



# THE CONGREGATION OF TIRON

MONASTIC CONTRIBUTIONS TO TRADE  
AND COMMUNICATION IN TWELFTH-  
CENTURY FRANCE AND BRITAIN

By

**RUTH HARWOOD CLINE**

Amsterdam  
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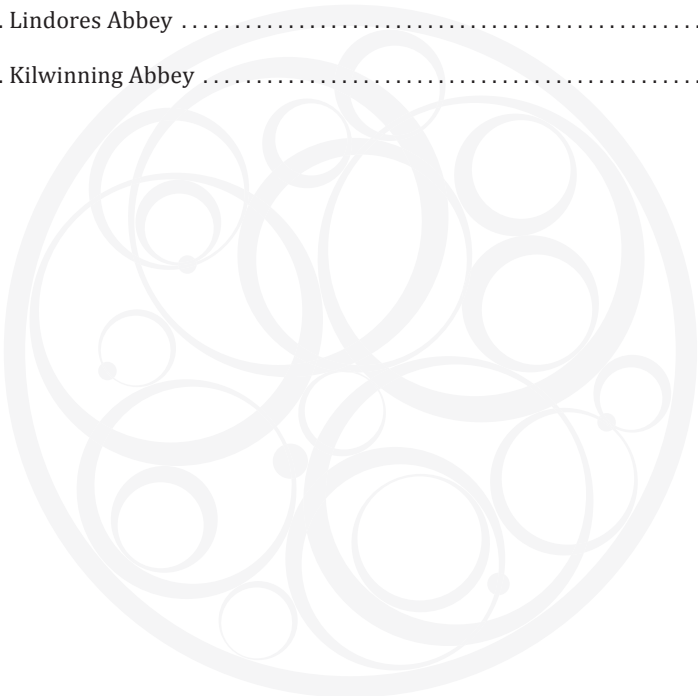
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## ABBREVIATIONS

These publications and other citations given in a shortened form in footnotes are listed in their complete form in the Select Bibliography.

AASS	<i>Acta Sanctorum</i>
ADEL	Archives départementales d'Eure-et-Loir
BC	<i>Bullarium sacri ordinis Cluniacensis</i>
CNDC	<i>Cartulaire de Notre Dame de Chartres</i>
<i>Cuninghame</i>	<i>Cuninghame, Topographized by Timothy Pont</i>
ES	<i>Early Sources of Scottish History</i>
GC	<i>Gallia Christiana</i> (using the revised "Maurist" version). 13 vols. 1715–1785
IS-ADEL	<i>Inventaire sommaire des archives départementales antérieures à 1790. Eure-et-Loir</i>
<i>Kelso Liber</i>	<i>Liber S. Marie de Calchou, Registrum Cartarum Abbacie Tironensis de Kelso 1113–1567</i>
<i>Lindores Cart.</i>	<i>Chartulary of the Abbey of Lindores 1195–1479</i>
OV	Orderic Vitalis. <i>Historia ecclesiastica; The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis</i> . Edited by M. Chibnall.
PL	Patrologia Latina ( <i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina</i> ). Edited by J. P. Migne.
<i>Rule</i>	Benedict of Monte Cassino, <i>The Rule of Saint Benedict</i> .
T	<i>Cartulaire de l'Abbaye de la Sainte-Trinité de Tiron</i> . Edited by Lucien Merlet. 2 vols. Chartres: Garnier, 1883. "T1" refers to the first volume and "T2" to the second.
VB	<i>Vita beati Bernardi Tironiensis autore Gaufredo Grosso</i> . Edited by Godefroy Henskens and Daniel Papebroch.
VB, trans. Cline	Geoffrey Grossus. <i>The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron</i> . Translated by Ruth Harwood Cline.
VCH Hampshire	<i>The Victoria History of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight</i> . Edited by William Page. Vol. 4. Victoria County History, 1911.
WCM	<i>Winchester College Muniments</i> . Compiled by Sheila Himsworth. 3 vols. Chichester: Phillimore, 1984.



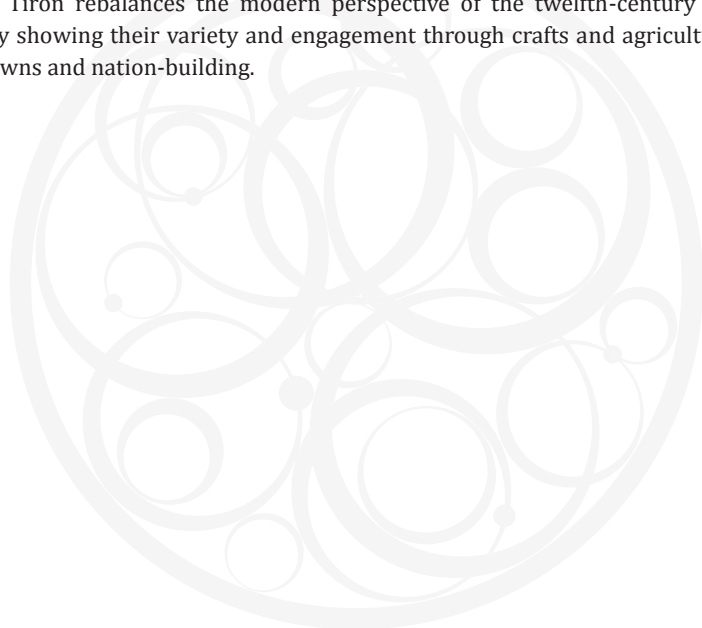
## PREFACE

THE JOURNEY TO Tiron began as an intellectual exercise. After I had translated the five romances of Chrétien de Troyes into English verse, I was asked to discern his identity. I postulated that the creator of the Arthurian legend was a gifted cleric, fond of hermits, and well-connected to the House of Blois-Champagne, whose members were prototypes for his characters. Chrétien's detailed descriptions of southern England in *Cligès* indicated that he had visited that country before settling in the court of Champagne. The genealogies of Thibaut II, count of Blois-Champagne, and his illustrious children show royal and episcopal connections in England and France. One genealogy included Thibaut II's natural son Hugh of Blois, a knight wounded in battle who became a monk of Tiron Abbey in the diocese of Chartres. Hugh's career took him to England under his uncle King Stephen, where he was abbot of St. Benet's Hulme (ca. 1141–1146/49) and of Chertsey outside London (1150–1155). Hugh returned to Champagne with his uncle, Henry, bishop of Winchester, upon the accession of Henry II, became prior of Notre-Dame d'Arable (1156) and ended his days as abbot of Lagny (1163–1171). Rich, lame, and castrated, Hugh of Blois seems a prototype for *Perceval's* Fisher King. I speculated that Chrétien may have been associated with him and thus came to the attention of the literary court of his half-brother Henry, count of Champagne, and Countess Marie, the daughter of Louis VII and Eleanor of Aquitaine. Thus Chrétien de Troyes led me to Abbot Hugh, who led me to Tiron.

When I discussed my research with my Georgetown thesis advisers, Bennett Hill recalled that his mentor David Knowles considered Tiron much more important than Savigny among the twelfth-century reformed Benedictine orders that coexisted with Cîteaux. Thus the topic of my doctoral dissertation was the foundation and first century of the congregation of Tiron, which expanded from obscurity in the forests of the Perche to an international congregation with headquarters in Chartres and Paris and abbeys and priories in modern France and the British Isles. My research entailed translating *The Life of Blessed Bernard of Tiron* by Geoffrey Grossus, a retrospective tribute to its miracle-working and prophetic founder, written and recopied in the abbey's fine scriptorium. After my defence in 2000 my advisers and I concurred on polishing and publishing the *Life* and continuing research on the congregation. In pre-Internet days much travel ensued to libraries in Paris, Poitiers, London, Winchester, and Edinburgh, where librarians provided many nineteenth-century specialized studies of individual foundations.

Time and again I returned to mapping to discern a coherent pattern for my findings. Initial mapping of Tiron's abbeys and priories showed their areas of concentration: riverine expansion in France and coastal expansion in Britain. Scottish studies showed the importance of mapping churches, farms, and townhouses, which indicated their routes to towns and ports. The same approach applied to their properties in modern France.

Tiron expanded into hamlets, but modern electronic resources pinpointed the properties and showed their direction and proximity, usually 10–16 kilometres or a day's walk or hauling distance. The network of trade and communication was largely in place by 1147. Its configuration contextualized the charters describing acquisitions, obligations, and disputes. Tiron enjoyed royal favour and preceded Cîteaux in its expansion. The study of Tiron rebalances the modern perspective of the twelfth-century reformed orders by showing their variety and engagement through crafts and agriculture in the rise of towns and nation-building.



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

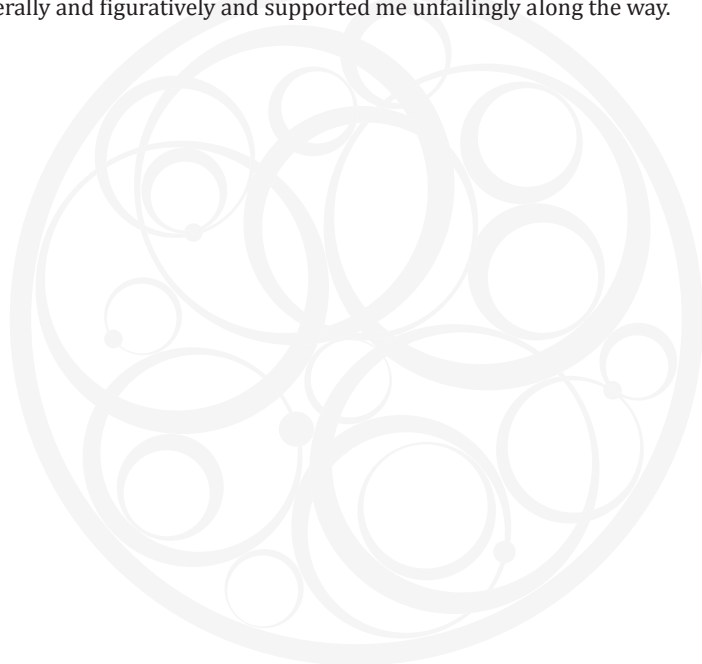
I AM DEEPLY indebted to my long-time friend and adviser Jo Ann Moran Cruz, Associate Professor of History, Georgetown University, who helped me make a career change from diplomatic translation to a doctorate in medieval history in 2000. Professors James Collins, Dennis McManus, and the late Bennett Hill, my Georgetown University advisers, and Theodore Evergates of McDaniel College, have provided twenty years of sustained interest, insights, and contextualization of my findings during my research on the congregation of Tiron. In particular James Collins noted the rank of Tiron's commendatory abbots and directed me to sixteenth-century sources that showed Tiron's wealth at that time. Giles Constable, professor emeritus at the School of Historical Studies, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey, gave early guidance. All recognized the importance of the congregation of Tiron when it was widely regarded as obscure.

The librarians of Georgetown University, the Catholic University of America, the Library of Congress, the British Library, the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, the Bibliothèque nationale, the Médiathèque François Mitterand, and the Centre d'études supérieures de civilisation médiévale of Poitiers were exceedingly helpful in providing early published research on individual foundations. Melissa Jones, Meg Oakley, and Megan Martinsen of Lauinger Library, Georgetown University have provided specialized expertise. John Hardacre and Suzanne Foster, the Winchester College archivists, gave outstanding advice concerning the charters of Tiron's local priories. In Chartres, Abbé Pierre Bizeau, the diocesan archivist, and Michel Thibault, the departmental archivist, and in Poitiers, Mirielle Jean, the departmental archivist, offered valuable guidance. In Edinburgh and Glasgow Geoffrey Barrow, Mark Dilworth, and Kenneth Varty guided my research on Tironensian abbeys and foundations in Scotland. Constance Berman, professor emerita of history, University of Iowa, contextualized Tiron's development into an order alongside the Cistercians. Constance Brittain Bouchard, distinguished professor of medieval history, University of Akron, Ohio, answered research questions and offered thoughtful criticisms. George Beech, professor emeritus of Western Michigan University, provided an original candidate for Abbot William of Poitiers. I am most grateful for their interest, time, and expertise.

The maps were designed and produced by Patrick Jones, Cartographer/Lab Manager of the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences, University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

This book is dedicated to my husband, William R. Cline, Senior Fellow Emeritus of the Peterson Institute for International Economics, with deepest love and gratitude. Bill has encouraged me throughout my graduate studies, research, and teaching. He has lent wise counsel and economic expertise to many problems I was unable to resolve. He has

travelled with me to major British and continental European libraries but also driven into the countryside to Tiron's abbey buildings and ruins at Thiron-Gardais, Bois-Aubry, Asnières, and Ferrières, and to Kelso, Arbroath, and Lindores in Scotland. Together we have explored the premises and gotten the lay of the land. Bill has travelled the road to Tiron literally and figuratively and supported me unfailingly along the way.



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## INTRODUCTION

NO ONE TRAVELLING hundreds of kilometres in modern France and Britain to visit the abbatial church of Tiron and the scattered ruins and transformed remains of its abbeys, priories, and churches would immediately realize that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries they all were part of the congregation of Tiron (ca. 1107–1109 to 1792–1794). This congregation, founded by a hermit some 40 kilometres southwest of Chartres, became noted for its crafts. The Tironensian order expanded to a large and prosperous congregation under a remarkable abbot, and formed a centralized “international” network of exchange and communication between France and the British Isles. The congregation of Tiron survived until the French Revolution and then passed into near-obscurity.<sup>1</sup>

Tiron has also passed into near-obscurity in accounts of twelfth-century monasticism. The congregation of Cluny (founded 910) with its wealth and elaborate liturgies was contrasted with the congregation of Cîteaux (founded 1098) and its emphasis on austerity and simplicity. Cîteaux absorbed a portion of the population growth, coalesced, and expanded into an enormous international congregation during the twelfth century, whereas Cluny was sometimes presented as being in decline. Cîteaux’s willingness to accept marginal wasteland, its initial exclusion of women and its rejection of income sources like churches, tithes, rents, mills, or serfs<sup>2</sup> formed an image that was projected onto other reformed orders. Cistercian studies have proliferated and less attention has been paid to other reformed orders. More recent scholarship includes studies of the Carthusians, Gilbertines, Premonstratensians, Fontevraudians, Savignacs, and Tironensians, and revisions have been proposed regarding the Cistercians, which include the participation of women.<sup>3</sup> Published cartularies have made primary sources accessible to inform specialized studies. Studies of French religious foundations in Scotland reflect the “Auld Alliance” between Scotland and France to curb English expansionism and the Anglo-Normans’ desire to extend educational and technological advances to a rural economy. They show the variety of the reformed orders, including marked differences from Cîteaux.

Whereas the contrast between Cluny and Cîteaux has dominated the study of reformed monasticism, Giles Constable observes that their differences have been exaggerated. The major dissimilarity was their spiritual orientation: Cluniac monks felt assured of their salvation and were spiritually and economically connected to their communities, particularly through intercessory prayer, whereas Cistercian monks sought individual salvation through direct spiritual experience, isolation from their communities, personal devotion, and imitation of Christ. Cluny was centralized, but Cluniac practices varied under the rule of individual abbots; varying Cistercian practices were

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1 Cline, “The Congregation of Tiron in the Twelfth Century,” 520.

2 Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 161.

3 Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution*.

eventually unified by visitations and general chapters. Constable notes that Cluniac and Cistercian monasticism evolved over the twelfth century: "In practice, the two models had common roots and overlapped in many respects, and they followed parallel courses of development which tended to converge and to reduce the original contrast between them."<sup>4</sup> Tiron adopted the most fitting organizational features of Cluniac monasticism and the ascetic features of the reformed eremitical monasticism that preceded Cîteaux.

The historiography of twelfth-century monasticism has not given Tiron its due as an expansive reform movement comparable to and yet different from that of the Cistercians. Initially the Tironensians wore different habits and were known as the "grey monks" but as they grew wealthier their distinctiveness blurred in France and they were called Benedictines. Therefore Tiron was not closely studied. In twentieth-century historiography Tiron is sometimes grouped with Fontevraud and Savigny because their founders were colleagues. David Knowles lists the English and Welsh houses of Cluny and the new orders of Fontevraud, Grandmont, Cîteaux, and Tiron, and groups Tiron with Grandmont and Bec-Hellouin.<sup>5</sup> R.W. Southern concentrates on the Augustinian canons and the Cistercians in his study without mentioning Tiron, in *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*. Lawrence mentions Tiron in his study of medieval monasticism, and Constable touches upon Tiron in his study of the twelfth-century reformation.<sup>6</sup> In England and Wales Savigny and Tiron are often considered together, with Tiron presented as a poor relation. In addition to at least twelve abbeys in France, Savigny founded fifteen abbeys in England and Wales before its merger with Cîteaux ca. 1147, in contrast to Tiron's single abbey of St. Dogmaels in Wales. In his study of medieval England, Colin Platt notes that Tiron founded "the merest handful of communities" and, like Savigny, made little impact on England.<sup>7</sup> To a considerable extent Tiron was overlooked in studies of reformed Benedictine monasticism.

Notwithstanding, Bennett D. Hill shared personal knowledge that David Knowles was well aware of Tiron and advised Hill that Tiron was much more important than Savigny.<sup>8</sup> Although smaller than Fontevraud and Savigny, Tiron was a prominent and prosperous monastic congregation with a fief in downtown Paris and an income comparable to some bishoprics. Tiron provides a more nuanced example of a reformed order with enduring royal and aristocratic patronage, long-distance travel, and involvement with trade and political developments on both sides of the English Channel.

Much of what we know about Bernard of Abbeville, abbot of Tiron, is derived from the foundation story, the *Vita B. Bernardi Tironiensis*, a retrospective work commissioned by and dedicated to Geoffrey II of Lèves, bishop of Chartres (r. 1116–1149). Its

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4 Constable, "From Cluny to Cîteaux," specifically 239.

5 Knowles and Hadcock, "Houses of the Order of Tiron," *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales*, 102. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, 2:165.

6 Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 156. Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century*, 50–51 and 218.

7 Platt, *The Abbeys and Priories of Medieval England*, 39.

8 Personal communication from Bennett D. Hill to Ruth Harwood Cline and Jo Ann Hoeppner Moran-Cruz.

nucleus is a saint's life written ca. 1147 by a monk named Geoffrey Grossus, a contemporary of Bernard. The *Vita Bernardi*, however, is a compilation of many sources and several narrators, stitched together with its inconsistencies unresolved and its Latin unimproved. Geoffrey's autograph manuscript was copied (and probably expanded) by Jean Pignore de Vallea at the order of John II of Chartres, abbot of Tiron (r. 1277–1297). The lives of saints and the foundation stories of monasteries are inspirational genres. Historical facts and institutional memories are combined with miracle stories and literary borrowings from earlier hagiographies. Often failures are ignored or presented as setbacks. The introduction to my translation covers these points in greater detail.

Much of what we know about Tiron's history is derived from the documents compiled as a "cartulary" by Lucien Merlet (1827–1898), the archivist of the département of Eure et Loir. He dated and supplemented the charters in Tiron's twelfth-century manuscript cartulary with other archival materials and rearranged and published them chronologically.<sup>9</sup> The cartulary includes papal bulls, pancartes prepared for the bishop recording gifts made at different times, and charters or letters recording gifts, sales, leases, pawns, exchanges, confirmations thereof, and settlements of disputes. Information about the monks' charitable counter-gifts in kind to donors' relatives are particularly useful because they indicate such Tironensian specialties. Witnesses for both parties were carefully listed with surnames or place names to avert future disputes. Merlet and Theresa Webber concur that, after the contents list and the papal, episcopal, and comital acts, the manuscript cartulary was organized geographically: possessions near Tiron, in and around Chartres and Châteaudun, privileges of the rulers of England, Normandy, and Scotland, south of the Loire in Anjou and Poitou, acts by the kings of France, possessions in Capetian lands, possessions at Bacqueville in Normandy added in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and finally a copy of the bull of Pope Eugenius III (r. 1145–1153) in 1147 and possessions in Ile-de-France, Maine, and Brittany.<sup>10</sup> Merlet openly acknowledges that the documentary record left by the monks did not include most of the original charters prior to 1428. In that year English troops burned the monastery, including the records in the scriptorium. The monks attempted to reconstitute their archives, but their forged charters added many additional liberties not in the originals.<sup>11</sup> Merlet included some obvious forgeries in the cartulary of Tiron, such as the fifteenth-century version of the foundation charter.<sup>12</sup> The charters Merlet included

<sup>9</sup> ADEL, H 1374. Merlet (ed.), *Cartulaire de l'Abbaye de la Sainte-Trinité de Tiron*, 2 vols. Hereafter T1 and T2.

<sup>10</sup> T1: cxiv. Thompson, "The Cartulary of the Monastery of Tiron," 70–72. Thompson provides important correctives for some of the problems created by Merlet's edition. Her critique partly relies on a paleographic analysis of the 325 charters in the cartulary by Theresa Webber, who dates the cartulary as begun in the 1140s and nearly completed in the 1160s.

<sup>11</sup> IS-ADEL, 8:157–58, H 1373 (1611), 1376–77 (1509). Lucien Merlet, "Chartes fausses de l'abbaye de Tiron," *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes*, 3rd ser., 5 (1844): 516–27.

<sup>12</sup> T1:3–13, no. 1. The forgery's exemptions caused litigation with the chapter of Chartres 1505–1558, resolved by the chapter's discovery of the authentic charter. Guillaumin, "Thiron, son Abbaye," 31.

as genuine may have undergone some editing subsequent to their date of execution, but they are simple in language, plausible, and reliable enough for my focus on the material aspect of the order.<sup>13</sup>

Local historians have written extensively on Tiron. In his beautifully illustrated history of Tiron Denis Guillemain refers to the historiography of his predecessors and his access to private archives. He lists Arsène Vincent, *Recherches historiques sur le canton de Thiron-Gardais*, a 700-page manuscript, and the manuscript of André Guillaumin's research for his brochure *Thiron, son abbaye, son collège militaire* (1929).<sup>14</sup> In the 1959 article with the same title cited above, Guillaumin describes the *Manuscrit de Tiron* as a long manuscript that is a sort of chronicle begun in 1468, recopied in 1789, and continued and communicated to Arsène Vincent in 1848.<sup>15</sup> In France, the charters of Tiron Abbey and its daughter abbeys and priories are contained in the departmental archives of Eure-et-Loir and other departmental archives in pertinent regions.

In England, the Winchester College Muniments contain local charters and duplicates and certified copies of important Tironensian charters sent to Tiron's alien priories, which were sold to Winchester College in 1391. The Patent Rolls and Close Rolls also contain records of these alien priories and their tribulations during the Hundred Years' War. The Welsh abbey of St. Dogmaels was subject to Canterbury and included in English records. In Scotland, the cartularies of Kelso, Arbroath, and Lindores Abbeys have been published. Secondary regional and archaeological studies are available. Locally, persistent efforts were made in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to preserve the memory of this lost congregation. Members of the Société Archéologique d'Eure-et-Loir inventoried and discussed the few treasures that survived the sacking and burning of the abbey in 1428 and 1562 and visited and reported on the history of its important priories.

Both chronology and topography are essential to understanding Tiron's expansion. A topographical reorganization of Merlet's edited charters shows the pattern of acquisition of property and assets and the disputes associated with the individual properties. For the purposes at issue here—the geographical range and economic outputs—the data provided by Merlet remain a solid foundation. Merlet was a distinguished archivist and geographer and a recipient of the Legion of Honour.<sup>16</sup> I rely mainly on the "*Dictionnaire topographique*" in appendix for the Latin and French names and the location of the properties. Mapping its abbeys and priories discloses its broad expansion pattern, but

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**13** Chédeville, *Chartres et ses campagnes*, uses Merlet for his economic study of Chartres and the Perche.

**14** Guillemain, *Thiron, abbaye médiévale*, 119. Guillaumin, *Thiron, son abbaye, son collège militaire, guide*.

**15** Guillaumin, "Thiron, son Abbaye," 23.

**16** Lucien Merlet, *Dictionnaire topographique du département d'Eure-et-Loir, comprenant les noms de lieu anciens et moderne*, 4 vols. (Paris: Imp. 1861), listed in his obituary "Lucien Merlet," *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* 60 (1899): 267–80; available online at [www.persee.fr/doc/bec\\_0373-6237\\_1899\\_num\\_60\\_1\\_452524](http://www.persee.fr/doc/bec_0373-6237_1899_num_60_1_452524). He also organized and published seven volumes of inventories of archives of Eure-et-Loir and organized hospital archives in Chartres and Châteaudun.

mapping its churches, farms, and houses discloses its network and routes. I have used INSEE, GPS, and web searches to assign each property modern geographic coordinates for mapping purposes. Tiron's properties are predominantly located in hamlets, suburbs, and border regions, and mapping them has been likened to pointillism. Once the dots are connected, however, the image of Tiron's expansion pattern emerges, showing that these properties were purposefully acquired to support, unite, and rule an important congregation. Since the extent of Tiron's holdings has never been fully mapped and its extensive economic network has not been documented and understood, this study is pathbreaking.

Bernard of Tiron's experience as a claustral prior and abbot of traditional Benedictine monasteries in Poitou led him to incorporate some of their organizational merits into his reformed congregation. Tiron's growth patterns resembled those of the other new orders, but its revised customs and practices drew many supporters and followers and contributed to the unique profile of the order. The congregation expanded into the equivalent of an international corporation. Tiron was associated with the expansion of trade and commerce and political developments in France and Britain.

This study begins with an overview of Tiron, its place in medieval monasticism, and its distinctiveness, then goes into specifics about the leading abbots and the geography of the expansion in France and the British Isles. It examines the extent to which the Tironensians participated in local communities as educators, healers, horticulturalists, craftsmen and builders, incorporated women, respected the dignity of manual labour, admitted artisans to church and chapter, and supported and profited from shipping and pilgrimages. It concludes with the later history of Tiron's prosperity and upheavals during periods of strong central government and warfare and the legacy of the congregation today. Tiron's distinctive features—royal and aristocratic favour, distances travelled, and products traded—create a more nuanced view of reformed monasticism than the traditional contrast of the congregations of Cluny and Cîteaux.

