – 1330" compares burial practices of Capetian kings to those of the Holy Roman Emperors, linking more elaborate ceremonies to increased power on the part of kings and examining the political symbolism of church buildings associated with royal burials.<sup>63</sup> She points out that while the Normans and German Emperors eagerly seized on building programs and increasingly complex burial rituals as demonstrations of their power, the Capetians were slow to follow. Hallam credits Suger's biography of Louis VII of sparking an interest in burial ceremonies emphasizing monarchical power. This thesis moves beyond Hallam's argument, asserting that Suger's consecration ceremonies, with

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<sup>61</sup>Janneke Raaijmakers, *The Making of the Monastic Community of Fulda, c. 744 – c. 900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) and Anne A. Latowsky, *Emperor of the World: Charlemagne and the Construction of Imperial Authority, 800 – 1229* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

<sup>62</sup> Andrew W. Lewis, "Suger's Views on Kingship" in *Abbot Suger and Saint Denis*, ed. Paula Lieber Gerson (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), 49 – 54.

<sup>63</sup> Elizabeth M. Hallam, "Royal burial and the cult of kingship in France and England, 1060 – 1330," *Journal of Medieval History* 8, Issue 4 (December 1982):359 –380.



their emphasis on historical kings, significant relics, and ecclesiastical approval of the monarchy, were significant factors in the evolution of the Capetians from weak feudal kings to powerful medieval monarchs.

In addition to historical works, scholarship in medieval philosophy must be utilized in any study of Suger's work in order to understand the significance of the art and architecture in the rebuilt abbey church of St. Denis, the consecrations of the church, and Suger's written record. Umberto Eco's *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* explores ecclesiastical and philosophic influences in the abbey church of St. Denis as well as the medieval attitudes about art. He points out

Medieval taste...involved...an appreciation of all of the relations, imaginative and supernatural, subsisting between the contemplated object and a cosmos which opened on to the transcendent. It meant discerning in the concrete object an ontological reflection of, and participation in, the being and the power of God.<sup>64</sup>

Medieval men could, like Suger, appreciate art as a tool to assist in the process of spiritual contemplation, or like Bernard of Clairvaux, be wary of the distractions posed by beautiful objects. Paul Rorem provides a description of the Pseudo-Dionysian texts in *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols Within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis*, discussing Suger's use of this Neo-platonic philosophy to provide legitimacy of his building program. Grover A. Zinn also explores Suger's use of Pseudo-Dionysian philosophy in "Suger, Theology, and the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition", suggesting that rather than being an original thinker, Suger was strongly influenced by his contemporary Hugh, abbot of St. Victor in Paris. During the 1120s, Hugh wrote a commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's *Celestial Hierarchy* that expounded on the translation and

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<sup>64</sup> Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, trans. Hugh Bredin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 15.

commentary by ninth century scholar John Scotus Erigena. Both Eco and Zinn believe Suger's art projects, particularly the west front, and his written defenses echo much of Hugh of St. Victor's work. Conrad Rudolph connects Suger to Hugh of St. Victor's commentaries on Pseudo-Dionysian philosophy as well in *Artistic Change at St-Denis: Abbot Suger's Program and the Early Twelfth-Century Controversy over Art* but also argues that Hugh's commentaries on the teachings of St. Augustine influenced on Suger's work more than the Pseudo-Dionysian commentaries.<sup>65</sup>

Sources regarding music, liturgy, and medieval consecrations help in understanding the nuances of a twelfth century consecration. Liturgical practices at St. Denis emerge from preserved documents dating from this period. Edward B. Foley examines an ordinary dating from 1234 to 1236 in *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis in France: Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine 526*. This ordinary was prepared during the initial phases of the thirteenth century extension of the nave and as such preserves elements of the liturgy as used in the twelfth century building. Foley sees the liturgy as a means of identifying the location of various items in the church. In *The Service-Books of the Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis: Images of Ritual and Music in the Middle Ages*, Anne Walters Robertson surveys Merovingian sources of the abbey's history and liturgy and, using several manuscripts dating from the eleventh and twelfth centuries that originated from St. Denis, discusses the ecclesiastical calendar of the medieval abbey as well as liturgical and musical practices at St. Denis. In the process,

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<sup>65</sup> Paul Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols Within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis* (Toronto, Canada: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984; Grover A. Zinn, Jr., "Suger, Theology, and the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition" in *Abbot Suger and Saint Denis*, ed. Paula Lieber Gerson (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), 33 – 40; and Conrad Rudolph, *Artistic Change at St-Denis: Abbot Suger's Program and the Early Twelfth-Century Controversy over Art* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990).

Robertson demonstrates that Suger's approach to music was traditional, incorporating older musical forms rather than newer approaches appearing in France during the twelfth century. Louis Hamilton's *A Sacred City: Consecrating Churches and Reforming Society in Eleventh-Century Italy*, Andrew Hughes' *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office: A guide to their organization and terminology*, and Dominique Iogna-Prat's article, "The Consecration of Church Space" join Brian Repsher's *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era* are valuable sources of information on medieval church consecration practices and liturgy.<sup>66</sup>

Art historian Erwin Panofsky and archaeologist Sumner McKnight Crosby are two significant twentieth century scholars whose work has had significant impact on scholarship. Panofsky's work, *Abbot Suger and its Art Treasures on the Abbey Church of St.-Denis*, includes translated portions and commentaries of Suger's *De Administratione*, *De Consecratione*, and the *Ordinatio*.<sup>67</sup> Panofsky's translations and commentary center on specific features of the church building: the doors and the altars, examining Suger's use of Pseudo-Dionysian philosophy to justify his decoration of the church, his emphasis on St. Denis's connection to the monarchy, particularly to Dagobert and Charles the Bald,

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<sup>66</sup> Edward B. Foley, *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis in France: Paris, Bibliothèque Mazarine 526* (Fribourg, Switzerland: The University Press, 1990); Anne Walters Robertson, *The Service-Books of the Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis: Images of Ritual and Music in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1991); Louis Hamilton, *A Sacred City: Consecrating Churches and Reforming Society in Eleventh-Century Italy* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2010); Andrew Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office: A guide to their organization and terminology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982); Dominique Iogna-Prat, "The Consecration of Church Space" in *Medieval Christianity in Practice*, ed. Miri Rubin (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009) 95 – 99; and Brian Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1998).

<sup>67</sup> Other than Panofsky's translations, there seem to be no other published English translations of Suger's works. A. Lecoy de la Marche's *Oeuvres Complètes de Suger* provides the Latin texts of Suger's books, letters and charters, with commentary in French. The author of this thesis did a rough translation of much of Suger's works for herself in order to examine Abbot Suger's writings.

and details of the consecration ceremonies. Crosby's two works, *The Abbey of St. Denis, 475 – 1122* and *The Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis from its Beginning to the Death of Suger 475 – 1151*, provide extensive information about the history of the abbey of St. Denis and the basilica. Crosby carried out archaeological excavations at the abbey over a period of nearly forty years, minutely examining the various incarnations of the basilica. Crosby's books are an invaluable connection to older research on the abbey, including sources dating to the sixth century, but also reference works by sixteenth and seventeenth century historians, including those previously mentioned.

Otto von Simson's *The Gothic Cathedral: Origins of Gothic Architecture and the Medieval Concept of Order* examines the role of medieval thought and education in the building of Gothic cathedrals, exploring ecclesiastical and philosophic justifications for Suger's building project and discussing the political importance of the west front and consecrations at St. Denis.<sup>68</sup> Simson believes Suger was motivated in part by a desire to raise St. Denis' reputation as a pilgrimage site comparable to other major pilgrimage destination, such as the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. He also suggests a connection with the Normans. He points out that the St. Denis controlled abbeys in England and that Suger maintained a relationship with King Henry I and Henry's successor, Stephen. To honor this relationship, the abbot placed the archbishops of Canterbury and Rouen in positions of honor during the consecration ceremony of 1144. Diana Webb explores the political and economic implications of relics and pilgrimages in the twelfth century in *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West*. Suger obviously demonstrated a strong

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<sup>68</sup> Otto von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral: Origins of Gothic Architecture and the Medieval Concept of Order* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965).

interest in upholding the Capetian monarchy, but his strong emphasis on the relics of St. Denis also implied his interest in promoting St. Denis as a pilgrimage site.<sup>69</sup>

Wim Swann's *The Gothic Cathedral* connects the political and social environment of the period to the liturgical and social functions of Suger's church building. Medieval cathedrals attracted visitors from all levels of society and served as meeting places, their large size accommodating several activities at one time. Cathedrals provided sensual experiences to educate the spiritually unlearned, following the dictates of Pope Gregory I (r. 590 – 604), who wrote, "For what writing supplies to him that can read, that does a picture to him that is unlearned and can only look". More than just a canvas on which to present icons, Swann portrays the cathedral as the "theatre of the Middle Ages", with the liturgy characterized by dramatic elements.<sup>70</sup> In *Blessing the World: Ritual and Lay Piety in Medieval Religion*, Derek Rivard examines the function of a church building as a tool to provide meaning and hope to medieval man, with the sacred space and the ceremonies carried out in this space sources of spiritual power. Anne Prache's *Cathedrals of Europe*, Nicola Coldstream's *Medieval Architecture* and James Snyder's *Medieval Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture 4th – 14th Century* discuss general cultural, religious and political influences on gothic architecture.<sup>71</sup>

When viewed as a whole, the amount of scholarly work over the centuries centered on the architecture and art presented in the renovated church of St. Denis would

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<sup>69</sup> Diana Webb, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001).

<sup>70</sup> Wim Swann, *The Gothic Cathedral* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1969), 37 and 31.

<sup>71</sup> Derek A. Rivard, *Blessing the World: Ritual and Lay Piety in Medieval Religion* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009); Anne Prache, *Cathedrals of Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); Nicola Coldstream, *Medieval Architecture* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002); and James Snyder, *Medieval Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture 4th – 14th Century* (New York: Harry H. Abrams, Inc. Prentice Hall Inc., 1989).

have delighted Abbot Suger, who desired to leave his mark on the world. After all, he liked nothing more than to tell a story about the glories and history of the Benedictine abbey of St. Denis. However, most of the research only looks back in time at the building and its furnishings and does little to examine the significance of the four ceremonies in which Suger presented these physical attributes to make a powerful statement about the status of his abbey and its relationship with the history and monarchy of France. The political and historical significance of St. Denis as well as the increased status and power of the Capetian monarchy is notable in a large part because of Suger's consecration ceremonies.

## THE FOUNDATION OF FRANKISH POLITICAL POWER

To learn more about Suger's work and the consecrations, it is necessary to examine the historical, political, and economic environment of twelfth century France. St. Denis is located just five miles north of Paris, just east of a bend in the Seine River on the road leading north to Rheims. In the mid-first century BCE, the Romans occupied the small island that would become the heart of Paris, with the city spreading onto the southern bank of the Seine. Missionaries from Rome and the Middle East introduced Christianity to the region in the third century CE. In 250, during persecutions of Christians carried out under Emperor Domitian, the Roman prefect of Paris ordered the execution of Denis, the first bishop of Paris, carrying out the decapitation on the tall hill that lay to the north of Paris called Mons Mercurius.<sup>72</sup> The hill later came to be known as Mons des Martyrs — Montmartre. Legend claimed that Denis was buried at a small necropolis, near a small village called Vicus Catulacensis, directly north of Paris. This village was renamed St. Denis in honor of the small basilica that arose to house the tomb of Denis<sup>73</sup>.

A century later, with the decline of the Roman Empire, the Frankish Merovingians gained control of the area. The Merovingian rulers of the fifth through seventh centuries built a palace on the small island in the Seine that was the center of

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<sup>72</sup> Named for a Roman temple to the god Mercury located on the hill.

<sup>73</sup> "Early History from late Antiquity to the early Merovingian period," *Saint-Denis, une ville au Moyen Âge*, [http://www.saint-denis.culture.fr/en/1\\_2a\\_ville.htm](http://www.saint-denis.culture.fr/en/1_2a_ville.htm).

Paris. On the southern bank of the river, new monastic foundations replaced Roman structures and on Mons Mercurius a Christian chapel arose on the site where a temple to Mercury once stood. The Merovingians extended their reach beyond Paris to patronize the small basilica at the village of St. Denis, founding a monastery next to the basilica.<sup>74</sup>

### **Christian Monarchs from Constantine to the Carolingians<sup>75</sup>**

Under the Carolingian monarchs, feudalism as an economic and political system came to its full development, with official acts and terms appearing in the written record. Prior to the Carolingians, few of the Merovingian kings were strong enough to maintain much control over the region of Gaul, with the notable exceptions of Clovis I, who was baptized a Christian in 495, and the early seventh century King Dagobert, who made Paris his capital. The Merovingians eventually lost control to the Carolingian kings, starting with Charles Martel, de facto ruler from 714 to 741. Under the reign of Charles Martel's grandson, Charlemagne, the Frankish empire reached its greatest height, becoming the Holy Roman Empire in 800 after Charlemagne was crowned emperor by Pope Leo III.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Abbeys are monasteries led by an abbot. In general, abbots held power equivalent to that held by a bishop.

<sup>75</sup> See *Appendix C: Early Medieval Feudalism*.

<sup>76</sup> Einhard, "The Life of Charlemagne" in *Einhard and Notker the Stammerer*, 81. Einhard recorded that Charlemagne was crowned and granted the title of "Emperor and Augustus". Pope Leo III, accused of perjury and adultery by Roman opponents, sought Charlemagne's protection. Leo and Charlemagne apparently negotiated an agreement: Roman law stipulated that only an emperor could judge enemies of the pope so the German king needed to be crowned emperor. The two traveled back to Rome, where Charlemagne's presence forced Leo's enemies to refute their accusations. On Christmas Day, Leo placed a crown on Charlemagne's head and the congregation declared him the Roman emperor. Pope Leo III made obeisance to the newly crowned emperor "according to Byzantine ceremonial" and singlehandedly set the stage for the investiture controversy between the Holy Roman Emperor and the papacy. Paul Johnson, *The Papacy* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1997), 68.



Being crowned Holy Roman Emperor raised Charlemagne from being merely another Frankish king to now being viewed in the same legendary status as the great Roman Emperor Constantine and the Byzantine Emperor Justinian. See *Appendix D: Constantine and the Transition to Christian Monarchy*. Charlemagne's biographer, Einhard, a monk from the Benedictine monastery at Fulda, outlined the number of achievements carried out by the emperor in his *Vita Carolingian*.<sup>77</sup> Einhard identified what he believed made a great king, contrasting Charlemagne's effective administration with the weak governments of kings who were puppets occasionally put on display while their kingdoms disintegrated.<sup>78</sup> He was careful to point out that Charlemagne was elected with the consent of the Franks, the people of the Holy Roman Empire, thus conferring his reign with a legitimacy that was derived from the people as well as God. As the elected king, Charlemagne set out to improve his kingdom, both as a successful warrior who enlarged his kingdom and as an effective diplomat.

As a feudal king and then emperor, Charlemagne enforced the idea of a Christian monarch, duly anointed by a representative of God and to whom loyalty and service was owed by both secular lords and churchmen. Having defended Leo III, he could view himself as equal (or perhaps even superior to) the pope. Charlemagne enthusiastically

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<sup>77</sup> Thorpe, "Introduction" in *Einhard and Notker the Stammerer*, 49 and 14. Einhard was both friend and biographer to Charlemagne and to Louis the Pious. Born around 775, he was described by his contemporary, Walafrid Strabo, as a tiny man, intelligent with "remarkable" talents and "one of the most highly thought of among all the palace officials of that time". Both Strabo and Alcuin name Einhard by the nickname of "Bezaleel", from which Thorpe infers that Einhard was skilled in gem cutting, wood carving and metal work. Sometime after Charlemagne's death in 814, Einhard married and went on to become abbot of several monasteries. Einhard died March 840.

<sup>78</sup> Einhard, "The Life of Charlemagne" in *Einhard and Notker the Stammerer*, 55. This was an apparent reference to the ineffective rule of the Merovingian kings.

followed the example of his legendary predecessors, utilizing the Church as a tool to enhance his authority and to carry out administrative and liturgical reforms.

The Church had grown in power from the fourth century onward. Constantine's famous vision of the chi-rho seemed to bestow divine blessing on his reign and in return, he actively supported the Christian Church. His close relationship with Pope Sylvester helped move the Roman bishop to a position of significance, based on Rome's status as capital of the empire, as well as assertions that Peter, one of Jesus' apostles, had been crucified and buried in Rome.<sup>79</sup> Under the leadership of Pope Gregory I (590 – 604), the interaction of the Roman Church with secular life increased. Influenced by Justinian reforms, Gregory set in motion reorganization of Church structures, actively taking over roles formerly controlled by the Roman government. The Church became a public institution, its laws part of the secular government, with bishops and clergy taking on public duties and helping to run local governments in the wake of the chaos caused by the breakdown of the Roman Empire.<sup>80</sup> Gregory supervised the building of churches, hospitals, and schools and strove to alleviate the effects of famine within Italy. His pontificate oversaw the writing of liturgical books as a means of creating some kind of liturgical consistency within the Church.<sup>81</sup> The Mass received its definitive form, with the addition of the *Pater Noster* — the Lord's Prayer — as an integral part.<sup>82</sup> Plainchant, also known as Gregorian chant, began to appear in a number of texts during this period.

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<sup>79</sup>The Pope is the Bishop of Rome, with the appellation of “pope”, coming from the Greek pappas or father. In the early Church, all bishops could be called pope.

<sup>80</sup> Johnson, *The Papacy*, 52.

<sup>81</sup> Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era*, 20.

<sup>82</sup> François Amiot, *History of the Mass* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1959), 21 and 24.

In addition to a stronger papacy and the more influential secular clergy, monasticism increasingly became a significant part of the Church. Christian monasticism emerged during the fourth century as a means for Christians to withdraw from the secular world in order to focus on prayer. In the east, monastic foundations followed the rules set down by Bishop Basil of Caesarea. Western foundations chose to follow the early sixth century rules written by Benedict of Nursia, the *Regula Benedicti*, answering directly to the Roman pontiff as the head of the Church. With the city of Rome falling into decline after a series of political upheavals and invasions, educated men like Benedict sought refuge in private sanctuaries away from what they perceived as immorality and chaos. The Benedictine rule dictated “sacred reading” and study, and over the next few centuries, their foundations became the schools of the early medieval period.<sup>83</sup> By the Carolingian period, monasteries were the source of the educated elite that served kings and lords. They served as repositories for texts and legal documents, and their scriptoria provided a wealth of charters, both real and forged, that supported legal claims of lords and churches.

Charlemagne used the various structures within western Christianity — the papacy, secular churches and monasteries — to reform structures of power and administration during the early ninth century.<sup>84</sup> The emperor recognized the need for qualified men to serve him. He denounced moral laxity and had no problem with demoting churchmen for their failures. Notker the Stammerer, a late ninth century

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<sup>83</sup> Benedict of Nursia, “Rule 48” in *St. Benedict’s Rule for Monasteries*, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/50040/50040-h/50040-h.html#chapter-1-nl-on-the-kinds-of-monks>.

<sup>84</sup> Secular churches were the parish churches and cathedrals in villages and towns, while the “regular” churches were those in the monasteries; the term “regular” is derived from “regula” (rule), referring to the rules for monastic life. The terms secular clergy and regular clergy refer to the various non-monastic and monastic churchmen.

biographer, pointed out that Charlemagne was disgusted by the laziness and ineffectiveness of the sons of the nobility. The king believed that a man needed to be trained and educated, whether in military arts or in letters.<sup>85</sup> He ordered the establishment of schools where any man regardless of social status could be trained to serve God and the empire. Under Alcuin, a Saxon monk from York who led a school at Charlemagne's palace in Aachen, the educational curriculum became articulated as the seven liberal arts, divided into the *Trivium* (grammar, rhetoric and logic) and the *Quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy).<sup>86</sup> The main centers of the Carolingian reform at Fulda, Reichenau, and Saint-Gall had extensive libraries employing this new educational program.<sup>87</sup> These schools, with their libraries and scriptoria, saved ancient texts and produced educated men capable of serving secular leaders.<sup>88</sup> In 789, Charlemagne issued an *Admonitio generalis*, outlining a comprehensive program of religious education that led to an increase in the production of liturgical texts and commentaries.<sup>89</sup> It was during this period that monks began translating and copying the texts of the classical Greeks, Romans, and early Church writers.

Charlemagne took on the role of protector of the Church, building it up, literally, while still subjugating it to his authority. He viewed the Church as an “instrument of power”.<sup>90</sup> He forced conquered Saxons to convert to Christianity and then used

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<sup>85</sup> Einhard, “The Life of Charlemagne” in *Einhard and Notker the Stammerer*, 99.

<sup>86</sup> Brian Tierney and Sidney Painter, *Western Europe in the Middle Ages 300 – 1475*. 5th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992), 144.

<sup>87</sup> James G. Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, Inc., 2014), 162.

<sup>88</sup> Tierney and Painter, *Western Europe in the Middle Ages 300 – 1475*, 146.

<sup>89</sup> Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era*, 111.

<sup>90</sup> Prache, *Cathedrals of Europe*, 31 – 32.

Christianity as a unifying tool for his empire. He believed the bishops and abbots of the Holy Roman Empire served him as vassals and as vassals owed him the same loyalty as the lay nobility. Records from this period, including that of the powerful western German monastery of Fulda, indicate that cooperating with the Carolingian court by incorporating liturgical and educational reforms and engaging in building projects created stronger ties with both the monarchal court and with Rome.<sup>91</sup> Charlemagne commanded the bishops and archbishops in his realm to restore sacred buildings.<sup>92</sup> These directives utilized the concept of *renovation* — renovation of ancient buildings to emphasize a connection with the past — to bolster his ties to the glories of the Roman Empire as epitomized by the important churches built by Constantine.<sup>93</sup> *Renovatio* incorporated a belief that religious sites and buildings were more than walls and doors: they literally were sacred objects, blessed by the touch of a saint or by the hand of God himself.<sup>94</sup> The ambitious emperor saw that association with these sacred buildings from the past signified a connection to the supreme authority of God. He set out to restore the past while emphasizing the strength of his own authority by building new and even more impressive structures. Notker the Stammerer points out that Charlemagne set out to build a cathedral “according to his own plan...which should be finer than the ancient buildings of the Romans.”<sup>95</sup> The sanctification of sacred spaces with links to the ancient Roman Empire and early

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<sup>91</sup> Raaijmakers, *The Making of the Monastic Community of Fulda, c. 744 – c. 900*, 61.

<sup>92</sup> Einhard, “The Life of Charlemagne” in *Einhard and Notker the Stammerer*, 71.

<sup>93</sup> Snyder, *Medieval Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture 4th – 14th Century*, 235.

<sup>94</sup> It is interesting to note that while religious buildings of the early medieval period still stand, such as the fourth century baptistery in Poitiers and Charlemagne’s chapel in Aachen, virtually no political buildings from the same period still exist in anything remotely resembling their earliest incarnations.

<sup>95</sup> Notker the Stammerer, “Charlemagne” in *Einhard and Notker the Stammerer*, 125.

Christianity became common.<sup>96</sup> One of the first such occasions was the 775 consecration of a new church built over the tomb of Saint Denis, attended by Charlemagne in company with his father, Pepin, and brother, Carloman.<sup>97</sup>

As part of Charlemagne's imperial program, ecclesiastical and monastic foundations were expected to take a more significant role in society, as well as undertake the renovation and building of sacred buildings. The participation of abbots and bishops in court activities or as advisors brought royal patronage. Grants of feudal privileges and rights allowed the foundations to become economic, administrative and political centers, serving the needs of Charlemagne's empire.

The role of monasteries in meeting the spiritual needs of laymen also factored in to the need for larger monasteries. St. Benedict of Nursia's *Regula Benedicti* called for monks to do the work of God — the Opus Dei — to pray, read psalms, and sing chants in the choir of the monastery church.<sup>98</sup> At first meant only as a spiritual discipline to organize monastic life, by the ninth century the Opus Dei came to be a major source of income for the monasteries as lay people, viewing monks as holier and closer to God, paid to have prayers said for the souls of deceased relatives.<sup>99</sup> Although Rule 48 dictated that the monks were also supposed to do manual labor as part of running the monastery, reforms in the ninth and tenth centuries promoted by Benedict of Aniane placed a strong

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<sup>96</sup> Eric Palazzo, "Art, Liturgy, and the Five Senses in the Early Middle Ages," In *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 41, no. 1 (2010): 34 – 35.

<sup>97</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 52 – 54. Crosby believed that the older church on the site was demolished prior to building this new basilica.

<sup>98</sup> Benedict of Nursia, "Rule 47" in *St. Benedict's Rule for Monasteries*.

<sup>99</sup> Norman F. Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 151.

emphasis on the Opus Dei.<sup>100</sup> By transferring manual labor to serfs and tenants, monks gained more time to pray, read, worship, and to provide religious services for laymen.<sup>101</sup>

The Opus Dei proved to be a lucrative source of income for the monasteries. Laymen paid to have prayers said for their dead. As the demand grew, so did the complexity of the Offices (services) of the Opus Dei. The complete liturgy, the antiphons, psalms, prayers, readings and responses, in different combinations depending on the season, day and hour, not to mention location, patrons, feudal associations, as well as hour, led to the preparation of assorted books to keep track of the office.<sup>102</sup> The *Regula Benedicti* and the Opus Dei required monks to be literate. Because much of the liturgy was sung, monks also needed musical training. Monasteries grew rich from the donations of items and land from grateful laymen and secular leaders who found spiritual consolation in the services of the Opus Dei.<sup>103</sup>

The Carolingian reforms strove to unify liturgical rites in both secular and monastic churches. In spite of Gregory I's efforts, early medieval Christianity was characterized by regionalism in both leadership and liturgy. To the east, the Byzantine Church developed its own hierarchy, structure, architecture and liturgy.<sup>104</sup> Western

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<sup>100</sup> Benedict of Aniane, c. 747 – 821, once served in Charlemagne's court before entering monastic life. His successful application of the *Regula Benedicti* at the monastery he founded at Aniane, in the Languedoc region of southern France, became a model of monastic life. As a chief advisor to Louis the Pious, Charlemagne's son, Benedict became the essential head abbot of monasteries in the Holy Roman Empire. "St. Benedict of Aniane," *New Advent Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02467a.htm>.

<sup>101</sup> Braud, "Suger and the Making of the French Nation," 52.

<sup>102</sup> Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages*, 154 – 5.

<sup>103</sup> Rudolph, *The "Things of Greater Importance"*, 4.

<sup>104</sup> The differences between the Roman Church and the Eastern Church, which eventually became centered in Constantinople under the Byzantine Emperors, had existed since the early years of Christianity as various bishops had vied for primacy over the rest of the Church. Cultural differences, theological disputes,

Christians acknowledged the pope in Rome as the head of their church, but distance and limited communication in Western Europe allowed churches and monasteries to combine the general outlines of western liturgy with their own local ceremonies and musical traditions that reflected their individual linguistic, political and ecclesiastical boundaries and jurisdictions, as well as local saints and history.<sup>105</sup> Two primary liturgical styles developed simultaneously in Rome and in the Frankish lands, each with their own musical styles, psalmody, selected lectures and readings: the Roman liturgy and the Gallican.<sup>106</sup> The liturgy in Gaul featured greater ceremony than the rites that developed in Rome. Charlemagne's reforms introduced the Roman liturgical rites into the Gallican churches. Many pontificals and sacramentaries from the ninth century containing both the Roman and Gallican rites demonstrate the distinctive features of each. The oldest extant Gallican ordo, the *Angoulême Sacramentary*, c. 800, for example, shows the Gallican rite before it was absorbed into the Roman rite.<sup>107</sup> However, although Carolingian reforms attempted to create a unified liturgy, some Frankish churches, including St. Denis, clung to their historical musical tradition.

Charlemagne's reforms significantly molded the medieval church and left a legacy of glory and the vision of a strong theocratic monarch that Suger would later build on. The Carolingians, primarily Charlemagne, his son Louis I "The Pious", and his grandson, Charles the Bald, became symbols of royal power and ecclesiastical patronage.

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and the dissolution of the Roman Empire, with a political split between the Byzantines in Constantinople and western leaders, eventually led to complete schism between east and west in 1054.

<sup>105</sup> Susan Boynton, *Shaping a Monastic Identity: Liturgy & History at the Imperial Abbey of Farfa, 1000 – 1125* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 4.

<sup>106</sup> The standardization of monastic and secular church liturgies began to coalesce during the Carolingian era and would not be finalized until well into the 12th century.

<sup>107</sup> Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era*, 22.



By the twelfth century, objects and documents attributed to their reign gained increased credibility as legitimate, just as members of the aristocracy attempted to show their descent from early medieval monarchs.<sup>108</sup> The subdivision of the Carolingian empire in the late ninth and tenth centuries, however, weakened the effective power of the Carolingians, allowing dukes and counts who administered subdivisions of the empire to seize more control. In 987, the last Carolingian king of the Franks died, and a new family, the Capetians, became the feudal monarchs of Frankish territories to the west of the Rhine. The election of Hugh Capet by French lords in 987 placed a king at the head of the feudal structure but one with little real power. Even as an ecclesiastical ceremony legitimized his rule, an increasingly larger number of lords from lower levels of the nobility held real power from every grant of immunity bestowed by monarchs for centuries before.

### **The Tenth Through Twelfth Centuries in Western Europe: Efforts to Build Power**

Unlike the Capetians in Gaul, whose reigns proved to be weak and ineffective, the neighboring Norman dukes and Ottonian rulers in Germany used elements of the church to bolster their power. The Ottonian Empire of 962 – 1024 appeared after Otto I intervened in Italy in 951 to protect the pope from Magyar invaders. After defeating the Magyars, Otto, following Charlemagne's example, had the pope crown him emperor, then declared that papal candidates had to swear an oath of allegiance to the emperor. Henry II, a duke of Bavaria who inherited the Ottonian crown, ruled as emperor from 1014 to 1024. Like Charlemagne, he also used the church to support his administration.

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<sup>108</sup> Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Strong of Body, Brave & Noble* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 4.

Through donations to churches and the establishment of new dioceses (with candidates favorable to himself), he strove to influence and control the churches in the empire. His successor, Conrad II (1024 – 1039), continued Henry’s policies, appointing bishops to important positions across the empire. His support of the Church earned him the title of “vicar of Christ”, placing Conrad on the same level as the pope.<sup>109</sup> This title, reserved for use by the pope, suggested that not only was Conrad imperial lord of the Holy Roman Empire, he was supreme leader of the Church, a stance that would lead to controversy a few decades later between his successors and the Church.

With the support of the emperor, German bishops and abbots, who were usually related to the royal family, patronized the arts, enjoyed great power, and supported the monarchy with building projects.<sup>110</sup> To display their power and wealth, these benefactors built Ottonian churches with large, solid, prominent towers and thick walls, echoing the solidity and strength of the large stone fortresses that were starting to appear across Europe. Due to the rarity of glass during this period, windows were small and plain. Under Charlemagne, the westwerk had been introduced: a large entrance on the west end of a church dominated by two towers on either side that represented the power of a secular king, while the east end represented the Church’s power. Ottonian cathedrals with their massive westwerks became associated with the secular power of the crown. The Ottonians developed elaborate burial ceremonies for their rulers to emphasize the power

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<sup>109</sup> Brian Tierney, ed., *The Middle Ages: Volume I: Sources of Medieval History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992), 142.

<sup>110</sup> Prache, *Cathedrals of Europe*, 50.

of their monarchs, who were buried in royally commissioned cathedrals such as Speyer Cathedral.<sup>111</sup>

Documents from the Carolingian period onward as well as inscriptions, paintings and sculptures within the cathedrals reveal interaction of politics and religion by the men who commissioned them.<sup>112</sup> A large mosaic dominating the apse of the papal dining hall in the Lateran Palace depicts Charlemagne and Pope Leo III kneeling on either side of Christ. On the other side of the apse, Christ is joined by Pope Sylvester I and Constantine.<sup>113</sup> The figures of kings and popes are equal in size and position. Another example of royalty favored by Christ resides at the Musée national du Moyen Âge in Paris: a gilt altar front commissioned by Emperor Henry II for a Benedictine monastery, possibly Fulda Abbey, depicting the small figures of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry II (c. 1002 – 1024) and his wife, Cunegonde, at Christ's feet, in company with Saint Benoît, Saint Benedict, and the archangels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. See Figures 2 and 3. The power and might of the Holy Roman Emperors was clearly equated with that of the significant monastic founders, the popes, and even the highest powers in heaven. Like the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire, the Normans also utilized churches and a building program to demonstrate their increasing power.<sup>114</sup> They encouraged the growth of trade and towns by conceding judicial privileges in exchange for substantial

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<sup>111</sup> Elizabeth M. Hallam, "Royal burial", 360.

<sup>112</sup> Prache, *Cathedrals of Europe*, 80.

<sup>113</sup> These apsidal mosaics were created c. 799.

<sup>114</sup> The Normans were the heirs of the Vikings who had threatened Charlemagne's borders and harassed the Franks throughout the eighth century. In 911, Charles the Simple, the Carolingian King of Western Francia from 898 to 922, offered lands to the Viking leader Rollo in exchange for Rollo's agreement to be a vassal to the king. Rollo was granted the title of Duke and converted to Christianity.

payments.<sup>115</sup> The Norman dukes restored lands back to the control of the church, set up dioceses throughout Normandy and founded influential monasteries and schools.<sup>116</sup> The Norman lords relied heavily on educated Benedictines, often from the Rhineland and northern Italy, to run these institutions and to assist in administrating the duchy while manipulating feudal relationships with both secular and ecclesiastical lords to establish greater power. As vassals, the higher clergy were expected to command knights from ecclesiastically held fiefs. As patrons of the clergy, the dukes maintained control over over election of the higher clergy. They also managed to influence the destiny of their feudal overlords. Duke Richard I, who ruled from 942 to 997, was married to Hugh Capet's sister, Emma, and helped place Hugh on the French throne.<sup>117</sup> Fortunately for the Capetians, Richard I, respecting the feudal structures of his day that placed the monarch of the Franks as his feudal overlord, wanted to establish a French monarchy that he could strongly influence, rather than directly control.



**Figure 2 Altar Front Commissioned by HRE Henry II.<sup>118</sup>**

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<sup>115</sup> Hallam, *Capetian France 987 – 1328*, 9.

<sup>116</sup> Prache, *Cathedrals of Europe*, 49.

<sup>117</sup> Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, 208.

<sup>118</sup> Musée national du Moyen Âge, Paris. Photo by Author, June 2015.



**Figure 3** Detail of Altar Front: Henry and Cunegonde at the Feet of Christ.<sup>119</sup>

William II, later called William the Conqueror for his conquest of England, also respected his feudal vassalage to the French king, though his relationship with the Capetians could be tense at times. William managed to avoid splintering his authority within his duchy by setting himself up as liege lord to every vassal in Normandy. His power increased with his conquest of England, which he claimed had been promised him by King Edward the Confessor (r. 1042 – 1066) and ceded to him under oath over relics by Harold Godwinson. Like his predecessors, he used the structures of feudalism and the church to foster his legitimacy and power.

William used a building program to solidify his position in both Normandy and England. He allowed castles to be built only with his license and set up the jurisdiction of law and taxation for his benefit and not the lesser lords. Like the Ottonians, he built churches that gave an impression of size and strength rivaling that of his castles in Caen and London, such as abbey churches at Jumièges and at Caen. The architecture of these

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<sup>119</sup> Musée national du Moyen Âge, Paris. Photo by Author, June 2015.

churches, labeled Norman Romanesque, incorporated the Ottonian twin-towered west front with a three level façade.<sup>120</sup> Inside, round semicircular arches rested on strong blocks of masonry columns called piers with bases and capitals separating “bays”, openings that led to the side aisles. Ambulatories, semi-circular walks around the back of the apse, allowed pilgrims closer access to the sanctuary where relics were housed. Other characteristics of the Norman Romanesque style included small windows, arcades of rounded arches on small columns, and blind arcades of arches overlaid on a wall. Sculptural decorations such as composite columns and carved tympanums over doors appeared with columns decorated with bold geometric designs, some stained glass, murals, and ceiling paintings.<sup>121</sup> Romanesque churches appeared throughout Italy and Aquitaine as well as in Germany, Britain and France, demonstrating the strength and solidity of both secular rulers and the Church.<sup>122</sup>

### **Capetian Monarchs**

While the Holy Roman Emperors and the Norman dukes were growing in power the Capetians struggled in the aftermath of the Carolingian kings. They inherited feudal lordship over the lands encompassing Gaul, but their power was limited. Over the centuries, the feudal system encouraged the delegation of authority over a great lord’s lands into many hands, but unlike the Normans and Germans, the Capetians, who either were short lived or ineffective, failed to utilize the structures of the Church to bolster their own power. Feudal practices in the duchies and counties of Gaul increasingly placed

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<sup>120</sup> Prache, *Cathedrals of Europe*, 114.

<sup>121</sup> Francois Icher, *Building the Great Cathedrals*, trans. Anthony Zielonka (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1998), 146 – 149.

<sup>122</sup> Freda White, *Ways of Aquitaine* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1968), 46.

more and more power into the hands of the castellans, men who held small castles built by lords as military centers and administrative centers. To be able to capture and hold a castle was a sign of power, but many castles also became symbols of trouble.<sup>123</sup> Some lords, including the Aquitaine dukes, viewed themselves as equals to the king, with an older lineage than the Capetians, paying token homage but in effect running their lands as small kingdoms.<sup>124</sup> Able to protect and reward their own vassals, they commanded more men and resources than their feudal overlords, the Capetian monarchs. However, even they, along with the other great French lords, watched in dismay as the castellans and their knights terrorized the countryside with arbitrary taxation and seizures of land both secular and ecclesiastical, harassment of travelers, and small wars.

The king of the French himself struggled to deal with the castellans. Robert the Pious, King of the Franks from 996 to 1031, once arrived at a meeting of his royal vassals in an ox-cart while they came well mounted and accompanied by armed escorts; Philip I had to be prepared to fight his way along the road from Paris to Orleans in order to inspect his lands there.<sup>125</sup> Barons within a few miles of Paris threatened the king's holdings, even invading them at times, such as the previously mentioned attack by the Comte de Meulan. The local barons and great lords commanded more wealth, more knights, and more ambition. They paid feudal homage to the king even as they generally ignored him, recognizing that a weak ineffective king who could not curb them was a better option than a strong lord who would. In the late eleventh century, Philip I and his son Louis VI made efforts to regain royal power from the castellans through

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<sup>123</sup> Hallam, *Capetian France 987 – 1328*, 28.

<sup>124</sup> White, *Ways of Aquitaine*, 48.

<sup>125</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 106.

administrative and judicial means. They expanded the royal household to include leading castellans, who took on offices such as constable, butler, seneschal and chamberlain.

These officers assisted the king in governing, allowing him to harness their energy in his behalf. Terse instructions, “mandements” from the king to local administrative officials called prevots, appeared after 1082, indicating more efforts at control by the kings.

As the twelfth century dawned, increases in population and in the amount of land cleared and tilled, the growth of pilgrimage and trade routes, more fairs, and a larger class of burgesses with economic influence all helped fill the coffers of the king and the great lords. Greater wealth supported royal efforts to consolidate royal power. The Capetians built castle towers to protect their interests. However, the (potential) power of the Capetian monarchs did not start to become realized until Abbot Suger renovated the abbey church of St. Denis. He built on the spiritual, political, and economic significance of relics attributed to the patron saint of the Capetians, Saint Denis, to present a structure in elaborate and carefully orchestrated consecration ceremonies that boldly declared the significance and ecclesiastical sanction of the Capetian monarchy.



## MONASTERIES: SAINTS, RELICS, AND PILGRIMAGES

Monasteries such as St. Denis, often located outside the walls of urban centers, were more than retreats for men and women seeking a life of prayer.<sup>126</sup> The Benedictine Rule originally dictated that monks perform labor with their hands. With the growing importance of the *Opus Dei*, serfs, tenants, and lay monks provided the physical labor needed to tend monastery properties enlarged by donations from grateful laymen, allowing monks to focus on prayer and learning. Men educated in the monasteries served kings and lords as advisors. As feudal vassals, their monasteries became administrative centers for both the Church and the lords. Moreover, the importance and economic situations of monasteries grew from their holdings of sacred objects and relics and from pilgrimage trade.

A strong belief in the power of sacred objects pervaded all levels of a society seeking protection and answers. Medieval society believed that the relics or physical remains of saints, as well as the church buildings housing these relics, literally provided a connection to God. The relic had the power of the saint within it.<sup>127</sup> The deceased saint acted as an intercessor with God on behalf of the faithful. A relic often was the central core of a new religious foundation, built to house the sacred item. Any church built to

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<sup>126</sup> By the late tenth century, there were clear demarcations of hierarchies within the structure of the Church, with the papacy centered in Rome the head of the Church, overseeing the regular clergy in the monasteries and the secular clergy of the cathedrals and parish churches. As this thesis focuses on the abbey of St. Denis and its interaction with the Capetian monarchy, issues dealing with the secular clergy will not be addressed.

<sup>127</sup> *The Book of Sainte Foy*, trans. Pamela Sheingorn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 3.

house a relic was called a basilica. People crowded into small basilicas to gaze upon, touch, and pray to saints for intercession, hoping for solutions to earthly problems. Oaths made over relics were binding. Relics became tools that could raise an agreement to a sacred promise. Knights had to swear to keep the peace in the presence of a relic.<sup>128</sup> One clear piece of evidence regarding the legal power of a relic is the Bayeux Tapestry, which records the Norman claim that Harold Hardrada swore allegiance to William of Normandy over religious relics in 1064-5, and by doing so, legitimized William's seizure of the English throne.<sup>129</sup>

The powers of a relic to protect, heal, and legitimize led to a cult-like fervor in some medieval men and women. By the seventh century, pilgrimages to Rome were common. In his *History of the English Church and People*, The Venerable Bede recorded a number of pilgrimages by English kings who embarked or planned to embark on pilgrimage.<sup>130</sup> Priests ordered pilgrimages for sinners, while some penitents sought to lessen their time in purgatory in their afterlife.<sup>131</sup> Drawn by faith and need, or sometimes forced to embark as penance for some crime, men and women of all levels of society undertook pilgrimages to sacred spaces. Prior to the ninth century, only a few places, such as Rome and Tours, were noted pilgrimage destinations.<sup>132</sup> By the eleventh century,

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<sup>128</sup> Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, "Sainte Foy on the Loose, Or, the Possibilities of Procession" in *Moving Subjects: Processional Performance in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, eds. Kathleen Ashley and Wim Hüsken, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 59.

<sup>129</sup> Frank Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England 1042 –1216* (Boston: Pearson, 1999), 63.

<sup>130</sup> Webb, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West*, 11. In 670, a sick King Oswiu of Northumbria wanted to travel to Rome out of admiration for the "Roman and apostolic customs" (IV.5); Caedwalla of Wessex went in 688; Ine of Wessex (688 – 726) also went after reigning for 37 years, in order "that he might be thought worthy to receive a greater welcome from the saints in heaven".

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

the number of sacred destinations had increased throughout Europe, with monasteries and churches growing to meet the demands of more pilgrims.

Pilgrimages benefitted monasteries economically. Service industries developed: ferry service across rivers, toll roads, baggage handlers and pack mules, hostels, inns, the provision of food and drink for travelers, wax suppliers for candles for pilgrim candles at holy shrines, and by the eleventh and twelfth centuries, makers of souvenir pilgrim badges. Monasteries were some of the major providers of these services for travelers and sought ways to encourage pilgrims to stop at their particular church. Monasteries also provided financial services to pilgrims. A penitent often placed valuables in the hands of monks for safe keeping and borrowed money using the valuables as collateral. The practice of mortgage arose from pilgrims borrowing money on lands. If the pilgrim did not return, the institution kept the valuables and land.<sup>133</sup>

Hagiography helped promote pilgrimages.<sup>134</sup> From the earliest days of Christianity, the concept of sanctity through martyrdom dominated Christian thought. “Passio” recorded the stories of a martyr’s suffering and death, linking them to the story of Christ’s death. Annual masses celebrated the anniversary of the martyr’s death. The death date was marked as the day of direct ascension into heaven to reside near the presence of God, literally a day of birth into eternal life that bypassed purgatory. In the little books of stories about saints, miracles wrought by martyrs while on earth

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 24 – 26.

<sup>134</sup> Hagiography refers to books compiling stories about a saint’s life and miracles.

intertwined with miracles performed by the same martyrs from their seats in heaven. Both the humanness and the sanctity of the saint were presented.<sup>135</sup>

These records of the lives of saints, ostensibly written to inspire faith, served as histories of a local place. St. Denis abbey's history was recorded in hagiographic books.<sup>136</sup> The *Passio sanctorum martyrum Dionysii episcopi Rustici et Eleutherii* appeared in the late fifth or early sixth century, telling the story of the martyrdom of the first bishop of Paris, Denis, with his two companions Rusticus and Eleutherius.<sup>137</sup> In the seventh century, the *Vita Sanctae Balthildis* recorded that Clovis II's wife Bathildis established monastic rule at St. Denis and other important basilicas.<sup>138</sup> The *Vita Eligii*, the late seventh century biography of Eligius/Eloi, an advisor to Dagobert, interwove the political history of King Dagobert with Eloi's and Dagobert's patronage of St. Denis.<sup>139</sup> Eloi was credited with building a mausoleum for Denis' relics, a lectern, doors adorned with silver metal, a throne with a canopy, and a fabulous gold and gem encrusted cross.<sup>140</sup> Louis the Pious commissioned Hilduin, a ninth century abbot of St. Denis, to write a biography of Saint Denis, the *Historia Sancti Dionysii*.<sup>141</sup> Around the same time, Hincmar, a monk at St. Denis, compiled the *Miracula Sancti Dionysii*.<sup>142</sup> The two also

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<sup>135</sup> *The Book of Sainte Foy*, 23 – 5.

<sup>136</sup> Crosby, *The Abbey of St. Denis, 475 – 1122*, 48. Although she was associated with Paris, *The Vita Genovefae*, written about the patron saint of Paris shortly after her death in 512, recorded the locations associated with Bishop Denis' martyrdom. Geneviève also built monuments and chapels dedicated to Denis.

<sup>137</sup> Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "The Cult of Saint Denis and Capetian Kingship," 46.

<sup>138</sup> Robertson, *The Service-Books of the Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis*, 19.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>140</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 36.

<sup>141</sup> Robertson, *The Service-Books of the Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis*, 38.

<sup>142</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 5.

produced the *Gesta Dagoberta* soon after.<sup>143</sup> These histories portray Saint Denis as the founding figure of the abbey.

In his *Historia Francorum*, Gregory of Tours, the sixth century Bishop of Tours, related that Denis was one of seven men sent into Gaul to preach.<sup>144</sup> He became bishop of Paris and was killed during a period of Christian persecution. Later histories told of how the imprisoned Denis, along with his two companions Rusticus and Eleutherius, refused to deny his faith in front of the prefect, Fescennius. The night prior to his execution, Denis received the Eucharist from Christ himself. In the morning, he and his companions were decapitated on the slopes of Montmartre. As soon as Denis' head hit the ground, he reached down and picked it up, the lips chanting psalms as he walked two miles to his chosen place of burial. A noble lady, Catulla, stopped the soldiers ordered to throw the bodies of the two companions into the Seine, and after getting the soldiers drunk, she buried the bodies in a field where hastily sown grain miraculously took root, grew and hid the graves. Later, Catulla reunited the three bodies and erected a simple monument in their memory.<sup>145</sup> The monument evolved into a small basilica.<sup>146</sup>

Over time, the legend conflated the original Denis with a first century apostle of Saint Paul, Dionysius the Areopagite, with the late fifth/early sixth century scholar

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<sup>143</sup> Robertson, *The Service-Books of the Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis*, 7.

<sup>144</sup> In his *History of the Franks*, Book I, chapter 30, Gregory of Tours cites a history of “the holy martyr Saturnius” as the source for his information, calling Denis “Dionysius” and merely stating that Dionysius “ended the present life by the threatening sword.” Dionysius’ two companions, Rusticus and Eleutherius, who are later identified as being martyred along with Dionysius, are not mentioned as being with Dionysius in Gregory’s version. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, [https://archive.org/stream/historyoffranks00greguoft/historyoffranks00greguoft\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/historyoffranks00greguoft/historyoffranks00greguoft_djvu.txt).

<sup>145</sup> Crosby, *The Abbey of St. Denis, 475 – 1122*, 25 – 26.

<sup>146</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 27.

Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.<sup>147</sup> The Abbey of St. Denis obtained Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's Greek texts in 827 from Louis the Pious. Hilduin and his monks did a rough translation. Around this time, Hilduin wrote the biography of Saint Denis, *Historia Sancti Dionysii*, Hincmar prepared the *Miracula Sancti Dionysii*, and together the two produced the *Gesta Dagoberta*, blithely fusing the philosopher with the Greek bishop and the first bishop of Paris into one Saint Denis.<sup>148</sup> The biography helped Saint Denis become famous as a significant saint, known throughout Western Europe. Paris, as well as the abbey, profited from the saint's fame, with seven sites associated with Denis' arrival in Paris, his arrest, imprisonment and death. By the end of the eighth century these "seven stations of Saint Denis" were pilgrimage destinations.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 4. Dionysius the Areopagite, briefly mentioned in Acts 17:34 as a convert of Saint Paul in Athens, is named as the first bishop of Athens by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 86. Louis the Pious had received them from the Byzantine emperor Michael the Stammerer.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 6.

## THE HISTORICAL ABBEY CHURCH OF ST. DENIS

Suger drew upon the long and, according to the hagiographic texts, glorious history of the church dedicated to Saint Denis to incorporate into the art and consecrations of the abbey church building. The site itself originally was a cemetery, with evidence of Merovingian and pre-Christian graves. The earliest structure on the site was a small rectangular chapel with an east-west orientation built over the tomb of Denis, reputedly by Saint Geneviève.<sup>150</sup> According to Gregory of Tours, this early church had one altar, placed over Denis' tomb, with a memorial sarcophagus to the east, or behind, the altar.<sup>151</sup> Archaeological evidence from the period indicates that the basilica was built with carefully finished stones and had Merovingian decorations.<sup>152</sup>

The histories celebrated the early seventh century king, Dagobert I, as a generous patron of St. Denis. According to the *Chronica Fredegarii*, Dagobert “*in circoito fabrecare*” (built around) the existing basilica, extending the building to the west and adding side aisles to the north and south, adding a vestibule to the western front and extending the east end with a rounded apse.<sup>153</sup> See Figure 4. The relics of Rusticus and

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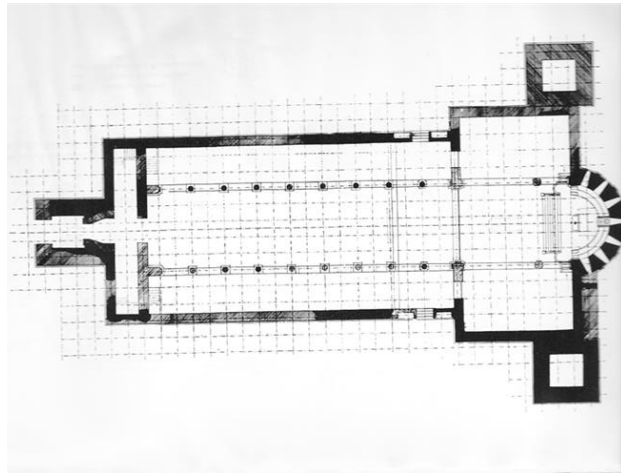
<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 22. Crosby measured the dimensions as 67 ft. 7 in. by 31 ft. 2 in. Geneviève, c. 423 – 512, was the patron saint of Paris. Her biography relates that she urged the people of Paris to remain when Attila the Hun approached the city, calling on them to fast and pray for deliverance. For some unknown reason, Attila bypassed the city and Paris was saved. Geneviève was instrumental in Clovis I's conversion to Christianity. In 502, Clovis founded an abbey on the south side of the city that was later renamed in Geneviève's honor. The Abbey Ste. Geneviève became one of the significant Parisian schools of the early twelfth century.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 30, 35, 46.

Eleutherius, the reputed companions of Denis, were placed with those of Saint Denis sometime during this period.<sup>154</sup> Besides enlarging the basilica, Dagobert granted the charter for the Fair of St. Denis held in October and gave or commissioned a number of objects to the abbey.



**Figure 4** Formige's Reconstruction of Dagobert's Church.<sup>155</sup>

With the introduction of monastic rule in the mid-seventh century came perpetual psalmody, the singing of psalms day and night by monks.<sup>156</sup> Clovis II and his wife, Bathildis, while not doing much to the building, granted a charter of freedom releasing St. Denis from the jurisdiction of the bishop of Paris in 653. A few years later, a grant of royal immunity gave the abbey judicial rights over its inhabitants, allowing it to collect public revenues and freeing it from officials wanting to hold court, seize witnesses, levy taxes or exercise other feudal rights.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>155</sup> Foley, *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis*, fig 17.

<sup>156</sup> Robertson, *The Service-Books of the Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis*, 3. Dagobert initiated perpetual psalmody before 639. A 654 charter of Clovis II recorded the practice at St. Denis.

<sup>157</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 48.



Fulrad, abbot at St. Denis from 750 to 784, was a friend and advisor to Pepin III and to Pepin's son, Charlemagne. As a trusted advisor and personal chaplain to Charlemagne, Fulrad acquired properties and privileges for the abbey and rebuilt the basilica. By this time, the abbey included a school at which royal princes were educated, including the sons of Charles Martel.<sup>158</sup> Archaeological evidence suggests that Fulrad extended the building on all four sides, maintaining the Roman basilica layout with a wide nave bordered by side aisles separated by columns.<sup>159</sup> The interior was plastered and painted in blue, yellow, and red ochre, as well as orange, light green, black, white and grey-brown. Walls in the apse were painted to suggest draperies, while crypt walls were painted to imitate marble. The main entrance may have been on the north side of the building, opening directly into the nave. Masonry fragments exhibit carved fleur de lis, vines and leaves.<sup>160</sup> The casket holding Denis' relics resided in a confessio (a small chapel) under the apse.<sup>161</sup> The new building was complete or nearly so by 775 when Charlemagne attended the consecration.<sup>162</sup> See Figure 5.

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 280.

<sup>159</sup> Robertson, *The Service-Books of the Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis*, 221.

<sup>160</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 67 – 83. These design elements were typical of the Carolingian period.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>162</sup> Caroline Astrid Bruzelius, *The 13th-Century Church at St-Denis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 9.



**Figure 5 Fulrad's Apse and Stairs to Upper Nave of Twelfth Century Building.<sup>163</sup>**

In the ninth century, Abbot Hilduin enlarged the crypt of the church to provide more space for relics and to accommodate the increasing number of pilgrims who came to see them.<sup>164</sup> By this time, the abbey had several well established functions. Royalty continued to patronize the abbey school and the abbey itself was well on its way to being the burial site of royalty, as well as a repository of royal items.<sup>165</sup> Hilduin's chapel was consecrated in November 832. Archaeological evidence suggests that this addition included a single story chapel separated from chapels on either side by solid walls, rather than columns, in which small windows were placed.<sup>166</sup> By the early twelfth century, the central chapel held the relics of Christ's passion, a nail and the crown of thorns, given to

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<sup>163</sup> St. Denis. Photo by Author, June 2015.

<sup>164</sup> Bruzelius, *The 13th-Century Church at St-Denis*, 3.

<sup>165</sup> The first known royal burial dates to 570, the body identified as Queen Arnegonde, wife to Clothaire I. Other royals buried there by the time of Hilduin's abbacy included Clothaire II (584 – 628), Dagobert I (628 – 38), Clovis II (638 – 55), Charles Martel (688 – 741), and Pepin the Short (d. 768.).

<sup>166</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 87.

the abbey by Charles the Bald while the relics of Denis and his companions were kept in a small room behind the main altar in Fulrad's church.<sup>167</sup> Hilduin's chapel had a small altar and could also be used as an oratory for private prayer. An eleventh century description commented

on certain days, when the monks could supervise those who came to worship the relics, the two doors with strong locks at the western end of the 832 chapel (where it joined the 8th century apse) could be opened, allowing the faithful to circulate from one side of the crypt to the other to venerate both the martyrs' relics through a small opening into the confessio to the west, and the nail and crown of thorns kept in the central chamber of Hilduin's chapel to the east.<sup>168</sup>

Today, visitors can view this small barrel-vaulted chapel, which lies in the center of the ambulatory of the twelfth century crypt, though Fulrad's church is available only to archaeologists. See Figures 6, 7, and 8. For the next three centuries, the only major construction at St. Denis prior to Abbot Suger's projects seems to be a tower by the north transept of the church reportedly built by William the Conqueror.<sup>169</sup> William and his wife, like many other royal patrons, may have paid for this tower to expiate their sin of consanguinity. They, like their Norman forebears, financed the building of several churches and foundations, including two large monasteries in Caen.<sup>170</sup> William, known more for building secular castles as administrative centers for his feudal government, may have wanted to have his power literally standing in the face of his feudal overlord,

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 92. This small room, a confessio, could be used for private prayer by the monks, while pilgrims could only view the relics through small windows.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 97. According to the abbot of Nogent, Guibert, the tower was badly built and fell down before completion. Archaeological evidence supports that there was a tower built in the mid-eleventh century with a square base measuring 34.5 feet each side.

<sup>170</sup> Arthur Gardner, *Medieval Sculpture in France* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge at the University Press, 1931), 7.

the French king.<sup>171</sup> Suger, aware of William's status and power, needed to make a statement of power on behalf of the Capetians. His renovated church building, and the consecrations of the church, provided an ideal opportunity to present the Capetians as significant rulers.



**Figure 6 Hilduin's Chapel and Suger's Crypt Ambulatory.<sup>172</sup>**

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<sup>171</sup> James R. Mathieu, "Assessing Political Complexity in Medieval England: An Analysis of Royal Buildings and Strategies" (PhD diss. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2001), 74.

<sup>172</sup> St. Denis. Photo by Author, June 2015.



**Figure 7** Window into Hilduin's Chapel from Suger's Crypt Ambulatory.<sup>173</sup>



**Figure 8** Detail of Column Outside Hilduin's Chapel.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

## CONSECRATIONS OF THE RENOVATED ABBEY CHURCH, 1140 TO 1141

### **The Political Aspect of Consecrations**

The practice of consecrating churches dates back to the fourth century.

Consecrations are religious ceremonies culminating in a Mass involving the blessing of the building and sanctifying it to the worship of God. The translation (moving from one location to another) of relics is a smaller ceremony included within many consecrations. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, book 10, Eusebius discussed the consecration of churches, noting the transition to the legal status of Christianity under Constantine.<sup>175</sup>

At the heart of any consecration was the liturgy. Consecration liturgies incorporated elements of purification and blessing, prayers and hymns specific to dedicating the building to ecclesiastical use, scripture readings, psalms, and sermons emphasizing the importance of the building as a living symbol of heaven on earth and the populace's role in maintaining and protecting the building and its clergy. Prior to the mid-eleventh century, the most common source for liturgy, including consecrations, was the Romano-Germanic Pontifical, initially produced in the mid-tenth century and in wide use until the mid-twelfth century.<sup>176</sup> During the eleventh century newer versions of this Pontifical appeared, with one of the most significant produced at the abbey of Montecassino under Desiderius, who became Pope Victor III (r. 1085 – 87).<sup>177</sup> This particular liturgy was the foundation of the most widely used Roman liturgy of the

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<sup>175</sup> Hamilton, *A Sacred City*, 13.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

twelfth century.<sup>178</sup> In the first half of the twelfth century, Paschal II (r. 1099 – 1118) likely used the liturgy produced by Desiderius at Montecassino.<sup>179</sup> By 1140, the formula for a consecration ceremony utilized by Paschal II earlier in the century was well on its way to becoming the standard for future ceremonies, and as such would have been the formula used by Suger.

During the eleventh century, consecrations started to become more than just religious ceremonies. They provided opportunities to undertake ecclesiastical reforms and to make political alliances and served as vehicles to obtain promises of protection and support from noble patrons. One such example occurred on the second day of October 1049 when Pope Leo IX consecrated the church of St. Remigius in Rheims. At the end of the ceremony, an assembly of bishops held a synod and issued a number of reforms. To emphasize the importance of these reforms, the churchmen swore upon the relics of Saint Remigius.<sup>180</sup>

Pope Urban II used consecration rites to emphasize papal authority.<sup>181</sup> Urban traveled through Italy and France to build support for his legitimacy as Pope, attending councils to discuss reform issues and consecrating sacred objects. He consecrated altars, buildings, building sites, stones for new churches and even the island of Maguelone, a papal stronghold.<sup>182</sup> In October 1095, he stopped at Clermont, where he called for the First Crusade. Consecrations often went hand in hand with affirming ecclesiastical

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 254. Montecassino was a significant source of reformers and reform literature. Founded by St. Benedict of Nursia, it had strong ties to the papacy in the eleventh century.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 1 – 2.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 146.

privileges and served as a vehicle to educate lay authorities on their duties to support the Church (and by extension the pope). The language of a consecration metaphorically linked the church building and the Church to the holy city of Jerusalem in both the temporal and spiritual sense. Urban's consecrations played a major role in garnering enthusiastic support for the Crusade, demonstrating the powerful influence of these ceremonies.<sup>183</sup>

Pope Pascal II also used consecrations to build support for the Church. Traveling through France in 1106 – 7, Pascal II held a series of elaborate consecrations and ceremonies that used imperial imagery to gain support from the French in his conflict with the Holy Roman Emperor over investiture. A letter written by Pascal II in November 1105 discussed his plans to assert his authority through the consecration of churches, stressing that princes were to defend the Church, not appoint its clerics. He also warned that bishops who had received their office from the excommunicated Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV were to be judged by papal legates or a Church council and that he was going to re-consecrate churches that had been consecrated by these same schismatic bishops.<sup>184</sup> Suger met Pascal II in March 1107 at the consecration of the church of La Charité-sur-Loire in Nièvre, where he joined the Pope's entourage along with a number of other “noble magnates” of France, eventually traveling with the Pope to St. Denis where Philip I and his son Louis (the future Louis VI) pledged support to the Pope. Soon after

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 187.



this meeting, Pascal II returned to Rome, his mission in France and against the Germans accomplished for a time.<sup>185</sup>

Suger personally witnessed elaborate consecration ceremonies and fully understood how they served as vehicles for making clear statements about the hierarchy of the Church and its relationship with secular leaders. A consecration was an extremely important liturgical event with political undertones. An ornate ritual carried out by as many high ranking churchmen as possible impressed upon laymen the importance of the Church and supported the Church's agenda. However, the importance of laymen, particularly noble patrons, in supporting the Church, also needed to be stressed during a consecration. To emphasize his agenda in presenting the Capetian monarchs as good kings, worthy of respect and support from their vassals, Suger needed to make clear statements about the abbey, the king, and the king's recognition of the Church's supremacy over the king in his consecration ceremonies.

#### **On the Road to St. Denis: Evidence of the Patron Saint and his Abbey**

The first consecration under Suger's direction, held in June 1140, celebrated both the new addition to the west end of the abbey church at St. Denis and the glories of the French monarchy. By 1137, when Louis VII inherited the crown, the road to St. Denis was safer than it had been in the past, reflecting the increased power of the Capetian king over his lands. Suger's biography of Louis VI, the *Vita Ludovici*, credited Louis VI with the majority of this new control. The road Louis VII and his retinue followed north in June 1140 on their way to celebrate the consecration of the newly built western façade of the abbey church of St. Denis was an ancient Roman street called the Estrée Saint-Denis,

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 199.

leading north out of Paris to Rouen and other northern towns. It would not take long for the party to ride through the Porte St. Denis. A short distance farther the road cut through a pass at the base of the hill Montmartre. It was on the top of this hill, according to legend and several texts produced over the centuries, that the first bishop of Paris, Denis, had been Denis, had been beheaded.<sup>186</sup> At the top of the hill, the orchards and walled gardens

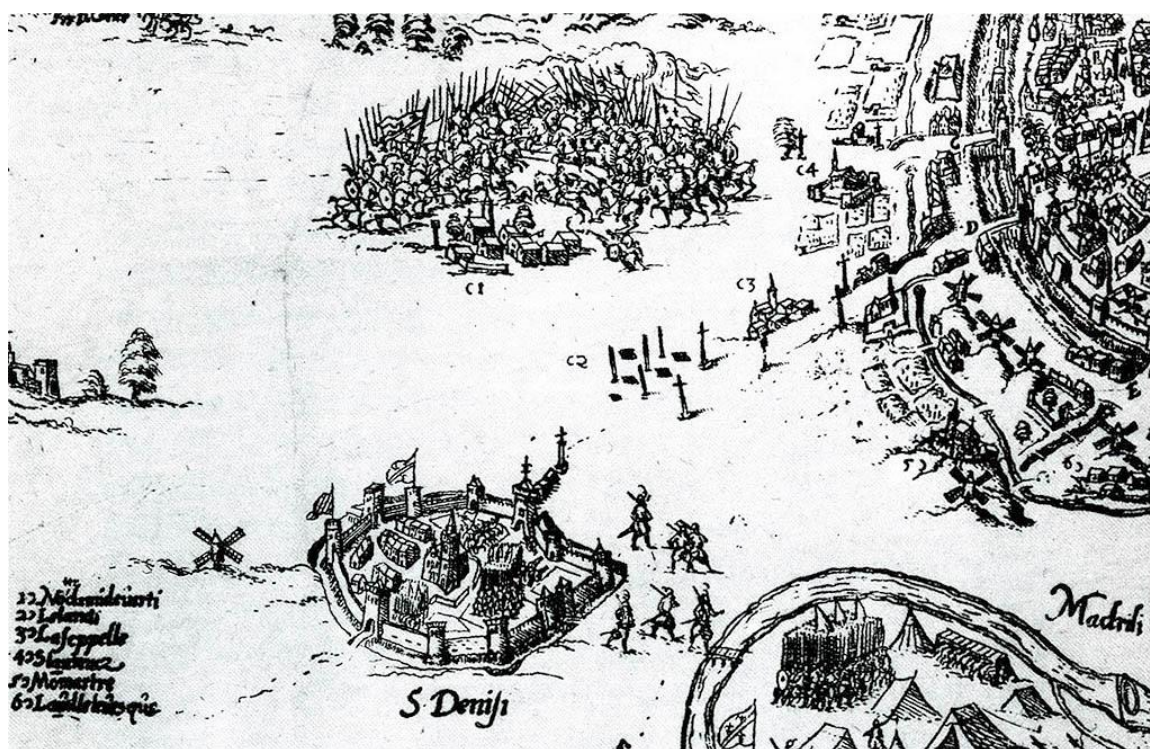


Figure 9 Map Showing the Main Road from Paris to St. Denis.<sup>187</sup>

of the new Montmartre abbey founded by Louis VI a decade before looked out over the road. An old Merovingian church dedicated to St. Peter adjoined the abbey. This

<sup>186</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 4. Early historical records, including a list of the Bishops of Paris, indicate that Christianity was established in Paris during the mid-third century.

<sup>187</sup> Sixteenth Century Map by Zundten Mathis. Note that north is to the left. The curve of the Seine is in the bottom right corner of the map and Montmartre is marked by windmills depicted in the center right. C2 indicates the location of the Montjoie, which was marked by crosses, figured columns and stone blocks as late as the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Chapel Saint-Denys-de-la-Chapelle is marked at C3. Anne Lombard-Jourdan, *Montjoie and St. Denis! The Gaul's Centre to the origins of Paris and Saint-Denis* (CNRS presses, 1989), Archives de la 4e promenade LMA 18 Mar.2009. "Montjoie Saint-Denis!" [http://www.arpla.fr/canal2/figureblog/?page\\_id=2295](http://www.arpla.fr/canal2/figureblog/?page_id=2295).

pilgrimage church originally had been built around 475 at the direction of Sainte Geneviève, the patron saint of Paris, according to the *Vita Genevieve*.<sup>188</sup> The church may have been rebuilt or restored in the Carolingian era, but to visitors and inhabitants alike, it was old and venerated as the burial place of a number of martyred saints. Pilgrims ascending or descending the steep path leading to the church probably looked curiously at the colorful entourage passing by.

At the southern base of the hill a small chapel called the Martyrium had been built by Louis VI at the same time he founded the abbey on Montmartre. It is unlikely that the younger Louis stopped to pray at the Martyrium, as this chapel was off the main road. Instead, it would have been the small Saint-Denys-de-la-Chapelle, built by Saint Geneviève as one of the sites associated with the martyrdom of Saint Denis, a bit farther along the Estrée St. Denis on the eastern side of the hill where Louis and his retinue would have stopped to pay respects.<sup>189</sup>

After praying at Saint-Denys-de-la-Chapelle, the party continued northward. At some point along the road they passed a mound with stone blocks marking the border between Paris and the flat area called the Lendit Plain, at which point ecclesiastical jurisdiction passed from the Bishop of Paris to the abbot of St. Denis. Farther along the road past the Chapel, they approached another mound with ancient columns and blocks. This was the montjoie, a physical landmark that historian Anne Lombard-Jourdan

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<sup>188</sup> “Montmartre, the ‘Mount of Martyrs’,” *Basilique du Sacré-Cœur website*, <http://www.sacre-coeur-montmartre.com/english/history-and-visit/article/montmartre-the-mount-of-martyrs>.

<sup>189</sup> “Histoire de Saint-Denys de La Chapelle,” *Saint-Denys de la Chapelle Basilique Sainte-Jeanne’Arc — Paris website*, <http://saintdenyslachapelle.fr/-Histoire-de-La-Chapelle>. The original building was rebuilt in the early thirteenth century.

identifies as the center of France.<sup>190</sup> See Figure 9. A montjoie was a natural prominence or landmark that marked the boundary between two territories and political meeting places. The standards and banners of an army stood on a montjoie during battle. In the *Song of Roland*, a chanson de geste written out in French in the early twelfth century though the tale had circulated since the tenth century, French lords and armies cried out “King Carlon's war-cry, 'Montjoie!’” as they carried the ancient banner of Charlemagne, the Oriflamme, which the song describes as “It was St. Peter's and then was called Romaine, But to Montjoie later it changed its name.”<sup>191</sup> See Figure 10. As it became a common phrase, the cry of “montjoie” by itself meant nothing; it had to be joined with the name of some significant place such as “montjoie Notre Dame” or “montjoie Bourbon” for the dukes of Bourbon. The cry of “Montjoie St. Denis” existed well before the Capetian kings, and it was probably this particular small hill that lent itself to the cry.<sup>192</sup>

Perhaps the King stopped to rest briefly here. Perhaps the knights in his party cried out, “Montjoie St. Denis!” That the King knew this location and its significance is unquestionable. He had traveled this road between the abbey where he had been educated and Paris many times, possibly with the companionship of Suger. The abbot was familiar with the history of the abbey of St. Denis, the Franks, the Capetians, and the patron saint of the Franks, Saint Denis, and he liked to tell stories. He may have spent the time traveling between abbey and palace relating these tales to the future monarch of the

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<sup>190</sup> Lombard-Jourdan, *Montjoie and St. Denis! The Gaul's Centre to the origins of Paris and Saint-Denis*.

<sup>191</sup> *The Song of Roland*, section 94, page 99 and section 225, page 169.

<sup>192</sup> Crosby, *The Abbey of St. Denis, 475 – 1122*, 51 – 52.

French, speaking often about the saint’s role in protecting the kingdom.<sup>193</sup> Certainly, at some point, Suger related the story of how Louis VI saved the kingdom in 1124 from a potential attack on Rheims by the Holy Roman Emperor Henry V. In preparation for battle, Louis VI approached St. Denis, seeking the intercession of his patron saint. As a token of the saint’s favor, Louis received the banner representing the county of the Vexin from the hands of Suger himself. The king offered “prayers and gifts” while begging for Denis, “the particular patron, and after God, the foremost protector of the realm”, to protect the kingdom, as it was a “special privilege” from the saint to defend the kingdom.<sup>194</sup>



**Figure 10** Early Twentieth Century Reproduction of Oriflamme.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Benton, “Suger’s Life and Personality,” 7.

<sup>194</sup> Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, 128. A charter prepared in 1124 as Louis VI prepared for his meeting with the Emperor asked for the “oriflamme” — the flag of the Vexin — to be used as his standard, acknowledging that the Vexin fell under the jurisdiction of St Denis and that the King held it in fief from St. Denis. Braud, “Suger and the Making of the French Nation,” 139. See also note 28. During the twelfth century, the flag of the Vexin was conflated with Charlemagne’s Oriflamme banner, sung of in the early twelfth century *Song of Roland* CCXXV. By the end of the century it was simply called the Oriflamme. Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 12.

<sup>195</sup> St. Denis. Photo by Author, June 2015.

A call went out for the French to join their feudal overlord against the threat posed by the German Emperor, who had been joined by Henry I of England, and a large host of French rallied under Louis. The campaign accomplished that rare moment — the unity of all the French dukes and lords with their king, presenting a solid front that sent Henry back to his lands.<sup>196</sup> To bring together the many feudal lords under a single monarch, joined together for a common cause, would have been a historical moment of great importance to the abbot. Suger had strongly expressed his concept of a good king in his *Vita Ludovici*, and he certainly must have conveyed his ideas regarding a good king, particularly as to how a king should support the patron saint and the saint's representatives on earth, to the young Louis during the years he oversaw the young man's education and travels.

Immediately past the mound, the party could see the tents and stalls of merchants set up in preparation for the famous Lendit fair that was to start the following Wednesday and last well over a week.<sup>197</sup> Every year, this fair was held starting on the second Wednesday of June and lasted until June 23, the eve of the Feast of John the Baptist. It was one of several significant and profitable fairs held under the control of the Abbey of St. Denis.<sup>198</sup> See *Appendix E: The Fairs of St. Denis*. The grant of the fair for the feast of

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<sup>196</sup> Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, 203. According to German sources, however, the Emperor didn't like to attack other lands (though he apparently had no problem with attacking the Pope in Rome) and that he had gotten word of a revolt in Worms, thus necessitating his retreat from Rheims.

<sup>197</sup> In *De Consecratione*, Suger wrote that the King, with his wife and his mother, as well as many nobles of the realm arrived *perendie* for the June 11, 1144 consecration (“Ipse dominus rex Ludovicus, et regina conjux ejus Aanor, et mater ejus, et optimates perendie adventarunt.”). Suger, *De Consecratione* VII in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 112. Panofsky interprets *perendie* to mean “on the third day”. A literal translation means “the day after tomorrow.” While confusing in its time sequence, the use of *perendie* may indicate that the king and his party arrived on the Friday before the consecration ceremony. This would be logical, allowing the party a day to travel and get settled before the various Church ceremonies began. This time frame most likely also applied to the June 9, 1140 consecration.

<sup>198</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 47.

Saint Denis, held in October, had been the first of many royal concessions to the abbey, bestowed by King Dagobert in 635.<sup>199</sup> After the aborted attack by the Holy Roman Emperor in 1124, a grateful Louis VI issued an Charter supporting St. Denis's rights to control of the Lendit fair, noting that the abbey stood in *caput regni nostri* (at the head of our kingdom), echoing a belief at the time that Charlemagne had designated St Denis as *caput omnium ecclesiarum regnum* (head of all the churches in the realm) in a charter called the *Donation of Charlemagne*.<sup>200</sup> According to this charter, Charlemagne declared that he himself held France in fief from God, Saint Denis and the holy martyrs Eleutherius and Rusticus, and that kings were to be consecrated at the abbey of St. Denis and their flags deposited there, as opposed to Rheims, which had long claimed the right to crown the French king.<sup>201</sup> By the twelfth century, Charlemagne had achieved legendary status as a pilgrim, builder, benefactor of churches, a warrior hero, and documents attributed to him bore significant weight.<sup>202</sup>

Many major Church feast days were accompanied by fairs, a natural extension of the need to provide for an influx of pilgrims.<sup>203</sup> These fairs, which played a significant role in economic life, were generally located on major trade routes. They served as periodic meeting places, independent of local markets. The fairs provided the equivalent of early banking transactions, such as settling debts from the fair as well as preceding

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<sup>199</sup> Spiegel, "The Cult of Saint Denis and Capetian Kingship," 51.

<sup>200</sup> Braud, "Suger and the Making of the French Nation," 352 and Spiegel, "The Cult of Saint Denis and Capetian Kingship," 59. Modern scholars question the legitimacy of this document, with some suggesting it was a forgery produced by Suger's monks.

<sup>201</sup> Braud, "Suger and the Making of the French Nation," 352.

<sup>202</sup> Latowsky, *Emperor of the World*, 215.

<sup>203</sup> Webb, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West*, 83.

fairs.<sup>204</sup> Laws granted special privileges to the fairs. The ground was protected by a special peace, with severe punishment for violating the peace. Attendees were under the protection of the territorial prince who granted the fair, while *custodes nundinarum* (guards of the fair) had special jurisdiction and maintained order. Letters of obligation sealed with the seal of the fair were recognized as specially binding, lawsuits could be suspended during the fair, and there was a suspension of the canonical prohibition of usury (loans with interest charged).<sup>205</sup> Within the towns where the fairs were held, inns and residences for merchants sprang up, leading to increased economic activity beyond the fair. The churches within the towns benefitted from offerings and gifts given by attendees seeking intercession from the relics of saints. In *De Consecratione*, Abbot Suger listed revenues raised from offerings at the Lendit fair and Feast of St Denis.<sup>206</sup>



**Figure 11** Benediction of the Lendit fair.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Henri Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1937), 98.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>206</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 103.

<sup>207</sup> From 15th century pontifical: BNF, ms. Lat. 962, [http://www.saintdenis.culture.fr/en/3\\_5b\\_lendit.htm](http://www.saintdenis.culture.fr/en/3_5b_lendit.htm).



### The Village of St. Denis and Improvements to the Abbey

The village surrounding the abbey had grown significantly in the years prior to this consecration. Even before his rebuilding of the west façade, Suger had undertaken building improvements to the abbey. The access to considerable financial resources allowed him to employ an army of skilled craftsmen and laborers. The homes and workshops for the various sculptors, stonemasons, glaziers, metal workers, and other workmen crowded in behind older buildings. Excavations indicate that houses during this period were made of wood, probably similar to the three to four story timber and stucco houses in Paris.<sup>208</sup> See Figure 12. Community wells were lined with stone. There is evidence of weaving workshops, a tanning pit and grain storage pits.<sup>209</sup> The abbey dominated the village, owning a number of properties and businesses in the village as well as outlying lands including mills.<sup>210</sup>



**Figure 12 Twelfth Century Homes in Paris.**<sup>211</sup>

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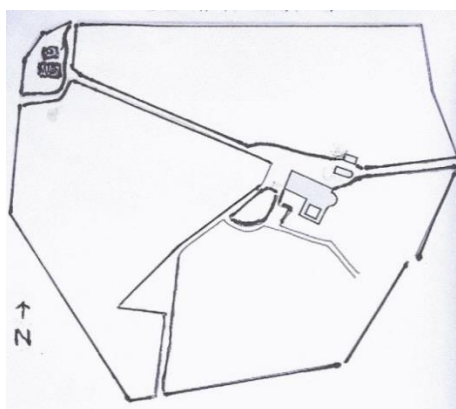
<sup>208</sup> Interactive display at La Crypte Archéologique du Parvis Notre-Dame, Paris.

<sup>209</sup> “Origins of a medieval town: 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries,” *Saint-Denis, une ville au Moyen Âge*, [http://www.saint-denis.culture.fr/en/1\\_2a\\_ville.htm](http://www.saint-denis.culture.fr/en/1_2a_ville.htm).

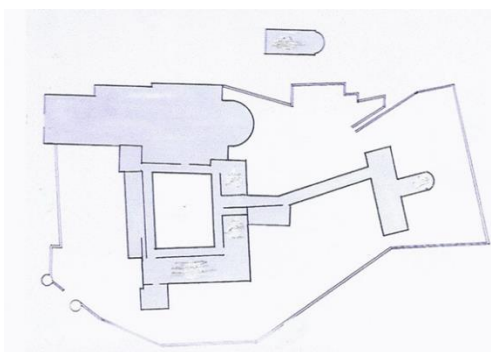
<sup>210</sup> “The mills and river based trades,” *Saint-Denis, une ville au Moyen Âge*, [http://www.saint-denis.culture.fr/en/3\\_4b\\_moulins.htm](http://www.saint-denis.culture.fr/en/3_4b_moulins.htm).

<sup>211</sup> Interactive display at Crypte Archéologique du Parvis Notre-Dame, Paris. Photo by Author, June 2015.

A wall separated the abbey from the village, with the west doors of the abbey church opened directly onto a plaza edged by homes and shops. A charter dated March 15, 1125, referred to a new entrance to the abbey from the village at the southwest corner of the abbey. Later historical research showed that this became the principal entry to the abbey, with a tower topped by simple crenellations.<sup>212</sup> Walls around the abbey itself dated to the time of Dagobert. See Figures 13 and 14.



**Figure 13 Walls of St. Denis Village.**<sup>213</sup>



**Figure 14 Layout of the Abbey and its Walls, Twelfth Century.**<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 124. Engraving done in 1779 by Martinet shows a tower called “Principale Porte du Cloître St. Denis” with simple crenellations that could date back to the 12th century; Formige’s book includes a layout of the monastery in the 15th century showing a building there. Foley, *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis*, figure 25.

<sup>213</sup> Abbey lies to center right of village. Two small boxes in upper left corner indicate the location of St. Denis d’Estree, where Suger may have been educated as a young oblate. Foley, *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis*, figure 3.

The royal party may have found the Estrée Saint-Denis to have been crowded but once they entered the fortified village of St. Denis, the crowds may have seemed worse. Some scholars suggest that Suger may have had work done on the walls as part of his building program, but Suger himself made no reference specifically to this.<sup>215</sup> A testament written by Suger in June 1137, shortly before leaving with the young Louis for Bordeaux to celebrate Louis' marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine, refers to a large "domus hospitum", which was probably a guest house located at the new entrance and connected to the western section of the cloister.<sup>216</sup> This document also mentions renovations and repairs to the dormitories and refectory, and enlargement of the treasury where objects such as the royal regalia were stored.<sup>217</sup>

With so many people attending the consecration, the abbey would need to utilize every inch of property it owned to house guests. St. Denis may have housed the King and his party in a house owned by the abbey, rather than in the hospital. Archaeological excavations identified that in the eighth and early ninth centuries a large 98 by 46 foot two story building constructed with stone sat on the north side of the church. Further evidence on the site such as luxury glassware suggests this building was a palace for royal visitors. In 1008, King Robert II gave this property to the abbey, but it is not clear to what purpose they put it.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Foley, *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis*, figure 2.

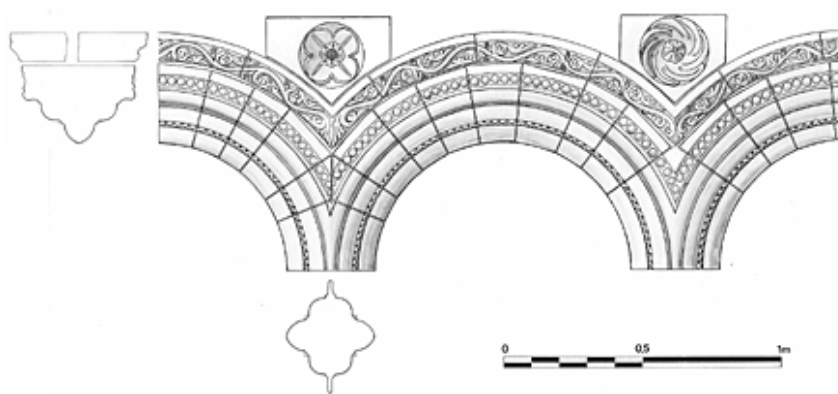
<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 252 – 253.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>217</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 124.

<sup>218</sup> "The castellum from 869 to the early 11th century," *Saint-Denis, une ville au Moyen Âge*, [http://www.saint-denis.culture.fr/en/1\\_3b\\_ville.htm](http://www.saint-denis.culture.fr/en/1_3b_ville.htm).

As part of his building projects Suger had prepared a guest house for priests at the collegiate church of St. Paul, which lay northeast of the abbey church.<sup>219</sup> It seems likely that the abbey would have offered hospitality in its own dormitories to the highest ranking churchmen, the archbishops and bishops. This would have been an opportunity for these influential churchmen to closely observe renovations carried out by Suger within the abbey proper, including new decorations in the cloister.<sup>220</sup> See Figure 15.



**Figure 15 Twelfth Century Arch Decorations in the Cloister.**<sup>221</sup>

Bernard’s 1127 letter to Suger complained that at one time “the cloister of the monastery was often crowded with soldiers, that business was done there, that it echoed to the sound of men wrangling and that sometimes women were to be found there.”<sup>222</sup> His complaint

<sup>219</sup> Braud, “Suger and the Making of the French Nation,” 35.

<sup>220</sup> Léon Pressouyre, “Did Suger Build the Cloister at Saint-Denis?” in *Abbot Suger and Saint Denis*, ed. Paula Lieber Gerson (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), 238. Decorations of the cloister dated to the mid-twelfth century. As Suger was the only abbot to carry out any kind of decorations or building during the century, it seems likely that the building of a gallery with carved colonnettes and arches along the inside of the cloister was created under his leadership. “Birth of the monastic borough 11th and 12th centuries,” *Saint-Denis, une ville au Moyen Âge*, [http://www.saint-denis.culture.fr/en/1\\_4a\\_ville.htm](http://www.saint-denis.culture.fr/en/1_4a_ville.htm). The rebuilding of the nave in the early thirteenth century led to the demolition of the northern flank of the buildings that enclosed the cloister. Foley, *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis*, 238.

<sup>221</sup> Reconstructed view of cloister decorations. “The Romanesque Cloister,” [http://www.saint-denis.culture.fr/en/1\\_4a1\\_ville.htm](http://www.saint-denis.culture.fr/en/1_4a1_ville.htm).

<sup>222</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux to Abbot Suger, in Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, 112.

highlights a Cistercian concern — that of monasteries involved in worldly matters.<sup>223</sup> The consecration provided an opportunity for Suger to demonstrate St. Denis’ pious environment.

Certainly, Suger would have wanted to show off the extensive libraries of the abbey as evidence of its historical significance. The libraries were the heart of the cloister school that claimed Carolingian and Capetian kings as students. A library of the period consisted of cupboards holding texts in passages and rooms adjoining the cloister.<sup>224</sup> At St. Denis, there were coffers of books and manuscripts in the infirmary, the treasury, and in the abbot's personal library as well as in the cloister. Books for the liturgy and *Opus Dei* were kept in the church building’s sacristy.<sup>225</sup> The *Sugerii Vita* claimed that the library contained almost 300 documents: “Sacred Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, the writings of theologians, chronicles and annals...classical authors of antiquity, philosophers, historians and poets...Horace, Lucian and Juvenal.”<sup>226</sup> Peter Abelard, a noted scholar of the day, referred to the wide variety of classical texts he was able to read at St. Denis, including the Venerable Bede.<sup>227</sup> The organization of the abbey archives and libraries by Suger became the foundation of record keeping for France as well as the abbey.<sup>228</sup> In addition to the library, St. Denis had a scriptorium.<sup>229</sup> St. Denis’ libraries

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<sup>223</sup> Rudolph, *The “Things of Greater Importance”*, 49. Bernard felt that the presence of women was another sign of the sad state of affairs at St. Denis: Cistercians refused women to enter their monasteries.

<sup>224</sup> M.T. Clanchy, *Abelard, A Medieval Life* (Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell, 1999), 232.

<sup>225</sup> Foley, *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis*, 62.

<sup>226</sup> Braud, “Suger and the Making of the French Nation,” 16.

<sup>227</sup> Abelard, *Historia Calamitatum*, lines 242 – 244 in Clanchy, *Abelard, A Medieval Life*, 228.

<sup>228</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 115.

<sup>229</sup> Clanchy, *Abelard, A Medieval Life*, 227.

were a source of pride to Suger, who had a strong knowledge of the contents in his library and who was able to call upon documents to support claims of the Abbey.

### **The Renovated West Façade**

However, Suger wanted the church building itself to be the center of attention. From an early age, Suger planned to renovate the abbey church of St. Denis. As a young man he worked at several of the properties owned by the abbey. He traveled through France, Normandy, and parts of the Holy Roman Empire, studying in noted libraries, visiting famous monasteries and churches, and viewing the architecture and decoration of each. In a letter dated August 1125, Suger tells of being in Mainz to help in the election of a new emperor.<sup>230</sup> Mainz was home to a significant Ottonian cathedral with a large westwerk.<sup>231</sup> While in Normandy, he must have seen some of the impressive Romanesque churches erected under the patronage of the Norman dukes.

As abbot, Suger's set out to repair and paint the walls of the nave in gold and precious colors.<sup>232</sup> Although he suggests that the nave would be increased at some future date, he bows to resistance on the part of others to altering the walls of the nave, so that "reverence for the ancient construction might be safeguarded."<sup>233</sup> However, according to Suger, a larger building was needed to accommodate the increasingly large crowds of pilgrims. In *De Consecratione*, Suger gives some detail of the problems the old church

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<sup>230</sup> Braud, "Suger and the Making of the French Nation," 86.

<sup>231</sup> Prache, *Cathedrals of Europe*, 54.

<sup>232</sup> Suger, *De Administratione* XXIV in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 43.

<sup>233</sup> Suger, *De Administratione* XXIX in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 53. In *De Administratione* XXV, Suger notes that the ancient church had been "consecrated by the Hand Divine". By the eleventh century, it was commonly believed that Christ himself had appeared at the consecration of the church built by Dagobert, making every stone of the nave sacred. As a sacred building, Suger had to be careful. He justified the new west front by claiming that the old front had been built by Charlemagne, and thus was not sacred. Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 45.

faced on feast days, the crowds so thick that women fainted and riots and fighting broke out, forcing the monks guarding the sacred relics to flee with the relics through a window.<sup>234</sup> Backed “by the inspiration of the Divine Will...by the counsel of wise men and by the prayers of many monks,” he demolished the addition to the front of the church built by Fulrad, which he refers to as “a certain addition asserted to have been made by Charlemagne”.<sup>235</sup> In addition, “Divine Will” not only inspired Suger to increase the size of the building, it also provided the necessary funds and materials to carry out the project in a relatively short period of time.

Construction on the west end began before June 1137.<sup>236</sup> This impressive addition was built onto the end of the older church. Like the Ottonian and Norman churches, it had two towers flanking three new portals. The Ottonians had introduced the concept designating the doors of the westwerk as the Royal Portal, representing the temporal realm of the living monarch while the east end of a church represented the celestial realm.<sup>237</sup> By the mid-twelfth century, this idea was widely accepted. Simson notes that the Royal Portals of a church associated kings with Solomon, who built the Temple, implying that the building of a church was the highest calling of a king.<sup>238</sup> Simultaneously, the doors represented the *porta caeli* (gates of heaven) leading into the sacred sanctuary of the nave and apse.

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<sup>234</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* II in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 89.

<sup>235</sup> In spite of the respect given to Charlemagne, only the nave reputedly consecrated by Christ was considered sacred and untouchable. Suger, *De Administratione* XXV in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 45.

<sup>236</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 123. A testament/will dated 17 June 1137, before leaving for Bordeaux and Poitiers to get Eleanor, instructed the *cellarius* of the abbey to continue to provide funds for the building projects underway, including the “novi et magni aedificii ecclesiae agumentione” (the new and great addition to the church building).

<sup>237</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 281.

<sup>238</sup> Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 141.

The façade was topped by crenellations. See Figures 16 and 17. Suger commented that these and the towers, which were completed after the consecration, were for decoration, but also “should circumstances require, for practical purposes”.<sup>239</sup> Suger had literally fought off greedy lords in the past, and he knew that such attacks were still possible. His church was not just for spiritual worship: it was also a fortress built to protect its monks. The towers also made the statement that the church guarded the king, holding such objects as the regalia for coronation and a number of other royal artifacts.<sup>240</sup> The crenellations echo those of ancient walls of Rome, the fortified palace in Paris, and the ducal castle in Caen built by William the Conqueror from which he controlled Normandy.<sup>241</sup>

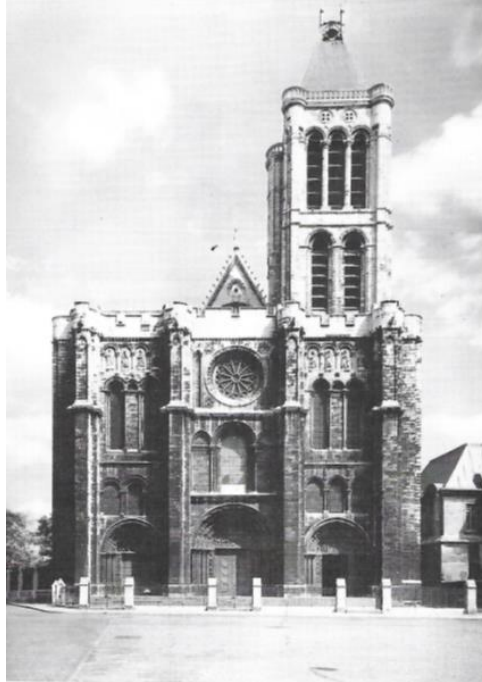
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<sup>239</sup> Suger, *De Administratione* XXVII in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 47.

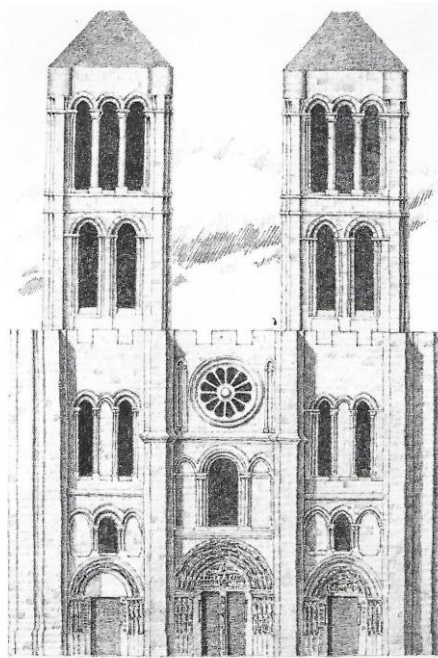
<sup>240</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 282. St. Denis served as the repository for royal items from at least the seventh century including a scepter attributed to Dagobert, a scepter donated by Charles the Bald, and several crowns. Conway, “The Treasures of Saint Denis”, 14 – 23.

<sup>241</sup> Other Romanesque cathedrals of the period, such as those at Caen and Mainz, do not have crenellations.





**Figure 16** West Front, St. Denis.<sup>242</sup>



**Figure 17** Reconstruction of the Twelfth Century Façade of St. Denis.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 66.

<sup>243</sup> In 1837, the north tower was severely damaged by lightning and dismantled. Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 172 and 162.

A large window of stained glass dominated the upper elevation of the façade. See Figure 18. This window, the first example of a large stained glass window in a church façade, became the prototype of medieval rose windows. The window could more properly be characterized as a wheel, with a central round hub from which spokes radiated out, dividing the window into twelve sections. The hub portrayed the image of Christ, while the twelve sections depicted the twelve signs of the zodiac.<sup>244</sup> The wheel was a common device used to represent various ideas, such as the wheel of Fortune, or as in the case of the *Hortus deliciarum*, a twelfth century book by Herrad of Landsberg, Learning, with the seven liberal arts encircling Philosophy.<sup>245</sup>



**Figure 18 West Façade Window.**<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Painton Cowen, *Rose Windows* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1979), 88. Cowen points out that the zodiac represented a structure for knowledge; astronomy was part of the seven liberal arts and included the study of the zodiac. The signs of the zodiac were also engraved on the jambs of the north portal doors.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>246</sup> The window is now converted into a clock but still shows the original tracery of the window. St. Denis. Photo by Author, June 2015.

Three portals dominated the lower part of the façade.<sup>247</sup> The entire northern-most portal emphasized St. Denis’s connection to the monarchy. The northern doors originally were from the north side of the old church building leading out to the cemetery.<sup>248</sup> On either side of this set of doors, slender statue columns of four kings with crowns and scepters, along with two other elongated figures stood guard over the entry. See Figures 19, 20, and 21. Suger himself never mentioned these columns, and scholars can only guess at whom the personages depicted were, but the images of kings at the ancient door clearly associated this door with the historical church building and the monarchy and emphasized the concept of royal patronage and protection.<sup>249</sup> It is not clear, but it is possible that Suger may have had this door gilded.



**Figure 19** “Prophet” Statue Column Head from St. Denis<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 180. The number three figures prominently in the west front: the three doors and the three levels. Three was the number of the Trinity. There are strong references to the number three of the Trinity in the ceremony and physical appearance of the church building, such as three vertical divisions of the façade with the two towers on either side of the main portals and three horizontal levels moving upward, three arches over each of the three portals, and three arches on the top level of the north and south elevations.

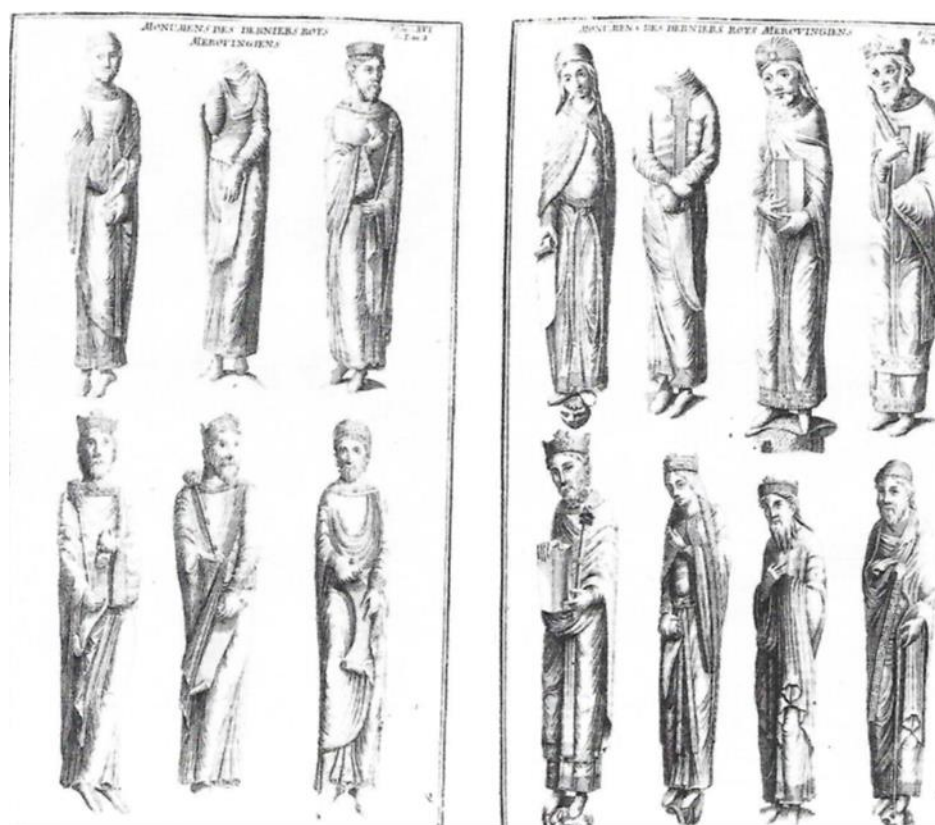
<sup>248</sup> Virginia Chieffo Raquin, Kathryn Brush, and Peter Draper, eds. *Artistic Integration in Gothic Buildings* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Inc., 1995), 94.

<sup>249</sup> The columns were removed in 1771. Carved stone heads in various museums indicate that the images were relatively lifelike. With the little information available, scholars believe that the clothing and objects carried by the columns were clues to the identity of each statue: kings holding scepters, Denis in bishop’s vestments holding his head and a mitre, and Moses, the great law giver, holding the tablet of law.

<sup>250</sup> “Prophet” head in Musée national du Moyen Âge, Paris. Photo by Author, June 2015.



**Figure 20** “Queen” Statue Column Head from St. Denis.<sup>251</sup>



**Figure 21** Statue Columns of Front Façade.<sup>252</sup>

<sup>251</sup> “Queen” head in Musée national du Moyen Âge, Paris. Photos by Author, June 2015.

<sup>252</sup> These drawings by Antoine Benoist appeared in *Les Monumens De La Monarchie Françoise* by Monfaucon. Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 198.



**Figure 22 The Southern Portal Tympanum.**<sup>253</sup>

The other two portal doors were gilded bronze and in the June sunlight must have shone brightly.<sup>254</sup> The southern portal was dedicated to Saint Denis, with the tympanum showing Denis and his companions imprisoned, receiving the sacraments from Christ himself while in prison, and then subsequently martyred. See Figure 22. The statue columns bordering this portal depicted Moses, Abraham and other early Biblical leaders.<sup>255</sup> Crosby speculates that the statue columns bordering the central doors may have represented the Biblical kings David and Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, while earlier scholars believed that these figures were medieval kings and patrons. Drawings by Antoine Benoist depicted in *Monfaucon's Les Monumens De La Monarchie Francoise* indicate a queen and a woman holding a scroll, both dressed in twelfth century fashion,

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<sup>253</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 210.

<sup>254</sup> According to Crosby, a sixteenth century description by Doublet in his *Histoire* noted that the figure of Suger was depicted on one of these doors prostrated on the ground at the feet of Christ. The *Histoire* also describes the right portal doors as decorated with metal, gold, and enamel. Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 188.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

three kings, and three other figures. The trumeau, a slender column between the two doors of the central portal, portrayed Saint Denis. See Figure 23.

Regardless of whom the statues depicted, the images of kings and queens guarding the entrance into the church made a strong connection of the west front to the monarchy. Large elaborate tympanum bordered by sculpted archivolt over the doors in each portal also portrayed symbolic messages about St. Denis' history and its connection to Christ. The northern most tympanum linked St. Denis' history to the history of the Church in Rome. "Contrary to modern custom" this tympanum was decorated with a mosaic created by Italian artists.<sup>256</sup> Mosaics were not common in France at that time but were plentiful in the Italian churches seen by Suger while traveling.<sup>257</sup>



**Figure 23** Statue Column Trumeau of Central Portal Depicting Saint Denis.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>257</sup> Unfortunately, there is no record of the mosaic depicted. Suger recorded that he ordered a mosaic but did not describe it.

<sup>258</sup> Drawing by Antoine Benoist, depicted in *Les Monumens De La Monarchie Francoise* by Monfaucon Crosby, Royal Abbey, 194.

Suger clearly wanted to ensure that viewers recognized his work at St. Denis. Christ sitting in judgment dominated the central portal tympanum, flanked by the twelve apostles, with Suger at his feet inside the mandorla surrounding Christ. See Figure 24. The resurrection theme is further supported by two angels holding a trumpet and a flaming sword, and scrolls extending from Christ's outspread arms. Christ's palms face outward and showing the stigmata of the crucifixion. Angels hovering over the figure of Christ hold the symbols of his passion, the crown of thorns and nails, referring to the relics given to the abbey by Charles the Bald. The oval mandorla, a common form of



**Figure 24** Detail of Central Tympanum: Suger at the Foot of Christ.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 185.

Christian iconography, represented the presence, power, and glory of God.<sup>260</sup> Depicting himself inside the mandorla literally placed Suger in the presence of God, equal to the saints. A row of figures at the bottom of the tympanum represents the resurrected dead. Suger's figure is included in this row, cleverly suggesting (and avoiding criticisms of arrogance) that at the resurrection, and not in his lifetime, he would be honored. Suger presented himself in a humble kneeling position, and inserted an inscription on the lintel over the doors: "Receive O Stern Judge, the Prayers of Thy Suger; grant that I be mercifully numbered among Thy own sheep".<sup>261</sup> The spiritual theme of judgment is supported by images of the wise and foolish virgins on the doorway jambs, a Biblical warning to believers to be prepared for the coming of Christ. According to Suger, a copper plaque marking the date of the consecration was placed on the doors of this central portal, but this plaque may have been affixed sometime after the consecration. See Figure 25.

Suger's record of the 1140 consecration in *De Administratione*, with its implication of royal authority, focuses more on ecclesiastical interpretations of elements in the building rather than secular, presenting a strong defense of his expensive building and its extravagant decorations. Bernard of Clairvaux's *Apologia* condemned excessive decoration in monastic churches, arguing that these things were unnecessary to monks. Bernard clearly delineated between the secular bishoprics and the monasteries, reluctantly allowing that the former were permitted to spend lavishly on churches to

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<sup>260</sup> Georgieva Todorova Rostislava, "New Religion — New Symbolism: Adoption of Mandorla in the Christian Iconography," Collection of Scientific Works IX, NIS AND BYZANTIUM: "Towards the celebration of the Edict of Milan anniversary", Nis: NKC (2011) [https://www.academia.edu/1764058/NEW\\_RELIGION\\_NEW\\_SYMBOLISM\\_ADOPTION\\_OF\\_MANDORLA\\_IN\\_THE\\_CHRISTIAN\\_ICONOGRAPHY](https://www.academia.edu/1764058/NEW_RELIGION_NEW_SYMBOLISM_ADOPTION_OF_MANDORLA_IN_THE_CHRISTIAN_ICONOGRAPHY), 56.

<sup>261</sup> Suger, *De Administratione* XXV in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 49.



“stimulate the devotion of a carnal people with material ornaments because they cannot do so with spiritual ones”.<sup>262</sup> However, Suger viewed his church as serving both monarchal and monastic needs and used his book to address criticisms that may have arisen either during or after the consecrations.



**Figure 25** Central Portal of West Façade, St. Denis.<sup>263</sup>

Suger, aware of the ascetic disapproval of lavish spending, chose to justify his expenses as spiritually necessary. The inscription on the gilded doors tells the viewer not

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<sup>262</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia* XII in Rudolph, *The “Things of Greater Importance”*, 10.

<sup>263</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 183.

to marvel at the gold and expense of the doors (with the implications that one would do exactly that) but to see them as the entry to knowledge and enlightenment:

Whoever you are, if you seekest to extol the glory of these doors  
marvel not at the gold and the expense but at the craftsmanship of the work  
bright is the noble work, but being nobly bright, the work  
should brighten the minds so that they may travel, through the true lights,  
to the true light where Christ is the true door  
in what manner it be inherent in this world the golden door defines:  
the dull mind rises to truth through that which is material  
and in seeing this light, is resurrected from its former submersion.<sup>264</sup>

Suger argued in *De Administratione* that God himself provided “all things without exception”, noting that “it behooves us most becomingly to serve our Savior in a universal way and without any exception”. In addition, according to Suger, the saints (Denis and his companions) provided materials for the decoration of the church, demanding: “Whether thou want it or not, we want it of the best.”<sup>265</sup> Cistercian statutes forbade the use of gold or silver in their churches, but could not argue against good craftsmanship, as men were expected to labor with their hands. Suger’s defense was not isolated. In his book *On the Division of Nature*, ninth century scholar John Scotus Erigena claimed that the world was a manifestation of God; by looking at the visible beauty of the world, one could be reminded of the harmony of the Godhead. Hugh of St. Victor (died 1141), noted scholar and abbot of St. Victor’s in Paris, discussed St. Denis’ Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite’s *Celestial Hierarchy*, stating that “visible beauty is an image of invisible beauty”.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Suger, *De Administratione* XXVII in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 47 – 49.

<sup>265</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* V in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 107.

<sup>266</sup> Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Age*, 56 – 58.

Light is a defining element of the west façade, gleaming from the golden doors and spilling through the colored glass of the round window into the new chapels of the façade and the nave. Suger relied strongly on medieval philosophies that equated light with spiritual knowledge leading men into a better understanding of God. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite described God as “lumen”, fire or the source of light.<sup>267</sup> Light revealed God and was a unifying element, bringing men forward into the goodness of God.<sup>268</sup> The *Regula Benedicti* instructed monks to “Let us open our eyes to the deifying light”.<sup>269</sup> Suger equated the doors of his church with Christ as the gates leading into heaven both figuratively and literally. His consecration ceremony provided the opportunity for fellow churchmen to do more than write about light as a philosophical concept that symbolized a transition to a higher level of existence: they could experience this physical transformation in a ceremony filled with symbolic movements, gestures, music, and light that emphasized St. Denis’ role as the spiritual leader to the feudal Capetians monarchs.

### **The Consecration Ceremony of the West Façade**

Suger chose to hold the 1140 consecration of the new west front on the Feast of the Detection of the bodies of St. Denis and his companions, a liturgical commemoration held annually on June 9. By choosing this day, Suger emphasized the importance of the relics upon which the church of St. Denis originally had been built and that continued to be central to its role as the legitimate representative of the patron saint of the French

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>268</sup> Andrew B. Schoedinger, ed., *Readings in Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 86.

<sup>269</sup> Benedict of Nursia, “Prologue Jan 2 – May 3 – Sept. 2” in *St. Benedict’s Rule for Monasteries*.

monarch. This feast, one of the more significant events in St. Denis' liturgical year, celebrated the opening of the tomb of the martyrs in 1053 to reveal the relics and ending claims by the monks of Regensburg, which lay on the Danube River, that they held the bones.<sup>270</sup> He described the ceremony held on June 9, 1140 in both *De Administratione* and *De Consecratione*, with the more detailed account in the latter.

The Ordinary of St. Denis indicates that services held annually to commemorate the various feast days associated with the patron saint, Denis, were more ornate affairs than most other feasts. This “*liber ordinarii*” or “ordinary” was not intended for usage during the liturgy, but rather supplied texts and directions for the various offices, Eucharist, and other rites and devotions for the abbey.<sup>271</sup> The annual Feast of St. Denis on October 9 was one of the most important feast days of the year at the abbey, celebrated with the same degree of ceremony as Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and the Assumption.<sup>272</sup> The Ordinary indicates that Vespers at these services included processions to the altars holding tombs of the saints.<sup>273</sup> As perhaps the most important day in St. Denis' history, the consecration ceremony would have incorporated elements from the significant feast days honoring the saint.

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<sup>270</sup> Foley, *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St. Denis*, 156 and Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 78.

<sup>271</sup> Foley, *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis*, 26. This particular Ordinary dates to c. 1234 – 1236. According to Foley, this manuscript, produced during reconstruction of the nave (begun 1231), gave directions for the various offices and liturgies that had been largely unchanged since Suger's time.

<sup>272</sup> Other significant feasts fell on February 24 commemorating the consecration of the church building in 775 and the June 9th feast of Detection of the bodies of St. Denis and his companions.

<sup>273</sup> Foley, *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis*, 175.

The consecration celebration for the west front started the evening of June 8.<sup>274</sup> Consecration rituals included specific rituals for the translation of relics (movement and placement of relics from one location to a new resting place). The ritual started the day before the consecration, when monks moved the relics to a tent set up either inside the church building or in a location where the relics could be protected.<sup>275</sup> Suger wrote on the assumption that his contemporaries knew and understood that such a ritual took place. As befitting a special occasion, a vigil was held. The vigil followed Compline, the last service held before retiring, and lasted until morning, sometimes ending with the celebration of the Mass.<sup>276</sup> Suger comments in *De Administratione* that at a point midway during the consecration ceremony he and the other officiating bishops and archbishop “were a little tired”.<sup>277</sup> This admittance seems at odds with a man who appears to be energetic in all he does. However, this is understandable if they had been awake all night participating in a vigil.

The consecration ritual carried out on the morning of June 9 was the major celebration where Suger’s message regarding the Capetian monarchs’ relationship with the Church was presented to the gathered secular and ecclesiastical participants and onlookers. See *Appendix F: The Desiderian Liturgy for Consecrations*. Suger notes

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<sup>274</sup> The Benedictine hours of the day were as follows: Vespers (at the end of the day), Compline (upon retiring), Vigils (sometime during the night), Matins (at sunrise), Prime (during the first hour of daylight), Sext (at the sixth hour), None (at the ninth hour), and then Vespers at the end of the day to start the next spiritual day.

<sup>275</sup> Although Suger wrote nothing about the ceremony of translation of relics in his accounts of the 1140 consecration as opposed to his description of the 1144 consecration, which describes the translation of the abbey’s patron saint, both occasions had this ceremony. Suger related the names of the saints whose relics were placed into the chapels of the new façade in *De Consecratione IV*, in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 101.

<sup>276</sup> Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era*, 45.

<sup>277</sup> Suger, *De Administratione XXVI* in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 47.

briefly that a large crowd of ecclesiastical and lay people attended. The lack of detail indicates that this celebration followed the standard formula for a consecration. Suger states that the ceremony started with the blessing of water in the “nave of the new addition” by Archbishop Hughes of Rouen, assisted by Bishop Eudes of Beauvais and Bishop Peter of Senlis.<sup>278</sup> Some of the water was mixed with salt for the exorcism of demons from the building, with another part mixed with salt, ashes, and wine for sprinkling on the walls and altars. Later in the consecration, a third part would be mixed with mortar for the sealing of relics into altars.<sup>279</sup> After the blessing of the water, a procession of churchmen formed and proceeded to exit the building through “the chapel of St. Eustace”, passed in front of the church through the large plaza called the Panetière where the large crowd stood and returned into the building through “the other bronze door which opens onto the sacred cemetery”.<sup>280</sup> According to Panofsky, there may have been a chapel dedicated to St. Eustace within the south aisle of the Carolingian nave, separated by gates or impermanent walls, with a door opening to the exterior of the nave. The procession exited the church through this door, either processing around the galley surrounding the cloister or more directly through the building on the west side of the cloister into a small courtyard to the west of the building and then passing through a

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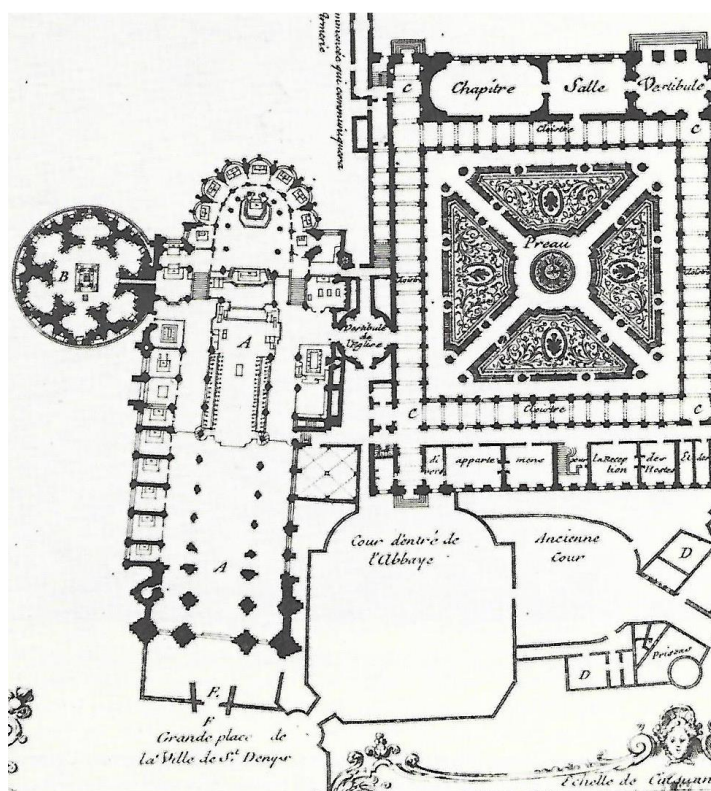
<sup>278</sup> While Beauvais and Senlis lay within the domain of the Ile de France, Rouen lay in the heart of Normandy, having been the capital city of the Normans until William the Conqueror chose Caen as his capital. Hilduin identified a disciple of Saint Denis, Nicasius, as the first bishop of Rouen, linking the Norman city to St. Denis abbey. Georges Goyau, “Archdiocese of Rouen,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 13 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), 14 Feb. 2016 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13208b.htm>.

<sup>279</sup> Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era*, 44.

<sup>280</sup> Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 161. Panofsky believes that these doors once hung on the tower on the north side of the church attributed to William the Conqueror.

doorway in the walls to the “Place Panetière”.<sup>281</sup> The procession moved past the west front to the north side of the church and through the cemetery located there.<sup>282</sup>

The Desiderian liturgy dictated that the procession circle the church three times. The layout of the walls surrounding the abbey church indicate that the procession would have had to move through the cloister and through Suger’s new gate at the southwest



**Figure 26** Abbey Layout, Eighteenth Century.<sup>283</sup>

<sup>281</sup> The current north transept, extended in the thirteenth century, seems to be the relative location of the twelfth century cemetery entrance. An eighteenth century diagram of St. Denis indicates that the footprint of the abbey remained relatively unchanged from the twelfth century, altered only by additions to the abbey as it grew, but respecting the position and layout of older buildings, which while restored or rebuilt, maintained previous locations. Thirteenth century additions to the church added larger side aisles and transepts to the nave, but tried to respect the historical church building. The same diagram also indicates a small doorway to the west of the thirteenth century transept, leading out to an “Ancienne Cour” and “Cour d’entree de l’Abbaye”, which may provide a clue to the location of the twelfth century door by the chapel of St. Eustace. Bruzelius, *The 13th-Century Church at St-Denis*. See Figure 26.

<sup>282</sup> Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 155.

<sup>283</sup> Plate 10 in Bruzelius, *The 13th-Century Church at St-Denis*. See Note 281.

corner of the abbey in order to return to the front of the building. Every time the procession passed the front of the church, the bishops performed a ritual called the *Atollite Portas*, knocking on the doors, tapping on the lintels, and calling out “Lift up your gates, O princes, and be raised up, you everlasting doors, and the king of glory will come in.” A monk or priest inside the closed doors answered, “Who is this king of glory?” The first and second time, the procession moved around the church, singing hymns and chants. After the third circle, the bishops knocked again with their call to open the doors; after the inside response asking who the king of glory was, they answered, “The Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory,” and the doors were opened.<sup>284</sup>

The three bishops led the procession carrying small containers of chrism, scented oil used for sacraments. At various points they stopped and made the sign of the cross with a thumb dipped in the chrism. Other participants carried incense censors or candles. See Figure 27. Incense was a purifying agent, used in processions and consecrations to rid buildings and objects of demons.<sup>285</sup> In *De Consecratione IV*, Suger mentions that the “true body and blood of the High Priest Jesus Christ” was displayed, indicating that vessels carrying the blessed wine and bread used in the Eucharist, believed to be the body and blood of Christ and thus relics of Christ himself, were carried in the procession.<sup>286</sup> As relics, they signified the presence of Christ, conferring greater significance on the ceremony.

Once inside, after reciting a litany calling upon the saints and powers of heaven to bless the church, the priests prostrated themselves, chanting prayers before performing

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<sup>284</sup> David Bevington, *Medieval Drama* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975), 12 – 13.

<sup>285</sup> Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era*, 53.

<sup>286</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione IV* in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 97.



the abecedarium.<sup>287</sup> The abecedarium ceremony dated to the time of the church fathers and alluded to Christ teaching his disciples. Just as a child learned his alphabet, men learned the principles of faith; by crossing the church to the four corners of the building, the ceremony represented the declaration of the doctrines of the church to all four corners of the world. Directions held significant meanings with the east representing the nativity and the west representing the ascension of Christ and his entry into Heaven.<sup>288</sup> During the abecedarium the presiding bishop wrote the Latin and Greek alphabets with his crozier in small piles of ashes in a large X that crossed the nave, connecting the ceremony to the two linguistic traditions of the liturgy. The Latin alphabet was traced in a line from opposite corners of the building followed by the tracing of the Greek alphabet in the other direction.<sup>289</sup>



**Figure 27** Bronze Incense Censor and Pyx.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Robertson, *The Service-Books of the Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis*, 222.

<sup>288</sup> Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era*, 70.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>290</sup> A pyx held Eucharistic wafers. These pieces from Limoges, France date from early thirteenth century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo by Author, June 2015.

After the abecedarium, the bishops blessed the altars by anointment with chrism, followed by the swinging of incense censors around the altar, and the sprinkling of blessed water on the top of altar. The top of the altar contained a cavity into which relics, along with incense and a Eucharistic host for protection, were placed. A stone tablet covered this, sealed into place with the mortar prepared with blessed water, then blessed with chrism.<sup>291</sup> The presiding priest circled the interior of the church and anointed the walls, making crosses of chrism with his thumb on each wall. The building was empty of all furnishings up to this point, when deacons and priests brought in and blessed the various items: linens and vestments, candlesticks, crosses, incense boats, and the various objects used for the Mass.



**Figure 28** Silver Incense Boat.<sup>292</sup>

Once the priests completed the exorcism and the blessing of the interior was completed, they translated the relics. Monks lifted the relics in their chausses up onto biers or carried them in their arms in procession around the outside of the church, preceded and followed by monks or priests carrying candles and incense censors, the

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<sup>291</sup> Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era*, 54.

<sup>292</sup> Mid-fourteenth century incense boat used for the storage of incense. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo by Author, June 2015.

participants chanting antiphons and singing hymns. The procession halted at the main doors, which the priests anointed and blessed again.

Suger took advantage of this point in the ceremony when the presiding churchman had an opportunity to teach the crowd the duties owed to the Church. The officiating bishop proceeded to give a sermon to the crowd, speaking of the saints whose relics were being placed in the new altars, discussing clerical responsibilities to God and of their duties as servants of God, and calling for all to practice tithing and proper decorum within the building. By the eleventh and twelfth centuries, these sermons were heavily sprinkled with references to the Biblical Jerusalem and Solomon's temple as well as the promised temple of God's kingdom, linking the new building to a higher level of spiritual existence.<sup>293</sup> The final part of the sermon stressed the responsibilities of maintaining the building, calling upon benefactors and builders to endow, maintain, and protect — physically and financially — the building and clergy. The benefactors came forward and publicly declared their commitment to the building and the clergy in the presence of the crowd and relics.<sup>294</sup> As previously noted, the swearing of oaths over relics was binding; to swear publicly placed one's honor as collateral as a Frenchman's honor tied him to his place in society. A cleverly worded sermon extracted promises that few could break without fear of damnation, legal ramifications, or social ostracism.

With the promises made, the procession moved back into the building, followed by the crowd. Priests sealed the relics into their respective altars with prayers, antiphons, and hymns, symbolically sealing the promises made into the altars. Candles were lit, the

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<sup>293</sup> Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era*, 66.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

altars were covered with linens and the items for the Mass set out. The priests changed their vestments and the Mass celebrated.<sup>295</sup> As indicated by the previously mentioned Ordinary and Service Books of St. Denis, on important feast days the various elements of the Mass were enhanced with more participants and elaborate musical elements.



**Figure 29** Early fourteenth century cope.<sup>296</sup>

As one of the more joyful ecclesiastical celebrations, a consecration would be enhanced by festive ecclesiastical garb, an intricate liturgy supplemented with the singing of alleluias, and the ringing of bells.<sup>297</sup> Bells, depicted in medieval pictures as hanging from a rod or hung on a wheel in groups of three to eight bells, were cast of bronze and hit with a small mallet. They were sounded at significant points within the Mass and used

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<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>296</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo by Author, June 2015.

<sup>297</sup> Bells during this period were large tolling bells hung in towers or smaller ones hung from a bar; all generally had a beehive or half egg shape rather than the tulip shape of the later Gothic period bells. J. Smits Van Waesberghe, *Cymbala: Bells in the Middle Ages* (Rome, NY: American Institute of Musicology, 1951), 13 – 17.

more often on important feast days. By the twelfth century, *campanulae manuales* (little altar bells) announced the Elevation of the Host to those who could not follow the service or were too far away from the altar to see it.<sup>298</sup> The Ordinary of St. Denis dictated bells rung “duppliciter” (twice) at Easter and on the October 9<sup>th</sup> Feast of Saint Denis, indicating that the joyous ringing of bells also took place during the consecration ceremony.<sup>299</sup>

Music played a large part in the liturgy, and the abbey clung tight to traditional forms that formed a link to its history. The use of music as part of the liturgy by the Church appeared as early as the papacy of Damasus I (r. 366 – 384).<sup>300</sup> Records of St. Denis’ musical tradition date to the seventh century, when Dagobert established perpetual psalmody.<sup>301</sup> In Gaul, the Gallican rites and music dominated until the late eighth century, when Charlemagne initiated his liturgical reforms, introducing Roman style chants into Gallican rituals.<sup>302</sup> Fulrad, who served both as abbot of St. Denis and as capellanus of the royal chapel under Pepin, directing the court clerics and serving as the chief mediator between king and the pope, helped develop the new liturgy. As ambassador to Rome for Pepin in 755, Fulrad was influenced by the Roman liturgy, but nevertheless, he incorporated Gallican pieces.<sup>303</sup> The consecration of Saint-Denis in 775

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<sup>298</sup> O. B. Hardison, Jr., ed., *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages: Essays in the Origin and Early History of Modern Drama*. (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), 65.

<sup>299</sup> Foley, *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis*, 165.

<sup>300</sup> William L. Smoldon, *The Music of the Medieval Church Dramas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 26.

<sup>301</sup> Perpetual psalmody was the singing of chants and psalms throughout the day and night as part of the Opus Dei. Robertson, *The Service-Books of the Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis*, 13.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 27. Gregorian chant is a mix of Gallican and Roman chant, receiving its final form around 800 as part of the Carolingian reforms.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

would have provided an opportunity to introduce this reformed liturgy, melding Roman liturgical elements with the more ornate Gallican hymns and antiphons, as Charlemagne had directed that the renovated church building be consecrated “in a manner of great distinction”.<sup>304</sup>

Suger, ever cognizant of the abbey’s history, not only utilized what was coming to be the standard ceremony for consecration of churches, the Desiderian Liturgy, but incorporated the abbey’s Gallican musical tradition. During the first half of the twelfth century, the new musical concept of duophony had been appearing in secular music. In duophony, two different lines of melody were sung at the same time. Musical notations from the time have an “upper” voice and the “lower” voice, but this refers to location on the page rather than tones. Around the same time, a different form called organum developed in southern France.<sup>305</sup> In organum, two voices sing a parallel line of melody, moving up and down together, but separated by a musical fourth or fifth. By the second half of the twelfth century, polyphony, singing with several tones sung at the same time by various voices, emerged from the school at Notre Dame in Paris. However, evidence shows that St. Denis continued to use the more traditional plainchant, also referred to as Gregorian Chant. An eleventh century psalter and hymnal produced at St. Denis, F:Pn, lat. 103, Bibliotheque Nationale, contains Gallican hymns for the feast days of Saints Cucuphas, Hippolytus and Denis.<sup>306</sup> The antiphoner F:Pn, lat. 17296, held in the Bibliotheque Nationale and copied out sometime between 1140 and 1150 at St. Denis,

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<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>305</sup> Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era*, 27.

<sup>306</sup> Robertson, *The Service-Books of the Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis*, 320 – 321.

includes traces of the Gallican liturgy, including processional antiphons, providing evidence of the abbey's more traditional musical practices during Suger's abbacy.<sup>307</sup>

As Charlemagne had once ordered, Suger celebrated his new west façade in a manner of great distinction. Suger noted that the musical elements of the Mass filled the church with “polyphonic praise”, the various ranges of male voices, from young tenors to elderly baritones and basses, creating a rich sound echoing from the high roof of the nave.<sup>308</sup> The above mentioned antiphoner indicates that the monks of St. Denis used more performers singing solos and ornamented their chant with musical melismas, extra notes added to a single syllable, but did not engage in either duophony or organum.<sup>309</sup> From this, it becomes evident that the rather “old-fashioned music” utilized in the consecration liturgy, which could be dated back to Charlemagne's time and beyond, created a link with the ancient liturgical tradition of the abbey, while still utilizing the maximum number of singers and musical ornamentation.

### **Consecrations of the East Foundation and the Altar of Charles the Bald**

Excavation work for the new east end began before the consecration of the western façade. Suger reports that he was encouraged by his success on the west façade and his finances were good.<sup>310</sup> However, he encountered significant resistance to any plan of rebuilding the sacred nave. Instead, he chose to build a new apse over Fulrad's and Hilduin's building. With a significant amount of money, labor, and materials available

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>308</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* IV in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 99. Author had the opportunity to observe a male chorus of boys and men at Westminster Abbey, London. While modern interpretations view polyphonic music as being several different tones sung at the same time, a choir of voices in different ranges can create a rich sound that can also be termed polyphonic even if all are singing the same tone.

<sup>309</sup> Foley, *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis*, 48.

<sup>310</sup> Suger, *De Administratione* XXVIII in *Oeuvres*, 189 and *De Consecratione* II in *Oeuvres*, 218.

and agreeing to just repair and renovate the walls of the nave, he proceeded to add a new rounded end that incorporated an ambulatory ringed with radiating chapels and a light filled crypt. Almost immediately after the consecration of the west front, he held a ceremony to bless the foundation of the new east front, indicating in his description in *De Consecratione* that the excavation of the ground had already been completed. On July 14, 1140, a procession “beautiful by its ornaments and notable by its personages...descended with humble devotion to the excavations made ready for the foundations”. The procession included the King and a number of abbots, bishops, and monks.<sup>311</sup>

In both *De Consecratione* and *De Administratione*, Suger emphasizes the connection of the abbey to the Frankish monarchs, from Dagobert to Louis VII. By including an account of the consecration of the east foundation in *De Consecratione*, he draws attention to significant relics held by the abbey, and the relics’ connection to the monarchs, including the nail and thorn crown of the Passion of Christ, given to the abbey by Charles the Bald. Suger notes that Louis VII was among those who laid foundation stones with their own hands, the king literally helping to build up and enhance the Church and its buildings, even as Dagobert built the historical abbey church building. The crown and thorn of Christ’s crucifixion connected the blessing of the foundation with Christ’s blessing of Dagobert’s church.

Not only did the kings, past and contemporary, help build the abbey church, they were generous patrons. Suger records a beautiful porphyry vase given to Louis by his new bride Eleanor on the occasion of their marriage, and subsequently donated to St.

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<sup>311</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* IV in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 101 – 103.





**Figure 30 The Throne of Dagobert.<sup>312</sup>**

Denis by the king.<sup>313</sup> Louis VII's gift, given "as a tribute of his great love", formed part of a long inventory of gifts to the abbey from Frankish kings. At various places in his *De Administratione*, Suger lists a gold altar front given by Charles the Bald, candlesticks given by Louis VI, and a necklace from "Queen Nanthilda, wife of King Dagobert, the founder of the church". Other royal objects included "the famous throne of the glorious King Dagobert". See Figure 30. Suger ordered this throne repaired and restored, noting that "as ancient tradition relates, the kings of the Franks, after taking the reins of government, used to sit, in order to receive, for the first time, the homage of their nobles."<sup>314</sup> St. Denis was the repository of the royal regalia, which included the crown, scepter, sword, spurs, and garments worn during coronation ceremonies by the kings. As the repository, it stood as the symbolic palace of the kings of France, where feudal

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<sup>312</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 44.

<sup>313</sup> Suger, *De Administratione* XXXIVA in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 79.

<sup>314</sup> Suger, *De Administratione* XXXIII, XXXIV, and XXXIVA in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 61 – 79.

ceremonies of homage to the king were held under the watchful eye of the monarch's patron saint.<sup>315</sup>

The abbey church could be presented as a secular palace and fortress, protecting the monarch's interests, but it was also the sanctuary of Christ, a new temple of Jerusalem in which the Lord, through his beloved martyr Denis, could bless and guide the monarch of the French people. Suger recorded that "the assembly of illustrious men", including the King, laid the foundation stones as they chanted "all thy walls are precious stones" and Psalm 86: "The foundations thereof are in the holy mountain". Holy water saved from the June 9 ceremony was mixed with the mortar for the foundation of the east end.<sup>316</sup> He also notes that "certain persons" deposited gems.<sup>317</sup> Archaeological work in the twentieth century found no gems in the foundation. As Suger's book would have been questioned if inaccurate information was presented, it would be logical to conclude that gem stones were placed and then carefully retrieved by the Abbot and his monks at some time soon after and used to finance the building of the east end.<sup>318</sup>

To further emphasize the abbey's connection to the historical monarchy and its importance as a holder of significant relics, Suger recorded the October 9, 1141 ceremony in which the altar located in the middle of the choir was opened, the contents

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<sup>315</sup> The inventories of the abbey over several centuries noted a large number of objects given by kings to the abbey, including two life sized gold statues of saints Peter and Paul given by Pepin after his coronation at St. Denis in 754, a large porphyry tub once used at the Baptistry in Poitiers and given to St. Denis by Dagobert, gold tables given by Dagobert and Charles the Bald, the Cup of the Ptolemies, a two handled agate cup, and the Cup of Solomon, a gold bowl set with colored glass and cameos reputed to have belonged to an early seventh century Persian king, both given by Charles the Bald, who also donated crosses and altar retables attributed to Charlemagne. Many of these objects were placed in the church building itself, either on altars or in prominent places. Conway, "The Treasures of Saint Denis," 13 – 23.

<sup>316</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* IV in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 103.

<sup>317</sup> There is no indication of who these people were and apparently, at least to Suger, not important enough to list by name: he was more interested in the donation of the gems.

<sup>318</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 216.

within verified, and the altar resealed.<sup>319</sup> According to Suger, a large number of archbishops, bishops, noblemen, clerics, and laypeople of both sexes attended the opening of the altar on the Feast day of St. Denis' martyrdom.<sup>320</sup> After the mid-morning celebration of Terce, at which the Mass was held, a procession moved into the nave and gathered around the "Holy Altar". Suger directed the opening of several compartments in the altar to expose the relics sealed within it. According to his account, a discussion ensued about the opening, some suggesting that it would have been better to do this secretly, but Suger stated that he wanted the contents to be attested to by many. He noted that the compartments were sealed with the impression of the ancient king's ring, thus confirming the authenticity of documents attesting to the contents of the altar and marking the royal connection to the relics within.<sup>321</sup> Suger should have been content: this ceremony confirmed the legitimacy of the abbey's claims of monarchical support and its ownership of important relics. However, in the meantime, Louis VII had become engaged in a conflict that threatened to undo Suger's efforts to glorify the Capetian monarchy and his own abbey.

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<sup>319</sup> He does not mention the improvements to the altar, but later descriptions indicate this altar was renovated.

<sup>320</sup> Suger, *De Administratione*, XXXIII A in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 69. Suger stated that the churchmen come from "diverse provinces... who as though paying a debt to the apostolate of all Gaul". He specifically named the archbishops of Tours, Rheims (in Champagne), Rouen (in Normandy) and Lyon (in the Kingdom of Arles, part of the Holy Roman Empire). This particular passage omits any mention of Louis VII. The archbishop of Bourges died the middle of August 1141 and a controversy over the investiture of a new archbishop had begun. Charles Cawley, "Bourges Archbishopric" chapter 1, *Medieval Lands*, <http://fmg.ac/Projects/MedLands/Bourges.htm>. It is unclear if Louis was still trying to besiege Toulouse or was on his way to Bourges: either way, he may not have been in good graces at this time. The presence of significant archbishops such as those from Rheims and Tours, which bordered Bourges, suggests that meetings regarding the situation accompanied this event. See footnote 27 regarding Toulouse.

<sup>321</sup> Suger, *De Administratione* XXXIII A in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 67 – 69.

## THE CONSECRATION OF 1144

**The King, a Count, a Bishop and an Unwise Lover: 1140 to 1144**

Crowds witnessing Louis VII and his entourage riding north from Paris to St. Denis abbey on that sunny Friday morning in June 1144 to attend the consecration of the east end would have noted one significant difference from the same event marking the consecration of the west end four years previously: Unlike his wife, mother, and court, the King was dressed simply, in the clothes of a pilgrim. See Figure 31. Louis needed to pay penance for actions on his part that had threatened to destroy his reign.<sup>322</sup> As a



**Figure 31** Pilgrim robe of Louis IX, early thirteenth century.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 43.

<sup>323</sup> Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris. Photo by Author, June 2015.

monarch in disgrace, it was necessary that Louis be present at this consecration to acknowledge his relationship with the saint interred in the basilica and to seek his intercession. Louis approached the ceremonies as a penitent, seeking redemption for his sins. His visits to the various chapels along the way would have been marked by Louis praying more fervently and leaving more expensive gifts than in the past. The Church advised penitents to stop, pray, and leave gifts at significant holy sites along their route.<sup>324</sup> By the early twelfth century, medieval people firmly believed in the power of a pilgrimage to forgive sin.<sup>325</sup> To Louis, this trip was more than royal attendance at an ecclesiastical event. It was political and personal, pilgrimage to restore himself in the eyes of his vassals.

The consecration of 1144 was also more than an ecclesiastical ceremony to those gathering at St. Denis. It served as an opportunity to end a devastating conflict between Louis VII and Theobald II, Count of Blois and of Champagne. As a young man, Theobald, who was only Count of Chartres at the time, had been a “handsome youth and valiant warrior”.<sup>326</sup> In 1111, he joined with King Louis VI against Hugh of Le Puiset, a local castellan who had been harassing churchmen and the countryside. Almost immediately after subduing Hugh, Theobald attempted to deceive Louis VI over the building of a castle on land held in fief from the King. When the King objected, a war lasting over seven years erupted, with Theobald's uncle, King Henry I of England, assisting Theobald. In spite of a negotiated alliance, the Capetian king continued to view

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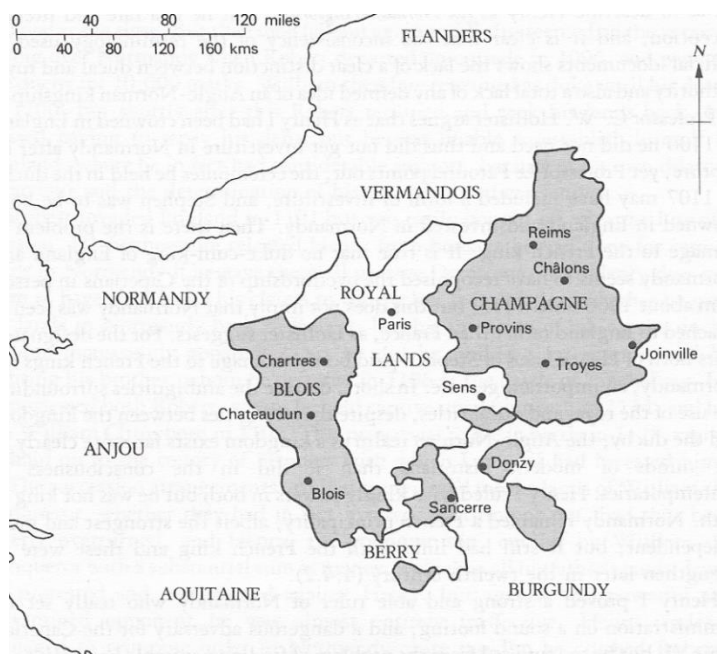
<sup>324</sup> Webb, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West*, 124. A “Guide du pelerine”, giving pilgrims directions to the famous basilica of Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain, was one of the more famous books that emphasized the importance of praying at shrines along a pilgrimage route.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>326</sup> Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, 86.

Theobald as a problem. In his biography of Louis VI, Suger wrote that Theobald “jealously plotted every harm for the state”.<sup>327</sup> Another war between Louis and Theobald broke out in the region of Brie from 1128 to 1135.

One of the biggest points of contention between the Capetians and Theobald was money. In 1125, Theobald became Count of Champagne after his uncle Hugh renounced the title to become a Knight Templar. See Figure 32. The Chronicler of Morigny described Theobald as second only to the king in political power.<sup>328</sup> Theobald chose Champagne as the center of his authority. Theobald was a vassal of the French king, but he managed to avoid directly acknowledging the French king as suzerain of all his



**Figure 32 Domain of Count of Champagne, twelfth century.**<sup>329</sup>

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>328</sup> Hallam, *Capetian France 987 – 1328*, 49.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid., 44.

holdings.<sup>330</sup> As Count of Champagne, Theobald competed with the Capetian monarchs for the profits gained from trade. Early in the twelfth century the counts of Champagne developed a system of protection that encouraged the growth of trade routes and what would be called the fairs of Champagne. Both Louis VI and his son attempted to set a monopoly on Parisian water traffic to counter Theobald's strong control of trade through central France, but with little success. As count, Theobald profited directly from the increased trade in his lands, perhaps so much that when his uncle, Henry I of England, died, he allowed his younger brother, Stephen, to step in and seize the English throne from Henry's daughter Matilda, rather than take it himself.<sup>331</sup>

By the time of Louis VI's death, many of the conflicts between Theobald and the old king had been resolved. In 1137, Theobald joined the entourage of the young Louis VII as he traveled to Bordeaux to marry Eleanor, the heiress of Aquitaine.<sup>332</sup> Abbot Suger had a strong respect for the man, but also recognized him as a man who did not necessarily act in the best interest of the king or St. Denis. See *Appendix G: Abelard and St. Denis*.

Conflict between the king and the Count of Champagne ignited again in 1142, when Theobald became involved in a controversy with Louis VII over the election of the archbishop of Bourges. Over the past century, the popes in Rome and the Holy Roman Emperors clashed over the issue of investiture. The Emperors claimed the right to put forward candidates for bishoprics and abbacies, to approve the election of these men, and to oversee the ceremony where these churchmen were presented the insignia of their

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<sup>330</sup> A successor would not acknowledge the king as suzerain for all his holdings until 1198.

<sup>331</sup> Hallam, *Capetian France 987 – 1328*, 49.

<sup>332</sup> Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 48.

offices. By doing so, the emperors, as well as all other secular lords who claimed this privilege, placed themselves as the supreme authority over the Church as well as the state. The popes sought to reassert papal authority over the election of clergy. The Holy Roman Emperors believed they had the right and duty to appoint bishops and archbishops in their lands, based on precedents set by Charlemagne, and before him, Constantine the Great. Church reformers in the eleventh century frustrated by feudal obligations that strengthened the power of the German emperor while corrupting churchmen and weakening their control over ecclesiastical holdings, argued that the church alone had the right to invest churchmen with the insignia of their positions. Under Pope Gregory VII (r. 1073 – 85) a strong intellectual reform movement commenced to stop simony, clerical marriage and lay investiture, seeking absolute supremacy of the Roman Church and its clergy, and freedom from any secular control.<sup>333</sup> Gregory's 1073 declaration of papal rights, *Dictatus Papae*, asserted that the papacy was supreme over every other authority, implying that the pope was the true successor to Constantine the Great, and clearly stating that the pope had the power to depose emperors.<sup>334</sup> The investiture controversy of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries centered on issues between the Holy Roman Emperors and the popes, but conflicts over investiture were also found in England and in France. The official end of the controversy came with the *Concordat of Worms* in September 1122, but investiture struggles between lords and the Church continued.

As part of his privileges as feudal overlord, the French king also claimed the right to name and approve bishops and abbots. Over the centuries, grants of land to the Church

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<sup>333</sup> Braud, "Suger and the Making of the French Nation," 53.

<sup>334</sup> Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, 258 and Norman F. Cantor, ed. *The Medieval Reader* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 31.



by Frankish kings created “royal sees” of land. These grants, along with attendant immunities and privileges, created bishoprics and monasteries that flourished. Many of the archbishops and bishops were simultaneously dukes and counts, great feudal lords with possessions that far exceeded those of the royal domain, yet still vassals to the king, swearing fealty to him. The king claimed the right to nominate bishops and monastic abbots, striving to exert his influence through his selection of churchmen supportive of the monarch.<sup>335</sup> The Capetian kings were relatively weak feudal overlords, and their demands for feudal rights and dues were not as threatening to the papacy as the Germans’ were. However, as the Capetians started to accrue more power, conflicts between the king and the Church increased. In 1106, Philip I disagreed with Pope Pascal II over the candidate to the bishopric of Rheims. Both invested their candidates, and neither recognized the other’s candidate. As a result, Philip’s son, Louis VI, was crowned king at Orleans when he ascended the throne in 1108, rather than at Rheims, angering the archbishop of Rheims who claimed this prerogative.<sup>336</sup> Louis VI struggled with the reform clergy for most of his reign, with the King trying to establish his precedence over the Church in matters that pertained to both the royal sees and the crown.<sup>337</sup>

In 1122, Suger himself encountered the rage of Louis VI over preempted royal privilege when the monks of St. Denis voted him abbot. While away on a diplomatic mission for the King, messengers from the abbey arrived to tell Suger of his election. They related that the King, angry at having his feudal prerogative to approve the choice of an abbot ignored, imprisoned the monks who had come to tell him of the election.

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<sup>335</sup> Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 67.

<sup>336</sup> Braud, “Suger and the Making of the French Nation,” 70.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 72 – 3.

Louis eventually relented. While reciting this story in his *Vita Ludovici*, Suger makes it clear that the “will of the king” in the matter of his election as abbot was extremely important and to go against the king's will would harm the Church.<sup>338</sup> The point was clear: the Capetian kings believed they had a say in the election of abbots and bishops, and their feudal rights were respected, to some extent, by members of the French clergy.

Suger acknowledged the Capetian’s claims, but as a churchman, he also believed in the supremacy of the Church. He attended a council of French churchmen in 1119 at Rheims, convened by the newly elected Pope Calixtus II (Guy of Bourgogne, Archbishop of Vienne, and uncle of Louis VI's wife, Adelaide), that excommunicated the Holy Roman Emperor Henry V over the issue of imperial investiture of church men.<sup>339</sup> At this council, Suger suggested that there be a distinction between investiture of the staff and ring, the symbols of spiritual power, and the scepter, the symbol of temporal power. The council accepted this with the codicil that the investiture of the spiritual power superseded that of the temporal, making the spiritual more important.<sup>340</sup> Suger further made his stance clear in the biography of Louis VI when he points out that at a meeting at St. Benedict-sur-Loire between the newly elected Pope Innocent II and Louis in 1130, the King bowed down to the Pope and promised to serve the Pope and the Church. The Pope traveled on to Chartres where he met with King Henry I of England, who did the same. Shortly after this, Innocent II met with the Holy Roman Emperor Lothar at Liège, where the Emperor acted as squire to the Pope, walking in procession holding a scepter to

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<sup>338</sup> Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, 122 – 124.

<sup>339</sup> Braud, “Suger and the Making of the French Nation,” 29.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

protect the Pope and leading the reins of the Pope's white horse.<sup>341</sup> These meetings publically acknowledged the monarchs' acceptance of the Pope's authority.

Yet, in spite of the official settling of the investiture controversy two decades before and the acknowledgement by his father of the Pope's supremacy, when the canons of Bourges chose Pierre de la Châtre over the his choice in 1141, Louis VII vetoed the election and swore publically that as long as he lived, Pierre would not be archbishop of Bourges.<sup>342</sup> The chapter in Bourges ignored the King and sent Pierre to Rome to be consecrated by the Pope. Louis held firm to his oath and blocked Pierre from entering Bourges upon his return to France. Pierre sought refuge with Theobald, out of reach of the King, and the Pope laid an interdict upon the King. The King's oath created a serious problem for the King and threw his domain into chaos. Bernard of Clairvaux noted in a letter written in early 1142 to three French bishops and the French Chancellor that

He (the king) took an oath unlawfully and he kept it unjustly. But the last he has done not willingly, but because he was ashamed to break it. As you well know, it is considered a disgrace by the French to break an oath however ill-advisedly it may have been taken, although no wise man can doubt that unlawful oaths ought not to be kept.<sup>343</sup>

Bernard tried to excuse the King's behavior by acknowledging that Louis was "a mere youth" and noted that he was attempting to help resolve the matter.

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<sup>341</sup> Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, 147.

<sup>342</sup> D.E. Luscombe, "Introduction: the formation of political thought in the west," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c. 350 – 1450*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 162. Oaths were the basis of association and contract. They could be used for everything from legal proceedings to taking a throne, for business, for political organizations, for protest movements; they were the primary way to voice obligations. Prior to the fourteenth century, legal written records were not legally binding; they were considered inferior to the living verbal expression in a courtroom or judicial proceeding, a continuation of the traditional methods of trial by oath, combat or ordeal. Bloch, *Medieval French Literature and Law*, 3.

<sup>343</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux to Bishops Alberic of Ostia, Stephen of Palestrina, Hincmar of Tusculum and Gerard the Chancellor, 1142, in Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, 360.

This conflict was aggravated by a personal dispute between Theobald and Louis. In the summer of 1141, Ralph, Count of Vermandois, cousin and seneschal to the King, started an affair with Petronilla, Queen Eleanor's sixteen-year-old sister. The two claimed that it was love and wanted to marry, in spite of the fact that the 55-year-old Ralph was already married to Theobald of Champagne's sister, Eleanor. To please his wife, who supported her sister, Louis agreed to help Ralph end his marriage and marry Petronilla. Ralph used the often used argument that his marriage was invalid because of consanguinity, and the Bishops of Tournai, Senlis, and Laon, to please the King, agreed to annul the marriage.<sup>344</sup> Early in 1142, Petronilla and Raoul were married, over the protests of Theobald and others.<sup>345</sup> In June 1142, at a church council at Lagny-sur-Champagne, the papal legate ordered Raoul to return to his wife and excommunicated or suspended the three bishops. Raoul refused to renounce Petronilla. The legate excommunicated him and Petronilla and placed their lands under interdict.<sup>346</sup>

This was the last straw for Louis. Already under interdict himself over the archbishopric of Bourges, the furious King invaded Champagne, burning towns and laying waste to the countryside, declaring he would leave only after the interdicts were lifted. In a series of letters to Pope Innocent, Bernard of Clairvaux complained of the King's behavior in supporting Ralph and Petronilla. "Shameless men have arisen who, despite the law of God, have not scrupled to separate what God has joined together," he wrote. "They have gone further and added one sin to another by uniting what should not

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<sup>344</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux to Pope Innocent II, 1142, in Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, 361.

<sup>345</sup> The marriage produced three children and ended in 1151. Ralph died 1152. Petronilla lived with her sister until her death in 1193.

<sup>346</sup> Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 39.

be united.” He mourned that the rites of the Church were violated “by those very persons whose business it ought to be to mend them.” Bernard claimed that it was an evil deed done in darkness that united Ralph and Petronilla and that Count Theobald did not deserve the attacks on his land as it was at the pope's command that Theobald gave the Archbishop asylum.<sup>347</sup>

Soon after, Louis' army attacked the village of Vitry-sur-Marne. All of France was shocked to learn that over a thousand villagers seeking refuge in the village church died when the building caught fire and the roof collapsed.<sup>348</sup> An outraged Bernard wrote to the King, chastising him for “associating with robbers and thieves in the slaughter of men, the burning of homesteads, the destruction of churches, and the scattering of the poor” and telling him “to give up your evil practices immediately.”<sup>349</sup>

In a scathing letter to Suger and Jocelin, Bishop of Soissons, both of whom served as advisors to Louis. Bernard asked, “what has the Church of God done to deserve” the evil deeds of the war, to have the King “lay waste the territory and possession of the Church, and to forbid the shepherds of Christ's sheep to care for their flocks?” Bernard harshly told the two men that if they had suggested to the King that he interfere in church matters, that it would be “strange and mischievous”, stating that

Certainly to advise such outrages is to contrive schism, to resist God, and to make a tool of the Church and reduce her once more to slavery. Any servant of God, any son of the Church, should certainly do what he can to oppose this and stand out like a wall in defense of the house of God. And you, how can you, if indeed you do desire the peace of the Church, if indeed you are the sons of peace, I do

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<sup>347</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux to Pope Innocent II, 1142, in Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, 362.

<sup>348</sup> Braud, “Suger and the Making of the French Nation,” 176.

<sup>349</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux to Louis VII, 1143, in Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, 365.

not say commit such evil things, but have any part in them by your advice. For whatever wrongs are committed, they are quite rightly attributed, not to the young king, but to his elderly advisors.<sup>350</sup>

This letter must have stung. In a subsequent letter to Jocelin, Bernard apologized for failing to seal the letter with wax “according to my custom”, allowing any person who came into contact with the letter to be able to read its contents.<sup>351</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux knew his importance in his world, and he knew that the contents of his unsealed letter would have spread, humiliating Suger and Jocelin. Bernard believed the advisors were not doing enough to control the King. His letters to the King expressed frustration that Louis had been “annoyed without cause” listening to the “fraud of wicked men and the idle chatter of silly people who do not know good from evil or evil from good”.<sup>352</sup> Bernard was concerned, as were others, about the King’s susceptibility to those closest to him. As an advisor to the King and humiliated by the sharp accusations of Bernard, Suger needed not only to help resolve the matter, but to somehow demonstrate to the world that the King was chastened and a servant of the church. To not do so threatened the stability of the kingdom and the status of St. Denis.

The churchmen worked to bring about the end of the brutal warfare. The abbot of Clairvaux knew that the King, who had witnessed the carnage at Vitry, was horrified and sickened by the massacre and was suffering from depression. In another letter to Jocelin, Bishop of Soissons, written spring of 1144, Bernard expressed concern that the King was still being misled and urged the bishop to help end this matter.

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<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 368.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid., 369.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 373.

We have worked hard, but it is questionable whether we have made any progress. We have sowed much, but gathered little. We confess that your presences and co-operation are needed. Our common friend, the Abbot of St. Denis, will tell you why we have not sought your help in our difficulties before now. We admonish you to cease dissembling, and to begin working for peace with the wisdom which God has given you. There ought to be no need to ask you to do this, since it is not only evident that your ministry would be greatly honored by it, but also that it would be disgraced by your failure to do so. We hope to see you at the celebration to be held at St. Denis.<sup>353</sup>

The last sentence referred to the upcoming consecration of the east end of the abbey church, at which churchmen and lords were expected to come, participate in Suger's elaborate celebration, be awed by the abbey's improvements, and, hopefully, witness the ending of hostilities between two of the most significant Frankish feudal powers. With the King, and by extension himself, in disgrace, Suger needed to direct a consecration that portrayed Louis as suitably chastened, a servant to the patron saint of the monarchy and to the Church.

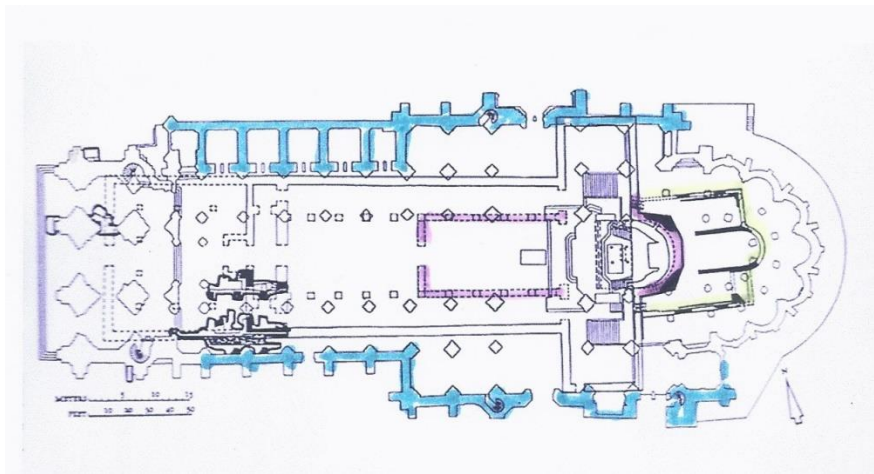
### **The New East End**

By spring 1144, the construction of the new east end neared completion.<sup>354</sup> Over the course of four years, Suger oversaw the construction of a new crypt enclosing Fulrad's eighth century basilica and Hilduin's extensions. The new choir and apse lay over the older buildings. In the crypt, a new ambulatory moved around Hilduin's old chapel with seven rounded chapels radiating out from the ambulatory. Two pairs of stairs at the transept descended down from the side aisles along-side the outer walls of Fulrad's

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid., 372.

<sup>354</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* IV in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 99. Suger had previously noted that construction on the towers of the west end had been halted while he worked on the east end. In addition, although he had not been able to rebuild the transept wings of the nave, he fully intended to do so. Suger, *De Administratione*, XXVIII in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 51.



**Figure 33** Layout of St. Denis Basilica.<sup>355</sup>

basilica and led directly into the ambulatory.<sup>356</sup> Suger kept the continuous walls of Hilduin's central chapel intact and used heavy columns to support the upper choir and to create separations between the radiating chapels. See Figures 34 and 35.



**Figure 34** Exterior of Fulrad's Chapel Inside Suger's Crypt Ambulatory.<sup>357</sup>

<sup>355</sup> Dagobert's building lays at the center, in pink, with Fulrad's apse at the east end (right side) of the building. To the east of Fulrad's chapel, in yellow, lays the three chapels added by Hilduin. Blue walls indicate thirteenth century additions. Foley, *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis*, figure 16.

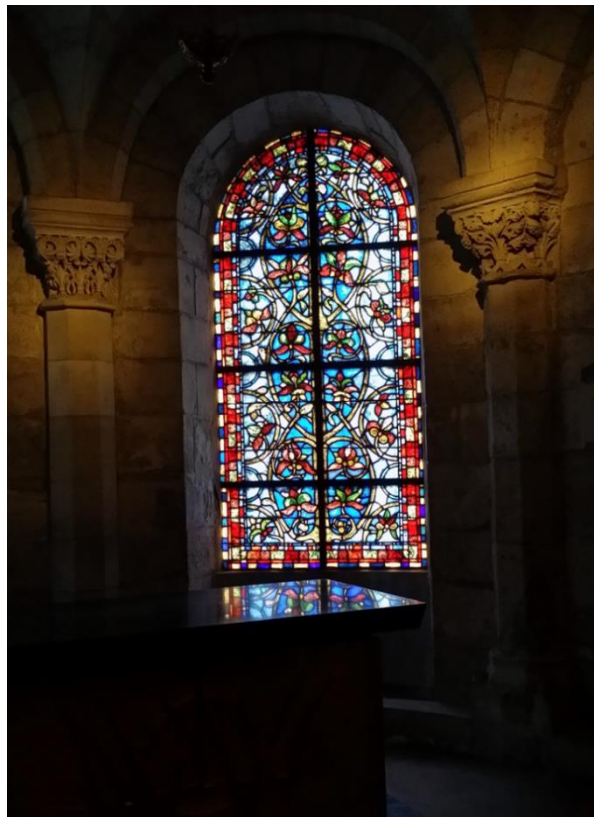
<sup>356</sup> See Figure 5. Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 92.

<sup>357</sup> St. Denis. Photo by Author, June 2015.





**Figure 35** Suger's Crypt Ambulatory.<sup>358</sup>



**Figure 36** Crypt Chapel Window.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 244

<sup>359</sup> St. Denis. Photo by Author, June 2015.

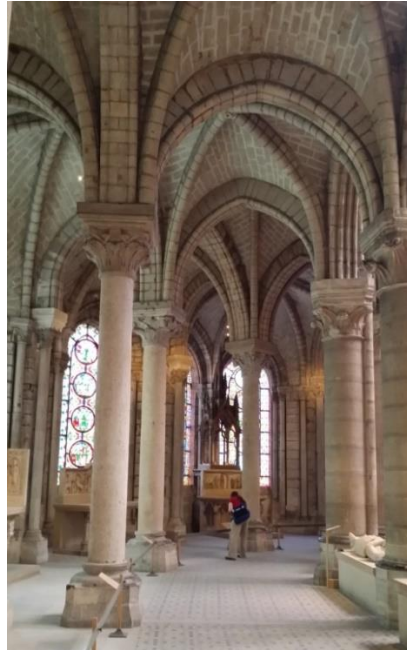
Tall rounded arch windows filled with stained glass flooded the chapels with light. See Figure 36. Unlike other churches of the period, the windows were placed low on the walls, increasing the light in the crypt. Above the crypt, the eastern end of the church built over Fulrad's church rose several feet above the level of the old nave. Stairs placed on the outer sides of the crypt stairs led up to the ambulatory, emphasizing the high level of the new choir floor. More radiating chapels separated by columns extended from the new ambulatory. The lower ledges of the pointed-arch chapel windows were placed about three feet above the floor, bringing more light into the apse. Another row of twelve columns, "representing the number of the Twelve Apostles", marked the inner edge of the ambulatory, circling the new apse and supporting the upper walls of the apse.<sup>360</sup> An arcade of slightly pointed double arched windows moved along the lower of the two upper levels of the apse walls. Above this arcade level, another level of wider and taller pointed-arch windows rose up to the new ribbed ceiling. Stained glass filled all the windows. The three levels created the effect of a colorful light-filled rounded wall.<sup>361</sup>

See Figures 37 and 38.

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<sup>360</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* V in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 105.

<sup>361</sup> The thirteenth century renovation of the east end and the nave replaced the upper level of windows with taller arched windows incorporating rosettes in the top of each arch.



**Figure 37** Apse Ambulatory.<sup>362</sup>

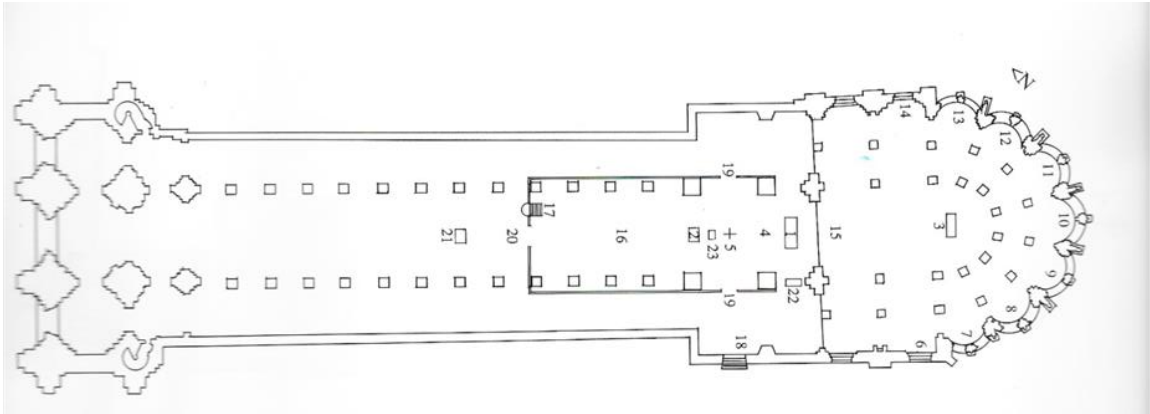


**Figure 38** Apse Upper Windows.<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> St. Denis. Photo by Author, June 2015.

<sup>363</sup> Ceiling and upper-most level of windows date to thirteenth century. St. Denis. Photo by Author, June 2015.



**Figure 39** Layout of the Twelfth Century Basilica after 1144.<sup>364</sup>

Key to numbers on diagram:

- (2) Altare Sancte Trinitatis
- (3) Altar containing relics of Saint Denis and his companions;
- (4) Main altar;
- (5) Large cross of Charles the Bald;
- (6 – 14) Ambulatory chapels;
- (15) Large cross commissioned by Suger;
- (16) Choir;
- (17) Ivory pulpit on top of choir screen;
- (18) Ivory door to cloister;
- (19) Red doors into the choir;
- (20) Entrance to choir;
- (21) Chapel dedicated to St. Hippolytus;
- (22) Tomb of Dagobert;
- (23) Tomb of Charles the Bald.

At the front of the apse, a large golden cross commissioned by Suger stood directly over the location of Saint Denis’s original burial spot.<sup>365</sup> He noted that gems decorating the cross came from two Cistercian abbeys and the noted abbey of Fontrevault, “who had obtained them as alms” from Count Theobald, who had received them “through the hands of his brother, Stephen, king of England, from the treasures of his uncle, the late King Henry”. Suger’s mention of donations with royal origins from

<sup>364</sup> Foley, *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis*, figure 1.

<sup>365</sup> Suger, *De Administratione* XXXII in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 59.

notable ascetic orders subtly tied the Cistercians, and by extension Bernard of Clairvaux, into support of his “costly but wonderful” building project and deflected any criticism. A retable given by Pepin to the church sat on top of the altar. To the back of the altar stood a small tabernacle in the form of a building with central nave and lower aisles, containing the saints’ chasses under the roof. See Figure 40. The tabernacle sat atop the coffins



**Figure 40** Small Tabernacle Housing Items Used in the Mass.<sup>366</sup>



**Figure 41** East Side of Altar of St. Denis and His Companions.<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> German tabernacle c. 1180, gilded bronze and copper on wood, with enamel and ivory. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo by Author, June 2015.

<sup>367</sup> Gold baldacchino on top of altar dates from nineteenth century, replacing earlier tabernacle. St. Denis. Photo by Author, June 2015.

holding what was believed to be the relics of St. Denis, St. Rusticus, and St. Eleutherius. These coffins extended in part to under the altar. See Figure 41. Suger commented on the exquisite “chased relief work” on the back panel of the altar, echoing his earlier comment on the doors: “The workmanship surpassed the material.” Near the altar sat a large tub called the “Cuve de porphyre”, a gift to the church from Dagobert.<sup>368</sup> Gates separated the altar, tabernacle, and tub from the ambulatory, protecting it while allowing pilgrims to view the sacred objects.<sup>369</sup> Dedicated to Saint Denis and the two companions, the altar also appeared to serve as a physical offering of penance on behalf of the King and Suger. A panel on the side of the altar recorded:

Abbot Suger has set up these altar panels  
 In addition to that which King Charles has given before,  
 Make worthy the unworthy through thy indulgence, O Virgin Mary  
 May the fountain of mercy cleanse the sins both of the king and the abbot.<sup>370</sup>

Anyone seeing these lines could interpret this as a reference to the recent events in Champagne, which Bernard blamed on Suger as well as the King. Suger seems to be making a show of public penance to counter Bernard’s accusations. In an earlier passage in *De Administratione*, while discussing the need to enlarge the church building “under the inspiration of Divine Will”, Suger referred to a “bloody man”:

In our chapter as well as in church, I implored Divine Mercy, that he who is the one, the beginning and the ending, the alpha and omega, . . . might not repel from

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<sup>368</sup> Conway, “The Treasures of Saint Denis,” 10. Conway believes that this tub lay behind the tabernacle. By the latter medieval period, it may have been positioned here. However, Suger notes that during the consecration of 1144, the bishops and archbishops participating in the consecration gathered around a “vat” placed between the altar of Saint Denis and the main altar. Suger, *De Consecratione* VI in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 115. Legend reported that Dagobert brought the tub from Poitiers, where it had been used as a baptismal font. Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 45.

<sup>369</sup> Suger, *De Administratione* XXXI in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 55 – 57.

<sup>370</sup> Suger, *De Administratione* XXXIII in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 59 – 63.

the building of the temple a bloody man who desired this very thing, with his whole heart, more than to obtain the treasures of Constantinople.<sup>371</sup>

Panofsky interprets this as a reference to Suger's own past when he had to literally hold a sword to fight off greedy lords, much as the Biblical King David had.<sup>372</sup> However, it is difficult to view Suger as a bloody man. In his biography of Louis VI, he implied that he was involved in fighting to protect the priory of Toury-en Beauce against Hugh of Puiset, but he never actually stated that he killed anyone. Instead, he felt any action against a persecutor of the church was necessary and justified. He believed God helped the King's men win against Hugh, justifying a churchman's involvement in battle.<sup>373</sup> This particular reference to a bloody man quite possibly referred to Louis VII, who had the blood of over a thousand dead at Vitry on his hands. Suger wrote *De Consecratione* sometime after 1146/47 when Louis VII was preparing to leave on Crusade to the holy land and indeed may have already arrived in Constantinople. Embarking on a Crusade, especially one promoted by Bernard of Clairvaux, would have expiated the sins of a bloody man.

In addition, Charles the Bald was the king mentioned on the panels rather than Louis VII. Suger used the third person in both the bloody man passage and on the altar panels, serving as a rhetorical tool to separate himself from Bernard's criticisms. Considering the high esteem with which the Carolingian king was held, Suger seems to have cleverly manipulated the inscription to satisfy Bernard while leaving a different message for posterity. Suger portrayed himself as a confident man in his books, whom

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<sup>371</sup> Suger, *De Administratione* XXV in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 45.

<sup>372</sup> Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 145.

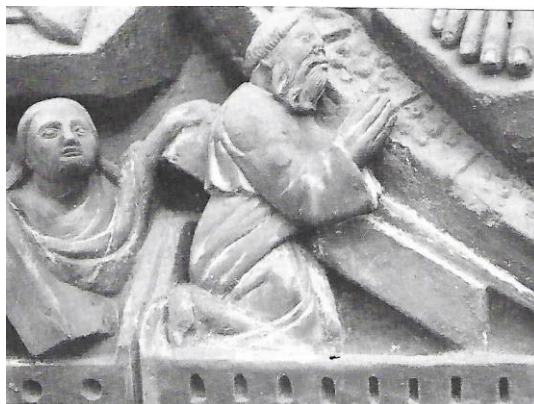
<sup>373</sup> Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, 85.

the church “set (me)...among the princes of the church and the realm”, demonstrating a strong self confidence in his role as abbot and royal advisor.<sup>374</sup>

Another panel on the front of the altar certainly does not indicate that Suger truly believed he was beyond redemption:

Great Denis, open the doors of Paradise  
 And protect Suger through thy pious guardianship.  
 Mayest thou, who has built a new dwelling for thyself through us,  
 Cause us to be received in the dwelling of Heaven  
 And to be sated at the heavenly table instead of at the present one  
 That which is signified pleases more than that which signifies.<sup>375</sup>

A bloody man, eaten up with guilt could not hope to sit at the heavenly table, yet this passage, along with his depiction on the central portal tympanum, kneeling within Christ’s mandorla with the resurrected dead, indicate that rather than being a bloody and sinful man, indicated Suger believed that he was destined to be included in the panoply of saints who had served as patrons and builders of the church. See Figure 42.



**Figure 42** Detail Showing Suger Kneeling at Christ’s Foot within the Mandorla.<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Suger, *De Administratione* XXVIII in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 5.

<sup>375</sup> Suger, *De Administratione* XXXI in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 55.

<sup>376</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 119.



Other beautiful objects commissioned by Suger filled the new eastern extension and the nave. Suger noted that the abbey received a large number of gold and donated gems from “pontiffs”, the King, and Count Theobald with which to decorate the high altar.<sup>377</sup> A large golden retable, called “l'Escrin de Charlemagne” and attributed to Charles the Bald, surmounted the altar previously opened in 1141. Elaborately decorated candlesticks from Louis VI and a six-and-a-half-foot-tall cloisonné and jeweled cross attributed to Dagobert’s advisor, St. Eloi, sat on the altar.<sup>378</sup> Six large candles stood around the altar.<sup>379</sup> See Figure 43.



**Figure 43 Tall Candlesticks.**<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* V in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 105. He also stated that “the Holy Martyrs themselves handed” the abbey these donations, justifying his acceptance of these gifts and numerous offers to sell “gems and pearls...from nearly all parts of the world”. In *De Administratione* XXXI, Suger states that these gems came from “kings, princes, and many outstanding men” as well as from “archbishops and bishops”. Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 55.

<sup>378</sup> Crosby, *Royal Abbey*, 37.

<sup>379</sup> These and other such large candles were placed on tall metal stands that were taller than a man.

<sup>380</sup> St. Denis. Photo by Author, June 2015.

The altar used for the first Mass of the day, called the “altare sancte Trinitatis” by Suger, lay in the western part of the monk’s choir before (to the east) the tomb of Charles the Bald, with seven large candlesticks around it. Immediately to the west of the tomb stood a large cross donated by Charles the Bald, with the necklace that once belonged to Queen Nanthilda, the wife of King Dagobert, attached. A renovated gilded eagle lectern, used for holding antiphonal books, stood in the middle of the choir, which now consisted of new wood stalls, replacing the older ones “which had been detrimental to health for a long time on account of the coldness of the marble and copper”.<sup>381</sup> A new rood screen enclosing the monk’s choir featured a renovated ivory pulpit on its top. This old pulpit for reading scriptures was decorated with copper panels depicting animals.

More objects of gold and silver and decorated with gems filled the church. Each chapel of the ambulatory contained an altar. Openings in the two of the piers in the upper ambulatory indicate the presence of cabinets to hold objects used in the Mass.<sup>382</sup> A stone basin extended from a third pier. See Figures 44 and 45. Smaller crosses and candles stood on altars, which were laid with embroidered altar cloths. During the Mass, objects used to celebrate the Eucharist were brought out along with more candles on elaborate stands, the gems and precious metals shining in the light from the large windows.

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<sup>381</sup> Suger, *De Administratione* XXXIV in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 73.

<sup>382</sup> Suger recognized the need for securing precious objects; it seems safe to believe that these cabinets were locked.



**Figure 44** Ambulatory Chapel with Cabinet Opening in Pier.<sup>383</sup>



**Figure 45** Ambulatory Chapel with Basin Attached to Pier.<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> St. Denis. Photo by Author, June 2015.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

The restored throne of Dagobert must have been placed in a prominent place, although sources do not indicate where it stood. Also prominently displayed would have been the red silk flag of the County of the Vexin, the so-called Oriflamme.<sup>385</sup> The interior of the church, both the new east end and the painted and gilded older nave, glittered in the colorful light from the windows, dazzling the eyes of churchmen and laymen alike with the conspicuous display of ecclesiastical and monarchical objects that demonstrated the wealth and power of the abbey of St. Denis.

### **The Consecration of the East End**

Suger planned his consecration ceremony, held on June 11, 1144 after the completion of the east end addition, to not only consecrate the beautiful new building in the proper ecclesiastical manner, but to make a glorious statement about the authority of the church, the power of his patron saint, and the honor due the saint's abbey. He also needed to use the event to resolve the King's situation by ending the war with Theobald and placating the count of Champagne, presenting the King as a humble servant to the church, and in turn, to demonstrate his control over the King both as the king's advisor and as the representative of the Capetian's patron saint. The 1140 consecration of the west front, along with the blessing of the foundation for the east end, strongly emphasized the history of St. Denis and the importance of past secular and Biblical kings, portraying the Capetian monarch as one in a long line of kings sanctified by the church that in turn supported both the building itself and the sanctity of the Church. As previously mentioned, the west end represented the earthly realm of men, dominated by

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<sup>385</sup> See notes 28 and 196 and Figure 10. The Felibien history indicates that the Oriflamme was fastened to an eastern column in the apse with the scepter of Saint Denis fastened to a neighboring column. Suger does not mention the location of the Oriflamme during the ceremony, but like the throne of Dagobert, it most likely would have been displayed prominently. Conway, "The Treasures of Saint Denis," 10.

kings and prophets.<sup>386</sup> The 1144 ceremony, however, drew attention to the celestial realm of God, highlighting the authority of the Church and the glory of the patron saint of St. Denis abbey. The temporal realm was presented as subject to the judgment and authority of the celestial, with Louis VII in a secondary role as a humble servant who literally protected the church rather than an arrogant feudal lord who had wrought destruction and chaos. The consecration served to make a powerful message to those gathered regarding the authority of the Church over the secular monarchs, particularly in regards to the issues of investiture, which still created conflict between the Church and lords, and offered an opportunity to solve the political crisis centered on the King's actions.

Suger's description of the June 1144 consecration of the new choir and apse is significantly more descriptive than his account of the June 1140 consecration of the west front. In the latter, he mentioned few names. The 1144 consecration account liberally names attendees and participants, starting with the King himself, Queen Eleanor, and the King's mother, Adelaide. He noted that he had set the date "with the gracious consent" of the King, who "wished to see the Holy Martyrs, his protectors".<sup>387</sup> Like the 1140 consecration, this one also was held a few days before the beginning of the Lendit fair. The Abbot also invited many important churchmen and nobles "from almost all the districts of Gaul". According to a letter sent out by the monks of St. Denis after his death, Suger's

special purpose and desire was constantly to raise the noble monastery of Saint-Denis to every glory and honor, to arrange things in a religious manner, and to

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<sup>386</sup> See section "The Renovated West Façade".

<sup>387</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* IV in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 113.

make the church rich in revenues, better endowed with buildings, [and] adorned with ornaments.<sup>388</sup>

This consecration was the perfect opportunity to demonstrate the “glory and honor” of St. Denis to all of Gaul and beyond. Archbishops and bishops mixed with the various dukes and lords, plus “ordinary troops of knights and soldiers” of all France, of which there was “no count”.<sup>389</sup> *Vita Tertia, a life of Bernard of Clairvaux* by Galfredas Claras Vallensis marks the presence of Bernard of Clairvaux and Theobald of Champagne, and quite possibly the contested Bishop of Bourges, Pierre de la Châtre.<sup>390</sup> Suger listed the archbishops of Rheims, Rouen, Sens, Bordeaux and Canterbury as attending this event, as well as bishops from around France. Suger noted that

Since all of these had come to so noble a ceremony and so great a spectacle in state, in their capacity of higher dignitaries of their church, their outward apparel and attire indicated the inward intention of their mind and body. We, however, were not so much [intent upon] external matters.<sup>391</sup>

Suger obviously relished this great spectacle, though he made efforts to present this delight in appropriately spiritual and humble terms.

Although all of Suger’s previously celebrated consecration ceremonies indicate Suger’s attention to detail in planning the messages he wished to present to his audiences, the account of the 1144 consecration indicates his clever melding of historical tradition

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<sup>388</sup> Marche, *Ouevres Complètes de Suger*, 405.

<sup>389</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* VI in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 113. Although he made no mention of the lower classes, feasts and other religious celebrations drew great crowds. When writing his *De Consecratione*, Suger noted that pilgrims to the church on feast days had been thick, with “countless thousands of people” leading to women fainting or crying out “horribly as in labor”, people being trampled underfoot, or “gasping with their last breath, panted in the cloisters of the brethren to the despair of everyone.” Suger, *De Consecratione* II in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 89. Such crushes happened. In 1018 at St. Martial in Limoges, fifty people died in a crush on a feast day. Webb, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West*, 84.

<sup>390</sup> Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 44. Weir cites *Patrologiae Latinae — Cursus Completus a Tertullian ad Innocentium III*, edited by J. P. Migne, (Paris, 1844 – 64).

<sup>391</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* VI in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 113.

and what had become the standard liturgy, carefully stage-managed to emphasize the king's humility before the Church. Similar to the earlier consecration, the actual liturgy used, as described in *De Consecratione* VI and VII, appears consistent for the most part with the liturgy used in the previous consecration. The liturgy was performed, according to Suger, "in the proper manner", indicating that he utilized the same liturgy of the Desiderian consecration ceremony that had become the standard for the time, with few significant changes.<sup>392</sup> Suger, however, notes significant portions of the ceremonies that draw attention to the relics, in particular the relics of Saint Denis and his companions, and to the King's participation in the ceremony. The evening before, most of the relics were taken out of their chapels and placed in "draped tents" in front of the choir in the nave. Suger and his monks made preparations for the processions within and outside the church building. Suger asked Louis to have his nobles keep the crowd away from the procession, which the King agreed to do personally along with his "peers and nobles". The offices of the day continued, though Suger noted that "we [spent] the whole proceeding night reading the office of Matins". Matins was usually held at sunrise, but for such a great occasion, the office of Matins seems to have been held as a vigil.

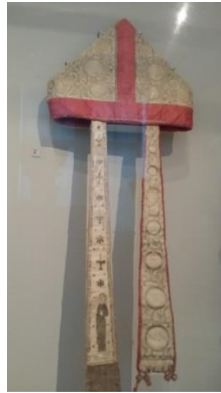
Early Sunday morning, the church men "arranged themselves in episcopal manner" in the upper choir "near the vat" of water placed between the main altar and altar of the martyrs.<sup>393</sup> Arrayed in white vestments with "pontifical mitres and precious

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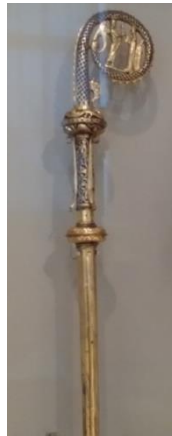
<sup>392</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* VII in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 115.

<sup>393</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* VI in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 113. Suger indicates that the churchmen arranged themselves according to their rank. The highest rank officiant often was at the end of a procession, with the least ranks leading the procession with candles, thurifers, and gospel books, followed by priests carrying the various containers holding the Eucharist host and wine. Ashley and Sheingorn, "Sainte Foy on the Loose, Or, the Possibilities of Procession," 42 – 47. The higher ranked bishops carried their croziers while archbishops were preceded by priests holding their crossed staff. Jane Hayward, "Sacred Vestments

orphreys embellished by circular ornaments” and holding croziers, the archbishops and bishops piously circled the vat, exorcising the water with prayers and hymns.<sup>394</sup> See *Appendix H: A Note on Liturgical Clothing*. See Figures 46 and 47. Suger stressed the authority of these men and the significance of the event by indicating that these important churchmen wore their most elaborate ecclesiastical garb on this occasion.



**Figure 46** Twelfth century bishop's mitre.<sup>395</sup>



**Figure 47** Early thirteenth century crozier.<sup>396</sup>

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as They Developed in the Middle Ages,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol 29, No 7 March 1971, 305.

<sup>394</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* IV in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 115.

<sup>395</sup> This mitre is believed to have been worn by Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo by Author, June 2015.

<sup>396</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo by Author, June 2015.



The blessing of the façade, as part of the complete liturgy of a consecration, provided a public opportunity for Suger to present a chastened and humbled king to his subjects. Louis VII, seen by all in the humble robe of a penitent, had to demonstrate repentance both for the sake of his own soul and for the sake of the kingdom.<sup>397</sup> The complete liturgy of the consecration used in 1144 incorporated the elements of blessing of the portals, complete with the procession around the church, the knocking on doors, and the sermon eliciting promises from the patrons and crowd. For several years workmen and strangers moved through the building: it needed to be fully sanctified before it could serve as the house of God. The King's sacred promise made in front of the church during the sermon was a public avowal that could override his hasty and disastrous vows regarding the archbishopric of Bourges and the resultant war. The engraving on the altar of Saint Denis publically acknowledged the King's sin, but he needed to stand in front of his people and make a public declaration of loyalty to the church, his promise bearing the weight of a sacred vow made in sight of significant relics.

In addition to extracting public promises from the King to protect and support the church building, Suger arranged to have the King physically demonstrate his role as a protector of the Church. Suger pointed out that the King himself, with his "officials", helped hold back the "tumultuous" crowd and "protected...with canes and sticks" those

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<sup>397</sup> Author's note in Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, note 359. An interdict prevented the celebration of nearly all the rites of the church to the land under the control of the person being punished. In Louis VII's situation, he had been placed under interdict after the situation over the archbishop of Bruges, when the Pope laid interdict "upon every place the king set foot". When the situation escalated the pope excommunicated the King. Excommunication was dangerous: it could be used to sever all oaths of loyalty to the king. Suger knew that in 1119, Pope Calixtus II excommunicated the Holy Roman Emperor Henry V over investiture issues, releasing Henry's subjects from any allegiance to the king and opening the door for French knights to invade and attack German lands. Braud, "Suger and the Making of the French Nation," 29.

in the procession consecrating the church building.<sup>398</sup> His earlier use of the term “peers and nobles” suggests that these officials were joined by significant feudal lords from throughout Gaul, though Suger does not state who they were.

More importantly, in addition to protecting the procession, Suger arranged to have the king participate in the rite of translation for the patron saint and the two companions, using it as an opportunity to impress upon the king and observers the supreme authority of the Church over the authority of the secular hierarchy. Once the rites consecrating the interior of the church finished, complete with a celebration of the Mass, the rites for translation of the relics proceeded. Unlike the relics placed in the tents the night before, the relics of the patron saints still resided in the old tomb under Suger’s new choir. The relics in the tents were significant, but the extreme importance of those of Denis and his companions was highlighted by an additional ceremony of translation focusing on the relics of Denis. Suger stated that a procession of “the pontiffs”, the king, and others moved down to the old chapel in the crypt. In the narrow room the chanting men prostrated themselves before inspecting the relics. Demonstrating their spiritual authority over the king as bishops and archbishops, they invited the “Christian king” to help carry the relics, instructing him to pray to Denis who would be the intercessor to Christ on his behalf.<sup>399</sup> It is possible that Louis VII prayed in front of the assembled churchmen at this point. As a sign of the saint’s grace, the archbishops placed the chasse containing Saint Denis’ relics into the young king’s arms and allowed him to lead the procession from the

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<sup>398</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* VI in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 115.

<sup>399</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* VII in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 117

crypt up to the choir. The lowest rank of churchmen usually led a procession.<sup>400</sup> Thus, the king was placed metaphorically lower in rank and status than the least acolyte of the church, yet still presented as the humble supporter of the Saint. The significance could not be missed: the king was the servant of the Church, subject to her authority.

A second procession of churchmen carrying the relics of the lesser saints from the tents met the procession led by the King at the “ivory door”.<sup>401</sup> Together the procession moved through the cloisters with “candlesticks, crosses and other festive ornaments” singing “many odes and hymns”. On special occasions such as this consecration, burning candles lighted the four corners of the cloister.<sup>402</sup> Returning back into the church, the priests placed the relics on their respective altars. After ceremonially sealing and consecrating all the altars, the priests celebrated Mass simultaneously at all the altars.

Suger used the consecration ceremony to demonstrate to Louis VII and all others that the French monarch served the abbey and protected its patron saint, who in turn protected the king and France. Suger did not refer to the king’s participation lightly. On several different occasions, he portrayed the king as literally helping to build the church and physically protecting the same church. Suger called Louis a humble and devout Christian king but also referred to the king’s sins. Because of these sins, the king presented himself at the consecration as a penitent seeking the intercession of the patron saint. In turn, the actions of the churchmen and Suger, directing the king and allowing him to participate in the translation ceremony, allowed him to publicly demonstrate his

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<sup>400</sup> See footnote 393 regarding order of participants in a religious procession.

<sup>401</sup> Foley, *The First Ordinary of the Royal Abbey of St.-Denis*, 221. This particular door was situated in the south wall of the church near the new ambulatory and led into the cloister.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

humility before the greater authority of the church and its representatives, including the abbot of St. Denis. Louis's humble appearance and actions in protecting the procession demonstrated his role as defender of the Church. Carrying the relics of Saint Denis portrayed him as a servant of the Saint and of the Church. The king publicly swore allegiance to the Church during the sermon at the front doors. By extension, feudal vassals of the monarch ultimately owed allegiance to the monarch and then beyond that, St. Denis and the church.

The 1144 consecration provided the opportunity for Suger to present the patron saint of the abbey and of the Capetians as powerful, providing for and protecting his church. His relics were too important to remove without the greatest ceremony. His role as patron to the Capetian kings was demonstrated when Louis VII piously accepted the *chasse* holding the saint's relics and carried them reverently in procession. While the king could fail as a man, Denis could intercede and assist. The ceremony of translation placed the king below the least churchman and clearly directed the king to serve the saint and the Church.

In addition, Suger presented the saint's home, the abbey church of St. Denis, as more important than other significant churches. In his account of the 1144 consecration, Suger almost disingenuously recounts how others told him that the ornaments in his new building surpassed those of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. He states, "They acknowledged that these here were the more important ones", and muses that "those marvels [in the Hagia Sophia] of which we had heard before, might have been put away" to protect them from the Franks and suggesting that the Greeks hid them out of fear of

“conditions unsafe on account of disorders.”<sup>403</sup> Suger had no need to worry about such disorders. He had built a fortress-like façade to protect the relics and royal regalia stored at St. Denis.

St. Denis represented the power of the monarchy, portrayed in the statue columns and numerous royal donations. It also represented the power of the Church, a glorious light-filled sanctuary dedicated to Christ and his saints who could guide, and intercede in behalf of, humans. The consecration ceremonies of June 11, 1144 emphasized the authority of the Church over secular authority. While honoring the memory of past monarchs, it presented the current king, Louis VII as humble and obedient to the Church. And as the humble servant of Saint Denis and the Church, the king carried out Suger’s third purpose in his elaborate consecration ceremonies: he submitted to the Church’s guidance in ending the war between the King of the French and the Count of Champagne.



**Figure 48 Twelfth Century Reliquary.<sup>404</sup>**

<sup>403</sup> Suger, *De Administratione* XXXIII in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 65.

<sup>404</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photo by Author, June 2015.

### The End of War

The emotional impact of the consecration on the king, who had been “as devout as humble” and who had carried the relics of Saint Denis “as devoutly as nobly”, paved the way for the church to negotiate a political settlement between the king and Theobald of Champagne immediately after the ceremonies that day. Although spiritually humbled before the saint and the church that morning, Louis was still the king with his pride as monarch upheld.<sup>405</sup> Over the past months, churchmen had struggled to bring about peace through diplomacy. Suger provided the environment for the final settlement with his uplifting consecration ceremony. With the events of the ceremony fresh in his mind, Louis would have been more than willing to concede to the stipulations presented by Bernard, who seems to have presided over the negotiations after the consecration and who knew how to use the power of God to get his way, as demonstrated by a letter to the king in 1138:

Though all the world were to combine in making me attempt something against your royal Majesty, yet I would fear God and not dare to oppose the king whom he had ordained. I know where it is written, ‘He that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.’ But I shall speak the truth to you because I also know how wrong it is for any Christian to lie.<sup>406</sup>

Bernard recognized that he could influence the king. Bernard deplored any violence that threatened the stability of the church and clearly wanted to end the war between Louis

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<sup>405</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione* VII in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 117.

<sup>406</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux to Louis VII, 1138 in Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, 257. James notes that in 1138, Bernard convinced the king to support Bernard’s choice for the bishopric of Langres, even after Louis had already invested another candidate. Bernard must have been extremely frustrated when the same young and supposedly compliant king dug his heels in over the archbishopric of Bourges several years later.

and Theobald.<sup>407</sup> The Abbot of Clairvaux's strong personal relationships with both Louis VII and Theobald made him the ideal person to preside over the negotiations. Suger wrote nothing regarding this settlement, but the *Vita Tertia* recorded that Bernard and Louis spoke after the consecration in friendship. Bernard also met with Eleanor, promising her that she would have a child within a year if she behaved herself and stopped interfering in the King's business. Later that day, a treaty of peace was concluded between Theobald and Louis. The King returned lands seized during his war in Champagne to Theobald and confirmed Pierre as Archbishop of Bourges, thus ending most of the problems between Theobald and Louis.<sup>408</sup> Papal courts still dealt with the question of Petronilla and Raoul, but for the most part, with the king agreeing to stop helping the lovers, the war was over.<sup>409</sup>

### **And After the Ceremony, a Feast**

Although Suger made no mention of the events following the consecration, he mentioned preparations for a great feast afterwards. Suger knew how to host a lavish feast. In 1130, the newly elected Pope Innocent II celebrated Easter at St. Denis. Suger recorded the Pope's visit in the *Vita Ludovici*, recording that after celebration of the Mass the papal party enjoyed a banquet in the cloister, where tables were set up and carpets were spread out. "Reclining as if in bed," the papal party and guests ate lamb and the

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<sup>407</sup> Theobald seems to have been a wily lord, knowledgeable in the political games of the era. A letter from Bernard of Clairvaux to Stephen, the Cardinal Bishop of Palestrina mentions that Theobald had been attempting to undermine the Louis' authority through matrimonial alliances with Louis' vassals. Bernard acknowledged the king was irritated by this, but also indicated that this was simply politics as usual. Bernard of Clairvaux to Stephen, the Cardinal Bishop of Palestrina, 1143, in Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, 370. In general, however, Theobald had righteousness and Bernard on his side, and seemed willing to negotiate with the king in an effort to end Louis's destructive actions in Theobald's lands.

<sup>408</sup> Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 44.

<sup>409</sup> Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 67.

“other dishes of a noble table in the customary way”. Suger certainly repeated such a fabulous repast at his consecration. In the noble way, linen cloths draped to the ground over boards set on trestles. Diners shared a trencher with their neighbor. Etiquette demanded clean hands. Hands could be wiped on the tablecloth or into the basins of water offered at regular intervals during the meal. All the dishes of a course were placed on the tables, with the best dishes placed before those of highest rank. Diners chose from those dishes nearest them: there was no passing of food up and down the table. Each participant brought his own knife and spoon, with carving knives provided by the host. Drinking horns and a variety of cups of various materials — silver, wood, pewter or clay — held wine.<sup>410</sup> St. Denis produced wine, which was a significant source of income for the abbey, and Suger probably served the abbey’s best wines to the guests.<sup>411</sup> At luxurious meals, spiced or mulled wine would be served in small quantities at the beginning and the end of a meal. Hippocras, mulled wine with honey, pepper and cinnamon was a favorite on feast days at such monasteries as Cluny.<sup>412</sup> The better wines were poured at the beginning of meals, with the wine increasingly watered down as the meal progressed.

In *De Consecratione V*, Suger related how he had miraculously obtained a “great flock of rams” to use for the feast following the consecration of 1144. He bemoaned that

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<sup>410</sup> Melitta Weiss Adamson, *Food in Medieval Times* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 159 – 161.

<sup>411</sup> *Ordinatio* in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 127. A mosaic of the months of the year in the chapel of Saint Firmin depicts a winemaker in the October medallion. “Saint –Denis in images,” *Saint-Denis, une ville au Moyen Âge*, <http://www.saint-denis.culture.fr/en/stdimages.htm?partie=8+sequ=1>.

<sup>412</sup> Antoni Riera-Melis, “Society, Food, and Feudalism” in *Food: A Cultural History from Antiquity to the Present*, eds. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 261.



he had reluctantly ordered 1,000 shillings for the purchase of rams.<sup>413</sup> Fresh mutton, preferably from a castrated male sheep three to five years of age, a ram, was the most expensive meat of the day. Seasoned with garlic, it was extremely popular.<sup>414</sup> Mutton was not a normal ingredient for Benedictine meals, which generally consisted of soups, bread, greens, fish and eggs.<sup>415</sup> In addition to mutton, upper class cookery used chicken, pork, eggs, almonds, and such spices as pepper, cinnamon, ginger and saffron.<sup>416</sup> While the upper classes liked their meat roasted, they often boiled tough cuts of meat in water with spices and aromatic herbs.<sup>417</sup> Although a sign of conspicuous wealth, spices were associated with health, controlling the body *humours* (blood, phlegm, choler, black bile) affecting health and personality, thus offering Suger a justification for using them for his feast in the face of possible ascetic disapproval.<sup>418</sup> The medieval menu usually had two main courses followed by a dessert course; each main course would have several meat or fish dishes plus two or more sweet dishes, such as seen in Chrétien de Troyes' "Percival", in which Percival dined on sliced meat served on bread trenchers, drank clear wine and grape juice, and finished his meal with "dates, figs and nutmegs, cloves and pomegranates".<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>413</sup> Suger, *De Consecratione V* in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, 111.

<sup>414</sup> Adamson, *Food in Medieval Times*, 30 – 31.

<sup>415</sup> Riera-Melis, "Society, Food, and Feudalism," 261.

<sup>416</sup> Adamson, *Food in Medieval Times*, 83.

<sup>417</sup> Riera-Melis, "Society, Food, and Feudalism," 261.

<sup>418</sup> Madeleine Pelner Cosman, *Fabulous Feasts: Medieval Cookery and Ceremony* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1976), 45.

<sup>419</sup> Chrétien de Troyes. *Arthurian Romances*, trans. D. D. R. Owen (London: J. M. Dent, Orion Publishing Group, 1993), 418.

Suger's reputation as a diplomat probably extended to the intricacies of proper seating at a banquet. Suger gives virtually no details of his feast, but in light of the ceremonies that day, the abbot may have placed the presiding archbishops at the high table, seating the king to the outside of the archbishops, in a location that indicated his rank as monarch, yet still below the presiding churchmen.<sup>420</sup> With the possible exception of the queen and her mother-in-law, Adelaide, women did not attend the feast. The highest ranking churchmen and lords would have crowded into the cloister, holding quiet conversations with their neighbors. The excitement of the consecration probably had left many of them tired and ready to relax. Most probably intended to stay for several days, to visit and negotiate, to examine the features of Suger's marvelous building more carefully, and to participate in the opening of the Lendit fair in three days before heading to their respective churches, monasteries, and castles to plan grand imitations of what they had seen and experienced this day. The 1140 consecration celebrated the temporal realm of the kingdom, drawing attention to the history of St. Denis abbey and the monarchy, with statue columns of kings and queens standing with Biblical patriarchs and emphasizing the power of the monarchy. The 1144 consecration not only presented a monarch humble before the authority of the church, clarifying the relationship between the monarch and the Church, but also successfully presented the abbey and its beautiful new church building as the home of the monarch's patron saint, literally a celestial space that stood as a powerful entity among the churches of France and that provided an environment in which peace could be restored and the monarchy prosper.

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<sup>420</sup> And perhaps with a secret smile, placed Bernard of Clairvaux, who had assisted in the political matters that day but did not officiate in the consecration, much lower.



**Figure 49** Altar of Saint Denis.<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> St. Denis. Photo by Author, June 2015.

## CONCLUSION

Suger made it very clear throughout his books and through his administrative efforts that protection of the church's interests, in particular St. Denis and its properties, was of primary importance. A good king protected the church. A good king supported the church. A good French king recognized Saint Denis as the patron saint of the monarchy and did what he could to uphold the saint. Suger used the consecrations to visibly demonstrate to the king of France that his role was to help build up and protect the abbey of St. Denis, eliciting responses and promises from the king at various points of the ceremonies that were witnessed by churchmen and lords alike. At the same time, by including the king in the consecrations, he demonstrated the king's importance as secular leader to the assembled lords of France, a leader chosen by God and guided (when he chose to listen) by God's representatives. Louis VII remained a relatively weak king throughout his tenure as monarch, losing Aquitaine when his marriage to Eleanor was annulled in 1152. However, after 1144 his relationship with lords such as Theobald improved, thanks in large part to Suger's careful direction at the consecration of the east end of the abbey church of St. Denis, laying the foundation for the growing strength of France as a unified whole. Suger's advice regarding the role of the king as a defender of the church was followed, increasingly leading to a stronger alliance between the church and the monarchy. Louis VII never displayed the same strength of character exhibited by his father. However, the foundation of a strong French monarchy had been laid, to be built on by successive kings. This close association between the Church and the Capetian kings, wherein the monarch was clearly subordinate to yet supported by the Church —

emphasized in the consecration ceremonies and symbolized by Suger's new architectural style — reached its epitome in the early thirteenth century during the reign of Louis IX, Saint Louis, builder of the lovely St. Chappelle in Paris. The French kings would build palaces and castles, but it was the *opus Francorum* (the French style) of the cathedrals of France, a style introduced by Abbot Suger at the consecration celebrations of the monastic church of St. Denis with the strong emphasis on monarchical heritage and power that in turn acknowledged the Church as its head, which came to symbolize the power of the Medieval French kings.



**Figure 50** Fragment of Original Stained Glass Window from Chapel of St. Benedict in St. Denis.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>422</sup> Musée national du Moyen Âge, Paris. Photo by Author, June 2015.

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APPENDIX A

**A Cast of Characters**

## A Cast of Characters

### Churchmen

**Abbot Suger:** born 1081, died 1151. Given as an oblate to St. Denis at age 10, Suger was educated at either St. Denis or the nearby St. Denis d'Estree. In 1107, he was sent as provost at Berneval in Normandy, then sent to Toury-en Beauce between Orleans and Tours in 1109. Suger served King Louis VI as a diplomat and advisor, traveling throughout France and Italy. He became abbot of St. Denis abbey in 1122. Later in his life, he served as regent of France when Louis VII went on crusade. He produced several small books: a biography of Louis VI, *Vita Ludovici Grossi Regis* (c. 1137 – 1143/4), *De Rebus Administratione Sua Gestis* (1144/5), and *De Consecratione de Ecclesiae Sancti Dionysii* (1147 – 1150). Shortly after his death, his successor as abbot at St. Denis Abbey, William of St. Denis, wrote the biography, *Sugerii Vita*.

**Fulrad:** born 710, died 784. Elected abbot of St. Denis in 750, he also served as an advisor to Pepin and Charlemagne. He oversaw the construction of a new basilica over the tomb of Saint Denis.

**Hilduin:** born 775, died 840. Bishop of Paris and abbot of St. Denis from 815, he was commissioned by Louis the Pious to write the *Historia Sancti Dionysii*. Together with Hincmar, a monk of St. Denis who wrote *Miracula Sancti Dionysii*, he produced a history of Dagobert, the *Gesta Dagoberti Regis*. During his abbacy, Hilduin added a new apse that incorporated three chapels to the Carolingian basilica built by Fulrad.

**Bernard of Clairvaux:** born 1090, died 1153. A member of the knightly class, Bernard chose to enter the abbey of Cîteaux in 1112. He founded the Cistercian abbey of Clairvaux in 1115, founding over 68 daughter houses by the time of his death. Of the 350 Cistercian houses throughout Europe by 1153, 164 were directly answerable to him. His *Apologia*, written c. 1125, is a denunciation of monastic excesses and a defense of ascetic monasticism. In 1145, his secretary, Geoffrey, published 200 to 300 of Bernard's letters. The abbot of Clairvaux was respected in his day as a spiritual leader and advisor.

**Peter Abelard:** born 1079, died 1142. Medieval scholar and humanist, concerned with reason, logic, and power of human reasoning; his personal relationship with Heloise, the daughter of a canon in Paris led to his involvement with the abbey of St. Denis. He published *Historia Calamitatum* to record his personal history.

**Pope Gregory VII:** Reigned as pope 1073/5 – 1085. Immediately after he was elected pope, he issued the *Dictatus Papae*, stating that the Church had supremacy over secular rulers. His pontificate was one of reform and marked the beginning of the investiture controversy with the Holy Roman Emperors.

**Pope Pascal II:** Reigned as pope from 1099 – 1118. Pascal had to deal with pressure from the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry V, to allow lay investiture by the emperor.

**Pope Calixtus II:** Reigned as pope from 1119 – 1124. Calixtus, the son of William I, Count of Burgundy, led the effort to condemn the efforts of the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry V, at a synod in Vienne, 1112.

**Pope Innocent II:** Reigned as pope from 1130 – 1143.

### Lords and Monarchs

**Clovis I:** born c. 466, died c. 511. The first Merovingian king of the Franks, Clovis united the Frankish tribes under a single monarch. In 492, he converted to Christianity and was baptized 496 by the archbishop of Rheims, Remigius, a significant French saint.

**Dagobert:** born 603, died 639. This Merovingian king made Paris his capital and patronized St. Denis abbey. He was the first king to be buried at St. Denis.

**Clovis II:** born 637, died 657/8. Named King of the Franks in 639 after death of his father Dagobert, Clovis II was married to Bathildis (died 680), an Anglo-Saxon woman ten years older than him, who served as regent after Clovis' death.

**Pepin:** born 714, died 768. Pepin was educated at the monastery of St. Denis. He replaced his father Charles Martel as Mayor of the Palace, the de facto ruler of the Franks, in 741. In 747, after the last Merovingian ruler retired to a monastery, Pepin became the first Carolingian king of the Franks in name as well as deed.

**Charlemagne:** born c. 742 – 746, died 814. Son of Pepin, he reigned as king of the Franks from 768. In 800, Pope Leo III crowned him Holy Roman Emperor.

**Louis I, the Pious:** born 778, died 840. Son of Charlemagne and Holy Roman Emperor from 814 to 840, he continued many of the reforms started by his father.

**Charles II, the Bald:** born 823, died 877. Educated at St. Denis, he was considered one of the most generous patrons of St. Denis. He served as lay abbot of St. Denis from 867. Charles served as King of West Francia from 843 and Holy Roman Emperor from 875 until his death. His tomb lay in the floor in front of the main altar in St. Denis basilica.

**Hugh Capet:** born 941, died 996. Hugh was elected first Capetian king in 987.

**King Philip I:** born 1052, died 1108. Capetian king of France from 1060 until his death.

**King Louis VI:** born 1181, died 1137. Capetian king of France from 1108 until his death, he was also called *Le gros* (the fat) due to his extremely large size the last few years of his life. Louis was married to Adelaide of Savoy.

**King Louis VII:** born 1120, died 1180. Also known as Louis le Jeune, the younger, he was anointed and consecrated heir to the throne on the death of his older brother Philip in 1131. He became sole monarch just days after his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine in

1137. He had two daughters with Eleanor; they divorced in 1152. In 1160, he married Alice of Champagne, with whom he had two daughters and a son, the future Philip II.

**Queen Eleanor:** born 1122, died 1204. Daughter of the duke of Aquitaine, she married Louis VII in 1137. After her divorce from Louis in 1152, she married Henry Plantagenet, count of Anjou. Henry became Henry II of England in 1154. She produced two daughters with Louis and a handful of troublesome children with Henry.

**Count Theobald of Champagne:** born 1090, died 1152. Theobald became Count of Blois and of Chartres in 1102, and Count of Champagne in 1125. Theobald was a friend and supporter of both Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter Abelard and a thorn in the side of the French kings.

**King Stephen:** born c. 1092 – 1096, died 1154. In 1135, Stephen, the younger brother of Theobald of Champagne, seized the throne of England from Matilda, daughter of Henry I of England, setting off a civil war in England.

**King Henry I of England:** born 1068, died 1135. Son of William the Conqueror, Henry became king in 1100. He participated in an aborted attempt to invade Rheims, 1124.

**Henry IV:** born 1050, died 1106. King of the Germans from 1056 and crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 1084, he was forced to abdicate in 1105. His conflicts with the

papacy over his investiture of bishops in his empire led to his excommunication, civil war and unrest in the empire, and war against the papacy.

**Henry V:** born c. 1081, died 1125. Henry became King of the Germans in 1099 and was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 1111. He was married to Matilda, the daughter of Henry I of England. Henry attempted to work with the Pope Paschal II in settling the investiture controversy in order to be crowned Holy Roman Emperor, but refused to cooperate over the issue of crown-held fiefs being returned to the Church. Henry seized the Pope, who reluctantly agreed to allow the Henry to continue investing churchmen, and then crowned Henry as Emperor. In 1112, a Lateran Synod proclaimed the agreement in a document called the *Privilegium*. However, later that year, a synod of French and Burgundian bishops held in Vienne condemned the *Privilegium* and the practice of lay investiture exercised by the Holy Roman Emperor, and excommunicated Henry V. After being excommunicated again in 1119, Henry agreed to settle with the papacy, signing the *Concordat of Worms* in 1122. The *Concordat* officially ended the Investiture Controversy and restored Henry into good graces with the church. However, angry at the French bishops for their role in condemning him earlier, Henry, in league with his father-in-law, Henry I of England, announced his plans to attack the city of Rheims. The French rallied together under Louis VI and the two Henrys decided to call off their attack.

APPENDIX B

**Pseudo-Dionysian Philosophy**



### **Pseudo-Dionysian Philosophy**

The late fifth century Syrian monk known as Dionysius the Pseudo Areopagite produced short Neoplatonic texts expounding on the liturgy and rites of the church, equating the hierarchies of heaven with ecclesiastical roles and linking the divine powers of purification, illumination, and perfection, to tasks performed by the various levels of churchmen. Perfection was the culmination of the spiritual process. Articles of the Mass such as the holy oil, and the Eucharistic bread and cup of wine were sacred symbols used to present divine information with which to bring about the elevation of men. The texts placed monks at the pinnacle of the human hierarchy, the “perfected” order.

Dionysius used the term “uplift” to indicate a man’s spiritual moving forward towards perfection as he “beheld” or contemplated physical objects and spiritual concepts. The texts present the concept of “procession and return”, with God’s word and truth proceeding down, in a figurative sense, to the temporal realm, teaching humans through scripture and sacred rites in which they gazed upon the symbols of God’s word, and helping them to return to the higher level of existence. A procession revealed higher truths to lower men and was a process of understanding. God himself remained in the higher celestial realm. Dionysius used the directions of higher and lower to represent levels of understanding and enlightenment rather than physical locations. Churchmen, including Suger, used physical direction and movement as a means of portraying man’s internal movement towards perfection. Physical illumination with light and the physical perception of sacred objects were means by which men could achieve ecstasy, when they could leave behind their awareness of their physical self and surroundings and enter into a sense of union with God.

APPENDIX C

**Early Medieval Feudalism**

### Early Medieval Feudalism

Feudalism began to develop during the early medieval period. Most of the practices of feudalism arose as the Roman Empire was disintegrating, with the Germanic nobility mixing Roman customs with Germanic tribal practices in efforts to maintain some kind of control over their lands.<sup>423</sup> The feudal system placed a strong reliance on personal ties of loyalty between the lords and the soldiers who fought under them. To ensure support, the lords offered a piece of land, generally one that had improvements such as houses and tenants, to their “vassal”. In return, the vassal promised to be loyal to the lord and to provide certain services when called upon to do so by his lord. This oath of loyalty to the lord was supposed to be a lifelong bond.<sup>424</sup> The practice of granting land to a vassal mimicked the Roman custom of granting land to retiring soldiers as a way to settle colonies. To the Germans, this granting of a land was both a reward for service and an economic investment in future support. Under the Frankish Merovingian kings, the system developed more formally with written documents recording unions between a lord and his vassal. Grants of land that relinquished the lord’s legal jurisdiction, granting “immunity” to the holder, also appear at the same time.<sup>425</sup>

By the later Merovingian period, vassals of the king himself, both secular and ecclesiastical, were considered the elite, serving the king through diplomatic missions or militarily. Royal grants by the king to his vassals provided support for the vassals and were held on the condition that service to the king was provided. In an era where minted

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<sup>423</sup> Carl Stephenson, *Mediaeval Feudalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1942), 6.

<sup>424</sup> Luscombe, “The formation of political thought in the west,” 159 – 60.

<sup>425</sup> Milton Viorst, ed., *The Great Documents of Western Civilization* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1994), 33.

coins were rare, the granting of a fief became a way to reward for service. Land was plentiful, and the granting of improved land with buildings, tools and a labor force ensured continued support. A royal vassal became an extension of the monarch, administering justice, collecting fines and taxes, exacting services to maintain roads, bridges and fortifications and raising troops. More than just a simple economic system, it became the political organization that in essence placed real authority in the hands of local lords and churchmen who not only reaped the financial benefits of control over land and improvements but also gained jurisdiction of the lands under their control.<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>426</sup> Stephenson, *Mediaeval Feudalism*, 13.

APPENDIX D

**Constantine and the Transition to Christian Monarchy**

### **Constantine and the Transition to Christian Monarchy**

The Roman Emperor Constantine the Great (ruled 306 – 337 CE) did not become a Christian until on his deathbed, but his rule is marked by the transition of Christianity from an underground religion viewed suspiciously by the Romans as subversive to the empire to official status as a legitimate religion. His biographer, Eusebius of Caesarea, made much of Constantine's vision on the eve of the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312, in which he saw the chi-rho, the first two letters of Jesus Christ's name in Greek, and was promised victory if his soldiers would use this symbol. Constantine won, and the concept of Christian soldiers and of the Christian God supporting an emperor or king was born. The next year, the Edict of Milan freed Christians from the oppression and persecution they had suffered under the earlier emperors.

The Roman Emperors engaged in building palaces, but it was the new Church buildings, using the architecture of the imperial Roman basilica as a model, which attracted attention as symbols of power. The Roman basilicas served as public meeting halls and places from which imperial business could be conducted. Constantine encouraged family members and associates to support the building of churches in Rome and elsewhere. He is credited with the conversion of the Lateran basilica into the central seat of the Roman bishop, the building of the first St. Peter's basilica and the building of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, which Eusebius called the “New Jerusalem”.<sup>427</sup>

Constantine also set a precedent for secular leaders taking leadership roles in Church matters by summoning Church leaders to the Council of Nicaea in 325, as well as

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<sup>427</sup> Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era*, 20.

issuing a number of decrees that dealt with Christian Church matters. Apart from his association with Christianity, his military and political successes including monetary and administrative reforms and the foundation of his eastern capital at Constantinople helped cement his reputation as a great Emperor. Eusebius equates the Pax Romana, a term meaning a peaceful, stable empire, with a Christian emperor.<sup>428</sup> Constantine's reputation became a legendary model invoked by successive leaders.

As Rome's administrative structure eventually collapsed, the Byzantine Empire emerged to the east. The sixth century Byzantine emperor Justinian the Great tried to reestablish the Pax Romana by ordering the codification of Roman Law in an effort to create a more efficient administration. He built public works, new palaces, and the impressive Hagia Sophia to emphasize Byzantine glory and royal power supported by the Church. By the twelfth century, Constantinople was viewed as a city of great wealth and power, with her churches symbols of imperial piety. Suger's comments about the Hagia Sophia indicate western awe of the monumental structure even though it stood as the head of the Orthodox Church and was not under Rome's control.

Even though Justinian's reign arguably could be marked as the height of the Byzantine Empire, Byzantine influence was felt throughout the west. Einhard's book recorded diplomatic interactions between Charlemagne and the Byzantines. In his efforts to create an empire that surpassed the Byzantine Empire, Charlemagne maintained diplomatic relationships with the Emperors of Constantinople, sending gifts to the emperors and alms to the Church of Hagia Sophia. He also strove to protect the Pope in

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<sup>428</sup> Latowsky, *Emperor of the World*, 29.

Rome, favoring St. Peter's Basilica with "a vast fortune in gold and silver coinage and in precious stones."<sup>429</sup>

Following Constantine and Justinian's examples, Charlemagne ordered the collection of the assorted laws found within his empire.<sup>430</sup> He encouraged the creation of schools to provide educated men to serve him. Under Alcuin, a Saxon monk from York who led a school at Charlemagne's palace in Aachen, the educational curriculum became articulated as the several liberal arts, divided into the trivium (grammar, rhetoric and logic) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy).<sup>431</sup> The main centers of the Carolingian reform at Fulda, Reichenau, and Saint-Gall had extensive libraries employing this new educational program.<sup>432</sup> These schools, with their libraries and scriptoria, saved ancient texts and produced educated men capable of serving secular leaders.<sup>433</sup> In 789, Charlemagne issued an *Admonitio generalis*, outlining a comprehensive program of religious education that led to an increase in the production of liturgical texts and commentaries.<sup>434</sup> Along with his development of curriculum, Alcuin popularized a new form of writing, supported by imperial edict, that produced neatly formed letters and words that were separated from each other by a space.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>429</sup> Einhard, "The Life of Charlemagne" in *Einhard and Notker the Stammerer*, 80.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid., 81. According to Einhard, Charlemagne personally worked in the codification, but the task was never completed.

<sup>431</sup> Tierney and Painter, *Western Europe in the Middle Ages 300 – 1475*, 144.

<sup>432</sup> Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages*, 162.

<sup>433</sup> Tierney and Painter, *Western Europe in the Middle Ages 300 – 1475*, 146.

<sup>434</sup> Repsher, *The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era*, 111.

<sup>435</sup> Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, 82.



APPENDIX E

**The Fairs of St. Denis**

### The Fairs of St. Denis

The Fair of Saint Denis, held from October 9 to the end of November was extremely profitable. King Dagobert gave a charter granting full revenue from the fair to the abbey in 635/6. This fair was considered one of the great fairs of the period, attracting merchants from the north, with their wools and furs, and French sellers of honey, wines and provisions for winter.

The June Lendit fair may have dated as far back as Merovingian times, but it was not officially recognized until the eleventh century. The abbey claimed that Charles the Bald had declared an “indictum” — a document instituting a religious feast — to honor relics of Christ's Passion (one of the nails, and part of the crown of thorns) he had given to the abbey.<sup>436</sup> *The Descriptio* written during the 1080s, probably by the monks of St. Denis, related how the abbey acquired the relics and explained how the Lendit began.<sup>437</sup> The day on which these relics were displayed became a religious festival.<sup>438</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral*, 78.

<sup>437</sup> The full title is *Incipit Descriptio qualiter Karolus Magnus clavum et coronam Domini a Constantinopoli Aquisgrani detulerit qualiterque Karolus Calvus hec ad Sanctum Dionysium retulerit* (“Here begins the story of how Charlemagne brought the nail and crown of the Lord from Constantinople to Aachen and how Charles the Bald brought these things to Saint-Denis”).

<sup>438</sup> Latowsky, *Emperor of the World*, 75.

## APPENDIX F

**The Desiderian Liturgy for Consecrations<sup>439</sup>**

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<sup>439</sup> Hamilton, *A Sacred City*, 27 – 38.

### The Desiderian Liturgy for Consecrations

1. Preparation and blessing of water with salt, ash and wine
2. Triple circuit around exterior of the church; Bishop knocks on the door each circuit with singing of chants
  - Antiphon — *Fundata est V. Venientes*
  - Antiphon — *Benedic domine V. Domini si*
  - Antiphon — *Tu domine universorum V. Tu elegisti*
3. Entrance into church
  - antiphon — *Pax huic*
4. Litany and prostration
5. Abedecarium
  - Antiphon — *O quam metuendus Ps. Benedictus*
6. Preparation of more water with salt, ash and wine
7. Consecration of altar with aspersion of prepared water
  - Antiphon — *Asperges me ysopo Ps. Miserere*
8. Aspersion of interior — three circuits
  - Antiphon — *Haec est domus Ps. Laetus sum* (repeated)
  - Antiphon — *Qui habitat Ps. Qui habitat*
9. Aspersion of interior (length and width)
  - Antiphon — *Domini mea V. Narrabo*
10. Prayers of Consecration
11. Procession to altar
  - Antiphon — *Introibo Ps. Iudica me*
12. Preparation of mortar
13. Move to relics
  - Antiphon — *Movete sancti*
  - Antiphon — *Ecce populous*
14. Procession with relics
  - Antiphon — *Cum iocunditate*
  - Antiphon — *Ambulate sancti*
  - Antiphon — *Surgite sancti*
  - Antiphon — *Ambulate sancti*
15. Circuit around church with relics
  - Antiphon — *Erit mihi dominus V. Si reversus*
  - People sing *Kyrie*
16. Entrance with relics
  - Antiphon — *Pax eterna*
  - Antiphon — *Ingredimini*
17. Installation of relics into altar
  - Antiphon — *Exultabunt sancti Ps. Cantate*
  - Antiphon — *Sub altare*
  - Antiphon — *Dirigatur domini*
18. Anointing of altar with oil and chrism
  - Antiphon — *Erexit Iacob Ps. Quam dilecta*

Antiphon — *Mane surgens Ps. Deus noster*

Antiphon — *Ecce odor Ps. Fundamenta*

19. Anointing of interior of church with chrism

Antiphon — *Haec est domus Ps. Qui habitat*

20. Return to and incensing of altar

Antiphon — *Edificavit Moyses*

21. Prayers of consecration

Antiphon — *Confirma hoc deus*

22. Blessing of linens

Antiphon — *Corpora sanctorum*

23. Vesting of altar

Antiphon — *Circumdate Syon Ps. Mirabilis deus*

24. Mass

APPENDIX G

**Abelard and St. Denis**

### Abelard and St. Denis

One of the greatest teachers and intellectuals of the period, Abelard retreated to St. Denis after his wife's family attacked and castrated him. While at St. Denis, he started teaching again. The library at St. Denis, considered one of the best in France, seemed acceptable to Abelard, who prided himself on his learning: "As I had been liberated from the temptations of the flesh and the tumults of daily life, I should devote myself to the study of learning and truly become God's philosopher rather than the world's."<sup>440</sup> Abelard used his time at St. Denis to write *Theologia Summi Boni*, a compilation of his lectures that challenged the Church's interpretation of the Trinity.

In 1121, Abelard was called to a Council at Soissons to answer to charges of heresy in his book. The abbot of St. Denis at that time, Adam, also attended the Council. The council condemned this book, forcing Abelard to burn copies of it, then sent him to the abbey of St. Medard in Soissons rather than returning him to St. Denis. The monks of St. Medard greeted Abelard nicely. Abelard managed to convince everybody that he had been unjustly treated, at least according to him, and was allowed to return to St Denis.<sup>441</sup> According to Abelard, the monks at St. Denis did not receive him with joy:

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<sup>440</sup> Abelard, *Historia Calamitatum*, lines 651 – 654 in Clanchy, *Abelard, A Medieval Life*, 227.

<sup>441</sup> Or perhaps sent away by the dismayed monks of St. Medard, who may have found him extremely difficult to live with. St. Medard's abbot at the time, Prior Goswin, was a former student of Abelard's while the famous scholar taught at St. Geneviève's Abbey in Paris. Goswin apparently had been hostile to Abelard. Jan M. Ziolkowski, *Letters of Peter Abelard: Beyond the Personal* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), xxvii. This explains why Abelard wished to leave St. Medard, but it is unclear as to why Abelard wished to return to St. Denis, whose monks lived "scandalous lives". Abelard, *Historia Calamitatum*, line 658 in Clanchy, *Abelard, A Medieval Life*, 229. Ziolkowski points out that residing at St. Denis, which had earned freedom from the jurisdiction of any bishop, meant that Abelard was answerable only to the abbot. Ziolkowski, *Letters of Peter Abelard*, xxiv. Comments about the abbot of St. Denis at the time, Adam, indicate that the elderly abbot may have had a rather weak personality, and if so, could have been easily manipulated by the strong willed Abelard, who had managed to get his way at the abbey when he first arrived.

Here, however, I found almost as many enemies as I had in the former days...for the vileness and shamelessness of their way of living made them realize that they would again have to endure my censure.<sup>442</sup>

Abelard managed to make himself unwelcome to the monks with his arrogance and criticisms.<sup>443</sup> Forbidden from teaching, he retreated into the library of the abbey and “discovered” that the relics of Saint Denis that the abbey owned, for whom the abbey was named, the patron saint of the monarchy, and by extension of all of the French, were not really the Denis that Hilduin had written about.<sup>444</sup> Citing the Venerable Bede, who had stated that Dionysius was the Bishop of Corinth and not of Athens as stated in Hilduin's biography, Abelard declared that Bede was a better and more respected historian, managing to insult both the legend of Denis and one of the abbey's respected forefathers. Abelard then claimed that it didn't matter who Dionysius was anyway, further disparaging the reputation of Saint Denis. The furious Abbot Adam threatened to take Abelard before the king, Louis VI, to answer for “having thus sullied” the monarchy, but Abelard fled to Champagne, seeking refuge from Count Theobald.<sup>445</sup>

Adam approached Theobald to retrieve Abelard, but died within a few days after arriving at Theobald's court. There is no record of Theobald's interest in this matter, though the fact that Abelard was not returned to Adam's control indicates that Theobald

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<sup>442</sup> Abelard, *The Story of my Misfortunes*, 68.

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*, 55 – 7. Abelard spent a significant amount of time in his writings portraying himself as a victim to various people and parties, including the monks of St. Denis, who he claimed were jealous of his brilliance.

<sup>444</sup> While Abelard was correct in that he recognized contradictions in the depiction of the saint, his real crime consisted in criticizing a history commissioned by King Louis the Pious (Louis I) in a letter to Abbot Adam written sometime between March 1121 and February 1122. Ziolkowski, *Letters of Peter Abelard*, 133. Letters in this period were often written with the intention of publication — of being copied and circulated among an audience. As demonstrated by his *Historia Calamitatum*, Abelard had no qualms about having his personal letters read and discussed.

<sup>445</sup> Abelard, *The Story of my Misfortunes*, 69 – 70.



may have used his feudal privileges to demonstrate that he was not answerable to a man whose abbey was closely associated with the French king, even if called upon to turn over a fugitive accused of treason. Adam's successor, Suger, negotiated a compromise with Theobald, allowing Abelard to go free with the strict order that Abelard could take himself off "to any solitary place" he chose, as long as he did not become part of any other abbey. Suger never mentions Abelard in his books, but his silence and his directive to Abelard indicates that he wanted the unrepentant philosopher, who had disrespected St. Denis' patron saint, completely distanced from St. Denis.<sup>446</sup> Abelard managed to obtain some property near Troyes (a city under Theobald's control), started his own monastery, and maliciously tried to portray St. Denis in as negative a light as he could get away with in his *Historia Calamitatum*.<sup>447</sup> This popular book, while only briefly dwelling on St. Denis, would have irritated Suger with its negative portrayal of the abbey, creating yet another reason to present the abbey in as positive a light as possible.

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<sup>446</sup>Abelard's similar brevity on the subject may be a mark of the power held by Suger at the time the *Historia Calamitatum* was published c.1134/5. Abelard had no problem with making cutting comments about Suger's predecessor Adam but refrained from naming Suger at all, only referring to him as "the abbot" or "successor" in the few passages that dealt with Suger. Abelard, *The Story of my Misfortunes*, 7 and 85.

<sup>447</sup> Abelard, *The Story of my Misfortunes*, 72.

APPENDIX H

**A Note on Liturgical Clothing**

### A Note on Liturgical Clothing

Bishops and archbishops wore ornate garments as signs of their position, with particular items worn depending on rank and occasion. Many of the garments developed during the first few centuries of the Christian Church. The twelfth century saw a rise in elaborate embroidery with metallic threads, pearls, and gems on expensive materials such as rich silks and velvets. During this period, churchmen participating in processions and important ceremonies like consecrations wore a cope, a ceremonial cape fastened by a jeweled brooch, over the dalmatic. The dalmatic was a tunic, often with two orphreys running from the shoulders to the bottom hem. Orphreys, decorative strips of fabric embellished with embroidery, attached to the tunics and robes worn by churchmen. The amice, a rectangular piece of linen that wound around the neck, and the loose-sleeved alb served as undergarments. During the Mass, the chausable, a garment of rich fabric was added on top of the several layers. Another strip of embroidered fabric, the stole, draped from around the neck to the floor. Bishops wore the triangle shaped mitre, embroidered gloves, a ring and carried croziers. Originally crook headed staffs, by the twelfth century the tops of croziers were beautifully carved spiral shapes of ivory, metal, or gilded wood. Suger mentions the rings of pontiffs and bishops several times.<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> John T. Doherty, "Ecclesiastical Vestments in the Modern Church," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol 29, No 7 March 1971, 317.