Orsolya Varró

# USING AND ABUSING POWER IN EARLY 11TH-CENTURY POITOU

MA Thesis in Medieval Studies

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by

Orsolya Varró

(Hungary)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Medieval Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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I, the undersigned, **Orsolya Varró**, candidate for the MA degree in Medieval Studies, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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# Abstract

The Duchy of Aquitaine – and Poitou within it – has been often used as an example in the debate on the "feudal transformation". The central topic of this thesis is the early 11th-century notion of possible social changes in Poitou as it is present in the contemporary evaluation of the political practices of landholders in the early 11th-century, centered around the question, what factors determined the rightfulness or wrongfulness of an act of exercising power in early 11th-century Poitou. I examine narrative sources as the *Chronicle* of Ademar of Chabannes and the *Conventum*, instructive and regulating sources as council decrees, charters, and the letter of Fulbert, bishop of Chartres to Duke William V of Aquitaine on the lord—vassal relationship. I analyse the authors' expectations toward political figures and, based on these, the image of society which they had on their mind. In the last part of the work, I describe the methods the anonymous author of the *Conventum* and Ademar of Chabannes applied to deal with non-conform behaviours. I argue that early 11th-century sources convey a change in the political climate of Poitou, nevertheless, the tension was caused by an increased upward mobility within the existing social system rather than by a structural change.

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# Introduction

*"The duke of Aquitaine, count of Poitou"*, Ademar of Chabannes writes about William V, duke of Aquitaine in the 1020s, *"(...) appeared most glorious and potent, friendly with everyone, of great council and wisdom, in giving the most liberal, defender of the poor, father of monks, builder and lover of churches, particularly of the holy Roman church."*[1] However, another contemporary source puts the following words in William's mouth: *"You* [one of his vassals] *depend so much on me, that if I told you to make a peasant to your lord, you would have to do so"*,[2] and on another occasion: *"Do not expect me to do anything for you. Even if the whole world was mine, I would not give you for this purpose as much as I can hold on my finger."*[3]

The contrast between these excerpts is striking. It may suggest a serious ideological discrepancy, a sign of deep political crisis. Instead of making quick assumptions, this thesis will ask a variety of questions. One group of questions targets the "reality" behind the main narratives of the era, one represented by Ademar in the first quote, the other by the anonymous author of the second excerpt. I intend to deal with these questions to a lesser extent, e.g. what political figures, the duke of Aquitaine, the members of the clergy, and other landholders did, and how their relationships (vassality, alliances, disputes, power plays) worked. Another group of questions is aimed at the narratives themselves. The central question of the thesis belongs to the latter, and can be summed up as following: what factors determined the rightfulness or



[1] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, ed. Richard Landes, Georges Pon, and Pascal Bourgain (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 161: *"Dux vero Aquitanorum, comes Pictavinus, jam dictus Willelmus, gloriosissimus extitit et potentissimus, cunctis amabilis, consilio magnus, prudentia conspicuus, in dando liberalissimus, defensor pauperum, pater monachorum, aedificator et amator ecclesiarum et precipue sanctae ecclesiae Romanae."*

[2] Anonymous, "Conventum inter Guillelmum Aquitanorum comitem et Hugonem chiliarchum," in *Le Conventum (1030). Un précurseur aquitain des premières épopées*, ed. Georges T. Beech, transl. by Yves Chauvin, Georges Pon, and George T. Beech (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1995), 128: *"Tantum ex me tu es, ut si dicerem tibi rusticum facere in seniori facere debueras."*

[3] Ibid., 135:*„Noli adtendere quia tibi nihil faciam. Et si omnis mundus erat meus tantum quantum tenet digitus meus non te dedissem pro hac re."*

wrongfulness of an act of exercising power in the opinion of Poitevin landholders in the early 11th century?

By looking for answers to the question and conflicting ideas and practices of power, we can establish certain inner dynamics within the 11th-century Poitevin society of landholders. In the debate on the so-called "feudal transformation" *(see below, in Chapter 1),* the historical developments in this region played an important role in the arguments of both sides, one arguing for a disruption of an alleged old public order, the other opposing this theory. I devoted my bachelor's thesis to a thorough analysis of the positions and network of the most important Aquitanian landholders and analysed the transformation of their relationships during the reign of Duke William V (mid-990s—1030). In contrast to my earlier, purely pragmatic approach, I am now more interested in the contemporary, 11th century perception of the situation.

## Methodology

The first chapter is intended to give a brief overview of the historiography of the topic, the political situation in Poitou in the early 11th century, and some of the main sources used in the thesis. Due to the limits of the present work, it cannot be a highly detailed argumentation: only the main tendencies will be outlined to provide a context to the next chapters.

In the second chapter, I will use a variety of written sources to outline a normative social structure and the expected behaviour and relationship of the participating groups based on the applied vocabulary and other implications. The sources I used are highly theoretical as the famous letter of Bishop Fulbert on the lord—vassal relationship, a mixture of theoretical reasoning and the description of practices resulting in a narrative which contains the implications of social norms, such as the *Chronicle* of Ademar of Chabannes or the so-called *Conventum*, or communicating practical expectations as for example council decrees.

The third chapter will approach the problem from another perspective: the aim of the anonymous author of the *Conventum* and Ademar of Chabannes to fit non-conform persons or behaviours into the outlined structure. I will analyse the description of conflicts by asking the following questions: Who were the participants of the conflict, by whose fault did it start (in the author's opinion)? What was his reason to initiate the conflict? What did he wrong and why? The methods of the authors to deal with these cases reveal a more nuanced image of their idea of how society should have worked, how they perceived and evaluated the dynamics within it.

# 1. Contextualising the Problem: Poitou in the Early 11th Century

## 1.1. Historiography

The doctoral dissertation of Georges Duby in 1953 started a new trend in the historical investigation of "feudalism". He came to the conclusion during his analysis of the society of Mâconnais during the 10—12th centuries that a radical transformation occurred in French society around the first millennium. The royal power had significantly decreased outside of Île-de-France after the ascension of Hugh Capet to the throne, and, according to Duby, the decomposition of the old public order did not stop at this level. The comtal power also experienced a decline against local castellans who appropriated the *bannum* (previously exercised by the count as a public figure) for themselves and used it for their own purposes without any control from above.[4] This theory became prominent in historiography very soon. One of the most important works on the topic is the great synthesis of Jean-Pierre Poly and Eric Bournazel on the development of political institutions in France during the the 11—12th centuries.[5]

The 1990s witnessed the crisis of the theory of "feudal transformation". Dominique Barthélemy was among the first to write excessively about the question with a decisively critical approach.[6] He, together with Stephen D. White, Timothy Reuter, and Chris Wickham, participated in the debate in *Past & Present* unleashed by the article of Thomas N. Bisson in 1994, "The 'feudal revolution'". Bisson defended the "mutationist" standpoint against the new trend in French



[4] Georges Duby, *La société aux XIe et XIIe siècles dans la région mâconnaise* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1953), 155—229.
[5] Jean Pierre Poly and Éric Bournazel, *La mutation féodale. Xe–XIIe siècles* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980).
[6] Dominique Barthélemy, *La mutation de l'an mil a-t-elle eu lieu ?* (Paris: Fayard, 1997): the chapters of this book appeared earlier in various journals and books between 1992—1997.

(and American) scholarship by arguing that the violent behaviour of castellans and knights became a dominant way of exercising power, but it was absolutely autotelic, "unconstructive", and *"had neither political nor administrative character, for it was based on the capricious manipulation of powerless people."*[7]

Barthélemy pointed out in his reaction that certain notions with which the "mutationist" party was operating were too vague or inappropriate, for example, the clear distinction of public and private spheres. The result is the concept of a "feudal society" which is the antithesis of a legally operating state. Another problem is, according to him, the importance attached to certain trends in the development of the source material around the year 1000. The sudden increase in the number of available documents and the greater variety in their vocabulary may suggest a (greater) qualitative change in the society. He claimed that *"the 'feudal revolution' of the year 1000 is thus based on poorly relativized sources."*[8]

White criticised the "mutationist" approach to the question of violence. He argued that the mention of violence is sometimes a purely rhetorical tool, which makes the contextualisation of individual sources crucial, and, therefore, the use of violence as a category in the debate is not without dangers.[9] Reuter warned about the influence of the modern distinction of "civil" and "criminal" dispute and violence, while *"beating up the peasants in one's neigbourhood or district"* was a normal way of dispute in the examined period, and was usually not considered as a criminal act.[10] Wickham,[11] and White in a later article,[12] remarked on the lack of effective



[7] Thomas N. Bisson, "The 'feudal revolution'," *Past & Present* 142 (1994), 16, 18, 39—40.
[8] Dominique Barthélemy, "Debate. The 'feudal revolution'," *Past & Present* 152 (1996), 196—197, 200—201.
[9] Stephen D. White, "Debate. The 'feudal revolution'," *Past & Present* 152 (1996), 205—209.
[10] Timothy Reuter, "Debate. The 'feudal revolution'," *Past & Present* 155 (1997), 181—182.
[11] Chris Wickham, "Debate. The 'feudal revolution'," *Past & Present* 155 (1997), 197.
[12] Stephen D. White, "A Crisis of Fidelity in c. 1000?", in idem, *Re-Thinking Kinship and Feudalism in Early Medieval Europe* (Padstow, Ashgate, 2005), 6—8.

"state" power in the Carolingian era, a concept which is characteristic of 19th—20th-century narratives celebrating "the triumph of the state".[13]

I took the side of those who criticised the "feudal transformation" in my bachelor's thesis, arguing that despite the more than real possibility of collapse, Duke William V of Aquitaine could manage to enforce his will, and even strengthen his position in certain fields compared to the beginning of his reign. However, I did not comment on the social dynamics of the era, another important territory of the debate. I will restrict the focus of my current inquiry to the county of Poitou, but, because of the inner cohesion of Aquitaine, an outlook to the neighbouring territories will be necessary on several occasions.

## 1.2. The Historical Context

The territories under the governance of William V "the Great", duke of Aquitaine differed from each other in many respects, as we will see in the following. The county of Poitiers had been inherited within the family of William since the middle of the 9th century.[14] One century later Èbles Manzer or William III acquired the ducal title after the death of the last count of Auvergne who bore it.[15] At the turn of the first millennium, the counts of Angoulême, Périgueux, La Marche, and the viscount of Limoges were the vassals of Duke William V, and the county of Saintes, which had had no count since 866, stood at least partly under his authority.[16]



[13] Cf. Matthew Innes, "Charlemagne's Government", in *Charlemagne. Empire and Society*, ed. Joanna Story (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 71—73 and Stuart Airlie, "Charlemagne and the Aristocracy", ibid., 90—97.
[14] Dominique Barthélemy, *L'an mil et la paix de Dieu* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 611.
[15] Ibid.: William III was the first to bear the title in the family. Florian Mazel, *Féodalités 888—1180* (Paris: Belin, 2014), 731: Ebles Manzer had been already duke of Aquitaine. For the counts of Auvergne see ibid. 720.
[16] For Saintonge see Bernard S. Bachrach, "King Henry II and Angevin Claims to the Saintonge," *Medieval Prosopography* 6 (1985), 26.

La Marche was originally part of Poitou, the frontier separating it from Limousin. The family of Boso the Old (mid-10th c.) held these lands as vassals of the counts of Poitou, and their authority was strenghtened by the acquisition of the comtal title of Périgueux, inherited from the father-in-law of Boso the Old.[17] Robert-Henri Bautier suggested, based on the frequency of certain names in the family and the advantageous marriage of Boso the Old, that he was a descendant of the family of Boso, Western Frankish rival king (879—887).[18] Boso was not the only one who succeeded at making a good match. One of his sons, Aldebert took Almodis, cousin of Fulk Nerra, count of Anjou to his wife, forming thus an alliance with the count of Anjou.[19] The threat, which the increased power of the family posed to the ducal authority in the heart of his province, became obvious in the 990s when a war started between Fulk Nerra and William V, and the lords of "the March" took the former's side, flanking from North and South the duke who eventually lost the war.[20]

Fortunately enough for the duke, he could marry the widow of Count Aldebert, and thus obtained the tutelage over his underage son, Bernard. A few years later, the last full-aged member of the family, Count Boso II (brother of Aldebert) died, leaving behind two sons of minor age. Duke William, now in guardianship over the whole family, separated La Marche and Périgord from each other, and gave the former to his foster-son with a freshly fabricated comtal title while the sons of Boso II could keep the county of Périgueux.[21] Thus, La Marche



[17] Barthélemy, *L'an mil et la paix de Dieu*, 279. The family tree on page 612 is incomplete, the brother of Aldebert, Boso II and their sons are missing, and Bernard appears as the son of another brother of Aldebert by mistake. Cf. Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 164.
[18] Robert-Henri Bautier, "Les origines du comté de la Marche," in *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire offerts à M. Henri Hemmer par ses collègues et ses amis*, ed. s.n. (Guéret: Lecante, 1979), 13—14.
[19] For a family tree see Bernard S. Bachrach, *Fulk Nerra the Neo-Roman Consul. A Political Biography of the Angevin Count* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 265, 268.
[20] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 162., Fulk le Réchin, "Historia Andegavensis", in *Chroniques d'Anjou*, ed. Paul Marchegay and André Salmon (Paris: Renouard, 1853), 377. Cf. Bernard S. Bachrach, "A study in feudal politics: relations between Fulk Nerra and William the Great, 995—1030," *Viator* 7 (1976), 116—119.
[21] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 164.

became theoretically a separate county, but its count stood under ducal tutelage until the 1010s.[22]

Duke William intended to be on good terms with the viscount of Limoges and his family,[23] and he succeeded at increasing his immediate influence over the bishopric. Even Hilduin was invested by him in 990, as Ademar of Chabannes recalls, and the next bishop, Gerald was also a treasurer of Saint-Hilaire of Poitiers[24] of which the duke himself was the abbot. Jordan, a descendant of a castellan family, who followed Gerald in the see, was Willam's candidate to the position, and a charter preserved in the cartulary of the cathedral of Limoges enumerates the benefices which he acquired from the duke *"extra episcopatu"*, as his vassal.[25]

The count of Angoulême, William IV was a vassal and ally of Duke William, but also a strong potential adversary. He married the sister of Fulk Nerra, count of Anjou,[26] who led aggressively conquering politics in Aquitaine after his victory over the duke in the 990s. Nevertheless, it seems that Count William never used the opportunity to harm Duke William, who trusted him with the defence of the southern border of Poitou.[27] Count William shared the former county of Saintes with the duke, who possessed the northern part of Saintonge. In 999, after his defeat by the count of Anjou, the duke had to delegate the city of Saintes and important

[22] Robert-Henri Bautier claimed, based on the appendix of Georges Thomas' article on the counts of La Marche, that Bernard used his comtal title only after 1028. However, the *terminus post quem* of the charter cited in the appendix of Thomas' paper as the earliest attestation of the comtal title is 1011. The anonymous author of the contemporary *Conventum* denies the title from Bernard, but its most likely reason is the alleged equality between Bernard and the protagonist, Hugh of Lusignan. In turn, the war of Duke William V and Bernard against Peter, temporary governor of La Marche in the 1010s (see 3.2.), can mark the beginning of the independent career of the young count. See Bautier, "Les origines du comté de la Marche", 17 and Georges Thomas, "Les comtes de la Marche de la maison de Charroux (X$^{e}$ siècle—1177)," *Mémoires de la Société des Sciences Naturelles et Archéologiques de la Creuse* 23 (1925—1927), 625.

[23] E.g. Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 156: Hilduin, brother of the viscount of Limoges and the previous bishop becoming bishop of Limoges *"per manum Willelmi ducis."* Ibid., 163: William helping Hilduin in a war. Ibid., 168: William and Hilduin making a pilgrimage to Rome together, William making Gerald the next bishop.

[24] Ibid., 170.

[25] Ibid., 178 and Paul Decourtieux, ed. *Sancti Stephani Lemovicensis cartularium* (Limoges: s.l., 1919), 55—56.

[26] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 161.

[27] Ibid., 163. Cf. Bernard S. Bachrach, "Toward a Reappraisal of William the Great of Aquitaine (995—1030)," *Journal of Medieval History* 5 (1979), 16.

strongholds to Fulk Nerra, and the new bishop of Saintes might also have been chosen by the latter.[28]

The most striking similarity that these parts of the ducal province were sharing was the influence of Fulk Nerra. He had close family ties with the count of Angoulême, he had strong vassals in Angoumois, Saintonge,[29] La Marche, and even in the heart of Poitou. His tight alliance with the viscounts of Thouars was founded by his father, Geoffrey Greymantle, who strived to destabilise comtal power in Poitou.[30] In turn, Duke William IV, father of William V, had a cold relationship with Viscount Arbert I (956—987). Peter of Maillezais gives an account in his *Relatio* (written in ca. 1060) of the adulterous liaison of William and the viscountess,[31] but Bernard S. Bachrach warns about the romanticising tendency of Peter's work, and argues that the story of the liaison was born probably rather as a consequence of a famously bad relationship between the duke and the viscount of Thouars.[32] The lords of Parthenay and those of Rancon and Taillebourg were among the vassals of the count of Anjou,[33] who also disposed over strategically important strongholds in Poitou (as Loudun and Gençay for instance), as well as in the Saintonge.[34]

Duke William V answered the challenge by various means besides eliminating the threat coming from the counts of Périgueux and La Marche. His strategy encompassed keeping a tight



[28] Bachrach, "Angevin Claims to the Saintonge," 26.
[29] One of his most important allies were the vicomtal family of Mussidan, who also belonged to his family by the marriage of his half-brother Maurice. Two of the sons of Viscount Aimery I became bishops of Angoulême and Saintes, the latter was perhaps exercising Fulk's authority over his benefices in the Saintonge. See Bachrach, "Angevin Claims to the Saintonge," 28.
[30] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 151., Fulk le Réchin, "Historia Andegavensis", 376.
[31] Peter of Maillezais, "Relatio", in BnF, MS. lat. 4892, 247v. The anecdote ends with the exemplarily cruel revenge of Duchess Emma.
[32] Bernard S. Bachrach, "Geoffrey Greymantle, count of the Angevins, 960—987: a study in French politics," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 17 (1985), 54—55 (note 74). The confusion of names and the depiction of Countess Adalmodis as a witch also speak against the credibility of Peter: Peter of Maillezais, "Relatio", 246v, 247v, 249v.
[33] Anonymous, "Conventum", passim.
[34] Bachrach, *Fulk Nerra the Neo-Roman Consul*, 176—177.

bond with the church,[35] a duty in which Fulk Nerra did not excel.[36] Beyond rich donations to existing monasteries and the foundation of new ones,[37] the duke was paying attention to fill important ecclesiastic positions with his own men throughout his whole dominion. He also took the initiative in the organisation of councils generally associated with the Peace of God movement,[38] which contributed to his reputation as a leader and asserted his leadership in a symbolic way.

The bishops of Poitiers came from a local landholding family,[39] and the duke himself was abbot of Saint-Hilaire, a collegiate church with an important school in the suburb of Poitiers.[40] It offered him a good opportunity to tighten his relationship with Fulbert, bishop of Chartres, whom he appointed to treasurer in 1023.[41] Beyond the borders of the diocese of Poitou, the bishops of Limoges were not the only ones to stand close to William V. Roho, bishop of Angoulême between 1018/1020 and 1029—1036 was supposedly his protegee. We know that he was Poitevin,[42] and in the *Conventum*, he is mentioned to kiss the duke's hand, which suggests a lord—dependant relationship.[43] Bernard S. Bachrach claimed in his article on William V in 1979 that King Robert II reasserted royal authority over the see of Angoulême and Roho was appointed him,[44] but the information originates from the 12th-century *Historia pontificum et comitum Engolismensium*,[45] and considering that King Robert II appeared only on exceptional occasions in the province, it is presumably the invention of the 12th-century

[35] Daniel F. Callahan, "William the Great and the Monasteries of Aquitaine," *Studia Monastica* 19 (1977), passim.
[36] Bachrach, "Toward a Reappraisal of William the Great", 18—19.
[37] Two examples of new foundations are Maillezais and Bourgueil. Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 162.
[38] See 2.4.
[39] Jacques Duguet, "La familles des Isembert, évêques de Poitiers, et ses relations (Xe—XIe siècles)," *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest*, 4th series, vol. 11 (1971), 185.
[40] Robert Favreau, "Les écoles et la culture à Saint-Hilaire-le-Grand des origines au début du XIIe siècle," *Cahiers de Civilisation médiévale* 3 (1960), 473—475.
[41] Claude Genin, "Que savons nous de la vie de Fulbert de Chartres ? Images, certitudes, hypothèses," in *Fulbert de Chartres, précurseur de l'Europe médiévale ?* ed. Michel Rouche (Paris: PUPS, 2008), 16.
[42] Anonymous, "Historia pontificum et comitum Engolismensium" in *Rerum Engolismensium scriptores*, ed. J.-F.E. Castaigne (Angoulême: s.l., 1853), 27.
[43] Anonymous, "Conventum", 123.
[44] Bachrach, "Toward a Reappraisal of William the Great", 16.
[45] Anonymous, "Historia", 27.

author who thought royal investiture to be normative. In a letter of Bishop Isembert of Poitiers, the bishops of Périgueux and Saintes, Arnold and Islo are also mentioned to perform tasks delegated to them by the duke in his absence.[46]

What could the duke possibly gain by supporting the church? First of all, the increase of his reputation. He could influence bishops to use the weapon of excommunication, interdiction, and liturgical cursing in the case of monks according to his taste. In other words, he had built a network which could help him to keep landholders in check with the possibility of punishments of spiritual nature. The donation of lands to monasteries freed him of the displeasant duty to give those benefices to vassals who might have been potentially dangerous to him.

The main reason for turmoil in the period was the death of a landholder, because his *honor* was not necessarily to be inherited by a family member in the opinion of the lord disposing of the property, while the relatives of the deceased thought the land to be their rightful heritage.[47] Wars and agreements alternated with one another, and conflicts over a particular land could take up to years, for example, Hugh of Lusignan fighted at least for three years to get hold of the castle of Chizé.[48] The more important the deceased person was in his life, the more landholders could seize the opportunity to stand up for their alleged rights. Ecclesiastical communities were equally participating in these conflicts.[49]



[46] Isembert of Poitiers, "Epistola," in *The Letters and Poems of Fulbert of Chartres*, ed. Frederick Behrends (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 186.
[47] Stephen D. White, "The politics of exchange: gifts, fiefs, and feudalism," in idem, *Re-Thinking Kinship and Feudalism in Early Medieval Europe* (Padstow: Ashgate, 2005),12—14.
[48] For the datation see footnotes 66 and 133.
[49] Ademar of Chabannes mentions the lord of La Marche, Boso I to be the vassal of the abbot of Saint-Martial of Limoges for certain benefices. Chapter III. 43. of Ademar's *Chronicle* speaks most likely about one of these lands: the abbot of Saint-Martial, urged by Boso II, count of Périgueux and lord of La Marche, kidnaps the relics of Saint Valery from a church in La Marche, because its property was confiscated by certain lords in the neighbourhood. This presumably resulted in the cessation of liturgical activity in Saint-Vaury, which pressured the landholders to achieve an agreement with the abbot of Saint-Martial. The *principes* not only gave back the land, but they also payed a compensation for the caused damages. See Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 164. Cf. footnote 50.

According to Lester K. Little, excommunication and liturgical curses served the same purpose in the hands of the church as the wars from the part of the lay landholders to achieve a better position in negotiations.[50] While ecclesiastical lands could often not defend themselves against armed assaults, castellans were helpless against attacks on their honour and reputation.[51] Since the duke of Aquitaine strongly relied on the support of the bishops of his province, the use of these tools in councils organised by the duke is hardly surprising.

## 1.3. The Sources

Below, I present three authors who will be important in the next chapters: Fulbert, bishop of Chartres, Ademar of Chabannes, and the anonymous author of the *Conventum*.

Bishop Fulbert was the author of one of the most iconic documents on the lord—vassal relationship, written around 1020 at the request of William V, duke of Aquitaine. Although Fulbert was one of the most renowned scholars of his generation, not much is known about his life apart from what he tells in his own letters.[52] He was bishop of Chartres between 1006 and 1028 and had an extensive correspondence with the most prominent political figures of his age.[53] The corpus of his surviving letters was collected shortly after his death by his pupils,[54] and was copied around the middle of the 11th century. This manuscript is the source of the



[50] Hartmut Hoffmann emphasised that while an excommunicated lord could achieve by coercion to participate in the mass, the complete cessation of liturgical activity deprived him from this possibility, and he needed to ask for forgiveness. See Hartmut Hoffmann, *Gottesfriede und Treuga Dei* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1964), 30. Cf. footnote 50.
[51] Lester K. Little, *Benedictine Maledictions. Liturgical Cursing in Romanesque France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 225—229.
[52] Frederick Behrends, "Introduction" to *The Letters and Poems of Fulbert of Chartres*, ed. Frederick Behrends (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), xvi and Genin, "Que savons nous … ?", 14.
[53] Juliette Clément, "*Fulbert de Chartres, Oeuvres, correspondance, controverse, poésie*," in *Fulbert de Chartres, précurseur de l'Europe médiévale ?* ed. Michel Rouche (Paris: PUPS, 2008), 124.
[54] Behrends, "Introduction", xxxviii.

subsequent tradition of the text.[55] The collection includes letters by other persons who were in correspondence with the bishop, and their order follows a strict inner logic.[56]

Ademar of Chabannes (c. 989—1034) left behind a highly original corpus. He was born in a landholder family in Limousin. His maternal uncles participated in the government of La Marche during the minority of Count Bernard, his paternal uncles were monks at Saint-Martial of Limoges, and one of his father's great-uncles had been bishop of Limoges.[57] Ademar got an impressing education at Saint-Martial where he spent his adolescence.[58] Later he returned to Saint-Cybard, but kept a strong bond with his other home in Limoges.

He started writing his chronicle in the second half of the 1020s. He reworked it several times which resulted in three different versions of the text. The first and shortest, Alpha, survived as an autographe of Ademar. The second version, Beta has the largest tradition, the earliest exemplar is dated to the middle of the 11th century. The last version, Gamma survived in the form of two autograph fragments and a 12th-century, low-quality copy. [59]

In the meantime, for his ambition to become abbot of Saint-Cybard failed,[60] he directed his efforts to propagate the apostolic cult of Saint Martial, first bishop of Limoges. He was the author of the so-called apostolic life of Saint Martial and the apostolic liturgy of the saint.[61]

[55] Mike Brown, "Chartres comme l'exemplaire féodal : une interprétation de la collection des épîtres et des poèmes de Fulbert de Chartres comme traité sur la fidélité, la loi et la gouvernance," in *Fulbert de Chartres, précurseur de l'Europe médiévale ?* ed. Michel Rouche (Paris: PUPS, 2008), 232.
[56] Ibid., 233—238.
[57] See 3.1.
[58] Franz Brunhölzl, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters*, vol. 2 (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1992), 279, Richard Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse and Deceits of History. Ademar of Chabannes 989–1034* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 102, and Georges Pon, "La culture d'Adémar de Chabannes á la lumière de sa Vie de saint Amant de Boixe," in *Saint-Martial de Limoges. Ambition politique et production culturelle (X^e—XIII^e siècles)*, ed. Claude Andrault-Schmitt (Limoges: PULIM, 2006), 398—408.
[59] Georges Pon, "Introduction" to Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronique*, transl. Yves Chauvin and Georges Pon (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), xvi.
[60] Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse and Deceits of History*, 170—171.
[61] For the apostolic life, see Richard Landes, "L'hagiographie de la Paix de Dieu," in *Naissance d'apôtre. La Vie de Saint Martial de Limoges. Un apocryphe de l'an Mil,* ed. Richard Landes and Catherine Paupert (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991), 9—39. For the apostolic liturgy, see James Grier, *The Musical World of a Medieval Monk: Adémar de Chabannes in Eleventh-Century Aquitaine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 105—126.

The cult was, nevertheless, highly controversial, because Martial was a shared saint of the bishop and the monks, and the latter aimed to appropriate him completely.[62] Eventually, the monks were defeated in a debate over the apostolicity of Martial in 1029, which was a personal trauma for Ademar whose ambitions were destroyed once again. His interest turned into unhealthy obsession, manifesting in a huge corpus of forged documents and sermons.[63] His efforts were fruitful in the long run: the monastery of Saint-Martial persisted at the apostolic cult, and until the 19th century, scholars were convinced that the monks won the debate in 1029 and the pope acknowledged the apostolicity of Martial, based on the documents which were pure fiction written by Ademar of Chabannes.[64]

In the present work I will rely on the critical edition of the 1999 edition of his *Chronicle*, particularly on Beta and Gamma, and the apostolic version of *Vita prolixior* to get acquainted with Ademar's concept of society. This latter is a highly normative work, as Richard A. Landes has already remarked in his introduction to the French translation in 1991.[65]

The *Conventum inter Guillelmum Aquitanorum comitem* (shortly *Conventum*) is different: while Ademar was highly biased for the church and Duke William V, the author of the *Conventum* was the same *against* the duke and indifferent toward the church. It is a narrative of the relationship of Duke William and Hugh IV of Lusignan, his vassal, in the 1020s[66] from the viewpoint of the latter. Scholars have been interested in this short (342 lines long) document

[62] For a rarely utilised, but relevant letter of Jordan, bishop of Limoges, see Decourtieux, *Sancti Stephani Lemovicensis cartularium*. 89—91. Cf. Daniel F. Callahan, "The Sermons of Ademar of Chabannes and the Cult of Saint Martial of Limoges," *Revue bénédictine* 86 (1976). 256.
[63] Richard Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse and Deceits of History*, 269—278.
[64] Landes, "L'hagiographie de la Paix de Dieu," 11.
[65] Ibid., 30—31.
[66] Jane Martindale defines the time span of the events as 1022—1028, while Dominique Bartélemy as 1019—1028. According to George Beech, the range of the events in the Conventum is thirty years. See Jane Martindale, "Conventum inter Guillelmum Aquitanorum comitem et Hugonem Chiliarchum," *English Historical Review* 74 (1969), 530, Barthélemy, *L'an mil et la paix de Dieu*, 340, George T. Beech, "Introduction" to *Le Conventum (1030). Un précurseur aquitain des premières épopées*, ed. Georges T. Beech, transl. by Yves Chauvin, Georges Pon, and George T. Beech (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1995), xxii. The year 1028 is attested by the appearance of William IV, count of Angoulême who died in this year, and by the mention of the meeting of Count Sancho of Gascogne and Duke William at Blaye. There are no simliar clues in the text to establish the beginning of the story.

particularly since the genesis of the theory of "feudal transformation", which is due partly to the uniqueness of its viewpoint and the possibility of its exploitation for the theory, and partly to the mysteries surrounding its origin.

The date of composition is the only feature one can establish without serious doubt. It is usually dated to ca. 1028—1030,[67] with the exception of Clément de Vasselot's new theory which places it into the 1060s.[68] Its original function is unknown, and the establishment of its genre is problematic given the singularity of the document. One group of scholars thinks that it served practical purposes as a reminder to either the duke or Hugh's family or was a document of legal nature.[69] It has indeed a formulaic similarity with the so-called *convenientiae*, agreements between lords and vassals, but the existence of a storyline, dialogues, and its length contradict this classification. George T. Beech suggested that it is a literary text, a precursor of later epic poems.[70] The great inner coherence and the quality of the narrative is indeed a good reason to suppose an intention of composing a literary text, but there is neither direct evidence on the working method of the author, nor any comparable control material from the era.

The theory of Beech requires the author to be an educated person,[71] a possibility that is rejected by many scholars based on the language of the text. It has been labelled "barbarous"[72] and "half-Latin",[73] because its vocabulary, grammar, and syntax may seem horrendous ("often

[67] Martindale, "Conventum," 531. Beech, "Introduction," civ—cv., Dominique Barthélemy, "Autour d'un récit de pactes ('Conventum Hugonis'): la seigneurie châtelaine et le féodalisme, en France au XI[e] siècle," in *Il feudalesimo nell'Alto Medioevo*, vol. 1, Settimane di Studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'Alto Medioevo 47 (Spoleto: Presso La Sede del Centro, 2000), 447, and White, "A Crisis of Fidelity …?", 5.
[68] Clément de Vasselot, "Les relations féodales dans le Poitou au début du XIe siècle : de l'élaboration du *Conventum* à sa fonction," *Annales de Jauna* 3 (2015), accessed 18 May 2017, http://annalesdejanua.edel.univ-poitiers.fr/index.php?id=879 and see below.
[69] Beech, "Introduction," 14—16.
[70] Ibid., 29—111, passim.
[71] Ibid., 105—107. He suggests that the author might have been a canon of Saint-Hilaire of Poitiers.
[72] Sidney Painter, "The Lords of Lusignan in the Eleventh and Twelwth Centuries," *Speculum* 32, no. 1 (1957), 28, Marcel Garaud, "Un probleme d'histoire : à propos d'une lettre de Fulbert de Chartres á Guillaume le Grand, comte de Poitou et duc d'Aquitaine," in *Études d'histoire du droit dédiées à Gabriel le Bras*, vol. 1 (Paris: Sirey, 1965), 560.
[73] Dominique Barthélemy, "Autour d'un récit de pactes," 447.

incorrect" in the moderate wording of W. Mary Hackett), if one bears the norms of Classical Latin in their mind while reading it.[74] The use of such a "vulgar" language was sometimes used as an evidence for the author's lack of proper education.[75] Because of this and the strong bias of the narrative, the author has been hypothesised to be someone from Hugh of Lusignan's environment, or even Hugh himself.[76] Clément de Vasselot raised the possibility in a recent article that the document was written in the environment of the count of Angoulême in the second half of the 11th century as a pamphlet against the duke of Aquitaine, when his theoretically existing but weak authority became a burden for the region.[77]

Not only the identity of the author was subject to debate, but also their number. Dominique Barthélemy suggested, based on a slight change in the vocabulary, that the *Conventum* is "without doubt" the product of multiple authors.[78] Indeed, we can divide the text into two separate narratives, and interestingly the vocabulary change happens exactly where the second story begins.

The length of the two parts is disproportionate: while the first story is only 91 lines long, the second consists of 250 lines (if we do not count the finishing sentence, *"finiunt conventi inter comitem et Ugonem"*). Despite this difference, their narrative structure is identical: William promises a land to Hugh[79] who proves his worthiness multiple times,[80] and still, he does not get anything, it is even his adversaries with whom William negotiates and whom he helps out.[81]



[74] For an analysis on the vocabulary and syntax of the *Conventum*, see W. Mary Hackett, "Aspects de la langue vulgaire du Poitou d'après un document latin du XIe siècle," in *Mélanges offerts à Rita Lejeune*, vol. 1. (Gembloux: Duculot, 1969), 16—21.
[75] Painter, "The Lords of Lusignan", 28, Martindale, "Conventum", 531.
[76] Hackett, "Aspects de la langue vulgaire du Poitou", 14: according to her, one can have the impression that the text was dictated by Hugh in vernacular and recorded by someone who did not have the ability to translate a dictated text into Latin.
[77] Vasselot, "Les relations féodales", paragraph 31.
[78] Barthélemy, *L'an mil et la paix de Dieu*, 348, n. 3.
[79] Anonymous, "Conventum", 123, 128.
[80] Ibid., 123—125, 128—129.
[81] Ibid., 125—127, 129—132.

Finally, Hugh acquires a new property, although in both cases it is a land which he thinks to be his rightful heritage anyway.[82]

The narrative techniques and rhetorical strategies employed by the author were examined by Stephen D. White[83] and George T. Beech[84] among others. Despite the document may seem odd and even primitive at first sight, it operates with a wide range of ideological and literary tools to attract the attention of the reader to certain problematic features of the lord—vassal relationship.

The document survived in three slightly different versions (A, B, and C). The differences are minor and more or less systematic, but sometimes confusing.[85] The text has several editions and translations[86] of which I use the Latin edition of George Beech in the present work.

Additional sources will be mentioned throughout the following chapters, of which I will provide necessary information. For example, in a section of the first chapter, I will examine accounts of councils and assemblies in connection with social norms and the way they were communicated. Some charters are relevant to the question, because they mediate ideologies

[82] Ibid., 127, 138.
[83] Stephen D. White, "Stratégie rhétorique dans la Conventio de Hugues de Lusignan," in *Histoire et société : mélanges offerts à Georges Duby*, vol. 2 (Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence, 1993), 147–157.
[84] George T. Beech, "Narrative Structures and Techniques in the Conventum of Aquitaine ca. 1030," in *Latin Culture in the Eleventh Century*, ed. M. W. Herren, C. J. McDonough, and R. G. Arthur (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 39—56.
[85] Perhaps the most bizarre anomaly is *"incendit manus illorum"* (C) instead of *"incidit manus illorum"* (AB). See Anonymous, "Conventum", 126.
[86] Martindale, "Conventum": critical edition with parallel English translation. For additional information on the translation see Jane Martindale, "An introduction to the Conventum inter Guillelmum Aquitanorum comitem et Hugonem Chiliarchum, 1969", in eadem, "Status, Authority and Regional Power: Aquitaine and France, 9th—12th Centuries (Padstow: Ashgate, 1997), 1—3. The first English translation of George Beech appeared in a sourcebook: Anonymous, "Agreement Between Lord and Vassal," in *Readings in Medieval History*, ed. Patrick J. Geary (Peterborough: Broadview, 1989). Later he published a critical edition and a new translation of the text: Anonymous, "Conventum" and "English translation" in *Le Conventum*, 123—138 and 147—153. The French translation of Yves Chauvin and Georges Pon appeared in the same book: "Tranduction française" in *Le Conventum*, 139—147.

explicitly or implicitly. Others, together with letters and minor historical sources are a useful supplement to writings with a broader horizon.

# 2. Imagining Society

The sources I analyse in this chapter create social categories based on expectations, which might not always be identical with actual identities represented by political figures and groups. In this chapter I aim to deal with the following questions: first, what expectations did different authors create towards landholders? Second, how did they categorise society? By addressing these questions to the sources, we will be able to assess the image of society and its ideal functioning which the authors had on their minds.

## 2.1.The Letter of Bishop Fulbert to Duke William

Fulbert, bishop of Chartres, summed up the essence of the relationship between lord and vassal in a letter on the request of William V, duke of Aquitaine in 1020.[87] The letter begins with the description of the duties of a *fidelis* (vassal). He lists six passive duties, namely: not to inflict corporal harm on one's lord, not to threaten his safety, not to harm him by legal means or by dishonesty, not to damage his possessions, and finally not to make easy or possible things difficult or impossible to him. But, Fulbert continues, it is not enough to be passively not harmful, the vassal shall actively help the lord, give aid and counsel in the above-mentioned matters in order to deserve his benefice.

In turn, he deserves the same treatment from his lord. If he is reluctant or even hostile, he is *"malefidus"* (of ill faith), *"perfidus"* (perfidious) and *"perjurus"* (perjured). As Stephen D. White pointed out, there are two possible interpretations of the passage concerning the lord's duties: they include either only the six passive duties which constitute the main body of the letter, or the obligation of aid and counsel too. These interpretations correspond to different

[87] Fulbert of Chartres, "Epistola 51", in *The Letters and Poems of Fulbert of Chartres*, ed. Frederick Behrends (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 90—92.

notions of the feudal relationship:[88] one that stresses vassal fidelity and obedience and thus marks one's place in society by subordination, and another that puts equal emphasis on the duties of both side, and which does not have a direct influence on one's social standing. In my opinion, the phrasing of the letter is quite obvious. Fulbert writes that fulfilling the six passive duties is not enough and one must actively give aid and counsel. *"Dominus quoque fideli suo in his omnibus uicem reddere debet,"* he continues, making clear that all of these criteria apply to the lord as well.

The terminology (*"fidelis"*, *"dominus"*) and the unequal consequences of breaking the vow indicate a "lop-sided friendship".[89] Although the logic of the letter implies the possibility of vassals legitimately revolting against Duke William if he does not help them, at the same time, it is clearly more favourable for the duke.[90] However diligently his vassals followed his "advice" (commands) and requests, in order to "preserve" and increase (alleged) family property, they needed to do exactly what was prohibited by the main part of the letter: besieging and burning down castles, invading lands of fellow vassals – vassals of the same lord, thus damaging *his* property and invalidating his decision to give that land to someone else. Since the duke was distributing his lands following a strict logic to keep a balance between his vassals and resist the intrusion of Fulk Nerra, it was a serious offense with dangerous consequences.

The duke had the same obligations towards his vassals, but if the vassals fulfilled theirs, he did not need to do anything to punish them, thus, a conflictless relationship between lord and vassal



[88] White, "A Crisis of Fidelity?", 12—14.
[89] This is an expression applied by Julian Pitt-Rivers (*The People of the Sierra*, 2nd ed., Chicago, 1971, p. 140) and taken over by White, "The politics of exchange", 10—11. It means that *"two parties exchange gifts without computing the costs of the gifts and without comparing those costs with the costs of previous gifts or gifts that might be made in the future."* In the case of a lord—vassal relationship it means the disproportionate efforts the parties had to undertake in order to sustain the relationship.
[90] Cf. White, "A Crisis of Fidelity?" 12—14.

and the peace of the province was granted. As the letter suggests, it depended on exclusively whether the vassals used the possibility or not.

The correspondence between Duke William and Bishop Fulbert served multiple goals. On the one hand, addressing a letter to Duke William could be one of the easiest ways to reach out to the whole network of his vassals. On the other hand, the letter was supposed to reinforce William's authority by legitimating his sanctions against lesser landholders and by presenting him as a good lord who cares about the ideal functioning of his relationships and the well-being of his vassals.

## 2.2. Ademar of Chabannes

The works of Ademar of Chabannes incorporate both explicit and implicit expectations towards the political actors of his time. The *Chronicle* contains a panegyric passage about Duke William V whom Ademar presents as a role model and about his exemplary "friendship" with William IV, count of Angoulême. It also includes remarks on ecclesiastical issues like simony or the alienation of church lands, which will be discussed in Chapter 3. The *Vita prolixior* of St. Martial is in itself a guide how Aquitaine should have looked like,[91] and the forged documents served to create an alternative reality where the dream of Ademar had come true.

Thus, for example, in the persons of Duke William V and William IV, count of Angoulême we meet the incarnation of the ideal lord—vassal "friendship" as it was characterised by Bishop Fulbert. In the words of Ademar the two men *"always loved each other as if they had had one soul in two bodies".* This reference to the biblical story of David and Jonathan in itself suggests

[91] See 1.3.

an ideal friendship to the reader.[92] The chronicler mentions occasions when the two William helped each other in wars and lists some of the benefices given by the duke to the count.[93]

According to Ademar, the duke was both a good man and a good leader. He was friendly, went on pilgrimage every year, and as it is mentioned in chapter 54,[94] was not only literate, but reading was one of his favourite activities – a good occasion for Ademar to list various historical figures who shared the same passion. When practicing his authority, he was glorious and powerful, wise and prudent, a fervent supporter of the church, generous donator, who had a friendly relationship with various rulers (including Henry II, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire) – even he himself as well *"seemed to be rather a king than a duke,"* and was acclaimed by the Roman senate as *augustus* and their father.[95]

In these two chapters (41 and 54), he is compared to King David, Augustus, Theodosius the Great, Charlemagne, and Louis the Pious.[96] All of them were exemplary, and more importantly, supreme rulers. They all made their nation glorious, which legitimated the lack of precedent for their authority on the one hand, and their occasional wrong-doings on the other.

The apostolic version of *Saint Martial's Life* depicts an ideally functioning Aquitanian society. The territory of Stephen, the fictive duke of Aquitaine during the mission of Saint Martial, included everything between the Rhône and the ocean, the Loire and the Pyrenees.[97] Nevertheless, he did not style himself king, because he respected the authority of the Roman



[92] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronion*, 163: *"Qui ita se invicem dilexerunt semper, ut esset eis* (Gamma: *in duobus corporibus*) *anima una."* Cf. 1 Sam 18:1: *"... anima Ionathan colligata est animae David, et dilexit eum Ionathan quasi animam suam."* (Vulgate)
[93] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 163, 181.
[94] Ibid., 172—173.
[95] Ibid., 162.
[96] Ibid., 173.
[97] Ademar of Chabannes, "Vie de saint Martial, évêque de Limoges et apôtre des Gaules," in *Naissance d'apôtre. La Vie de Saint Martial de Limoges. Un apocryphe de l'an Mil*, eds. Richard Landes and Catherine Paupert, transl. Catherine Paupert (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991), 62, 76.

emperor.[98] After his conversion he made donations, founded churches, made a pilgrimage to Rome.[99] As for his subjects, they crowded around Martial to receive baptism and the other sacraments, and many of them chose to devote their lives to the faith.[100] The only indication that it was not an entirely perfect world is the remark of Martial about not administering the Eucharist to the impure.[101]

The presentation of the duke is echoes the *Chronicle*'s panegyric and, in general, its concept. Since this text was a completely fictive history, Ademar could omit disobedient vassals and simoniac prelates. What remains is a perfect duke, two counts who are the recipients of miracles performed by Martial,[102] the company of the saint, and the faceless, obedient crowd that submits itself to Christianisation without any conflict. Living in a society like that would have been more peaceful, indeed.

## 2.3. The *Conventum*

An entirely different world unfolds from the "barbarous" phrases of the *Conventum*, including the ideal behaviour of political actors. Collecting the duty- and expectation-related vocabulary, we find the following words among the most frequently used expressions: various forms of the verb *'debeo'* (on six occasions), *'rectum'* (seven, together with *'rectitudo'* nine). The forms of *'debeo'*, apart from one single exception,[103] are used in connection with the alleged obligations of Duke William, while *'rectum'* and *'rectitudo'* belong exclusively to Hugh.



[98] Ibid., 76.
[99] Ibid., 65—66.
[100] Ibid., 69, 75.
[101] Ibid., 93.
[102] The son of Count Arcadius was resurrected, Count Sigisbert of Bordeaux was healed. See Ademar of Chabannes, "Vie de saint Martial", 68—75, 78—81.
[103] Anonymous, *Conventum*, 125: *"Tantum ex me tu es, ut si dicerem tibi rusticum facere in seniori facere debueras"*, tells Duke William to Hugh.

According to the text, the duties of Duke William include being glad when Hugh achieves something on his own,[104] promising not to exclude him from decisions which directly or indirectly affect his life (negotiations with other vassals, decisions over lands),[105] keeping his promises,[106] and most importantly, helping his vassal in need.[107] The words *'rectum'* and *'rectitudo'* are used as property-related terms.[108]

The *Conventum* suggests, that Hugh is able and willing to do everything on his own: taking "back" lands,[109] negotiating with his adversaries.[110] He needs William only as a hand to help him reach his goals. His dissatisfaction arises from his need for a much larger independence than it is acceptable for William. This approach conflicts with the principles set by Bishop Fulbert, but the *Conventum* succeeds in justifying the deeds of Hugh by claiming that he had no other choice after all the mistreatment from his lord's part, and, consequently, William is the one to blame for the wars which Hugh had to fight for his alleged "heritage".

Otherwise, Hugh does not transgress the rules of fidelity: he refuses to make a form a secret alliance against his lord,[111] aids him in wars, hands over hostages, becomes a vassal of someone whom he thinks to be of equal rank with him.[112] He even makes an exception of the duke's



[104] Ibid., 126: *"Ut autem audivit comes, letus esset* [sic] *debuisset …"*
[105] Ibid., 129: *"… promisit ei comes sicut debet senior promittere suo homini rationem ut finem vel societatem cum Aimericum non haberet sine Ugonem et permisit ei facere Malavallem sine consilio Ugoni."*
[106] Ibid., 133—134: *"'Faciat Ugo pro me, et ego portam illi fidem sicut senior portari debet homini suo.'"*
[107] Ibid., 130: *"Precor te et ammoneo per fidem quam senior adjuvari debet homini suo …"*, ibid., 131: *"Comes autem qui adjuvare debuerat Ugoni …"*
[108] Ibid., 127—128: *"… et hoc castrum rectitudo erat Hugoni …"*, ibid., 132: *"'… homines sui tollebant mihi rectum meum.'"* Ibid., 133: *"'… rectum habeo melius quam illi qui tenebant.'"* Ibid., 135: *"… ivit ad curtem comiti, et misit eum in ratione de sua rectitudine …"* , ibid., 135—136: *"… fecitque Ugo pro hoc quia cogitavit habere rectum …"*, *"… ubi ipse rectum habebat …"*, *"'… alias causas, quas per rectum tuum requiris.'"* Ibid., 138: *"'… et si non reddidero tibi tu dicas quod non est rectum ut tibi vetem castrum quę de te habeo …'"*
[109] Ibid., 132—136.
[110] Ibid., 124—125.
[111] Ibid., 125.
[112] Ibid., 125—127, 128—129.

person when he denounces their pact and declares war on him.[113] (It had a very pragmatic reason as well: the episode happened at William's court.)

At the same time, William is shown to have no scruples about violating the contract between him and his vassal. He breaks almost all of his promises,[114] makes secret agreements and alliances,[115] burns the new castle of Hugh,[116] takes away his hostages,[117] abandons him in wars,[118] thus, generally speaking, inhibits him from acquiring what is "rightfully" his. In all of these cases the duke did not support his vassal exactly because these are independent actions from the part of Hugh which come from a very different perception of their place in society and their relationship.

## 2.4. Council Regulations

The Peace of God had been known for long as a popular movement standing up against the widespread violence of greedy and bloodthirsty castellans, which afflicted the church and the poor, generally speaking, the innocents. The influence of a presumptive apocalypticism in the



[113] Ibid., 135.
[114] Ibid., 123, 124, 125, 127, 128—131, 131—132, 133—135.
[115] Ibid., 123, 124, 125, 129, 134—135.
[116] Ibid., 131.
[117] Ibid., 126—127, 128.
[118] Ibid., 126, 129, 130, 132, 135.

era has been widely debated.[119] When the political activity of castellans was reassessed, some characteristics of the Peace of God as a movement needed to be revaluated as well.[120]

Shortly, an important aspect of these gatherings was that the ecclesiastical activities which they encompassed (parade of relics, threats of anathematisation) were part of the general strategy of the church, having the same function as the "average" excommunication and liturgical curses from their part and plundering from the castellans' side.[121] However, the church had the advantage of being an all-covering network, therefore they could exert a consistent propaganda. This notion is strengthened further by other documents speaking of similar gatherings where landholders, including the church, settled their dispute over a particular land. Certain councils seem very similar to these, only with the rhetorical layer on them.

Looking at the problem from another perspective, even the councils associated with the Peace of God were very different from each other regarding the social status and number of the participants and the decisions made by them. Sometimes it seems that only the regional elite gathered together to settle their disputes after something of great impact (e.g. death of a great landholder) happened which made it necessary to restore peace between them. On several

[119] For arguments on the pro-apocalypticism side see Thomas Head and Richard Landes, eds., *The Peace of God. Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000* (Ithaca—London, Cornell University Press, 1992).
A radical counteropinion was presented by Sylvain Gougenheim, *Les fausses terreurs de l'an mil. Attente de la fin des temps ou approfondissement de la foi ?* (Paris, Picard, 1999), particularly 199—202.
More moderate opinions are held e.g. by Edward M. Peters and Michael Frassetto. See Edward M. Peters, "Mutations, adjustments, terrors, historians, and the year 1000," in *The Year 1000: Religious and Social Response to the Turning of the First Millennium*, ed. Michael Frassetto (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 9—28 and Michael Frassetto, "Heretics, antichrists, and the year 1000: apocalyptic expectations in the writings of Ademar of Chabannes," ibid., 73—84.
For the answer of Richard Landes to the arguments of Gougenheim and others see Richard Landes, "Introduction: The *Terribles espoirs* of 1000 and the Tacit Fears of 2000," in *The Apocaliptic Year 1000. Religious Expectations and Social Change, 950—1050*, eds. Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, and David C. Van Meter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3—15.
[120] Dominique Barthélemy, *L'an mil et la paix de Dieu*, 261—263, Gougenheim, *Les fausses terreurs de l'an mil*, 183.
[121] Hoffmann, *Gottesfriede und Treuga Dei*, 30 and Little, *Benedictine Maledictions*, 225—229. Cf. 1.2.
For the contemporary practice of bringing relics to a disputed land to intimidate perpetrators see Bernard of Angers, *Liber miraculorum sancte Fidis*, ed. Luca Robertini (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1994), 158—159.

occasions, the main figures of these councils were bishops and/or archbishops and abbots, who had the means to phrase anathemes for those who (in the heat of war) insulted the poor or the church, and at the council held at Poitiers in 1010 the participants also made up regulations for clerics.

In order to assess the texts related to these councils, a brief summary of the events is necessary. In 989 Gumbald, archbishop of Bordeaux, held a council in Charroux with the bishops of his province and the bishop of Limoges in the presence of relics from nearby monasteries which attracted a huge crowd. The council decreed that the plunderers of church property, abusers of the poor and the unarmed clerics would be anathematised.[122]

The immediate reason for the council of Limoges in 994 was an epidemic raging in Limousin. Hilduin, bishop of Limoges and his brother, Geoffroy, abbot of Saint-Martial prescribed a three days long fast following the advice of Duke William V. During this time relics arrived at the city, then Saint Martial, who was lifted from his tomb, healed the sick, the duke and the *principes* who were present agreed on keeping the peace and justice.[123] Ademar of Chabannes mentions in a sermon written one decade later the archbishops of Bordeaux and Bourges and other Southern French bishops among the participants who, according to him, decreed similar regulations than in 989.[124]

Five years later, on 12 January 999, Duke William V held a council in Poitiers with the participation of the archbishop of Bordeaux, the bishops of his province, the bishop of Limoges, and twelve abbots. They affirmed the decrees of the council of Charroux, delegated the settlement of negotiations over properties to the overlord of the land in question and the local

[122] Barthélemy, *L'an mil et la paix de Dieux*, 298—299, for the latin text see Little, *Benedictine Maledictions*, 259.
[123] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 157.
[124] Daniel F. Callahan, "Adémar de Chabannes et la Paix de Dieu," *Annales du Midi* 89 (1977), 21—43.

bishop to ensure the obedience of both parties. They obliged priests and deacons to celibacy, and bishops were not anymore allowed to receive money for absolution and confirmation.[125]

The duke convoked another council to Poitiers on 10 March 1010 together with Bishop Gilbert who threatened the violators of the (unknown) decrees with divine revenge. There is no available information on the participation of the lay elite, but the relics of Saint Maxentius were translated to the city which might have attracted a crowd of pilgrims.[126]

The second council of Charroux in 1028 was convoked by Duke William because of the spread of Manichean heresy, according to Ademar of Chabannes at least. The *Chronicle* does not mention the presence of relics and a crowd led by religious devotion, pointing out only that the duke prescribed for the participating *principes* the confirmation of peace and respect toward the church.[127]

A sermon of Ademar of Chabannes is the only contemporary source mentioning a council held after the consecration of the new basilica of Saint-Sauveur in Limoges on 18 November 1028 by the participating bishops, the dukes of Aquitaine and Gascogne, and certain landholders of Limousin. The bishops threatened the violators of the peace with anathematisation.[128] The *Chronicle* of Geoffroy de Vigeois written at the end of the 12th century do not report this council, only the crowd heading to the relics which had been carried there for the solemn occasion.[129]



[125] Giovanni Domenico Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio,* vol. 19 (Venice, 1774), col. 265—268.
[126] Alfred Richard, ed., *Chartes et documents pour servir à l'histoire de l'abbaye de Saint-Maixent* (Poitiers, 1886), 91 and Anonymous, "Chronicon sancti Maxentii Pictavensis," in *Chroniques des églises d'Anjou*, ed. Paul Marchegay and Émile Mabille (Paris: Renouard, 1869), 387.
[127] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 189.
[128] Callahan, "Adémar de Chabannes et la Paix de Dieu," 29, idem, "William the Great and the Monasteries of Aquitaine," 331, Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse and Deceits of History*, 199—204.
[129] Geoffroy of Vigeois, "Ex Chronica Gaufridis Coenobitae Monasterii S. Martialis Lemovicensis, ac Prioris Vosiensis Coenobii," in *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, vol. 10, ed. Léopold Delisle (Paris, 1874), 268.

Even if the councils of the Peace of God movement seem quite heterogeneous, they share the common feature of answering critical situations.[130] However, as a reaction to a general crisis they seem too diversified, spontaneous, and of little efficiency. In theory this might have been a result of the meagre effect the officials decreeing the peace had on the everyday life of Aquitaine, but they had the appropriate means to keep conflicts under control. It is more likely that the landowning participants of the councils aimed to arrange their own power relations which were disrupted by a momentary crisis.

Shortly before the first council of Charroux (989) Hugh Capet was crowned king and found a fierce adversary in Duke William IV.[131] In the same year the 17-year-old Fulk Nerra inherited the county of Anjou together with the holdings his father had acquired in his war against Duke William IV.[132] Many of his neighbours wanted to profit from the situation,[133] the succession of the young, inexperienced count. These events might have destabilised the situation for a time in the region. The anathemes were aimed at the abusers of the church and the poor, as this could be the only generally applicable tool of the organisers against the wars of landholders.

The epidemics of 994 was perhaps a crisis serious enough in itself to trigger this reaction from the duke, the bishop of Limoges and the abbot of Saint-Martial. In 999 the decree of the council of Poitiers which inhibits vigilantism may have been provoked by the war lasting for years between Fulk Nerra, Aldebert and the Boso of La Marche and Duke William V.

The death of Savary, viscount of Thouars, which happened between 1002 and 1012[134] could have resulted in a similar crisis. As it was mentioned earlier, the viscounts of Thouars were playing a crucial role in the rivalry of the duke of Aquitaine and Fulk Nerra, because their lands

[130] Mazel, *Féodalités*, 144—145.
[131] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon,* 150—151.
[132] Ibid., 151, Fulk le Réchin, "Historia Andegavensis", 376.
[133] Bachrach, *Fulk Nerra the Neo-Roman Consul,* 27—28.
[134] George T. Beech, "Identification des personnes et des lieux," in *Le Conventum*, 156.

were situated between the capitals of the two parties, and both were aiming to gain the viscounts for their own cause.[135]

During a time span of four years between 1024 and the second council of Charroux (1028) Gui, viscount of Limoges, Aimeri I, lord of Rancon and Taillebourg, and William IV, count of Angoulême, who were the most important landholders in the region besides the count of La Marche,[136] deceased.[137] Their deaths must have destabilised the whole network of landholders in La Marche. In turn, the affirmation of peace after the consecration of Saint-Sauveur in Limoges, if it happened at all,[138] was a representative occasion, a demonstration of power from the part of the church and the participating lay elite, rather than an answer to particular problems.

We can add two further events (which may not seem important at first glance) to the series of classic examples. The first was recorded in a charter of Saint-Cyprien of Poitiers between 1000 and 1004[139] which prohibits the plundering of the lands of the abbey and the local bishop on the order of Duke William V, urged by Bishop Gilbert of Poitiers, and with the consent of the

[135] Bachrach, "A study in feudal politics," 112.
[136] William IV, count of Angoulême got the viscounties of Melle, Aulnay, and Rochechouart, and further benefices (Chabanais, Confolens, Ruffec, and "much else") attached to Blaye. See Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 163. Aimery I of Rancon was an important figure in La Marche, besides Rancon he held for example the castle of Gençay which had a particular strategical importance. See Anonymous, "Conventum", 132—135, Marcel Fouché, "Chronologie des seigneurs de Gençay," *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest et des musées de Poitiers* s. 4, vol. 10 (1969), 99—100, Barthélemy, *L'an mil et la paix de Dieu*, 345.
[137] Viscount Guy died in October 1025 (Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 183, cf. idem, *Chronique*, transl. Yves Chauvin and Georges Pon (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 283). Aimeri I of Rancon, if he is identical with the person in Ademar's *Chronicle* killed at the castle of Fractabotum (Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 181), died in 1024, but latest in 1025 when the castle of Couhé had been already finished, which happened, according the *Conventum*, after his death (Anonymous, "Conventum", 129—130). Count William died in April 1028 (Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 186—187).
[138] Those works of Ademar of Chabannes which were written after 1029 must be handled with particular caution because of the great number of forgeries fabricated by him at that time. There is no account given on this peace council either in the *Annales Lemovicenses* (Anonymous, "Annales Lemovicenses" in MGH SS 2, 252) or in the *Chronicle* of Geoffroy of Vigeois (Geoffroy of Vigeois, "Chronica", 268). Nevertheless, a number of scholars give credit to him. See Callahan, "Adémar de Chabannes et la Paix de Dieu", 29, idem, "William the Great and the Monasteries of Aquitaine", 331, Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse and Deceits of History*, 199—204, Barthélemy, *L'an mil et la paix de Dieu*, 370.
[139] The editor dates this charter to 990—1004, but Islo, bishop of Saintes, who is a witness became bishop around 1000. Louis Rédet, ed., *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Cyprien de Poitiers 931-1155* (Poitiers, 1874), 22.

landholders of whole Poitou.[140] The charter applies the word *calumnia* to these conflicts, which meant the "retrieving" of alleged family property.[141] Among the few witnesses of the charter the only lay person besides William and his mother is Savary, viscount of Thouars, therefore, it is perhaps not too far-fetched to assume that the purpose of the event was to discipline him. During the 990s three important changes happened in Poitou: around 990 Viscount Savary inherited Thouars,[142] mid-990s Duke William IV retired and was succeeded by his son, and the war between William V and Fulk Nerra. Viscount Savary cound profit from any (or all) of these events to "restore" "family" properties.

We have records of two councils held in 1032.[143] One took place in Poitiers (as well as in other French cities) on the order of King Robert, and the preservation of the peace was decreed upon penalty of excommunication. Few days later Duke William VI (son of William V who had died two years earlier) held another *placitum* at Melle to arrange property affairs. He awarded certain disputed lands to Saint-Maixent, a monastery in the immediate vicinity of the chief holdings of the family of Lusignan.[144] Hugh IV, lord of Lusignan, who often confronted with his neighbours, died in 1032.[145] We find a certain Hugh among the witnesses of the charter who might have been the son of Hugh IV, the new lord of Lusignan.

In all these nine cases the events went through the interpretation of the church, but by different persons, means, and to different extent. The surviving decrees (only those of Charroux I [989] and Poitiers I [999]), understandably, have a very pragmatic approach. They set down rules for lay landholders, on the one hand, in order to defend the poor and the unarmed (!) clerics, and



[140] Ibid.
[141] Little, *Benedictine Maledictions*, 225.
[142] George T. Beech, "Identification des personnes et des lieux," 156.
[143] Anonymous, "Chronicon sancti Maxentii Pictavensis," 391, Richard, *Chartes et documents de Saint-Maixent*, 109.
[144] Callahan, "William the Great and the Monasteries of Aquitaine," 328, Painter, "The Lords of Lusignan," 28—30.
[145] George T. Beech, "Identification des personnes et des lieux," 156.

rules for the clergy in the case of the council held in 999. The expectations communicated in these regulations are very down-to-earth: the decision-makers insisted on carrying out negotiations without the application of physical violence, and to achieve this, the dispositions of the council of Poitiers explicitly asserted the juridical function of the suzerain responsible for the disputed property and of the local bishop. They dissociated themselves of (armed) clerics who could potentially participate in violent acts, because their existence was not compatible with the rhetoric of the council, the church being the spokesman of peace. Furthermore, they ordered the celibacy of priests and deacons, thus restricting the possibility of wars between their heirs and the church. The decree against bishops administering certain sacraments only for money aimed to support the poor.

The charters and the annals of Saint-Maixent mention the councils at Poitiers in 1010 and 1032 only briefly. As for the gatherings of 1000—1004 at Poitiers and of 1032 at Melle, the charters of Saint-Cyprien and Saint-Maixent describe them as a group of people coming together to decide about the future of certain lands which eventually got restored to Saint-Cyprien and Saint-Maixent. This is another type of pragmatic approach, recording the result of the negotiations. The expectations are simple: the decision was intended to be the final solution, and the parties were required to respect this. In turn, Ademar of Chabannes grasped the ceremonial, representative aspect of the events.

The accounts share the feature of mentioning the aim of the participants to create peace. The decrees, which strived to achieve a general peace, set down rules of behaviour for a variety of groups who were potentially dangerous to the peace. The charters of Saint-Cyprian and Saint-Maixent confined themselves to the settlement of one particular conflict, which required the coordination of a limited number of people. Ademar remained silent on most of these events. Maybe they were of small importance for the contemporaries, or writing about frequent peace

councils, thus, about the need for *creating* an obviously non-existing peace would not have fitted into the concept of the *Chronicle* which aimed to idealise the rule of William V. Therefore, while the decrees and charters give an actual list of inappropriate behaviours, these are only sporadic in the historical work of Ademar, and missing from the accounts of the councils. At the same time, this subject is the central topic of the *Conventum*, only without the layer of religious narrative.

## 2.5. Thinking About the Future: Donations to the Church

Donation charters put all these expectations into a broader perspective. The purpose of giving land to churches and monasteries was to maintain the family's memory by the prayers of the recipients and to ensure a reward after death. For this reason two time frames appear in popular charter arengas: the close past and the present on the one hand, and the remote future on the other. To eliminate complications in the close future, certain closing formules prohibited the contestation of the decision.[146]

The idea of the world and its history is represented in the arengas as following: the end of history, the reign of God is irresistibly approaching.[147] This world is, however, far from being perfect. The only thing one can do to make it better is to think about the salvation of one's self



[146] In the cartulary of Saint-Cyprien of Poitiers we find the following formules: "nemine contradicente:" nos. 269, 274, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 303, 304, 306, 308, 309, 312, 319, 363, "sine / absque ulla contradictione:" nos. 271, 311, "nemine proibente:" no. 367. See Rédet, *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Cyprien*.

[147] The most popular formula in Poitou during this era was: *"Mundi terminum atproprinquante, ruinis crenscentibus, iam certa signa manifestantur. Dum in hoc seculo unusquisque homo proprio vacat arbitrario, oportet ei ut de rebus sibi aquisitio taliter agere valeat qualiter in futuro aeterne vite mereantur precipere."* Sometimes only certain phrases appear in charters. See P. de Monsabert, ed., Chartes de l'abbaye de Nouaillé de 678 à 1200 (Poitiers, 1936), nos. 72, 73, 74, 76, 77, 78, 80, 81, 83, 84, 89, 100. The formule often appears together with a sanction for the violators. Richard, *Chartes et documents de Saint-Maixent*, nos. 75, 76, 80. It also appears in the Saintonge, see Georges Musset, ed., *Cartulaire de Saint-Jean d'Angély*, vol. 1 (Saintes, 1901), nos. 43, 47, 48, 65, 78, 95, 111.
Another popular arenga was in Nouaillé: *"Latores legum sanxerunt ut qui de iure proprio aliquis alicui conferre voluerit, hoc sub presentia virorum nobilium per seriem cartarum gestis alligetur, quatinus hoc quod pie factum est diuturnis temporibus maneat inconvulsum."* Monsabert, *Chartes de Nouaillé*, nos. 82, 87, 92.
Similar ideas are expressed in the following charters: ibid., nos. 86, 92, 103, 108, Richard, *Chartes et documents de Saint-Maixent,* nos. 78, 82, 91, and Musset, *Cartulaire de Saint-Jean d'Angély,* nos. 8, 82, 182.

and family and act consciously to achieve it. What is not made explicit is the circumstance that after the donation is made, society is still stuck in the present timeframe where disputes and wars are part of one's life. This is blurred on the one hand by the aim of the donator to ensure the finality and eternal validity of the decision, and, on the other hand, by the perspective of remote future, this constant presence of a ground for comparison next to which no society can stand its ground.

## 2.6. Concepts of Society

The concept of Fulbert, Ademar, and the council decisions are in harmony. They differentiate between four basic groups of society: 1) the duke of Aquitaine, 2) the church, 3) the vassals of the duke, among them those persons who loot each other's lands, 4) the poor who suffer the consequences of wars. Fulbert writes about the norms which are supposed to govern the relationship between William and his vassals, the council decisions, of which some make further divisions within the four groups (bishops and minor clergy within the church, lords and vassals within the group of vassals) for the sake of greater efficiency, try to regulate the behaviour of landholders among each other and towards the church and the poor.

In this way, the church was claiming control over society, but not only for herself, but also for the Duke of Aquitaine. Both had an interest in confining the inheritance wars in a way that was favourable for the duke, since he was the one standing at the top of the network of landholders and the one who had the greatest influence over the events in his province. The letter of Fulbert summons the vassals to be obedient and accept the duke's decisions, while the councils try to restrict wars by banning aggression against the church and the poor.

Ademar of Chabannes, who worked with the same social categories in his *Chronicle*, pointed out the defects of the (imaginary) system from time to time. Even though he tries to convince the reader (and himself) that the society he describes was near to perfect, he does not hide that

William V and his bishops had controversies, and the lay elite had its inner conflicts too. His explanations for these sporadic events will be discussed in the next chapter.

The viewpoint of the *Conventum* differs from these. The basis of its worldview is the relationship between lords and vassals – both lay and cleric. It highlights the importance of inheritance wars and their role in the identity of smaller families on the margin of the elite and formulates claims from their part which were invalidated by other sources.

The donation charters put these concepts into an eschatological context: it does not matter how society is structured and how it works. At the Last Judgement only individual merits and flaws will decide the fate of a person.

# 3. Society in the Making

In the following chapter I examine cases in which certain persons or groups were experimenting with finding their place in the hypothetical social structure outlined in Chapter 2 and situations where the authors of my two main sources, the anonymous writer of the *Conventum* and Ademar of Chabannes aimed to do the same with the figures in their narrative.

## 3.1. The *Conventum* and the Ascension of Castellans

No matter how desperately Ademar tried to avoid writing about important figures on the margin of the elite, he could not erase their traces from other sources. The one most consistently representing their perception of society and their place in it is the *Conventum*. In the previous chapter I analysed the relation between the *Conventum* and other sources expressing expectations toward political actors, and its place in that image of society of which the other texts are important witnesses. Among these documents, the *Conventum* is the one explicitly describing the inner dynamics within the large group which I previously labelled as "vassals of the duke of Aquitaine".

Let us take a closer look at the Poitevin society as it is depicted in the *Conventum*. Poitou, where the narrative is placed, is dominated by "Count" William. Fulk Nerra, count of Anjou is also an overlord of the county despite governing partly from behind the scenes.[148] Hugh of Lusignan is keeping an exact record of which lands his ancestors and other relatives once held in benefice, and considers them to be his own.[149] Similar persons are the viscounts of Thouars, the lords of Rancon, and Bernard, count of La Marche. Although they are all adversaries of

[148] Anonymous, "Conventum," 124, 132—135.
[149] Ibid., 127—128: the castles of Civray (*"et hoc castrum rectitudo erat Hugoni sicut fuerat patris suo"*), 132—133: Gençay (it is hinted that Hugh might have had previous connection to Gençay, because he thinks that *"rectum habeo melius quam illi qui tenebant"*), and 135—136: Chizé (*"... Ugo perrexit ad castrum Kassiacum quę fuit avunculo suo, ... cepit turrem ..., fecitque Ugo pro hoc quia cogitavit habere rectum quia fuerat patri suo vel ad aliis parentibus suis"*).

Hugh, the right of inheritance within these families is not contested, if one of these figures dies,[150] only their right to certain lands. Places like Châtellerault and Parthenay appear in the story as lands which are to be given without any restriction,[151] although we know that finally both were inherited by the son of the deceased viscount or lord.[152] Bishops appear as potential business partners and allies.[153]

There are not simply two groups, one of landholders with titles and one without titles. In this latter group, another fraction can be identified, those who do not have titles but are (or aim to be) of equal rank with viscounts and counts and try to assimilate themselves into this group. The author even gives them fabricated titles as *chiliarchus* and *tribunus*.[154] The *Conventum* acknowledges the unity of their lands, the automatic inheritance of the position of the head of the family. The immediate vassality to the lord seems crucial as well. When Hugh does not want to swear fidelity to Bernard of La Marche,[155] it is not only because he thinks they are equals (the *Conventum* also denies the comtal title from Bernard) and because he thinks the

[150] Ibid., 123, 125: in Thouars Viscount Savari is succeeded by his brother Radulf, whose heir is his nephew Geoffrey. Ibid, 129: the heir of Aimeri I of Rancon is his son Aimeri II. The passage of power happens in the narrative in all three cases without any remark concerning its rightfulness or wrongfulness. Both families were following a system of inheritance popular in Poitou which does not exclude the youger brothers and sons of the family. See Adrien Morin, *Histoire de Thouars et du pays thouarsais* (Thouars: Impr. nouvelle, 1964), 15—16 and Cédric Jeanneau, "Liens adelphes et héritage, Une solution originale en Poitou aux XIe et XIIe siècles : Le droit de viage ou retour", in *Frères et sœurs : les liens adelphiques dans l'Occident antique et médiéval*, eds. Sophie Cassagnes-Brouquet and Martine Yvernault (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 95—100.

[151] Anonymous, "Conventum", 123: Châtellerault (*"Aquitanorum comes vocitatus Guillelmus conventum habuit cum Hugonem Chiliarchum, ut dum eveniret finis vicecomiti Bosoni, honorem ejus mitteret ei in commendatui."*), 123—124: Parthenay (*"Eo tempore accidit ut finiretur de castro Parteniaco Joscelinus. Dixitque comes ut honorem et mulierem ejus Hugoni traderet …"*).

[152] Jacques Duguet, "Notes sur quelques vicomtes de Châtellerault", *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest* 4/16 (1981), 262—263. Châtellerault was inherited by Viscount Boso's son Acfred, maybe together with his brother Hugh. Bachrach, *Fulk Nerra the Neo-Roman Consul,* 218. Joscelin of Parthenay was succeeded by his son William.

[153] Anonymous, "Conventum", 123: Roho, bishop of Angoulême is witnessing an agreement between Duke William and Hugh of Lusignan. Ibid., 127: agreements with Gislebert et Isembert, bishops of Poitiers. Ibid., 131: Gerald, bishop of Limoges helps Hugh in one of his campaigns.

[154] Ibid., 123: Hugh of Lusignan is called a *chiliarchus*, ibid. 127: Aimeri I of Rancon is called a *tribunus*. George T. Beech suggested on the basis of the use of the word chiliarchus a deeper relationship between the biblical story of King David, and hypothesised that the figure of Hugh was formed to imitate David, although even he himself admits the weaknesses of the theory. See Georges T. Beech, "The Biblical David as Role Model in the early 11th century Latin narrative the Conventum of Aquitaine," in *Foi chrétienne et Églises dans la société politique de l'Occident du Haut Moyen Âge (IVe-XIIe siècles)*, eds. Jacqueline Hoareau-Dodinau and Pascal Texier (Limoges: Pulim, 2004), 254—266.

[155] Anonymous, "Conventum", 128.

castle of Civray is his part of his heritage, but also because it would degrade Hugh to the level of those landholders of whom Hugh wants to distinguish himself. Finally, he surrenders to the will of his lord, Duke William, and becomes a vassal of Bernard for that part of the fortress of Civray which was his father's before, but the worst is yet to come. The humiliation is twofold, when he is thrown out from the castle by the garrison (in agreement and cooperation with Bernard) as he was one of those whom he thinks to be less than him and whom he himself chases away or captures in a similar way, the castellans of Gençay and Melle, respectively.[156]

This puts the role of William, count of Angoulême in a slightly different light. It was noticed by Clément de Vasselot that he is the only person presented in the narrative as neutral, which otherwise tends to portray figures in black and white.[157] Count William is sent by Duke William to receive an oath of fidelity from Hugh during a conflict between the duke, Count Fulk, and Hugh, because the duke is afraid that if he supports one of them, he will lose the friendship of the other.[158] This small interlude is meant to prove the cravenness and slyness of Duke William. But this puts Count William, too, in a slightly negative light, because, on the one hand, he is a useless character, only a shadow of Duke William for whom he is a substitute in the situation, and, on the other hand, his use by the duke is disrespectful towards Hugh in which the count is participating (although passively). The setting seems characteristic of the relationship of the two William,[159] and this reference might be understood as a low-key joke on the author's part.



[156] Ibid., 130: Hugh is thrown out from Civray (*"Homines autem de Sivriaco ut viderunt oppressionem quam faciebat eis Ugo, non valentes sustinere ferecunt finem cum Bernardo et reddiderunt ei castrum, recepitque illum sine consilio Ugoni."*), 132: the text does not even mention the castellan of Gençay whom Hugh captured or expelled (*"... ivit Ugo ad castrum Gentiaco, et incendit eum, et coepit viros hac mulieres ..."*). The most obvious difference of status is between Hugh and Peter: *"... perrexit* [Hugh] *ad castrum Kassiacum quę fuit avunculo suo et Petrus tenebat injuste, unde dampnum Ugoni veniebat, cepit turrem et projecit homines Petroni, fecitque Ugo pro hoc quia cogitavit habere rectum ..."* Ibid., 135—136.
[157] Vasselot, "Les relations féodales dans le Poitou," paragraph 31.
[158] Anonymous, "Conventum", 133.
[159] Barthélemy, *L'an mil et la paix de Dieu*, 338—339.

Shortly before this scene, the hope of getting a real title was raised for Hugh. After he burnt down and rebuilt Gençay, Hugh has the opportunity to bargain with it. The suzerain of the castle is Duke William, who gave it to Fulk Nerra in benefice. Given the balance of power between the two, Willliam must give Gençay back to one of Fulk's vassals, but he also has to give something to Hugh in turn.[160] During the negotiation, the first recommendation of Hugh is Melle, which has a viscountal title attached to it. However, this is not mentioned in the text. Actually, the role of Melle in the narrative is to be the bigger prize compared to Chizé, the second suggestion (and real target) of Hugh.

Does this mean, that family property and family identity were more important than gaining a title if its price was losing family property? This seems perhaps too far-fetched, but titles play no privileged role in the *Conventum*. The heritage of the deceased viscount of Châtellerault is not more important than the castle of Parthenay or any of the lands that are "rightfully" Hugh's.

Why did this not fit into the system described at the end of the previous chapter? The duke had certain rights over the benefices given to his vassals, which he could not practice if they had acquired privileges connected to these lands. The redistribution of lands was crucial in the politics of Duke William. Beyond this pragmatic reason, the behaviour of these parvenu lords was a sign that they did not respect the rules of society. They did not have respect for titles, privileges, and tradition, only for the actual power relations. From this point of view the ascension of the Lusignans and similar families is not simply an upward mobility of the fortunate few among the titleless landholders, but a general attack against the established norms.

If these norms are not respected anymore, the consequences affect the whole society, and new customs might appear in the aristocracy too. The *Conventum* makes Duke William appear on

[160] Anonymous, "Conventum", 133—134.

one occasion petitioning at Hugh.[161] This is not a necessary move from his part, since he is definitely the stronger one (otherwise he could not have denied to fulfil his promise about Châtellerault). This episode is an early sign in the narrative of an overall disturbance in the ways conflicts traditionally used to be settled. However, the *Conventum* blames the two counts, William (the duke) and Fulk Nerra, and Hugh's adversaries for the taut atmosphere. The inconveniences of Hugh come, on the one hand, mainly from the inability of the duke and Count Fulk to adjust their attitude to the one represented by Hugh and his equals, and, on the other hand, from a clash of interests with his neighbours, who claim the same lands by the same right as he.

What could feed the self-confidence and the unyielding commitment for "rigths" of these lords in such a hostile environment? One possible answer is a strong identity built up from a certain perception of the family past and from one's exact place in the present. For example, Hugh of Lusignan was most likely conscious of his lineage (as, for example, Ademar of Chabannes, descendant of a similar or less significant family was[162]), also recounted in the 12th-century chronique of Saint-Maixent, which he could trace back to the middle of the 10th century, until Hugh the Huntsman, founder of the lineage of Lusignan.[163] His sense of inhesion could be strengthened by sharing the same name with all of his predecessors.[164] By the 1020s a notion



[161] Anonymous, "Conventum", 123. (*"Ut audivit comes iratus est valde, properavitque ad Hugonem cum humilitate …"*) Geoffrey Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor. Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 36—37, 59—60: "with humility" was a common formule of petition taken from the liturgy.

[162] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 165, 182. Ademar knows the generation of his parents, and attests that his family kept the memory of Turpio, bishop of Limoges, who was the great-uncle of Ademar's father.

[163] Anonymous, "Chronicon sancti Maxentii Pictavensis," 389: the list is not complete, Hugh "the Huntsman" is missing. Idem, 424: Hugh "the Huntsman" is mentioned as the first known member of the family, however, the author does not know that there were two Hugh "the Brown", Hugh IV and his great-grandson. Cf. Painter, "The Lords of Lusignan," 27—28, 38.

[164] George T. Beech, "Les noms de personnes poitevins du IXe au XIIe siècle," *Revue internationale d'onomastique* 26 (1974), 85—87, 100: there was a significant decrease in unique names in the second half of the 10th century in Poitou, which culminated in the early 11th century. The tendence was widespread in the whole region. See Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance. Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 73—75.

of ancienty must have existed concerning Lusignan, called once "the old castle" in the *Conventum*,[165] and, consequently, the family owning it.

However, it had no pragmatic significance for Hugh IV in the political climate of the early 11th century. Donations made in this era rarely mention generations previous to the parents of the donator,[166] and in the Conventum as well, the persons being referred to by Hugh are his father and his uncle, the circle of "other relatives" is indeterminable. Detailed information (although not always reliable) might have been available for ecclesiastical writers, but for the lords themselves, beyond the pride taken from the history of their family, the previous generation, its positions, and the new acquisitions were more important for practical reasons. In this respect Hugh IV of Lusignan was not much less than the young count of La Marche or the viscount of Thouars.

## 3.2. Ademar of Chabannes and the Church in Action

The church, depository of peace, social justice, and the memory of the deceased was not exempt from structural conflicts either. Ademar of Chabannes gives a full inventory of possible church-related conflicts in his *Chronicle*. The majority of these scandals is connected either to the abbey of Saint-Martial at Limoges or the episcopal see of the city, and some concern Saint-Cybard of Angoulême or the bishop of Angoulême. These were the two places where Ademar lived most of his life and was an immediate witness of the events. The bishops of Limoges regularly took away treasures from Saint-Martial,[167] which was sometimes facilitated by the circumstance that the bishop, the abbot, and the viscount were brothers.[168] It happened at both



[165] Anonymous, "Conventum", 138. (*"... et si non reddidero tibi tu dicas quod non est rectum ut tibi vetem castrum quę de te habeo ..."*)
[166] Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 77.
[167] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 156, 158.
[168] Two consecutive bishops of Limoges, Hildegaire (969—990) and Hilduin (990—1014), Abbot Geoffrey (991—998), and Viscount Guy (988—1025) were brothers. Vincent Roblin, "La vicomté de Limoges et son environnement au Xe siècle," in *Recueil des actes des vicomtes de Limoges (Xe-XIVe siècle)* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2009), 20. For the relationship of the viscounts, the bishops, and the abbots see Didier Delhoume, "Les

Saint-Cybard and Saint-Martial that the abbatial see was left empty by the bishop so he could access the treasury and the lands of the abbey.[169] On such an occasion Grimoard, bishop of Angoulême alienated lands from Saint-Cybard to his own family.[170]

Another reason for concern were ecclesiastical functions. The consecration of the bishop of Limoges caused a scandal two consecutive times, in 1014/1015 and 1024. Neither of these is a simple case of nepotism or simony. In 1014/1015, when Gerald, the nephew of the previous bishop (and the third person from the vicomtal family in this office) became bishop, his colleagues from Poitiers and Saintes stayed in Poitiers after Gerald had received the minor orders in the city instead of accompanying him to Limoges to the episcopal consecration, and were protesting for two weeks, referring to the canon law which allows episcopal ordination only on certain days of the year.[171] They could not protest on the ground that the viscountal family of Limoges was overrepresented in the church and that Gerald's position served only political causes, because both Gislebert of Poitiers and Islo of Saintes came from a family where wearing episcopal titles had a precedent.[172] For Islo, as Fulk Nerra's representative, the problem was probably that this act strengthened the bond between the duke of Aquitaine and the vicomtal family of Limoges. If Gislebert had had another reason for protesting than the timing of the consecration is completely unknown.



vicomtes de Limoges et l'abbaye : difficultés et enjeux d'un pouvoir urbain (X$^{e}$ – XIV$^{e}$ s.)", in *Saint-Martial de Limoges. Ambition politique et production culturelle (X$^{e}$—XIII$^{e}$ siècles)*, ed. Claude Andrault-Schmitt (Limoges: PULIM, 2006), 73—80. and Myriam Soria Audebert, Les évêques de Limoges face aux abbés : la question du soutien nobiliaire (milieu XI$^{e}$ – fin XII$^{e}$ s.)", ibid., 103.

[169] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 168, 170.

[170] Ibid., 168.

[171] Ibid., 169.

[172] Duguet, "La familles des Isembert," 167—169, 185. The relation between Peter (bishop of Poitiers, 963—975) and Gilbert is not certain, but one of Gilbert's brothers became abbot, and later, Gilbert was succeeded by one of his nephews. As for Islo, he was possibly named after a relative who was bishop of Toulouse between 974—986. His brother, Grimoard, was bishop of Angoulême, abbot of Brântome and Saint-Cybard. They were supported by the counts of Périgord, Angoulême, Anjou, and perhaps by the counts of Toulouse as well. See Bachrach, "Angevin claims to the Saintonge," 28—34.

When Bishop Gerald died in 1023, the viscount of Limoges had no more living son to replace him,[173] thus, the tradition which had lasted for more than fifty years, had to be broken. The new bishop, Jordan of Laron, the provost of Noblat (an episcopal castle) was the candidate of Duke William. His consecration happened without protest, but soon after, the archbishop of Bourges excommunicated the whole diocese (with the exception of Saint-Martial), because he was not invited to celebrate the ordination.[174] Limoges originally belonged to the church province of Bourges, but had been de facto subject of Bordeaux since 990.[175] No complaint was made against the practice until 1024, when Gauzlin, bastard son of Hugh Capet and archbishop of Bourges felt himself strong enough to lead a counterattack.[176]

These two cases attest that the choice of arguments always fitted the pragmatic interest of the actors. Gislebert and Islo were bothered, because the consecration did not happen in the right time slot, but had no problem with the archbishop of Bordeaux celebrating the act. The practice is, however, justified by Ademar in the latest version of his *Chronicle* by explaining that Archbishop Gauzlin asked for money in turn for consecrating Jordan.[177] The manipulation of church organisation by the dukes of Aquitaine served purely pragmatic reasons,[178] and could have been condemned by Ademar or sabotaged by the bishops, but the prelates silently



[173] Roblin, *Recueil des actes des vicomtes de Limoges*, 112—117: the sons of Viscount Guy, Ademar, Peter, and Fulcaldus appear in two charters of the monastery of Uzerches. Fulcaldus was given as an oblate to the monastery of Uzerche, and does not appear in sources after the period of 1014—1022. Peter held the vicomtal title together with his brother in 1027. See Decourtieux, *Sancti Stephani Lemovicensis cartularium*, 88. Cf. Roblin, "La vicomté de Limoges," 20.
[174] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 178—189.
[175] Ibidem., 156: even Hilduin was consecrated by the archbishop of Bordeaux in 990. Cf. Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse and Deceits of History*, 66 and Barthélemy, *L'an mil et la paix de Dieu*, 305—306.
[176] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 160: the archiepiscopal career of Gauzlin started scandalously in 1012, when his city did not want to receive him, because he was a bastard. Ademar claims that he was not present at the consecration of Bishop Gerald, because he had not been in his office yet (ibid., 168). The absence of his resistance is more likely a sign of the initial weakness of his position. Cf. Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse and Deceits of History*, 160.
[177] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 169.
[178] From the whole ducal province only Limousin belonged to the archbishop of Bourges.

consented and the chronicler, too, supported the consecutive decisions of Dukes William IV and V.

These are two different approaches to the problem: one is the same practical approach as the one represented by the duke, the other is the approach of someone who describes a society and its functioning, and has to find an argument in favour of the party he himself is supporting. The easiest way to justify a change in the system is to suggest that it is malfunctioning and needs correction. In the *Chronicle*, William, not without difficulties, but succeeds in repairing the system. The reality was, however, much gloomier in 1024 than the account of Ademar, even though he reveals that Jordan had to approach the archbishop barefoot and beg for his forgiveness.[179] We know from a letter of Bishop Fulbert of Chartres that Gauzlin was the stronger party, and Duke William had to ask for the intervention of King Robert through Fulbert.[180] It might have been an embarrassing experience for Duke William too, but not as much as for Jordan, who had to pay the whole price of this decision.

The non-Limoges- or Angoulême-related conflicts are different: two of them are (or might be) connected to monastic reforms dirigated by Cluny, and resulted in the death of Abbo, abbot of Fleury, in the monastery of La Réole in Gascogne,[181] and of a provost of Duke William at Angély.[182] Abbo of Fleury sent a letter to Odilo, abbot of Cluny during his last journey, which suggests that the Cluniac reform of Saint-Cyprien (at Poitiers), too, encountered resistance.[183]

We have no sources from the other side, but the objection of such figures as Peter of Mortemart, abbot of the collegiate church of Le Dorat, and Peter, lay abbot of Charroux, is understandable.



[179] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 169.
[180] Fulbert of Chartres, "Epistola 107," in *The Letters and poems of Fulbert of Chartres*, 190—192.
[181] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 159—160.
[182] Ibid., 177.
[183] Abbo of Fleury, "Epistola XII," in PL 139: 438—439., Callahan, "William the Great and the Monasteries of Aquitaine," 339.

Peter of Mortemart was the son of Abo Drutus, a castellan in La Marche who got permission from his lord to build his own castle. His two sons, Peter and Umbert were commissioned by Duke William to govern La Marche during the infancy of Bernard, count of La Marche, with the help of some other local landholders. As the years passed, Bernard grew up, and all of his helpers died, except Peter, who was thus a burden for the young count and his stepfather. When the abbot of Le Dorat got entangled in an inheritance conflict, Duke William, Count Bernard, and other lords in La Marche grasped the opportunity to get rid of him. After a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Peter retired to Saint-Étienne of Limoges making large donations and lived the rest of his life in peace. [184]

Peter, the lay abbot of Charroux is depicted by Ademar as a powerful magnate who bought the title for himself and then governed the monastery *"in a secular and insipid way"*. After Duke William *"threw him out"* because of his concerns for the discipline of the abbey, he lived his remaining days in a monastery in Limousin afflicted by paralysis. The difference between the last years of the two Peter is perhaps accidental, but striking in any case.[185]

But the real difference is between the characterisation of these two persons and Aimeri, lay abbot of Saint-Martial and the builder of Rancon. He seems to have been a powerful figure (he gave benefices to Viscount Gerald of Limoges and Boso the Old of La Marche, and even King Louis V was afraid of his power), and Ademar mentions some of his additional merits as well: he agreed to give up his secular state and become a monk, and later he destroyed a castle whose garrison was harrassing the nearby monastery.[186] This description is at least neutral, if not slightly positive. Why? Because in the case of Peter of Mortemart and Peter of Charroux Ademar had to justify the acts of Duke William, while Aimeri had been dead for more than

[184] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 164—165.
[185] Ibid., 179.
[186] Ibid., 149—150.

half a century, moreover, he was committed to his profession and augmented the power of Saint-Martial, one of the two home monasteries of Ademar.

Another remarkable tendency in his *Chronicle* is the opposition between monks and canons, the building, reforming of monasteries and their "destruction", the installation of collegiate churches. His negative assessment of the occasional destruction of monasteries is natural since he was a monk, but the tendence for radically negative statements about canons and collegiate churches is presumably the consequence of his fatal clash with the canons of Saint-Étienne, the cathedral of Limoges on the apostolicity of Saint Martial: the most derogatory value judgements concerning collegiates appear only in the latest version of the *Chronicle*, edited after 1029.[187]

In every situation examined above Ademar is trying to justify demonstration of power on the side of Duke William V by claiming that the other side started the conflict by abusing his own power and William is just correcting the system. To make this impression in the reader, he had to characterise the duke as a somewhat passive figure who rather reacts in conflicts than purposefully initiates them in the first place. Bernard S. Bachrach argues that the apparent passivity and avoidance of military activity from the duke's part might have been an outcome of his humiliating defeat against Fulk Nerra during the first years of his reign.[188] But, one might add, there is not enough source to determine to what extent this image is accurate or distorted.

As for the ecclesiastical groups affected by the above-mentioned conflicts, since there was no clear distinction between the lay and the ecclesiastical spheres, the problems connected to the



[187] Ibid., 157: *„Alduinus autem episcopus monasterium Sancti Stephani Agentense …,* ***suadente diabolo****, dextruxit, et ibi canonicos restituit"*, 168: „*Abiensque* [Alduinus] *inde ad supradictam ecclesiam Agento,* ***unde monachos extruserat*** *…"*, 177: *„Tunc a primatibus* ***adulantibus*** *malivolis … suadebatur ei* [Willelmi] *destruere locum Sancti Johannis, et inde monachos /* ***monachorum senatum*** *eicere et canonicos /* ***canonicorum feritatem ibidem*** *inmittere."* Text written in bold is an addition or correction in the Gamma.
[188] Bachrach, "Toward a Reappraisal of William the Great," 14.

former permeated and influenced the latter. The factors which determined the success or failure of an enterprise were the same for church officials as for lay magnates: one's reputation, connections, and current position in the political scene of the region as a whole. An extreme example is the difference between the fates of Duke William V (as lay abbot) and Peter of Mortemart.

This chapter was intended to deal with two groups of the hypothetical social structure outlined in the previous chapter. We saw that some phenomena did not fit automatically into this system and how our main narrative sources tried to solve the problem.

# Conclusion

Reaching the end of our inquiry, a short summary of the results is needed. In the first chapter, I described the context for the arguments of the next two chapters, namely the political climate of Poitou in the early 11th century. The duke of Aquitaine struggled to keep his authority over the province against Fulk Nerra who intruded Poitou and Saintonge. The duke started his career with handicap, because both the father of Fulk, Geoffrey Greymantle, and his son acquired lands from the property of the dukes of Aquitaine, thus, they were in a position to give.

However, the situation was not catastrophal for Duke William V either, because he could marry the widow of Aldebert, count of Périgueux and lord of La Marche, an ally of Fulk Nerra, and he became the stepfather of Aldebert's son, Bernard. After this, he only had to wait until Aldebert's brother, Boso II died to regain full control over La Marche and Périgueux. To make it easier, he split the family property into two separate counties for the two branches of the family. The duke had a strong bond with the viscount of Limoges and his family, and later he could install his own candidate as bishop. He had an equally good relationship with William IV, count of Angoulême.

The real problem in the province was the intrusion of Fulk Nerra, whose presence disturbed power relations by creating the possibility of choosing a party. The system of recycling benefices in itself had been a source of conflict for most landowning families, but now it became a real threat to the ducal authority as well. Under these circumstances, it can be acknowledged as a success that Duke William could keep his power after the early difficulties and even strengthen it in certain territories.

The central question of the thesis concerned the evaluation of acts of exercising power in Poitou during this period, the theory and practice of relationships, and the contemporary perception of

social dynamics. The assessment of political acts depended mostly on the social groups the author recognised and where he placed the characters he was writing about.

There were two main versions of thinking about society. One divided it into categories as the duke himself, the church, the ducal vassals, and the poor. The church was further divided into bishops, priests, deacons, etc., regular monks, and lay officials. The other approach recognised two basic categories, lords and vassals, with the stratum of Duke William V and Fulk Nerra on the top, a group of privileged vassals under them (including bishops too, for example), and finally the less significant castellans.

Whether the duke used or abused his power depends on the approach one chooses. The first option allowed him greater freedom, because it was not the lord—vassal relationships that stood in its focus but a more general responsibility for the province which should have been rewarded with fidelity and obedience on his vassals' part. For this reason, his interventions in the church were justified without question.

In case of applying the other approach, it is important to point out that, as the *Conventum* suggests, the duke had the opportunity to choose between using his authority appropriately or not. Yet, this view does not take into consideration the duke's intention to keep the integrity of his authority against Fulk Nerra. The *Conventum* does not distinguish between the status of the two counts. From the viewpoint of Hugh of Lusignan and others in a similar situation, the rivalry of William and Fulk was an inspiring circumstance, and they had an interest in maintaining the fragile balance between the two.

The church's indivisible intertwining with the lay sphere played a decisive role in the evaluation of the behaviour of church officials, although decrees of the council of Poitiers in 999 tried to regulate practices which were harmful and discrediting for the rhetorics of the peace and the protection of the poor. In fact, bishops could transgress behavioural rules and

alienate lands and money from monasteries, initiate wars, dissolve monasteries, etc., because no one was able or wanted to stop them doing so. The duke of Aquitaine needed episcopal support, and it seems that the archbishop of Bordeaux (and the archbishop of Bourges, in the case of Limoges) had no interest either in confronting their suffragants in this matter.

Regular monks were the recipients of donations in exchange for prayers and a burial place. But with properties came conflicts too because of the claims of surviving relatives. From the monks' viewpoint, they were innocent victims of circumstances beyond their responsibility, and understandably they condemned all inheritance wars.

Lay abbots held properties as private persons too, thus, had interests outside of their community. When the reform movement of Cluny gathered ground, the lay abbots of monasteries had to face the danger of deposition. As the example of Peter of Charroux shows, they could be chased away without any further consequence if they were in a stronger person's way. The position of lay abbots of collegiates (as Duke William V himself for example) was not in danger, except if their lay career failed, as in the case of Peter of Mortemart.

The church in general did not support clerics wearing weapons or at least this was communicated to the public of councils. The ban on the marriage of priests and deacons might have served a practical purpose, namely to minimalise the structural intertwining of the church with the lay world.

The real controversy was generated by different opinions on the function of Duke William's vassals. For those who regarded the relationship of the duke with his vassals concentrating on the interests of the duke, vassalic obedience and the duties enumerated in the letter of Bishop Fulbert were crucial. This view invalidated not only the claims of the circle of Hugh of Lusignan, but even the existence of the tendency which made them stand up for their alleged rights. Ademar of Chabannes mentions only two inheritance conflicts, both in a family which

held a title, and in his interpretation the events took place as a consequence of the claiming party's sacrilege or treason.[189] In this opinion, those who started a war for their alleged heritage were abusers of power, because they did not have valid justification to pursue their claim and were thus the enemies of the system.

For those who shared the opinion presented in the *Conventum*, the ones abusing power were exactly those who were reluctant to acknowledge the right to inherit and the newly acquired status of the circle of Hugh of Lusignan. At the same time the *Conventum* does not represent lords under the level of these lucky few as a revolutionary, upward striving group. As we can see in the narrative, Hugh of Lusignan, champion of his own rights to inherit "family" lands, was happy to exploit those who were not so fortunate as him, and the tension between William and Fulk Nerra was favourable for those in the first place who were *ab ovo* strong enough to be used by them for their own purposes.

In the *Chronicle* of Ademar upward mobility itself is stigmatised. Beyond the threat it posed to the "normal" order of society and the absolute primacy of the duke, frequent military campaigns also affected the majority of the population. Building new castles, however ephemeral their existence could be, drew such communities into political events which might have had previously no (or only sporadic) contact with castle garrisons and no experience with inheritance wars. If we hypothesise an increase in the number of fortifications, and thus the same in the number of castellans and soldiers, we need to ask where all these persons came from and whether it means the militarisation of early 11$^{th}$-century Poitevin society. As the *Conventum* suggests, insignificant figures remained insignificant with the possible difference that more of them were carrying weapons. The problem is, that the sources do not allow us to detect social dynamics below a certain level. The growth in the number of surviving charters

[189] Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 181, 188.

may have been the outcome of many different factors or a mixture of them: differences in preservation, growth of literacy or the need to record agreements in writing, an increased number of donators either because more could afford it or because for some reason it became a trend.

Therefore, we cannot be sure about the reason for the increased awareness of the consequences of wars and plundering. It may be on the one hand the result of either a more conscious and consistent application of a rhetorical strategy or a greater interest in the poor on the church's part, while on the other hand of the increased number of those who were plundering and vexing peasants or the increased number of those affected by it.

These differences in thinking about society and the different ways in which political actors strived to make their society function are an evidence of political diversity, which in itself is not a sign of deep crisis. However, in our case it resulted in uncertainty and recurrent physical and economic damage for a great number of people who had no means to protect themselves. The question, whether we can acknowledge a society as properly functioning if it is entirely imbued with social injustice, is purely philosophical.

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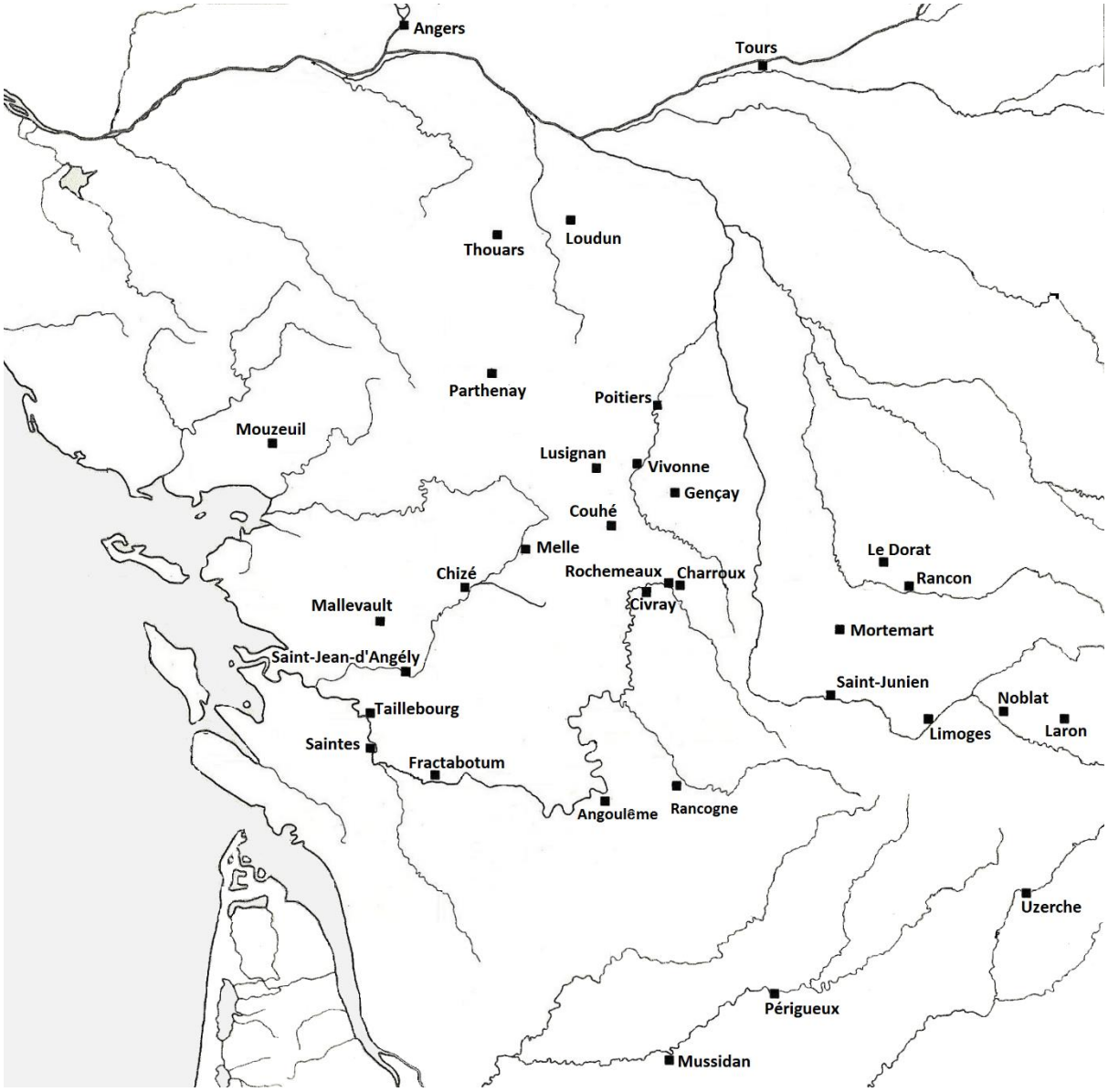
# Appendix

## Map




Source: Michel Parisse, ed. *Atlas de la France de l'an mil*. Paris: Picard, 1994.