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THE LORDS OF LUSIGNAN IN THE ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH CENTURIES

BY SIDNEY PAINTER

FEW feudal families are of interest to as wide a variety of scholarly specialists as the house of Lusignan. The historian of Poitou sees the Lusignans as the most turbulent and vigorous of the region's baronial dynasties — one which in the thirteenth century almost succeeded in creating a feudal principality between the Loire and the Garonne. To the historian of France as a whole the Lusignans were for many years the chief impediment to the development of Capetian authority in Northern Aquitaine. The student of English history is interested in them both as participants in the long struggle between the Capetians and the Plantagenets and as intimates of King Henry III. The fact that, once the Crusades began, every head of the house of Lusignan was a Crusader, and that the family supplied three kings of Jerusalem and the dynasty which ruled Cyprus until 1474, has centered on it the attention of specialists in the history of the Crusades and the Latin East. The literary historian is attracted by the family so deeply involved with the famous legend of Mélusine. Finally, the student of feudal institutions finds in the Lusignans a family which has a reasonably well established history from the ninth to the fourteenth century. It is this last aspect that is the primary interest of this article. The activities of the Lusignans in France, England, and the Near East after the year 1200 are well known, but only an unpublished dissertation deals with the early history of the family. Yet it supplies a fascinating example of the process by which a tenth-century landed family could develop into a thirteenth-century baronial house.

According to the *Chronicle of Saint-Maixent*, the founder of the house of Lusignan was Hugh Venator. His son and successor, Hugh Carus, built the castle of Lusignan.¹ As the Lusignans were the most powerful neighbors and chief vassals of the abbey of St-Maixent, there seems to be no reason for rejecting the chronicler's statement. M. Richard assumes that Hugh I was the huntsman, perhaps the chief huntsman, of the count of Poitou, but the fact that in later years the Lusignans held the forest to the east of their castle from the bishop of Poitiers suggests that Hugh may have held his office from that prelate.² The first definite reference to the castle of Lusignan is in 1009.³ Beginning about 960 the name Hugh appears frequently among the witnesses to the count's charters, but

¹ "Chronicon Sancti-Maxentii Pictavensis," *Chroniques des églises d'Anjou* (ed. Paul Marchegay and Émile Mabille, *Société de l'histoire de France*), pp. 389,424. This will be referred to as the *Chronicle of Saint-Maixent*.

² *Cartulaire de l'évêché de Poitiers* (ed. Louis Rédet, *Archives historiques du Poitou*, x), pp. 48-49.

³ *Chartes de l'abbaye de Nouaillé de 678 à 1200* (ed. Dom. P. de Monsabert, *Archives historiques du Poitou*, XLIX), pp. 163-164.

there is no indication that these Hughs were lords of Lusignan.⁴ Later evidence shows that the family had extensive allods in the vicinity of Lusignan and it seems likely that the castle was built on one of these.⁶ They also held a large benefice in the lands which had once belong to St-Maixent. The frequent references made by Hugh IV to lands once possessed by his relatives suggest that the family had been of importance in the region for several generations.⁶ In short, while only the *Chronicle of Saint-Maixent* mentions Hugh I and Hugh II, there seems to be no justification for relegating them to a legendary status.

Hugh III, called *Albus*, is a slightly less shadowy figure than his predecessors. When a certain Walter Granarius gave the church of Mezeaux, a village some four miles south of Poitiers, to the abbey of Saint-Cyprien, the grant was confirmed by Hugh Albus because it was held of him as a fief.⁷ It was probably Hugh Albus who as Hugh, lord of Lusignan, granted St-Cyprien the woodland between Mezeaux and the public road between Poitiers and Lusignan.⁸ Hugh III was apparently a favorite of the Countess Emma, wife of Count William Fierabras. She laid a tax on the town of St-Maixent and gave the proceeds to Hugh to increase the value of his fief.⁹

Two qualities of Hugh IV, called *Brunus*, his turbulence and his piety, served to bring him rather fully into the light of history. The "Conventio inter Guillelmum ducem Aquitaniae et Hugonem Chiliarchum" recounts at length the quarrels of Hugh with the viscounts of Thouars, the count of La Marche, Aimery I de Rancon, and Count William III the Great.¹⁰ Then, shortly before his death, Hugh founded the monastery of Notre Dame de Lusignan as a dependency of the abbey of Nouaillé. The documents connected with this foundation tell us much about his estates and his position in feudal society.¹¹ One is tempted to think that some monk of Notre Dame whose gratitude was much stronger than his Latin composed the barbarous sentences of the "Conventio" to give Hugh's own account of his political career.

In order to understand the activities of Hugh IV and his successors it is necessary to have some knowledge of the feudal geography of the region lying south and west of the city of Poitiers. Lusignan stood on the western bank of the river Vonne, a tributary of the Clain, about twenty miles southwest of Poitiers. The country to the north and east of Lusignan was infertile and was largely forest, but to the west and south lay bands of deep, rich soil. The band

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 122,124; *Documents pour l'histoire de l'église de St-Hilaire de Poitiers* (ed. Louis Rédet, *Memoires de la société des antiquaires de l'Ouest* xiv, xv), i, 48, 56, 72, 73; *Chartes et documents pour servir à l'histoire de l'abbaye de Saint-Maixent* (ed. Alfred Richard, *Archives historiques du Poitou*, xvi, xviii), i, 33, 50, 79; *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Cyprien de Poitiers* (ed. Louis Rédet, *Archives historiques du Poitou*, m), p. 52.

¹ *Chartes de Nouaillé*, pp. 173-174.

⁶ "Conventio," Labbé, *Nova bibliotheca*, n, 185-189.

⁷ *Cartulaire de Saint-Cyprien*, p. 49.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

⁹ *Chartes de Saint-Maixent*, i, 104, 155; n, 482.

¹⁰ Labbe, *Nova bibliotheca*, n, 185-189.

¹¹ *Chartes de Nouaillé*, p. 172-179.

running west was some twelve miles long and varied in width from six miles at the eastern end to two at the western. This fertile strip was bounded on the north by the heights of La Gàtine and just beyond its western extremity stood the town and abbey of St-Maixent. The band running to the south had a fairly consistent width of about six miles. Apparently the lands of the Lusignans in the immediate vicinity of their seat were allods, but many others held allods in the same area. Thus St-Hilaire of Poitiers owned an allod in full view of Lusignan castle.¹² It is clear, however, that the lords of Lusignan either legally or illegally exercised some control over the allodial holders around their castle. We find one of the lords consenting to the grant to St-Cyprien of an allod in the *dominicatu* of Lusignan.¹³ Later evidence shows the Lusignans exercising rights of justice and collecting dues from the lands of St-Hilaire in Rouillé three miles west of Lusignan.¹⁴ Lusignan is known to have been the seat of a vicary and presumably its lords had vicarial rights over the neighboring countryside.¹⁵ Then the Lusignans held in benefice the forest which lay on both sides of the road to Poitiers as far as Fontaine-le-Comte some four miles from the city. In the thirteenth century they held this forest from the bishop of Poitiers, but it may well have been given them by the count. Here and there along the edges of the forest were villages which they either held in demesne or had granted to vassals.¹⁶

About ten miles south and slightly east of Lusignan in the band of fertile land lay Couhé, today Couhé-Verac, the center of the chief fief held by the Lusignans in the lands of the abbey of St-Maixent. Hugh IV certainly held Couhé, but unfortunately it is impossible to say which of the other St-Maixent lands later ruled by the Lusignans were in his possession.¹⁷ In the thirteenth century the lords of Lusignan held from the abbey in addition to Couhé an important fief with its center at Le Bois-Pouvreau near Ménigoute on the northern edge of the fertile belt some nine miles northwest of Lusignan, lands on the outskirts of the town of St-Maixent, and scattered fiefs to the south and west of the abbey.¹⁸ Some of these lands were clearly in other hands in the eleventh century, but no information is available about most of them.

In short, Hugh IV had allods in the vicinity of Lusignan, the forest and the villages along its edge to the northeast of his castle, Couhé, and probably some other fiefs in the St-Maixent lands. All his possessions except the estates around the town of St-Maixent could have been enclosed in a circle with a radius of fifteen miles centering in Lusignan. He was essentially a local potentate.

The opportunities available to the Lusignans for expanding their lands and power depended largely on the strength of their neighbors and here they were

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 172-174.

¹³ *Cartulaire de Saint-Cyprien*, p. 274.

¹⁴ *Documents de St-Hilaire*, i, 326-329.

¹⁵ Garaud, "Les circonscriptions administratives du comté de Poitou," *Le Moyen Age*, LIX (1953), p. 29.

¹⁶ *Cartulaire de l'évêché de Poitiers*, pp. 48-49; *Cartulaire de Saint-Cyprien*, pp. 49-50; *Chartes de Nouaillé*, pp. 249-250.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 178-179.

¹⁸ *Charles de Saint-Maixent*, n, 26, 46-47, 65, 79-80.

far from fortunate. The only soft spot lay to the west in the lands of St-Maixent, and we shall see the lords of Lusignan making the most of the abbey's weakness, but even there their opportunities were limited by mighty neighbors. The northwest corner of the abbey's lands was held by the lords of Parthenay, who effectively blocked Lusignan expansion in that direction.¹⁹ On all other sides the Lusignan ambitions met formidable barriers. To the northeast lay the city of Poitiers and the count's demesnes in its vicinity, dominated by the great castle of Montreuil-Bonnin ten miles north of Lusignan. To the southwest lay the lands of the powerful houses of Melle and Lezay backed by the viscounty of Aulnay. Six miles to the east of Lusignan was the castle of Vivonne on the river Clain, and about two miles beyond it on the Clouère the fortress of Château-Larcher. A few miles farther up the Clouère was the castle of Gencay. While this stronghold was considered to belong to the count of Poitou, the house of Rancon had effective control of it and the countryside around it.²⁰ In fact, the Rancons blocked the house of Lusignan on two sides, for they were the dominant power in the region to the west of St-Maixent. Finally, to the southeast lay the most formidable of all the Lusignan neighbors except for the count of Poitou himself — the counts of La Marche. Charroux, the ancient seat of the counts of La Marche, lay fifteen miles south of Gencay. The counts had abandoned Charroux itself to the abbey of that name, but they had built the castle of Rochemaux just to the north of it and in the time of Hugh IV they controlled the fortress of Civray about four miles to the west.²¹

Hugh IV de Lusignan had an overwhelming greed for lands and castles. He waged a series of savage wars with the viscounts of Thouars over a fief he claimed they had taken from him. At one point in this struggle a brief period of peace was procured by a marriage between Hugh and Audéarde, daughter of Viscount Ralph, and Hugh apparently received as his wife's marriage portion the castle of Mouzeuil in western Poitou halfway between Lugon and Fontenay-le-comte. But Ralph's successor, Geoffrey, renewed the war and captured Mouzeuil. As far as one can discover from the "Conventio" Hugh gained nothing permanently from either the war or the marriage.

An even longer and more bitter struggle was with Aimery I de Rancon. Aimery who was castellan of Gencay seized the castle of Civray which belonged to Bernard I, count of La Marche. Hugh IV claimed that his father had owned a quarter of Civray. At the suggestion of the count of Poitou, William III the Great, Hugh did homage to Count Bernard, and as allies they ejected Aimery from Civray, which Hugh then held as Bernard's vassal. But Hugh was a grasping lord and the citizens of Civray surrendered the fortress to Count Bernard. Meanwhile Hugh's war with Aimery had continued. The lord of Lusignan captured Gencay and another of Aimery's castles, but he was obliged to surrender them to Count William, who returned them to Aimery. At times Hugh was at war with

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 50, 94-95.

²⁰ *Cartidaire de Saint-Cyprien*, pp. 217, 219-220; "Conventio," Labbe, *Nova bibliotheca*, n, 187-188.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

Count Bernard as well as with Aimery de Rancon. He drew no profit from these conflicts and his lands were severely ravaged by his foes.

When he was not waging war on his neighbors, Hugh was equally active at the court of the count of Poitou. He begged the count to aid him in recovering the land he claimed from the viscounts of Thouars, to help him drive Aimery de Rancon from Civray, and to allow him to keep the Rancon castles he had taken. Then Hugh felt that he was entitled to any castle or benefice which had ever belonged to one of his relatives. On this ground he sought the castles of Vivonne and Chizé. But Hugh's ambitions soared beyond these narrow limits. When the viscount of Châtellerault and the lord of Parthenay died, he asked the count for these great fiefs. The "Conventio" indicates that Hugh hoped to obtain permanent possession of one of these fiefs, but as there was an heir to each of them, it seems more likely that he sought only the custody. Count William realized that if he aided Hugh in all his enterprises he would be continuously at war with his other vassals. Moreover, he probably was unwilling to upset the feudal balance of power in his county by allowing Hugh to become too powerful. It seems clear that he had no intention of giving him even temporary possession of Châtellerault or Parthenay. But, as it was easier to say yes than no, he put Hugh off with amiable promises. Once he actually aided the lord of Lusignan in a campaign against Aimery de Rancon, and he built for him a castle at Couhé. Nevertheless, the broken promises enraged Hugh, and he defied and waged war on the count. He captured and held for a time the count's castle of Chizé and the count's men ravaged his lands.

Finally both Hugh and Count William grew weary of strife. The count offered Hugh the castle of Vivonne and the benefice attached to it which had once belonged to his uncle, Jocelin, if he would promise not to claim any other lands formerly held by his relatives and would renew his oath of homage to the count and his heir. Hugh accepted the offer.²² It is not quite clear what the lord of Lusignan obtained by this agreement. Throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries a family in which the name Hugh was common was called "de Vivonne." At the same time there is clear evidence that the Lusignans had an interest in the castle and its lands. In the thirteenth century the lord of Lusignan appears as the suzerain of Vivonne. The house of Vivonne also had some share in the forest lands of the Lusignans to the north of Vivonne.²³ It seems probable that Hugh IV received a share of the castle and fief of Vivonne, perhaps a half, while Jocelin's son, the ancestor of the house of Vivonne, had the rest and the actual command of the castle. In the eleventh century they may both have held from the direct overlord of the castle, the bishop of Poitiers, but eventually the Lusignans made the Vivonnes their vassals.

²² This account of the activities of Hugh IV de Lusignan is drawn entirely from the "Conventio," Labbe, *Nova bibliotheca*, n, 185-189.

²³ *Cariulaire de Saint-Cyprien*, pp. 269-271; *Charles de NouaiUé*, pp. 196-197, 357-358; *Documents de St-Hilaire*, i, 107-108; *Cartulaire de l'evêché de Poitiers*, pp. 48-49; *Qallia Christiana*, n, *Instrumenta*, 375-376.

In the "Conventio" Count William is shown blocking the ambitions of Hugh IV. In a charter issued for St-Maixent toward the end of his reign he actually reduced Hugh's resources. The count and his son William renounced the *ariban-num* or tax imposed on the town of St-Maixent by the Countess Emma in favor of her knight Hugh. William's knight Hugh was to receive 500 *solidi* a year as compensation. As the name "Hugoni" appears among the witnesses, it seems likely that Hugh IV was obliged to attest the act depriving him of some of his revenue.²⁴

Having devoted his career to bitter and ruthless feudal warfare, combined with not too scrupulous feudal politics, Hugh IV decided to assure the salvation of his soul by a striking act of piety. An ordinary castellan might find a monastery — Hugh would find two at once. Each of his castles, Lusignan and Couhé, would be supplied with a monastic establishment outside its walls. At Lusignan this was a little difficult because the suitable site belonged to St-Hilaire of Poitiers. On 6 March 1025, in the presence of an assembly which included Count William, Countess Agnes, the count's sons, William and Eudes, Count William of Angoulême and his son, Alduin, the archbishop of Bordeaux, and the bishops of Poitiers, Angoulême, Périgeux, and Limoges, Hugh and St. Hilaire made an exchange which provided the necessary land for the new monastic house.²⁵

Shortly after this occasion Count William journeyed to Tours to negotiate with King Robert. In the course of his visit he obtained for Hugh two royal charters — one for the monastery of Notre Dame of Lusignan and the other for the priory of St-Martin of Couhé. In each case the king stated that Hugh had endowed the new establishments from the allods of his inheritance. If anyone wished to give lands to these houses from their benefices, the monks were to hold those lands as allods.²⁶

Having obtained the authorization of the highest secular authority for his two foundations, Hugh decided to go just as high in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The lord of Lusignan and Bishop Isembert of Poitiers sent letters to Rome asking the pope to exempt Notre Dame of Lusignan from all ecclesiastical authorities except the abbot of Nouaillé. This privilege was granted by letters of Pope John XIX.²⁷ Thus, Notre Dame of Lusignan was a dependency of Nouaillé. It is not quite clear whether the priory of St-Martin of Couhé was to depend on Notre Dame of Lusignan or directly on Nouaillé. The fact that it is not mentioned in the papal letters suggests the former.

The "Conventio" states that Hugh IV died a year after his final agreement with Count William. As he was clearly on good terms with the count in 1025,

²⁴ The amount of the annual compensation given to Hugh is not certain. This charter of Count William in sets it at 50 *solidi*. *Charles de St-Maixent*, I, 104. Later references to the same payment mention 500 *solidi*. *Ibid.*, pp. 155, 156, 248; n. 482. There may be an error in the first charter or the Lusignans may have forced the abbey to increase the payments.

²⁶ *Charles de Nouaillé*, pp. 178-174.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 176-179.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 175-176.

it seems likely that the agreement was made before that and that Hugh died soon after founding Notre Dame of Lusignan. The earliest positive indication that he was no longer alive comes in 1032.²⁸ By his wife Audéarde, Hugh had two sons, Hugh and Rorgo. A papal letter of 1032 speaks of them as "the sons of Hugh living in Castle Lusignan."²⁹

Extremely little is known of the career of Hugh V de Lusignan called "the Pius." He and his brother, Rorgo, witnessed a charter for the abbey of St-Maixent and one for St-Cyprien.³⁰ They also gave their assent to a grant made to Nouaillé by a certain Hugh of Jerusalem.³¹

Despite the obscurity of his rule as lord of Lusignan, Hugh V made an important contribution to the future power of his house. He married Almodis, daughter of Bernard I, count of La Marche, and so established the rather tenuous claim of the Lusignans to that important fief. After Almodis had borne him two sons, Hugh and Jordan, Hugh V repudiated her on the ground that they were too closely related, and she married Pons V, count of Toulouse.³² This connection between the houses of Lusignan and Toulouse may have led to the untimely death of Hugh V. While Count Guy-Geoffrey-William was at war with Almodis' son, William IV, count of Toulouse, in 1060, the lord of Lusignan rose in revolt. M. Richard suggests that Almodis persuaded her former husband to support her son.³³ Count Guy invaded Hugh's lands and laid siege to Lusignan. When Hugh V attempted to sortie in search of provisions, he was slain at the gate of his castle.³⁴

The connections of Hugh VI de Lusignan made him a more prominent figure than his predecessors in feudal society. Before his father's death he married Audéarde, daughter of Aimery IV, viscount of Thouars.³⁶ He was the half-brother of William IV and Raymond IV, who were in turn counts of Toulouse. William VII the Young, duke of Aquitaine and count of Poitou, sometimes called William the Troubadour, married his niece, the daughter of William IV of Toulouse. Yet, except for two crusading expeditions, one to Spain and one to the Holy Land, his activities were much like those of his grandfather, Hugh IV. He devoted his attention to steady aggression against his neighbors with a reasonable amount of success.

The broad lands of the abbey of St-Maixent were a continual temptation to the

²⁸ *Le cartulaire de l'abbaye royale de Saint-Jean d'Angély* (ed. Georges Musset, *Archives historiques de la Saintonge et de VAunis*, xxx, xxxm), I, 32. ²⁹ *Ibid.*; *Charles de Nouaillé*, pp. 171-172; *Cartulaire de Saint-Cyprien*, p. 276.

³⁰ *Chartes de Saint-Maixent*, i, 122; *Cartulaire de Saint-Cyprien*, pp. 278-274.

³¹ *Chartes de Nouaillé*, pp. 291-292. Dom de Monsabert believed "Hugh of Jerusalem" was the name assumed by Hugh VI de Lusignan on his return from the crusade and hence dated this charter 1103-1110. But a reference to Isembert as bishop of Poitiers clearly places the document in the period 1021-1085. There are several other references to a Hugh of Jerusalem who lived at this time. *Ibid.*, pp. 208-209; *Cartulaire de Saint-Cyprien*, pp. 275-276, 277-278.

³² *Chronicle of Saint-Maixent*, p. 401; *Chartes de Nouaillé*, pp. 196-197.

³³ Alfred Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou, 778-1204* (Paris, 1903), i, 278-281.

³⁴ *Chronicle of Saint-Maixent*, pp. 401-402.

³⁵ *Oallia Christiana*, n, *Instrumenta*, 334-335. Hugh VI's sons, Hugh and Rorgo, witnessed a charter in 1085. *Chartes de Nouaillé*, pp. 243-244.

lords of Lusignan, and Hugh VI made only sporadic attempts to restrain his greed for them. Not without reason did the *Chronicle of Saint-Maixent* call him Hugh the Devil.³⁶ He took advantage of the war with Count Guy-Geoffrey-William, which had led to his father's death and which he continued, to drive the monks of St-Maixent from his fiefs. Not until 1069 did he make peace with the abbey. Then he solemnly announced that he was the vassal of Benedict, abbot of St-Maixent, and did homage for the fief he held from the abbey. He also renounced the 500 *solidi* a year which his ancestors had been granted in compensation for the loss of the tax imposed by the Countess Emma and promised to cease the exactions which he and his men had been making on the abbey's lands. In return for these concessions the abbot agreed that as long as Hugh lived he would say mass for him once a week. After his death, the abbot would offer masses and prayers for his soul. If the abbot died before Hugh, his monks would perform this service. Hugh's name would be inscribed on the abbey's martyrology.³⁷

This agreement between Hugh de Lusignan and St-Maixent is the earliest record of the performance of homage to the abbot for a fief created from the abbey's land by the Carolingian kings. Forty years later Jocelin de Lezay recognized that he was the abbot's vassal and there were a few similar cases during the twelfth century. In the thirteenth century regular lists of the vassals who performed homage to the abbot began to appear.³⁸ There are two obvious possibilities. Hugh VI may have been the first holder of a fief created from the abbey's lands to do homage to the abbot and become his vassal. Or the holders of these fiefs may have been doing homage to the abbot without any record of the fact being preserved. Despite the danger of arguing from silence, the first alternative seems the more probable. The St-Maixent records are quite full and it is hard to believe that if great lords like the Lusignans were the abbey's vassals no mention of it would be found. Moreover, there is a certain amount of positive evidence that Hugh's act created a new relationship. Certainly King Pepin of Aquitaine had not considered these fief holders vassals of the abbey — they were his men.³⁹ Then the document of 1069 states that Hugh's ancestor received the 500 *solidi* "in augmento beneficium suum." Yet the original tax on the town of St-Maixent had been levied by Countess Emma, and Count William III had arranged the 500 *solidi* compensation when he abolished the tax. Moreover, the fact that Count William III built a castle at Couhé for Hugh IV de Lusignan indicates that he considered Couhé a fief held from him. In short, it seems clear that Count William IV had considered himself the direct suzerain of the Lusignan fiefs in the lands which had once belonged to St-Maixent, and Hugh's action in placing them in the feudal mouvance of the abbey was essentially novel.

One can only speculate as to how this important innovation came about. As the process by which the abbot of St-Maixent extended his suzerainty over the

³⁶ *Chronicle of Saint-Maixent*, p. 402.

³⁷ *Chartes de Saint-Maixent*, I, 155-156; n, 482.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, i, 263, 268, 807, 325, 351, 374; n, 2-3, 14, 21-26, 47-54, 95-108.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 5-6.

lands taken from his house by the Carolingian kings was not completed until the thirteenth century, Hugh's act cannot have been the result of a general policy of Count Guy-Geoffrey-William. On the other hand, the count did on several occasions protect the abbey from the usurpations of secular lords, and he may have ordered Hugh to do homage to the abbot as recompense for the damage done to the abbey during the war.⁴⁰ But, as the count is not mentioned in the agreement between Hugh and St-Maixent, it seems likely that it was a private arrangement between the two parties. Hugh was buying forgiveness at a reasonable price. According to the thirteenth-century registers of the abbey's vassals, the lord of Lusignan owed the abbot one deer skin a year to repair the binding of the books in the library.⁴¹ It is possible, however, that Hugh was moved by other motives than pure piety. In the thirteenth century the lords of Lusignan were inclined to place as many of their lands as possible under ecclesiastical suzerainty as a measure of protection against the counts, and Hugh VI may well have had a similar idea. The abbot of St-Maixent was unlikely to be a very troublesome overlord, yet the count of Poitou might hesitate to attack a fief held of a spiritual lord.

The agreement of 1069 did not stop the aggressive policy of Hugh VI toward the abbey of St-Maixent. In 1106 Hugh and his son, Rorgo, were persuaded to appear in the chapter house of the abbey before Peter II, bishop of Poitiers, Marquerias, abbot of Montierneuf, and 200 clerks and laymen. They promised Abbot Garner that they would protect the abbey and its lands to the best of their ability. They also confirmed the renunciation of the 500 *solidi*.^{*2} But this promise was no more effective than the previous one. Abbot Garner died shortly after the appearance of Hugh in his chapter, and a few years later his successor, Abbot Geoffrey, went to Rome to secure papal support against his foes — particularly the lord of Lusignan.

The chief bone of contention between Hugh and the abbot was three villages lying about half-way between Lusignan and St-Maixent in the fertile band at the foot of La Gàtine — Pamproux, Rigaudan, and St-Germier. Apparently Hugh had either seized these lands or was levying dues on their inhabitants. In 1110 Abbot Geoffrey returned to Poitou with a collection of papal letters. The most important was addressed to Peter, bishop of Poitiers. The pope placed the abbey of St-Maixent under the special protection of the Holy See, confirmed all its possessions, and directed the bishop to excommunicate anyone who injured its lands or men. The pope noted particularly that Pamproux, Rigaudan, and St-Germier were bound to pay him an annual tribute of five *solidi* of the money of Poitiers.⁴¹ Another letter to Bishop Peter asked him to take special care to guard these three estates because of this tribute to Rome.⁴⁴ A third letter to the bishop informed him that the pope especially loved Hugh de Lusignan, but he

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, i, 185, 197-198, 286.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, II, 65-66, 79-80.

⁴² *Ibid.*, I, 242-248.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 256-959.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 260-261.

could not allow his love to interfere with God's work. Unless Hugh made amends for his injuries to St-Maixent within two months, he was to be excommunicated.⁴⁶ As Hugh VI died during the course of 1110, this letter probably had no effect, but in 1118 his successor, Hugh VII, came to an agreement with St-Maixent about the three villages. The abbey was to pay Hugh 100 *solidi* a year to protect Pam-proux, Rigaudan, and St-Germier.⁴⁶ One can only hope that they were worth the cost of protection by both the papacy and the Lusignans.

In addition to his extortions from St-Maixent, Hugh VI made two important acquisitions, both of which were outside the region in which the Lusignans had been operating. By 1069 he was in possession of Frontenay, now known as Frontenay-Rohan, about six miles southwest of Niort.⁴⁷ This was not only an extremely valuable property — in the thirteenth century it yielded some 200 *limes* a year — but it was also strategically located as a base for further expansion. It stood near the eastern edge of the Poitevin marshes on the frontiers of the castellanies of Mauzé, Surgères, and Chizé.⁴⁸ It was also near the Rancon holdings to the west of Niort. Although there is no conclusive evidence as to how Frontenay came into Hugh's possession, it seems likely that it was given to him by the viscount of Thouras as his wife's marriage portion.⁴⁹ In 1069 Hugh recognized that the church of St-Geneviève near Frontenay belonged to St-Maixent.⁶⁰ In 1095 he confirmed the grant by Adémar, castellan of Chizé, of the church of St-Gaudent to Nouaillé.⁶¹ The church of Frontenay itself got Hugh into a complicated situation. He gave the church to Bertrand, his chaplain. When Bertrand resigned his office to become abbot of Nouaillé, Hugh gave the church to the monastery of La Chaisse-Dieu. Bertrand protested this action and Hugh cheerily drove out the monks of Chaisse-Dieu and gave the church to Nouaillé. He then sat back to watch, one may guess with amusement, the magnificent quarrel between the two monasteries that was still going in full force after his death.⁶²

Hugh's other acquisition, the castle and castellany of Angles, lay on the river Anglin, a tributary of the Gartemp, some twenty-five miles northeast of Poitiers. There is no evidence as to how it came into his possession. As Hugh VII was to use it to endow his younger sons, one might advance the hypothesis that it came to him with his wife Sarracena, but this would be pure speculation. At any rate, Hugh VI and his son Hugh Brunus gave the church of Ste-Croix of Angles with its lands and subject churches to St-Cyprien.⁶³ As Angles was a fief of the see of Poitiers, this grant was approved by Bishop Peter.

Although Hugh VI earned his sobriquet of "the Devil" in his relations with

« *Ibid.*, p. 260.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 295; *Chronicle of Saint-Maixent*, p. 424.

⁴⁷ *Charles de Saint-Maixent*, n, 482.

⁴⁸ *Archives historiques du Poitou*, rv, 150-151, 218-219.

⁴⁹ *Charles de Saint-Maixent*, I, 106-107.

» *Ibid.*, II, 482.

⁶¹ *Charles de Nouailli*, pp. 278-279.

^B *Ibid.*, pp. 297-299.

^M *Cartulaire de Saint-Cyprien*, pp. 135-136.

St-Maixent, he seems to have been on friendly terms with both St-Cyprien and NouaiUé. In addition to giving St-Cyprien the church of Ste-Croix of Angles, he renounced a levy which he had been collecting in the village of Vaux near Couhé which had belonged to St-Cyprien since 969.⁶⁴ In 1087, when Hugh was about to embark on a crusade against the Saracens in Spain, he gave NouaiUé St-Amand at the edge of his forest north of Vivonne. One half would go to the abbey at once and the other half after his death.⁶⁶ When, in the year 1104, the count's prévôt of Poitiers seized some mills belonging to NouaiUé, the abbot asked aid from Hugh, who had just returned from Jerusalem with Count William VII. At the request of his companion at arms, Count William ordered the affair settled by a duel. The duel was held on an island used customarily for this purpose and the abbey's champion won. Several of Hugh's vassals witnessed the battle, but the lord of Lusignan himself remained at some distance — presumably on the river bank.⁶⁶

In 1091 Boso, count of La Marche, was slain while besieging the count of Angoulême's fortress of Confolens. Boso was childless and his nearest heir was his sister, Almodis, who was the wife of Roger, called the Poitevin, lord of Lancaster in England, third son of Roger de Montgomery, earl of Shrewsbury.⁶⁷ But her right to the county was disputed by the heir male, her uncle Eudes. Eudes formed an alliance with William III Taillefer, count of Angoulême, and soon forced Almodis to share the inheritance with him. The quarrel between Almodis and Eudes over La Marche could not fail to arouse the ambition of Hugh de Lusignan, the son of Eudes' sister. The westernmost lands of the counts of La Marche, those around Charroux, were just southwest of Hugh's fief of Couhé and would make a valuable addition to his holdings. Taking advantage of the confusion in La Marche, he promptly attached Charroux, but he was driven off by Count William of Angoulême.⁶⁸ When one considers that Count William's strongholds of Confolens and Ruffec were fifteen and twelve miles respectively from Charroux, it is not hard to see why he was unwilling to see the turbulent lord of Lusignan seated there. Despite Hugh's lack of success, he had started a family tradition and his successors never forgot their claim to La Marche.

Hugh VI engaged in two crusades. In 1087 he went to Spain to assist King Alfonso VI of Castille against the Almoravides.⁶⁹ Then, in 1101, he followed his suzerain, Count William VII, in his expedition to the Holy Land.⁶⁰ Little is known of his adventures on these expeditions and in any case, as we are following the history of the barony of Lusignan rather than that of its lords, they would not concern us. Hugh was a regular attendant at the court of Count William VII

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 249, 260-261.

⁶⁶ *Chartes de NouaiUé*, pp. 249-250.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 292-294.

⁶⁷ *Chronicle of Saint-Maixent*, p. 410.

⁶⁸ *Historia pontificum et comitum Engolismens, Becueil des historiens, de France*, xn, 398. ⁸⁹

Chartes de NouaillCp. 249-280. ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 292-294.

and witnessed many of his charters. He died in 1110.⁶¹ He had ruled as lord of Lusignan for fifty years and, as he had sons old enough to witness charters in 1084, he must have been close to seventy at his death.

The first act of Hugh VII de Lusignan, called *Brunus*, was to plunge into a bitter war with Count William VII.⁶² Richard suggests that the cause of the strife was disagreement over the relief to be paid by the new lord of Lusignan. While this explanation is plausible, there is no evidence to support it. Hugh had as an ally another lord who had just come into power, his nephew, Simon II of Parthenay. The war was a savage one and lasted, probably with intervening truces, for eight years. It made a deep impression on the people of the countryside and was mentioned in four charters of St-Maixent. Finally, in 1118, Count William defeated the allies and captured Simon of Parthenay. Simon died in 1121 and his son, William III, continued the war until the count took Parthenay castle and forced him to seek refuge with Geoffrey de Rancon at his castle of Vouvant.⁶³ There is, however, no evidence that Hugh VII participated in this last phase of the war.

It was probably during an intermission in his war with Count William that Hugh founded the monastery of Bonnevaux. He chose a site in the midst of his forest six miles northeast of Lusignan and presented it to Ely, abbot of the Cistercian abbey of Cadouin in Périgord, for the establishment of a daughter house. Hugh gave enough land for the monastic buildings and assured the monks that when they found places for a pasture and mill he would give these locations as well. They could pasture their pigs and cut the wood they needed in his forest. As Hugh de Vivonne shared his rights in the forest, Hugh VII obtained his consent and that of his mother and stepfather. Hugh's sons, Hugh, William, and Rogo, his wife, Sarracena, and his nephew, Simon of Parthenay, also gave their consent to the grant.⁶⁴

Shortly after his defeat by Count William, Hugh VII settled his father's and his quarrel with St-Maixent over Pamproux, Rigaudan, and St-Germier. Hugh, with the consent of wife and his sons, Hugh and William, did homage to Abbot Geoffrey and agreed to protect the three villages to the best of his ability in return for an annual retainer of 100 *solidi*. He would never demand anything else from those lands.⁶⁶ In 1137 Hugh did homage to Abbot Peter, who had succeeded Geoffrey in 1134.⁶⁶

The controversy with St-Maixent was only one of a number of quarrels between the lords of Lusignan and their ecclesiastical neighbors. We know of these disputes only through the agreements which brought them to an end. Thus Hugh and Sarracena promised to give up the exactions which he and his father

⁶¹ *Chronicle of Saint-Maixent*, p. 424.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poiou*, i, 490; *Chronicle of Saint-Maixent*, pp. 428, 430; *Chartes de Saint-Maixent*, I, 242, 266, 273, 276.

⁶⁴ *Qattia Christiana*, n, *Instrumenta*, 375-376.

⁶⁶ *Chartes de Saint-Maixent*, 1,295.

< * *Ibid.*, p. 54.

had made on the men of the abbey of Nouaillé in Frontenay. If he really needed aid, he would ask the abbot for it.⁶⁷ Another dispute was with St-Hilaire of Poitiers over Hugh's rights in the abbey's estate at Bernay, one of the villages on the edge of Hugh's forest. The lord of Lusignan claimed he could tallage the inhabitants of Bernay at will and collect many other dues. He agreed to renounce these claims in return for eight *livres* a year.⁶⁸ Apparently his most enthusiastic quarrel was with the bishop of Poitiers. About the year 1144 Hugh decided to make peace. He admitted that he had injured the bishop, his chapter, and their lands, and had been frequently excommunicated for these offenses. Moreover, the bishop had loaned him 1000 *solidi* and he had untruthfully claimed that he had repaid this loan. Hugh announced his penitence, promised to do better, and agreed to pay the debt. His five sons confirmed this act at the tomb of their mother Sarracena.⁶⁹ Actually Hugh showed no haste in carrying out the concrete part of this agreement. While he was absent on the crusade some years later his eldest son, Hugh, mortgaged a vineyard near Couhé to guarantee the eventual payment of the 1000 *solidi*.⁷⁰

A marriage alliance made by Hugh VII vastly increased the power of his house. He married his eldest son and heir to Burgundia, daughter of Geoffrey de Rancon, who succeeded his brother, Aimery IV, as head of the family shortly after 1120.ⁿ Geoffrey's other daughter, Bertha, married William Maingot II, castellan of Surgères.⁷² The marriage portion of the two sisters was the castle of Vouvant with its castellany. Apparently the Lusignans received the castle while the lord of Surgères had a share in the lands dependent on it.⁷³ The acquisition of Vouvant, which lay to the west of the Parthenay lands, opened a new region to the aggressive policy of the Lusignans. This opportunity was to be exploited vigorously by Hugh's grandson, Geoffrey I.

Hugh's alliance with Geoffrey de Rancon began as early as 1127. In that year he aided Geoffrey and a group of his friends to seize the castle of Montignac, which was one of the chief strongholds of the counts of Angoulême. That particular venture was a failure for they were quickly expelled by Count Wulgrin II, but Hugh and Geoffrey remained friends and comrades-in-arms for the rest of their careers.⁷⁴ Geoffrey was an extremely valuable ally. Each of his castles of Gengay, Marcillac, Taillebourg, and Vouvant was the center of an important group of estates. Next to the counts of Poitou, Angoulême, and La Marche, and

* *Chartes de NouaiUé*, pp. 306-307.

⁶⁸ *Documents de St-Hilaire*, i, 147-148.

⁶⁹ A. Champollion-Figeac, *Documents historiques inédite {Documents inédits sur l'histoire de France*, Paris, 1841-1848), n, 27-29.

i* *Evêché et chapitre de Saintes* (ed. Louis Audiat, *Archives historiques de la Saintonge et de l'Aunis*, x), pp. 25-26.

⁷¹ *Cartulaires et chartes de l'abbaye de l'Absie* (ed. Bélisaire Ledain, *Archives historiques du Poitou*, xxv), pp. 29, 33-36.

⁷² *Chartes de la commanderie magistrals du Temple de La Rochelle* (ed. Louis de Richemond, *Archives historiques de la Saintonge et de l'Aunis*, i), pp. 39-40; *L'Aumonerie de Saint-GiUes de Surgères* (ed. Paul de Fleury, *Archives historiques de la Saintonge et de l'Aunis*, vi), p. 12.

ⁿ *Cartulaires de l'Absie*, pp. 92, 102, 182-183.

⁷⁴ *Historia pontificum et comitum Engolismens*, *Recueil des historiens de France*, xn, 396.

the viscount of Thouars, he was by far the most powerful lord in the region. Moreover, when King Louis VII of France married Eleanor, countess of Poitou and duchess of Aquitaine, Geoffrey became his most trusted, agent in Poitou.

It was probably Geoffrey's influence with Louis VII that permitted Hugh VII to make another important addition to the Lusignan estates. William de Lezay, castellan of Talmont, was avaricious and turbulent even by the standards of his day. Shortly after William VIII succeeded his father as duke and count, he visited his castle of Talmont. When the count left, William de Lezay seized several nobles of his entourage, including Hugh de Lusignan, and forced the count to ransom them.⁷⁵ At the death of William VIII William de Lezay took advantage of the occasion to seize the whole castle and lordship of Talmont. When he learned that the new count of Poitou, Louis VII, king of France, was about to visit Talmont, he planned a coup similar to the one which had been so successful before. This time he planned to let a group of nobles enter the castle and then close the gates and seize them. Unfortunately for William, the alarm was given before he was prepared to close the gates, and Louis VII, who was following closely behind his advance guard with a strong escort, quickly captured the stronghold.⁷⁶ William de Lezay may have been killed in the fight — he certainly lost all his lands. Eble de Mauléon became castellan of Talmont, and Lezay, with the lands dependent on it, went to Hugh de Lusignan.⁷⁷

Hugh VII felt that the Lusignan lands were extensive enough to justify separate establishments for his younger sons. His second son, William, became lord of Angles, an isolated stronghold lying far to the east of the center of the Lusignan power. When William died, he was succeeded by his next brother, Rorgo. The fourth son, Simon, received Lezay and a share in the lands of the castellany of Angles.⁷⁸ Both Rorgo and Simon founded families which continued to rule Angles and Lezay respectively. They seem also to have remained faithful allies of the senior line of the house of Lusignan.

The rule of Hugh VIII de Lusignan lasted for only a decade and little is known about it. Like so many of his predecessors, he was obliged to renounce levies which he had been making on the lands of his ecclesiastical neighbors. Thus he admitted that the land of Jouarenne belonged to the abbey of Nouaillé and that he had obtained his rights there by violence. This charter was witnessed by his wife, Burgundia, and his sons, Hugh, Robert, Geoffrey, and Peter.⁷⁹ Robert and Peter never appear again. On the other hand, two younger sons, Guy and Amaury, were to play an important part in the history of Jerusalem and Cyprus.

⁷⁵ *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Talmond* (ed. Louis de la Boutetière, *Memoires de la société des antiquaires de l'Ouest*, xxxvi), p. 226. Suger, *L'histoire du roi Louis VII* (ed. Auguste Molinier, *Collection des textes pour servir à l'étude et à l'enseignement de l'histoire*), p. 155.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.

⁷⁷ *Recueil des historiens de France*, xv, 486; *Cartulaire de Saint-Cyprien*, pp. 302-803; Champollion-Pigeac, *Documents historiques*, il, 27-29.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*; *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Notre-Dame de la Merci-Dieu autrement dite de Bécheron* (ed. Etienne Clouzot, *Archives historiques du Poitou*, xxxiv), pp. 39-41. Teulet, *Layettes du trésor des chartes*, ni, 66.

⁷⁹ *Chartes d'* Nouaillé*, pp. 333-334.

Hugh VIII departed for Palestine in 1163 and in 1164 was captured at the battle of Harim. He died a prisoner of the Moslems.⁸⁰

When Hugh VIII set out for Palestine, the government of the lordship of Lusignan passed into the hands of his eldest son, Hugh Brunus. As he died before 15 April 1169 and there is no evidence as to how long his father lived in captivity, it is impossible to say whether or not he was ever really lord of Lusignan, but he did assume the title. In a charter to the abbey of Bécheron he called him-Hugh Brunus, lord of Lusignan. This charter, which freed the monks from tolls throughout his lands, was witnessed by his brother, Geoffrey, and his three uncles, Simon, Rorgo and Waleran. His mother, Burgundia, gave her consent in respect to the lands of her marriage portion. Hugh Brunus also confirmed a gift of his grandfather, Hugh VII, to the abbey of Fontaine-le-Comte.⁸¹ Although Hugh Brunus should probably be called Hugh IX de Lusignan, it seems useless to upset the numbers traditionally assigned to the lords of Lusignan by scholars who had not noticed his existence. By his wife, whose name and family are unknown, he had two sons, Hugh and Ralph. As they were infants at their father's death, Geoffrey de Lusignan became the effective head of the house.

The exact date of the death of Hugh Brunus de Lusignan is unknown, but it was probably late in 1167 or early in 1168. On the day after his burial at Lusignan his brother, Geoffrey, with the consent of his mother, Burgundia, made a gift to the abbey of Absie in the presence of his uncle, Simon de Lezay. The abbey was to receive 20 *solidi* a year of the sales taxes collected at Vouvant and several lesser sums from various sources so that the anniversary of Hugh's death might be solemnly celebrated each year at Absie. This grant was confirmed at Vouvant on 15 April 1169 in the presence of Geoffrey IV, viscount of Thouars, Simon de Lezay's son, William, and a number of others.⁸²

Geoffrey de Lusignan made a deep impression on his contemporaries. In an age of war and warriors he was frequently mentioned as a particularly effective soldier. In a charter of his son, Geoffrey II, he was referred to as "lo Prodome."⁸³ Apparently his ability in war was only matched by his love for it and he was completely unhampered by any delicate feeling about feudal propriety. As his turbulent career can be followed in excellent scholarly works, we need only outline it here.⁸⁴ During the years 1173-1174 Geoffrey participated in the revolt of

⁸⁰ Letter of Amauri, patriarch of Antioch to Louis VII of France. *Recueil des historiens de France*, xvr, 61-62; *Documents de St-Hilaire*, i, 214.

⁸¹ *Cartulaires de l'Absie*, pp. 132-138; *Cartulaire de Bécheron*, p. 66; *Oallia Christiana*, II, 1842.

⁸² *Cartulaires de l'Absie*, pp. 182-138. Lusignan castle was taken by King Henry II early in 1168. Although it was probably returned to the Lusignans after peace was made in Lent, 1169, it seems unlikely that it was actually in their possession by 16 April. Hence the funeral of Hugh Brunus probably took place before the castle was taken. Robert de Torigni (ed. Richard Howlett, *Chronicle of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry 11, and Richard 1*, Rolls Series), pp. 235-236.

⁸³ Richard of Poitiers, *Recueil des historiens de France*, xn, 419. *Histoire des dues de Normandie* (ed. Francisque Michel, *Société de l'histoire de France*), p. 94; Ambroise, *The Crusade of Richard Lion-Heart* (translated by M. J. Hubert with notes by John L. La Monte, New York, 1941), p. 131; *Cartulaires du Bas-Poitou* (ed. Paul Marchegay, Les Roches-Baritaud, 1872), pp. 804-805.

⁸⁴ See Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, n; Kate Norgate, *Richard the Lion Heart* (London, 1924).

Henry the young king and his brothers, Richard and Geoffrey, against their father, Henry II, king of England and duke of Aquitaine.⁸⁵ When in the autumn of 1177 the childless Audebert V, count of La Marche, sold his county to King Henry, Geoffrey advanced the rather shadowy claim of his family and made a futile effort to take La Marche by force of arms.⁸⁶ In 1183 he joined Henry, the young king, and Geoffrey, duke of Brittany, in a war against their brother, Richard, who was ruling Aquitaine for his father. In 1188 he was once more in arms against Richard. This revolt was suppressed with a heavy hand and Geoffrey decided on a change of scene.⁸⁷ During the winter of 1188-1189 he joined his brothers, Guy and Amaury, at Tripoli.

Although Geoffrey's nephew, Hugh IX de Lusignan, must have come of age about 1180, I can find only one possible indication of his activities before 1190.⁸⁸ Sometime between 1178 and 1182 the castellany of Lusignan was under interdict because of its lord's offences.⁸⁹ There is no indication what the offences were, and Geoffrey may have been the culprit, but as he was never technically lord of Lusignan, it seems likely that the offender was Hugh IX. In 1190 Hugh IX appears at Messina in the crusading army of King Richard. Thus, both Geoffrey and Hugh were in the Holy Land during the Third Crusade. Geoffrey was one of the chief heroes of the Crusade and was for a time count of Jaffa, while Hugh earned a solid military reputation. Hugh returned to Poitou before the end of

1193, as he accompanied Queen Eleanor on a visit to Richard in his German prison early in 1194. Geoffrey's first appearance after his crusade was at Vau-dreuil in Normandy in 1196.⁹⁰ When King Richard was freed from captivity in 1194, he made peace with the house of Lusignan. Although he kept in his own hands what the lords of Lusignan most desired — the county of La Marche — he gave them ample compensation. At least part of this price of peace was the grant to Hugh's younger brother, Ralph, of Alix, heiress of the count of Eu. By this marriage Ralph became lord of extensive lands in Normandy and the barony of Hastings in England. He also revived his wife's claim to the great English honor of Tickhill. Richard's generosity combined with their respect for his military capacities kept the Lusignans loyal to him for the rest of his reign.

Hugh IX de Lusignan soon showed himself to be a true scion of his house. In 1198 Peter Bertin, seneschal of Poitou, announced that Hugh had agreed to pay the abbey of Nouaillé 40 *livres* damages for injuries done to its lands. He and his son would go to the monastery and swear that they would not infringe its rights. A year later, however, Hugh was promising to give satisfaction to Nouaillé for seizing one of its men.⁹¹ Once more he swore to respect the liberties of the abbey.

⁸⁵ Benedict of Peterborough, *Oesta regi» Henrici Secundi* (ed. William Stubbs, Rolls Series), i, 46-47; Richard of Poitiers, *Recueil des historien de France*, xn, 419.

⁸⁶ Geoffrey de Vigeois, *ibid.*, p. 447.

⁸⁷ Ralph de Diceto, *Opera historica* (ed. William Stubbs, Rolls Series), i, 481-482. Benedict of Peterborough, I, 213.

⁸⁸ He had a grown son in 1200. *Documents de St-Hilaire*, i, 214.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁹⁰ Lionel Landon, *The Itinerary of King Richard I* (Pipe Roll Society, LI), pp. 82, 113.

⁹¹ *Chartes de Nouaillé*, pp. 350-351, 354-355.

In 1200 Hugh agreed to renounce five *solidi* a year which he had been collecting in an estate belonging to St-Hilaire on the ground that his grandfather had given up his claim to it before he departed for Jerusalem.⁹²

The great opportunity for the Lusignans to demonstrate their special capacities came when Richard was slain at the siege of Chalus in Limousin, leaving the Plantagenet inheritance in dispute between his brother, John, and his nephew, Arthur. Queen Eleanor was devoted to the cause of John and promptly set to work to buy the support of the Poitevin barons. The Mauléons received the lordship of Talmont, 10,000 *solidi* a year from the revenues of La Rochelle, and the great comtal fortress of Benon with its castellany.⁹³ William Maingot III was given the lordship of Surgères.⁹⁴ It seems probable that it was at this time that Hugh I of Parthenay recovered his fortress of Secondigny, which Richard had deprived him of.⁹⁵ During this period the three Lusignans, Geoffrey, Hugh IX, and Ralph, count of Eu, were regular members of Queen Eleanor's entourage and they almost certainly received some grants. In all probability Ralph was given the castle of Civray at this time.⁹⁶ But there was one thing Hugh wanted above all else and apparently Eleanor was unwilling to give it to him — the county of La Marche. Hugh decided on direct action. He kidnapped the aged queen and refused to release her until she had surrendered the county to him.⁹⁷ Before the close of the year 1199 Hugh was styling himself Hugh Brunus, count of La Marche and lord of Lusignan. On 28 January 1200 King John recognized the *fait accompli* by accepting Hugh's homage for the county of La Marche.⁹⁸

The story of the lordship of Lusignan loses its meaning for our purpose when Hugh IX acquired the county of La Marche. Moreover, the history of the Lusignan counts of La Marche and Angoulême is well known.⁹⁹ We have here but one more concern — to attempt to identify the additions made to the lordship of Lusignan by Geoffrey and Hugh IX. As there is rarely evidence as to how and when even important acquisitions were made, this identification cannot be absolutely certain, but enough can be proved to show the success of their aggressive policy.

Shortly after 1200 Hugh IX's younger brother, Ralph, was in possession of an important fief held from the head of the house. As he was called Ralph of Exou-don as early as 1194, he must have possessed that village to the southeast of

⁹² *Documents de St-Hilaire*, i, 214.

⁹³ *Rotuli chartarum* (ed. Thomas Hardy, Record Commission), p. 24.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁹⁵ *Rotuli litterarum patentium* (ed. T. D. Hardy, Record Commission), p. 11.

⁹⁶ An inquest of 1245 states that John gave Civray to Ralph. Teulet, *Layettes du trésor des chartes*, II, 570-571.

⁹⁷ Aubri de Trois-Fontaines, *Recueil des historiens de France*, xvnt, 762; Bernard Iter, *Chronicon* (ed. H. Duplès-Agier in *Chroniques de Saint-Martial de Limoges, Société de l'histoire de France*), p. 66.

⁹⁸ *Chartes de Nouaillu*, pp. 854-855; *Rotuli chartarum*, p. 58.

⁹⁹ See Prosper Boissonade, *L'Ascension, le déclin, et la chute <un grand état féodal du Centre-Ouest. Les Taillefer et les Lusignans comtes de la marche et à Angouême et leurs relations avec les Capétiens et les Plantagenets 1137-13H* (*Société archéologique et historique de la Charente, Bulletins et Mémoires*, 1934-35).

St-Maixent.¹⁰⁰ In 1202 he held the castle and castellany of Chizé and the castle of Civray.¹⁰¹ There is no evidence as to how and when the Lusignans absorbed Chizé, which had been an important castle of the counts of Poitou, but there is good reason to believe that Count Richard was in possession of it in 1181.¹⁰² Hence it seems likely that it was either part of the price paid by Richard for peace with the Lusignans in 1194 or part of the bribe Eleanor gave them for supporting John. Civray was granted to Ralph by King John to be held of Hugh IX, who in turn did homage for it to the bishop of Poitiers.¹⁰³ Then, when Count Ralph did homage to John in 1200, the chief of his vassals who guaranteed his good faith was Maingot de Melle. Later we find Melle listed as one of the castles of the count of Eu.¹⁰⁴ As we have seen in a previous article, the Maingots were almost certainly simply castellans and not lords of Melle and apparently the lordship was given to Ralph of Eu, perhaps at the same time he received Chizé.

In the early thirteenth century Geoffrey de Lusignan held of Hugh IX the castle and castellany of Vouvant and the castle of Soubise just south of the river Charente near its mouth. Vouvant was certainly acquired by Hugh VIII as the marriage portion of his wife, Burgundia de Rancon, and it seems likely that Soubise came from the same source. Geoffrey used this castle, which lay far from his other lands, to endow his younger son, Aimery.¹⁰⁵ With his second wife, Eustachia, Geoffrey received the castle and castellany of Moncontour. This was not part of the lordship of Lusignan — it was in fact held of the count of Anjou rather than of the count of Poitou.¹⁰⁶ By the year 1200 Geoffrey was also in possession of the important castle of Mervent and the lands dependent on it. This stronghold had always belonged to the counts of Poitou, and Richard was in possession when he started on his crusade, for on 12 May 1191, when he was at Limassol in Cyprus, he gave it to his bride, Berengeria, as part of her dowry. On 4 September 1215, King John solemnly promised Berengeria that if he ever got possession of Mervent, she should have it.¹⁰⁷ Thus Mervent came into Geoffrey's hands between 1191 and 1200. As he apparently did not return from Palestine until 1196, this castle must have been given to him by Eleanor to gain his support for John. Mervent, too, was not a part of the lordship of Lusignan but was held directly from the count of Poitou.

The only important addition made during this period to the Lusignan possessions which the senior line retained in its own hands was the castle and castellany of Château-Larcher near Vivonne. The historian of this fortress asserts that it was acquired by the Lusignans in the second half of the twelfth

¹⁰⁰ Landon, *Itinerary of Richard I*, p. 98.

¹⁰¹ *Rotuli patentium*, p. 21.

¹⁰² Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou*, n. 204, 231.

¹⁰³ Teulet, *Layettes du trésor des chartes*, n. 580-571; *Cartulaire de l'évêché de Poitiers*, pp. 14-15.

¹⁰⁴ *Rotuli chartarum*, pp. 58-59; Teulet, *Layettes du trésor des chartes*, n. 644.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 473; *Rotuli patentium*, p. 116; *Cartulaires de l'Absie*, pp. 132-133, 137-139.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, *Rotuli patentium*, p. 2; Teulet, *Layettes du trésor des chartes*, n. 473.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31; E. Martène and T.J. Durand, *Veterum scriptorum et monumentorum amplissima collectio* (Paris, 1724-1733), i, 995; *Rotuli patentium*, p. 116; *Rotuli chartarum*, p. 219; *Cartulaires de l'Absie*, pp. 137-139.

century, but he could find no indication as to how it was done. While it seems likely that some estates in the vicinity of St-Maixent and Frontenay which were held by the Lusignans in the thirteenth century, such as Cherveux, St-Gelais, Sanxay, and Prahecq, were quietly absorbed by Geoffrey or Hugh IX at opportune moments, there is no actual evidence that they did so.

An article of this sort should obviously contain a description of the feudal relationships of the lords of Lusignan. Unfortunately, the contemporary documents furnish very little information on this subject. Although Hugh IV was certainly a vassal of the count of Poitou, and presumably his predecessors had had the same status, no written record of an act of homage by a lord of Lusignan to the count is earlier than 1200. Then Hugh IX as count of La Marche simply did liege homage to King John without specifying what fiefs he held. In 1224 Hugh X did liege homage to King Louis VIII for all his fiefs except those held from ecclesiastical lords. Not until 1241, when Hugh X did homage to Count Alphonse of Poitou, do any details appear. Then he performed "one homage" for the lordship of Lusignan, one for the county of La Marche, and additional homages for other estates, all of which had been acquired since 1200.¹⁰⁸

The "Conventio" states clearly that Hugh IV became the vassal of Isembert I, bishop of Poitiers, at the command of Count William III. Hugh VII spoke of the bishop as his lord. In 1236 Hugh X recognized that because he was lord of Lusignan he ought to carry the bishop of Poitiers into his cathedral on the day he was enthroned. In 1268 came the earliest written record of the actual act of homage. The lord of Lusignan did liege homage to the bishop for his forest of Gàtine, the wooded country northeast of Lusignan, some land near Vivonne, and all his rights of justice in the castellany of Lusignan. When the last of the lords of Lusignan died in 1308, the bishop of Poitiers claimed the castle and castellany of Lusignan as his fee.¹⁰⁹ In short, the bishop's claims seem to have grown steadily. Civray furnishes a similar example. In 1228 Count Ralph of Eu recognized that he held this castle of Hugh X and Hugh held it of the bishop of Poitiers. Count Alphonse, apparently, was not convinced of the legality of this arrangement and ordered an inquest held on the subject. The witness called asserted that Aimery fitz Ivo held the castle for seven years under Henry II and performed no service to the bishop. Richard, Otto of Brunswick, and John held it in turn without recognizing the bishop's suzerainty. Although Alphonse ended by yielding to the bishop, the inquest seems to indicate that his suspicions were justified.¹¹⁰ In short, while it is quite possible that the castellanies of Lusignan and Civray or rather the territory they embraced had once belonged to the bishop of Poitiers, the idea that they were fiefs held of the bishop seems to have appeared in the thirteenth century. It was clearly for the land near Vivonne that Hugh IV became the bishop's vassal.

¹⁰⁸ *Rotuli chartarum*, pp., 58-59; Martène and Durand, *Amplissima collectio*, I, 1184-1185; Teulet, *Layettes du trésor des chartes*, n, 453.

¹⁰⁹ Labbe, *Nova bibliotheca*, ri, 186; Champollin Figeac, *Documents historiques*, n, 27-29; *Cartulaire de l'évêché de Poitiers*, pp. 16, 48-49, 141-142.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15, 32-34; Teulet, *Layettes du trésor des chartes*, n, 570-571,

As we have seen, the first record of the performance of homage by a lord of Lusignan to the abbot of St-Maixent was in 1069 in the time of Hugh VI. Hugh VI did homage again in 1106, and Hugh VII in 1118 and 1137. The next record shows Hugh IX doing homage about 1204. Hugh X did homage to the abbot in 1222 and 1235 and Hugh XI in 1248. Hugh IX's act in 1204 is the first to mention specific fiefs — Couhé, Bois-Pouvreau, and lands near the town of St-Maixent. The act of 1222 states that Hugh X should be chamberlain of the abbey while in 1235 the annual payment of a deer skin is first mentioned. The act of 1248 mentions a number of additional estates, but it is impossible to say whether this means that new lands had been acquired or simply that the statement had become more detailed.¹¹¹

Before leaving this discussion of the relations between the lords of Lusignan and their feudal suzerains, let me reaffirm my belief that in the early eleventh century the Lusignan lands were either allods or benefices granted by the counts from lands which had once belonged to the church. As time went on the allods began to be regarded as fiefs and the former church lands tended to pass into the suzerainty of the ecclesiastical lords. Since an immediate ecclesiastical lord might furnish some protection from the authority of the count, the Lusignans were inclined to place as many of their estates as possible in their homage.

There is extremely little information about the vassals of the house of Lusignan. Confirmations of grants to churches indicate perhaps a dozen.¹¹² Of these the only ones otherwise known were the castellans of Chizé, who held some scattered estates from the Lusignans, and the lords of Celle-Levescault, who apparently were their vassals for all their lands.¹¹³ Then, when King John accepted the homage of Hugh IX and Count Ralph of Eu in 1200, thirteen vassals guaranteed Hugh's good faith and five performed the same service for Ralph. At the head of the list of Hugh's men was Jocelin, lord of Lezay, while Ralph's chief followers were Maingot de Melle and his brother, Chalon. The other names on the two lists are otherwise unknown and were presumably men of little importance.¹¹⁴ Later evidence indicates that the lords of Cursay, northwest of Lusignan, were vassals of its lords.¹¹⁶ In short, the evidence indicates that, except for the heads of the cadet branches of the house — the lords of Lezay, Ralph of Eu, and Geoffrey de Lusignan — and Maingot de Melle, the Lusignan vassals were mere gentry.

In closing, it seems worth while to summarize very briefly the development of the barony of Lusignan. In the tenth century the allods and benefices held by the head of the house made him the largest landholder in the country between Poitiers and St-Maixent, but there were many other landholders both large and small. In the early eleventh century the Lusignans built the castles of Lusignan

¹¹¹ *Charles de Saint-Maixent*, I, 155, 242-243, 295, 334; n, 26, 46-47, 65-66, 79-80.

¹¹² See as examples, *Cartulaire de Saint-Cyprien*, pp. 25-26, 49, 50. *Chartes de Nouaillé*, pp. 218-219, 230, 243-244.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 277-279, 328-329, 357-358.

¹¹⁴ *Eotuli charlarum*, pp. 58-59.

¹¹⁵ Teulet, *Layettes du trésor des chartes*, n, 498-499.

and Couhé. Operating from these strongholds, at the head of their armed followers, they imposed varied dues on their neighbors and exercised rights of justice over them. Soon the oastle of Lusignan had a castellany extending over the forest land and bordering villages to the east and the band of fertile country to the west. Couhé also had its castellany in the fertile band to the south. The family benefices, which had been granted originally by the king and the count out of the lands of the see of Poitiers and the abbey of St-Maixent, were shielded to some extent from the count's authority by placing them under the suzerainty of the bishop and the abbot. Then, bit by bit, more castles with their castellanies were acquired — Angles, Lezay, Vouvant, and Château-Larcher. Lesser castellans such as Maingot of Melle became their vassals. Thus the barony was formed. While it is clear what the Lusignans accomplished, one can only speculate as to why they were more successful than other castellans. A continuous series of vigorous and unscrupulous leaders for ten generations is part of the answer. The weakness of the richly endowed abbey of St-Maixent was certainly helpful to the Lusignans. The possession of the largest fertile area in the region may well have given them advantages over their rivals. Perhaps their control of the routes leading from Poitiers to St-Maixent, Niort, Saintes, and St-Jean d'Angély brought them a heavy revenue in tolls. Unfortunately, the documents supply no information on these matters and one can merely suggest them as possibilities.

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