

Walking The Path of Medieval Inquisition

DEPOSITIONS, DEponents AND DATA FROM 13TH-CENTURY TOULOUSE

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1 SUMMARY

My research looked at depositions recorded by inquisitors of **'heresy'** (actions or beliefs the church viewed as against doctrine) in **Toulouse, France, 1273 – 1282**. These were records of the questioning of local people about their involvement with 'heresy'.

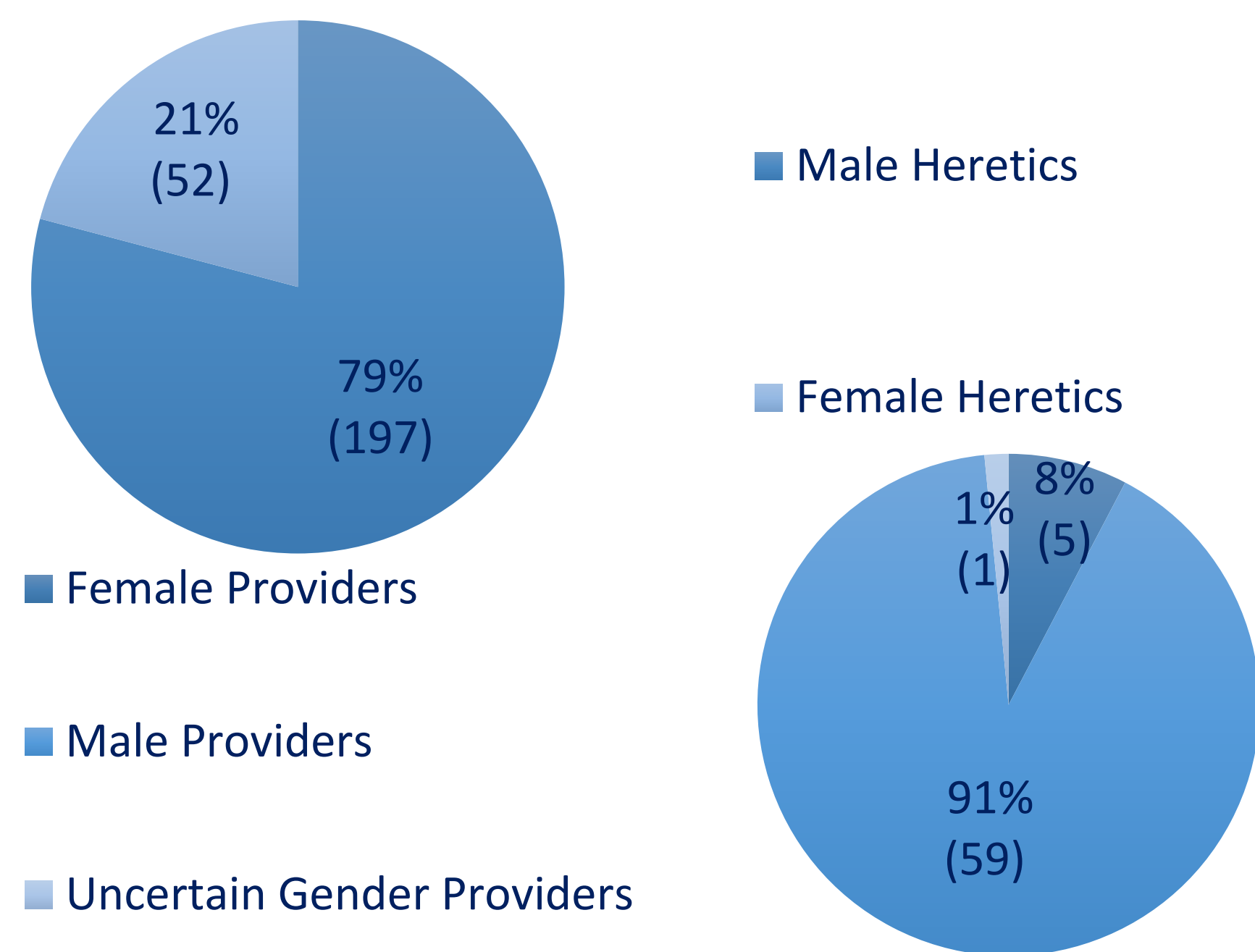
As well as reading and interpreting the vast and detailed records collected by inquisitors, the main aim of the project was to explore **alternative ways of evaluating and presenting information** gleaned from over 100 depositions documented. Such ways included:

- Utilising **GIS** software
- Quantifying actions of deponents and supporters of 'heresy'
- Producing **charts** and **graphs**

3 GENDER DISTINCTIONS

Approaching the records quantitatively allowed for numerical comparison and mapping, including across gender. Both males and females are present as named 'heretics' in the depositions, but **males were more likely** to be seen providing a religious service. This can be seen in the incidences where **'blessed bread'**, given by heretics to supporters.

- There were **249 heretics** mentioned in the depositions of **97 deponents**.
- Of these, **79% of heretics mentioned were male** (197), **21% were female** (52).
- However, out of 65 providers, **only 5 females** provided blessed bread – **8% compared to males 91%** (59 with 1 incidence of gender undetermined).



Top: Pie chart showing the gender ratio of heretics in the depositions.
Bottom: Pie chart showing the gender ratio of 'blessed bread' providers.

2 SUPPORTING THE 'HERETICS'

Throughout the depositions there were clear references to **actions of support** by local people given to identified heretics. Several of these support actions were recurring, and included:

- The giving of **food and wine**
- The giving of **clothes**
- **Services** e.g. tailoring clothes for no pay

These actions were viewed as supporting heresy and were therefore of interest to inquisitors and included in their questioning. Another action that was common was providing **money**.

Gifts of money often appeared to be associated with a believer, or a believer's family member, receiving the 'consolamentum' – a ritual performed by Cathar leaders as a mark of membership. This therefore looked like an exchange.

Conversely, giving food, wine or clothes were more associated with actions like **'adoring'** or **'hearing'** heretics. Therefore, they were more associated with acts of belief and support.

ACROSS 100 INCIDENCES

Food was given
70%
of the time...

Clothes were given
16%
of the time

Wine was given

14%
of the time

Service was provided

11%
of the time

GENDER AND SUPPORT

Gender and support actions were more proportionate...

Men gave support

47%
of the time...

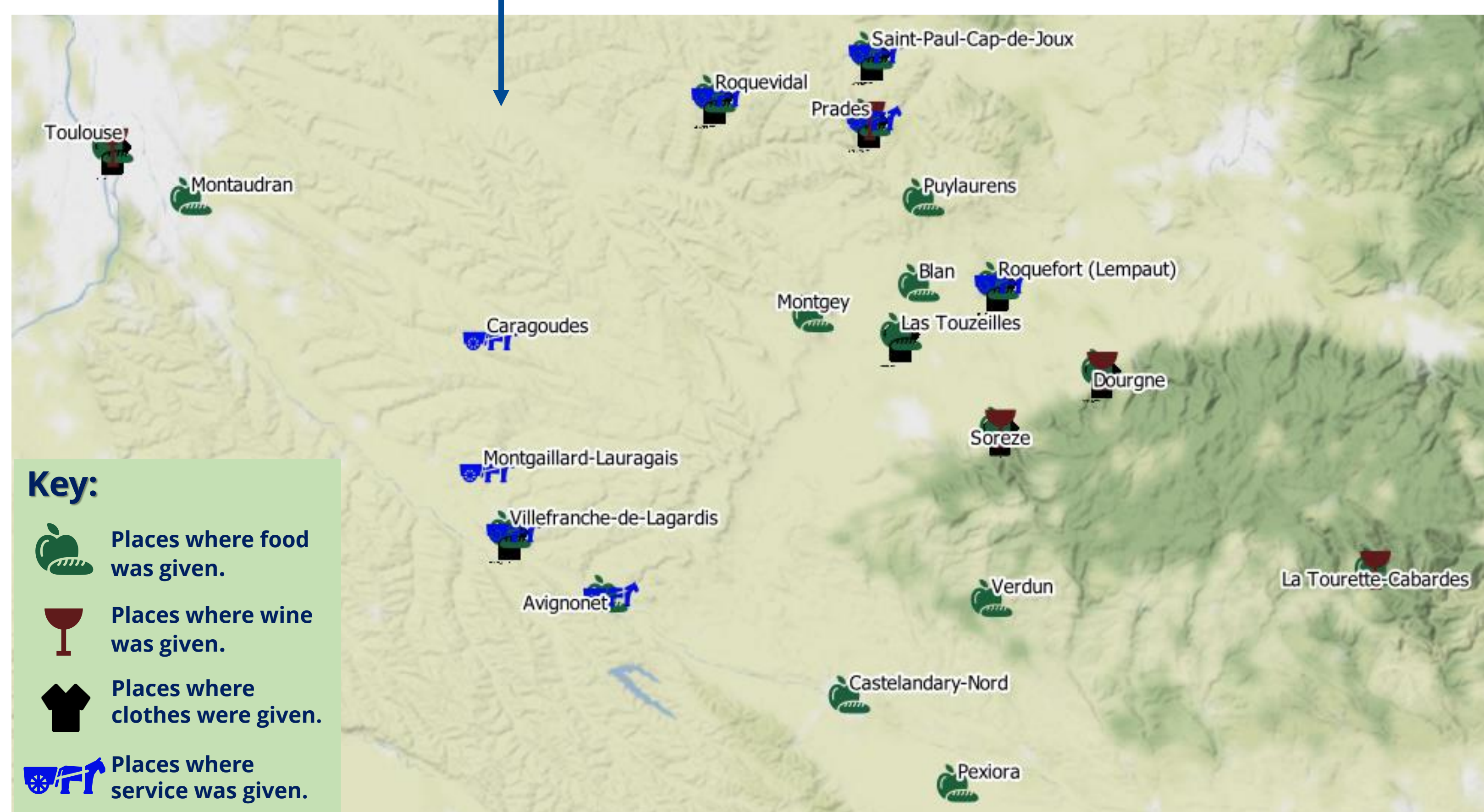
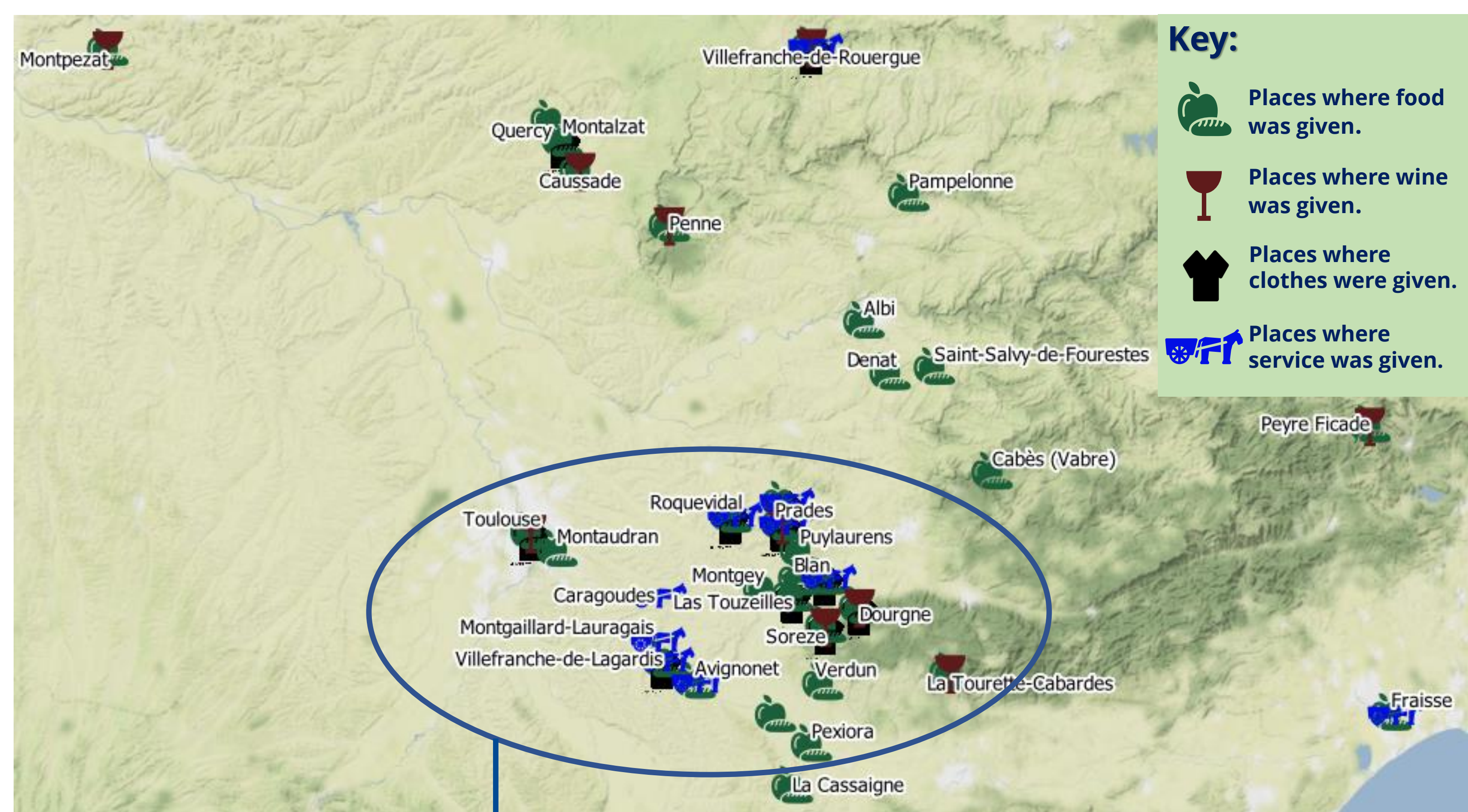
Women gave support

36%
of the time

They jointly gave support

17%
of the time

LOCATIONS OF SUPPORT ACTIONS AROUND TOULOUSE IN THE 13TH CENTURY [1]



4 THE IMPRISONMENT DILEMMA

Many deponents were imprisoned following capture as fugitives, or inquisitorial suspicions. This was a practice commonly recommended in inquisitorial manuals.[2] This had a clear effect on the depositions:

- **24 deponents** were identified as imprisoned either prior to or after initial questioning.
- **21 deponents** either confessed or gave addition/correction' after imprisonment. This was **87.5%** of the time.



Château Narbonnais, Toulouse, 16th century. Château Narbonnais was one location used as an inquisitorial prison in the 13th century. [3]

Additions and corrections were not solely about the deponent either. Often, a deponent would recount an incidence of heresy that they had suspected, seen or heard about:

- **33 out of 37** additions/corrections included others (**89.2%**).
- **38 out of 56** deponents denying or not admitting to heresy provided information about others or events they had witnessed. This was **67.9%** of the time.

5 KEY CONCLUSIONS

- Support from locals was high, with **food being the most frequent material support** to itinerant heretics.
- There is a clear gender divide amongst identified heretics - **more men** gave 'blessed bread'.
- Nevertheless, support actions were **more proportionate** between men and women.
- **Imprisonment had a clear effect on confession** with 87.5% of those imprisoned adding or confessing after being brought out of prison.

References:

- [1] **Icon from the Noun Project:** Round Neck by Vectors Market: <https://thenounproject.com/icon/283667/> [date accessed: 13th July 2020].
[2] Given, J., *Inquisition and Medieval Society: Power, Discipline, and Resistance in Languedoc* (2nd ed. New York, 2001), pp. 53-54.
[3] Biller, P., Bruschi, C. and Sneddon, S. (eds.), *Inquisitors and Heretics in Thirteenth-Century Languedoc: Edition and Translation of Toulouse Inquisition Depositions, 1273-1282* (Leiden, 2011), p. cover.

Bibliography:

- Maps, graphs and data produced by Emma Porter through the research project.
- Biller, P., Bruschi, C. and Sneddon, S. (eds.), *Inquisitors and Heretics in Thirteenth-Century Languedoc: Edition and Translation of Toulouse Inquisition Depositions, 1273-1282*, (Leiden, 2011).
- Given, J., *Inquisition and Medieval Society: Power, Discipline, and Resistance in Languedoc* (2nd ed. New York, 2001).