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Historical News
The Capetians and Brittany

In his account of the coronation of Hugues Capet in 987, Richer, monk of St-Rémi de Reims, describes how the king was recognized 'by the Gauls, Bretons, Normans, Aquitanians, Goths, Spanish and Gascons'. There are sound reasons for doubting whether Richer's testimony is entirely reliable. He was personally concerned with the interests of a church whose fortunes were closely bound up with those of the Carolingians and the Capetians. As successor to Hincmar and Flodoard, he saw Breton affairs from a royal perspective. Nevertheless he was a contemporary and the implication is plain: the Bretons, together with those other ethnic groups he named, were considered, in royal circles, subjects of the new king of Francia. With the exception of those who today live in what is Catalonia, all these 'peoples' have remained in some sense 'French' down to the present, though the intervening thousand years have seen remarkable fluctuations in the fortunes of those exercising power within geographical France, whether this was at the centre or in the provinces.

This brief article can do no more than draw attention to some features of that relationship with regard to one particular province with its own specific characteristics and unique history. But the story has its resonances in other regions. Indeed, recent books in English alone on Carolingian and Capetian France have brought welcome recognition of this provincial dimension. A pioneering article by Professor K.-F. Werner, also available in English, and an equally welcome synthesis by Dr. Elizabeth Hallam have both discussed the king's relations with his princes for the eleventh and twelfth centuries. They reflect a reorientation of scholarly interest as the history of dynasties other than that of the Capets are subjected to


2 A version of this article was read as a paper at the Anglo-American Conference of Historians 7-8 July 1988 on 'Multiple Kingdoms and Federal States'. Since it was intended as a broad survey I have not tried to document every statement. Three volumes in the Ouest-France Histoire de la Bretagne provide the best recent detailed treatment: A. Chedeville and H. Guillotel, La Bretagne des saints et des rois, Ve-Xe siècle (Rennes, 1984); A. Chedeville and N.-Y. Tonnerre, La Bretagne féodale, XIe-XIIe siècle (Rennes, 1987); J.-P. Leguay and H. Martin, Fasts et malheurs de la Bretagne dorée, 1213-1532 (Rennes, 1982). M. Jones, The Creation of Brittany: a late Medieval State (1988), brings together various of my own articles which will be cited from this source.

critical modern investigation. In all of this Brittany and the Bretons naturally receive some attention, though this remains modest. This partly reflects the limited connections of the duchy and the Crown for much of the period as we shall see. But it is also a commentary on the fact that many developments remain under-investigated whether this concerns external relations with other princes (including the Crown) or questions of internal administrative and social evolution. It would be presumptuous to suppose that all such inadequacies of treatment can be cleared up here. Nor can there be a detailed narrative, instructive as that would be. What this article aims to provide is a commentary on broad developments, using with some latitude the theme of relations between the Capetians and the duchy: to limit discussion chronologically to the period 987-1328 does, in some sense, falsify perspectives. First, some reference must be made to the Carolingian period, whose true significance for later developments in Brittany is only now receiving fuller recognition. Secondly, there is a Norman and Angevin interlude that fills much of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It is only from the late twelfth century that contacts between a Capetian monarchy in the ascendant and a duchy which had for the most part developed in isolation from it become at all regular. There are important implications in this for the later middle ages and even beyond. Linked together these three phases—Carolingian, Norman-Angevin and Capetian—bring the story in summary form from the mid ninth century to 1328. They underline the complex and extremely ancient origins of the 'multiple kingdom' of France.

'La Bretagne en tant qu'unité politique, s'est constituée au IXe siècle' wrote M. Pocquet du Haut-Jussé some thirty years ago. That is to say, although there was already a considerable legacy from even earlier periods—from the Romans, for example, and from the colonization of the Armorican peninsula by emigrants from the British Isles over an extended period between the third and seventh centuries AD—the origins of the future duchy of Brittany, which enjoyed a largely autonomous existence from the mid tenth century until 1491, are properly found in the achievements of the native princes who came to dominate the peninsula in the time of Emperor Louis the Pious and his successors.

Three forceful native Breton rulers, Nomenoc, his son Erispoe and Salomon, cousin of Erispoe, between c.830 and 874 established a rudimentary state which was recognized as a regnum within the Carolingian empire in 851. It is to this 'kingdom', comparable with others which had similarly lasting influence on the way in which the French realm developed, that in the central and later middle ages rulers of Brittany, their advisers and propagandists would look back to justify arguments for independence from Capetian or Valois France. The territorial bounds of the regnum

* Cf. the works cited in n. 1 above, which only partially replace the standard account of A. de la Borderie and B. Pocquet, Histoire de Bretagne (6 vols., Paris and Rennes, 1895-1914).

reached their greatest extent in 867 when Charles the Bald conceded to Salomon the dioceses of Avranches and Coutances, minus their episcopal sees.\(^6\) By then Salomon dominated much of the former March of Brittany, first established about a hundred years earlier—the counties of Rennes and Nantes, large parts of Le Mans and Angers, where his influence was felt up to the walls of Angers itself, and even parts of Poitou—besides holding Vannes and the Breton-speaking parts of the Armorican peninsula.\(^7\) The internal division of Brittany from this time between Romance- and Breton-speaking halves has been a political constant, mirrored in later administrative arrangements—Bretagne Gallo and Bretagne Bretonnante, Haute and Basse Bretagne—as well as in social and cultural differences.\(^8\) It helped to give Brittany something of its distinctiveness, though Celtic traditions, it must be emphasized, played only a minor role in the political evolution of the duchy in the middle ages.

The assassination of Salomon in 874, internal rivalries and external threats (the Vikings and the rise of other principalities like Normandy and Anjou) resulted in the loss of some territory held in 867. But the counties of Rennes and Nantes and the vicaria of Retz were permanently added to the Breton sphere of influence from this date. So that Brittany then achieved, except for relatively minor changes along the eastern and southern boundaries, the form it has maintained to modern times. The five post-1789 départements of Côtes-du-Nord, Finistère, Ille-et-Vilaine, Loire-Atlantique and Morbihan cover, in effect, the same area as the historic duchy. Though it should also be remembered that such territorial consistency and continuity can be extended back even further: Roman Armorica contained five civitates whose outlines are still fairly faithfully reflected in the latest administrative divisions.

This geographical, as well as political, unity and the fortune of having comparatively well-defined boundaries (two-thirds of them demarcated by the sea) may be held to be one of the most significant advantages that successive rulers of Brittany in any age ever enjoyed. In later periods it certainly enabled them to argue for a separate identity within a larger kingdom, particularly following the stabilization of the eastern frontier in the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The creation of 'marches communes', 'marches séparantes', and 'marches avantagères', dividing Brittany from Poitou and Anjou, with their highly specific laws and customs, which differed from one parish to the next, was a further aid to demarcating political limits in a region where a linear frontier might otherwise have moved to and fro in response to fluctuating political and military fortunes. These marcher customs were codified by the early thirteenth century: parallels and contrasts with the March of Wales might prove an interesting field of study in the light of Professor Rees Davies's brilliant


\(^{8}\) Cf. J. E. Jones, 'Upper and Lower Brittany as shown on early maps', *Camps et littoraux d’Europe: Mélanges offerts à Pierre Flairès* (Lille, 1988), pp. 61-6.
work. In any event, the particularity of the marches, a form of 'cordon sanitaire' ringing south-eastern Brittany, was generally respected down to the Revolution. It helped to consolidate the framework of castellanies and feudal lordships that had simultaneously been constructed within the duchy.

Brittany thus already enjoyed considerable advantages differentiating it from neighbouring provinces in territorial terms as it did in a more limited linguistic and cultural sense by early Caperian times. But geography and language are no guarantee of political unity: this has to be created and sustained. There was a predisposition to unity, but nothing was predetermined. And as the example of Roman administrative arrangements in Armorica has already shown, old divisions have a remarkable propensity to survive political change. What significance might not be attached to the fact that present-day inhabitants of the Nantais, annexed to the regnum of Brittany in 851 and subsequently one of the most important constituent parts of the duchy, naturally speak of going to Brittany for their holidays as if to some exotic and distant location? Intense localism, love of the pays, and a failure to identify with grander notions of political authority are characteristics of the 'French state' in every period without exception. In few regions, however, were they so strong as in Brittany, whose history following the decline of the Roman empire had been one of intense social and political fragmentation. It was this fragmentation that Nommoë and his successors halted. Although the Viking invasions of the late ninth and early tenth century destroyed the Carolingian regnum, this left an enduring legacy.

This is not the place to describe it in detail. Erispée, Salomon and, after a gap, Alan the Great (d. before 27 November 908) were all styled rex. They were installed with some kind of ceremony that later became one of coronation. They possessed certain insignia of royalty, were recognized as enjoying a degree of authority over other local Breton rulers and entered into formal relationships with the Carolingians as fideles. The Bretons, politically and culturally speaking, were thus integrated into the Carolingian world and though on its periphery, the province's fortunes mirrored those of Francia at large. Likewise the ruling élites in Brittany were drawn inexorably into Neustrian affairs. Marriage alliances and political agreements with the Imperial family or with other great comital houses signified their acceptance. A pattern of rulership and administration, social

10 Jones, pp. 24-31.
11 Chèdeville and Guillonet, pp. 374-402.
12 Ibid., p. 270.
development and cultural interest was set that would recur throughout the duchy's history: Carolingian models in church and state began to influence local developments and overlay or supplant Celtic traditions and institutions, the strength of which is often exaggerated. In the two subsequent periods discerned above, the same kind of evolution occurred as Anglo-Norman or Angevin and then Capetian example exerted powerful normative influences.

There were, of course, distinctive variants and customs but there was little truly innovative to compare with developments in Brittany's more powerful neighbours until the later middle ages when the Montfortist dukes deliberately set out to create the organs of a state which at the local level could fend off the Valois monarchy. The achievement of Nomenoe and his immediate successors was primarily political, the imposition of authority on lesser men. Memories of this united rule survived the traumas of Viking domination in the province from c.913 to 933, when secular and ecclesiastical authority was destroyed and many leading figures simply fled into exile. It was these traditions of the regnum as much as any underlying institutional or administrative forms that eventually resurfaced and were of inestimable value to all those who later claimed to govern the duchy. They constituted an enduring impediment to those who sought to rule it from outside.15

The reimposition of central authority in Brittany from the late ninth centuries onwards was a hard task that was long left incomplete.16 In 942 Alan Barbetorte, now styled 'dux' not 'rex Britonum', and other Breton leaders became fideles of Louis IV d'Outremer, the restored Carolingian ruler. But following Barbetorte's death in 952, ducal authority in Brittany was disputed between his successors as counts of Nantes and the counts of Rennes. Under Conan I and his successors from c.970 to 1066, these latter were to hold the ducal title before it reverted to Barbetorte's distant successors. In the late tenth century, partly because of internal divisions, partly because new power complexes arose on Brittany's borders—the counties of Anjou and Blois-Chartres and the duchy of Normandy—and partly because of the impotence of the monarchy, Brittany gradually slipped out of the orbit of the rulers of Francia. Richer could only have been speaking in the loosest terms when he alleged Breton acknowledgement of the Capetian succession. From 987 until 1106 no Breton duke, count or lesser lord witnessed a single Capetian charter; no royal acta were issued concerning Brittany between King Lothair, who died in 986, and Louis VI in 1123.17 Between 942 and 1199 no Breton duke

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16 H. Guilhotel, 'Le premier siècle du pouvoir ducal breton (930-1040)', Actes du 18e Congrès national des sociétés savantes, Nantes-Metz 1977, Section de philologie et d'histoire jusqu'à 1610 (Paris, 1979), pp. 61-84; is a brilliantly succinct survey not apparently known to Dunbabin.

17 See below n. 25 for the confirmation in 1123 of a privilege for the cathedral of Nantes. Wicohen, bishop of Dol, as 'Gislenus episcopus Britannorum', witnessed a charter of Hugues Capet in 970 (M. Jusselin, Un acte de Hugues duc des Francs et ses souscriptions en notes tiremennées (10 avril 970), Le
performed homage to a king of France and when he—infrrequently—did acknowledge feudal dependence it was normally in the specific form of *hommage en marche* to the duke of Normandy.\(^{18}\) By the treaty of Gisors in 1113, Louis VI recognized this dependence and granted Henry I suzerainty over Brittany. Henry's Angevin successors continued to treat Brittany in this fashion and its subordinate status, as a rear-fief of the French Crown, was again, though for the last time, confirmed by Philip Augustus in the treaty of Le Goulet in 1200.\(^{19}\)

Thus for two centuries after 987 official Capetian contacts with Brittany were extremely limited and episodic: when Philip I appeared before Dol in 1076 in the company of rebels against Hoël, duke of Brittany and his ally William the Conqueror, it was the first occasion since 851 that a ruler of Francia had ventured so far west.\(^{20}\) It was also an experience not repeated until Philip Augustus in 1206 advanced as far as Nantes in mopping-up operations following the defeat of King John.\(^{21}\) Indeed in the whole Capetian period only one other royal visit to Brittany is recorded—that of Louis IX in 1230 in support of barons resisting Peter Mauclerc, a Capetian cadet who had been chosen by Philip Augustus to marry the heiress to the duchy, ironically to ensure its succession in safe hands.\(^{22}\) Capetian influence was thus almost invariably exercised from a distance and indirectly. It depended partly on the authority and prestige of the monarchy, on feudal law and precedent, and, more practically, on whether it was in the interests of the duke to admit royal claims or if there were local circumstances which the Crown could exploit to its own advantage. The conversion of a vaguely acknowledged and distant suzerainty, implicit in Richer's remarks, into effective political domination by the Capetians was a particularly delayed business in the case of Brittany.

Take, for example, the obvious matter of feudal military obligation; briefly, in the mid eleven-twenties, Duke Conan III appeared to tire of the Anglo-Norman yoke under which he and his ancestors since the late tenth century normally laboured. In moves hitherto unprecedented not only did he, along with many other

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\(^{19}\) *Diplomatic Documents*, i, 1039-1118, ed. P. Chaplais (1964), no. 9 provides the most definitive version of the treaty of Le Goulet.

\(^{20}\) Below n. 44.


princes, proffer aid to Louis VI, threatened by the Imperial invasion of 1124, but he also served Louis in the Auvergne in 1122 and 1126.\textsuperscript{23} But neither Conan nor any of his twelfth-century successors ever again answered any summons to the French royal host. It was only after 1206 that the duke in person or through contingents sent from the duchy performed limited armed service in royal armies. There were Bretons at Bouvines, though it is not until Philip III's reign, when the duke was held to provide sixty knights, including sixteen bannerets, that any precise measurement of the extent of this aid can be measured. Thereafter, until the beginning of the Hundred Years War, he normally contributed a modest troop to most royal expeditionary forces, while after 1206 lists were kept of Breton lords who also owed the king service in arms.\textsuperscript{24}

Otherwise, for most of the twelfth century Capetian contacts with Brittany remained very restricted and distant. In 1123 Louis VI confirmed privileges that Charles the Bald had once granted the cathedral of Nantes.\textsuperscript{25} These had previously been confirmed by Louis d'Oultremont and Lothair I in the tenth century. Since then no ruler of Francia had exercised gracious jurisdiction in the province. Nor was the 1123 intervention repeated: Brittany was not a province in which \textit{sauvegardes}, \textit{pariage} agreements or the appointment of ecclesiastics prepared the way for the extension of regal authority. Though the nine dioceses of Brittany formed part of the metropolitan province of Tours, the Breton church was and remained largely separate from the French church till the end of the middle ages.\textsuperscript{26} Rather it was the political disarray and military collapse of the Angevin realm that finally removed the barrier which for two centuries had limited royal control in western France. In the fifty years or so prior to this, however, the duchy had become an Angevin appanage, and before passing to a consideration of Franco-Breton relations following the collapse of the Angevin empire, some account of this development is required.

In 1156 Henry II, the growth of whose power was the most important political development in France in the mid twelfth century, helped Conan IV to regain the ducal throne, disputed since the death of his grandfather Conan III in 1148. In 1158, following the death of his own brother Geoffrey Plantagenet, who had taken advantage of Breton rivalries to install himself at Nantes, Henry stepped in once again to settle a new quarrel, with the express encouragement of Louis VII.\textsuperscript{27} The


\textsuperscript{25} Published by L. Maître, \textquoteleft Situation du diocèse de Nantes au XIe et au XIIe siècles\rightquote, \textit{Annales de Bretagne}, xxvii (1911-12), 109-15; J.-P. Brunet, \textquoteleft Le diocèse de Nantes entre 916 et 1049\rightquote, \textit{Mémoires de la société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Bretagne} (cited hereafter as \textit{M.S.H.A.B.}), lxi (1984), 29-82 provides a remarkable commentary on this document.


strategic and economic importance of the mouth of the Loire for Angevin interests is obvious. Whilst recognizing Conan's title, he took for himself the county of Nantes. "Hic fuit primus ingressus ejus super Britones edomandos" was the comment of Gervase of Canterbury.28 Henry's annexation of Nantes was the culmination of ambitions that go back to the earliest days of the county of Anjou. After 1158 Conan's debt to Henry II grew larger still and though he occasionally showed signs of resentment, he could not shake off the king's masterful tutelage. By 1166, worn down by this and continuing Breton factiousness, Conan agreed to betroth his only daughter, Constance, to Geoffrey, Henry's fourth son, and took the twelfth-century equivalent of early retirement, withdrawing to the lordship of Guingamp, the only part of the ducal demesne left to him, while Angevin officials took over the rest.29

In doing so they transformed and consolidated ducal authority to the lasting advantage of all subsequent rulers. Between 1166 and 1181 Geoffrey and Constance remained minors and it was under the personal supervision of Henry II himself and those he appointed, Bretons as well as men from other parts of his dominions, that government was exercised. After their marriage in 1181, Geoffrey and Constance were allowed to pick up the reins. But the policies of administrative, legal and financial reform, which already characterized Angevin rule in Brittany, continued. Nor did the premature death of Geoffrey in August 1186 cause a substantial break either in personnel or policy: Constance remained in control, though it was under the watchful eye of her former father-in-law and Richard I.30 First, she was remarried to the powerful Anglo-Norman marcher lord, Ranulf, earl of Chester and hereditary vicomte of the Bessin and Avranches, from whom she later obtained a divorce on the grounds of consanguinity in 1199.31 Secondly, her actions were supervised by the seneschals of Brittany, who with the exception of Alan de Dinan, appear to have been strong Angevin supporters: Roland de Dinan, Raoul de Fougères and Maurice de Craon.32 The duchy, thus ruled by a cadet branch of the Angevin family, grafted onto the old ducal stock, was well on the way to integration in the Angevin dominions.

31 The Charters of the Anglo-Norman Earls of Chester, 1107-1237, ed. G. Barraclough (Lancs. and Cheshire Record Soc., xxvi, 1988), prints or calendars to surviving charters of Ranulf using the style 'dux Britanniae'. Constance was a great-great-grand-daughter of William the Conqueror, Ranulph was a great-grandson of Henry I, but their nearest common ancestor appears to have been Robert, duke of Normandy (d. 1035).
32 Their careers cannot be summarized here but for the attack in 1196 by Richard Cœur de Lion on the duchy and the counter-attack by 'Alanus Brito Dinanites' see Œuvres de Rigord, ii. 110ff. Brother of André II de Vitre, Alan succeeded to the Dinan lands of his mother, Emma, only daughter and heiress of Roland, lord of Dinan. He married Clemence de Fougères, who after his death married Ranulf, earl of Chester, following the latter's divorce from Duchess Constance. For a charter i. 1196 of Duchess Constance witnessed by 'Alano de Dinain tune temporis senechallo Brietaine' see Dom H. Morice, Mémoires pour servir de preuves à l'Histoire ecclésiastique et civile de Bretagne (3 vols., Paris, 1742-6), i. 710. A. Oheix, Essai sur les seneschalz de Bretagne des origines au XIVe siècle (Paris, 1913) was a pioneering work but now requires revision.
What the final result would have been, had these developments continued peacefully, cannot now be decided, of course. Given the waiting game played so patiently by Philip Augustus, any excuse served to allow him to take advantage of Angevin family quarrels—in 1186 Geoffrey had made an alliance with him in order to extend his own share of the Angevin succession—but it was the birth of Geoffrey's posthumous son, Arthur, in 1187 that provided a focus for further intrigue.\(^3\) It ensured that on the fate of the heir to Brittany would also turn the fortunes of the Angevin empire as a whole. For Arthur was (and remained until his death in 1203) Henry II's only grandson in the direct male line, with claims to succeed to all his territories. Naturally many were interested in Arthur's fortunes. None more so than his ultimate suzerain, Philip II, who had formed a friendship for Arthur's father so passionate that he had to be prevented from throwing himself into Geoffrey's open grave.\(^3\) Even without this personal bond, with the growth of royal prestige and hardening feudal practice that characterized even the early years of his rule, we might expect Philip legitimately to pose as Arthur's defender. Inevitably much of Arthur's short life was filled with political intrigue as he, or rather those who manipulated him, sought to ensure he gained the largest possible share of the Angevin succession.

Already by the time Arthur was three years old in 1190, Richard I had recognized him as his heir. In the treaty of Messina in 1191 Philip Augustus also accepted this arrangement. But they had underestimated the ambitions of John, loyally supported by his mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, who hoped to see her youngest son rather than her grandson acquire the Angevin succession. While Richard lived he was able to keep them in check as well as counter moves on Philip's part to exploit his suzerainty. But matters came to a head when Richard I died on 6 April 1199. Arthur quickly made a bid for the Angevin continental lands by appealing to the king of France for help. Whether he was influenced by the memory of Geoffrey or the terms of 1191, whether he simply wished to see successorial laws properly applied or whether he was just cynically exploiting Angevin disarray, he quickly received Arthur into homage for Anjou, Maine and the Touraine. The fact that he also simultaneously confirmed a number of charters in which Arthur was styled 'dux Britanniae', the first time any king of France had acted in this fashion, suggests that they had also agreed on terms for Arthur's succession to his mother, Constance, with whom he now openly shared authority in the duchy, imitating a form of association favoured by the Capetians themselves until Philip's reign.\(^3\) A decisive phase in the extended rivalry between the Angevins and the Capetians was at hand. The dénouement is so well known that little comment is required.

In the autumn following Richard I's death, Philip tried to seize Maine but, over-
reaching himself, he was compelled to negotiate with John at Le Goulet. Reneging on his recent agreement with Arthur, Philip had to recognize once more that Brittany was held indirectly of the French Crown, through the duke of Normandy. Though reluctant, Arthur was persuaded to perform homage to John. In turn, he agreed to pay a relief to Philip for the duchy, along with other Angevin lands. After a short interlude, however, the briefly-restored Angevin harmony was again shattered. The death of Constance in September 1201 perhaps removed a calming influence. In 1202, when Philip decreed the confiscation of John’s continental lands for failure to answer charges relating to Poitou, Arthur once more seized his chance. He performed liege homage for Brittany, Anjou, Maine, Touraine and Poitou and Philip Augustus betrothed him to his own daughter, Marie. New campaigns against John were planned and it was while Philip moved slowly into Normandy, that Arthur recklessly set off to besiege his grandmother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, at Mirebeau in Poitou. There, on 1 August 1202, he was captured by John at the head of a relieving force. Attempts were made to arrange Arthur’s release but sometime around Easter 1203 John murdered him, possibly with his own hand.

If John hoped this would lead the Bretons and other supporters of Arthur to capitulate, he was sadly mistaken. Unsure as yet of their lord’s fate, they rallied around Alix, Arthur’s half-sister, and her father, Guy de Thouars, third husband of the late Duchess Constance. Under his leadership Breton troops took an important part in driving John out of Normandy in 1203-4. Not surprisingly, in return Philip recognized Guy’s claims to the regency in Brittany, where the king’s own rights as suzerain were quickly acknowledged by leading Breton lords, happy to have rid themselves of John’s version of the Angevin yoke. In the end, the transition to Capetian overlordship seems to have been accepted with little demur and heedless of its full implications at a critical moment in the expansion both of royal resources and ideas on kingship.

The events of the next few years can be quickly summarized before consideration of the longer-term effects of the substitution of Capetian for Angevin power brings this survey to a close. Although John continued to intrigue with many of the leading barons of western France and even briefly appeared in arms in Brittany in 1206 and 1214, when he was accompanied by Arthur’s eldest sister, Eleanor, whom

37 Morice, i. 109; but cf. Hillion, p. 143 n. 187.
38 Recueil, nos. 709 and 723; Layettes du Trésor des Chartes, ed. A. Teulet and others (5 vols., Paris, 1863-1909), i, no. 647.
40 Giraud de Rigaud, i. 220-1.
41 Philip granted Brissac and Chemillé to Guy de Thouars in Oct. 1203, saving the rights of the bishop of Angers and Arthur of Brittany ‘if he is still alive’ (Recueil, no. 764). The king’s earliest actions as suzerain in Brittany appear to have been the confirmation of an accord between Geoffroy and Guillaume de Fougères (ibid., no. 826, Aug. 1204) and the grant to inhabitants of Nomancourt and Verneuil in Normandy of freedom from customs in Brittany (ibid., nos. 877, 879-80, Feb. 1205).
he presumably intended to replace on the ducal throne, he was never able to regain a proper foothold north of the Loire.42 In 1206 Guy de Thouars, whose own brother Aimery, viscount of Thouars, was one of those most involved in the perpetual intrigues of these years, was suspected momentarily of collusion with John. This allowed Philip, who had begun to treat Brittany like any other province under his control, to impose his authority on the duchy, the first and, as it proved, the only time a Capetian intervened so directly.43 Arriving at the head of an impressive force, Philip temporarily deposed Guy, made a few grants from the ducal demesne to favoured lords and instituted various judicial inquiries.44 But after this short and effective demonstration of royal might, Philip withdrew. Guy soon returned to favour. He was allowed to administer on behalf of Alix until 1212 and there is little evidence of further royal interference at a local level.45 It was a policy which, by and large, was followed by all Philip's Capetian successors. There was just one important exception: the crucial matter of Alix's marriage.

In 1209 a contract was drawn up in Paris with royal approval for her to marry Henry, son of Count Alan of Tréguier, the last male representative of the sole cadet branch of the old ducal family.46 Had it been completed, this match would have immensely enhanced ducal landed resources, though because the prospective couple were then only nine and four years old respectively, this clearly would not be for some years. Three years later, better aware of the potentially dangerous political consequences of reinforcing the local dynasty and conscious of the uncertain allegiance of some leading Bretons, whilst at the same time more sure of his own authority, Philip used his prerogative as suzerain to arrange another match for Alix, one more in keeping with traditional Capetian ways of extending their influence. Alix was thus married to Peter, second son of Robert, count of Dreux, a great-grandson of Louis VI, a distant but under-endowed relative to the king himself.47 After exacting from Peter promises that he would observe all agreements made with Guy de Thouars and his barons and that he would deprive no baron of Brittany of lands or privileges without a decision of Philip's court, another novel extension of royal power into the duchy, Peter eagerly performed liege homage for Brittany on 27 January 1213. Then or shortly afterwards he was permitted to marry Alix.48 The transfer from Angevin to Capetian rule was finally completed.

43 (Œuvres de Rigord, i. 223-4.
44 Recueil, nos. 946-50; Morice, i. 802-4 (inquiry at Nantes, July 1206). 807-8.
45 Chédeville and Tonnerre, pp. 103-4. In 1207 Philip ceded custody, previously held by Guy, of Saint-James de Beuvron on the borders of Brittany and Normandy, to Simon de Dammartin (Recueil, no. 939), but Guy continued to issue charters in Brittany as regent.
46 Morice, i. 812-13.
47 The marriage contract has not survived but cf. Recueil, nos. 1410, 1413-14; for the circumstances see S. Painter, The Scourge of the Clergy: Peter of Dreux, duke of Brittany (Baltimore, Md., 1937), pp. 3ff; Baldwin, pp. 198-9.
48 (Œuvres de Rigord, i. 255; Layettes, no. 1033 (homage); cf. Recueil, nos. 1271-2. The earliest surviving documents in which Peter and Alix act as husband and wife date from March 1214 (J. Levron, 'Catalogue des actes de Pierre de Dreux', M.S.H.A.B., xi (1936), nos. 10-12).
After 1213, then, a new chapter opened in relations between the Capetians and Brittany. Some of its main features may be examined in conclusion. Peter proved to be one of the most ambitious of all Capetian princes. There was a period after the death of Philip Augustus when he was to be found at the heart of every noble rebellion against the Crown. That he did not in the end cause the Capetians to regret even more their generosity in promoting him, was largely thanks to the traditional factiousness of the Breton nobility, the limited period during which he legally held the duchy and his own recklessness. From the start, in a sense picking up from where the Angevins had left off, Peter tried to impose on his new Breton vassals some of the restraints which a feudal lord coming from the ile de France would have found natural and reasonable—reliefs, wardship, precise military obligations, control of castle building and more specifically local customs like the unrestrained use of 

*lagan* or shipwreck—only to be met with violent opposition. He also richly won his sobriquet Maucrèc for battles with the bishops of Brittany over their temporalities. The lords of Léon, whom the Angevins once appeared to have broken, were amongst the most redoubtable opponents of this strengthening of ducal authority but baronial coalitions attracted wide support throughout the duchy. At the same time, neighbouring Angevin lords like Amaury de Craon, whose family had received rewards in Brittany from both Angevin and Capetian alike, also fished in troubled waters. In rebelling they appealed to the monarchy and provided it with new excuses for intervention.

Though the *enquêtes* undertaken in 1235 by Louis IX's officials in response to Breton complaints about the tyrannous nature of Peter's rule are the best known instance, royal inquiries in Brittany began as soon as Philip II arrived in 1206. The tradition of sending royal commissioners to Brittany continued intermittently to the end of the century as the demand for royal justice grew. But after the creation of the *parlement* of Paris around 1250 more formal arrangements were made for supervising Breton courts and limitations were placed on the royal prerogative. In common with other provinces, it became normal practice for cases to proceed to Paris only in the event of alleged denial of justice or false judgment. By common consent, cases of first instance had to be tried locally and a hierarchy of ducal and seigneurial courts was established with initial appeals heard by the seneschals of Rennes and Nantes. By 1288 there was also a Breton *parlement*, which mixed political and judicial business. Pressure was certainly brought to bear from the start on litigants who sought to escape ducal jurisdiction by direct appeal to Paris. Royal sergeants met increasing difficulty in executing their mandates in the duchy: a riot provoked at Nantes in 1308 when royal commissioners attempted to seize the goods...
of the Templars in defiance of ducal wishes is only one startling instance of this increasing judicial autonomy. As Strayer comments, even under Philip the Fair, ‘les sujets du conte de Bretagne ou du duc de Bourgogne ne plaident presque jamais en Parlement de Paris’.54

To return to Mauclerc, the crisis in his rule came when he allied with Henry III of England. His barons deserted him one by one and submitted to Louis IX.55 Muster ing a powerful army Louis marched towards the duchy in June 1231 and Peter was forced to sue for peace. Though he continued to intrigue with Henry III, who held out the carrot of the earldom of Richmond, which the ducal family had possessed since Domesday, Peter’s position in Brittany was undermined by the guarantee which his barons gave to aid Louis if he violated the terms of the peace. By this stage, too, Peter’s rule was also quickly coming to a close. He had gained the duchy by marriage in 1213. After his wife’s death in 1221, he retained it only as guardian until their son John achieved his majority. John’s title was carefully protected in a series of agreements thereafter, most notably by Louis IX as part of his bargain with the Breton lords in 1231. In 1237 John, now of age, finally succeeded his father, whose still inexhaustible energies were subsequently channelled into crusading ventures and a frenetic search for fame and fortune outside Brittany.

The new duke did not, however, seriously modify his father’s policies: he, too, took a tough line with the nobility and church in Brittany, though he proved to be a more skilful politician, gradually reconciling his enemies and remaining securely on his throne for almost fifty years.56 This allowed him time to pursue policies which were not spectacular but which gradually extended ducal rights and resources. There are parallels with earlier Capetian experience and it is clear that the contemporary royal administration provided a model for imitation, in chancery practice for instance, or legal form. In issuing an ordonnance expelling the Jews from Brittany in 1240 John specifically asked the king to confirm this act.57 Later royal measures against usurers were repeated in the duchy and other reforms closely imitate Louis IX’s own efforts. In 1275, in order to remove an impediment to the swift exercise of justice, John and Philip III mutually agreed to renounce their right of aveux.58 Dissident lords were brought to heel by force if need be in a number of minor wars or by exploiting their financial difficulties to deprive them of estates which were then added to the ducal demesne.

In a move designed to meet criticism of the unrestrained ducal exercise of bailiff, which had resulted in the wasting of noble estates when they fell into ducal hands, a

53 Morice, i. 1210-17.
55 Levron, nos. 143-7; 171-6, 181; R.H.F., xxi. 220-6; Painter, pp. 53 ff.
56 Pocquet du Haut-Jussé, Les paper, i. 130-64; Leguay and Marin, pp. 17-38; Jones, pp. 5-8.
57 Morice, i. 914-15 and cf. La Borderie, Histoire, iii. 330-9, including a photograph of the original ordonnance.
58 M. Planio, La très ancienne coutume de Bretagne (Rennes 1896), pp. 313-518 publishes all the important ducal ordonnances concerning the administration of justice; see esp. the Assise des plebiscus (1253) and the abolition of aveux (1275) on pp. 331-5.
crime of which Mauclerc was particularly accused, in 1276 the Assize of Rachat was agreed.59 The duke allowed nobles testamentary freedom, especially to name tuteurs or curateurs for minors, in return for payment of a relief equal to a year's income from the estates of a deceased tenant in chief. Families might voluntarily continue to be subjected to bail but this was also now strictly limited to a year with a promise not to waste the property. Either way the duke, with greater ease, derived considerable though inevitably fluctuating revenues from these measures. The rachat remained one of the most carefully administered feudal incidents until the sixteenth century. In return tenants in chief allowed their own men similar terms, thus formalizing and strengthening the feudal hierarchy.

Increasing wealth, the beginnings of a Breton chambre des comptes with regular accounting sessions, the growth of a more advanced central and local administration, especially to cope with the expanding demesne, control of minting in the duchy, exercise of regalian rights over church properties, allied to the provision of ducal justice, all enhanced ducal power and prestige in this period. We should be careful not to overemphasize ducal achievements just as the limits of Capetian success have recently been stressed with the realization that there is a wide gap between aspirations and actual results in many fields.60 Some disputes between nobles—towns played as yet little serious role in the politics of Brittany—were still settled outside ducal courts by traditional means of arbitration. Private warfare also posed in Brittany the same problems of control as it did in other parts of France.61 But by the end of the century, the duke stood head and shoulders above those who earlier might have considered themselves his equal. Furthermore his national status was clearly acknowledged in 1297 by Philip IV's promoting John II to the peerage of France. Belatedly, the royal chancery recognized the ducal rather than the comital title which it had pointedly used since 1206.62

Normally a policy of laissez-faire prevailed throughout the thirteenth century. The rudimentary development of the royal administration itself must be remembered: provided the dukes of Brittany acknowledged Capetian suzerainty, performed homage and a few, generally honorific, services and administered their duchy more or less in accordance with royal wishes and example, successive kings were only too happy to allow the dukes great freedom of action. It was only when internal disputes or external alliances, with England, for example, threatened to disturb this balance, that they intervened before the end of the century, when changing attitudes and aspirations amongst royal advisers began to cause greater friction with the development of fresh ideas on sovereignty.

Thus the duchy only occasionally contributed to general taxes levied on ecclesiastical property, forerunners of royal taxation, and few royal nominees were

59 Planiol, pp. 335-8; for discussion see Jones, pp. 6, 98, 223.
62 Morice, i. 1122-3; Jones, pp. 200-2.
appointed to Breton benefices before the early fourteenth century, whilst the duchy almost entirely escaped later royal lay taxation. Instances where the Crown intervened in matters of internal financial administration were rare indeed. Kings from Louis IX increasingly tried to supervise minting in Brittany. But strong rearguard action preserved ducal rights intact, perhaps even stimulated a more active coinage-issuing policy. It is true that as the century wore on and the theory of 'cas royaux' developed, the baillis of the Cotentin, Maine, Anjou and the Touraine were sometimes sent to execute royal mandates in Brittany (which otherwise escaped Capetian local administration). But here, too, vigilance on the part of ducal officials limited their effectiveness. In 1317, for example, it was recognized that the duke exercised justice in cases of 'port d'armes'.

Conversely, and of considerable importance for the future, by then, to counter royal claims, it is clear that the notion of 'ducal regalities', sovereign rights, which the duke himself exercised exclusively within the duchy, was taking shape as royal rule threatened to become more oppressive. John III took advantage of the movement for the charters in 1314-15, which signalled reaction in the kingdom at large to the centralizing tendencies of the Capetian monarchy, brought to new levels of efficiency by the stern rule of Philip IV, to acquire royal letters confirming a number of his privileges and the immunity of the duchy from direct royal control. And though the duke continued to perform his obligations with admirable rectitude in the early years of Philip VI's reign, little prescience was needed on the eve of the Hundred Years War to foresee that any weakening of the Crown would be to the advantage of a prince now anxious to build up his own administration. But that is another story.

By the early fourteenth century it has been claimed that 'la domination française en Bretagne fut la plus absolue'. This domination was both political and cultural: the Capetian monarchy provided the model for much of the duchy's own

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63 Cf. R.H.F., xxii. 543, 549-50 (dimes); Pocquet du Haut-Jussé, Les papes, i. 201-3, 253-6; Strayer, Reign of Philip the Fair, pp. 162, 164.
64 Leguay and Martin, p. 36 makes the most of the few scattered references; Strayer, Reign of Philip the Fair, p. 101.
65 There is no full study of ducal minting policy before the late 14th century. F. Dumas, 'La monnaie dans les domaines Plantagenet', Cahiers de civilisation médiévale, xxix (1960), 53-9 provides details on late 12th-century coinage in Brittany. In 1237 John I complained how tournois circulating in the duchy since 1206 were harming ducal coinage (Pocquet du Haut-Jussé, Les papes, i. 137). In 1274 he was accused of weakening the Breton coinage by 25% (Actes du Parlement de Paris, ed. E. Boutaric (2 vols., Paris, 1863-8), i. no. 1974) and ordered to expel Lombards from the duchy as the king had from the realm. In 1288 it was alleged that Breton coins were still circulating at one-fifth less than their intrinsic value (A. Dieudonné, 'L'ordonnance ou règlement de 1315 sur le monnayage des barons', Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes, xciii (1932), 8).
67 The main series of original royal letters confirming Breton privileges issued by Philip IV and his successors to Philip VI are conserved in Nantes, Archives départementales de la Loire-Atlantique, E 110, cf. Ordonnances, i. 329, 369, 620-1, 633-4, 617, 782-3, ii. 17-18; Jones, pp. 10-12, and 338-41 for ducal regalities.
administration and ceremonial. Legal developments show how important were contacts with Anjou and the Touraine. These culminated in the compilation of 'La très ancienne coutume' around 1315-20, a codification heavily dependent on Angevin customary practice as were a number of ducal ordonnances. With regard to laws on landholding 'la censive—le fief roturier breton—commença à évoluer de la même façon que la censive parisienne'. But it was not just royal France that exerted attraction. The Assize of Rachat of 1276 closely mirrors a measure of Alphonse of Poitiers. Whilst the spread of public notaries into the duchy was also from the south, bringing a greater knowledge of Roman law though this, in turn, also depended heavily on training received in the universities of the Loire valley. Orléans was especially popular amongst Breton students, while the lure of Paris, not simply for students from the days of Abelard onwards, but for many immigrants from the duchy, hardly needs further emphasis, since it has been well documented. In the middle of the thirteenth century Paris university was indeed at its apogee and increasing numbers of the higher clergy of Brittany received training there. In art and architecture the influence of Capetian court styles on Brittany may also be dramatically experienced in the recently discovered tessellated pavement at the remote ducal castle of Suscinio on the Rhuys peninsula. Maucere and his son both gained reputations as chansonniers and shared the chivalric preoccupations of other contemporary French princes: the first was an enthusiastic crusader, the latter somewhat more reluctant, but both accompanied Louis IX, Peter in 1248, John I in 1270 and this was not the end of ducal concern with the crusade.

But acceptance, consciously or otherwise, of the overwhelming cultural forms of Capetian France, by the dukes of Brittany and their subjects, did not imply, as this survey indicates, complete political subservience. Nor was this what the Capetians themselves expected even, perhaps, in the days of Philip IV, though new points of friction arose as both royal and ducal administrations expanded in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Despite this the Capetian state in 1328 remained what to a large extent it had always been, a multiple kingdom. Political power was becoming more structured and hierarchical but the king still shared it with many other authorities. Here the main concern has been to demonstrate how, in the Breton case, this power had evolved since late Carolingian times and how the Capetian kings shared it with the dukes of Brittany.

Michael Jones

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70 Planiol, passim.
71 Le Roy, p. 54.
72 Planiol, pp. 315-8.
73 Jones, pp. 206-9, 315-24; notaries are dealt with at greater length in idem, 'Notaries and notarial practice in medieval Brittany', Notariado público y documento privado: de los orígenes al siglo XIV, Congreso internacional de diplomática, Valencia-Castellon-Peñíscola del 7 al 12 octubre 1986 (Valencia, forthcoming).
76 Poqueot du Haut-Jussé, Les papes, 1. 165-81.
Clerkenwell and the Religious Foundations of Jordan de Bricett: a Re-examination

The Hospitallers’ priory of St. John of Jerusalem and the convent of St. Mary were both founded at Clerkenwell in the eleven-forties. Cartularies from both survive, but the Hospitallers’, which was not compiled until the fifteenth century, contains an inaccurate account of the foundation and very little other early material concerning Clerkenwell. Round was the first person to explore properly the more accurate and detailed St. Mary’s cartulary, and he used it to correct various errors in the Hospitallers’ account which had been copied by Dugdale and all subsequent writers. In particular he was able to show that both foundations were made in the eleven-forties rather than around 1100, that St. John’s was slightly the earlier of the two, and that the family tree of the founders, Jordan de Bricett, or Jordan fitz Ralph fitz Brian, and his wife Muriel de Munteny, could be corrected and extended.

Round was not able to identify the ultimate source of the founders’ patrimony. He established that Jordan was the younger son of Ralph fitz Brian, and that the elder son, Brian, had direct heirs, and he thought that Jordan must therefore have been unable to inherit any of his father’s estates. Although he could not establish a genealogy to substantiate it, he concluded that since Muriel donated some of her maritagium to St. Mary’s and passed to her daughters her own family name the land must have come from her inheritance. Among later writers, none of whom has systematically re-examined the problem, some have assumed that Jordan was the more likely founder. Madge pointed out the possible connection between Jordan fitz Ralph fitz Brian and the wife of Brian recorded in Domesday Book as holding five hides within the manor of Stepney from the bishop of London, but otherwise followed Round, and his suggestion was noted in the most recent Victoria County History.

It is possible to dispute each of the pieces of evidence which Round adduced in support of Muriel. The lands which he thought were hers seem in fact to have been

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1 I am very grateful to Dr. M. Chibnall and Dr. V. Harding for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article. My debt to earlier authorities, particularly J. H. Round and Dr. W. O. Hassall, will be obvious. For all deficiencies which remain I am of course responsible.


