

SIMONE MARTINI'S *ST. LOUIS OF TOULOUSE* AND ITS CULTURAL CONTEXT

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Abstract

This thesis provides a cultural and historical context for Simone Martini's painting, *St. Louis of Toulouse Crowning Robert of Naples*, a landmark of Early Renaissance Sienese art. It offers a detailed analysis of the painting's style, themes, and unusual iconography based on an examination of the political and religious climate of early fourteenth-century Angevin Naples. In particular, it investigates the motives of Robert of Naples, the probable patron, in commissioning the work. While ostensibly intended to commemorate his brother Louis of Toulouse on the occasion of his sanctification in 1317, the painting nevertheless served Robert's own political agenda: the validation of his much disputed claim to the Neapolitan throne. This goal was accomplished through a complex iconographical program which emphasized the King's exalted lineage, in particular his dynastic connections to Hungarian and French royal saints. The painting exploited the belief in *beata stirps*, inherited sanctity, to imply that Robert was not only the legitimate ruler but, having inherited his ancestors' virtues, also an enlightened one. The thesis also analyzes the way in which Louis of Toulouse is represented, both in the main panel and in the five predella scenes. The altarpiece presents Louis primarily in his role as Bishop of Toulouse, diminishing the importance of his true Franciscan vocation. The insistence on Louis' humility and obedience to papal authority, rather than his poverty, reflects the bitter debate raging between Spiritual and Conventual Franciscans at the time the painting was created. Cognizant of the necessity to preserve good relations with the Pope, a committed Conventual, Robert downplayed his brother's Spiritual sympathies. Thus, the painting is more a portrait, both literally and figuratively, of Robert of Naples than of Louis of Toulouse. Robert has cleverly "adjusted" his brother's image in accordance with his own political exigencies. The painting therefore becomes both a monument to Angevin power and prestige, and an affirmation of his right to rule.

Introduction

Simone's Martini's *Robert of Naples Crowning St. Louis of Toulouse* could quite simply be appreciated as an exquisite work of art by a divinely gifted Sienese painter. Its sumptuous decoration, patterned splendor, copious gilding, and sinuosity of line testify to the refinement and sophistication that graced Sienese art of the Trecento. Yet the altarpiece is much more than a gorgeous work of art – it is, in the words of Maria Cristina Gozzoli, an “atto politico più che devozionale.”¹ Without an understanding of the historical, religious, and political context in which Simone executed the panel, one cannot access the multiple layers of meaning the painting embodies. Only by illuminating the complex power relations between the Neapolitan Angevins, the Franciscan Order, and the Papal Curia can one begin to decipher its unusual iconography. Moreover, without an awareness of the challenges confronting Robert of Naples, the painting's probable patron, one cannot hope to apprehend his motives in commissioning it. These motives were, as Gozzoli has observed, largely political in nature. Weary of accusations he had usurped his nephew's throne, Robert seized the occasion of his brother Louis' coronation in 1317 to set the record straight – or at least, to present his version of the story. The irony is that in so doing, Robert left more of a portrait of his own motives and ambitions than of the saintly brother to whom the altarpiece is ostensibly dedicated. Indeed, Louis' personality and *raison d'être* have been all but effaced; the image that remains, that of an aristocratic prince-bishop, is far removed from the humble Franciscan friar he aspired to be.

Louis, in fact, would never have consented to be portrayed amidst such worldly pomp and splendor. He had renounced his right to the Kingdoms of Sicily, Hungary, and Jerusalem, preferring to lead a quiet life in the company of the Franciscan brothers he adored. In fact, his dearest wish was to doff the regal bishop's cope he wears and don the plain brown Franciscan

¹ Maria Cristina Gozzoli, *L'Opera completa di Simone Martini* (Milan : Rizzoli, 1970), 86.

habit and all it symbolized – a wish his ambitious father heartily opposed. He might have been more disposed to sanction Louis' decision had his son not insisted on following the more ascetic branch of Franciscanism known as Spiritual Franciscanism. The Spirituals, otherwise known as Zealots, aspired to live like their founder St. Francis – in absolute poverty. This was considered an entirely inappropriate way of life for one who stood to inherit one of the richest and most venerable kingdoms in Christendom. As a descendant of the noble Angevins, themselves cousins of the kings of France, Louis was expected to fulfill his responsibilities in *this* world, not to shirk them in the interest of the next. Eventually Louis compromised, bargaining his acceptance of the bishopric of Toulouse against his acceptance into the Franciscan brotherhood. After his early death, his family took advantage of his saintly life to have him canonized, hoping to capitalize on his prestige to increase their own. Any family that could claim its own saint was made immeasurably richer by the honor.

Thus Louis proved more useful to the Angevins in death than in life. Robert, in particular, basked in Louis' reflected glory, exploiting his brother's sanctification to legitimize his own shaky claim to the throne. When Louis abdicated, Robert was next in line of succession. All would have been well had it not been for the law of primogeniture, according to which his young nephew Carobert was the rightful heir. Carobert and his supporters would prove a thorn in Robert's side, necessitating a complex political strategy on the new king's part to silence the offensive tongues. A key element of this strategy was the patronage of artists and writers who depicted the monarch in a flattering light. Among the most talented was Simone Martini, whose St. Louis altarpiece presents Robert's kingship as divinely ordained. At the same time, the painting emphasizes his family's dynastic connections with both French and Hungarian royal saints to bolster his claim to the throne. As there was as yet no pre-established iconography for the saint, Simone could allow

his imagination free rein – guided, most probably, by his patron whose agenda the painting was intended to communicate. Whether we consider Simone’s work as a sort of political manifesto or simply as a splendid work of art, it merits closer examination on both counts.

Chapter 2: Simone Martini – An Overview of His Life and Work

In his *Commentarii*, Lorenzo Ghiberti accorded Simone Martini high praise. Simone was, in Ghiberti's opinion, "Nobilissimo pictore e molto famoso," considered by many "el miglore" of the Sienese painters.² Vasari lauded him as "eccellente dipintore, singolare ne' tempi suoi," and spoke of him as one whose "gentilezza e costumi cittadineschi...gli rendono a tutti gli uomini gratissimi."³ Almost five centuries later, Bernard Berenson would characterize Simone as an artist who "subordinates everything...to his feeling for magnificence, beauty, and grace."⁴

Unfortunately, not much is securely known about the early life of the artist who inspired such encomiums, as the Sienese registers document his movements only between the years 1321 and 1333.⁵ Even his birth date is conjectural, based on Vasari's claim that a commemorative inscription on his sarcophagus (probably added at a later date) recorded his death in Siena in 1345 at "60 anni, mesi due, giorni tre."⁶ However, he actually died in Avignon in August, 1344,⁷ which would place his birth in June, 1284. His citizenship has also been called into question; in the archives, he is always referred to as "de senis," implying Sienese citizenship, though nearby San Gimignano has also been proposed as his place of birth.⁸ The source of Simone's early training is another subject of speculation. Vasari names Giotto as "maestro suo,"⁹ a theory which has received support from Contini, among others, who acknowledges the "forte ruolo" Giotto played in his formation. Contini proposes that the young Simone may have come into contact with Giotto

² Lorenzo Ghiberti, *I commentarii*, 89. Ghiberti himself, however, expressed a preference for Ambrogio Lorenzetti.

³ Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori*, vol. 1 (Florence: Adriano Salani, 1906), 545-46.

⁴ Bernard Berenson, *Italian Painters of the Renaissance*, vol. 2 (London: Phaidon, 1968), 65.

⁵ Andrew Martindale, *Simone Martini* (Washington Square, NY: New York University Press, 1988), 5.

⁶ Vasari, *Le vite*, 556.

⁷ Martindale, *Simone Martini*, 2.

⁸ Ibid., 6; Gianfranco Contini, *Simone Martini* (Milan: Corriere della Sera, 2004), 24.

⁹ Vasari, *Le vite*, 546.

through his future brother-in-law Memmo di Filipuccio, who perhaps worked as his assistant in Assisi.¹⁰ Yet while acknowledging the influence of Giotto on Simone's conception of space, most scholars concur it is equally probable he was apprenticed during the 1290's to Duccio, with whom he also shares stylistic similarities.¹¹

Most of the information regarding Simone's life is contained in his will in the *Libri di Gabella de' Contratti*. He hailed from a family of artists living in the parish of St. Egidio in Siena.¹² His father Martino was an artisan specializing in the preparation of walls for frescoes, and he had two brothers, Donato, a painter, and Salvuccio, who had already died by the spring of 1344.¹³ Simone also married into a family of painters in 1324 when he wed Giovanna, daughter of Sienese *pictor civicus* Memmo di Filipuccio. Two of her brothers, Lippo and Tederigo, belonged to this profession, and Simone would later collaborate with the former on the *Annunciation* in 1333.¹⁴ Although Simone and Giovanna had no children, their nieces and nephews carried on the family *mestiere*: Donato's son Barnaba became a goldsmith, while his daughter Caterina married the painter Giovanni di Sera.¹⁵ Simone and Giovanna enjoyed a lifestyle of relative ease. Upon his marriage, Simone had purchased a home for 120 florins in the parish of S. Egidio from his father-in-law, placing him in the top 14% of homeowners in Siena, and in addition, he gave a generous dowry of 220 florins to his bride.¹⁶ Martindale speculates that Simone had acquired his wealth

¹⁰ Contini, *Simone Martini*, 31.

¹¹ Ibid., 30; Timothy Hyman, *Sienese Painting: The Art of a City Republic 1278-1477*, World of Art (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2003), 48; Alastair Smart, *The Dawn of Italian Painting 1250-1400* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 88.

¹² Martindale, *Simone Martini*, 5.

¹³ Contini, *Simone Martini*, 24.

¹⁴ Ghiberti, *Commentarii*, 89. Ghiberti notes that Simone "lavorò con esso maestro Filippo, dicono ch'esso fu suo [disce] fratello, furono gentili maestri e loro picture furon fatte con grandissima diligentia molto delicatamente finite."

¹⁵ Martindale, *Simone Martini*, 6.

¹⁶ Ibid., 7.

through painting; by 1324, with an established reputation, he could have expected a daily wage equivalent to that of Duccio, who earned 16 *soldi* a day for the *Maestà*.¹⁷

By 1324, Simone's career was already thriving. His first extant dated work is the *Maestà* (1315) fresco in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena. Certainly such an important commission would not have been entrusted to a novice, so he must already have demonstrated considerable expertise as a painter. Sometime between 1316 and 1319, Simone probably visited Naples where he executed *St. Louis of Toulouse Crowning Robert of Naples* for the Angevin monarch portrayed in the altarpiece. While there is no concrete evidence that Simone actually went to Naples, Martindale believes "the precious nature of the St. Louis altar and the presence on it of a verifiable 'portrait' of King Robert make it likely that Simone went in person to execute it."¹⁸ An annual pension of 50 gold ounces to a certain Simone "*Milite*" was recorded in the Angevin registers (destroyed by the Nazis during World War II), which gave rise to speculation about whether this knight and the painter were the same person.¹⁹ The success of the *Maestà* and St. Louis altarpiece led to other commissions outside Siena, evidence of his growing fame. The St. Martin fresco cycle in the Lower Basilica of St. Francesco in Assisi, generally believed to be another early work,²⁰ also brought Simone considerable notoriety. Considered one of the artist's greatest works, it narrates the life of St. Martin of Tours, whose charity and humility were reminiscent of St. Francis. At a slightly later date, he frescoed the St. Elizabeth Chapel for the same basilica.²¹ In 1319, Simone painted a large

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 6.

¹⁹ Adrian S. Hoch, "The Franciscan Provenance of Simone Martini's Angevin St. Louis in Naples," in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 58 (1995), 36. Recent scholarship by Adrian Hoch has revealed that the Simone "milite" was actually a knight who accompanied either Yolanda, the first Spanish wife of Robert of Naples, or Sancia, his second spouse.

²⁰ Martindale, *Simone Martini*, 21-22. He posits a date before 1316, therefore, probably prior to the altarpiece.

²¹ Adrian S. Hoch, "Beata Stirps, Royal Patronage and the Identification of the Sainted Rulers in the St. Elizabeth Chapel at Assisi," in *Art History* 15 (1992), 289.

altarpiece for the Dominican convent of Santa Caterina in Pisa,²² followed around 1320 by the signed polyptych for the Orvieto Duomo. Between 1321 and 1323, he returned to work in the Palazzo Pubblico, retouching the *Maestà* and painting a Crucifix for a chapel in the building.²³ Simone's next commission was the equestrian portrait *Guidoriccio da Foligno* (1328) for the Sala del Mappamondo,²⁴ to which he returned in 1330 to paint frescoes (now destroyed) of the castles at Arcidosso and Castel del Piano, apparently intended to record for posterity locations associated with glorious Sienese victories.²⁵ Shortly after, in 1333, he painted the Uffizi *Annunciation* for the Siena's Duomo with the assistance of his brother-in-law Lippo Memmi.

The rest of Simone's life must be reconstructed based on literary evidence. Between 1336 and 1344 he is believed to have moved to Avignon, where, Vasari informs us, he was “molto stimato nella corte del Papa.”²⁶ He was especially appreciated for his draftsmanship as well as his fidelity to nature, being “molt'ecellente nel disegno, ma ebbe invenzione dalla natura, e si diletto molto di ritrarre di naturale...”²⁷ His skills as a portraitist certainly garnered the respect of Petrarch, for whom he painted a lost picture of Laura, a work immortalized by the poet in two sonnets praising his friend's consummate skill as a painter.²⁸ The dating of these sonnets to 1336, and the lack of evidence for Simone's presence in Siena during these years,²⁹ would seem to substantiate the theory that he spent this period in Avignon. Petrarch reiterated his esteem for Simone in the margin of his copy of Pliny's *Natural History*. Next to the passage describing Apelles as a gifted

²² Bruce Cole, *Sienese Painting From Its Origins to the Fifteenth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 68.

²³ Ibid., 69

²⁴ Ibid., 79

²⁵ Ibid., 70

²⁶ Vasari, *Le vite*, 546.

²⁷ Ibid., 556.

²⁸ Robert M. Durling, ed., *Petrarch's Lyric Poems* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 177, 179. In Sonnet 77, Petrarch praises Simone: “Ma cert il mio Simone fu in Paradiso/onde questa gentil donna si parte;/ivi la vide, et la ritrasse in carte/per far fede qui giù del suo bel viso./L'opera fu ben di quelle che nel cielo si ponno imaginar, non qui tra noi,/ove le membra fanno a l'alma velo ;” Sonnet 78 begins by praising Simone's artistic ingenuity : “Quando giunse a Simon l'alto concetto/ch'a mio nome gli pose in man lo stile...”

²⁹ Martindale, *Simone Martini*, 5.

painter worthy of Alexander the Great's patronage, Petrarch added, "Haec (sc. Comitas) fuit et Symoni Nostro Senensi Nuper Iocundissima."³⁰ Unfortunately, apart from the frontispiece he designed for Petrarch's copy of Virgil's works (c. 1340), little survives of Simone's work in Avignon apart from two detached, poorly preserved frescoes, The *Madonna of Humility* and the *Blessing Christ Surrounded by Angels* from the portal of Avignon's Cathedral, Notre-Dames-des-Doms. Simone's career was cut short by his death there in August, 1344, at the age of sixty.³¹

³⁰ Ibid., 7: "Thus also our own Simone of Siena used formerly to do, very joyfully."

³¹ Ibid., 2.

Chapter 3: Angevin Naples: Historical Background

In order to appreciate both the surface meaning as well as the subtler, more richly nuanced subtext of Simone's *St. Louis of Toulouse*, it is necessary to understand the historic background leading up to Louis' canonization on April 7, 1317.

We must begin by explaining how the Angevins, and ultimately Robert of Anjou, acceded to power in Italy before we can illuminate the complex web of power politics that enmeshed papacy and monarchy in Simone's own time. Louis of Toulouse's great-grandfather, Louis VIII of France, had two sons, Charles I and Louis IX. When his older brother John died, Charles inherited the counties of Anjou and Maine, becoming Count of Anjou, and in 1246, he married Beatrice Bérenger, daughter of Raymond Bérenger IV, Count of Provence, thereby acquiring title to one of the most coveted domains of Europe.³² Moreover, he had successfully defended his territories in Arles, Avignon, and Marseilles. When on December 13, 1250, Emperor Frederick II died, Pope Innocent IV seized the opportunity to place "a trusted papal vassal" on the newly vacated throne of Naples and Sicily who would prove a staunch Guelph ally in the eternal battle against the imperial Ghibellines.³³ So protracted had been the conflict between the Popes and the Emperors that when Frederick II died, the Pope wrote ecstatically that the "race de vipres" had finally ended.³⁴ He chose Charles of Anjou as successor to the Hohenstaufen dynasty because his "énergie, habilité, [et] clémence,"³⁵ augured well in a ruler. As Émile Léonard summarizes, Charles had proven himself a worthy choice :

³² Émile Léonard, *Les Angevins de Naples* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), 47.

³³ Darleen Pryds, *The King Embodies the Word: Robert of Anjou and the Politics of Preaching* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 21.

³⁴ Léonard, *Les Angevins*, 37. The first Swabian emperor, Henry VI, was King of Germany and Italy and also laid claim to the thrones of Sicily and Bologna, nourishing Urban II's fears of a one-man monopoly over the Papal States. He was succeeded by his son Frederick of Hohenstaufen.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

Charles avait prouvé depuis son avènement qu'il avait les qualités de l'homme d'État. Il était à la tête des riches domaines, avec un grand port et ses libres entreés dans la plaine du Pô. On pouvait compter que la cour de France l'aiderait à fond, une fois que son honneur y serait engagé. La décision prise par Urbain IV d'en faire le champion de l'Église en Italie ne peut que sembler toute naturelle.³⁶

Charles accepted the Pope's offer in 1263 and was crowned in Rome January, 1266, thereby inaugurating a new dynasty: the Neapolitan Angevins who would rule southern Italy until 1435.³⁷ In 1277 Charles purchased the title of King of Jerusalem from Mary of Antioch. As the Pope had hoped, Charles capitalized on his prestigious ties to the Capetian royal house of France, adopting the fleur-de-lys as the Angevin insignia. He also exploited his new alliance with the Papacy: while promising the pope never to seek imperial title or office, he claimed divine status for his own ancestors and pledged his loyalty to the Church, "thereby fusing divine sanction and earthly power into a single Angevin crown."³⁸ This point is crucial to understand, since two generations later, his grandson Robert of Naples would rely heavily on his family's reputation for saintliness as part of his strategy to justify his own claim to the throne.³⁹

In 1269, Charles' eldest son, Charles the Lamé, later Prince of Salerno, married Mary of Hungary, daughter of Stephen IV and sister of the reigning Ladislás of Hungary. At that time, Hungary was in the midst of a civil war (between Bela IV and his son Stephen V) and Charles took advantage of the crisis to extend Angevin influence over the Hungarian kingdom through a second dynastic alliance: Mary's eldest brother Ladislás of Hungary married the Angevin

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Pryds, *The King Embodies the Word*, 21-24. However, Charles first had to secure his right to the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily by defeating Frederick's son Manfred at the Battle of Benevento in February, 1266, and then Manfred's young grandson Conradin at the Battle of Tagliacozzo in August, 1268. Because he was a rallying point for the Ghibellines, the sixteen-year old was publicly beheaded in Piazza del Mercato, Naples, on October 1, 1268. This act earned Charles a reputation for brutality that he was never able to overcome.

³⁸ Ibid., 22.

³⁹ Ibid., 24. Charles was the first to cultivate his family's reputation for piety. Before waging war on Manfred and Conradin, he persuaded the pope to declare them heretics and to preach a crusade against them. As Pryds remarks, "the very desire to seek the appellation of holy war points to the religious context into which the Angevins persistently tried to situate their military and political endeavors."

princess Isabella. Charles II and Mary of Hungary had eight sons: Charles Martel, Louis (future Bishop of Toulouse), Robert (future King of Naples), Philip Prince of Taranto, Raymond Bérenger Count of Andria, Tristan, John Count of Gravina, and Peter Count of Eboli. In March, 1282 the Angevins suffered their first major defeat with the eruption of the Easter Sunday revolt which came to be known as the Sicilian Vespers.⁴⁰ Aided by the Aragonese, the Sicilians overthrew their Angevin overlords, who despite repeated attempts, would never succeed in regaining the island.⁴¹ One half of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, comprising Naples and the island of Sicily, had been irrevocably lost. On June 5, 1284, in an effort to regain control of Sicily, Charles the Lamé, disobeying his father's orders, pursued Philip III's ship in a naval battle in the Gulf of Naples. He was taken hostage by Ruggerio di Loria, the admiral in charge of the Aragonese fleet, who destroyed the Neapolitan fleet in the process.⁴² When Charles I died a year later, his heir was still captive.⁴³ Not until October 1288 would Charles II be liberated. By the terms of the Treaty of Canfranc, he was freed in exchange for his three sons, Louis, Robert, and Raymond Bérenger, who were handed over to Alfonso III of Aragon.⁴⁴ The boys would spend the next seven years of their lives in captivity, under the tutelage of the Franciscans, before being released in November, 1295.⁴⁵ In the meantime, on Pentecost (June 19), 1289, their father,

⁴⁰ Léonard, *Les Angevins*, 145.

⁴¹ Ibid. 148. In October, 1282, Philip III of Aragon invaded and captured Messina.

⁴² Ibid., 157.

⁴³ Ibid., 159. In his will, Charles designated his eldest grandson Charles Martel his heir in case his own son, then a prisoner, were unable to succeed him. However, Charles Martel being only twelve years old, Robert, Count of Artois, acted as regent until Charles II was liberated three years later in 1288.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 52. Charles was freed on the condition that he would work to procure peace between France and Aragon and would pay Alfonso 30,000 silver marks. However, James, Alfonso's brother, was outraged over Charles' liberation and made war on Naples, thereby enraging Pope Nicholas IV who forbade Charles from fulfilling the conditions, insisting the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily belonged to the Holy See and refusing to negotiate. As a result, Charles' eldest son, Charles Martel, was never handed over to the Aragonese.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 13. The release was effected thanks to the diplomacy of Boniface VIII, who was grateful to Charles II for his election to the Papacy. Margaret Toynbee relates that according to Giovanni Villani, Boniface told King Charles, "King Charles, your Pope Celestine both wished and possessed the means to serve you, but he knew not how. Wherefore, if you will influence the Cardinals in my behalf, you will find that I not only possess the power and the will, but the understanding how to use them."

now Charles II, had been crowned King of Jerusalem and Sicily by the Pope, re-establishing at least the Angevin's nominal claim to the Sicilian throne.

However, the thorny question of the succession raised its ugly head when Charles Martel and his young bride Clemenza died of plague on 19 August 1295, leaving their three children, Charles Robert (Carobert), Clemenza, and Beatrice to the guardianship of their grandmother, Mary of Hungary.⁴⁶ Since Carobert was only seven years old, he was deemed too young to rule by his grandfather Charles II. As Charles' second son, Louis, had renounced his right to the throne, Robert, then an ambitious youth of seventeen, seemed the natural choice to succeed his elder brother Charles Martel.⁴⁷ Robert, it was hoped, would strengthen the Angevin kingdom by battling the Ghibellines and retaking Sicily. So on 13 February 1296, with the blessing of Boniface VIII, his father bestowed the title Duke of Calabria on him and acknowledged his right of primogeniture.⁴⁸ In order to appease Carobert's supporters, through clever diplomatic manipulation, the Angevins managed to assert his title to the crown of Hungary in 1300, at the age of twelve.⁴⁹ Rivals claimants asserted their rights to the throne, however, and it was not until 15 June 1309, thanks to the tireless efforts of the papal legate, Cardinale Gentile Partino da Montefiore, that Carobert's title would be firmly established.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Carobert proved a thorn in his uncle's side. As Charles Martel's eldest son, the law of primogeniture designated

⁴⁶ Ibid., 185.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Giuseppe Galasso, *Il Regno di Napoli: Il Mezzogiorno angioino e aragonese 1266-1294* (Turin: Unione Tipografica, 1992), 116. By the terms of Charles' will, Robert became "heredem et universalem successorem" in tutte le signorie paterne, definendolo "primogenitum nostrum."

⁴⁹ Welbore St. Clair Baddeley, *Robert the Wise and His Heirs, 1278-1352* (London: Heinemann, 1897), 19-20. This coronation was achieved through complex political maneuvering. In 1290, Mary's brother King Ladislaus had been assassinated, leaving no heir. His cousin Andrew was therefore crowned as the nearest male representative to the House of Arpad. However, if descent through the female line had been respected, Mary's son Charles Martel should have succeeded to the throne, followed by his son, Carobert.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 26. Andrew died in January, 1301, and his daughter Agnes renounced all claim to the throne, bringing the Arpad dynasty to an end. However, a new contender by the name of Wenceslaus III, son of the King of Bohemia, asserted a claim, and it was not until 1309 that the succession crisis was resolved, as the Hungarian nobility and clergy were opposed to Carobert's accession.

him the rightful heir to the Kingdoms of Sicily, Hungary, and Jerusalem, making Robert a usurper. During his reign, Robert would wage a strenuous battle to conquer public opinion and overcome the stigma attached to his accession. As we shall see, the commissioning of Simone Martini's St. Louis altarpiece would comprise an essential element in this strategy.

Chapter 4: Louis of Toulouse: Reluctant Bishop, Frustrated Franciscan

Before proceeding with an account of the strategy Robert set in motion to legitimate his right to the succession, it will be useful to introduce the protagonist of Simone's altarpiece, St. Louis of Toulouse. Who was this man whose bland countenance stares impassively out as he places the crown on his brother's head, and why had he renounced his claim to three thrones, preferring the life of a humble Franciscan friar to the worldly glory and power of kingship? Simone Martini's *St. Louis of Toulouse*, as we shall see, reveals only a partial and imperfect glimpse of the man it purports to honor. Commissioned by Robert, the altarpiece had a definite political agenda that precluded an entirely faithful representation of his devout sibling. Louis' whole life had been modeled on Franciscan values of poverty and humility, yet Simone's portrayal of him barely alludes to these virtues which guided his existence.

In her well-researched biography of St. Louis of Toulouse, Margaret Toynbee gives a thorough account of the factors behind Louis' decision to resign his birthright.⁵¹ Her seminal work not only restores the reputation but clarifies the motives of the man Dante had discredited.⁵² Louis was born either in Brignoles (Provence) or Nocera dei Pagani near Salerno in February, 1274 into an illustrious family. He was the second son of Mary of Hungary and Charles II of Anjou, whose own father Charles I, Count of Anjou and Provence and King of Jerusalem, had, in addition to these titles, been personally entrusted with the Kingdom of Naples

⁵¹ Toynbee's sources included Louis' *Process of Canonization (Inquisito facta per venerabiles patres dominos Guidonem Xanctonensem et Raymundum Lectorensem episcopos super vita, moribus, meritis et miraculis domini Ludovici Tholosani episcopi)*, John of Orta's nearly contemporary *Life of St. Louis*, Boniface VIII's bull nominating Louis to the see of Toulouse, John XXII's bull of canonization, Louis' will, the Catalonia state archives in Barcelona, and the Angevin Registers (*Registri Angioini*) in the state archives in Naples, destroyed by the Nazis in the autumn of 1943. We must be particularly thankful that Toynbee had access to them while they were still in existence. They make this particular biography of the saint an invaluable source of information.

⁵² Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia*, ed. Charles C. H. Grandgent (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1972), 699. In the *Paradiso*, Canto VIII, 145-46, Dante had criticized Louis of Toulouse for neglecting his obligations by abdicating. "Ma voi torcete a la religione tal che fia nato a cignersi la spada."

and Sicily by Pope Urban IV. Louis' great uncle, Louis IX of France, had earned a reputation for piety and would be canonized in 1297. His mother, a devout woman who had founded many convents,⁵³ was a great niece of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. She was descended on her father's side from Andrew II, national hero of Hungary. Thus the young Louis was born into a family whose power and prestige conferred not only honor but obligations and high expectations. In fact, Louis was named after his saintly ancestor, whose example, it was hoped, he would imitate.⁵⁴

He spent his earliest years in Naples at the royal residences of Castel dell'Ovo and Somma, tutored by Nicholas Druget and John of Us, later Archdeacon of Beaugency, who taught him the alphabet, the *Pater Noster*, and the *Ave Maria*. In 1279, at the age of five, he accompanied his parents to Provence when his father was named Vicar-General by Charles I. There, Louis and Robert learned French and immersed themselves in local customs, "to gratify the patriotic feelings of the County."⁵⁵ The brothers received an education appropriate to their status as princes of the blood, modeled on that of the Royal House of France, under the tutelage of the elderly knight William de Manoir (who had been their father's governor), who instructed them in manners, morals, and the catechism.⁵⁶ When Louis was twelve, he and Robert paid a two month long visit to a community of Benedictine monks at Mt. St. Victor, near Marseilles.

However, it was to the Franciscans that, from earliest childhood, Louis developed a strong and unwavering attachment. The princes were supervised by the Master of the Household, a Franciscan friar named William of Miliard, and two priests, Peter Debria and Philip Normanni,

⁵³Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, trans. Éva Pálmai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 304. One of them was the Clarissan convent of Santa Maria Donna Regina, where she retired after the death of her husband. It became the center of the Angevin dynastic cult in Naples.

⁵⁴Toynbee, *St. Louis of Toulouse*, 34.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid., 45.

with whom they celebrated Mass daily.⁵⁷ By all accounts, Louis was a gifted and devout pupil, always carrying his book of devotions and reciting the Office of Our Lady. Toynbee reasons that he probably accompanied his parents to the ceremony for the translation of the relics of Mary Magdalene from Marseilles to the Church of St. Maximin in 1282.⁵⁸ If he were indeed present, this solemn event must have left a deep impression on the young Louis who, even as a young child, already showed signs of an uncommon sensitivity and deep devotion to God. The *Process of Canonization* relates how he would get out of bed in the middle of the night to pray and sleep on the hard floor, and how the only amusement he allowed himself was an occasional game of chess.⁵⁹ A docile child, he almost never misbehaved but would cry when his brother Robert got punished. He seems also to have had an aversion to women, avoiding the noble ladies of the court and refusing to eat in the presence of Robert's and Raymond's nurses.⁶⁰

The 1282 uprising known as the Sicilian Vespers would have dramatic repercussions on the life of the young prince. Little did he know that when his parents returned to Naples to manage the crisis, thirteen years would pass before he would see them again. In the meantime, his father would be taken hostage by Alfonso III of Aragon in 1284 in an attempt to recover Sicily, and four years later, under the terms of the Treaty of Canfranc, Louis and his brothers would be offered as hostages in exchange for their father's release. Forced to leave the comfort and security of their beloved Provence, they passed the next seven years in Aragonese and Catalanian prisons. The experience must have been traumatic, even for one not as young and impressionable as Louis. Forced to leave behind his mother and younger brother Raymond, who was dangerously ill, Louis entered the hostile territory of Catalonia accompanied by only one

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 47. Charles II had "discovered" the relics of Mary Magdalene in 1279 and presided over their translation from Marseilles to S. Maximin two years later.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 48

⁶⁰ Ibid.

member of his household.⁶¹ Knowing the little princes would excite sympathy among the populace, Alfonso sequestered them away in the remote fortress of Moncada near Barcelona.⁶² While strict codes of chivalric conduct prevented them from being overtly mistreated, they must surely have suffered the pangs of homesickness and loneliness.⁶³

Thus Louis spent the formative years of his adolescence – from age fourteen to twenty-one – in captivity. The experience profoundly affected the course of his life, particularly his decision to abandon the pleasures of the world for the rigors of Spiritual Franciscanism. Louis had already begun to come under the influence of the Franciscans in 1286 when Francis le Brun was appointed his tutor in Provence. Future bishop of Gaeta, le Brun “perhaps did more than any other towards moulding Louis for the religious life.”⁶⁴ A member of the royal household and Louis’ personal confessor, he became a lifelong friend, accompanying Louis to prison where he offered invaluable moral and spiritual comfort to his ward. While in prison, Louis also developed a close relationship with Friar Peter Scarrerii, future Bishop of Rapolla, who, along with Le Brun, became his tutor and devoted companion.⁶⁵ While in captivity, Louis and Robert wrote to distinguished theologian Peter John Olivi, the learned leader of the Spirituals venerated as a saint during his lifetime, and he met Raymond Gaufridi, a Spiritual sympathizer and Franciscan reformer who reinforced his admiration for the Order.⁶⁶ Le Brun and Scarrerii, moreover, played another important role in the princes’ lives: they oversaw their education, grounding them in grammar, logic, theology, natural science, metaphysics, Latin, and disputation (*disputatio*). Louis proved unusually studious, preferring to spend his free time reading rather

⁶¹ Ibid., 55.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia*, 378. In the *Purgatorio*, Canto VII, 115-17, Alfonso of Aragon (the Magnificent), eldest son of Pedro III, appears as a decent young monarch with a noble and generous nature.

⁶⁴ Toynbee, *St. Louis of Toulouse*, 51.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 184

⁶⁶ Ibid., 86, 76.

than playing with his younger brothers. Lay witnesses at his Canonization Process testified that he needed six or seven pack animals just to transport his books.⁶⁷ His erudition was so impressive that those who heard him preach believed his learning to be divinely inspired. In fact, André Vauchez has labeled Louis “the first intellectual to be canonized by the medieval Church.”⁶⁸

Louis embraced an austere and devout existence for one so young. At age fourteen, he designed a rule of life to which he strictly adhered. Every morning he heard Mass privately with Friar le Brun, followed by confession and prayer. He then joined the Franciscans in reciting the Canonical Hours and the Office of the Cross, which a Carthusian monk taught him to recite while imitating Christ’s grueling posture on the cross.⁶⁹ He fasted strictly, eating little meat or fish, his favorite dish being *nebule*, a wafer accompanied by some diluted wine.⁷⁰ He sometimes ordered Friar Francis to scourge him as many as three to four times a week.⁷¹ While he did not try to impose his high standards on the other members of his household, he did feel responsible for their moral education. He was especially concerned that the seventy Provençal nobles who had been forced to accompany the princes into captivity not exert a bad influence on his little brothers. As the eldest brother, Louis felt an obligation to discipline the others and ensure they conducted themselves *comme il faut*. Disapproving of their boisterous conduct, loud debates, and occasional profanity at table, Louis warned them that if they didn’t behave respectfully, they would have to eat their dinner off a napkin on the floor – and to share it with any dogs that might come along.⁷²

⁶⁷ Andre Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 346.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 402.

⁶⁹ Toynbee, *St. Louis of Toulouse*, 66.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 67.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 68.

Notwithstanding his concern for their moral welfare, Louis was a compassionate brother who tried to comfort his distressed siblings, reassuring them that God would take care of them. He could also be very protective, especially of Robert, who seems to have struggled more against his captivity than Louis. When they were moved to the castle of Cuirana, “state prison par excellence,” their new governor, Bernaldo de Monpahon threatened to throw them off the rock of Cuirana if Alphonso desired it. At one point he actually held Louis suspended over the rock, terrorizing his little brothers, whom he afterwards tried to comfort.⁷³ He even joined in their amusements on occasion, hunting and playing war games with Robert. However, when he was violently thrown from his horse, he concluded God was displeased with him and would never consent to ride again.⁷⁴ Even in captivity, Louis was also engaged in doing good works. In his new prison in Barcelona, a house belonging to Peter of S. Clement, he would pass bread to the beggars on the street through his window.⁷⁵ He persuaded a reluctant Robert to participate in the traditional Maundy Thursday ceremony of washing the feet of the poor, following the example of Christ. He even convinced him to kiss the mouth and feet of a leper, believing that since it was an act in honor of the Passion they would not contract the disease.⁷⁶ Apparently, “Robert partook very unwillingly in Louis’ charitable ventures.”⁷⁷

It was during this trying stay at the Cuirana that Louis took a vow to join the Franciscans when he was released. John of Orta relates how Louis fell very ill, vomiting blood and struggling for breath. Convinced he was going to die, he promised God, the Virgin, and St. Francis that if he recovered, he would join the Friars Minor.⁷⁸ In November 1294, a year before

⁷³ Ibid., 69.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 71.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 70.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 77.

his liberation, Louis secretly received the tonsure and the four minor orders from Francis le Brun on the orders of Pope Celestine V (Bull of 9 October 1294). Francis relates that Louis cried when he recited the words, “The Lord Himself is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup.”⁷⁹ Toynbee suggests that after he recovered, he continued to wear secular dress and to disguise the tonsure because his father disapproved of his son’s attachment to such a poor and humble religious order and moreover, was no supporter of the Spirituals. He also requested an interview with the great Spiritual leader Olivi, and though the visit never took place, Louis’ request is an indication of the level of his spiritual commitment. By the time he was finally freed in November, 1295, he had made the irrevocable decision to join the Franciscan Order. So pure was his spirit that he considered his long years of imprisonment a blessing in disguise, for they had brought him to God. John of Orta relates how he repeated the words of the Psalm, “Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.”⁸⁰

The very day Louis was released (All Saints Day), he publicly received the tonsure and clerical habit of the Franciscans at Beltrano and preached the wedding sermon at the marriage of his sister Blanche to James II of Aragon.⁸¹ During the return journey to Naples, Louis encountered a beggar along the road, and having no alms to give him, made him a present of his gloves.⁸² At Montpellier, he visited the Franciscan convent and reaffirmed the vow he had made at Cuirana to enter the Order.⁸³ When he stopped in Rome on his way to Naples, Boniface VIII ordained him to the sub-diaconate on Christmas day in St. Peter’s.⁸⁴ These acts of faith, however,

⁷⁹ Ibid., 84.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 99.

⁸¹ Ibid., 89. James II of Aragon had agreed to return Sicily and his sons to Charles in exchange for Sardinia, Corsica, and his daughter Blanche’s hand in marriage.

⁸² Ibid., 91.

⁸³ Ibid., 92. However, the friars were reluctant to receive him into the Order, fearing to displease his father the King.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 94.

alarmed his father, who must have seen where his son's devotion was leading. He upbraided him for riding a humble mule and refusing to eat off silver plate. He ordered Louis to wear costly furs in keeping with his royal status on the journey home; Louis complied as far as Vico, where he replaced his lavish garments with a simple white tunic, cloak, and hood.⁸⁵ Charles most likely hoped that his son's devotion to the Franciscans was just a passing phase. As Toynbee points out, he probably comforted himself with the thought that, even though Louis had received the minor orders, he could always obtain a dispensation from them. According to John of Orta, Charles endeavored to dissuade him from renouncing his inheritance, offering him the chance to govern and urging him to marry. Since his grandson Carobert was too young to rule both Hungary and Sicily, Charles hoped Louis would govern Naples upon his death and marry Violante of Aragon, James' younger sister.⁸⁶ However, Louis refused to renege on his vow. Temporal power held no more appeal to him than marriage – his aversion to women had reached such a level that he would not even kiss his own mother when they were finally reunited.⁸⁷ To all his father's arguments he replied that "he would not do evil in order that good might come."⁸⁸

In a ceremony that probably took place in January, 1296 at Castelnuovo, Louis renounced his right to the throne of Naples. The *Canonization Process* records that by so doing, "he aspired to attain an everlasting inheritance, so that, utterly rejecting his temporal patrimony, he renounced the rights of primogeniture and the kingdom."⁸⁹ During Lent of 1296, Louis was ordained a deacon in the Franciscan church of San Lorenzo in Naples.⁹⁰ He insisted on receiving no special

⁸⁵ Ibid., 95.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 98.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 92; Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 345, notes that according to Brother William of Cornillon, Louis "preserved throughout his life his baptismal innocence."

⁸⁸ Toynbee, *St. Louis de Toulouse*, 96.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 100.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 106.

recognition, presenting himself at the altar along with the other candidates.⁹¹ Pope Boniface VIII wrote to Charles personally offering to ordain him a priest immediately (waiving the usual one-year waiting period) but Louis refused, abhorring all the fanfare that such a ceremony would involve. In this he again disappointed his father, who having reluctantly accepted his sons' renunciation of his royal status, nevertheless was "always anxious that Louis, since he had renounced the world, should at least bring honor to the royal House of Anjou by that act."⁹² It was Boniface VIII who proposed making Louis Bishop of Toulouse in December, 1296, much to Louis' chagrin. His first impulse being to reject the offer. Bermundus de Roca reported in the *Process* that Louis "wept bitterly" at the idea, averring he was too young and inexperienced to accept such an honor.⁹³ His ambitious father, however, was delighted at the prospect of having a close family member in such an important and influential see. Even his mother appears to have encouraged her son to accept. Seeing no escape, Louis traveled to Rome to present the Pope with a daring ultimatum: he would accept the bishopric if Boniface would allow him immediate entry into the Franciscan Order.⁹⁴ Boniface agreed, and Louis entered his beloved Franciscan Order on Christmas Eve, 1296.⁹⁵ He made his profession of faith in the home of Gerard Bianchi, Cardinal Bishop of Sabina, to John of Murrovalle, Minister-General of the Order. Fearing to incite his father's wrath, the Pope forbade him from wearing the habit publicly. When Louis was invested as Bishop of Toulouse four days later, he had to conceal his Franciscan habit beneath his vestments.⁹⁶ Louis then left Naples to assume his new role in Toulouse, but he stopped in Rome along the way where he was publicly received into the Order on St. Agatha's Day,

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 107.

⁹³ Ibid., 110.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 112.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 113.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

February 5.⁹⁷ Boniface had finally given him permission to reveal his secret. When his father learned the news, he was furious: “his anger blazed forth against Louis and the Franciscan Order in general to such a degree that he declared that no Friar Minor should ever enter his household again.”⁹⁸ That evening, after saying Mass in the Aracoeli convent, he received permission to wear the habit publicly and gladly cast off his episcopal vestments in favor of the plain brown Franciscan robe. At dinner in the convent’s refectory, desiring to live like a humble friar, he offered to serve the meal but was prevented by the Count of Monte Feltro.⁹⁹ In Paris, however, on his way to Toulouse, while staying with the Friars Minor, he accepted the lowliest of tasks with alacrity. When reproved for not cleaning the dishes adequately, he offered to eat from those he had washed the next day.¹⁰⁰ On Maundy Thursday, he preached in his simple Franciscan habit. He asked that the lavish carpet which had been unfurled in his honor be removed.¹⁰¹ He also provided food and clothing to one hundred poor Parisians whose feet, along with those of his Franciscan hosts, he washed.¹⁰² A miracle is also attributed to Louis during his Paris sojourn. He is said to have cured the dean of the faculty of medicine, John Passavensis, of a near fatal case of dropsy by washing his feet and praying with him.¹⁰³ At the University of Paris, he preached the virtues of humility and poverty in the presence of the his cousin, King Philip le Bel, and scholars.

When he finally reached Toulouse, a “hotbed of heresy and scandal,” despite his misgivings about his new office, he dedicated himself to reforming the clergy and implementing a merit-based system of preferment. With the help of James Duèze, then a professor of canon law at the

⁹⁷ Ibid., 115.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 116.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 119.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 120.

University but destined to become Pope John XXII, he instituted vital changes. In particular, he required all candidates for benefices to undergo a rigorous selection process. According to John of Orta, “Louis was as firm in rejecting the noble and wealthy, if they proved unsuitable, as he was in accepting the humble and penniless who passed the test satisfactorily.”¹⁰⁴ His father lavished him with a generous allowance, “anxious that his son should...manifest to the world the magnificence with which a royal Angevin bishop, and the cousin of the King of France, could maintain himself and his household.”¹⁰⁵ In typical fashion, Louis rebelled by instructing Duèze to reduce his own as well as his household’s expenses to the bare minimum and to increase alms to the poor.¹⁰⁶ Despite a promising beginning, Louis soon realized that he could not successfully reconcile his obligations as Bishop of Toulouse with the spiritual demands of a Franciscan friar. As Toynbee eloquently summarizes the situation,

In allowing his reception in the Franciscan Order, which was the real aim of his life, to become dependent on his acceptance of a bishopric in order to please his father, Louis had been trying to serve two ends, and he was learning that he could serve neither. As bishop he considered that it was impossible for him to realise the Franciscan ideal; and yet as long as he was continually hankering after his habit and his cell, he could not carry out his episcopal duties with complete sincerity: the diocese must suffer.¹⁰⁷

Determined to put an end to this debilitating internal conflict, Louis decided to resign the bishopric and dedicate himself entirely to the Franciscans. Before he could reach the Pope in Rome, however, he became ill at Brignoles, where he expired on 19 August 1297. The *Process* relates that on his deathbed he confided to Friar William of S. Marcel, “I am altogether determined to be quit of a cure of souls. It is enough for me if I am able to give an account of

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 123.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 124.

¹⁰⁶ Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 308.

¹⁰⁷ Toynbee, *St. Louis of Toulouse*, 125. His father, ever eager to exploit his son’s position for the greater honor of the family, even petitioned Boniface to make Louis a cardinal. The Pope refused because he did not approve of royal cardinals.

my own soul to God.” As we will see, Simone Martini’s St. Louis altar presents a very different man from the one described in the *Process of Canonization*.

Chapter 5: Robert of Naples: Unscrupulous Usurper or “Roi Sage”?

“Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown” -- Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part II*; III, i, 31

As the last chapter demonstrated, Louis of Toulouse had relinquished the thrones of Sicily, Jerusalem, and Hungary in favor of his younger brother, Robert of Anjou. The third son of Charles II, Robert would have to devote considerable energy to overcoming the stigma of usurpation attached to his accession. It must be remembered that in the natural order of the succession, Carobert, eldest son of Charles Martel, would normally have inherited the title. However, his father Charles Martel having succumbed to plague in 1295, and Carobert being but seven years of age at the time, Charles II took the liberty of altering the succession, judging it more prudent to entrust the older and wiser Louis with the responsibility of such vast dominions. When, to his chagrin, Louis renounced his inheritance and embraced the simple life of a Franciscan friar, Charles again intervened, naming his third son Robert his heir and investing him with all the rights of primogeniture. Boniface VIII colluded to deprive Carobert of his rightful inheritance; on 24 February 1297, the Pope confirmed Robert heir to the Kingdom of Sicily.¹⁰⁸ Hoping to appease his grandson, Charles settled the throne of Hungary on him, but even the papal stamp of approval could not alter the law: in tampering with the succession and depriving Carobert of two-thirds of his kingdom, Charles had in fact violated the law of primogeniture.¹⁰⁹ It was a crime for which Robert would never be completely exonerated.

Thus Robert of Naples was on the defensive from the beginning. Anticipating resistance to his decision, Charles began almost immediately to take steps to prepare the terrain for Robert's eventual succession. Within a month of Louis' renunciation, on 2 February 1296, he knighted

¹⁰⁸ Romolo Caggese, *Roberto d'Angio e i suoi tempi*, 2 vols. (Florence: R. Bemporad, 1921-30), 7.

¹⁰⁹ Hoch, “Beata Stirps,” 286.

Robert; on 13 February, he invested him Duke of Calabria and Vicar-General of the Kingdom.¹¹⁰ The same year, he was named Captain-General of the Tuscan-Guelph League, charged with combating the Whites and the Ghibellines. Moreover, in order to give Robert valuable practical experience as the future sovereign, the Pope divided the kingdom between him and his father: Charles would rule Provence and Piedmont, while Robert would reign over central Italy.¹¹¹ Charles acceded to the power-sharing strategy, for as Caggese notes, “il re evidentemente voleva proseguire una politica di progressiva valorizzazione del figlio destinato al trono.”¹¹² In an effort to maintain the recently re-established alliance with Aragon, Robert married Violante of Aragon in 1297, and after her death, contracted an alliance with Sancia of Majorca in 1304.¹¹³ The same year he was invested Prince of Salerno by his father.

As soon as Charles II died on 5 May 1309, Robert lost no time in going to Avignon, accompanied by his lawyers Niccolo Ruffolo and Bartolomeo da Capua,¹¹⁴ to press his claim to the Angevin throne. The Pope supported Robert for several reasons: first, Charles II had designated Robert his rightful heir in his will; next, Florentine bankers and merchants, who contributed considerable wealth to the Kingdom of Naples, favored a strong Guelph party over a pro-imperial one;¹¹⁵ third, the Pope preferred a loyal Angevin monarch who would keep both Florentine and Ghibelline aspirations under control; finally, King Philip IV of France hoped to strengthen the Neapolitan branch of the French royal family.¹¹⁶ Thus, with much pomp and ceremony, on 1 August, 1309, Robert swore allegiance to the Holy See and was crowned King of

¹¹⁰ Hoch, “The Franciscan Provenance,” 24.

¹¹¹ Léonard, *Les Angevins*, 204.

¹¹² Caggese, *Roberto d’Angio*, 1:44.

¹¹³ Pryds, *The King Embodies the Word*, 26.

¹¹⁴ Baddeley, *Robert the Wise*, 75. Bartolomeo da Capua was a prominent jurist who supported Robert’s claim to the throne when the question of the succession arose. He also wrote sermons praising the Angevin dynasty and validating Robert as king.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 79. Naples benefited from commercial and artistic ties to Florence. Like his father, Robert accorded patronage to Jewish merchants and bankers, and as a result, the Neapolitan economy flourished.

¹¹⁶ Pryds, *The King Embodies the Word*, 28.

Sicily and Jerusalem by Clement V.¹¹⁷ A year later, thanks to the unstinting efforts of Cardinal Gentile Partino da Montefiore, his nephew Carobert was finally installed on the Hungarian throne. It was hoped that now, “nessuno avrebbe potuto più dubitare della legittimità dell’autorità sua, proclamata con tanta pompa dalla Santa Sede.”¹¹⁸

However, despite the King’s personal endorsement of his son, his measures to ensure a seamless transfer of power, and Louis’ own willingness, even eagerness, to surrender the crown to his brother, Robert’s critics began almost immediately to accuse him of usurping Carobert’s crown and to cast aspersions on his character.¹¹⁹ As Caggese has remarked, “I contemporanei ebbero subito un senso di profonda avversione contro di lui, poiché egli non era che il terzogenito di Carlo II, e la corona del Regno non gli sarebbe potuta legittimamente spettare.”¹²⁰ Some chroniclers even alleged he had poisoned Charles Martel, though this was impossible since Robert was still imprisoned in Catalonia when his brother died in 1295. Others averred he had deliberately encouraged Louis to embrace the religious life and relinquish his inheritance. Furthermore, Robert was accused of convincing Carobert to accept the Hungarian throne in order to rid himself of all obstacles to the Sicilian crown (“per sbarazzarsi completamente la strada e impadronirsi dello Stato.”)¹²¹ The last of these charges was entirely true. As we have seen, Charles II and Boniface VIII had hoped to persuade the young man to accept only a third of his due.

Robert had good reason to fear Carobert. Shortly after his coronation, his worst fears were realized when Carobert himself began contesting his uncle’s claim to the throne. Robert sent emissaries to Hungary on 10 June 1309 to remind him that his grandmother Mary of Hungary

¹¹⁷ Caggese, *Roberto d’Angio*, 106.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Toynbee, *St. Louis of Toulouse*, 102. Louis himself “appears to have raised no objection to passing over Carobert in favor of Robert.”

¹²⁰ Caggese, *Roberto d’Angio*, 5.

¹²¹ Ibid., 5-6

supported Robert's claim to the Neapolitan crown. Carobert, however, was not deterred; he continued to insist on his rights, sending John II, Dauphin of Vienne, to the Neapolitan court in 1317 – the same year Simone is believed to have painted the St. Louis altarpiece – to recover his title to the Principate of Salerno and the Honor of Monte Sant'Angelo – all to no avail.¹²² Robert adamantly refused to yield, and Carobert, confronted with his uncle's intransigence, decided to content himself with the Hungarian crown. But the threat of his renewed claims proved a constant source of anxiety to Robert. Robert therefore launched a campaign to whitewash his public image, increase his popularity, and above all, to counteract ugly rumors of usurpation. He consciously constructed a new self-image, or, to borrow Stephen Greenblatt's phrase, engaged in a measure of "Renaissance self-fashioning." Henceforth, he would be the loyal defender of the Guelphs and savior of the Church in its struggles against the imperially-backed Ghibellines; an erudite and eloquent monarch known for his sermons and preaching; and a refined and cultivated patron of the arts.

While it is chiefly with the last of these roles that we are concerned with here, it will be helpful to touch briefly on Robert as papal defender and preacher. As we have seen, Robert's grandfather had been hand-picked by Urban IV to act as his vassal in Sicily and bulwark against the remnants of Germanic imperialism. Robert was well aware of the heroic reputation and papal favor his grandfather had enjoyed. Writing to Philip V of France in 1318, he proudly recalled how Charles I, upon entering Apulia, had "crushed the pride of the Ghibellines and tamed the wilderness."¹²³ Robert cast himself in the same mold, determined to present himself

¹²² Hoch, "Beata Stirps," 286-88.

¹²³ Benedetto Croce, *History of the Kingdom of Naples*, ed. H. Stuart Hughes, trans. Frances Frenaye (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 33.

“come il protettore naturale del guelfismo italiano.”¹²⁴ The Guelph cause had been considerably weakened by the loss of Sicily and the Treaty of Caltabellota in August, 1302, which placed the island under the control of Frederick of Aragon during his lifetime. As Norman Housley has observed, “The blow which had been dealt to Angevin power and papal prestige weakened Guelphs everywhere.”¹²⁵ Under the Aragonese, Sicily became a major Ghibelline power and as such, a constant threat to the Angevin kingdom. Moreover, Robert had to contend with another threat in the form of Henry VII of Luxembourg, who aspired to become “roi des Romains.”¹²⁶ Reaffirming the papal-Angevin alliance, on March 15, 1314, the Pope named Robert his imperial Vicar in Italy, hoping to discourage Matteo Visconti from taking up the cause of Henry VII.¹²⁷ Believing, however, that it was more productive to intermarry with the enemy than to resort to the battlefield, Robert avoided armed conflict whenever possible.¹²⁸ Naples reaped the benefits of this “politique de paix.” Political stability encouraged Florentine merchants and bankers to invest generously in the city, making it one of the most prosperous in Europe. Moreover, they were reassured by the election of the new Pope, which ended a two-year papal interregnum.¹²⁹ Robert had maneuvered to have his personal choice for the papacy, Jacques Duèze of Cahors, elected Pope on 7 August 1316, reinforcing the papal-Angevin alliance and thereby assuring the long-awaited canonization of his brother.

¹²⁴ Alessandro Barbero, “La Propaganda di Roberto d’Angio,” in *Le Forme della propaganda politica nel due e trecento*, ed. Paolo Cammarosano (pub. Palais Farnèse, Rome : École Française de Rome, 1994) : 112.

¹²⁵ Norman Housley, *The Italian Crusades: The Papal-Angevin Alliance and the Crusades Against Christian Lay Powers, 1254-1343* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 32.

¹²⁶ Leonard, *Les Angevins*, 221.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 223. Fortunately for Robert, Henry died at Buonconvento on August 24, 1313, amidst rumors spread by Robert’s enemies that he had been poisoned during Communion.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 227. He arranged a marriage between his eldest son Charles, Duke of Calabria, and Catherine of Austria, widow of his former rival Henry VII of Luxembourg and sister of the new king of the Romans, Frederick.

¹²⁹ John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order From Its Origins to the Year 1517* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 309.

Robert also utilized the pulpit to counterattack critics who accused him of usurpation, preferring to wage his war with words rather than arms. Darleen Pryds presents a detailed study of the king as preacher. While Dante disparaged him as a “re di sermone,”¹³⁰ Pryds argues that Robert was an eloquent and prolific preacher; no fewer than 289 of his sermons have survived.¹³¹ According to Pryds, for Robert, “preaching served as a political tool to enhance his personal and dynastic reputation for religious devotion and to express his royal office in terms of evoking divine sanction.”¹³² Dominican and Franciscan court preachers reiterated Robert’s message in their own sermons: Robert came from a long line of saintly forebears whose virtues he had inherited. At Angevin funerals, “reciting the entire roster of family and dynastic saints was practically a *sine qua non* of these sermons.”¹³³

Furthermore, Robert cultivated the image of a wise and learned king, the new Solomon of his generation. From the beginning of his reign, he was portrayed as a sage and judicious monarch, surpassing in wisdom his Biblical predecessor. At his coronation in 1309, Bartolomeo da Capua praised the young monarch for “la haute et suave sagesse, la prompte et lumineuse science, l’éclatante et évidente justice, la stable et douce constance.”¹³⁴ Petrarch enthused, “C’è un solo Augusto oggi in Italia, anzi nel mondo, ed è il re Roberto.”¹³⁵ This was high praise for the man

¹³⁰ Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia*, 699. Dante, speaking through Charles Martel here, paints an unflattering portrait of both Robert of Naples and Louis of Toulouse. He blames Louis of Toulouse for neglecting his God-given duties as monarch by abdicating and Robert for being more interested in preaching than governing: “Ma voi torcete a la religione tal che fia nato a cignersi la spada, e fate re di tal ch’è da sermone; onde la traccia vostra è fuor di strada.” (Paradiso VIII, 145-48).

¹³¹ Pryds, *The King Embodies the Word*, 126.

¹³² Ibid., 124

¹³³ Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses*, 345.

¹³⁴ Jean-Paul Boyer, “Prédication et état napolitain dans la première moitié du XIV^e siècle,” in *L’État angevin : pouvoir, culture, et société entre XIII^e et XIV^e siècle* (Palais Farnèse, Rome : École Française de Rome, 1998) : 149.

¹³⁵ Alessandro Barbero, “Letteratura e politica fra Provenza e Napoli,” in *L’État angevin : pouvoir, culture, et société entre XIII^e et XIV^e siècle* (Palais Farnèse, Rome : École Française de Rome, 1998) : 159. The article discusses the literary luminaries at the Angevin court in Naples, the influence of the French troubadour and Provençale tradition, and the emerging Florentine vernacular on the development of letters in early fourteenth-century Naples.

who, as a young prisoner of Peter of Aragon, had preferred throwing stones to reading.¹³⁶ Indeed, cultivating the persona of the “roi sage,” Robert transformed Naples into a flourishing humanistic city, developing a notable library at Castel Capuano, embellishing the scriptorium,¹³⁷ and patronizing the University where famous professors such as Cino da Pistoia came to teach “la poesia volgare.”¹³⁸ His court attracted literary luminaries such as Petrarch, Boccaccio, Barbato of Sulmona, Giovanni Quatrario, and Guglielmo Maramaldo as well as artists, including Simone Martini, Giotto, Pietro Cavallini, and Lello da Orvieto. Neapolitans began to take pride in their city and its history, producing the *Chronica di Parthenope*.¹³⁹ When Robert died, Petrarch declared it the end of an era (“Parthenope infelix rapto gemit orba Roberto”) and predicted an inevitable decline in the city’s fortunes.¹⁴⁰ Federico Franconi, who preached at Robert’s funeral, echoed the sentiment, highlighting Robert’s intellectual achievements and his wisdom:

Who would not admire his wisdom with respect to the natural world, or to Ethics, Medicine, Law, Grammar, or Logic. In short, I believe that in his time the world did not have a man who was so wise in so many fields. Thorough instruction made him competent in all the Liberal Arts, and he was a great theologian. Therefore, one could apply the words of Matthew 12 [:42] to him: Behold, a greater man than Solomon here.¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ Toynbee, *St. Louis of Toulouse*, 49. It was only after being introduced to Aesop’s *Fables* that he began to take an interest in books.

¹³⁷ Isabelle Heullant-Donat, “La Cour angevine comme milieu culturel,” in *L’État angevin : pouvoir, culture, et société entre XIIIe et XIV siècle* (Palais Farnèse, Rome : École Française de Rome, 1998) : 189. The author characterizes Robert’s court as a place where “l’eclectisme culturel” flourished. Among the king’s interests was the collection of manuscripts, and sources speak of a house he rented solely to house his copyists and illuminators.

¹³⁸ Pryds, *The King Embodies the Word*, 66. The University of Naples also became a vehicle for promoting Angevin politics. Founded by Frederick II in 1224 as a pro-imperial institution intended to train imperial lawyers and administrators, the University now promoted Guelph rather than Ghibelline ideals and became a center for administrators and academics who wrote pro-papal tracts.

¹³⁹ Croce, *History*, 85. The chronicle reflected Neapolitans’ newfound pride. It reminded Neapolitans how Constantine had called Naples “the bulwark of the empire,” and how valiant Neapolitans had defended themselves against Saracens, Normans, Germans, and Hungarians.

¹⁴⁰ Francesco Petrarca, *Rerum familiarium libri XVII-XXIV*, trans. Aldo S. Bernardo (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 340. In XXIV.2 he wrote: “Unhappy and bereaved Naples mourns the death of Robert, and a single day has destroyed the fruits of many years. Now her people await anxiously its doubtful destiny...”

¹⁴¹ Pryds, *The King Embodies the Word*, 38.

Robert's efforts to whitewash his public image had succeeded admirably. Considered a usurper at the beginning of his reign, by the end he was perceived as a cultivated, bountiful monarch more interested in advancing the cause of culture than in usurping thrones. However, preaching and constructing a personal image as a man of letters were only part of his strategy to silence critics who viewed him as a usurper. The arts, and in particular, Simone Martini's panel *St. Louis Crowning Robert of Naples*, would prove another powerful weapon.

Chapter 6: *Robert of Anjou Crowning Robert of Naples: The Painting*

The *Pala* as a Work of Art: Style and Iconography

Simone Martini's magnificent altarpiece *St. Louis of Toulouse Crowning Robert of Naples* (fig. 1) is a splendid painting whose sumptuous decoration and imposing stature dazzle and impress. Yet Louis of Toulouse, whom it purports to represent, would never have approved of the aristocratic way in which he is portrayed. There is almost no trace of the man who had espoused the Franciscan tenets of poverty and humility; in fact, Simone's lavish altarpiece epitomizes the antithesis of the values Louis championed. Rather, it is as much a glorification of Robert of Naples and an affirmation of his right to rule as a tribute to his sainted brother. The altarpiece was a key element in Robert's program to dispel allegations that he had violated the law of primogeniture by appropriating his nephew's throne.

The sheer size of the altarpiece is calculated to impress the viewer with Angevin wealth, status, and power, the main panel measuring over eight feet tall and six feet wide.¹⁴² It was once adorned with precious stones and seed pearls that would have glittered seductively against its real gold background in the candlelit chapel where it was displayed.¹⁴³ An inscription across the spandrels of the predella which reads "SYMON.DE.SENIS.ME.PINXIT" assuredly serves as Simone's signature,¹⁴⁴ though why Simone was chosen to paint such an important work is open to interpretation. Gardner suggests he may have been selected on the strength of previous commissions which showed him capable of a refined elegance in harmony with the aesthetic norms of the French court at Naples.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Martindale, *Simone Martini*, 192. The exact dimensions are 250 x 188 cm (main panel) and 56 x 205 cm (predella).

¹⁴³ Julian Gardner, "St. Louis of Toulouse, Robert of Anjou and Simone Martini," in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 39 (1976), 12.

¹⁴⁴ John White, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1250-1400* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 352.

¹⁴⁵ Gardner, "St. Louis of Toulouse," 32.



Figure 1 : Simone Martini, *St. Louis of Toulouse Crowning Robert of Naples*, Naples, Museo di Capodimonte

While there is no evidence Robert himself had ever met Simone, his brother Philip of Taranto had visited Siena in 1315, where he may have seen the *Maestà* (fig. 2) whose regal opulence perhaps encouraged him to propose the Sienese artist for the important Neapolitan

commission.¹⁴⁶ As Martindale remarks, “In its dazzling richness of textures and textiles, its use of silver and gold, of glass and stones, the St. Louis altar in a real sense picked up where the *Maestà* left off.”¹⁴⁷ Perhaps stylistic considerations were not the patron’s only consideration. The *Maestà* was also “un vero e proprio manifesto politico...un’immagine più laica che sacra” in its determination to bring peace to the commune of Siena and promote wise and stable government.¹⁴⁸



Figure 2 : Simone Martini, *Maestà*, Siena, Palazzo Pubblico

¹⁴⁶ Hayden B. J. Maginnis, *The World of the Early Sienese Painter* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 155. Philip was in Siena from 27 July to 4 August 1315 when Simone was working on the *Maestà*.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Contini, *Simone Martini*, 29, 26. The Virgin, enthroned as Queen of Heaven and protector of Siena, admonishes the fractious Tolomei and Salimbeni for their violent quarrels and counsels the city’s rulers to “love justice.”

In its extensive use of heraldry, the *Maestà* also foreshadowed one of the themes of Simone's St. Louis altarpiece: on the canopy above the Virgin, the *balzana* figures prominently, alternating with a gold lion on a red field (symbol of the *Popolo* Party) and more importantly, with the coat of arms of the Neapolitan and French Angevins.¹⁴⁹ As Diana Norman explains, "The close political association of Siena (under the leadership of the Nine) with the Guelph party (under the leadership of Robert of Anjou, King of Naples) was thus made explicit."¹⁵⁰ Therefore it is probable that Simone's proven ability to produce art in the service of politics, as much as his exquisite technique, inspired Robert's choice of artist for the St. Louis Altarpiece.

There is little doubt that Robert of Naples was the altarpiece's patron given the political and religious events surrounding its creation. As we have demonstrated, Robert had compelling personal reasons to commission this work, whose iconography affirms his legitimacy as sovereign while also glorifying his brother's sanctity. Nor is there any "serious doubt" among scholars regarding the date of the work, since in all likelihood it was painted to commemorate the canonization of St. Louis of Toulouse in 1317, leading Martindale to posit "any date between September 1316 and November 1319" as appropriate possibilities.¹⁵¹ Contini concurs, believing 1317 to be the year of completion based on stylistic similarities with the *Maestà* and the St. Martin cycle of frescoes in Assisi, particularly in its depiction of space and the realism of figures (Robert being "un vero e proprio ritratto").¹⁵² Julian Gardner believes that April 7, 1317, the day on which Louis was proclaimed a saint, "is almost certainly a *terminus post quem* for the panel."¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Diana Norman, *Painting in Late Medieval and Renaissance Siena 1260-1555* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 93.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. Jacques Duèze became Pope John XXII in September, 1316, and Louis' remains were translated to a new tomb in Marseilles in November, 1319.

¹⁵² Contini, *Simone Martini*, 45.

¹⁵³ Gardner, "St. Louis of Toulouse," 20.

There are compelling reasons to believe the painting functioned as an altarpiece, not least of which is the existence of a predella. As Gardner observes, the predella would have raised the main panel above the priest as he said mass and elevated his mind as well.¹⁵⁴ However, we cannot be absolutely sure it was an altarpiece since poor restoration of the lower predella moulding makes it “impossible to ascertain whether or not it was socketed into an altar top.”¹⁵⁵ Today in the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples, its earliest recorded provenance is the Neapolitan Church of San Lorenzo Maggiore,¹⁵⁶ though Hoch and Gardner both favor Santa Chiara¹⁵⁷ as the panel’s original location. Since its dimensions were too small for the high altar, Gardner proposes it served as a chapel altarpiece for the *Cappella Sancti Lodovici* in Santa Chiara.¹⁵⁸ Hoch concurs, believing that the chapel’s proximity to the main altar would accord well with the saint’s elevated status. Moreover, he states that “A hitherto overlooked papal indulgence delimits the date of this chapel reinforcing the likelihood it was the original site for the St. Louis panel.”¹⁵⁹ Founded in 1310 by King Robert and his devoutly Franciscan spouse Sancia of Majorca, Santa Chiara appears a natural choice for the altarpiece, as it functioned as the Angevin family church and mausoleum. Several royal personages were interred there, including Robert’s son Charles, Duke of Calabria, who predeceased his father, Charles’ wife Elizabeth of Valois, and eventually, Robert himself.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 29-30.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 33.

¹⁵⁶ Hoch, “The Franciscan Provenance,” 28. Hoch suggests that in 1399 Queen Margaret of Durazzo, a member of the cadet branch of the Neapolitan Angevins, moved the altar from Santa Chiara, its original location, to San Lorenzo Maggiore. 28.

¹⁵⁷ The Church of Santa Chiara in Naples was founded by Robert of Anjou’s wife Sancia of Aragon as a Franciscan church. It served as the final resting place of the Angevin monarchs and their families, much like St. Denis for the French royal family. After Robert’s death, his widow Sancia of Aragon lived in the convent until her own demise.

¹⁵⁸ Gardner, “St. Louis of Toulouse,” 33.

¹⁵⁹ Hoch, “The Franciscan Provenance,” 29.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 32. Charles of Calabria predeceased his father, dying on 9 November 1328. Tuscan sculptor Tino di Camaino carved his tomb (1332-33), as well as that of his wife, Mary of Valois (d. 1331), adjacent. Robert himself was buried there in a tomb behind the main altar after his death in 1343. Sadly, aerial bombardments of the church during World War II destroyed much of its funerary sculpture.

Praised as “courtly art at its most refined,”¹⁶¹ Simone’s panel depicts a double coronation. St. Louis, Bishop of Toulouse, is shown in the act of placing the earthly crown of Naples on the head of his younger brother, Robert of Anjou, while he himself receives a celestial crown from two hovering angels. Christened a “huge dynastic icon”¹⁶² by John White, the image emphasizes dynastic continuity through heraldry. Louis is attired in a richly decorated cope bearing the arms of France and Hungary,¹⁶³ while his great morse displays the arms of Jerusalem and Sicily.¹⁶⁴ Robert’s dalmatic also exhibits the Angevin and Sicilian arms, though those of Hungary, barry gules and argent, are conspicuously absent; he was not entitled to wear them, his father having bestowed the Hungarian crown on Robert’s nephew, Carobert.¹⁶⁵ The Hungarian arms, however, reappear in the spandrels of the predella. A pattern of fleur-de-lys, the French royal arms differenced for Anjou, has also been punched into the dazzling real gold background,¹⁶⁶ while others modeled in gilded *pastiglia* decorate the border of the imposing frame, almost certainly conceived by Simone himself.¹⁶⁷ At the top of the panel, above Louis’s head, another heraldic device affirms the family’s lineage, France ancient with a label of five points gules¹⁶⁸ (fig. 3) leaving no doubt in the viewer’s mind that this is “a quintessentially Angevin image.”¹⁶⁹ Unusually, even the reverse side of the panel is covered with fleur-de-lys (fig. 4) making this “the first frame which elevates heraldry to a major expressive medium in painting.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶¹ Smart, *The Dawn of Italian Painting*, 90.

¹⁶² White, *Art and Architecture*, 352.

¹⁶³ Gozzoli, *L’Opera completa*, 86.

¹⁶⁴ Gardner, “St. Louis of Toulouse,” 12.

¹⁶⁵ In addition, Robert’s official title was King of Naples, since Sicily was still in the hands of the Aragonese, where it would remain, despite Robert’s efforts to recover it.

¹⁶⁶ Gardner, “St. Louis of Toulouse,” 17, avers this is “perhaps the first instance” of such a practice.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁶⁸ Martindale, *Simone Martini*, 193.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Gardner, “St. Louis of Toulouse,” 14-16. Furthermore, we know that heraldry was important to Robert, who preached a sermon around this theme based on a text by Matthew 6:28 (“Considerate lilia agri...”). See Gardner, 17.



Figure 3 Simone Martini, *St. Louis of Toulouse Crowning Robert of Naples* (detail), Naples, Museo di Capodimonte



Figure 4 Simone Martini, *St. Louis of Toulouse Crowning Robert of Naples* (reverse), Naples, Museo di Capodimonte

The painting is therefore a visual testament to the illustrious lineage of the two protagonists. As we have seen, Louis and Robert were direct descendants of the French royal line (the Capetian dynasty) as grandsons of Charles I of Anjou, brother of the French King Louis IX who would be canonized in 1297. Charles had become Count of Anjou upon his elder brother's death; hence the preponderance of fleur-de-lys differenced for Anjou. Urban IV, in an effort to procure a committed Guelph ally in his struggle against the imperially inclined Ghibellines, had increased Angevin territory by conferring the crown of Naples and Sicily on Charles, thus accounting for the prominent arms of Sicily on Louis' glowing morse (fig. 5). The ambitious monarch had himself purchased the title of King of Jerusalem from Mary of Antioch, explaining the appearance of the arms of Jerusalem beside those of Sicily. The additional Hungarian arms on Louis' cope refer to the Angevin claim to the throne of Hungary, a result of his father's marriage with Mary of Hungary, daughter of Stephen IV and sister of the ruling monarch Ladislas.¹⁷¹ Such a prominent display of family dynastic motifs "makes this picture as much an Angevin coat of arms as an altarpiece."¹⁷²

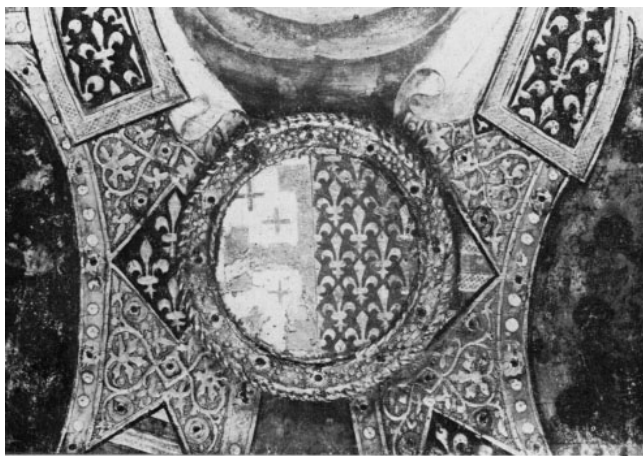


Figure 5 Simone Martini, *St. Louis of Toulouse Crowning Robert of Naples* (detail), Naples, Museo di Capodimonte

¹⁷¹ Martindale, *Simone Martini*, 192, suggests that Mary of Hungary had a role in financing the altarpiece and therefore perhaps influenced decisions regarding iconography.

¹⁷² Cole, *Sienese Painting*, 76.

Although relatively well-preserved, the painting has suffered from the passage of time and improper cleaning, which have altered its original appearance. The head of Louis' crozier has been largely obliterated (fig. 6), and quantities of precious gems that would have made the surface scintillate have long since disappeared; only those on Louis' prominent morse remain. All the gilding has vanished, and the silver leaf underlying Louis' cope and the spandrels of the predella has oxidized, darkening rather than illuminating the colors painted over it, which accounts for the dimming of the gilded octagonal spots on Louis' cope.¹⁷³



Figure 6 Simone Martini, *St. Louis of Toulouse Crowning Robert of Naples* (detail), Naples, Museo di Capodimonte

¹⁷³ Maginnis, *The World*, 98. Louis' cope was a rich crimson created by laying silver leaf and glazing it with transparent red lake. Small gold disks were then applied to its surface, but the egg-tempera caused the silver to darken.

The frame, too, has endured the wear and tear of the centuries. A truncated gable in its present state, conclusive evidence shows it would originally have been embellished with an upper pinnacle or “*incoronamento*” and a pair of side shafts, giving it a more Gothic overall effect.¹⁷⁴ White and Gardner posit that this pinnacle contained an image of God the Father whose presence would have conferred divine sanction on the double coronation proceeding below.¹⁷⁵ The frame’s unusual shape, and its combination of main panel and predella, has also engendered interest. Though ultimately derived from Duccio’s *Maestà*, it is, according to Martindale, “the first of its kind to survive.”¹⁷⁶

Simone’s style has been characterized as a mixture of elements derived from both Byzantine tradition and French Gothic art.¹⁷⁷ Certainly growing up in Siena he would have been exposed to the “modern” French style which left its trace on the sinuosity of his line and love of decorative pattern. As Martindale explains, Simone would likely have come into contact with fashionable French aesthetics through numerous channels. There were goldsmiths among the artisans in his brother-in-law’s family who were influenced by “quella cultura gotica d’oltralpe che, di moda a Siena intorno alla fine del Duecento, influenzò l’arte del giovane Simone.”¹⁷⁸ As early as 1285, Giovanni Pisano arrived in Siena, where he stayed for ten years, introducing French Gothic style through his sculptures for the Duomo.¹⁷⁹ Contini suggests Guccio di Mannaia, a respected goldsmith and enamellist working in the French Gothic tradition in Siena from 1291-1318, as

¹⁷⁴ Gardner, “St. Louis of Toulouse,” 12, 26; White, *Art and Architecture*, 353. Hoch, “The Franciscan Provenance,” 27, sheds light on the fate of this missing gable. In 1700 the painting was moved to the Bacio-Terracina Chapel in San Lorenzo Maggiore where Gaetano Filangieri saw it encased in a marble frame. “This protective cover perhaps closed easily over the protruding objects necessitating their removal.”

¹⁷⁵ Gardner, “St. Louis of Toulouse,” 26; White, *Art and Architecture*, 353.

¹⁷⁶ Martindale, *Simone Martini*, 18.

¹⁷⁷ Smart, *The Dawn of Italian Painting*, 93.

¹⁷⁸ Contini, *Simone Martini*, 31.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

another possible influence.¹⁸⁰ Many English and French “*oltramontani*” artisans were employed in Sienese workshops in the early Trecento, and their production of paintings, miniatures, textiles, metalwork, enamels, and seals would also have affected local Italian style. Moreover, artists traveled frequently between Siena and France, bringing back precious objects such as ivories, jewels, sculptures, manuscripts, and panel paintings whose style influenced Sienese art. Simone may even have made the journey himself to France during the years when the Sienese archives remain silent about his activities. As Martindale suggests, “An acquaintance with Parisian court art would certainly explain some of the notable features for which there appear to be no native Italian precedents.”¹⁸¹ Simone would likewise have been exposed to French Gothic style in Naples where, quite possibly, he journeyed when summoned by the King.¹⁸² There he would have encountered a society where French language and culture dominated court life. Since Charles I of Anjou had accepted the Sicilian crown and founded a new dynasty in southern Italy, the Neapolitan aristocracy had espoused French literature, architecture, and pastimes.¹⁸³ Boccaccio, noting the influence of French courtly culture on Neapolitan life, called the city “splendid” above all other Italian cities “for the frequency of its jousting.”¹⁸⁴ Giovanni Paccagnini has also remarked on the “oriental influences” on Simone’s style, citing the inclusion of an exotic of an exotic Persian rug,¹⁸⁵ Louis’ mitre decorated with oriental dragons, the precious brocaded robes, and the “rapt and withdrawn grace” of the figures as examples of Far

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 66.

¹⁸² Francesco Sabatini, *Napoli angioina: cultura e società* (Naples : Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1975), 34. Southern Italy was already predisposed towards French culture, the Normans having “assunto come propria la cultura di Francia, ” especially in their poetry.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 33. Charles I had been raised at the French court where he had received “un’educazione cavalleresca e letteraria.” He had reinforced ties with the French royal family by marrying Beatrice Béranger, daughter of the Count of Provence. He had transported this culture to the Neapolitan court, where it had a profound impact on both the culture and the structure of Neapolitan high society.

¹⁸⁴ Croce, *History of the Kingdom*, 56.

¹⁸⁵ Kurt Erdmann, *Seven Hundred Years of Oriental Carpets* (London: Faber, 1970), 49. Erdmann identifies the carpet as an Anatolian animal design c. 1270-1280.

Eastern elements in the painting.¹⁸⁶ In addition, Louis' throne is adorned with luxurious Chinese fabric, while Robert's robe is decorated with the Chinese leaf and lotus pattern.¹⁸⁷

The unusual iconography competes with Simone's refined technique in capturing the viewer's attention. Since no established iconography for St. Louis existed, the altarpiece testifies to Simone's creative ingenuity. Yet it presents a supremely ironic view of the man who in reality scorned worldly power and wealth. Seated on a claw-footed throne, the gorgeously attired saint towers over his kneeling brother as he places the crown of Naples on his willing head. To emphasize the young saint's status, Simone has depicted him as a bishop, with mitre, crozier, and opulent cope "degno del più ambizioso vescovo,"¹⁸⁸ not in the unadorned Franciscan habit he preferred. The habit, in fact, is nearly concealed, a reminder of how he was initially forced to conceal his true vocation from his disapproving father. In fact, Simone's painting emphasizes all the worldly pomp and wealth Louis had rejected; he would have heartily spurned the gilded rings, crown, and gold-embroidered robe that adorn his person. Nor would he have countenanced the luxurious Anatolian carpet beneath his elaborate throne. When preaching in the Franciscan cloister in Paris, had he not rejected the carpet and the honor it implied as inconsistent with his vow of humility? Had he not preferred to ride, like Christ, on a simple donkey rather than a finely caparisoned mount suitable to one of royal status?

Yet Simone's intention was not to represent Louis as he really was, but as Robert wanted him to be. For this reason, Louis is depicted frontally, like iconic images of Christ in majesty of the early Duecento, which lends the image an almost divine authority.¹⁸⁹ Yet his image is not

¹⁸⁶ Giovanni Paccagnini, *Simone Martini* (Milan : Aldo Martello, 1957), 24-26.

¹⁸⁷ Maginnis, *The World*, 98. In trecento Sienese painting, most representations of textiles were modeled on real fabrics with motifs of Chinese or Sino-Persian origin, a reflection of China's opening to Western trade in the 13th century.

¹⁸⁸ Contini, *Simone Martini*, 43.

¹⁸⁹ Gardner, "St. Louis of Toulouse," 27, believes the image of Louis receiving the crown from a divine hand is modeled on similar coronation scenes in Byzantine art, specifically the apse mosaics of William II in Monreale and

perfectly iconic, as Louis and the diadem-bearing angels (fig. 3) are slightly decentralized, bringing the painting back into the real world and thus enabling it to serve a pragmatic, temporal function as well: the transmission of Robert's very earthly "message." By means of this nearly imperceptible detail, Simone has managed to create a delicate balance between the sacred and the profane; indeed, as Gozzoli has remarked, "sottile è il concetto del dipinto."¹⁹⁰ Spiritual and temporal are also counterbalanced by the way in which the two brothers are characterized: by depicting Louis' countenance as neutral and impassive, Simone stresses his divinity in contrast to Robert's humanity. Robert Oertel has described the saint's countenance (fig. 7) as "pallid, enraptured ... full of inner fervour," his eyes "fastened on things not of this world."¹⁹¹

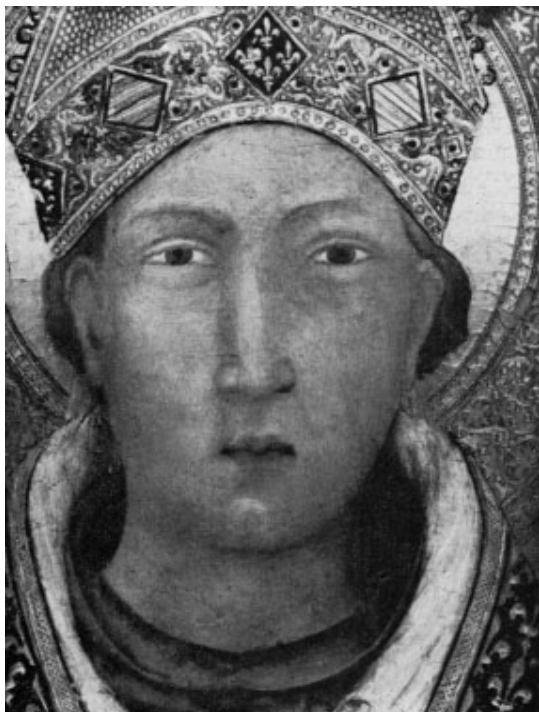


Figure 7 Simone Martini, *St. Louis of Toulouse Crowning Robert of Naples* (detail), Naples, Museo di Capodimonte

Roger II in the Martorana in Palermo. He argues persuasively that underlying Robert's decision to portray the Neapolitan coronation in this manner was his obsession with wresting Sicily from Aragonese control: "The legitimacy of Robert's claim to Sicily is perhaps alluded to..."

¹⁹⁰ Gozzoli, *L'Opera completa*, 86.

¹⁹¹ Robert Oertel, *Early Italian Painting to 1400* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), 204.

Robert's (fig. 8) on the other hand, suggests all the uniqueness of a real portrait, with its double chin, high forehead, and aquiline nose, presenting a less idealized image of a living individual.

In the words of John White, his is a portrait which "still retains its cunning."¹⁹²



Figure 8 Simone Martini, *St. Louis of Toulouse Crowning Robert of Naples* (detail), Naples, Museo di Capodimonte

The iconography reinforces Robert's legitimacy in yet another way. The double scale is a reminder of Louis' superior status as a bishop-saint whose power emanates from God, presumably occupying the pinnacle above. Christ's presence is implied by the fact that Robert is kneeling; as Gardner observes, "Monarchs normally are shown kneeling only in the presence of divinity."¹⁹³ Moreover, while frontally set rulers on animal headed thrones are not uncommon in Angevin iconography, Gardner points out that in Italian painting, enthroned ecclesiastics are

¹⁹² White, *Art and Architecture*, 352.

¹⁹³ Gardner, "St. Louis of Toulouse," 25.

rare.¹⁹⁴ He believes this combination of images – enthroned saint and kneeling king – not only signifies the presence of divinity but represents a feudal gesture, implying that St. Louis himself is intended to be “monarchical rather than episcopal.”¹⁹⁵ As such, the painting becomes “a political document” whose theme (unusual in Italian painting) is the transference of power.¹⁹⁶ In effect, Robert is crowned twice: by Louis and by Christ. Louis, as heir to the crowns of Sicily and Jerusalem, could (with the approval of Christ and his earthly vicar Boniface VIII) transfer his inheritance to his brother. However, not only is this transference enacted before God, it is God himself, through Louis, who actually crowns Robert. Louis acts, as it were, *in loco Dei*, an even weightier endorsement of Robert’s kingship.

It is true that Robert had not stolen Louis’ crown; his father’s interference in the succession had placed it on his head. Yet neither Robert (nor Louis either, for that matter) had protested against Charles’ decision to steal young Carobert’s inheritance; and years later, when Robert was king in his own right, he adamantly refused to restore even part of the territory usurped from his nephew. Rather, he used the occasion of Louis’ coronation in 1317 to reinterpret the story of the succession – in his own favor, of course. Simone’s painting depicts an altered reality, the tale as Robert wanted to tell it. Thus Robert appears as an obedient servant, humbly kneeling, the selfless instrument of his brother’s (and ultimately, God’s) will. There is no hint of the political scheming on the part of his father and the pope to manipulate the succession for their own benefit. The painting suggests Robert’s coronation is ordained by God and therefore wholly legitimate. The end result is a splendid altarpiece truly fit for a king, but incongruously dedicated to one who had repudiated his crown and chosen to live according to Franciscan ideals, among the lepers and outcasts he served.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 24.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 24-25.

The *Pala* in the Service of Dynastic Ambition: *Beata Stirps* and the Bid for Legitimacy

The St. Louis altarpiece has justly been called a “monument to kingship,”¹⁹⁷ functioning as it does as a visual justification of Robert’s claim to the throne. It is equally true that the painting intentionally evoked the idea of *beata stirps*,¹⁹⁸ the hereditary transmission of sainthood, in its attempt to bolster Robert’s legitimacy to the title. As we have seen, Robert had adopted a multifaceted strategy with regards to securing his claim, which included his self-affirming sermons and his efforts to cultivate a reputation as a wise and erudite monarch. Art patronage was another vehicle by which he succeeded in allaying suspicions that he had cheated his nephew out of his kingdom. Not only did Simone’s painting show Robert receiving the crown with Louis’ (and Christ’s) blessing; the image carried an even more subtle message, for Louis was no ordinary monarch – he was also a saint. As a member of a family that already boasted numerous saints (Louis of Toulouse being only the most recent), Robert was descended from an illustrious line of ancestors whose accumulated virtues he had inherited. Robert was not the first to exploit this belief in *beata stirps*. His father and grandfather had been well aware of the advantage of having saintly forebears; nor were the Angevins the first royal family to benefit from their illustrious connections. Religious legitimization of secular power had been practiced long before the Angevins ascended the throne. As André Vauchez observes, “The making – or remaking – of genealogical trees in noble families, and the adoption of a more or less mythical prestigious ancestor, attest to the need felt by the aristocracy to equip itself with a glorious past in order to legitimize its present situation.”¹⁹⁹

The Angevins proved as adept at exploiting their saintly lineage as anyone else. In his fascinating study of the use of Hungarian dynastic saints as royal propaganda, Gábor Klaniczay

¹⁹⁷ Hoch, “The Franciscan Provenance,” 22.

¹⁹⁸ Literally translated as blessed root or offshoot, in this context we might interpret it as “blessed origin.”

¹⁹⁹ Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 178.

has devoted an enlightening chapter to the Neapolitan Angevins and their conscious promotion of *beata stirps*. Robert's grandfather Charles I had cast himself in the role of savior of the papacy, exploiting his connection to his saintly ancestor Charlemagne, victorious champion of the Church *par excellence*.²⁰⁰ Moreover, Charles had foreseen the prestige that would accrue to the family through alliances with the saintly Hungarian royals: his son Charles of Salerno had married Mary of Hungary,²⁰¹ daughter of crown Prince Stephen (whose sister Margaret was venerated as a saint), while his daughter Elizabeth of Anjou had married Stephen's son Ladislas IV, who would also be canonized. Charles was cognizant of the advantages of a connection with Stephen, whom he termed a "powerful and warlike ruler, *descended from a line of saints and distinguished kings*" (italics mine).²⁰² Charles recognized the value of his saintly sibling as well. In his deposition in 1282 for Louis IX's canonization, he basked in his brother's reflected glory, reminding all present that "such a holy root will bring forth holy branches."²⁰³ After Louis' canonization, the Angevins promoted his cult, his grandson Philip IV of France founding a royal abbey at Poissy, Louis' birthplace, which became "a veritable family shrine."²⁰⁴

Louis of Toulouse was the object of similar exploitation at the hands of his father. Charles II, disappointed in his son's decision to abdicate, attempted to have him made a cardinal in order to further his own dynastic ambitions. When that failed, he pushed for Louis' canonization shortly

²⁰⁰ Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses*, 300. Charlemagne was a staunch defender of the papacy; he was rewarded for his piety by Pope Leo III who crowned him Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas day, 800.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 304. In 1293 the pious Mary ordered the rebuilding of the Clarissan convent of Santa Maria Donna Regina, later the center of the Angevin dynastic cult in Naples. Mary was a grand-niece of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, daughter of the Árpád king, Andrew II.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid., 301. Charles' sister, Isabel of France, was also a devoted Franciscan who founded the Abbey of Longchamp near Paris. Charles' brother Robert of Artois died a martyr's death in Egypt during the Seventh Crusade led by Louis IX. Alphonse of Poitiers, another brother of Charles, also accompanied Louis IX on both the Seventh (1248) and Eighth Crusades (1270).

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 301-303. The abbey contained the precious relic of Louis' heart. Philip also commissioned Franciscan Guillaume de Saint-Pathus to write a legend of Louis' life in French. Philip, like Charles, often alluded to his "sancti predecessors" and "sancti progenitors". Klaniczay argues that the Capetians' "pretension to saintliness" aided them in their efforts to subject the Papacy to French control at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

after his death, hoping to make Louis into the family's very own dynastic saint. In fact, "thanks to him, the family could boast dynastic saintliness in its own right, something that until then it had possessed only by inheritance."²⁰⁵ The Angevins were so eager to have Louis canonized that Robert attempted to expedite proceedings with "presents in influential quarters." On 12 September 1311, he paid Franciscan chaplain William of S. Marcel four hundred gold florins to facilitate the papal verdict by producing a list of his brother's miracles.²⁰⁶ Robert also established a special fund in Marseilles for the annual celebration of Louis' cult.²⁰⁷ Court preachers pronounced Louis an ideal candidate for sainthood, stressing his maternal and paternal links to saints.²⁰⁸

However, "the most spectacular" of the various strategies employed to promote the cult of St. Louis of Toulouse was "the iconographic propaganda conducted on his behalf."²⁰⁹ As Klaniczay has remarked, "Under the Angevins, who succeeded the Arpadians on the Hungarian throne, the thirteenth-century cult of royal saints would be exploited for propaganda purposes through the new technique of the dynasty's patronage of religious art."²¹⁰ By commissioning Simone's image of St. Louis, Robert effected a master coup by exploiting the belief in *beata stirps*. With its copious heraldry, the St. Louis altarpiece is a not-so-subtle evocation of the family's august and saintly forebears, intended to validate Robert's right to rule as their direct descendant.

Moreover, depicting Louis as a regal bishop rather than a humble Franciscan friar lent his

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 307.

²⁰⁶ Toynbee, *St. Louis of Toulouse*, 200.

²⁰⁷ Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses*, 305.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 306. Franciscan François de Meyronnes wrote many sermons praising the Angevins as a dynasty of saints. In support of Louis' canonization, he wrote: "In declaring the sainthood of St. Louis,...we need to contemplate...his singular lineage...Firstly, on his father's side, he is descended from saints, his father having been the nephew of St. Louis. Secondly, on his mother's side, too, he is descended from saints, for his mother, Mary of Hungary, comes from the saintly family of Saints Stephen, Emeric and Ladislas, kings of Hungary, Stephen being the country's first ruler. In recent times, only one woman has been canonised, and that is St. Elizabeth, who was of the same family as the mother of our Blessed Louis."

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 307.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 17.

endorsement of his brother more weight. In a word, the choice of iconography served Robert's political agenda -- dynastic aggrandizement and self-legitimization. While Robert never claimed to be a holy ruler himself, he nevertheless profited from his family's pantheon of saints to bolster his own authority, benefiting from a "capital of sanctity" accumulated by previous generations of ancestors.²¹¹

Not only were the Angevins the product of saintly dynastic alliances, they were, moreover, further exalted by their prestigious connection to the French royal family. Preachers reinforced the message to the populace. John Regina reminded his congregation that Robert was descended from "la maison de France...supérieurement noble entre toutes les maisons du monde...dont deux saints Louis ont été récemment canonisés, à savoir le roi de France et l'évêque de Toulouse." ²¹² It could be argued that Simone's iconography deliberately recalled certain aspects of French coronation rituals at Reims, reinforcing the link with the Capetian dynasty and, by extension, the saint of whom they were so proud: Louis IX, whose own coronation had taken place at Reims in 1226. Several details of the St. Louis altarpiece suggest Simone imitated certain aspects of the coronation ceremony. For example, Richard Jackson informs us that, "Après la très longue cérémonie de l'onction, le monarque était revêtu des autres symbols du pouvoir royal et de l'autorité. Tout d'abord le Grand Chambellan de France passait au roi la tunique royale et le manteau royal, tous deux de soie bleu...et couverts de fleurs de lys."²¹³ Robert's own blue tunic and mantle covered in fleur-de-lys would have caused the viewer to connect this image with French coronations. The color blue, or more specifically hyacinth, was associated with power

²¹¹ Vauchez, *Sainthood*, 179.

²¹² Boyer, "Prédication et état napolitain," 146.

²¹³ Richard A. Jackson, "Le Pouvoir monarchique dans la cérémonie du sacre et couronnement des rois de France," in *Représentation, pouvoir et royauté à la fin du Moyen Age*, ed. Joël Blanchard (Paris : Picard, 1995), 242.

and the sacred, having originated with the high priests of Israel.²¹⁴ Thus Simone's choice of hue for Robert's robes and the frame's background was well-informed. However, the similarities between the Capetian monarchy and their Angevin cousins do not stop there. At the crucial moment when the peers place the crown on the monarch's head, he is apprised of his responsibilities towards the realm and towards God:

Reçois donc cette couronne, et veille à agir de manière qu'elle porte les marques glorieuses et honorable de ta piété et de ton courage, et sache que c'est par elle que tu participes de notre ministère; et de même que l'on nous regarde comme les *pasteurs et les guides des âmes* dans le domaine spirituel, de même sois *le défenseur et le protecteur contre tous leurs ennemis de l'Église du Christ et du royaume* qui t'a été confié par Dieu et par l'office de notre bénédiction à la place des apôtres, afin que, paré de toutes les vertus, *comme autant de pierres précieuses*, et couronné comme les glorieux athlètes de la récompense du Bonheur éternel, tu jouisses d'une gloire qui n'aura point de fin avec notre Rédempteur et Sauveur, dont tu es considéré comme le gérant (*italics mine*).²¹⁵

While Robert was not crowned in Reims, he seems nevertheless to have consciously fashioned himself in the image of the ideal monarch described above. Through his sermons, Robert signaled his acceptance of his role as "pasteur et guide des âmes." As papal champion and staunch defender of the Guelphs, he proved himself a loyal "défenseur et protecteur" of the Church and the kingdom. The most interesting detail for our purposes, however, is the comparison of the new monarch's virtues with precious gems, both of which, it is implied, are valuable and rare. Perhaps Simone was thinking of this phrase in the coronation rite when he embellished his St. Louis altar with precious stones, whose light-reflecting properties were intended as a visual metaphor for the king's virtues. By linking the Angevin dynasty with his eminent Capetian relatives, Robert not only elevated his own image but gave credence to his claim to the Neapolitan throne. In this his strategy was similar to his grandfather's, who had

²¹⁴ J. Le Goff, "A Coronation Program for the Age of St. Louis: The Ordo of 1250," in *Coronations: Medieval and Early Modern Monarchic Ritual*, ed. János M. Bak (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 54.

²¹⁵ Jackson, "Le Pouvoir monarchique," 243-44.

emphasized his connection to his ancestor Charlemagne – the only difference being that Robert utilized a visual medium – the St. Louis altarpiece – to disseminate his political message and in so doing, “demonstrably brought a new spectrum of royal iconography to Italy.”²¹⁶

Two other roughly coeval examples will serve to demonstrate how Angevin artistic patronage promoted the family’s network of sanctity. The concept of *beata stirps* surely underlay Simone’s fresco cycles in the St. Martin and St. Elizabeth Chapels in the Lower Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi. The patron of the St. Martin Chapel was Franciscan Cardinal Gentile da Montefiore, papal envoy to Hungary who facilitated Carobert’s controversial accession to the Hungarian throne. Martindale posits a date before 1316 for this cycle, which would make it slightly earlier than the St. Louis altar.²¹⁷ The Angevin-Capetian-Árpád alliance is once again in evidence: on the soffit over the entrance arch, St. Louis of France is paired with St. Louis of Toulouse (fig. 9) and just below St. Clare appears with St. Elizabeth of Hungary.²¹⁸ Likewise, the St. Elizabeth chapel, which Martindale terms “the most regal corner of Assisi,”²¹⁹ continues the theme of dynastic sanctity. On the altar in the north transept five saints appear (fig. 10). Louis of Toulouse is flanked on the left by St. Francis and on the right by St. Elizabeth of Hungary, “one of the most important dynastic alliances of the late Middle Ages.”²²⁰ The dynastic implications multiply, for Martindale posits that if Vasari’s identification of one of the crowned figures as St. Louis of France is correct, the second crowned figure must be St. Ladislav. Given the choice of saints, which “suggests that the dynastic context is Anjou-Capet-Árpád,” Martindale believes

²¹⁶ Julian Gardner, “Seated Kings, Sea-faring Saints and Heraldry: Some Themes in Angevin Iconography,” in *L’État Angevin: Pouvoir, Culture et Société Entre XIIIe et XIVe Siècle* (Palais Farnèse, Rome: École Française de Rome, 1998), 119.

²¹⁷ Martindale, *Simone Martini*, 21-22.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 174.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 173.

²²⁰ Hoch, “Beata Stirps,” 278.

Robert, or his mother, Mary of Hungary, mother Mary of Hungary, would be the likeliest patron.²²¹



Figure 9 Simone Martini, St. Louis of France and St. Louis of Toulouse, Assisi, St.Martin Chapel, Lower Basilica, S. Francesco

²²¹ Ibid.



Figure 10 Simone Martini, *Five Saints*, Assisi, St. Elizabeth Chapel, Lower Basilica, S. Francesco

In an interesting article on the chapel, Hoch proposes an alternative identification of two of the saints. He confirms the presence of Francis, Louis of Toulouse and Elizabeth of Hungary but argues, based on iconographic evidence, that the other two figures represent the Blessed Agnes of Bohemia and St. Henry of Hungary.²²² He also believes St. Elizabeth of Hungary makes a second appearance in the crowned figure to the right of the Virgin and Child (fig. 11), questioning Martindale's assumption of St. Ladislav.

²²² Hoch, "Beata Stirps," 282. Hoch explains that the lily and the double row of punch marks above an unfinished crown identify this figure as St. Henry of Hungary, only son of the first Christian Árpád King, St. Stephen. According to his legend, he remained chaste after his marriage to a Byzantine princess (hence the lily, the flower of purity) and that he died young in a tragic hunting accident and thus never reigned (signified by the unfinished crown). He also challenges Martindale's assertion that the figure on his left is St. Clare, suggesting instead the Blessed Agnes of Bohemia, Elizabeth of Hungary's first cousin who rejected her royal birthright, preferring a life of poverty and charity. She founded the convent of St. Saviour for the Poor Clares in Prague, which she entered in 1234. He believes the plain white veil, simple cross, and incomplete crown (she renounced her royal status for the life of the cloister) identify her as St. Agnes.



Figure 11 Simone Martini, *Madonna and Child with Two Royal Saints*, Assisi, St. Elizabeth Chapel, Lower Basilica, S. Francesco

Regardless of the specific identities of the other saints, the appearance of St. Louis and Elizabeth of Hungary is enough in itself to underscore the connection between the Árpáds and their French relations. Moreover, the Christ child's gesture is significant. As Hoch observes, "Elizabeth of Hungary's orb and sceptre signal a majestic power acknowledged by Christ who reaches for the lily of Anjou and so sanctions the righteousness of Árpád-Angevin authority."²²³

The imposing tomb (fig. 12) of Robert's mother, Mary of Hungary, sculpted by Tuscan Tino da Camaino soon after her death in 1323, is another roughly contemporary example of art being used to promote *beata stirps*. Below the effigy, on the sarcophagus itself, are statues of her sons, with Louis in the middle flanked by Charles Martel, King of Hungary, and Robert, King of Naples. As Pryds has noted regarding Louis, "There is an effort to show the relationship not only between the saintly son and his deceased mother, but also between the saint and his two

²²³ Ibid., 286.



Figure 12 Tino da Camaino, *Tomb of Mary of Hungary*, Naples, Santa Maria Donna Regina

surviving brothers, both of whom ruled as kings.”²²⁴ Again, as in the St. Louis altarpiece, Robert’s relation to his pious brother and to the Hungarian royal family is affirmed. Even in death, he would continue to insist on his ties to Angevin and Hungarian royal saints. On his tomb (fig. 13), he appears not only as a king in majesty, seated on his throne, but as a gisant, surrounded by his entire family. Thus the dynastic message of the St. Louis altarpiece has come full circle. As Adrian Hoch has summarized, “the St. Louis panel triumphantly began the dynastic aggrandizement the tomb of Robert of Anjou likewise finished.”²²⁵

²²⁴ Pryds, *The King Embodies the Word*, 48.

²²⁵ Hoch, “The Franciscan Provenance,” 35.



Figure 13 Giovanni and Pacio Bertini, *Tomb of Robert of Anjou*, Naples, Santa Chiara

Spirituals vs. Conventuals: Remaking a Saint's Image

It now remains to discuss Louis' Franciscan Spiritual sympathies and their impact on the iconography of the St. Louis altarpiece. Here again, the true St. Louis has been remade according to the image Robert desired to present to the world of his brother. As we have mentioned, beneath the splendor of Louis' brocaded cope, his modest brown Franciscan apparel is perceptible, the only hint amidst such luxury of the saint's one true ambition: to embrace a life of poverty and renunciation in the spirit of the Franciscan tradition to which he was passionately devoted. His regal bishop's regalia deliberately obscures the humble habit and the austere

existence it symbolized. Moreover, the five predella scenes which will be discussed shortly present a similarly contradictory image of the saint, emphasizing his regal status as bishop of Toulouse and his humility, while consistently devaluing the poverty he had so zealously espoused. Why would Robert have wished to minimize his brother's devotion to the Franciscan ideal of poverty? To answer this question, we must first explain the religious context in which Simone's painting was produced, in particular with reference to the power struggle between two rival factions within the Franciscan Order.

By the time Simone was engaged in painting the altarpiece, the controversy between the Spirituals and the Conventuals had taken on "a whole new dimension in bitterness and obsessiveness."²²⁶ Louis had adhered firmly to the teachings of the Spirituals, who followed the example of the Order's founder, St. Francis of Assisi, and believed in absolute apostolic poverty. Louis had much in common with his saintly predecessor. In a dramatic gesture of renunciation, Francis had stripped off his clothes in the presence of the Bishop of Assisi²²⁷ and, to the consternation of his prosperous father, cloth merchant Peter Bernadone, had renounced his inheritance and announced his intention to adopt a life of abject poverty. True to his promise, he went to dwell among lepers, exposing himself to disease, hunger, and cold. He suffered a painful and humiliating existence; on one occasion, he was assaulted by robbers who beat and flogged him and threw him into a pit.²²⁸ Yet Francis strove to live according to Christ's example, interpreting the passage in Matthew 10: 7-10 literally: "As ye go, preach, saying, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils. Freely

²²⁶ Martindale, *Simone Martini*, 11.

²²⁷ Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order*, 13. When the Bishop of Assisi tried to dissuade Francis from adopting such a difficult way of life, the saint answered, "My lord, if we have possessions we shall need arms to protect them. And from this arise disputes and quarrels, and the love of God and of one's neighbor is much hindered. That is why I do not wish to possess any worldly goods."

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

have ye received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass for your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes nor yet staves..." The parallels with St. Louis of Toulouse are striking: both had renounced all their worldly possessions and rights to the everlasting displeasure of their fathers; both had chosen a life of poverty and humility among lepers and untouchables. We recall how Louis, emulating Francis' example, had ministered to lepers while in captivity in Barcelona, persuading the reluctant Robert to overcome his repugnance and kiss a leper's feet and mouth.²²⁹

The Spirituals endeavored to follow the original rule of St. Francis, which explicitly stated that the first condition of membership in the Order was absolute poverty: one must give all one had to the poor. As for clothing, the rule stated that "all the brothers shall be dressed in shabby clothes and shall patch them with sackcloth and other rags." To sustain themselves, they were allowed to work for their food, and "for their labor they may accept what is necessary, but not money." Moreover, they must limit themselves to humble tasks and not "have any rule over the households of those whom they serve...but let them be underlings [*minores*] and in subjection to all that are in the house."²³⁰ Thus, in abjuring his right to the throne, Louis was simply adhering to the tenets of the Order. He even referred to his fellow brothers as the *Fratres Minores*, the Lesser Brothers, thereby adopting St. Francis' own terminology.

The conflict within the order had begun during Francis' own lifetime as a result of a perceived inconsistency between word and deed: the saint himself had owned property.²³¹ By 1316, nearly a hundred years after his death, the order had grown considerably with the standard of living increasing accordingly; no longer content to live in abandoned houses and churches, the

²²⁹ Toynbee, *St. Louis of Toulouse*, 71.

²³⁰ Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order*, 16-17.

²³¹ Rona Goffen, *Spirituality in Conflict: St. Francis and Giotto's Bardi Chapel* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), 3. Francis, though opposed to ownership of property, nevertheless was legal owner of La Verna, his mountain retreat.

friars now enjoyed the shelter of specially built convents, regular meals, and the comfort of books and leisure, to the dismay of their more austere Spiritual brethren. In blatant violation of the Rule, some had begun accepting money as legacies from deceased parishioners, while others had started wearing fuller bodied habits with hoods and long sleeves, very different from the simple gray habit Francis had donned.²³² Unlike their rivals, the Conventuals were not threatened by the evolution of their Order, which they regarded as a healthy sign of its adaptability to the modern world. Their very name referred to their practice of living in large town convents rather than the abandoned homes and churches espoused by the Spirituals. By far the majority party, they conceived their role in a different light, believing their mission was to assist secular clergy in teaching theology at the universities, acting as missionaries, and combating heresy. In short, such a role in their opinion required greater material stability and security. In their eyes, strict obedience to the Church was required, not poverty, and those who did not submit to the Church – like the Spirituals – should be considered heretics and expelled before they could discredit the Order.²³³

Clement V had accorded a certain measure of protection to the beleaguered Spirituals,²³⁴ but after his death in 1314, matters came to a head when the new pope, John XXII, a Conventual sympathizer, issued the bull *Quorundum exigit* in October, 1317 stating that while poverty was a virtue, it was less important than obedience.²³⁵ The Spirituals were outraged, believing like their radical new leader Peter John Olivi that “materialism was the cancer poisoning the Body of Christ, and must be eradicated.”²³⁶ Finally, in an effort to end the controversy once and for all,

²³² Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order*, 185-187 discusses the violations of the Rule.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 191.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 200. Clement V published the bull *Dudum ad Apostolatus* on 14 April 1310 in support of the Spirituals.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 311. The bull stated, “Great is poverty; greater is chastity; but the greatest good of all is obedience if it is strictly kept.”

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 197.

the Pope issued an even stronger bull, *Sancta Romana*, on 30 December 1317, referring to the “*fraters de paupere vita*” as disobedient vipers that must be destroyed, and declaring their congregations henceforth dissolved.²³⁷ There was much at stake in the debate, for the very essence of papal authority was being challenged. As Moorman summarizes, “If Christian perfection could only be achieved through the renunciation of material goods – in both their use and ownership²³⁸ – then bishops, including the pope, could not claim to follow the apostolic life, and by extension, could not claim to be successors of Peter.”²³⁹ In other words, the doctrine of papal poverty was proving an acute embarrassment to the popes. That same year, 1317, John XXII had sixty-two Spirituals imprisoned and prosecuted, eventually burning five at the stake.²⁴⁰ It is small wonder given the furor of the debate that when Louis was asked, on his deathbed, whether he had any fear of death, he replied that he was more afraid of life.²⁴¹

A careful reading of the Simone’s painting will demonstrate that, once again, the iconography appears to have been politically motivated. Robert, like Louis, also cultivated relations with the Franciscans, by whom he had been educated in captivity. He and his wife Sancia had generously patronized Franciscan churches in Naples, founding the convent and monastery of Santa Chiara in 1310. He had hosted the Franciscan Chapter General in Naples in 1316, and would even be buried in the robes of a Franciscan friar.²⁴² However, Robert was too wise to become embroiled in the bitter controversy tearing the Order apart: he prudently adopted the path of least resistance,

²³⁷ Ibid., 312.

²³⁸ Ibid., 179-180. The debate over poverty hearkened back to Pope Gregory IX’s bull *Quo elongati* of 4 October 1230 which had introduced the concept of *usus rerum*, the enjoyment of material goods without possession (*possessio*). As this policy led to abuses by the friars, Nicholas III issued the bull *Exiit qui semina* on 14 August 1279 distinguishing between *usus juris* (use by right) and *usus facti* (use in fact). Friars had only the use of goods in fact (i.e. clothing, food), not by right. Even this stipulation had to be modified to prevent abuses, limiting friars to ‘*usus moderatus*’ more in harmony with their vow of poverty. Only the pope had the right of “*possessio*.”

²³⁹ Ibid., 86.

²⁴⁰ Lazaro Iriarte, *Franciscan History: The Three Orders of St. Francis of Assisi*, trans. Patricia Ross (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1979), 55-56.

²⁴¹ Toynbee, *St. Louis of Toulouse*, 130.

²⁴² Pryds, *The King Embodies the Word*, 37.

commissioning an image from Simone Martini in harmony with the teachings of the majority faction. Personally, Robert sympathized with the Spirituals. He and Sancia harbored Spiritual Franciscans escaping persecution in his kingdom, including Sancia's fanatical brother James, and he even appointed Peter Scarrerii, Louis' beloved old tutor, as his councilor and confessor.²⁴³ He also held Francis le Brun, Louis' old tutor and confessor in high esteem.²⁴⁴ In a sermon he preached in 1316 to the Franciscan provincial chapter in Naples, he reminded his audience that poverty was a virtue. He began courageously by quoting Matthew 5:3: ("Blessed are the poor in spirit"), but then as usual, pragmatism prevailed. Knowing the religious climate would not tolerate such a message, he cautiously concluded by elevating the virtues of clemency and piety above poverty.²⁴⁵ He could not risk angering the pope and thereby endangering the alliance on which the very foundation of his family's power rested. Had not his grandfather sworn to uphold the papacy and maintain the unity of the state, defending them not only against the Ghibelline threat but against all those who dared challenge the authority of the Church? Had not Clement V generously agreed to cancel the debts accrued by Robert's father and grandfather upon his own succession to the throne?²⁴⁶ Thus, in the main panel, the coarse brown sackcloth of Louis' Franciscan habit is "smothered"²⁴⁷ beneath the jeweled bishop's cope, stressing not his poverty and rejection of earthly power but his acceptance of his role as Bishop in obedience to the will of the church. In effect, the entire painting presents "un'immagine aggiustata...che oltre e essere un manifesto politico di legittimità del regno di Roberto, conciliava i progetti e le mire degli Angiò con le esigenze 'antispirituali' del papa."²⁴⁸ It was intended to show a recalcitrant young

²⁴³ Toynbee, *St. Louis of Toulouse*, 184.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Pryds, *The King Embodies the Word*, 118.

²⁴⁶ Caggese, *Roberto d'Angio*, 107. Robert was cash strapped because of the catastrophic loss of Sicily in 1282 as well as parts of the Angevin territories in Calabria and Basilicata.

²⁴⁷ Hyman, *Sienese Painting*, 49.

²⁴⁸ Contini, *Simone Martini*, 43.

Franciscan brought back into the fold; or, as Francesco Bologna has reasoned, to promote “il recupero della figura di Ludovico all’ortodossa francescana, voluto dal Ordine stesso.”²⁴⁹

Ironically, Louis, who had embraced the poverty and aceticism of St. Francis, would surely not have recognized himself either in Simone’s sumptuous main panel or in his “adjusted” predella.

Like the main image, the iconography of the five predella scenes (fig. 14) emphasizes Louis’ humility and obedience, consistently presenting him as a noble prince-bishop, not as the impoverished friar he aspired to be. The predella, like the main panel, presents the “official” version of the saint’s life – calculated to please the Conventuals and their papal champion. Since there was as yet no established iconography of St. Louis, Simone relied on his imagination and perhaps on accounts of Louis’ life in the *Process of Canonization* or the biography by John of Orta. He was probably also guided by Robert, who must have exercised considerable control over the image he intended the world to see.

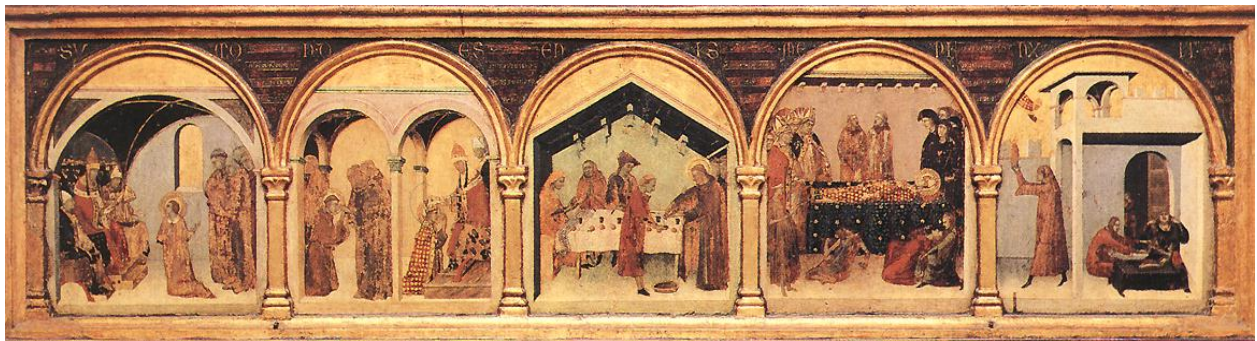


Figure 14 Simone Martini, predella, *St. Louis of Toulouse Crowning Robert of Naples*, Naples, Museo di Capodimonte

Giovanni Paccagnini has likened the predella scenes to “a scroll being unrolled before the spectator’s eyes.”²⁵⁰ In essence, they present the defining moments in the saint’s life. In the first scene (fig. 15) Louis is shown brokering a compromise with Boniface VIII, identifiable by the

²⁴⁹ Ferdinando Bologna, “Povertà e umiltà : il ‘San Ludovico’ di Simone Martini,” in *Studi Storici* 2 (1969), 231.

²⁵⁰ Paccagnini, *Simone Martini*, 30.

Caetani arms: he would accept the Bishopric of Toulouse if the Pope allowed him to fulfill his deepest wish – immediate acceptance into the Franciscan Order. Louis’ body language reveals his ambivalent attitude towards the bishop’s mitre; while his head turns toward the Pope, his upper body and left hand swivel in the direction of the Franciscan brothers behind him. Through the genius of this single gesture, Simone has managed to convey with eloquence Louis’ inner struggle: the obligation on the one hand to respect the wishes of his father and pontiff, and on the other to follow the dictates of his own heart. We recall that Louis had “wept bitterly” at Boniface’s proposal of the bishopric, consenting only when the Pope permitted him to enter the Order, too.²⁵¹ Interestingly, Simone even includes the detail of Louis’ tonsure. While the *Process* records that Louis’ first tonsure at Cuirana was nearly imperceptible, so as not to attract his father’s attention, the tonsure he received publicly in 1295 was “of normal size and shape,”²⁵² like the one in this scene. Stylistically, this scene, like the others, has prompted critics to comment on the “Giottesque” elements in Simone’s work. Martindale likens Simone’s simple, direct, uncluttered narrative technique and the corporality of his figures to that of Giotto.²⁵³ Gianfranco Contini concurs, crediting Simone with “un senso di maggior realismo e corposità,” while also acknowledging the Duccesque tendency that prefers to “impreziosisce il tutto con sottili decorazioni, aureole, guglie e bordi dorati.”²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Toynbee, *St. Louis of Toulouse*, 110.

²⁵² Ibid., 83.

²⁵³ Martindale, *Simone Martini*, 18.

²⁵⁴ Contini, *Simone Martini*, 30.



Figure 15 Simone Martini, *St. Louis before Pope Boniface VIII* (predella panel of the St. Louis Altarpiece), Naples, Museo di Capodimonte

The second predella scene (fig. 16) divided into two compartments separated by a colonnade, takes place under an arcade. In the first, Louis is being inducted into the Franciscan Order by John of Murrovalle, the Minister-General of the Order known for his anti-Spiritual stance, which would accord perfectly with Robert's desire to downplay Louis' Spiritual sympathies.²⁵⁵ Margaret Toynbee informs us that the Process of Canonization took place on Christmas Eve, 1296, in the home of Gerard Bianchi, the Cardinal Bishop of Siena. Despite his induction into the Order, Louis had to promise to keep his vows secret and not to wear the Franciscan habit until the Pope allowed him. Boniface was wary of angering Louis' father, who did not support

²⁵⁵ Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order*, 196.

his son's vocation. Imagining the small, intimate ceremony, Simone strips the scene down to its bare essence, concentrating on the small group gathered to witness the event and simplifying the background. In the second compartment, St. Louis is consecrated Bishop of Toulouse by Boniface VIII in a ceremony that took place on either December 29 or 30, 1296.²⁵⁶ Attired in a splendid cope, he kneels before the Pope who places the episcopal mitre on his head. Louis must have kept his vow of secrecy, since the Franciscan habit is barely noticeable beneath his elaborate cope. Indeed, submission to papal authority is the theme of this scene, which George Kaftal has described as Louis receiving the mitre "in virtue of holy obedience."²⁵⁷



Figure 16 Simone Martini, *St. Louis Received into the Franciscan Order and Consecrated Bishop of Toulouse* (predella panel of the St. Louis Altarpiece), Naples, Museo di Capodimonte

²⁵⁶ Toynbee, *St. Louis of Toulouse*, 113.

²⁵⁷ George Kaftal, *Iconography of the Saints in Tuscan Painting* (Florence: Sansoni, 1952), 635.

The third predella panel, *St. Louis Serving the Poor* (fig. 17) arrests our attention not only for its content but for its centralized placement. As John White observed, the predella scenes taken as a whole “mark a new stage in the evolution of pictorial organization. They are the first surviving example of the perspective grouping of several scenes about a clearly defined central axis.”²⁵⁸ Moreover, the orthogonals of the four flanking scenes “recede in parallel towards the centre of the predella,” balancing the slight asymmetry of the main image. The result, he concludes, “is emphatic visual unity.”²⁵⁹



Figure 17 Figure 17 Simone Martini, *St. Louis Serves Guests at a Banquet* (predella panel of the St. Louis Altarpiece), Naples, Museo di Capodimonte

²⁵⁸ White, *Art and Architecture*, 352.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

As Martindale observes, Simone's use of perspective within an architectural framework is also Giottesque – a technique reminiscent of the Saint Francis Cycle in the Upper Church at Assisi, itself inspired by the lessons of Roman mural painting.²⁶⁰ Perhaps Simone had seen the Assisi frescoes before embarking on the *St. Louis Altarpiece*. The scene shows St. Louis in his Franciscan habit and an ornate cloak pouring water over a poor man's hands, while his companions prepare to sit down for a meal. While Louis is shown fulfilling his vows by ministering to the poor, his cloak lined with (now faded) gold at first seems at odds with the subject of the scene. Surely when he fed the hundred poor in Paris on Maundy Thursday he was less sumptuously garbed. However, as Martindale remarks, this cloak establishes Louis' status as prince-bishop, not as self-effacing Franciscan friar.²⁶¹ Again, it seems Robert was taking precautions to avoid friction with the powerful Conventuals. By choosing to emphasize his brother's princely rank and not his poverty, he could deflect criticism from the Conventuals and maintain amicable relations with the Pope. Thus, Louis appears more like an aristocrat exercising *noblesse oblige* than a destitute follower of St. Francis. In fact, there is very little suggestion of poverty in this or any of the scenes – even the people Louis serves are “reasonably well-dressed and apparently in good health,”²⁶² while the table is neatly laid with an elegant white cloth. As the focal point of the predella, the choice of subject is also interesting. Robert, who probably commissioned the altarpiece, knew that if he wanted to appease the Conventuals, who had finally been persuaded to support the canonization of his ardently Spiritual brother, the image of Louis had to be acceptable. In his bull canonizing Louis, Pope John XXII had written that Louis' profound compassion for the poor, *not his imitation of them*, rendered him worthy of

²⁶⁰ Martindale, *Simone Martini*, 18.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 193.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

sainthood. Therefore, in Simone's painting, Louis himself is not depicted as a pauper dressed in rags; he is shown as an obedient practitioner of the Church's teachings on charity.

In the fourth predella panel, *The Obsequies of St. Louis*, (fig. 18) the saint, dressed in his lavish episcopal robes, lies on a bier draped in rich blue fabric with intricate patterns. He is surrounded by a cluster of bishops, a couple of singing monks, and several mourners respectfully attired in black. Others in attendance are engaged in more dramatic expressions of grief; one sways and faints into the outstretched arms of the person behind, while another, a cripple, drags himself awkwardly along the ground towards the saint's catafalque where he will be miraculously cured.



Figure 18 Simone Martini, *The Obsequies of St. Louis* (predella panel of the St. Louis Altarpiece), Naples, Museo di Capodimonte

Since no miracles at the funeral are recorded in the *Process*, perhaps Simone or his patron invented them as part of the strategy to deemphasize Louis' poverty, highlighting instead his divinely-bestowed curative powers. Focusing on Louis as healer and miracle-worker would divert attention from his reputation for self-abnegation and satisfy his Conventual critics. Clothing him in rich accoutrements rather than the drab Franciscan habit he favored was part and parcel of the same strategy. Yet this version of his death was no closer to the truth than the depiction of his life. The *Process* clearly states that he died the death of a mendicant – ill-clothed, unwashed, and lacerated, an unpalatable reality for the Conventuals and their status-conscious Angevin allies.

No doubt if Louis had had his way, he would have elected the most spartan of funerals and the humblest of graves. In actual fact, in accordance with his will, Louis was buried in a simple tomb without any monument in the church of the Friars Minor at Brignoles. This was, after all, the man who, the *Process* states, rejoiced to find a flea in his habit,²⁶³ and who so abhorred materialism that he had almost no possessions to bequeath to his friends at his death.²⁶⁴ However, in the twenty years between his death and canonization, a plethora of miracles credited to him had begun attracting scores of Provençal pilgrims to his grave. In 1319, with the encouragement of the Friars Minor of Marseilles²⁶⁵ and his devoutly Franciscan wife Sancia, Robert had his brother's relics translated to a more magnificent tomb, more in accordance with his cult status.²⁶⁶ It cannot have escaped his notice that such an honor would further increase Angevin prestige and more particularly, his own. The translation of Louis' relics almost certainly postdates Simone's painting. However, the decision to portray an elaborate funeral and clothe the saint in costly

²⁶³ Toynbee, *St. Louis of Toulouse*, 117.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 130.

²⁶⁵ Marseilles was chosen since it had belonged to Louis as Count of Provence.

²⁶⁶ Toynbee, *St. Louis of Toulouse*, 206.

vestments suggests that at the time the painting was commissioned, Robert was already contemplating a grander resting place for his by now famous brother. In essence, then, this predella panel not only foreshadows the translation of Louis' body, it encapsulates Robert's strategy of refashioning his brother's image in his own interest.

The final predella scene, *Revival of a Dead Child* (fig. 19) presents another posthumous miracle attributed to the saint, who, the *Process* records, resurrected a child in St. Rémy in the diocese of Avignon.²⁶⁷



Figure 19 Simone Martini, *Revival of a Dead Child* (predella panel of the St. Louis Altarpiece), Naples, Museo di Capodimonte

²⁶⁷ Martindale, *Simone Martini*, 193.

In the upper left of the panel, Louis, clad once again in his bishop's cope and mitre, careens down from Heaven to restore a dead child to life. The mother, not yet realizing the miracle that has occurred, tears out her hair in grief, while the father prays fervently to a statue of the saint. As before, care has been taken to avoid provoking the Conventuals. All reference to Louis' Franciscan habit has been obliterated; even the statue of the saint depicts Louis the royal Bishop, not Louis the indigent Franciscan.

Thus the predella scenes, like the main panel, serve a political end: they depict Louis as a prince-bishop performing duties entirely appropriate to his station as a prince of the blood and eminent Churchman. Any potentially controversial elements have been discreetly removed; Louis' image has been neutralized to such a degree that his true personality has been effaced and the ideals he lived by rendered innocuous.

This "neutralization" of the saint's image, in particular with regard to his ardent Spiritual leanings, is also apparent in Giotto's Bardi Chapel dedicated to St. Louis of Toulouse in Santa Croce. It is believed to have been frescoed between 1310 and 1316²⁶⁸ for Ridolfo de' Bardi, making it nearly contemporary with the St. Louis altarpiece and therefore an apt comparison. Once again, political and religious considerations appear to have played a role in the saint's iconography. The Bardi were bankers to the Pope and the King of England, as well as generous patrons of Florence's major Franciscan church."²⁶⁹ Their staunch loyalty to the House of Anjou and the Guelph cause dated to the thirteenth century. For Ridolfo, heir to the Bardi fortune, "these ancient political bonds were personified in Robert of Anjou, who, for the Bardi and their compatriots, embodied Italian opposition to the invading German Emperor Henry, while Robert's

²⁶⁸ Goffen, *Spirituality in Conflict*, 57.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 51. Their endowment of no fewer than four chapels in Santa Croce made them "the most conspicuous patrons of that church in the fourteenth century. The other chapels were dedicated to St. Francis, St. Lawrence, and St. Sylvester.

brother, Bishop Louis of Toulouse, became the saintly advocate of the Guelph, papal and Italian alliance.”²⁷⁰ Wishing to honor the Angevins by recognizing their recently canonized saint, but wary of offending the powerful Conventuals (and by extension, the Pope), Ridolfo, like Robert of Naples, commissioned a “modified” version of the saint. He had no desire to rekindle the wrath of the Conventuals, who had only reluctantly approved the canonization of a zealous Spiritual after twenty years. Any images of St. Louis therefore had to be carefully regulated. As Rona Goffen has remarked, “Control of his image became almost as thorny a problem – and a necessity – as control of images of Saint Francis himself.”²⁷¹ In Giotto’s fresco (fig. 20) unlike in Simone’s altarpiece, Louis’ appearance has been carefully balanced: he is depicted both as Bishop of Toulouse *and* as Franciscan friar, his brown habit plainly visible under his Bishop’s cope, recalling the bargain he had made with Boniface VIII – acceptance of the bishopric in return for Franciscan ordination. However, Louis’ discarded crown lies at the foot of his pedestal, a reminder of his abdication; nor is he shown receiving a heavenly one in exchange. Thus, in Giotto’s fresco, historical reality has been respected – but only up to a point. Once again, Louis’ fervent asceticism – the guiding principle of his life – has been suppressed. While he wears the Franciscan robe, he does so “in a ‘sanitized’ way, transforming the frequently dirty and ill-clothed friar, whose love of poverty evidently precluded good grooming, into an ideal figure acceptable to the Conventuals.”²⁷² Giotto may not have smothered Louis’ habit beneath a magnificent cope, but neither did he draw inordinate attention to it. In fact, Giotto’s St. Louis exhibits none of the splendor and magnificence of Simone’s. Notwithstanding the limitations of fresco, the Bardi St. Louis presents a far more modest and unassuming image of the saint than Simone’s glittering altarpiece.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 52.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 55.

²⁷² Ibid., 82.



Figure 20 Giotto, *St. Louis of Toulouse*, Bardi Chapel, Santa Croce

Simone's presents the saint as royal bishop, treating the inconspicuous Franciscan habit as an embarrassing anomaly rather than an integral part of his persona. He also makes certain to replace Louis' earthly crown with a heavenly one – some compensation to his status conscious brother. In Simone's hands, Louis becomes a symbol of Angevin wealth and royal privilege. Surely it was more flattering for Robert to portray himself receiving his crown from a majestically clad monarch than an insignificant, dispossessed friar. Ridolfo de' Bardi, on the other hand, had no titles to defend and no ugly rumors of usurpation to dispel. He belonged to a family reputed to be "the

richest merchants in Italy;”²⁷³ in other words, he had nothing to prove. All he had to do was avoid antagonizing his papal and Angevin allies – which he did by adopting a “middle way” in his portrayal of the controversial saint.

In this connection, we must return briefly to the fresco cycles attributed to Simone in the St. Martin and St. Elizabeth Chapels in Assisi, which we have touched upon in our discussion of the visual representation of *beata stirps*. At this point, it will also be useful to consider the way in which St. Louis of Toulouse is depicted in S. Francesco. In the St. Martin chapel, there is no attempt to hide his Franciscan habit; on the contrary, at first glance, he might almost be mistaken for St. Francis himself, with his plain brown habit, long knotted cord, and simple sandals (fig. 10). However, the absence of the stigmata, an identifying inscription, and the decorative fleur de lys of the background reveal his identity. If Martindale is correct in dating this cycle to before 1316,²⁷⁴ then the work would probably have been executed during the pontificate of Clement V (1305-1313), who treated the Spirituals more favorably than his predecessor, Boniface VIII, or his successor, John XXII. The Pope admonished the Conventuals for the laxity and abuses which had become commonplace by that date and encouraged them to adopt a stricter way of life. The Spirituals were also reassured by the protection of the powerful court physician Arnold of Villeneuve and the support of the influential Cardinals Giovanni Colonna and Napoleone Orsini.²⁷⁵ Although Clement’s efforts to prevent further schism soon failed, his position at least provided a temporary respite for the besieged Spirituals. If Simone frescoed the chapel during this brief truce, this would explain his willingness to portray St. Louis of Toulouse in his habit, unencumbered by the lavish cope which obscures it in the St. Louis altarpiece. That said, there is nothing offensive in the depiction of Louis’ simplicity, either; like Giotto’s St. Louis in the Bardi

²⁷³ Ibid., 51.

²⁷⁴ Martindale, *Simone Martini*, 21-22.

²⁷⁵ Iriarte, *Franciscan History*, 54-55.

Chapel, his is not an aggressive poverty. His delicate, white finger bears the episcopal ring, his hair is neatly cut, and his face is clean-shaven – not exactly the picture of an unkempt mendicant who cohabitated with lepers. Clearly, it was safer not to insist too much on the saint's poverty given the volatility of the religious climate.

Another shift in the relations between the Papacy and the Spirituals is reflected in the image of St. Louis in the St. Elizabeth Chapel, believed to date between 1316-19.²⁷⁶ The election of the anti-Spiritual Pope John XXII in 1316 surely influenced the manner in which the saint is depicted in the fresco, just as it affected Simone's portrayal of him in the St. Louis altarpiece which would have been painted at exactly the same time, if Martindale and Hoch are correct. Once again, as in the St. Louis panel, the saint appears as Bishop of Toulouse, with mitre, crozier, and cope (fig. 11) but this time, his identity as Franciscan friar is also acknowledged: his habit is covered but not concealed, as in the regal altarpiece. His discarded crown has also been placed on the ledge before him, a reminder of the earthly privileges he had foresworn. How can one account for these differences in iconography? Why was Simone permitted to make reference to the saint's true vocation here but instructed to expunge all traces of his Spiritualism in the altarpiece? Perhaps the answer lies in the fresco's patronage. Hoch believes Mary of Hungary was the likeliest patron of the St. Elizabeth Chapel.²⁷⁷ As a Franciscan devotee herself, she would have had no desire to hide the fact that St. Louis had also belonged to the brotherhood. Of course, like her son, she would have been equally unwilling to ruffle the papal feathers by overtly supporting the Spirituals. However, as long as Louis' Spiritual inclinations were not emphasized, there was no reason he could not appear in his habit. After all, even the Conventuals still wore the traditional brown robe. Nor was there any need to accentuate his

²⁷⁶ Hoch, "Beata Stirps," 289.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 288.

status as Prince-Bishop. Unlike her son who used the dazzling St. Louis altar to justify his succession, the Queen Mother did not need to defend her crown; her legitimacy was not in question. In fact, she was the only sovereign in early fourteenth-century Naples who enjoyed the undisputed right to exhibit the coats of arms of all three dynasties (Árpád, Angevin, Capetian).²⁷⁸ There was no need to impress the viewer with the power and prestige of Louis' earthly status or to dramatize his God-given right to transfer that power to another.

Thus in each of these cases – the Bardi Chapel in Santa Croce and the Saints Martin and Elizabeth Chapels in San Francesco in Assisi – a delicate balancing act is being performed with regard to the saint's image. The fashion in which he is represented reflects not only the prevailing religious and political climate but the specific agenda of the patron. In writing about St. Francis, Goffen made an observation that could apply equally well to St. Louis. She noted the sometimes contradictory desire “of preserving historical reality on the one hand, and coloring or even inventing it on the other, if need be, to confirm differing points of view.”²⁷⁹ In that sense, these images mirror the conflict within Louis himself, constantly torn between his secular obligations and his spiritual calling.

²⁷⁸ Martindale, *Simone Martini*, 193.

²⁷⁹ Goffen, *Spirituality in Conflict*, 26.

Chapter 7: Summary and Conclusions

Robert the Wise deserved his epithet. He knew that art can prove a powerful weapon in the hands of the right painter. Simone Martini's *St. Louis of Toulouse Crowning Robert of Naples* is indisputable proof of the power of beauty to seduce, inspire, and above all, persuade. Like us, Simone's contemporaries must have been awestruck by the delicacy and refinement of the painting's execution, stunning colors, gleaming surfaces, and impressive proportions. Unlike us, they would have needed little help in deciphering its subtext, being already *au courant* regarding the political and religious landscape of early Trecento Angevin Naples. Seven hundred years later, while it is certainly possible to admire Simone's altarpiece from a purely aesthetic point of view, knowledge of its cultural context and the motives behind its commission can only enhance our appreciation of this monumental creation.

Robert of Naples was, to some degree, fortune's plaything. Held hostage for seven years in Aragonese and Catalan fortresses in exchange for his father's liberty, he passed his adolescence under the watchful eye of his elder brother Louis, his benevolent Franciscan tutors, and the strict supervision of his captors. Shortly after their release, his brother's abdication catapulted him to kingship. In violation of the law of primogeniture, Robert inherited two crowns, Naples and Jerusalem, at the expense of the true heir, his young nephew Carobert. To be fair, Robert himself did not steal Carobert's crown; Charles II altered the succession, leaving his grandson with a paltry third of his rightful inheritance – the throne of Hungary – and entrusting the rest to his older, third-born son. Contrary to rumor, he did not poison his eldest brother Charles Martel; nor did he conspire to persuade Louis to abandon his claim to the throne. Profoundly influenced by the devoted Franciscan brothers who raised, educated, and sustained

him during his long captivity, Louis ardently embraced the Franciscan way of life, desiring nothing more than to follow his calling. Realizing that worldly power and wealth were inconsistent with the ideals of poverty and humility he sought to emulate, he freely renounced his crown and eventually, after much resistance from his father, entered the Order. To some extent, then, Robert was a pawn in the hands of Fate.

However, if Robert was not the villain some of his contemporaries believed him to be, he was no innocent victim, either. After his accession to the throne, he made no attempt to right the injustices committed against Carobert; rather, he deployed his energies in quelling unsettling accusations he had usurped his crown. He engaged in a multi-faceted strategy to assert his right to the Neapolitan throne and whitewash his reputation. He promoted himself as a wise and learned ruler, steadfast ally of the Guelphs, staunch defender of the papacy, and eloquent preacher of sermons. Moreover, he recruited the best artists, among them Simone Martini, in the interest of his cause. The St. Louis altar became, in effect, one of Robert's most potent weapons, a picture literally worth a thousand words. Displayed in a prominent public venue, most likely the Neapolitan Church of Santa Chiara, the impressive panel glittering with precious gems, real gold, and heraldic emblems served as a compelling visual reminder of Angevin supremacy and by extension, Robert's own right to rule. Nominally created for the occasion of his brother's canonization in 1317, the altar purported to honor Louis of Toulouse, whose cult Robert and his family had begun actively promoting.

Yet the image of St. Louis preserved through the centuries is a shrewd invention on the part of his brother and his self-serving family motivated by their dynastic pretensions. In fact, Louis was far more of a pawn than Robert in the hands of his ambitious family. Profoundly disappointed with his son's decision to repudiate his noble birthright and join the beggarly

Franciscans, Charles II had pressured Louis to accept the prestigious Bishopric of Toulouse to compensate, at least in part, for the glorious future he had eschewed. He even petitioned Boniface VIII to confer a cardinalship on Louis, seeking to maximize Angevin prestige and ignoring his son's dream of a simple life among his Franciscan brethren. Even in death Louis would know no peace; his family's aspirations pursued him to the grave. Shortly after Louis' demise in 1297, Charles initiated canonization proceedings, intent upon capitalizing on his son's reputation for piety. Though he had scorned Louis' choices in life, he was determined to exploit them in death. Robert also perceived the advantages to his own state of Louis' sanctification. A saintly sibling would confer greater honor and legitimacy on his own head, since virtue was commonly believed to be inherited.

However, the controversy tearing the Franciscans apart threatened to impede Louis' canonization. Opposed to the elevation of one whose values were contrary to their own, the powerful Conventuals approved Louis' admission to sainthood on one condition: every trace of his Spiritual propensities must be effaced. The pragmatic Robert, eager to have an Angevin saint in the family, readily obliged, manipulating Louis' image to conform to Conventual standards. Thus, the St. Louis altarpiece presents the saint to the world in the guise of a loyal Conventual—humble and obedient, but far from destitute. Yet this image tells only a half-truth; in no way is it a faithful portrait in the literal or figurative sense of the word. The image of Louis as resplendent bishop that looks mutely out at us is light years away from the person he really was. There is no reference to the disobedient son who defied his father, or the man who died en route to Rome to divest himself of a bishopric. Only the surreptitious appearance of a plain brown habit under his beautiful cope hints at the real meaning of his life. Thus seven centuries later Louis remains trapped inside the very image he fought desperately to avow, unable to speak

for himself. Only by uncovering the real man behind the mask can we do him the justice he deserves.

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Vita

Suzette Scotti was raised in the suburbs of Manhattan by Italian-American parents who instilled in her an appreciation of her heritage from a young age. Her first trip to Europe as a teenager ignited her lifelong love of travel, curiosity about other cultures, and interest in foreign languages. Upon graduation from Vassar College where she majored in English, Suzette pursued graduate studies in law at Cambridge University. Shortly afterwards, she spent a fascinating year teaching ESL in Nagano, Japan, immersing herself in local culture, studying the art of *ikebana*, and traveling widely. She returned to the United States to earn a master's degree in English language and literature from the University of Virginia before embarking on her next adventure, four years in Madrid. In Spain, when not busy instructing college students in the fine art of English composition, she enjoyed exploring the city and its museums, refining her Spanish, and discovering the country in all its diversity. The highlight of her intellectual and personal development, however, was the decade she spent living in the heart of Rome. She came to know and love every corner of the Eternal City she will always consider her true home. In Italy, she reconnected with her heritage and fell in love with Italian art, devoting countless hours to visiting museums, historic towns, archeological sites, churches, and palaces all over the country in an indefatigable pursuit of knowledge and beauty. Three years ago she and her French husband moved back to the United States to pursue advanced degrees in Louisiana. At Louisiana State University, Suzette had the opportunity to realize a long-deferred dream – a master's degree in art history, with a specialization in the Italian Renaissance – a pursuit which has brought her immense joy and satisfaction. She is simultaneously studying for a doctorate in English at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.