
Adaptation and Audience: Remodeling Notre-Dame d'Étampes in the thirteenth century

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Introduction

In the first half of the thirteenth century, the canons of Notre-Dame d'Étampes significantly altered the exterior of their church. Once the renovations were complete, Notre-Dame possessed three new western portals, creating a unique composition that opened onto the now-rue de la République (rue de la Poule in the Middle Ages) in the direction of the rue Louis Moreau (once the rue Saint-Jacques) (fig. 1). Prior to that date, the church's south portal—an impressive undertaking that itself was an addition to the structure at the end of the 1130s or early 1140s—served as its public face. This was a prestigious entrance: a “Royal Portal,” with diagonally-splayed jambs lined with sculpted kings, queens, and prophets, facing a royal residence seated directly across the street. With the south portal in existence, why would the college of canons agree that the expense of a major renovation would be a good investment?

Few historians of medieval art have paid any regard to Notre-Dame's western campaign. The renown of Notre-Dame d'Étampes depends upon the south portal (fig. 2), remarked for the connection between the “Étampes Master” and the northwest portal of Chartres Cathedral; this relationship between the two sites means that Étampes features heavily in the literature on the development of early Gothic portal sculpture, discussed in the works of Vöge, Stoddard, Armi, and Sauerlander, among others. The context of the south portal consistently frames scholarly investigations of Notre-Dame's architecture. While the church's frustratingly complex building chronology has perhaps kept it from becoming a more frequently cited example of early Gothic, for those who do study the site, the twelfth century has always taken precedence. The first half of that century witnessed confluent circumstances—the town's rising importance as part of the royal domain, the extended presence of royalty in Étampes, several significant councils, the establishment of members of the royal family and their courtiers as abbés or canons of the church—that suggest compelling motives for Notre-Dame's building and sculptural campaigns. These narratives have typically overshadowed the later changes to the building.

As recently discussed by Nicola Camerlenghi (2011, 11–20), scholars studying medieval buildings are often guilty of focusing on particular moments—of inception, of apogee, or of supposed completion, for example—rather than studying a building as an ongoing process, with each transformation

driving the narrative of the building's formal or historical significance. Notre-Dame stands as an example of this phenomenon. Though the church was altered in subsequent centuries, which saw the additions of the new western façade, a remodeled sacristy, replacement of the nave clerestory, additions of stained glass and sculpture, the installation of an organ, and a major restoration program, these changes are typically treated as footnotes in the story of a gestalt of early Gothic. Analyzing the motivations and effects of this remodeling demonstrates the value of studying a building beyond its initial era of construction since medieval buildings transform over time, illuminating the concerns of successive generations of patrons and users. A study of the western portal addition reveals that Notre-Dame d'Étampes was not preserved in amber after the twelfth century, and the changes were not minor. Rather, the canons remade the exterior of their church in response to changing circumstances that necessitated an appeal to a new audience, marking the continuing symbiotic relationship between the church and its shifting urban context.

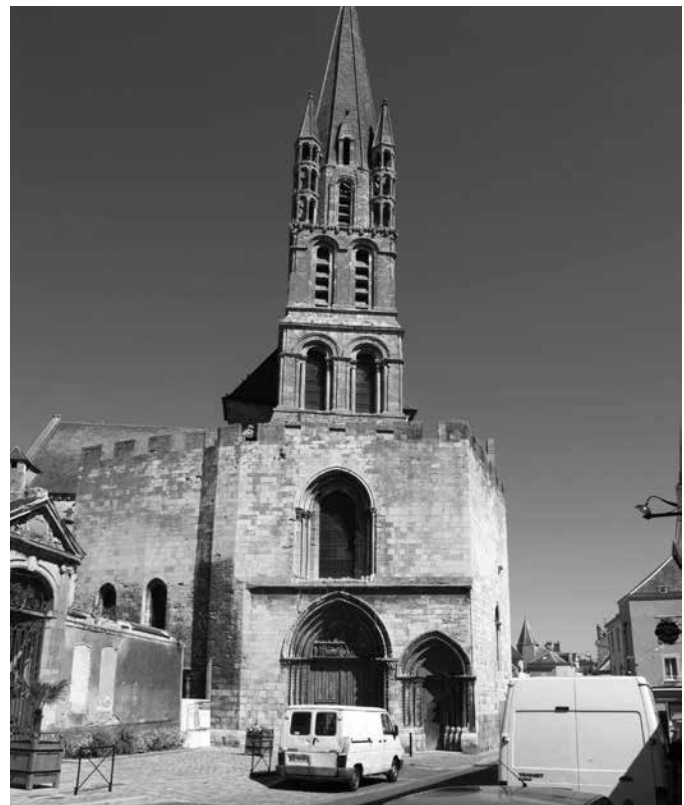


Figure 1. West façade of Notre-Dame d'Étampes. Photo by author.

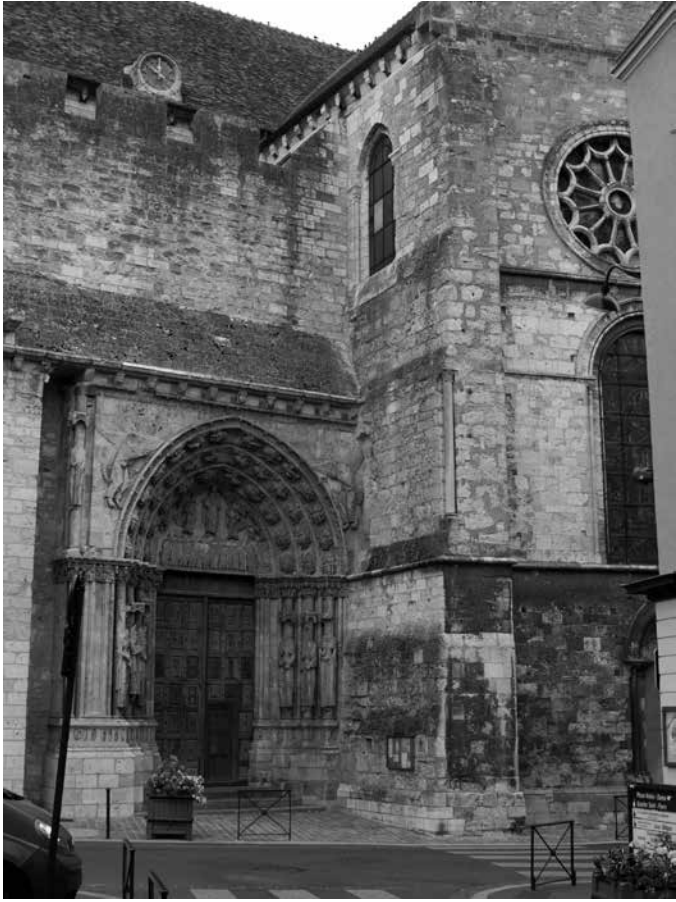


Figure 2. South portal of Notre-Dame d'Étampes. Photo by author.

The Context and Fabric of the Thirteenth-Century Campaign

Notre-Dame d'Étampes is known for its complicated construction history. At one time, its foundation by Robert the Pious in the eleventh century seemed to provide a point of certainty within the building's extended chronology, but a recent investigation has cast doubt on the legitimacy of this tradition and suggests that Robert and his successors provided funds to an existing foundation (Gineste 2011). As the building stands, its earliest campaign is the small-stone, groin-vaulted crypt. With the possible exception of the lower part of the tower stair (Baillieul 2012, 137), everything aboveground dates from the early twelfth century forward, although no specific documentation for the funding of construction or consecration of altars enables the firm establishment of years. The building's multiple campaigns can be dated in relation to each other. For example, the encasing of nave-type piers with additional masonry, associated with the transept campaigns, indicates that the nave came first. Determining specific years is a process of making stylistic and structural comparisons with other sites such as Saint-Pierre de Montmartre for the nave or Chartres's west portals for the south portal sculpture. Such study suggests a sequence

of construction as follows: nave, c.1115–30; choir, c.1130–35; north building (later remade as a sacristy), c.1135; south portal, c.1140; north transept, c.1140–50; north choir aisles, c.1150; and south transept and choir aisles, c.1150–60 (fig. 3). While each of these campaigns represents a construction break and a shift in both style and structure, some continuity can also be found from one program to the next. Masonry breaks and stylistic discontinuity of forms lead to the conclusion that work at Notre-Dame d'Étampes had halted for some decades by the time the west façade campaign was begun; this western campaign does not seem to be an extension of the twelfth-century pattern of ongoing, potentially overlapping campaigns.

The church's piecemeal construction does not indicate a lack of prestigious ties. Even if Robert the Pious did not found the building, it was a collegiate church with strong connections to the Capetians during an era when the town of Étampes became an increasingly significant part of the royal domain. Strategically located and surrounded by fertile grain fields, Étampes played host to national councils and often sheltered the royal family; Louis VII visited at least twenty-three times during his reign (Luchaire 1885, 62–68). French royals built several residences here, including the so-called Palais de Sejour and the Tour Guinette with surviving



Figure 3. Interior of Notre-Dame d'Étampes looking southeast. Photo by author.

remains, and the site across from Notre-Dame itself, known through documentation as the probable site of Robert's queen, Constance's, "palace with an oratory" (Helgaud of Fleury 1965, 64; Chatenet 1999, 39–41). Notre-Dame was given a number of privileges under Robert the Pious, Henri I, Philip I, Louis VI, and Louis VII, ranging from grants of land to fairs to having its canons named perpetual chaplains to the royal household in Étampes (Dufour 1993, 473). A position as a canon of Notre-Dame seems to have been a financial perquisite offered to those close to Louis VI, as royal chancellors Étienne de Garlande and Algrin d'Étampes both counted this position among their many other religious appointments. Although the church fell under the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Sens, the king had the right to appoint the abbé, and two of Louis VII's brothers held the title in the mid-twelfth century: Henry, who came to office c.1137 and who was also the abbé of Saint-Spire in Corbeil, and Philippe, who received the title from his brother around 1147 when Henry became Bishop of Beauvais (Fleureau 1997, 296, 350). The projection, orientation, and imagery of the church's south portal would seem to speak to this level of royal prestige. Set within a projecting surround, facing a

palace where the canons acted as chaplains, and flanked by images of righteous kingship from the Old Testament, the portal announced Notre-Dame's connections and function to the passing audience.

In adding the western portals, the canons sponsored a campaign that would completely revise the profile of, and public approach to, their building. Exactly what they were replacing is unclear: Notre-Dame's western tower was built in several stages in the twelfth century, and an earlier tower may have existed, but no evidence survives of the appearance of a prior western façade or portals. The angled position of the façade in comparison to the twelfth-century tower would seem to indicate that the new façade did not follow the ground plan of a previous western structure dating from the tower's era. Obviously the church had some kind of western enclosure, but its form and any openings remain debatable.

The new campaign visually enlarged, strengthened, and ornamented the church. Notre-Dame was partially wrapped in new masonry: exterior walls were extended into a *chemin de ronde* (an elevated walkway with battlements) that enclosed the west end and continued around the south nave aisle and north and south choir aisles. The *chemin de ronde*



Figure 4. Notre-Dame d'Étampes, masonry break at the northwest corner of the *chemin de ronde*; misalignment begins seven courses from ground level where it joins the north choir aisle. Photo by author.

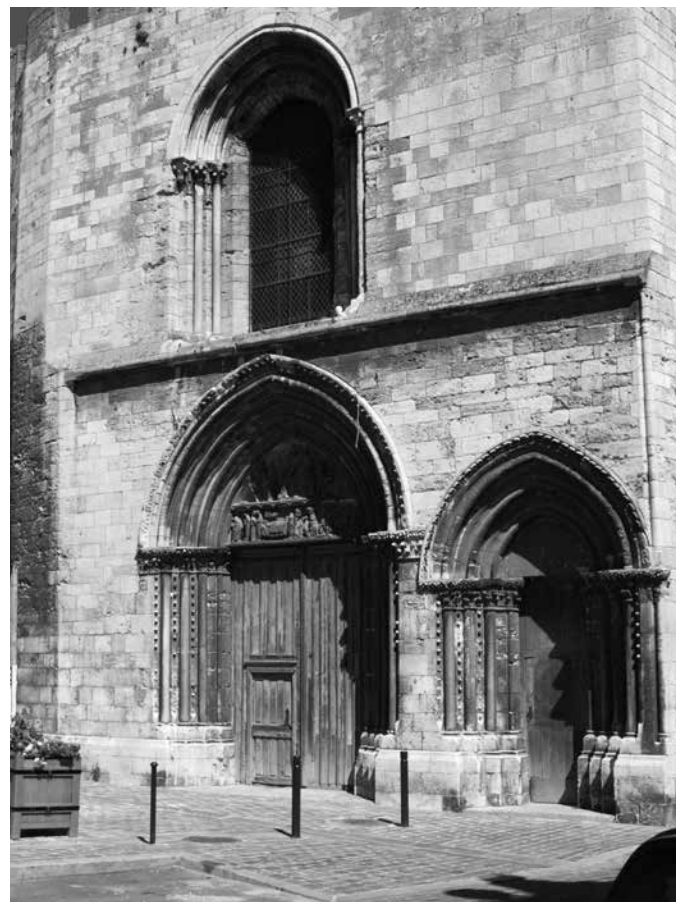


Figure 5. Notre-Dame d'Étampes, west façade showing all three portals and the wall buttress between the north and central portals. Photo by author.



Figure 6. Notre-Dame d'Étampes, tympanum of the central portal of the west façade. Photo by author.

begins with a masonry break visible on the north edge, where it joins the north choir aisle (fig. 4). As it continues around the west, it incorporates two windows with two orders of simply chamfered moldings above a portal (now nonfunctional) with three orders of chamfered archivolts, capitals with sharply-defined leaves and buds, and two en delit shafts to either side (fig. 5).

A wall buttress marks an angle between the north third and south two-thirds of the façade; this unusual layout likely results from expansion within a constrained site. While the extent of the canons' houses and the hospital complex in the twelfth century are not known, they were present here in some form and had to be accommodated when planning the new construction. Moving south, the remaining section of the west façade—the part directly visible from the rue de la République—has an upper window and two portals that are much more elaborately molded. The window, with four orders of molding, crocket capitals, and en delit shafts (some now missing), sits above a sloped molding with a rounded edge. Below are two more portals, both with a mixture of crocket and foliate capitals and en delit shafts, and both extensively decorated with moldings studded with rounded balls.

While the tympana of the flanking portals are bare, the historiated tympanum and lintel of the larger central portal clearly portray scenes from the life of the Virgin and the early life of Christ (fig. 6). The figures are badly mutilated, but the Virgin and Child are obviously enthroned in the tympanum, with the Dream of the Magi to the right conveyed by the three crowned men stacked in a bed and the Adoration of the Magi still visible in the standing and kneeling forms

to the left. The star appears just to the left of the Virgin's surviving halo. A blunted form that appears to be winged—an angel?—leans out from the peak of the archivolts above. An architectural molding of flattened arches separates the tympanum from the lintel, which from left to right shows the Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, Annunciation to the Shepherds, Massacre of the Innocents, and Flight into Egypt.

The twelfth-century nave aisles may once have extended one bay further west, flanking the tower, and in the course of the thirteenth-century façade addition those bays were remodeled as chapels. The portal presumably opening to the north chapel has been blocked, and its narrow span makes it questionable that it was ever much more than decorative, but the south chapel had a narrow but functioning portal, and the vaulted bay below the tower opened through the wide, new, central portal. An upper floor of the tower was also remodeled (today, this room provides access to the organ loft). Evidence for these changes is visible inside Notre-Dame. In the westernmost, south nave aisle bay, the former is supported on part of an impost and a dossieret now embedded in a later wall (fig. 7). The dossieret-and-impost combination are identical to those found in the other nave aisle bays, indicating that the aisle once extended further west. In the north nave aisle, a similar construction was used, although here the capital and colonnette still remain and have been used to support a later transverse arch (fig. 8, page 58). A clear line in the impost indicates the insertion of an extension to support the other side of the transverse arch opening to the new chapel (fig. 9, page 58); a similar extended impost can be seen to the left of the corresponding pier on the south side, forming a molding below a corbel for an inserted transverse arch.



Figure 7. Notre-Dame d'Étampes, interior of the southwest nave chapel, south side, showing an embedded dosseret and impost with thirteenth-century masonry additions, including crocket capitals and ball moldings. Photo by author.

The location and details of the chapel conversions and tower room remodeling—including the crocket capitals found in the south chapel and in the tower room—are consistent with the west façade campaign. Ball moldings also unify the entire addition. As noted by Lefèvre, these moldings appear at the northeast and southeast corners of the building, as part of the *chemin de ronde* that extends from the east side of the north transept arm around the north choir aisles and chapels (fig. 10), and in a small section that appears above the south choir aisle chapels (fig. 11). The same moldings appear in the new western chapels and on the jambs of two of the western portals (Lefèvre 1907, 19–20).

In the absence of any textual documentation for the campaign, comparative stylistic analysis can shed some light on the era of its construction. The presence of crocket capitals on the central portal and rudimentary crockets in the south nave aisle chapel and in the current organ loft narrows the possibilities slightly. Such capitals appear in construction from the second and third quarters of the thirteenth century and can be found broadly across France, including such Île de France sites as the interiors of the towers at Notre-Dame,



Figure 8. Notre-Dame d'Étampes, a twelfth-century dosseret and colonette of the northwest nave aisle chapel supporting a thirteenth-century transverse arch. Photo by author.

Paris; the transept campaigns from the same; and the thirteenth-century work at Saint-Denis. The molding separating the tympanum and lintel differs somewhat from the more elaborate architectural moldings of Rayonnant sculpted portals. While Staebel has suggested a connection with the transept portals of the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Rouen (2003, 131), the connection with the *c.*1240 portal of Saint John the Baptist (the north portal of the western façade) provides a closer match (fig. 12). The arches at Rouen are more decorative, with trefoils in the spandrels and moldings of their own, but both portals have a series of flattened arches extending over and framing scenes in the lower register. The figural style of the Étampes portal is difficult to evaluate due to damage (heads and limbs were hacked away when the church was attacked during the Wars of Religion). The remaining forms indicate straight figures without the elegant sway that became typical in the latter half of the thirteenth century. Drapery folds form sharp vertical triangles, broadly similar to those at Rouen. Based on this evidence, a date between 1225 and 1250 seems probable.

Ultimately, this campaign resulted not just in change or



Figure 9. Notre-Dame d'Étampes, north nave aisle chapel, south side: the twelfth-century nave pier with an impost extension to receive the thirteenth-century transverse arch; break visible to the right of the large capital. Photo by author.

expansion but in a major reorienting of the building's emphasis. The twelfth-century south portal, opening into the eastern bay of the south nave aisle, coincided with a period of expansion in the church's east end to accommodate the activities of the canons (and any royal visitors) in the choir and choir aisles. In contrast, the thirteenth-century work indicated strong consideration for the church's western approach and an interest in space for lay visitors in the nave. Jutting outward toward the rue de la République, two of the portals—those receiving the heaviest concentration of sculpted decoration—would have caught the eyes of those walking from the direction of the rue Saint-Jacques. The new tympanum would announce the church's dedication to the Virgin, and new chapels could welcome worshippers in the west end. A western façade with triple portals referenced the prestige of cathedral foundations. The practical function of the chemin de ronde and battlements was negated by the large windows and portals of the church, but they created an elevated profile and differentiated Notre-Dame from other sites of worship. Notre-Dame's nearest rival, Saint-Basile, was only a few steps away.

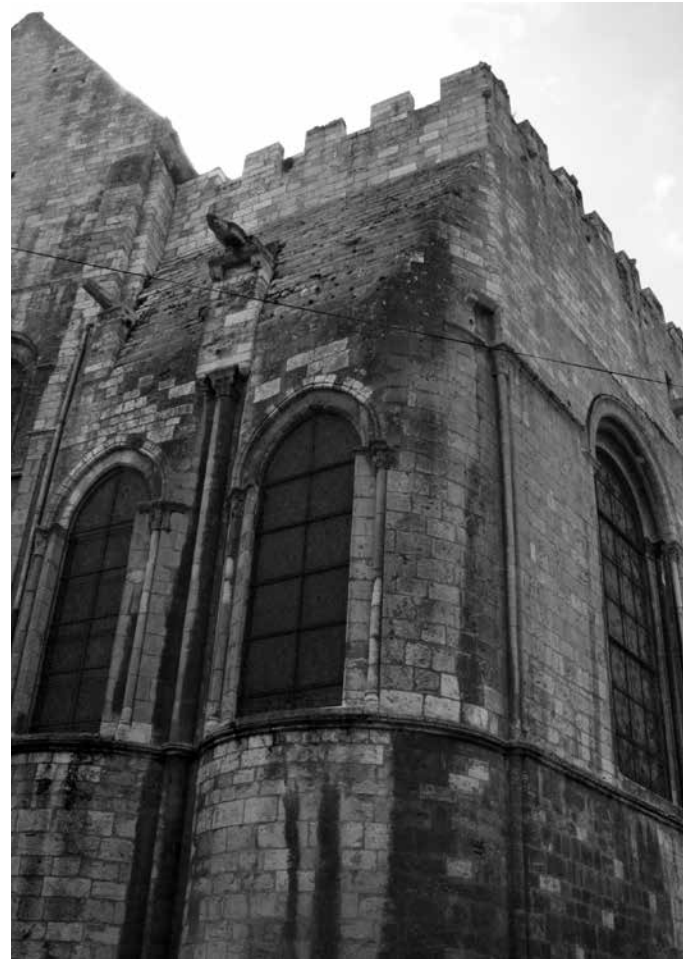


Figure 10. Northeast corner of Notre-Dame d'Étampes, showing the exterior of the north choir aisle and chapels; the ball molding is at the upper corner. Photo by author.

Changing Patronage, Changing Programs

As with the earlier campaigns at the church, no surviving documents describe the construction or financing of the western portal campaigns, making it difficult to prove the motivations for the new work with absolute certainty. Previous authors have suggested that the chemin de ronde coincides with the suppression of the Étampes commune around 1200 (Lefèvre 1907, 214), though Anthyme Saint-Paul pointed out that the defenses were not practical (Saint-Paul 1884, 216). Baillieul focuses on the visual symbolism of the crenellations in an era when Notre-Dame faced challenges to authority (2012, 77), although a desire to practically or symbolically strengthen the building with battlements does not account for the emphasis on the western portals built as part of the same campaign. However, changing circumstances at Notre-Dame did coincide with the new addition. Waning royal attention to Étampes and new competition for visitors may have inspired an attempt by the canons of Notre-



Figure 11. Southeast end of Notre-Dame d'Étampes, showing the wall extension above the south choir aisles; the ball molding is at the upper center. Photo by author.

Dame to redefine the church for a new audience. After 1180, Étampes did not welcome the royal family as often as it had in the past: Philip Augustus spent significantly less time in Étampes than had his father or grandfather, signing a single act here (Delaborde 1916, 414). Given that he exiled his wife, Ingeborg, here, he likely had little interest in living nearby. His successors failed to reverse this trend: Louis IX, for example, favored such sites as Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Vincennes, and Asnières when out of Paris, and was recorded as visiting Étampes only eight times (April 1246; July 1247; May 1248; October 1254; April and October 1255; December 1256; July 1260) in his forty-four-year reign—a third of the visits his great-grandfather Louis VII made over a similar span of time. His visits must have been short, as in each case he is recorded in several other sites during the same month (Guigniaut and De Wailly 1855, 413–18, 499). Louis shifted the governance of Étampes and the outlying areas from his immediate control by creating the Barony of Étampes in 1240. While the title, raised to a county, stayed within the extended royal family until the fifteenth century, the holders of these titles did not regularly occupy the Capetian palaces in Étampes (Marquis 1881, 53, 305).

In the absence of the king and court, the canons of Notre-Dame went without the payments they had formerly received



Figure 12. Tympanum of the portal of John the Baptist, Rouen cathedral, c. 1240. Photo by Giogo/Galerie.

for saying mass in the presence of the royal family. While Philip Augustus assumed the role of Abbé of Notre-Dame in the 1190s, and from this point the crown nominally held the title, the motivations were likely financial. The royal abbés were rarely if ever present, as from this date onward the precentor assumed the duties of the abbé (Fleureau 1977, 349–54). Notre-Dame also found itself with a rival for royal favor in Étampes: Philip Augustus had converted a former synagogue into the collegiate church of Sainte-Croix in 1183 (Fleureau 1977, 379). Apparently threatened by Sainte-Croix, the canons of Notre-Dame unsuccessfully attempted to claim control over the new foundation with a forged papal bull (Alliot 1888, x–xv). As Étampes declined in favor as a royal residence, the Capetians withdrew their direct support of Notre-Dame, and the royal subvention moved from the general financial support of the canons to the funding of specific services and chantries within the church. Chantry priests benefited financially, the canons less so. Louis IX was likely on the throne when the thirteenth-century work at Notre-Dame was undertaken, but his interest in Notre-Dame seems to have been perfunctory when compared to his involvement at other religious sites. His major donation came in 1255, the year he made two of his eight total visits to Étampes and founded two chantries dedicated to saints Peter and Denis to commemorate the death of his mother Blanche, whose holdings had incorporated the town (Alliot 1888, 10–11, 24–25).

Staebel has suggested that Louis IX's chantry foundations correlate with the thirteenth-century renovations (2003, 131–32), but while the dates may roughly correspond, the physical evidence and the records of Louis's patronage elsewhere do not. Statues installed in the northwest choir aisle chapel resemble those of the south portal and would have been archaic in comparison to sculpture associated with Louis's sponsorship of sites such as the Sainte-Chapelle or Saint-Denis (fig. 13, 14). Staebel speculates that they may be spolia from some lost western portal, moved to the chapel to rededicate it to Saint Peter when Louis endowed his chantry, but as yet conclusive evidence of the origin of these statues remains elusive. The heads and hands are plaster restorations,



Figure 13. Notre-Dame d'Étampes, interior of the northeast choir aisle chapel showing inserted column figures. Photo by author.

and while the drapery of the statues bears a strong similarity to that of the south portal jamb figures, there are small variations in the folds around the knees. The sharpness of the carving suggests that these works have never been outside. The rib vault profiles in these chapels, unique in the church, indicate a later re-vaulting in line with the consolidation of the chapel roofs when the *chemin de ronde* was built, but the capitals below the vault and above the statues are consistent with those in the rest of the north choir aisle campaign, indicating a date in the mid-twelfth century (fig. 15, 16, 17, 18). The documents do not indicate that any building changes or the funding directed toward such changes accompanied the foundations, and later nobles who founded chantries at Notre-Dame did so without associated architectural change (Louis d'Évreux founded the chapellenies of Saint-Paul and Saint-Denis in 1313; Alliot 1888, 37–38). The church of Notre-Dame eventually housed seventeen such chantries (Fleureau 1977, 340). The term indicates a supplementary altar manned by a priest whose services are endowed by a donor, not necessarily a defined space, and Notre-Dame has

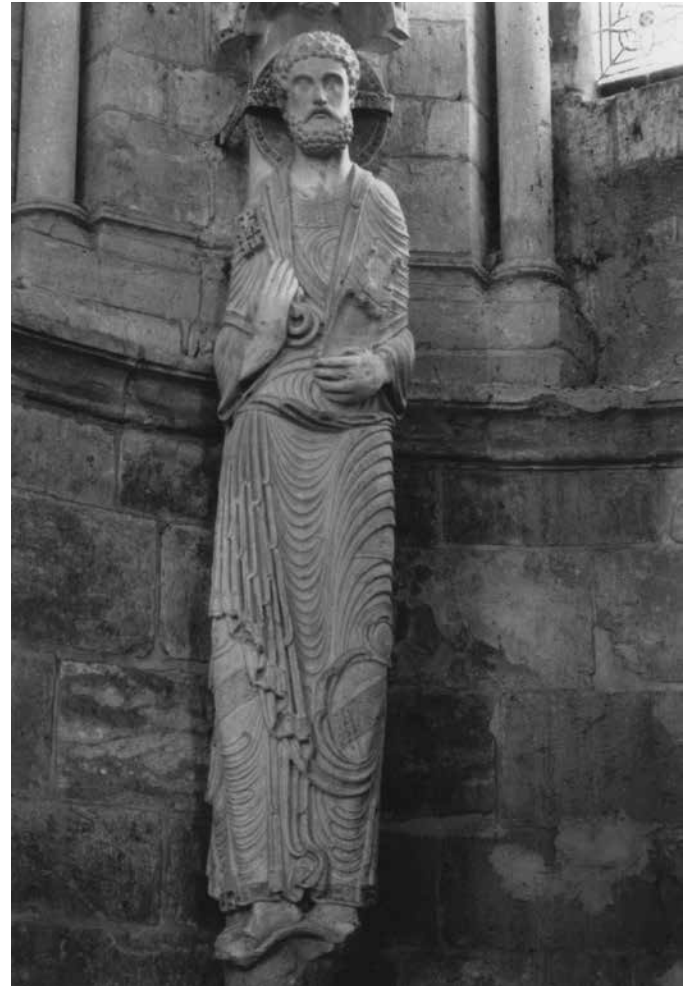


Figure 14. Notre-Dame d'Étampes, Saint Peter from the northeast choir aisle chapel. Photo by author.

far fewer than seventeen spaces that could be considered chapels. The only certainty about Louis IX's involvement with Notre-Dame d'Étampes is that he sponsored two chaplains who performed masses in his mother's memory.

Louis's limited presence and the minor privileges he offered the church in comparison to past Capetian royals characterize the changed status Notre-Dame experienced from the start of the thirteenth century. Faced with reduced royal contact and local competition, the college looked to alternative sources of income and prestige. A need to find new means of steady support as well as the proximity of the pilgrimage road to Santiago (the aforementioned *rue Saint-Jacques*, leading from Paris to Orléans and eventually on to Spain) provided an incentive for the chapter of Notre-Dame to remodel their façade in order to encourage a new audience. While documentary evidence for pilgrimage traffic within Étampes is relatively sparse, enough is known to indicate that pilgrimage traffic could be a desirable source of income. The hospital of Saint-Jacques de l'Épée appeared just outside the city's northeastern gate by 1164 (Billot 1999, 37). This foundation belonged to an order created in Spain during



Figure 15. Notre-Dame d'Étampes, capitals and rib vaults of the northeast choir aisle chapel. Photo by author.



Figure 16. Notre-Dame d'Étampes, detail of a capital from the northeast choir aisle chapel. Photo by author.



Figure 17. Notre-Dame d'Étampes, detail of a capital from the northeast choir aisle chapel. Photo by author.

the Reconquista that fought under the banner of Santiago de Compostela and was devoted to the protection of pilgrims. The order was rare in France, and the construction of the hospital demonstrates that enough pilgrims traveled through Étampes to make such a foundation worthwhile.

After the canons officially lost control of their nearby parish church, Saint-Basile, when it was elevated to the head of

its own parish in 1226 (Fleureau 1977, 401), their former dependent—located directly on the rue Saint-Jacques—became an additional rival (fig. 19). The loss of Saint-Basile provided further motivation for the chapter of Notre-Dame to publicize their own church's relics and associated miracles as well as to encourage lay visitors by building a western façade that would be visible from the rue Saint-Jacques. Intriguingly, the



Figure 18. Notre-Dame d'Étampes, capitals from a north choir aisle pier. Photo by author.

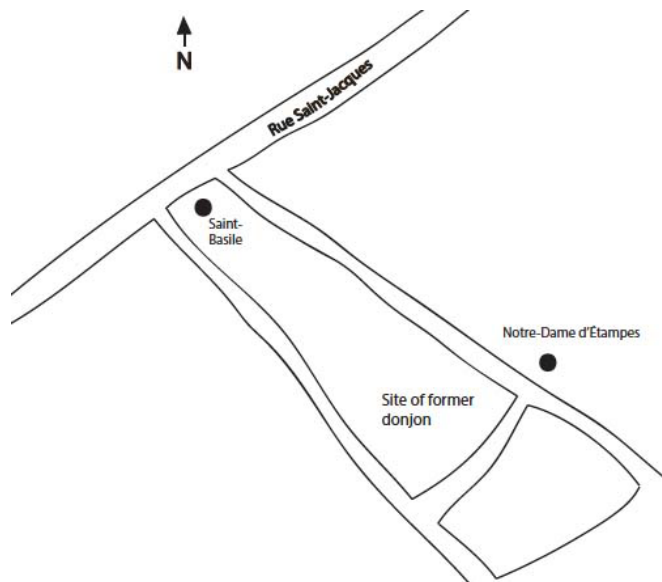


Figure 19. Diagram of the neighborhood and street layout near Notre-Dame d'Étampes. Image by author.

imagery chosen for the western portal advertises the new concerns of the church just as the royal figures on the south portal had connected Notre-Dame to their royal audience. On the west, the emphasis is not just holistically on the Virgin. The scene highlighted on the tympanum (the Adoration of the Magi) emphasizes the Magi's journey—depicting the outset with the dream to the right and the end with their camels to the left, so that the viewers' eyes travel across the scene—as well as the bringing of gifts, relevant themes when directed toward a pilgrimage audience expected to undertake jour-

neys and leave offerings. Perhaps the choice of the royal Magi kneeling before the enthroned Virgin also subtly prodded Notre-Dame's former royal patrons, needling them to return to their supportive roles and recognize the superiority of the Church.¹

The Emergence of a Cult

Pilgrims to Notre-Dame could visit the relics of saints Can, Cantien, and Cantienne (Latin Cantius, Cantianus, and Cantianella). Obscure today, these martyrs were supposedly the grandchildren of the Roman emperor Carus, executed near Aquilea in 304 for refusing apostasy (Fleureau 1977, 355–77). Their bodies were initially interred at San Canzian d'Isonzo near Grado, formerly Aquae Gradatae. Maximus of Turin's panegyric spread the fame of the three martyrs (Benedictine Monks 1921, 57), whose busts grace a fifth-century silver casket found below the altar of the basilica of Sant'Eufemia in Grado (Leader-Newby 2004, 105–07).

Tradition indicates that Robert the Pious brought the relics to Notre-Dame as a gift after a voyage to Italy. A search for evidence supporting the traditional association of the relics with Robert raises questions as to how and when Notre-Dame came to be in possession of Can, Cantien, and Cantienne, as Robert's supposed magnanimous gift left no trace in any contemporary documents. While Robert did visit Italy (Duchesne 1641, 170; Bénédictins de la congrégation de S. Maur 1760, 166), sources do not note Robert receiving relics there. Helgaud of Fleury makes no mention of the visits or of a gift of relics when he credits Robert with the foundation of Notre-Dame, although he does detail Robert's gifts of relics and precious objects at other sites (Helgaud of Fleury 1965, 113, 119). Nor are the relics mentioned in the charters of Robert's son or grandson, even though Philip I's charter reaffirms Robert and Henry's gifts. The only mention of the presence of the relics at Étampes in the eleventh century comes from Bonvoisin, writing in the nineteenth, and Bonvoisin makes his claim—that Archbishop Léothéric of Sens brought the jawbone of one of the saints to Sens from Étampes—based on an unnamed eleventh-century manuscript from Sens that other authors cannot confirm (Bonvoisin 1866, 37). The single cartulary surviving from Sens in the aftermath of the Revolution makes no mention of this. All other authors noting the removal of a jawbone to Sens associate the story with the Archbishop of Sens in the thirteenth century (Bredet 1673, 9; Fleureau 1977, 359; Forteau 1909, 197). No primary source, and no other description of a primary source save Bonvoisin, mentions Can, Cantien, and Cantienne's presence at Sens or at Notre-Dame before the mid-thirteenth century. The idea within the scholarship on Étampes that Robert returned with these relics after his Italian journey and presented them to Notre-Dame seems to be based on coincidence. As the seventeenth-century authors recording this connection lived in Étampes and wrote with the approval of the canons of Notre-Dame (Lefèvre 1913, 74), Robert's "gift" may have

been an assumption commonly held within the town and encouraged by the church.

Investigating the presence of Can, Cantien, and Cantienne in Étampes reveals curious lacunae for a cult supposedly established with an eleventh-century gift. The three are associated with a miracle that supposedly occurred within the church when it temporarily served as a hospital, which would seemingly place the events prior to 1225, the year an act describes the hospital of Notre-Dame outside the church: a woman named Sulpicia had a vision of the three saints and the Virgin predicting the healing of several patients and the death of another (Lefèvre 1913, 77). However, the earliest surviving account of this miracle dates from 1610 and was in turn based on late thirteenth-century documents (now lost) from the church's archive, not on a contemporary account (H.B.T. 1610, 43). Further miracles associated with the saints— healings and revivals of stillborn children—are either undated and described with insufficient references to allow for a narrowed span of time in which they could have occurred, or are described as occurring in or after 1282, the earliest documented date associated with the relics (Bonvoisin 1866, 23–25, 27–30). In that year, the relics of Can, Cantien, and Cantienne were brought in procession to the chapel of Saint-Lazare at the urging of the townspeople, who hoped to end a drought. Their reliquary then became too heavy to lift and could only be moved when a new, more splendid one was promised; the translation occurred in the presence of the Archbishop of Sens, who left written testimony in the new ch^âse.²

Manuscripts mentioning the saints provide no support for a pre-thirteenth-century cult in Étampes. Throughout the Middle Ages, entries for Can, Cantien, and Cantienne appear no more frequently in martyrologies produced near Étampes than in those from distant locations, and their entries mention no association with Étampes.³ The martyrs' earliest mention in breviaries for the use of Sens or Paris comes in the mid-thirteenth century. The earliest may be *Bibliothèque de l'Université MS 1220*, a breviary for the use of Paris that Leroquais dates to the beginning or first half of the thirteenth century (Leroquais 1934, 27). The three appear sporadically in breviaries produced in the Île-de-France after that date. Not until the eighteenth century do any breviaries for the use of Sens make reference to Sens's possession of relics from Can, Cantien, and Cantienne. While a breviary of 1780 ties the relics' arrival at Étampes and at Sens to Robert the Pious (a common association by that point), Bonvoisin's specifics about Léothéric taking a jawbone are not substantiated (*Breviarium Senonense* 1780, 498).

The absence of evidence indicating the presence of the relics prior to the beginning of the thirteenth century supports the possibility that the chapter of Notre-Dame acquired or invented the relics around that time. Alternatively, perhaps they had a new impetus to publicize the presence of the relics in the thirteenth century. The association with Robert the Pious may have been a convenient means of providing

a pedigree, or may have simply emerged as a correlation (perhaps encouraged) between the assumed founder of the church and the relics. However the relics arrived in Étampes, the coincidence between their rising prominence and the new architectural campaign seems remarkably fortuitous for a church that had need of attracting new visitors. To the canons of Notre-Dame, Can, Cantien, and Cantienne would have been desirable patrons, as they were prestigious early Christian martyrs with ties to the Imperial family whose acquisition could be associated with their supposed royal founder. Their names were known in France from an early date and thus might not be completely unfamiliar to a local audience. In his sixth-century *Vita* of Saint Martin of Tours, Fortunatus writes that those who reach Aquileia will venerate the Cantiens, and, as noted above, they do appear in some early martyrologies produced in France (Gineste 2012; Fortunatus 1822, 94). Furthermore, a legend indicates that Jacques l'Hermitte (Saint James of Sasseau) received some of their relics as a gift from Pope Sergius II in the ninth century and deposited them in a chapel at Sasseau, near Bourges (Boulé 1906, 6–9; Pallet 1785, 201). The relics at Sasseau were no competition for those at Étampes, however. The initial relic holdings at Notre-Dame must have been substantial, as at the 1672 opening of ch^âse, a town doctor recorded the presence of lower and upper leg bones, skull bones, jawbones (plural, even absent one claimed by Sens), vertebrae, an arm, and many smaller bones and scraps of cloth. This was after the attack on the ch^âse by Huguenots in 1562, when its contents were scattered and the townspeople had to gather what remained for a retranslation (Forteau 1909, 197–98, 210–11). Notre-Dame d'Étampes's claim to possess the three martyrs competed with churches in Milan (Fleureau 1977, 358) and San Canzian d'Isonzo (Roberti 1967, 59–86). While three bodies could presumably be divided over numerous locations, each site claims (or once claimed) to have the majority of Can, Cantien, and Cantienne's remains. These sites were distant enough to avoid a blatant contradiction of Notre-Dame's rights to the relics. Can, Cantien, and Cantienne served Notre-Dame well, becoming a reliable source of income. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the chapter earned about one hundred livres per year from pilgrims' donations (Legrand 1907, 84).

As the cult developed, Can, Cantien, and Cantienne benefited the church in other ways as the canons used the saints to forge connections with the Virgin and to indicate primacy over other local churches. The legend of Sulpicia's miracle indicated that the intervention of the three martyrs was connected to the Virgin's intercession. The reliquary of Can, Cantien, and Cantienne described by Fleureau in the seventeenth century was likely made in the fourteenth, as it had the arms of the Count of Étampes from the house of Evreux, whose imagery juxtaposed Can, Cantien, and Cantienne with the Virgin and other locally-revered saints. One gable depicted Christ as Salvator Mundi; the opposite gable showed the Virgin enthroned as the Queen of Heaven. In the sixteenth

century, four saints associated with local church dedications were added to the corners of the *châsse*: saints Peter and Martin nearest the Virgin, and Giles and Basil nearest Christ (Fleureau 1977, 359). Each long side of the *châsse* had five niches with selected apostles on one side and Can, Cantien, Cantienne, and their companions Sisinius and Protus on the other. The *châsse* was crowned by another image of the Virgin (Fleureau 1977, 363).

The church's new west façade played a role in a yearly liturgical procession that also asserted Notre-Dame's status. On Easter Monday, the large *châsse* and a smaller wooden *châsse* were brought to the west portal of Notre-Dame to be exposed to the faithful overnight. In the morning, the town assembled for the procession, with the curés of each parish near the corners of the *châsse* marked by their respective patron saints. The procession passed from the west entry of Notre-Dame as far as the church of Saint-Martin, returning along the rue Saint-Jacques and behind the church of Saint-Basile to Notre-Dame (H.B.T. 1610, 49). Notre-Dame had no claim over any of the other local churches referenced on its *châsse*, but the inclusion of these sites in a processional route beginning and ending at Notre-Dame—and their eventual addition to the *châsse* itself—indicated a hierarchy headed by Notre-Dame and its patrons.

Notre-Dame d'Étampes would be far from the only church of its era to promote a cult with the goal of encouraging pilgrimage. The new emphasis on Can, Cantien, and Cantienne, and the related façade situate Notre-Dame near the end of the eleventh- and twelfth-century boom in new or remodeled churches along the roads to Santiago. The development of Notre-Dame's cult in the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when connections between the three martyrs and the Virgin Mary were emphasized, also echoes late medieval trends favoring universal, as opposed to strictly local, cults (Abou-el-Haj 1997, 31).

Conclusion: Ongoing Transformation

In the course of the twelfth century, the expansion of the church of Notre-Dame was primarily addressed to a royal audience. The canons, some with royal ties themselves, oversaw a building connoting royal prestige through its geographical placement and prominent portal imagery. In the thirteenth century, however, Notre-Dame found itself without a consistent royal presence, and the church likely sought to maintain its status by adapting its structure to attract pilgrims. The thirteenth-century campaign transformed Notre-Dame from a foundation that spoke rather specifically to and about royalty into a building that actively sought to attract pilgrim traffic. The three new western portals, two of which were elaborately sculpted and projected outward toward the view of travelers turning from the rue Saint-Jacques; the higher walls that helped to unify the church's appearance and differentiate it from its nearby rivals; the sculpted tympanum emphasizing the majesty of the Virgin and highlighting the

pilgrim-like actions of the Magi; and the new chapels in the nave collectively demonstrate a re-imagining of the church's focus. The emergence of the cult of Can, Cantien, and Cantienne over the course of the thirteenth century suggests that the arrival or advertisement of the relics coincided with the new construction. If the canons did not invent the relics, they seem to have quickly realized their potential as a means of generating devotional visits, as the saints became central to the church's mythology from the thirteenth century onward. Whether the relics were in Étampes prior to the façade addition, were brought in after, or arrived in concert with the façade's creation, their promotion complemented the aims of the new construction.

A study of Notre-Dame in the thirteenth century reveals not only the extent and inspiration of an extensive remodel; it also suggests ways that past campaigns may shape future work. The presence of the royal south portal did not preclude the reconfiguration of the church for successive audiences. In fact, the strong visual association between the south portal and the royal palace may have been perceived as exclusive and may only have encouraged the canons of Notre-Dame to openly announce their welcome for other kinds of visitors via new western construction once royal attention was diverted elsewhere. The state of Notre-Dame at the close of the twelfth-century campaigns—emphatically focused on space for the college, its main portal turning toward the palace in both direction and subject—engendered a need for change at the start of the next century to increase chances for successfully attracting new viewers.

In the centuries that followed, the canons continued to adapt the ecclesiastical space and its décor according to changing trends and circumstances by, for example, commissioning a life-sized sculpture of the Entombment in the beginning of the sixteenth century (Legrand 1907, 110). This longer view of the life of Notre-Dame demonstrates a building in relation not to a single personality or a single stylistic phase but as an entity reflecting the ever-changing concerns of the society that produced it—and that, with the ongoing use and restoration of the building, continues to redefine the vision of a medieval church.

Notes

1. Cecilia Gaposchkin noted a similar circumstance at Notre-Dame in Paris, suggesting that imagery on the Porte Rouge was chosen to remind royals of their subservient position in relation to the Church (2001).
2. For the 1282 procession and translation, see H.B.T. 1610, 26–34 and Forteau 1909, 193–97. Forteau is transcribing the writings of Pierre Plisson, an Étampes resident documenting town affairs. Fleureau has this translation occurring in 1249 (1977, 359–61). Fleureau likely took his date from H.B.T., who use 1249 for this translation; however, they refer to Gilles, Archbishop of Sens, as having sued Pierre Barbet, the Archbishop of Reims (r. 1273–98). Gilles I Le Cornu was Archbishop of Sens from 1241–54, and Gilles II Cornut from 1275–92. H.B.T. confused the former with the latter. The dated testimonials in the châsse have since been destroyed, but Plisson claimed to have witnessed them when the châsse was opened in 1672 (Forteau 1909, 207).
3. Can, Cantien, and Cantienne appear in martyrologies of Bede, Florus, Wandelbert, Rhabanus Maurus, Ado, Usuard, Notker, Petrus de Natalibus, and in the “Parvum Romanum.” While they appear in at least two copies of the *Martyrology of Ado*, potentially produced in the Île-de-France before I propose that the relics were promoted at Étampes (Bib. Nat. ms Lat. 5250, a twelfth-century copy from Mantes, and Bib. Nat. ms Lat. 5280, a thirteenth-century copy from Chartres), they also appear in multiple martyrology manuscripts produced in Burgundy, Switzerland, and elsewhere both before and after their supposed arrival in Étampes (Quentin 1908, 223–42, 334, 411–13, 429, 467–68, 482).

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