In 1154, Henry II of England controlled more of the territory we today call “France” than did the Capetian kings, who wielded power only in the region around Paris known as the Ile de France. After the Angevin Empire crumbled in the wake of the battle of Bouvines in 1214, Capetian kings slowly but surely expanded the territory under their authority.

Map 10.2 The Expansion of Royal Power in France, c. 1150–1300

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a hereditary claim to the monarchy. This they accomplished with an astonishing reproductive record, producing legitimate male heirs for no less than eleven consecutive generations, across 341 years. The stability of their dynasty was further secured by their practice of crowning heirs before the old king died and by the loyalty of younger sons who usually opted to support their royal brothers rather than rebel against them.