

Notes on the Early History of the Augustinian Order in Southern France

The history of the Augustinians in southern France (defined here as that part of present-day France roughly south of a line drawn from Geneva to La Rochelle) has yet to be studied very extensively ; this is especially true of the early period. The aim of the present brief article is a restricted one : to offer some data on the beginnings of a few Augustinian houses in that area, and a few generalizations concerning the Order's expansion there.

The Order was always stronger in southern France than in the northern half of the country ; it was, however, the last of the « four orders » of friars to reach that country, and it long remained the smallest of them. Prior to 1300 its growth in France was, relatively speaking, slow and halting ; its weakness there is particularly striking as compared with its great strength in Italy and its quite substantial strength in the German lands. In southern France, between six and eight foundations were made before 1275 ¹⁾ ; this compares with at least 113 Franciscan, 45 Dominican, 22 or 23 Carmelite, and 31 Sack Friars convents. By 1300, this total had risen only to sixteen ; during

¹⁾ See F. ROTH, « Cardinal Richard Annibaldi », offprint from *Augustiniana*, II-IV (1952-1954), p. 147-150. He there examines the evidence for the earlier foundations of the Order in France, and reaches the figure of eight houses for that area (plus four in the north). My own opinion differs from his on two points : as will be seen below, I cannot, on the present evidence, accept the date of 1268 for Lyons, and I am dubious about the date of 1260 for Avignon. On the other hand, I think it quite likely that Montpellier should be moved into this group of early houses ; it, too, will be discussed below.

In the discussion that ensues, I am assuming foundations as follows (in almost every case the evidence seems conclusive ; for many of these datings I am indebted

that quarter century, the number of Carmelite foundations rose to 39. But by 1350 there were 44 Augustinian houses in the south of France ; in the first half of the fourteenth century, the Order made 28 new foundations, as compared with 18 Carmelite, 15 Dominican, and a mere six or seven Franciscan foundations. The Augustinians had become the most rapidly growing of the mendicants in this area.

This slowness of development of the Order in southern France in the thirteenth century is shown by the fact that in the six towns that had, by 1275, houses of all four orders ²⁾, the Augustinians were the last to be established in five — Aix, Avignon, Marseille, Montpellier and Toulouse ; only in Narbonne, where they preceded the Carmelites, did they achieve third place. And by 1275, there were twelve other towns that had convents of the other three orders but not of Augustinians: Agen, Bayonne, Bordeaux, Cahors, Carcassonne, Clermont, Figeac, Limoges, Montauban, Nîmes, Perpignan, La Rochelle.

A second aspect of Augustinian expansion in southern France is notable. Down to 1275, of eight foundations, five were made in towns already possessing three mendicant convents, two in towns that already had two such houses, and one (Grasse) in a town that had but a single convent hitherto. This is merely to say, of course, that the Order tended to put its houses into the larger urban centers. Of the eight foundations between 1275 and 1300, five (Agen, Bordeaux, Cahors, Carcassonne, Limoges) were in towns with three houses of friars, and a sixth (Draguignan) already had one. But two

to Father Roth, who has been most generous in putting at my disposal the fruits of his own extensive researches, especially in the archives of the Order):

Before 1275: Aix, Arles, Avignon, Grasse, Marseille, Montpellier, Narbonne, Toulouse.

1275-1300: Agen, Bordeaux, Cahors, Carcassonne, Castellana, Draguignan, Limoges, Puget-Theniers.

1300-1350: Barjols, Bayonne, Béziers, Brignoles, Crémieu, Ennezat, Figeac, Limoux, Lisle-sur-Tarn, Lyon, Marvejols, Mas-Saintes-Puelles, Montagnac, Montauban, Mortemart, Montflanquin, Nice, Nîmes, Pamiers, Pernes, Perpignan, La Rochelle, Saint-Geniez, Saint-Rome-de-Tarn, Saint-Savinien, Saverdun, Seyssel, La Voulte.

1350-1450: Arthez, Beaurepaire, Caudiès, Domme, Fiac, Fleurance, Geaune, Marciac, Marquefave, Mézin, Montluel, Montrejeau, Morestel, Saint-Pierre-d'Albigny, Thonon.

²⁾ For this purpose, I am ignoring the houses of the two orders of friars that were suppressed after 1274 — the Sack Friars and the Pied Friars.

(Castellane, Puget-Theniers) were made in relatively small towns in which no friars had settled. From 1300 on, the Order displayed an increasing tendency to found its new houses, not in the larger towns where other orders of friars had established themselves, but in smaller centers as yet untouched by the mendicant movement. Of the 28 houses founded between 1300 and 1350, 14 were put into towns of this type (Barjols, Crémieu, Ennezat, Lisle-sur-Tarn, Mas-Saintes-Puelles, Montflanquin, Montagnac, Pernes, Saint-Geniez, Saint-Rome-de-Tarn, Saint-Savinien, Saverdun, Seyssel, La Voulte). None of these towns was of much size; Saint-Rome-de-Tarn, for instance, was counted at 322 hearths in 1341, Lisle-sur-Tarn at 103 in 1375, and Montagnac at 154 in 1378. Of the fifteen additional foundations made by the Augustinians between 1350 and 1450, fourteen came in towns with no other house of friars: Arthez, Beaurepaire, Caudiès, Domme, Fiac, Fleurance, Geaune, Marquefave, Mézin, Montluel, Montréjeau, Morestel, Saint-Pierre-d'Albigny, Thonon). This is a rather striking phenomenon. It is not to be explained on such simple ground as that the larger urban centers had been settled so that the Order had to turn to smaller towns; at the end of the medieval period there remained in southern France nine towns with Franciscan, Dominican and Carmelite convents only (Albi, Bergerac, Clermont, Condom, Lectoure, Millau, Orange, Le Puy, Vienne), and not less than thirty-three towns that had houses of two other mendicant orders but not of Augustinians. There were, in short, sufficient larger centers in which the Order could have made foundations. The explanation is probably at least as much social and economic as religious.

One other geographical aspect of Augustinian expansion in southern France is of some interest. The fifteen houses founded before 1300 were extraordinarily localized; they formed a line running along the Mediterranean coast from Nice to Narbonne, and curving thence upwards to Bordeaux — only the house at Limoges, a major trade-route center, fails to fit that pattern. The twenty-eight foundations made between 1300 and 1350 are much more widely scattered, though showing tendencies to cling to the major trade routes, and to more dense settlement of the areas already penetrated before 1300. But the fifteen foundations made between 1350 and 1450 show a new and distinct localization; five of them were made in the small area east of the Rhone between Grenoble and Geneva, and seven others were made in the extreme

south-west, between the Garonne and the Atlantic, south of the 44th parallel. This may be partly explicable in military terms — this was the century of the Hundred Years' War — but it probably reflects other social, economic, and demographic developments. A study of all the foundations of all the orders of friars from this point of view might prove enlightening and significant.

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The beginnings of mendicant convents are likely to be rather obscure — especially of the older ones, before papal records come to our assistance in any volume. Rarely do we have today the archives — or the full archives — of such a house ; the vicissitudes of time, human negligence, flood and fire, expropriation, revolution and war, have taken their toll. For this reason, the earliest date for many, perhaps most, such houses will turn up in stray acts such as wills, which are particularly helpful in this respect. They have, in my judgement, the great virtue of setting, in effect, what might be called maximum as well as minimum dates for the establishment of houses of friars, and this is a use to which they have seldom, if ever, been put. The present writer cannot claim to have made exhaustive searches for such pertinent wills ; rather, the data that follows is, for the most part, the product of hurried trips to a rather limited number of French public archives ³⁾.

AGEN (Lot-et-Garonne)

Lauzun, in *Revue de l'Agenais*, XIV (1887), 23, has already narrowed the date for the foundation of this house to *inter* 1287-1300. It is possible to narrow this somewhat further by citing a will of 1291 that mentions only Dominican, Franciscan, and Carmelite convents here (BN, Coll. Doat, XLI, f. 123v). Thus it may be dated *inter* 1291-1300.

³⁾ In the citations that follow, the following abbreviations are employed:

AC: archives communales (followed by name of town)

AD: archives départementales (followed by name of department)

AN: Archives Nationales (Paris)

BN: Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris)

Besse: *Abbayes et prieurés de l'ancienne France (Archives de la France monastique)*

Herrera: *Alphabetum Augustinianum* (Madrid, 1644)

Lubin: *Orbis Augustinianus* (Paris, 1672).

AIX (Bouches-du-Rhône)

The oldest reference to this house seems to be in a will of 1276, listing Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites, Sack Friars and Augustinians (*fratribus sancti Augustini*) at Aix (AD: Bouches-du-Rhône, 2. G. 29, 183). The house must have been very new at that time. A will of 1261 mentions only the Franciscans (2. G. 17, 100); one of 1274 lists the Franciscans, Dominicans (whose house we know was founded in 1272), Carmelites, and Sack Friars only (2. G. 27, 166). It seems safe to date this house *inter* 1274-1276.

AVIGNON (Vaucluse)

The date of 1260 is given for this convent by Besse (II, 131) and Labande (*Avignon au XIII^e siècle*, p. 233). The first notice I have found occurs in a will of 1281 printed in the *Annales d'Avignon et du Comtat Venaissin*, III (1914), 94. No Augustinian house is mentioned here in the alms granted by Alfonse de Poitiers in 1269, though the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Carmelites of the town all appear therein (Boutaric, *Saint Louis et Alfonse de Poitiers*, p. 468; Molinier, *Correspondance administrative d'Alfonse de Poitiers*, I, 769). A will of 1260 mentions only the Dominicans and the Franciscans (AD. Vaucluse, ser. H, Fonds dominicains, 3, 4). An act of 1291 gives us the name of *frater Henricus de Lovinheyo prior domus ordinis beati Augustini heremitarum civitatis Avinionis* and ten friars of the house (AD: Vaucluse, G. IX. 9). The house should probably be dated *inter* 1269-1281.

BÉZIERS (Hérault)

The first reference to this house seems to fall in the year 1329 when a total of four of its friars, including the lector, served as councillors at two inquisitorial procedures (Douais, *L'Inquisition: ses origines, sa procédure*, pp. 331, 336). Its foundation must be placed after 1283, when a very full will lists the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Carmelites of Béziers, but not the Augustinians (BN, ms. lat. nouv. aq. 2462, 15). Thus the house can only be dated *inter* 1283-1329.

FIAC (Tarn)

Not listed by either Besse or Herrera, this house is dated 1425 by Lubin (p. 58). It existed by 1357, when it was twice mentioned in a will as *domus fratrum Augustinorum de Siaco* (BN, Coll. Doat. XLIV, f. 74v, 76).

FIGEAC (Lot)

This house was dated 1425 by Herrera (I, 262), and is listed without dates by Lubin (p. 58) and Besse (IV, 21). It was in fact

much older, being mentioned in a will of 1317, along with the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Carmelites of the town (BN, ms. lat. nouv. aq. 22358, 7). A will of 1268, and three wills of 1278, list only the Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites, and Sack Friars of Figeac (BN, ms. lat. nouv. aq. 1661, f. 30 ; BN, ms. fr. nouv. aq. 10188, f. 23, 50v, 76v). It is possible that this was one of the towns in which the Augustinians succeeded to the site of the Sack Friars ; there is no available information on the fate of that Order's house here. At any rate, it can be assumed that the Augustinian convent of Figeac was founded *inter* 1278-1317.

LIMOUX (Aude)

Lubin (p. 58) dated this house 1380. It was, however, the principal beneficiary of a will drawn up in Toulouse by one Petrus Cortanlini, son of master Bernardus Cortanlini (a notary of Limoux) (AD: Haute-Garonne, ser. H, Fonds des Augustins, liasse 134), and dated 1331. The only other mendicant houses in Limoux were those of the Franciscans and the Dominicans (founded only in 1325). Wills of 1270 and 1276 mention only the Franciscans (BN, Coll. Doat, XLI, f. 44v ; Moutié, *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Notre-Dame de la Roche*, p. 454). Evidently the Augustinian house here must be dated *inter* 1276-1317.

LISLE-SUR-TARN (Tarn)

Lubin (p. 58) lists this house without date ; Besse merely puts it in the 14th century (IV, 9). It first appears in a will of 1330 (BN, Coll. Doat, XLIII, f. 4), and occurs also in a will of 1343 printed in *Annales du Midi*, IV (1892), 218. Arvengas, « Le Couvent des Augustins de Lisle », *Revue du Tarn*, n. s., V (1939), 26-33, dates it *circa* 1341. There was no other mendicant house in this town.

LYON (Rhône)

Traditionally this house was founded before 1268 under Archbishop Philip of Savoy (1245-1267). But a will of 1267 mentions only Dominicans and Franciscans (*Chartes du Forez*, IX, 968). As late as 1305, when Duke John II of Brittany died at Lyon, gifts to the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Carmelites only were enumerated (*Bulletin et mémoires de la société archéologique d'Ille-et-Vilaine*, XXII [1893], 210). Again, a will of 1314 mentions only Dominicans, Franciscans, and Carmelites (*Archives historiques du département de la Gironde*, XXIX [1894], 361). In the absence of other documentary evidence, it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that this was a new house when, in 1315, the general chapter assigned it to the province of Provence (*Analecta Augustiniana*, III [1909-10], 180) ; such an assumption seems to me to be suggested by the very phraseology of that ruling. The traditional date in this case appears to

be based exclusively on the dating of Philip of Savoy. It seems likely that the real confusion lies between Philip of Savoy (1245-1267) and Archbishop Peter of Savoy (1308-1332), under whom, if I am correct, the house was really founded.

MAS-SAINTES-PUELLES (Aude)

This convent has been the object of some confusion, since it has at times been wrongly identified with Mercedarian house at the same place ; see, for example, Sabarthès, *Dictionnaire topographique du département de l'Aude*, p. 231, where an act of 1397 mentioning the *conventus fratrum Augustinorum de Manso Sanctarum Puellarum* is referred to the Mercedarians. Neither Besse nor the *Histoire générale de Languedoc* list this house ; Herrera (II, 122) and Lubin (p. 59) date it 1420. Its existence much earlier is attested by wills of 1326 and 1337 (BN, Coll. Doat, XLII, f. 306 and XLIII, f. 75 v).

MONTAGNAC (Hérault)

Besse lists this house without date (IV, 134). Herrera puts it before 1461 (II, 128) ; Lubin says cautiously that it was believed to have been founded *circa* 1290 (p. 88). An act of 1340, dealing with a legacy to this house in a will of 1339, proves its existence by that date, and names the prior, one fr. Mathieu Menrald (Pasquier & Olive, *Le Fonds Thesan aux archives du château de Leran*, p. 28).

MONTPELLIER (Hérault)

Besse (IV, 197) and the *Histoire générale de Languedoc* (IV, 821) place this house at the end of the 13th century ; Herrera (II, 114) and Lubin (p. 11) put it at 1324. But a will of 1287 mentions the *fratres sancti Augustini* along with the Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites, and Sack Friars of Montpellier (AC: Montpellier, Armoire E, Caissette 6, Louvet n. 2313). Wills of 1268 and 1270 mention all these houses save the Augustinians (BN, Coll. Doat, XL, f. 330v, 346). It seems possible to date the foundation of this house with some assurance as *inter* 1270-1287.

NARBONNE (Aude)

This house was one of the oldest in France, and probably the first established west of the Rhône. According to the *Histoire générale de Languedoc* (IV, 681-2), it was founded by 1262, and moved to a new site in 1528. But this was sharply challenged by the late Abbé Sabarthès in his *Etude historique sur l'abbaye de Saint-Paul de Narbonne* (Narbonne, 1893), pp. 160-161, 164 ; he could find no trace of the house prior to 1325, when the friars reached an agreement with the abbatial church of St. Paul, in whose parish they were then located. He argued that the convent

could hardly have existed for sixty years without some such arrangements, and concluded that the Augustinians had reached Narbonne only shortly before 1325. Actually, the house is first mentioned in a will of 1256 (AC: Narbonne, AA. 105, f. 45). The will of a knight of the city, Arnaldus Margalionis, in 1261, is of some interest, for it contained a bequest of land: *Item lego fratribus sancti Augustini medietatem unius modiatæ terræ in alodo et de illo et in illo campo quem habeo prope ecclesiam sancti Foelicis, in qua possint aedificare ecclesiam ad honorem Dei si ipsos contingerit ibi facere mansionem* (BN, Coll. Doat, XL, f. 315v-16). The church of St. Felix was located just north of the walls of the city, and settlement there explains why the friars needed no accord with the church of St. Paul, whose parish was across the river, in the bourg. An act of February 17, 1262 shows the convent and its prior (*frater Arnaldus prior conventualis domus fratrum heremitarum ordinis sancti Augustini in Narbona*) acquiring an annual rent-charge of 35 sous on land near the church of St. Felix by exchange with the cathedral chapter of St. Just (BN, Coll. Doat, LVIII, f. 87-93); this was clearly a step in the assembling of a site. An act of 1292 tells us the friars were still occupying this site at that date (Rocque, *Inventaire des actes et documents de l'archevesché de Narbonne*, I, f. 242v — ms. in the municipal library of Narbonne). But in 1317 the house received permission from John XXII to accept a new site, inside the walls, in either the bourg or the city (Mollat, *Lettres communes de Jean XXII*, 6030). At just that time, a new location presented itself. In the bourg, near the gate of St. Paul and in that parish, stood a communal leprosary. For some years its neighbors had agitated for its removal to a more distant spot, and on October 25, 1317, the royal seneschal of Carcassonne ordered this done, *quod tales infirmi a comunione et chohabitatione aliorum ceperentur* (AN: S. 4858, 45). A series of extant acts in late 1318 shows us the consuls of the town, in obedience to this order, alienating various plots of the leprosary site to private citizens (AN: S. 4858, 4, 24, 33, 42, 43). Apparently the Augustinians acquired part of this property at that time (although there is no surviving document to demonstrate this beyond question) for we know that before May 14, 1319, the consuls, in the name of the leprosary, had acquired land formerly held by the friars, *per modum excambii* (AN: S. 4858, 63). It is perhaps worth noting that the old house of the Sack Friars had adjoined this leprosary; it had been sold on papal authority to the abbey of St. Paul in 1280, and its subsequent fate is unknown. Perhaps it had been taken over by the leprosary, or perhaps it was now acquired by the Augustinians directly from St. Paul, with an additional plot from the leprosary holdings to enlarge it. In any case the transfer to the parish of St. Paul must have been effected by the Augustinians late in 1318 or early in 1319 — and hence the agreement of 1325 between the

friars and that church which disturbed Abbé Sabarthès. Two centuries later, the convent was moved again, for the last time, to the opposite side of the bourg, in the parish of Our Lady.

X NIMES (Gard)

All authorities seem to agree in putting the establishment of this house in 1350 or 1351. But an act of 1344 shows the Augustinians already present in the town (Petit, *Histoire des ducs de Bourgogne*, VII, 404). The house is not mentioned in various local wills running as late as 1313 (Menard, *Histoire de Nismes*, II, 8), and must therefore be dated *inter* 1313-1344.

PAMIER (Ariège)

Besse (IV, 323) gives no date; Herrera (I, 81) puts it before 1425; Lubin (p. 88) has it before 1345. Its first appearance seems to be in a will of 1318 (BN, Coll. Doat, XLII, f. 248). Four friars are listed as inquisitorial councillors in 1324, and four more, including the prior and lector, in 1329 (Douais, *L'Inquisition*, p. 296, 301-302, 323-4). Only the Dominicans and Franciscans are listed in a will of 1307 (BN, Coll. Doat, XLII, f. 57v). It would thus seem to have been founded *inter* 1307-1318 (the Carmelite house here was established in 1311).

PERPIGNAN (Pyrénées-Orientales)

Besse gives no date for this house (IV, 232); Herrera puts it before 1419 (II, 307). The date of its foundation can be fixed with considerable accuracy from Perpignan wills, which are preserved in large numbers in the many surviving notarial registers of the town. A profusion of wills prior to 1317 make no mention of it; it first occurs in a will of August 29 of that year (AD: Pyrénées-Orientales, ser. E, Fonds des notaires, 23, f. 43), and it appears regularly in wills thereafter. First located outside the walls, it was licensed to move to the interior of the town in 1325 by Pope John XXII (Mollat, *Lettres communes de Jean XXII*, 24020). There are numerous stray references to the convent after that date. An act of 1329 names fr. Berengarius Vergerii as *vicarius* of the convent (AD: Pyrénées-Orientales, ser. E, Fonds des notaires, 42, f. 5). Fr. Franciscus Catalani was lector in 1331 (AD: Pyrénées-Orientales, B. 25, f. 3v), and fr. Raymundus Miri was lector in 1332 (*Revue d'histoire de l'église de France*, I [1910] 720). An act of October 20, 1332, lists thirteen friars of the convent, *in claustris domus dicti conventus ad sonum campane congregati capitulumque facientes*, headed by fr. Franciscus Egidii, *vicarius dicti conventus* (AD: Pyrénées-Orientales, ser. E, Fonds des notaires, 49, f. 9v).

TOULOUSE (Haute-Garonne)

Lubin dates this house before 1269 (p. 11), and Herrera before 1341 (II, 478). The first reference seems to come in 1267 (*fratribus ordinis beati Augustini Tholose*) (Molinier, *Correspondance administrative d'Alfonse de Poitiers*, I, 155). A will of 1263 lists Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites, Sack Friars, and Crutched Friars, but no Augustinians (AD: Haute-Garonne, ser. H, Fonds de Sainte-Croix unnumbered liasse). It can, therefore, be pretty definitely dated *inter* 1263-1267.

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