MEDIEVAL FRANCE AT WAR

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MEDIEVAL FRANCE AT WAR

A MILITARY HISTORY OF THE FRENCH MONARCHY, 885–1305

JOHN FRANCE

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PREFACE

I OWE THANKS to many people for the help they have given me in preparing this book. The meetings of De Re Militari, the Society for Medieval Military History, have provided enormous stimulus over many years. More particularly, I would like to thank Clifford Rogers and Kelly DeVries, my colleagues on the editorial board of the *Journal of Medieval Military History*, for their kindness, patience, and great learning. Professors Bernard and David Bachrach have been a rich source of ideas. My colleagues in the History Department of Swansea University, Professor Dan Power and Dr. Simon Johns, have been enormously helpful. I can only admire the scholarly learning of Professor Matthew Strickland, to whose work I owe a very great deal. Dr. Alan V. Murray has been most generous in sharing knowledge and ideas. I owe a great deal to Dominique Barthélemy, whose knowledge of medieval France is remarkable. Federico Canaccini very kindly granted me the benefit of his learning, while Peter Herde made me think again about the Battle of Tagliacozzo.

Much of this book has been written during the extraordinary restrictions imposed by Covid-19. In spite of this, my family, and especially Angela, my wife, have coped with my struggles against these circumstances. Last, but not least, I must thank Anna Henderson of Arc Humanities Press, for all her help and the occasional – albeit tactful – prods, which have kept me going.

John France

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Range of This Book

FRENCH HISTORY IN the period under consideration can often appear totally shapeless, seeming to be "just one damned thing after another." This is particularly true of its military history, in which major events and dramatic changes are rare. Additionally, of course, those who composed our sources had their own agendas, and what they tell us reflects their priorities. To understand the coherence of French military history we must always remember that war reflects the nature of the societies that wage it. At heart, this was an agrarian society that marched to the rhythm of the agriculture year. The elite seized most of the difference between what peasants produced and what they needed to live on. Hence there could be no standing army of any size, and this relative poverty meant that any large army that was gathered could not stay together for very long.

Essentially, the subject of our discussion is the inheritance of Charles the Bald (843–877), the lands of the West Franks. His death was followed by a sequence of very short-lived descendants, and then a protracted period in which the territory was torn between the rival royal houses of the Carolingians and the Capetians.[1] Yet, by the later thirteenth century, France was the dominant kingdom in Europe, and a branch of its Capetian ruling house governed the wealthy kingdom of Sicily. Its influence extended right across the Mediterranean to the Kingdom of Jerusalem, which was protected by a French contribution to the garrison. A series of French popes ruled the Church, notably Martin IV (1281–1285). By the end of the century royal power had totally eclipsed that of the great nobility and a process of royal centralization through a loyal bureaucracy was well under way.[2]

This was an extraordinary rise, all the more so in that the inheritance of Charles the Bald was bitterly contested internally and, for a time, subject to violent external attack. Yet this entity held together, although Lorraine drifted to the empire and outposts in the Pyrenees to Spanish Christian kingdoms.[3] These were only marginal losses, however, despite the fact that there was no obvious principle of unity. Economically these lands were very diverse. In the south the agricultural staples of wheat, wine and olives were the classic commodities of the Mediterranean world with which it traded. The north raised a variety of grains, and it was linked to the North Sea littoral. The language of the Langue d'Oc in the south was very different from that of the north.

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1 See Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion.

2 Joseph R. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

3 Bernard Schneidmüller, "Constructing Identities of Medieval France," in *France in the Central Middle Ages*, ed. Marcus Bull (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 15–42 at 15.

What the area had in common, however, was an often nominal acceptance of the supremacy of the king, and actual rule by Frankish lords, the descendants of those who in the past had been appointed by Carolingian kings to rule the land as counts and dukes.[4] In the absence of effective royal control they became very powerful, yet they did not hold great territorial blocks of land but ill-defined collections of property and intangible rights, such as road tolls or fishing, together with jurisdictional and administrative powers derived from the offices granted to their ancestors by the king, which had become inheritable. Their power was most effective where they had land. Thus the dukes of Aquitaine could expect obedience in the Poitou and the region of Bordeaux, where they had extensive demesnes, but in between the powerful lords of the Limousin resisted their control. The broadly governmental authority of great princes had leaked into aristocratic families with whom they had intermarried or to whom they had made grants or conceded powers in order to seek influence. There was no clear hierarchy, and even relatively obscure, especially castle holders, could be described as princes.[5] The great, therefore, had to share power with other, often quite petty landowners, who claimed much the same rights as themselves and frequently asserted power relationships with other "princes." There were also large areas of France that were disputed between major princes, notably the Vexin in eastern Normandy, the Berry, and the Auvergne in central France, where more petty lords predominated. The great princes, therefore, found themselves struggling with others, who themselves depended on patronage over lesser landholders and paid men called "knights."

Without a strong central authority the disputes of the princes were often resolved by war. This was not war of all against all, however, and it did not amount to anarchy, for all these powers were seeking legitimacy and the security it brought. In the past this had come from the monarchy, and, although kings could no longer enforce judgments, especially far from their sphere of influence in northern France, they remained a vital source of legitimacy. There was a real concern for social order, and in finding ways of satisfying ambition while maintaining stability. This is why, to a remarkable degree, the princes and other lords deferred to the monarchy when it accepted what they took to be their rights, and in so doing acknowledged duties to it. In fact, the early Capetian kings Robert II (996–1031) and Henry I (1031–1060) pursued surprisingly interventionist policies, so that after a long period of disputed succession the monarchy to a degree was stabilized, and by about 1050 political France had assumed a form that it would retain for centuries to come. There could be no question of the king imposing his will upon the princes. The monarchs were forced to respect the rights and powers

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4 Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751–987* (London: Longman, 1983), 77–105.

5 In his account of the siege of Nicaea, Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, ed. and trans. Susan B. Edgington (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 100–101n80, notes one Gilbert of Traves as "one of the princes of Burgundy," but he seems to have been no more than a castellan. See also Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusaders, 1095–1131* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 208.

of aristocrats, even in their immediate lands, but insisted always upon their own. They were able to develop and extend this policy successfully because the political structure was destabilized by events.

One of the principles of their society was hereditary succession, and its workings could threaten the political balance. The rise of the Anglo-Norman monarchy in 1066, which in 1154 was embodied in the even vaster Angevin "empire," restricted and also gave urgency to the choices of other powers. The French monarchy, without ever openly challenging the autonomy of aristocratic power, manipulated the consequential fears and concerns. Out of the military conflict, apparently multi-sided, arose a consensus that support for a monarchy that ostentatiously respected aristocratic power was the best option, and, therefore, what we see arising in the early thirteenth century is a noble army and an acceptance of duty in return for recognition, which was unique in Europe. This was the military consensus that created the French army, not out of royal regulation but out of a recognition of mutual interest. It stands in contrast to the dissolution within the German monarchy and to the highly centralized English monarchy, which assailed and was in turn assailed by noble privilege—one of whose flashpoints is military service.

This is not to say, of course, that the result was an amicable arrangement. It was the outcome of many combinations of reasons, motives, and situations. Normandy was conquered, while Flanders was never fully assimilated to the system. By contrast, Champagne/Blois and Burgundy drifted into it. In the south the crusade against the heretics who we generally call Albigensians created conditions that ultimately favoured attachment to the king. A combination of factors, political and military, produced the military consensus, but it worked very well. It is interesting that the consensus did not extent to the raising of footsoldiers. The monarchy gave privileges of self-government to communes and in return demanded defined military service, which was often commuted to cash payments to raise mercenaries. By 1250 French armies appeared to be the strongest in Europe, though in most respects they were hardly different from those of their possible rivals. The strength of the monarchy inevitably ushered in changes, however, and in the second half of the thirteenth century royal control tightened and the great lords found themselves obliged to deliver defined numbers of knights on royal order. Even so, there was a remarkable consensus about military service, and the success of French arms only encouraged it.

Historiography

The extraordinary rise of the French monarchy has naturally attracted great attention among historians of France, yet there is no account that focuses specifically on its military activity across the period as a whole. Given the pervasiveness of violence and warfare, this is an extraordinary gap, and one that the present work seeks to fill. Of course, French military history in this period has not been ignored, but it has been overshadowed by the "Hundred Years War," which has attracted the attention of legions of historians and enjoys a very prominent position in the general studies of the art of war in the Middle Ages. In this respect, three classic works in different European languages

stand as remarkable monuments of scholarship.[6] They defined the framework for the study of European medieval military history, and all historians of the subject stand in debt to them. What they all had in common was a focus on battle, which demonstrated the enormous influence on military thinking of all kinds wielded by Clausewitz. Modern writing has very markedly changed this, revealing the importance of campaigns—by far the majority—from which battle was absent. This has been especially the case with the work of John Gillingham, though the emphasis of his work has been challenged.[7] All these works had a general focus, though Lot was much more orientated to France. The great thrust of his book was about numbers, however, as reviewers noted, for he challenged the enormous figures for the size of armies often found in medieval works. His minimalist approach has proved enormously popular, though it has been contested by Karl Werner, who more recently has been supported by Bernard Bachrach.[8] Another general work is that of Jan Verbruggen, which provides deep insights into medieval cavalry and their tactics and makes considerable use of French material.[9] In 1980 Philippe Contamine produced an excellent textbook of military history, considerably updating the classic works. Much more specifically French—in fact, no less than a general military history of France—is Contamine's first volume of the *Histoire Militaire de la France*, entitled *Des origines à 1715*, in which the medieval period, however, constitutes only a part.[10] There is a useful short overview of the whole medieval period by Xavier Hélary.[11]

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6 Charles Oman, *The Art of War in the Middle Ages 378–1515* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1884), was a prize essay expanded and republished as *The Art of War in the Middle Ages 378–1485*, 2 vols. (London: Methuen, 1924); Hans Delbrück, *Geschichte der Kriegskunst im Rahmen der politischen Geschichte*, 6 vols. (Berlin: Stilke, 1920–32), of which the third volume, from 1923, was translated by Walter J. Renfroe Jnr as *History of the Art of War within the Framework of Political History*, vol. 3, *The Middle Ages* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982); and Ferdinand Lot, *L'art militaire et les armées au Moyen Âge en Europe et dans le Proche Orient*, 2 vols. (Paris: Payot, 1946).

7 John Gillingham, "Richard I and the Science of War in the Middle Ages," in *War and Government in the Middle Ages*, ed. John Gillingham and James C. Holt (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1984), 78–91; "War and Chivalry in the *History of William the Marshal*," in *Thirteenth Century England II: Proceedings of the Newcastle upon Tyne Conference 1987*, ed. Peter R. Coss and Simon D. Lloyd (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1988), 1–13; and "William the Bastard at War," in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. Allen Brown*, eds. Christopher Harper-Bill, Christopher Holdsworth, and Janet L. Nelson (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1989), 141–58; Stephen Morillo, "Battle Seeking: The Contexts and Limitations of Vegetian Strategy," *Journal of Medieval Military History* 1 (2002): 21–42.

8 Karl F. Werner, "Heeresorganisation und Kriegführung in deutschen Königreich des 10 und 11 Jahrhunderts," in *Settimane de Studi de Centro Italiano sull'alto Medioevo* 15 (Spoleto: Centro Italiano sull'alto Medioevo, 1968), 813–22; Bernard S. Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare: Prelude to Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

9 Jan F. Verbruggen, *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe during the Middle Ages*, trans. Sumner Willard and Richard W. Southern (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1997).

10 Philippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, trans. Michael Jones (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984); and *Histoire militaire de la France*, vol. 1, *Des origines à 1715* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1992).

11 Xavier Hélary, "Du royaume des Francs au royaume de France, V^e–XVe siècle," in *Histoire militaire de la France*, vol. 1, *Des Mérovingiens au Second Empire*, ed. Hervé Drévillon and Olivier Wieviorka (Paris: Perrin, 2018), 17–144.

There have been some excellent studies that throw light on particular events and aspects of the military history of France in this period. Bachrach has provided immensely important studies of Anjou under Fulk Nerra, while Laurence Marvin has produced excellent work illuminating the military history of the Albigensian Crusade.[12] Georges Duby has produced a famous study of Bouvines.[13] The work of Dominique Barthélemy is not military history in the narrow sense of the term, but a penetrating and original analysis of French society from the tenth century to the thirteenth that throws real light on the nature of military activity.[14] The reign of Philip II Augustus (1180–1223) saw great victories and a huge expansion of the monarchy, producing very notable work.[15] The military development of France in the later thirteenth century has been analysed in a brilliant study by Hélary.[16] Verbruggen has produced an exemplary study of the Battle of Courtrai (1302).[17] There is a huge literature on castles, with a great volume of learned articles to be found, notably in *Château Gaillard: Études de castellologie médiévale*, while André Châtelain has produced a regional study of special interest for this book.[18] This, of course, is only a short survey, but note should be taken that, because our contemporary sources are so limited, works on the history of Normandy, and especially the Anglo-Norman state, often cast light upon French development, and in this context the work of Matthew Strickland is particularly important.[19]

It must be stressed that this book does not provide a total explanation of the success of the French monarchy. Rather, it looks at this process through the lens of military

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12 Bernard S. Bachrach, "The Angevin Strategy of Castle Building in the Reign of Fulk Nerra, 987–1040," *American Historical Review* 88 (1983): 533–60; and *Fulk Nerra the Neo-Roman Consul, 987–1040* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Laurence W. Marvin, *The Occitan War: A Military and Political History of the Albigensian Crusade, 1209–1218* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

13 Georges Duby, *The Legend of Bouvines: War, Religion, and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Catherine Tihanyi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

14 Dominique Barthélemy, *The Serf, the Knight, and the Historian*, trans. Graham Robert Edwards (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); and *La bataille de Bouvines: Histoire et légendes* (Paris: Perrin, 2018).

15 Ferdinand Lot and Robert Fawtier, *Le premier budget de la monarchie française: Le compte général de 1202–1203* (Paris: Champion, 1932); John W. Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus: Foundations of French Royal Power in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); James C. Holt, "The Loss of Normandy and Royal Finance," in *War and Government in the Middle Ages*, ed. John Gillingham and James C. Holt (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1984), 92–105.

16 Xavier Hélary, *L'armée du roi de France: La guerre de Saint Louis à Philippe le Bel* (Paris: Perrin, 2012).

17 Jan F. Verbruggen, *The Battle of the Golden Spurs: Courtrai, 11 July 1302*, ed. Kelly DeVries and trans. David Richard Ferguson (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2002).

18 André Châtelain, *Châteaux forts et féodalité en Île-de-France du xi*ᵉᵐᵉ *au xiii*ᵉᵐᵉ *siècle* (Paris: Créer, 1983).

19 Matthew Strickland, *War and Chivalry: The Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy 1066–1217* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and *Henry the Young King, 1155–83* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

history, and suggests that, in military terms, the French monarchy evolved in a particular and distinctive way. This distinctiveness was not technological, though. French armies shared the same kinds of arms, armour, and military equipment as those of others. Nor did they have any very special range of strategies and tactics, factors largely dictated by available technology. In these matters France closely resembled the other countries of western Europe.

In fact, French arms were not uniformly celebrated, let alone victorious, and the French pre-eminence in European affairs, so evident by the middle of the thirteenth century, rested as much on the failure of others as on any supposed offensive ardor. Success breeds success, though, and by that time French soldiers were confident and capable, perhaps more so than those of any other monarchy in Europe. We need to understand this achievement and its limitations. To do this a wide range of factors need to be examined. The next chapter considers the technology of warfare, showing that it was largely a constant across the whole period. There then follows an attempt to define what France was and when a French identity emerged. Thereafter the history of French military development is considered in a series of chronological chapters. The first covers the period from 885 to 1066, because, although the latter year is usually seen as a major landmark in English history, from that time onwards the French monarchy had to face a major and very threatening power: the Anglo-Norman realm, whose border was only about 160 kilometres (100 miles) from Paris. The Norman kings of England were succeeded by the Plantagenets, originally counts of Anjou, whose vast empire created enormous problems for Louis VII (1137–1180). The following chapter continues the story down to the final defeat of the Anglo-Angevin challenge under Philip Augustus and the consequent French invasion of England. After that the heyday of French military supremacy in the thirteenth century under Louis IX is examined, down to the reign of Philip IV, the Fair (1285–1314). During this last period a process of internal consolidation had produced, by the late thirteenth century, a highly centralized monarchy with an efficient bureaucratic administration that still respected the great nobility, in large part because of their military role. France by about 1290 was clearly the foremost military power in Europe, albeit never as supreme as its leaders assumed.

Chapter 1

TECHNOLOGY AND WARFARE

Preliminary Remarks

THE SUCCESS OF the armies of the kingdom of France did not rest on any notable advantage in arms, armour, or military equipment. There were differences between countries and districts, but technical development was very slow, and so these provided no special advantages. Moreover, there was only limited variation in the general nature of tactics. In these matters France closely resembled the other countries of western Europe. Armies were made up of cavalry and infantry, usually rendered in Latin chronicles *milites et pedites*. *Milites* simply means "soldiers," but by the later tenth century it usually meant the paid bully-boys of the great, the knights, who were the common and notable military men, quickly raised and at the disposal of their masters. Sometimes *equites*, "horsemen," was used as a synonym for *milites*, emphasizing their preference for fighting on horseback, though it should be said that they were perfectly capable of fighting on foot. By that time they had become the embodiment of military power, distinguished by their expensive equipment, by being mounted on horses, which were very expensive animals, and by relatively intensive training. In any large expedition the infantry would be far more numerous, but far less well equipped.

To a modern eye, accustomed to seeing soldiers in uniform, a medieval French army would have been an untidy sight. Pictures in manuscripts tend to impose a degree of uniformity that simply did not exist.[1] We have to remember that soldiers were supposed to bring their own weapons and armour to war. These were largely made of iron, which was difficult to extract and shape and, hence, very expensive. Weapons and armour would have been produced locally, for, although there were areas where iron was worked in quantity, for the most part supply was local.[2] So self-provision produced enormous variations both in appearance and quality. And most of the individual soldiers would have used hand-me-downs in one form or another. The two components of any army were the cavalry and the infantry, *milites et pedites*. Custom and law demanded that those who had to act as cavalry turned up with at least one good horse and a good set of armour and weapons, but only the great lords had the finest horses and the best and newest weapons and armour.

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[1] To get some sense of the incredible variety of medieval arms and armour in use in medieval France, see David C. Nicolle, *Arms and Armour of the Crusading Era 1050–1350*, 2 vols. (New York: Kraus, 1988), 1:284–318, 2:704A–801 (illustrations).

[2] Alan R. Williams, *The Knight and the Blast Furnace: A History of the Metallurgy of Armour in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Charles Ffoulkes, *The Armourer and His Craft from the XIth to the XVIth Century* (London: Constable, 1988).

Cavalry

At a minimum, the horseman had to provide himself with a byrnie (French = *broigne*), a metal covering for the torso from the upper arms to the thighs. Occasionally the byrnie was lamellar—that is, made of strips or plates of metal sewn onto cloth or leather. More usually it was made of iron rings, which were either butted or riveted (far superior) to close them, and interlaced such that each was connected to four (or sometimes six) others. By about 1100 this had been developed into what is commonly called a hauberk, which extended to the knee but was split below the waist in the interests of movement. It would seem that by 1100 lamellar was very much less common, probably because mail restricted movement less. In the twelfth century full-length sleeves, sometimes with gloves, became common, and the lower leg was protected by mail stockings (*chausses*). Underneath the knight wore a padded shirt or aketon. This combination gave a great deal of protection against sword slashes and arrow strikes, and could absorb some of the shock effect, which would otherwise have broken bones. This remained the standard form of protection across this period, although we hear of metal plates strapped under the mail. Armour of boiled leather (*cuir bouilli*) could be shaped to wear over the chest and to protect the knees (*poleyns*) and elbows (*couters*). By the end of the twelfth century there was a fashion, perhaps coming from the east, of wearing a white surcoat, which was later often padded or sometimes reinforced with metal strips.

Only the rich could afford this full panoply, and there must have been variations in the quality of mail. By about 1200 the armourer's art developed considerably, so the advantages of the latest models were probably very apparent. This armour was so universal that it must have been very effective. At the Battle of Brémule in 1119 the Anglo-Norman chronicler Orderic Vitalis say that, of ninety knights engaged, only three were killed, because "[t]hey were all clad in mail."[3] In experimentation at the Royal Armouries they dressed a forensic torso in mail over padded felt, to simulate a knight in battle. The mail would move with the body, the rings often overlapping. All sorts of weapons, hand-held as well as projectiles, were then used against it. A bodkin arrowhead curled up like a pig's tail and a very strong man attacked it with a sword, to little effect. The only thing that penetrated it was a bolt shot from a steel crossbow with a pull strength of 300 lbs. Of course, the wearer would have been badly bruised, perhaps to death, but the scale of protection was impressive.[4] Getting the equipment

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3 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, ed. Marjorie Chibnall, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969–79), 6:240–41. Orderic was a monk of Anglo-Norman descent who became a monk at St. Evroul in Normandy, and his *Historia aecclesiastica* is one of the great historical works of the twelfth century. It extends from the birth of Christ, but becomes of immense importance in his own lifetime, ending in the mid-1140s.

4 Kelly DeVries and Robert Woosnam-Savage, "Battle Trauma in Medieval Warfare: Wounds, Weapons and Armor," in *Wounds and Wound Repair in Medieval Culture*, ed. Larissa Tracy and Kelly DeVries (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 27–56; Kelly DeVries, "Catapults Are Still Not Atomic Bombs: Effectiveness and Determinism in Premodern Military Technology," *Vulcan* 7 (2020): 34–44. I must thank Professor DeVries for his knowledge of this work.

on took time, however, and because it was heavy knights wore it only when needed. Thus it was that, when Patrick earl of Salisbury was ambushed by Geoffrey of Lusignan in the Poitou, with no time to prepare, he was easily killed, while his kinsman and defender, the famous William Marshal, donned his hauberk but nothing else and was injured and captured.[5]

The knight's head was protected by a conical helmet, which might have been made of a single piece of metal but more commonly consisted of a conical frame to which small triangular sheets were riveted (*spangenhelm*). In illustrations of the eleventh and twelfth centuries a small strip of metal was attached to the base to form a nasal. The helmet could be worn over (and occasionally under) a mail hood (*coif*), but sometimes the helmet simply had pieces of mail attached to cover the throat (ventail) and neck. In the course of the twelfth century the nasal became less common and helmets quite often took on a rounded aspect. Sometimes the nasal was developed into a metal mask, presumably to protect from arrows. By about 1200 those who could afford it wore a pot helm that covered the whole head and face, though at the expense of vision, which was confined to what could be seen through narrow slits. Later in the century the flat top became rounded to deflect blows more effectively. All this reflected the developing skills of armourers. Many knights continued to use the simple conical helmet, however, presumably—at least in part—for reasons of cost. By the middle of the thirteenth century the kettle hat with its broad brim was becoming very popular among infantry and cavalry, perhaps because it provided excellent all-round vision.

A key piece of protective equipment was the shield. In the Bayeux Tapestry troops are depicted chiefly using a mildly concave kite-shaped shield, which protected either the horseman or the footsoldier from the shoulder to the knee. It was clearly of wood, because shields are often illustrated with arrows sticking out of them. Usually there was a central iron boss, and the edge was bound with either metal or leather. By the end of the twelfth century this had generally became smaller, covering only the torso, perhaps because leg armour was more common. It should be noted, however, that illustrations quite often show that, when a knight was riding at speed, the tail of the shield slipped back. There are other shapes of shields, but, overall, those borne by knights tended to reduce in size, presumably to offset the increasing overall weight of equipment.

The knight's primary weapon of offence was the lance, essentially a spear equipped with a sharp, often conical, point. It was not a heavy weapon, and there are illustrations, notably in the Bayeux Tapestry, of knights throwing them or jabbing at the enemy. In fact, the couched position—tucking the lance under the arm to hold it horizontal—is a quite natural one for a horseman, and a good way of striking down an enemy in the skirmishes and individual combats so typical of medieval combat. It was long thought that the central characteristic of the knight at war was his association with others in a mass "shock" charge, which delivered the whole momentum of horse and knight against the enemy through the point of the couched lance, and a great deal of ink has been

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5 *The History of William Marshal*, trans. Nigel Bryant (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016), 44–45.

spilt on this.[6] But armies in the twelfth century really lacked the organization to mount mass charges, and the knight was a much more adaptable warrior than this depiction suggests.[7] But the lance had become rather heavier by the thirteenth century, suggesting the increased value of the mass charge.

For close-quarter fighting knights could use maces, short axes or even clubs, but his weapon par excellence was the sword. Some fourteen types of sword have been distinguished in the period between 1000 and 1300.[8] Many of the surviving examples are masters of the armourer's art, being made of steel in a lengthy process of hammering and quenching. This made them flexible enough to survive constant and intense shock yet hard enough to take a keen edge. The sheer expense of producing such a weapon meant that swords were handed down through the generations. At the Battle of Bouvines in 1214 the Emperor Otto IV (1208–1218) used a sword made in the eleventh century and decorated with imperial insignia early in his reign.[9] But not all swords were of this quality. The citizens of Bruges who stormed their castle after the murder of Charles the Good in 1127 had swords, while, when Henry II of England (1154–1189) issued his *Assize of Arms* in 1181 for his French lands, he demanded that swords be borne by a wide range of people.[10] It seems unlikely that such weapons were all made to the highest standards, and knightly weapons have survived precisely because they were.

Knights and nobles needed more than a single mount. The palfrey was a good riding horse, and wealthy men would have had more than one, together with other animals to carry food and utensils. Perhaps the knight's most important weapon was his warhorse, though. When Earl Patrick was ambushed in Poitou he was killed trying to transfer from his palfrey to his warhorse.[11] The warhorse was not a huge beast. In the eleventh century twelve hands seems to have been the normal size; a modern hunter is fourteen to fifteen. Richard, son of Ascletin of Aversa, liked to ride a horse so small that his feet could touch the ground! They were bred for strength rather than speed, however, and, as the knight's protection increased in weight, so horses developed, so that by the late thirteenth century fifteen hands seems to have been a typical height. Warhorses were very valuable animals, especially as they had to be trained to tolerate the conditions

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6   David J. A. Ross, "L'originalité de Turoldus: le maniement de lance," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 6 (1963): 127–38; Victoria Cirlot, "Techniques guerrières en Catalogne féodale: le maniement de lance," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 28 (1985): 36–43; Jean Flori, "Encore l'usage de la lance: la technique chevaleresque vers l'an 1000," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 31 (1988): 213–40.

7   Stephen Morillo, "The 'Age of Cavalry' Revisited," in *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages*, ed. Donald J. Kagay and L. J. Andrew Villalon (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999), 45–58.

8   R. Ewart Oakeshott, *The Sword in the Age of Chivalry* (London: Lutterworth, 1964).

9   John France, *Western Warfare in the Age of the Crusades, 1000–1300* (London: University College London Press, 1999), 37.

10   France, *Western Warfare*, 16–29; David C. Douglas, ed., *English Historical Documents*, 12 vols. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1953), 3:462. Henry II issued two assizes, for England and for his lands in France, but that for England does not mention swords.

11   See above, 9.

of fighting, and, indeed, to rear and bite. In the thirteenth century kings agreed to compensate soldiers for the loss of such animals.

The relatively good protection of the knight meant that the killing of horses was important. At Bourgthérolde in 1124 the Anglo-Norman chronicler Orderic Vitalis commented: "The unarmed horse was a surer target [for archers] than the armoured knight."[12] At Bouvines the Flemish cavalry killed the horses of the sergeants sent against them early in the battle, but only a very few of their men.[13] It has been argued recently that this killing of enemy horses seems to have been an important tactic in the twelfth century, perhaps owing something to knightly scruples about killing knights of gentle birth.[14] This is why, by the later twelfth century, horses were commonly protected by armour, sometimes of padded cloth but in many instances mail. In 1187 Gilbert of Mons recorded that Baldwin of Hainaut sent knights and sergeants to the aid of Philip II of France against the Angevins, noting that it was unusual that the mere sergeants had armoured horses.[15]

Contemporary chronicles sometimes use the term sergeants (*servientes*) as a general word for infantry, but by the late twelfth century it is often applied to mounted men. Gilbert of Mons always makes a clear distinction between them and knights when describing the cavalry component of an army. It is, as Contamine has remarked, very difficult to see how humble men could aspire even to simple cavalry equipment, though a few can be traced to very minor aristocratic families.[16] I suspect, however, that such men had always been needed and sometimes rose to wealth through military ability. The fact is that, whereas in the eleventh century the word *milites* can be translated as "cavalry," by the middle of the twelfth century the aristocracy were becoming more self-conscious and distinct, so that the term *miles* clearly denoted an aristocrat distinct from all others.[17] In military terms, the distinction might mean very little, as both terms could be used in much the same way.

Infantry

We have very little idea as to how infantry were recruited. It is probable that lords recruited footmen from the more adventurous of the young men of their tenant families. They are often portrayed wearing cloth protection but with a metal cap. Townsmen later became the staple of the footsoldiers of the French monarchy, however, and they could

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12 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:348.

13 See below, 142.

14 Barthélemy, *Bataille de Bouvines*, 109–17.

15 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, trans. Laura Napran (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), §131.

16 Philippe Contamine, "L'armée de Philippe Auguste," in *La France de Philippe Auguste: Le temps des mutations: Actes du colloque international organisé par le CNRS (Paris, 29 septembre–4 octobre 1980)*, ed. Robert-Henri Bautier (Paris: CNRS, 1982), 577–94 at 583–85.

17 David Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility: Constructing Aristocracy in England and France, 900–1300* (London: Routledge, 2005).

be supported by their cities. In his *Assize of Arms* of 1181, Henry II of England specified that lesser freemen should have "a gambeson, an iron cap, and a lance."[18] By then this was probably the minimum equipment of a soldier for war, but illustrations suggest that some could afford to wear mail either over or under the gambeson. Mercenaries, of course, would have been better equipped. Some infantry certainly were well armoured, however. In 1191 Richard of England led the army of the Third Crusade southwards, with his infantry guarding their left flank from attacks by Turkish horse-archers. A Muslim observer remarked:

> The enemy army was already in formation with the infantry surrounding it like a wall, wearing solid iron corselets and full-length well-made chain-mail, so that arrows were falling on them with no effect ... I saw various individuals amongst the Franks with ten arrows fixed in their backs, pressing on in this fashion quite unconcerned.[19]

The *Maciejowski Bible*, produced in Paris at the middle of the thirteenth century, shows infantry wearing kettle hats and hauberks under surcoats, which themselves may have been padded or reinforced.[20] But such helms were sometimes worn by cavalry, so dismounted knights may sometimes be intended, rather than common footsoldiers.[21] Gradually the protection used by lords and knights was filtering down to poorer people.

The spear was the footman's primary weapon, but it had been developed into many different forms by 1300. At the Battle of Bouvines in 1214 King Philip was hooked out of his saddle, which suggests a weapon able to latch into mail.[22] Illustrations in the *Maciejowski Bible* suggest that by mid-century long-handled axes were very popular, but spiked clubs had also appeared, and there were a number of blades, suggestive of considerable variety in staff weapons.[23]

When it comes to discussing the weaponry of the infantry, the great puzzle is archery. Simple stave bows and arrows were clearly commonplace in medieval society, judging by the frequency of their portrayal in sculpture and art. This was usually in a non-noble context, although William the Conqueror and his son, Robert Curthose, were both proud of their skill with the bow.[24] Archery could be very useful. At Hastings it proved crucial, while at Bourgthéroulde the small royal army used their archers on the flanks to check the Norman rebels allied to the French king. Armour, and especially the helm, clearly developed to counter arrows. Bows and arrows are frequently pictured

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18 Carl Stephenson and Frederick M. Marcham, eds., *Sources of English Constitutional History* (London: Harper, 1937), 85.

19 Baha al-Din Ibn Shaddad, *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*, trans. Donald S. Richards (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 170.

20 *Maciejowski Bible*, 14v, shows the different styles of this helmet.

21 *Maciejowski Bible*, 22r.

22 See below, 144.

23 *Maciejowski Bible*, 10r, 16r, 31r, 34r, 34v; and see Nicolle, *Arms and Armour*, 2:800–803.

24 William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. Thomas D. Hardy, 2 vols. (London: Sumptibus Societatis, 1840), 2:335; Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 3:357.

in the *Maciejowski Bible*. Yet we hear relatively little of their use in the sources, until in early fourteenth-century England the longbow achieved remarkable victories.[25]

Clearly, there were archers in medieval French and other armies. The effectiveness of the weapon depended on individuals, however, and on the quality of the bow (and sometimes the weather). These factors and the apparent randomness of recruitment probably led to a neglect of the weapon. To be really effective the bow needed skilled archers who could allow for the fall of the arrow from its high trajectory. And archers were most effective organized into large groups for volley-fire, and this was perhaps thought not worthwhile. And, perhaps decisively, the bow was eclipsed by another weapon: the crossbow. This weapon had been known since the ninth century and it is mentioned quite frequently in tenth-century French sources.[26] It consisted of a short and very rigid stave bow set horizontally on a stock. The thick strong string was drawn back and held by a simple trigger mechanism behind a short arrow (quarrel) loaded into a groove. Stringing the bow was a considerable effort, and it was achieved by putting the foot inside the curve of the stave and pulling. This accounts for the very slow rate of fire. By the late thirteenth century a stirrup at the front end of the stock made this simpler, and the stave was replaced by composites of wood, horn and sinew. A goat's-foot lever pivoted on a pin facilitated and speeded up the drawing of the string. The crossbow had a good range, perhaps as much as 200 metres, though this was no more than a good bow. Its huge advantage was that at normal combat ranges, of about 100 m, it was far easier to achieve accuracy because of the flat trajectory of the quarrel. It was particularly useful in sieges, which were so common in French warfare, but its slow loading made the crossbowmen vulnerable in field encounters.[27] The crossbow was an expensive weapon, and its bearers seem to have been an elite among the infantry. In 1200 King John sent eighty-four to France against the French, and of these twenty-six had three horses and fifty-one had two. In 1202/03 Philip of France maintained 133 foot crossbowmen and eighty mounted on the Norman frontier.[28] Crossbowmen were actually numerous in the army of Philip Augustus, and their master was a senior commander in the thirteenth century.[29]

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25 The finest study of the bow is that of Matthew Strickland and Robert Hardy, *The Great Warbow: From Hastings to the Mary Rose* (Stroud: Sutton, 2005).

26 It beggars belief that Guillaume le Breton states in his poem the *Philippidos*, in *Oeuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton*, 2 vols., ed. Henri-François Delaborde (Paris: Renouard, 1882–85), vv. 315–19, 2:52–53, that before 1185 the French were completely ignorant of this weapon and were told about it only by Richard Lionheart. This was, presumably, a bow to the Church's prohibition of this weapon and an attempt to place blame on Richard.

27 Valérie Serdon, *Armes du diable: Arcs et arbalètes au Moyen Âge* (Rennes: Rennes University Press, 2005).

28 Frederick Maurice Powicke, *The Loss of Normandy, 1189–1204: Studies in the History of the Angevin Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1913), 333–36.

29 Contamine, "Armée de Philippe Auguste," 580–81.

The variegated nature of medieval armies essentially arose because of self-provision: the wealthy could afford the newest and best and the time to practice their use. In general, they invested in their own protection and weapons, so that infantry were neglected. Underlying this was the expense of metal, the limitations of the medieval economy and the poorly developed government administration. In the thirteenth century the king's government in France became more professional and articulated, enabling kings and great lords to accumulate arsenals to supply their troops. There had probably always been such depots, but now they became bigger and more diverse. A notable example is the list of arms and other weapons gathered at Carcassone in 1298. Although the list refers to tools and other material, for the most part it lists weapons and weapon parts, such as the *pousserios ferri ad manganellos*.[30] Even when produced at royal command, however, weapons and armour were manufactured locally, so that there was little uniformity.[31] Moreover, because of the expense of fine metal, the weapons and armour of most soldiers were hand-me-downs, precious heirlooms denoting status.

Castles and Sieges

In the ninth and tenth centuries, for reasons discussed below, French political structures became intensely decentralized. A highly localized economy meant that towns were small and few, and the households of great men—ecclesiastical and lay—became the focus. As wealth was based on land, the means of holding that land and protecting dominion became crucial, and the result was that France gave birth to a network of castles whose garrisons could protect them, attack those of rivals and overawe the mass of the population, who owed rents and taxes (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2). A man sitting behind even the simplest barrier, perhaps an earthwork topped by a palisade, was at an enormous advantage over an attacker, who had to expose himself just to get somewhere close. In addition, of course, the greater the height of the wall, the greater the advantage. This explains why castles were built with high walls. It was not safe for an army to leave cities and castles behind them, so they had to be captured or at least neutralized.

They were built in places where labour and incomes from land served to make them affordable. For the most part they were earthwork and timber, and so could be constructed quickly, and sometimes used to threaten the lands and incomes of others. Castles tended to be situated in high, defensible parts of the owners' lands, which were

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30 Gustave J. Mot, "L'arsenal et le parc de matériel à la cité de Carcassonne en 1298," *Annales du Midi* 68 (1956): 409–18 at 410.

31 The English monarchy also held stores of weapons, on which see David S. Bachrach, "The Military Administration of England: The Royal Artillery (1216–1272)," *Journal of Military History* 68 (2004): 1083–1104; "Military Logistics during the Reign of Edward I of England, 1272–1307," *War in History* 13 (2006): 423–40; and "English Artillery 1189–1307: The Implications of Terminology," *English Historical Review* 121 (2006): 1408–30.
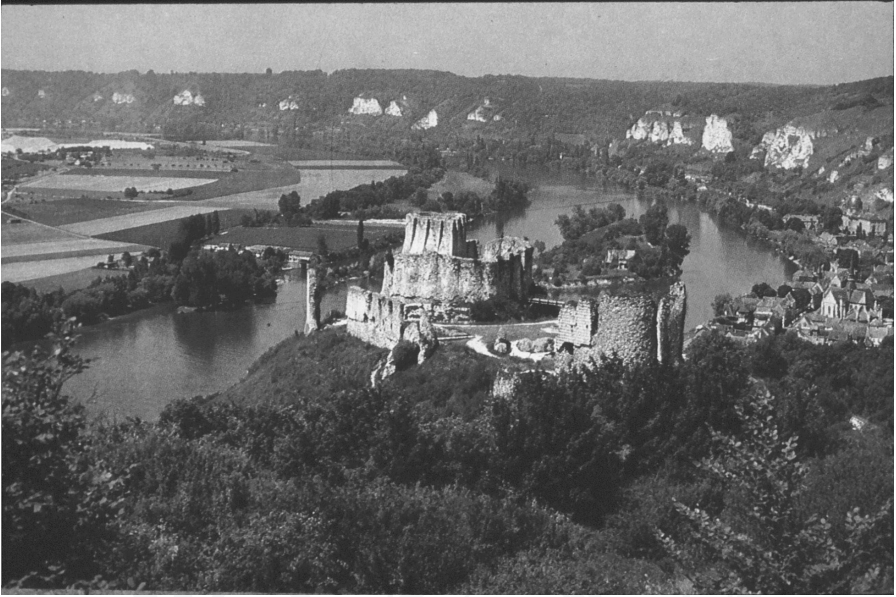
Figure 1.1 Château Gaillard, showing the grand scale and formidable position
of the fortress, which Philip Augustus captured but only after a siege lasting six months.
Photograph courtesy of Prof. Kelly DeVries.

the chief influence on form, but the motte and bailey—a high mound surrounded by a deep moat and topped with a wooden tower—could be built almost anywhere.[32] There was a remarkable wave of church building in France after 1000, and this created a base of masons with the skills to construct the stone castles that sprouted across France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which offered greater comfort to their owners.[33]

The effect of castles, and of the fortification of the towns where they grew, intensified the normal pattern of war, which was conducted by ravaging the countryside. Economic warfare—essentially, bullying peasants—gave invaders supplies, and deprived the defenders. More specifically, it was intended to subdue the morale of those in fortifications, threaten their food supply on a long-term basis, and impugn the authority of their leaders, which rested on the promise to protect. This economic warfare was also safer than fighting enemy troops, and looting contributed a vital element in the pay of all armies.

Castles also stimulated technological development, however, and somewhat improved the methods of attack in sieges, though this was to very limited effect. There is

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32 Robert Higham and Philip Barker, *Timber Castles* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1992).

33 O. H. Creighton, *Castles and Landscapes: Power, Community and Fortification in Medieval England* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2015), 65–88.
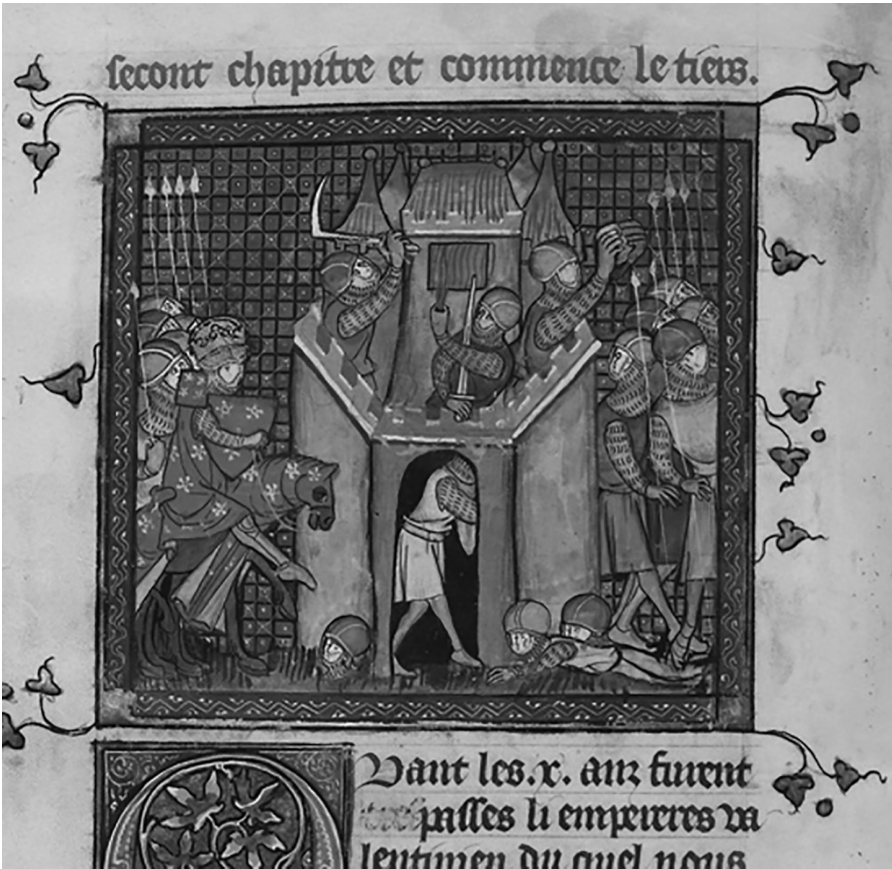
Figure 1.2 The sack of Troy, in a detail from a French manuscript depicted as the storming of a medieval castle. Castles were so important that they dominated both the French countryside and the imagination of artists. London, British Library, MS Royal 16 G VI, fol. 5v, reproduced with permission.

ample evidence for the use of siege towers against fortification from at least 885, while traction trebuchets (see Figure 1.3) driven by manpower were certainly used in Europe by 1000.[34] The trebuchet is believed to have been developed in China and passed into Europe via the Middle East. A beam was pivoted asymmetrically between upright beams

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34 John France, "La guerre dans la France féodale à la fin du IXᵉ et au Xᵉ siècle," *Revue belge d'histoire militaire* 23 (1979): 177–98; and "The Military History of the Carolingian Period," *Revue belge d'histoire militaire* 26 (1985): 81–100; Michael S. Fulton, *Artillery in the Era of the Crusades: Siege Warfare and the Development of Trebuchet Technology* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 25–30.
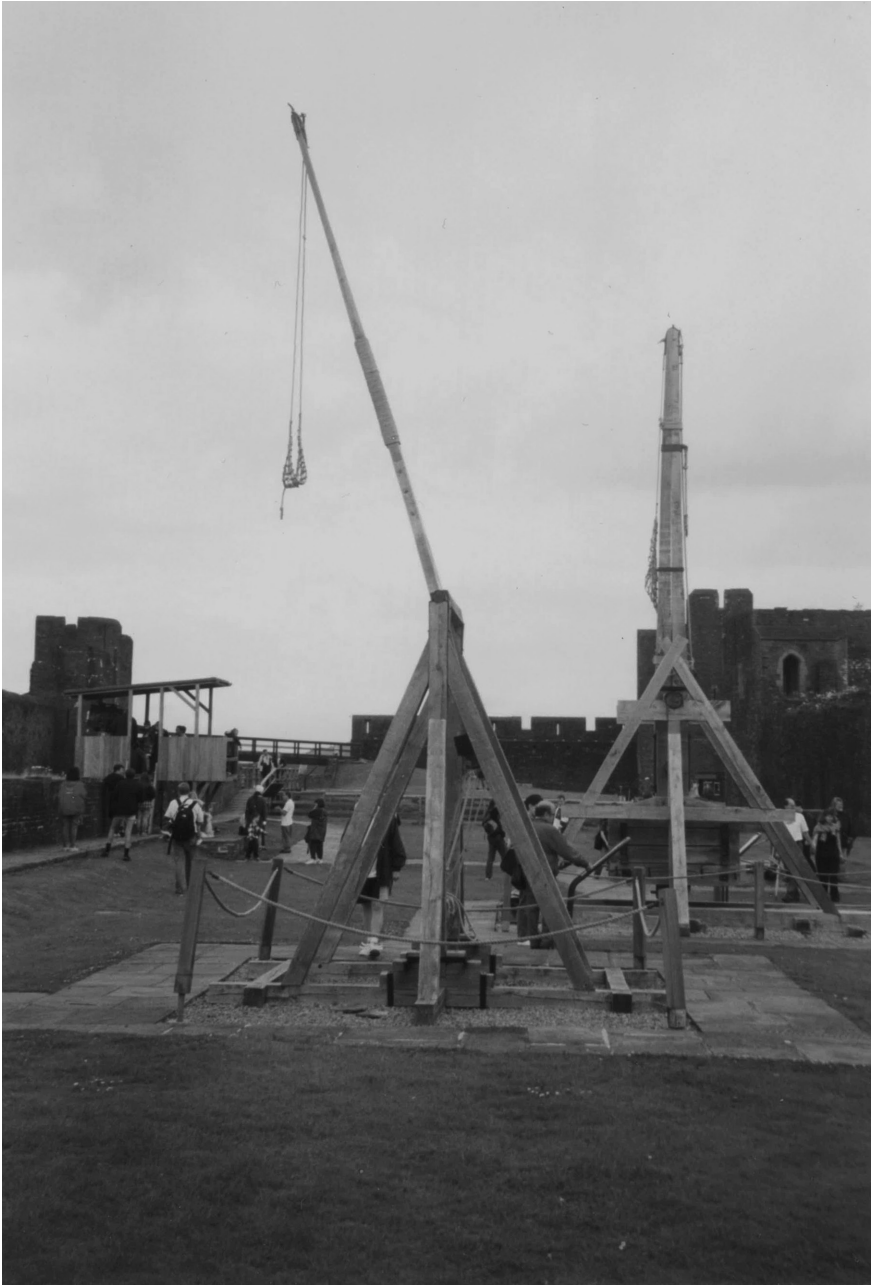
Figure 1.3 A traction trebuchet, normally pulled by a crew of eight. Note the very light structure compared to the counterweight trebuchet behind. The rate of fire, usually sustained by changing teams frequently, was quite high. Author's photograph.

Figure 1.4   Trebuchet ammunition. These roughly rounded balls of stone are only two of the piles of missiles collected during the archaeological dig at Arsuf in Israel, which was besieged in 1265 for forty days by the Mamluks of Egypt. Author's photograph.

such that most of its length was behind the pivot. A stone, usually in a sling, was attached to the rear, and ropes attached to the front were pulled down by a team of men, usually about eight in number (see Figure 1.4). This projected a relatively small stone about 200 m in a curving parabola. The missiles were deadly to people and were capable of disturbing the thin parts of a castle wall providing cover to the walkway or destroying the wooden reinforcements, called hoardings, which projected from the walls (see Figure 1.5).

The much more powerful counterweight trebuchet (see Figure 1.6) appeared in Europe toward 1200.[35] This worked on the same principle, but the whole machine was much more massive, and, instead of being pulled down at the front by a team of men, the beam was pulled down at the rear against a counterweight of earth and stone. The modern example at Caerphilly has a basket with a capacity of some 2.5 tonnes. This machine could fire a much larger missile and inflict damage on masonry, though only if it was built on a massive scale. Neither of these devices was a wall-smasher like the

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35 Fulton, *Artillery in the Era of the Crusades*, 30–37.

Figure 1.5 Hoarding at Caerphilly Castle. The defences projecting from the wall made it very difficult to start mining at the base or mounting ladders. Author's photograph.

Figure 1.6 A counterweight trebuchet, showing the arm of the trebuchet, to which the sling bearing a stone has been wound down. The arm in this example is 6.5 m long, of which 5.5 m are behind the pivot, which is mounted 4.2 m high on a frame 6 m × 4.2 m. The whole structure is of massive wood. Note the mighty counterweight of over 2 tonnes. Author's photograph.

later cannon, but they represented the application of technology developed for building war machines. At the siege of Boves in 1185 Philip Augustus deployed both traction trebuchets and a greater machine, whose missiles could be lifted only by four men. At Château Gaillard the king deployed even more of this complex machinery.[36] They were fairly crude, however, and sieges also demanded mining and, above all, raw courage in mounting siege ladders to get to grips with the enemy. When we add that a besieger had to provide his own shelter and food, and manage his forces so that they remained alert, we can see why castles were such a dominating factor in medieval warfare.

Military Organization and Tactics

Out on the great Eurasian steppe huge armies of horse-archers evolved, and on a world scale became the dominant military form of the medieval period.[37] They were the product of a particular way of life, however, which depended on the horse and hunting with the bow, and this was possible only on these vast open spaces. All armies, because they called up segments of the populace for short periods of time, depended on the native skills they brought with them. French agriculture, like that of most of Europe, was largely dedicated to the production of grain, and, while this was immensely productive, it demanded space. Moreover, the topography of France and much of western Europe, cut by river valleys, often mountainous and frequently heavily wooded, was not suitable for the raising or deployment of clouds of light horsemen. There was, therefore, a limit to the number of animals that could be produced, but grain-feeding could develop size and weight. The result was that western, and notably French, armies were made up of relatively small numbers of horsemen and much larger masses of infantry.

Because missile weapons were erratic, it was usually necessary for fighting in the field to take place at close quarters. Our best evidence of what this meant comes from the excavation of the bodies from the Battle of Wisby of 1361. Many of the victims of this battle were buried in their armour and some had suffered arrow strikes to the head, which had been partially protected from the worst effects by mail coifs. Nevertheless, the anatomist who examined the skeletons in the 1930s remarked of the injuries of the bulk of the victims that "[i]t is almost incomprehensible that such blows could be struck," and explained their brutal effects by suggesting that the attackers had "stepped or jumped forward" as they struck their blow.[38] This was an almost entirely infantry battle, but it is easy to imagine the impact of a strike from a couched spear or a slash from a sword magnified by the speed of a horse.

The close-quarter mêlée is a terrifying phenomenon, and men formed into close-quarter formations because thereby they gained reassurance from the presence of

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36 Contamine, "Armée de Philippe Auguste," 582; and see below, 127–29.

37 See John France, *Perilous Glory: The Rise of Western Military Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 138–80.

38 Bengt Thordemann, Poul Nörlund, and Bo E. Ingelmark, *Armour from the Battle of Wisby 1361*, 2 vols. (Stockholm: Antikvitets Akademien, 1939–40), 1:149–209, 165–66, 180–83.

comrades who could actually help them in time of need. The armies of France, like others in medieval Europe, were occasional bodies, however, so that instilling the steadiness and discipline needed for these ferociously intimate conflicts was difficult, and too often formations of men who barely knew one another and had never trained together dissolved at the first sign of stress. Equally, because armies were badly paid, they were prone to fall to looting, exposing themselves to defeat by their opponents. Soldiers and their leaders clearly understood the need for order and discipline, but, in the absence of regular standing armies, this was difficult to achieve.

The nature of weapons and fighting also explains the high regard among warriors for personal valor, which is the leitmotif of chivalry. In modern times generals need to be good organizers and logisticians, and they and their troops must learn to manage changing technology and complex tactics. Medieval commanders were certainly concerned with tactics, but their warfare changed less and was essentially a matter of raw courage in face-to-face combat. Chivalry, the ethos of medieval lords and knights, was in part a warrior code founded upon such qualities. Siege made this an even more personal form of conflict, while even the business of ravaging would generate small-scale skirmishes. From the point of view of the leading protagonists, the lords and their knights, war was a highly personal, highly individual business.

Because they were spared agricultural labour by reason of their wealth and status, knights and their lords had the leisure to train and to exercise with weapons. Hunting on horseback was certainly very valuable, and indeed replicated the hazards of war: Louis IV of France (936–954) and his grandson Louis V (986–987) both died as a result of hunting accidents.[39] A knight could thus develop athletic strength important in the manipulation of edged and pointed weapons. Nonetheless, usually such exercise was possible only in small groups, as we shall see, for they lived in dispersed locations, gathered around the properties of some great man, so that the virtues of organization were less obvious than they are in modern war.[40] The simple division of armies into *milites et pedites* masked the fact that armies were made up of the retinues of great men, which were themselves hardly coherent groups. They rarely stayed together for any period to enable them to gain trust and solidarity.

To a degree, the limitations of training and the incoherence of armies was made up for by the commonality of the social norm of chivalry. In the early medieval period France was almost continuously involved in warfare, which was so pervasive that military considerations underlay the emergence of coherent state institutions and profoundly influenced contemporary culture. What we call "chivalry" embodied the virtues of a warrior society: courage, loyalty, initiative. It became a truly international phenomenon,

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39 Flodoard, *Annales*, ed. Philippe Pauer (Paris: Picard, 1905), 138; Richer of Rheims, *Historiae*, ed. Robert Latouche, 2 vols. (Paris: Belles lettres, 1930–37), 1:295, 2:151.

40 Michel Bur, *La formation du comté de Champagne: v. 950–v. 1150* (Nancy: University of Nancy, 1977), 318, has a fine map showing the possessions of the count of Champagne scattered across the huge area of Champagne. His soldiers would have lived in these separated places. Another map (148) shows the castles of the counts in relation to those of other great lords of the area.

but its origins and greatest development lay in France. Indeed, the very term "chivalry" derives from "chevalier," the French word for a mounted man.[41] Much French warfare, as we shall see, involved war between close neighbours, even relatives, some of whom might, with a change of circumstance, become allies. To a degree this moderated the violence of war. Nobles and knights expected to be able to surrender if fighting went against them. This was, of course, self-interested, and the kindness extended to women was limited to those of the social elite. It is certainly true that wholesale massacre of lesser people was avoided, but, then again, as warfare was usually about land, nobody wanted to acquire a desert. The commanders and chief participants were nobles and knights, members of a social elite, whose standing was justified by their role as defenders of all. This was, as has been noted, an essentially self-serving claim. The leaders of French society, perhaps more than all others, saw prowess as a function of nobility, of something inherent, of something in the blood. This was reinforced by the conditions of war at this time, which very obviously demand "chivalric" qualities, often far above such matters as obedience and logistics; and it was these personal skills and qualities that were developed in the tournament.

This was mock warfare, which developed in northern France in the eleventh century. Originally it was a crude affair of noblemen and their followers fighting each other in mass battles, but this went on to become refined and splendid occasions. As a young man William Marshal made his way by becoming a champion in tournaments, in which victors received the horses, arms, and ransoms of the defeated. His great rival and friend, Guillaume des Barres, eventually chose to side with the French king, and they became enemies.[42] Gradually tournaments became much more complex affairs, bringing together the leaders of medieval society in social and not just military competition and offering opportunities for diplomacy. At heart, though, they were violent affairs, and no doubt their popularity meant that young knights adopted common patterns of fighting.[43]

Changes in the weaponry of French armies across this period were very limited. There was no technological race, such as has characterized modern conflict. Knights were much better mounted by the twelfth century, when the warhorse as a distinctive type seems to have become commoner.[44] By the end of the thirteenth century their armour and weapons were probably better and more plentiful than ever before. These were

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41 Sidney Painter, *French Chivalry: Chivalric Ideas and Practices in Medieval France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1940).

42 *The History of William Marshal*, trans. Nigel Bryant (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016), esp. 74–80, describing the tournament at Lagny of 1179; Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, 114, 427, 452, 333.

43 Dominque Barthélemy, "The Chivalric Transformation and the Origins of the Tournament as Seen through Norman Chroniclers," *Haskins Society Journal* 20 (2008): 41–60; David Crouch, *Tournament* (London: Hambledon, 2005).

44 Ann Hyland, *The Medieval Warhorse: From Byzantium to the Crusades* (Stroud: Sutton, 1994), 58, 85–86.

only gradual improvements, however, and there was no fundamental change. A Roman legionary would have understood the requirements of battle had he materialized on the field of Courtrai in 1302. These conditions of war made it an intimate process, so it is hardly odd that French chivalry stressed the personal qualities of the soldier, and success was attributed to innate superiority. It is certainly true that French armies could not have won to the extent that they did without brave soldiers, but, as this book shows, that was only part of the story. In fact, French arms were not uniformly celebrated, let alone victorious, and the French pre-eminence in European affairs, so evident by the middle of the thirteenth century, rested as much on the failure of others as on any supposed offensive ardor. Success breeds success, though, and by that time French soldiers were confident and capable, perhaps more so than those of any other monarchy in Europe. We need to understand this achievement and its limitations.

Chapter 2

THE EMERGENCE OF FRANCE

The "Frankish" Roots of Kingship

THERE WAS NO single moment when "France" was invented. The name slowly came to be applied to the area ruled by the Capetian monarchs, the descendants of Odo of Paris. Before the late thirteenth century, though, it was never a coherent territorial entity but, rather, a collection of lands, rights, and claims presided over by them. It is interesting, however, that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* refers to the people who conquered England in 1066 as "French". Suger, abbot of St. Denis, wrote a life of Louis VI (1108–1137) in which he usually describes what we now call the Île-de-France—broadly, the area of Capetian domination between Seine and Loire—as *Francia*. Since he was close to the monarchy and a great supporter of Louis VI, it seems that he regarded this area as truly France. On the other hand, he sometimes speaks of broader territories as being *Francia*, notably referring to the events of 1124, when Louis VI led a resistance from all over Gaul to repel a German invasion.[1] This seems to speak of both an actuality—the confinement of the monarchy to the Île-de-France—and a pretention, to a much wider dominion. The idea of France was emerging but it was very diffuse. We can certainly see Flanders as part of the French world, even though its counts were subjects of the German empire for some of their lands, while the Normans were effectively assimilated to French culture, as were the Bretons. After 1066 England became a French colony. So, in the search for the French army, the net can be cast widely.

When can we speak of a French monarchy, a French kingdom, a French people, or France? Essentially, France emerged out of a quite different identity, and even by the end of our period it barely resembled a nation in our sense of the word, in which people of a common language and culture live within defined frontiers under a single sovereign power. Yet a monarchy, around which modern France crystallized, did exist as a separate entity after 843: the portion of the Frankish Empire acquired by Charles the Bald. After his death, in 877, this apparently fragile polity survived, never again to be subsumed into some greater entity. This is not something its rulers were always aiming to achieve, and, indeed, certain of its kings after that date clearly looked to a wider domination. They did not achieve it, however, and by a series of chances a kingdom that clearly in many respects anticipated modern France had emerged by about 1000. Many factors combined to produce this result, but warfare was a vital element.

I Charles T. Wood, "*Regnum Francie*: A Problem in Capetian Administrative Usage," *Traditio* 23 (1967): 117–47; Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, ed. Henri Waquet (Paris: Belles lettres, 1929) [*The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, trans. Richard C. Cusimano and John Moorhead (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1992), §28].

In the early Middle Ages the term *Francia* meant simply the land of the Franks (*Franci*), who were the single most important group of people to emerge in western Europe after the collapse of Roman rule. They were settled with sufficient density in the area between the eastern side of the Rhine Valley and the Loire to assimilate to themselves the various peoples of this part of formerly Roman Gaul and its fringes. They also had the strength to impose control over Bavaria and some of the peoples of what is now western Germany, along with most of Provence and Aquitaine in southern Gaul. The Franks had a strong sense of identity, expressed in a devotion to the Merovingian royal house. At any one time, however, they usually had more than one king. The main line of division was between *Neustria* (a name still occasionally used as late as the twelfth century), which was the land of the West Franks, and *Austrasia*, the land of the East Franks, while Burgundy was—later—a third kingdom. Aquitaine had been divided between the kings, but because of their rivalries its Frankish dukes were very independent (see Map 2.1)[2]

The causes of this division are unclear, but it seems to have arisen from the desire of kings to provide a royal inheritance for all their sons and the need of aristocrats for a local focus for their interests. In origin, groups such as the Franks were not tribes but gatherings of bands who, at the time of the movement into the Roman Empire, had decided, or been forced, to throw in their lot with some great chief. Once within the empire the leaders of these groups and their followers formed the army and were provided for by grants of land.[3] The greatest land allocations, however, went to the leaders whose support was so essential to the king. As a result, even the most powerful kings held assemblies (*placita*), to consult with these important followers.[4] Attendance at such meetings was at once a duty and a privilege, a mark of elite status in a warrior society. Bishops and senior clergy might also attend, but they were drawn from this same elite, so the Church was firmly tied into this power structure. Therefore, the existence of accessible royal courts was a matter of importance to the leadership of the Frankish elite.[5]

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2 For an outline of early medieval Frankish history, see Patrick J. Geary, *Before France and Germany: The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

3 The basis of their settlement has been the subject of considerable controversy. Walter Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans, AD 418–584: The Techniques of Accommodation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), and *Barbarian Tides: The Migration Age and the Later Roman Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), has made a major contribution. For another discussion, see Guy Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, 450–900* (London: Routledge, 2003), 40–46.

4 Even Charlemagne, revered as the greatest of kings, was careful to consult: Matthew Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300–900: The Sword, the Plough and the Book* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 429; John France, "The Composition and Raising of the Armies of Charlemagne," *Journal of Medieval Military History* 1 (2002): 61–82.

5 For Merovingian history, see Edward James, *The Origins of France: From Clovis to the Capetians 500–1000* (London: Macmillan, 1982); and Carlrichard Brühl, *Naissance de deux peuples: Français et Allemands (ix–xii siècles)*, trans. Gaston Duchet-Suchaux (Paris: Fayard, 1994).

Map 2.1 Francia about 714. The main line of division was between Neustria (a name still occasionally used as late as the twelfth century), which was the land of the West Franks, and Austrasia, the land of the East Franks, while Burgundy was later a third kingdom. Aquitaine had been divided between the kings, but because of their rivalries its Frankish dukes were very independent. Kairom13, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

Kings were the administrators of law, so their favour could confer legitimacy on the aspirations of powerful men and settle disputes between them. As the holders of enormous estates, kings could make gifts of land. Their realms were divided into counties, and the office of count (*comes*, plural *comites*) was very powerful, but in the absence of a bureaucracy it was granted to substantial landowners who competed for the position (dukes ruled groups of counties, usually on frontiers). For all these reasons,

great men were drawn to the royal courts, where the office of mayor, which controlled access to the king, was the most prized of all.

Counts held all aspects of the royal power in their localities. Their key role was the administration of royal property within the county, some of which was allocated to them to pay their "salary." Very importantly, though, it was they who summoned all free men to the royal host. By origin, the army was made up of the people who invaded, the Franks, and who had been allocated land. The newcomers, great and small, married into the native population, so that by the seventh century military service no longer depended on ethnicity but on landholding.[6] The king's own guard formed the core of any royal army, to which could be added the retinues of the great men. In principle, all freemen could be summoned to the host, and were obligated to provide their own weapons and at least a degree of subsistence.[7] From early in the settlement, however, there was evidently a clear division between the household professional warriors around the king and his great men and the remainder of the army. Given this make-up and the necessity for consultation, it is hardly surprising that the king was obliged to share the spoils of victory with his great men, and this could be a powerful factor in persuading them to follow a king to war.

These Merovingian kings often fought among themselves, and out of their wars, in the eighth century, a new family emerged, the Carolingians, whose ambitions precipitated bloody civil war among the Franks, and weakened their control east of the Rhine and south of the Loire.[8] Their victory, and a succession of brilliantly able rulers, enabled the Carolingians to weld the Franks back together and to reassert control over much of what is now western Germany and southern Gaul. Under Charlemagne (768–814) the Franks conquered Saxony, much of northern and central Italy, and a fringe of northern Spain and pushed into the Slav lands of Central Europe. In 800, in recognition of the scale of his conquests, Pope Leo III (795–816) crowned Charlemagne "Emperor of the West" at Rome, and Charlemagne established Aachen in the Carolingian heartlands as his capital, the northern counterpart of Rome.[9]

In a violent world the papacy needed a protector, while Charlemagne needed the papacy and the Church, which provided divine sanction to his rule and the gift of literacy, which helped to regularize his government. This interdependence of Church and state was the central characteristic of Frankish government, and its great heritage to later rulers. This "divinity that doth hedge a king" was of enormous value to the Carolingian house, and it was far more than merely moral. The Church held enormous lands and

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6 Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West*, 46–48.

7 *Lex Ripuaria*, 68:1–2, in *Laws of the Salian and Ripuarian Franks*, ed. Theodore J. Rivers (New York: AMS, 1987).

8 For a brilliant study of the Carolingian emergence, see Paul Fouracre, *The Age of Charles Martel* (London: Pearson, 2000).

9 Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), is a fine study of this dominating figure, though one that is somewhat light on military affairs.

wealth, and, while nominally bishops were elected by the clergy and people of their dioceses, in practice this merely ratified the choice made by the monarch. In general, senior clergy favoured royal over local power, and this was an important buttress of Carolingian strength.[10]

It was only because all Charlemagne's other sons died that his great empire passed to a single successor, Louis the Pious (814–840). His attempt to create a truly unified and centralized monarchy proved unworkable.[11] There were many reasons for this, but the underlying factor was probably the attitudes of the great aristocrats. Monarchs were reliant on aristocrats for local government. At best, they could only intermittently limit their exploitation of the ordinary people and crown lands in their own interests. Charlemagne had offered his great men the spoils of war in return for uniting and fighting his wars, and in the process created a Europe-wide Frankish aristocracy. Their attitudes and interests quickly became local, however, as they largely were in *Francia* itself. The Carolingian family continued the tradition of creating kingdoms for all their sons, and this catered for local aristocratic interests within the greater unity of the Frankish people, which still stood as an ideal. This unity was put at risk, however, by the rivalries of the Carolingian kings and the jealousies of the great aristocrats.

The Parting of the Ways

In 843 the empire of Louis the Pious was divided by the Treaty of Verdun among his warring sons. The lands east of the Rhine went to Louis (or Ludwig) "the German" (843–876) while Neustria and Aquitaine passed to Charles "the Bald" (843–877). Louis's eldest son, Lothar, held the title of emperor, with Italy and a belt of lands extending via Provence and Burgundy to what is now the coast of Flanders, embracing the two imperial capitals of Rome and Aachen (see Map 2.2). This "middle kingdom" has often been seen by modern historians as anomalous, but that is because it did not survive, partly due to the random fact of the early death of heirs.[12]

For contemporaries, all these kingdoms remained part of a single empire of the Franks, but there was enormous tension between the individual rulers who divided their realms between their sons. The great men of these kingdoms focused on their immediate rulers rather than a remote emperor. By the chances of inheritance and war the "middle kingdom" was dismembered between the East and West Frankish realms, although Flanders and Lorraine formed uneasy disputed Marches between them. Italy, to which was attached the title of "emperor," continued as a kingdom, but Italy's connection with western Europe became increasingly tendentious.[13]

10　Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms, 789–895* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977).

11　Peter Godman and Roger Collins, eds., *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814–840)* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

12　McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians*.

13　On the significance of 843 and the events that followed, see Jean Dunbabin, *France in the Making, 843–1180* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
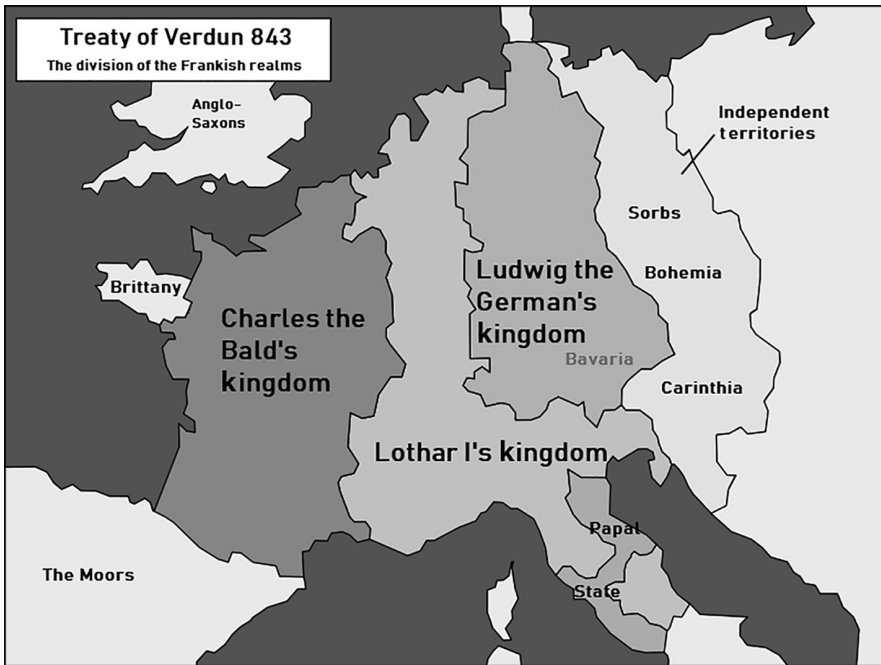
Map 2.2 Lands divided by the Treaty of Verdun. Great Politburo, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

In the 880s there was a crisis in the Carolingian dynasty because of a series of short-lived rulers who never established themselves. In consequence, the sole surviving adult, the East Frankish Carolingian Charles "the Fat" (881–887), acceded to all the Frankish lands and became emperor. He seems to have been a sick man, though, and failed to impress in that most vital aspect of kingship: as a soldier. In 887 his illegitimate nephew, Arnulf of Carinthia, deposed him and became king of the East Franks with the support of the most important German leaders, the local dukes. In the west Charles, called "the Simple," was a grandson of Charles the Bald, but he was passed over in 888 as a mere child, and one whose legitimacy was questioned because he was posthumous.[14] The circumstances of this realm demanded rule by a capable adult.

The uncertainties of royal power in the West Frankish realm in the later ninth century attracted Viking raids. Robert the Strong, ancestor of the Robertian house and later Capetian kings, held a powerful March in the west against the Bretons and

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14 On the Carolingian collapse, see Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Crucible of Europe: The Ninth and Tenth Centuries in European History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976), 54–83.

Vikings, who killed him in 866. By the early 880s substantial and well-equipped Viking armies were ravaging France. In 885/86 Paris endured a long Viking siege, which the Carolingian emperor, Charles the Fat, had failed to relieve. Much credit for the city's defiance went to its Count Odo, son of Robert the Strong.[15] So, in the absence of an adult of the royal family, he was chosen as king in the West Frankish lands in 888.[16]

In the south the extinction of the Carolingian line led to a usurper, Boso, claiming the throne of Burgundy/Provence, though what is now French Burgundy broke away. In 900 Boso's son Louis claimed the kingship of Italy and the title of emperor, but he was blinded by Berengar of Friuli, whose own rule was much contested. For half a century the kingdom of Italy and the emperorship were the prize of squabbling Italian nobles. Burgundy east of the Saône became a kingdom under Rudolf I, permanently engaged in squabbling with the East Frankish kings. In Aquitaine Ranulf, count of Poitou and duke of Aquitaine, proclaimed himself king in 888, but he died in 890.[17]

The inheritance of Charles the Bald survived in the form of a kingdom centred between Rhine and Loire, though with claims over Provence west of the Saône–Rhône corridor and Aquitaine, closely resembling what is later called France. Its very existence testifies to the need for kingship, especially in the face of external attack by the *pagani* (pagans), the Vikings, who had been emboldened by the weakness of royal power. After 888, however, two families claimed the kingship. The prestige of the Carolingian family was still important, and in 893 Charles the Simple was elected king by a faction of the nobles, precipitating civil war until he was recognized by Odo as his successor.

Rival Royal Houses

There was no reason why this western entity should be permanent. Many kingdoms had been carved out of Charlemagne's empire, subsequently dividing and merging. Charles the Simple was deeply attached to the notion of empire, and spent much time trying to seize Lorraine and, with it, the old imperial capital of Aachen. In 911 he conferred on a Viking leader, Rollo, the county of Rouen, to act as a March against more Viking attack and to create an ally against his enemies. Using one invader against others in this way was a classic tactic, founded in Carolingian precedent, though in this case it gave rise to the duchy of Normandy.[18] In 923 Robert, brother of the late King Odo, declared himself king, but he was then killed at the Battle of Soissons, shortly after which Charles was captured and deposed in favour of another of the Robertian family, Rudolf of Burgundy (923–936).

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15 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*, ed. Henri Waquet (Paris: Belles lettres, 1942) [English translation: Abbo, *Attacks on Paris: The Bella Parisiacae Urbis of Abbo of Saint-Germain*, ed. and trans. Nirmal Dass (Leuven: Peeters, 2007)]. Odo's descendants are usually called the Robertians.

16 James, *Origins of France*, 179–80.

17 Barraclough, *Crucible of Europe*, 101–4; James, *Origins of France*, 178–79.

18 Simon Coupland, "The Blinkers of Militarisation: Charles the Bald, Lothar I and the Vikings," in *Early Medieval Militarisation*, ed. Ellora Bennett, Guido M. Berndt, Stefan Esders, and Laury Sarti (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021).

Thereafter the throne reverted to the Carolingian family, but Louis IV (936–954), Lothar I (954–986), and Louis V (986–987) had to face a Robertian family that had claims to be royal.[19] These Carolingians were not ciphers. A contemporary noted of Lothar: "He was looking for new ways of extending his kingdom. His affairs prospered, and the condition of the Kingdom, favoured by the capture of the great nobles, was strong."[20] Louis V died in a hunting accident, however, leaving no obvious heir. The Carolingian claimant was Charles of Lorraine, but he had long been associated with the German kingdom to the east, so the choice fell upon the Robertian Hugh Capet, and in the ensuing war Charles was captured. Because Hugh was the first of a dynasty that would rule France till 1328, his election has been seen as a defining moment in the history of France. This was hardly the case, however, and Hugh was perhaps chosen because he represented "business as usual"—a powerful nobility and a monarchy that respected their authority and power.

Hugh died in 996, having already had his son crowned as Robert II. In 1002 Robert's uncle, Henry duke of Burgundy, died without heir. The Burgundian lords and bishops elected Otto-William, count of Mâcon, to replace him, but King Robert fought a long war for thirteen years to reclaim the duchy for the Capetian family. This was more than a merely local affair, for Otto-William had Carolingian blood and he had the support of a relative, Bruno of Roucy, bishop of Langres. As Otto-William already held the county of Burgundy east of the Rhône, which lay within the German empire, this was a real challenge to the monarchy. The German king had little interest in supporting Otto-William, however, and Robert enjoyed support from the duke of Normandy.[21] Robert exerted sufficient pressure for the Burgundian nobles to withdraw their support for Otto-William, but he could not annex the duchy and was obliged to grant it to Henry, his younger son.[22]

Robert's death in 1031 led to a bitter conflict within the royal house, because in 1025 his eldest son and heir, Hugh, had died. Henry of Burgundy was faced with the claim of his younger brother, Robert, who, in the end, was bought off with the duchy of Burgundy. The dukes of Normandy had been a major prop for Henry, and he in turn supported the claim of William the Bastard to the duchy, only to turn on him when in the 1050s he became very powerful—but to little effect. The opening of the reign of Philip I (1060–1108) imposed special strains on the monarchy. He was a child when his father died. His regents were his mother and Baldwin V count of Flanders, whose daughter, Mathilda, was married to William of Normandy. Duke William took advantage of his father-in-law's ascendancy at the Capetian court to conquer England in 1066. Philip was therefore faced with one of his princes being also a king. No Norman duke would do homage for the duchy until 1144.[23]

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19 James, *Origins of France*, 180–87.

20 Richer, *Historiae*, 2:138–41.

21 Rodulfus Glaber, *Histories*, ed. and trans. John France (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 2:15, gives a vivid picture of an episode in this war.

22 Constance B. Bouchard, "Burgundy and Provence, 879–1032," in NCMH, 3: 337–39.

23 Jean Dunbabin, "West Francia: The Kingdom," in NCMH, 3.

Summary

It is from about this time that we can see France clearly emerging. Richer of Rheims says that, when Charles the Simple met Henry of Germany in 921, his young followers and their German equivalents, "as is usual", fell to quarrelling.[24] This is an elaboration of a story told by Flodoard and reflects the thinking of the later tenth century, when Richer was writing. Richer also records an episode of the war between Otto II (973–983) and Lothar in 978 when champions fought, as between a *Gallus* (Gaulish = Frank) and a *Germanus* (German).[25] In the tenth century the rulers east of the Rhine took a keen interest in the west because of the imperial pretensions of the Carolingians, and played them off against the Robertians, but once Hugh had been elected they were notably less interested.

In fact, Henry I (919–936) and his dynasty, the Ottonians, were deeply concerned with other things. They had a long open border with the Slav peoples of central and eastern Europe. Of even more pressing concern, they claimed the title of emperor, and therefore spent much effort in conquering and ruling Italy. As a result, the term "kingdom of the East Franks" (*Francia Orientalis*) became less common as its rulers became emperors, preoccupied with Italy and Central Europe, and looking to the Roman rather than the Frankish past for their model.[26] This allowed the West Franks to annex the name of *Francia* to the western area over which they claimed rule, but this happened slowly. The language of French was not spoken all over Gaul, but the economic vigor of the Capetian lands and the literacy that they spawned created a literature patronized by the monarchy, giving rise to chivalric culture, whose prestige was enormous and redounded to the advantage of the Capetian monarchy.

France was partly defined by events outside its borders, and, while Germany arose in the east, in the west William duke of Normandy in 1066 conquered the rich and powerful English kingdom. In the 1060s, therefore, we can see France emerging clearly as one of three powers. The rise of the Anglo-Norman state, with its strong centralized monarchy, is usually seen as a disaster for the French monarchy. Although the Norman dukes refused to pay personal homage to the Capetian king, however, they never denied his overlordship. The borders within which the monarchy claimed to act were indistinct. In the north the count of Hainaut and the count of Flanders acknowledged the authority of the German king and the French king over different parts of their lands. The counties in the south were very distant but, nominally, looked to the French king. The princes of all these areas to differing degrees shared in French culture and methods of war, and existed in a kind of bickering family. By 1050 there was a certain precarious equilibrium between them, to which the rise of the Anglo-Norman state posed a threat. It was a threat to all the powers of France, however, and a threat that forced them all to define their attitudes to the French monarchy and its powers. This book focuses on the military means by which the French monarchs overcame the formidable forces ranged around them.

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24 Richer, *Historiae*, 1:48–51.

25 Richer, *Historiae*, 2:92–95.

26 Schneidmüller, "Constructing Identities of Medieval France," 24–26.

Chapter 3

FRENCH MONARCHICAL POWER IN CONTEXT

THE KINGDOM OF France was never a coherent territorial entity, what we would call a state, but, rather, a collection of lands, rights, and claims. Additionally, as the word "claims" implies, these were often contested. The ways in which they were advanced, realized, fought over, and lost are related to the nature of French society, however, as are the armies that were a vital element in the monarchy's development.

Since the collapse of Rome monarchs had been, essentially, the rulers of the rich and powerful who controlled the day-to-day life of ordinary people. The power of emperors and kings rested on their ability to build up resources, to manipulate the great through patronage, and to overawe or even threaten them with military power. The wealth of the king and his control of government gave him the means to reward. Royal offices were highly prized: to be a count was prestigious and well rewarded, and also enabled its holder to exercise power in his own interests. Kings could give their own land, and sometimes that of the Church, to favoured servants. The king could also, of course, act as a judge in disputes between the great and be the guarantor of the legitimacy of those who held power. This process left powerful lords with virtual autonomy, however, especially in the counties they controlled. Even a monarch as powerful as Charlemagne inveighed angrily against those who misused the royal power to repress lesser men in his *Memorandum on Military Matters* of 811.[1] These great men drew their wealth from landed estates on which they subjugated the peasantry to the status of serfs, a process very apparent in Carolingian times and even earlier.[2] Kings were expected to lead in war, though a wise ruler would consult so as to ensure that the great men would follow him. Successful war gained loot and gave the king's aristocratic followers employment for their armed retinues. Monarchy had great patronage, which could be used to manipulate others. Personality mattered a great deal, though, for power was exercised in a relatively small circle of individuals and radiated out from the royal court through the spheres of influence (*mouvances*) of each. Geography was also important; on the fringes of power, a king, even Charlemagne in his glory, would have to make compromises. In a practical sense kings had to persuade; the prestige of their office was enormous, and their power might be great but it was never absolute, and this was notably true in the field of warfare, whereby followers were asked to put their lives and fortunes on the line.[3]

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1 Alfred Boretius, ed., *Capitularia regum Francorum*, vol. 1 (Hanover: MGH, 1883), 73:164–65.

2 Auguste Longnon, ed., *Polyptyque de l'abbaye de Saint-Germain-des-Prés* (Paris: Champion, 1886); Hans-Werner Goetz, "Serfdom and the Beginnings of a 'Seigneurial System' in the Carolingian Period: A Survey of the Evidence," *Early Medieval Europe* 2 (1993): 29–52.

3 Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe*, 417–19, 439–46, 532–34.

This is why the sequence of very short-lived West Frankish Carolingians in the late ninth century undermined royal power. Kings had to conserve their own lands, and it took time for a new ruler to work himself in, so sequences such as this enabled provincial powers to take over royal property and rights. The conflict between two dynasties, the Carolingians and Robertians, that followed in the tenth century bled both parties. Internal quarrels meant that successful foreign war was not an option, while after the reign of King Odo (888–898) the Vikings were rarely so great a threat as to force great men to rally around the Crown. Moreover, among the aristocracy there was a strong trend, long evident, for sons to succeed fathers not merely in their private lands but also in the "honours," the counties and duchies granted by the Crown. This further exhausted the resources of the king.

All this enabled the strongest among the nobles to dominate those around them, creating local hierarchies of power presided over by "princes". We get some insight into the process from the *Life of St. Gerald of Aurillac* (ca. 855–ca. 909) by Odo, abbot of Cluny, which was written to provide an exemplar of lay piety fairly shortly after its subject's death. According to Odo: "Count Ademarus was very insistent that Gerald should give him his allegiance … Gerald refused to commend himself not only to Ademarus but even to Duke William who had greater possessions."[4] Ademarus then attacked Gerald's land, but failed to force submission. The clear implication is that Gerald was unusual, as a nobleman who resisted such pressures. This prolonged period of uncertainty, in which the royal court seemed to offer relatively little, produced a new and fractured political reality in the west that was most marked in the south, away from the old Frankish heartlands. By contrast, in the land of the East Franks the rulers of the Saxon dynasty showed a shrewd ability to manipulate the rivalries of great men and to exploit their need for a leader both against external attack from the east and in their efforts to colonize it.[5] The institution of monarchy was always highly prestigious, but personality and circumstance were immensely important. What is very striking is that the really important princes of the tenth century could all trace their eminence back to grants made by the Carolingian monarchs, and this continuity suggests that the disruption in the West Frankish lands attendant on Viking invasion and conflict over the succession was not as marked as once thought.[6]

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4 Odo of Cluny, "The Life of St. Gerald of Aurillac," trans. Gerard Sitwell, in *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Thomas F. X. Noble and Thomas Head (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 320.

5 Benjamin Arnold, *Medieval Germany 500–1300* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 83–91; John Gillingham, "The Kingdom of Germany in the High Middle Ages," Pamphlet G.77 (London: Historical Association, 1971); Laura E. Wangerin, *Kingship and Justice in the Ottonian Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019).

6 Dominique Barthélemy offers a useful short attack in "La mutation féodale a-t-elle eu lieu?," *Annales ESC* 47 (1992): 767–77; and, for a statement of the traditional view, see Dunbabin, *France in the Making*, 37–43.

When Hugh Capet was elected king in 987, Richer of Reims tells us that Hugh was made "King of the Gauls, the Bretons, the Danes, the Aquitainians, the Goths, the Spanish and the Gascons."[7] This is an assertion that there had been no change. Under Charles the Bald, the Franks (called here "Gauls") had dominated the whole group of peoples in this list. King Hugh is thus flattered by the assertion of power that he simply did not have. In the south there was no denial of Hugh's kingship, but the monarchy was little more than a memory; charters sometimes get the king's dates wrong. When the count of Toulouse and the marquis of Gothia did homage to King Rudolf in 932 it was clearly an exceptional event.[8] Charles the Simple had made William the Pious duke of Aquitaine in 893, but his grandson, King Lothar, had to fight William III "Oakhead" (962–963) to gain recognition as king there.[9] His son, Duke William IV (963–990), at first refused to accept the kingship of Hugh Capet, and even after he did the kings were unable to wield any real power in this vast area.[10] Many of the traditional Frankish lands in the north and east, such as Flanders and Lorraine, lay wholly or partially within the orbit of the German kings.[11]

The "Princes"

A distinguished scholar has remarked that, in the eleventh century, "the age of kings seemed to have passed and that of princes to be the future."[12] The rise of the counts of Anjou, later called the Plantagenets, nicely illustrates this process. The first of these to achieve eminence was Ingelger, an able soldier who held various substantial offices, married into the circle of important Frankish families, and became vicecount of Angers by the time of his death in 888. His son, Fulk the Red, obtained the title of count (*comes*) of Anjou in 929–30 from Hugh the Great, "duke of the Franks," and solidified the family connections with other aristocrats. His son, Fulk the Good (942–960), succeeded him in Anjou, and was in turn followed smoothly by Geoffrey Greymantle (960–987). This important county, facing the Bretons of the far west, had clearly become hereditary, and, while Greymantle declared for Hugh Capet in 987, there is little record of enthusiastic backing. From then on, however, relations with Odo I of Blois, who backed Charles of Lorraine, deteriorated and the two families became enemies, with possession of Tours sharply disputed.[13] By the time of Fulk Nerra (987–1040) the quarrel over Tours dominated the politics of the west. Fulk Nerra successfully established a strong county

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7 Richer, *Historiae*, 2:162–65.

8 Flodoard, *Annales*, year 932; Richer, *Historiae*, 1:120–23.

9 Richer, *Historiae*, 2:11–13.

10 Michel Zimmerman, "West Francia: The Southern Principalities," in NCMN, 3.

11 Dominique Barthélemy, *L'an mil et la paix de Dieu: La France chrétienne et féodale 980–1060* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 224–26.

12 Jean Flori, *L'idéologie du glaive préhistoire de la chevalerie* (Geneva: Droz, 1983), 168.

13 Bernard S. Bachrach, "Some Observations on the Origins of the Angevin Dynasty: Studies in Early Angevin History," in *State Building in Medieval France: Studies in Early Angevin History*, ed. Bernard S. Bachrach (London: Variorum, 1995), 1–24; and *Fulk Nerra*, 1–26.

based on Angers with a powerful position in the Loire Valley from Nantes to Ambroise. It was protected by a string of fortresses, from which Fulk threatened his enemies.[14] Fulk's son, Geoffrey Martel (1040–1060), defeated and captured Theobald I of Blois-Chartres on August 21, 1044, at the Battle of Nouy, thereby seizing Tours.

Robert II recognized the threat of a great power in the west, and he had married Bertha of Champagne, mother of the young Count Odo II. Nevertheless, his alliance with the house of Blois-Champagne, although it forced Fulk to withdraw in 997 from Tours, which he had seized in 996, did not in any way weaken the Angevin count's core support.[15] Perhaps because of his marriage to Fulk's cousin Constance in 1003, there was a rapprochement with King Robert, but by 1008 she had been deposed and replaced by Bertha. Court intrigues resulted in Fulk's assassination of the royal favourite, Hugh of Beauvais, in 1008, and once more the monarchy leaned to Blois. By 1012, however, Odo II's ambitions were becoming disturbing, and the king restored Queen Constance.[16] By 1019 Odo II was back in favour and Robert felt obliged to confirm his accession to Troyes and Meaux, the nucleus of the county of Champagne. Subsequently he regretted this, and his meeting with Henry II of Germany (1014–1024) in 1023 was intended to curb Odo's claim to the inheritance of the childless Rudolf III king of Burgundy (993–1032), whose sister was Odo's mother.[17]

In the meantime, Fulk went on to consolidate his power in western France, with the capture of Saumur in 1026—a key advance. Robert's son and heir, Henry, campaigned with Odo against him ineffectually. This attempt to play off one great prince against another was hardly a triumph. Fulk's power was undiminished, while the house of Blois-Champagne now held great territories to the west and east of the royal heartland.

To the north the counts of Flanders were subjects of both the German emperor and the French king, obeying neither except when it was in their own interests.[18] Lorraine was largely orientated to Germany, although the counts of Champagne could exert great influence there.[19] In the west Normandy was so powerful that, when William of Poitiers tried to define its status under William the Conqueror, whose biography he was writing, he remarked: "Normandy which had been under the kings of the Franks from the earliest times, had now been raised almost to a kingdom."[20] The early Capetian

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14 Bachrach, "The Angevin Strategy of Castle Building".

15 Bachrach, *Fulk Nerra*, 62–87.

16 Bachrach, *Fulk Nerra*, 118–41.

17 Glaber, *Histories*, 3:8, 37, 5; and see Bur, *Formation du comté de Champagne*, chaps. 1, 2.

18 David Bates, "West Francia: The Northern Principalities," in NCMH, 3, deals mainly with Normandy and Flanders.

19 Michel Parisse, "Lotheringia," in NCMH, 3.

20 William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi*, eds. Ralph H. C. Davies and Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), §29, 45; Warren Hollister, "Normandy, France and the Anglo-Norman Regnum," *Speculum* 51 (1976), 202–42, argues that the Norman dukes wanted to shake off the authority of the king of France entirely, but this has been questioned, notably by Mark Hagger, *Norman Rule in Normandy, 911–1144* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2017).

kings, Hugh, Robert II (996–1031), and Henry I (1031–1060), enjoyed a limited zone of action.[21] Reims, Paris, Orléans, and Dijon were their important cities. In between they directly held much of the Île-de-France, though their lands were intermingled with those of lords who held land of them. This was truly their zone of influence, and it is significant that royal charters of the eleventh century almost all relate to the Île-de-France and are witnessed by its petty lords and knights.[22] Within this sphere there was friction, and the important lords had considerable freedom of action, but rarely questioned the overall authority of the monarch. In effect, the Capetian monarchy was a principality like those around it—but one with far-reaching claims.

Beyond the Île-de-France the Capetians might have been recognized as kings, but only in a very nominal sense. Richer of Rheims formulated kingship in terms of rule over peoples. The reality was a loose dominion over great "princes." So, for "Gauls, the Bretons, the Danes, the Aquitainians, the Goths, the Spanish and the Gascons," we need to read the count of Flanders, the duke of Normandy, the count of Flanders, the count of Blois-Chartres, the duke of Aquitaine, the count of Toulouse, and the duke of Burgundy, to name only the most eminent. Nonetheless, these great princes found that many of their subjects played them off against neighbours, while men who held castles often paid them only limited obedience. There were large areas, such as the Vexin between Normandy and France, where there was no great prince but a network of petty lords, whose allegiance to neighbouring princes fluctuated. This was not so very different from what had gone before, however. Even at their strongest the Merovingians and Carolingians had been the kings of the great, able only to a limited degree to curb the internal aggressions of those upon whom they depended. Only a romantic view of the early medieval past would suggest otherwise. Moreover, the violence of the tenth and eleventh centuries was hardly worse than what had happened before, especially the period of Carolingian emergence.[23] The difference between the France of ca. 1050 and that of 877 (the death of Charles the Bald) was one of degree. Conflict over a century and a half had enabled—indeed, compelled—the princes to consolidate. None denied the overlordship of the French monarchy, however, even if they ignored it.

A Feudal Revolution?

It has been suggested that the change to the Capetian dynasty came at a time of revolutionary development when relations between people fundamentally changed,

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21 For the history of France under Hugh's early descendants, the following are useful: Robert Fawtier, *The Capetian Kings of France: Monarchy and Nation 987–1328*, trans. Lionel Butler and Robin J. Adam (London: Macmillan, 1960); Georges Duby, *France in the Middle Ages 987–1460*, trans. Juliet Vale (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); Dunbabin, *France in the Making*; and Elizabeth M. Hallam and Judith Everard, *Capetian France 987–1328*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2001).

22 Jean-François Lemarignier, *Le gouvernement au premiers temps Capétiens, 987–1108* (Paris: Picard, 1965).

23 Barthélemy, *La mutation féodale*, 23–27.

in what has been called the "feudal revolution." This idea suggests that the period from the late ninth century to the eleventh was a period of uniquely intense violence, essentially caused by the collapse of the monarchy and the subsequent struggles for power, combined with the horrors of the Viking invasions. In these conditions, it is argued, by the middle of the tenth century the great men who had held high office of the Carolingians took control over the public courts and used them in their own interests. In particular, they forced the free peasantry to become serfs holding land not as freehold (*allods*) but as tenements rented from them on unfavourable terms. A small number of the better-off freeholders were retained on much more generous terms, as their enforcers— whom we call knights (*milites*). In return for military service, knights held fiefs swearing oaths of vassalage to their lords. With the collapse of royal authority, such oaths were also the means by which greater men regulated relationships between themselves. Thus, the privatization of the public functions of government created a systematized, militarized hierarchy, with great and lesser lords, supported by their knights, living in private fortifications—castles—on the labour of newly unfree peasants: serfs. In time the knights became assimilated to the noble class, and their interactions generated a culture of chivalry supported and transmitted by its own secular literature.[24] There is little proof, however, that great lords believed their land holdings were originally royal and only, as it were, borrowed. Crucially, although there was an evident connection between landholding and military capacity, the one being necessary to support the other, the idea that military service to a lord or king was the price of landowning was not common.[25]

The powerful of the tenth and eleventh centuries certainly imposed themselves brutally on lesser people, but great men had always behaved like this; as we have noted, Charlemagne found controlling them very difficult.[26] Moreover, it seems odd to suggest that the tenth century saw the subjugation of the peasantry to the status of serfs when such people are very apparent in Carolingian times, and even earlier.[27] All this change is sometimes regarded as revolutionary, but it seems to the present writer that continuity was much greater than change and that the evidence for a real transformation is lacking. Monarchy was limited, but it still acted as guarantor of the legitimacy of those who held power. In 978 many of the great princes rallied to support Lothar V when he repelled an invasion by Otto II of Germany (973–983).[28]

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24 The clearest substantial statement is that of Jean-Pierre Poly and Eric Bournazel, *The Feudal Transformation, 900–1200*, trans. Caroline Higgitt (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1991).

25 The most radical critique of the notion of feudalism is Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). See Barthélemy's discussion of French history in this period, "La mutation féodale," expanded in his *La mutation féodale*.

26 See above, 40.

27 Longnon, *Polyptyque de l'abbaye de Saint-Germain-des-Prés*; Goetz, "Serfdom and the Beginnings of a 'Seigneurial System.'"

28 Richer, *Historiae*, 2:95–97.

Princes, Kings, and Military Power

From the late ninth century the princes saw little reason to frequent the royal court, which had only the most limited resources for patronage, and their lands became the focus of their activities. Their ancestors had been delegated royal powers, and these became inherited—among them the right to raise troops and deploy forced labour on roads and fortifications. Frankish kings had always claimed the right to summon all free men to the host, specifying their equipment according to wealth; but even they relied on others powerful kings actually to raise them.[29]

Furthermore, great men always had their own followers. What changed at the end of the ninth century was the Crown's ability to manipulate the great and thereby control them. Social processes such as marriage arrangements, alliances, and—most generally—the need to reward spread fragments of royal rights across the whole range of leading arms-bearers, so the power of the princes mirrored that of the Crown, depending on persuasion and arrangements within their mouvances. Since much warfare was relatively petty, they naturally relied primarily, though never exclusively, on their immediate followings, who we tend to call knights (in French, "chevaliers").

What was new, though it emerged only slowly, was the vast expansion of European agriculture, which drove into the ancient wastelands and was, unsurprisingly, accompanied by a rising population. This process, as a distinguished economic historian has noted, "is extraordinarily difficult to document."[30] Nonetheless, Rodulfus Glaber (ca. 980–ca. 1046) provides powerful evidence that agricultural expansion was well advanced by around 1000 in writing:

> Just before the third year after the millennium, throughout the whole world, but most especially in Italy and Gaul, men began to reconstruct churches, although for the most part the existing ones were properly built and not in the least unworthy. But it seemed as though each Christian community were aiming to surpass all others in the splendour of construction. It was as if the whole world were shaking itself free, shrugging off the burden of the past, and cladding itself everywhere in a white mantle of churches.[31]

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29 In a famous letter to Fulrad, Charlemagne demanded: "You are to come with your men to the aforesaid place equipped in such a way that you can go from there with the army to whatever place we shall command—that is with arms, implements and other military material, provisions and clothing. Each horseman is to carry shield and spear, long-sword and short-sword, bow quivers and arrows, and your carts are to contain implements of various kinds—axes and stone-cutting tools, augers, adzes, trenching tools, iron spades and the rest of the implements which an army needs. And provisions in the carts for three months following the assembly, weapons and clothing for half a year." "Charlemagne to Abbot Fulrad, April 806," in P. David King, ed., *Charlemagne: Translated Sources* (Lancaster: University of Lancaster, 1987), 260. On earlier precedent he insisted that the wealthy bring to the host arms, armour, and horses, while poorer men club together to produce one properly equipped soldier. See, for example, *Capitulary de Causis Diversis*, CRF, 1:49, 136; and *Capitulary miss. in Theodensvilla*, 44, 123.

30 Norman J. G. Pounds, *An Economic History of Medieval Europe* (London: Longman, 1974), 166.

31 Glaber, *Histories*, 3:13.

This passage is often used as evidence of religious fervor at the dawn of a new millennium, but it also testifies to the significant scale of prosperity, and the architectural and archaeological record bears witness to its accuracy.[32] This in itself suggests that the picture of unrelieved crisis in the ninth and tenth centuries must be false. There seems to have been a noticeable warming of the climate of northern Europe in the tenth century, while limited but important technological developments were applied in agriculture. The three-field rotation system spread widely, improved tack made animal power more effective for ploughing and transport, and we hear more of mills. Moreover, from the eighth century lordly exploitation of the peasantry was becoming more effective and, coupled with the expansion of agriculture, provided a powerful incentive for lords to dominate the courts. At the same time the great churches and secular lords had little to gain from the royal court and so focused on their land. These yielded the wealth that made abbeys, cathedrals, castles, and well-armed knights possible.

This new wealth also made written records more desirable, and these in turn have misled historians. The Latin word *consuetudines* ("customs") is frequently used in eleventh-century charters, and is taken to mean unjust exactions upon Church land made possible by the violence of a new class of soldiers, the "knights." Thus, as he prepared to go on the First Crusade, a minor lay lord, Nivelo of Chartres, came to terms with the church of St. Père, saying that, in return for "a great sum of money,"

> I ... renounce forever in favour of St. Père an oppressive behaviour resulting from a certain bad custom, handed on to me not by ancient right but from the time of my father, a man of little weight who first harassed the poor with this oppression. Thereafter I constantly maintained it in an atrociously tyrannical manner.[33]

The sense of knights as tokens of change, spreading violence in society, has been buttressed by the notion of the "three orders of society," embodied in the observations of two clerics of the early eleventh century. The *Gesta Episcoporum Cameracensium* (*History of the Bishops of Cambrai*) was begun in 1024 on the order of Bishop Gerard (1012–1051), at a time of crisis for him and his bishopric. In it Bishop Gerard proclaims: "From the beginning, mankind has been divided into three parts, among men of prayer, farmers, and men of war." At about the same time Adalbero, bishop of Laon (977–1030/31), wrote a satire, *Carmen ad Rotbertum regem*, in which he proclaimed: "Some pray, others fight, still others work."[34] Both authors were reacting against what they saw as disorder in the world and asserting the ideal of a mutually supportive society in which the different classes of people performed different reciprocating functions and, thereby,

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32 See Georges Duby, *The Early Growth of the European Economy*, trans. Howard B. Clarke (Ithaca: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1974), 160; despite the dating, he sees real economic development as a phenomenon of the later eleventh century.

33 Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (London: Athlone, 1986), 37–38.

34 Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 13.

supported one another. This vision of the "three orders" thereafter underlay much medieval thinking about achieving stability in a disturbed and often violent society. So why is it that, in France at this time, the *milites* attracted so much attention and seemed to form a specific group, an order apart from others? It was most certainly not that knights were a new phenomenon, for armoured and mounted soldiers had long existed. Indeed, it has been argued that warrior virtues were vital to nobility and that mounted warriors had adopted not simply a love of war but distinctive Christian militant values by the ninth century.[35]

The reality was that France in the late tenth century, as we have already noted, was becoming more stable and much wealthier. As a result, the number of knights was growing at the same time as literacy, so they enter into our records often in a bad light. Intellectuals were moved to find a place for them in the divine cosmology, and the military description seemed the most appropriate. This lumped together the very rich with much less wealthy people, however, and this confusion is increased by the common values of the military caste, often labelled chivalry.[36] The knights were a manifestation of the growing wealth and exploitation of landholdings of France, in which disputes were inevitable. There were now more of these well-equipped soldiers than ever before, and they came fiercely to the attention of contemporary observers.

By the tenth century contemporary chronicles refer to any army as being made up of *milites et pedites*, and this usage continues throughout the period. The word *miles* (plural *milites*) simply means "soldier," and, confusingly, it continued to be used in this sense. An alternative description is *equites et pedites*; the evident apposition of *pedites*, meaning "footmen," shows that the term was often arrogated by the mounted man whose appearance and equipment are familiar from the Bayeux Tapestry. What was a knight, though? And why were knights able to occupy such a dominating role in the armies of our period? After all, there had always been elite soldiers, and from the earliest Frankish times they had been drawn from the landholders.

In the very important tenth-century chronicle of Flodoard, canon of Reims, covering 919 to 966, with a continuation for a period after that,[37] there are strong hints that the *miles* is a person of status. In 976 Charles of Lorraine's troops fought enemies in Lorraine who "killed from amongst Charles' notable supporters Emmo of Logne who was a *miles* of Duke Hugh."[38] Evidently, although he was a *miles* of Hugh Capet, Emmo felt free to serve others. Most importantly, he is described here as a notable (*procer*), somebody whose death is worth recording, and, therefore, a person of status and a landholder of note.[39] In 948 Hugh of Vermandois was excommunicated, and his *milites* were included in the

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35 Janet L. Nelson, "Ninth Century Knighthood," in *The Frankish World, 750–900* (London: Hambledon, 1996), 75–88.

36 See above, 121.

37 Flodoard, *Annales*.

38 Flodoard, *Annales*, year 976, 162.

39 Flodoard, *Annales*, 959, 146, has already mentioned him as holder of Chevremont Castle.

sentence, pointing to a very close relationship. In 956 Renaud of Hainaut went to Queen Gerberga for protection along with his *milites* and his children: a suggestive conjunction of persons.[40] In December 925 King Rudolf raised troops against a major Viking incursion, which took refuge in Eu, but some of the *milites* were delayed because of the shortage of fodder, underlining the importance of horses to these mounted warriors.[41]

Flodoard's references to *milites* associate them very closely with leading nobles and bishops. Hugh of Fleury, who, admittedly, was writing at a much later date (died ca. 1118), notes that in 924 the archbishop of Rheims, *militibus cum armis* (with armed knights) put down tumults in the city.[42] Since the acquisition of a horse and armour demanded a degree of wealth, we should see such men as reasonably endowed. Indeed, it has been suggested that, by the tenth century, *miles* is best translated as "vassal": a person holding land, perhaps of a noble.[43]

Richer of Rheims used Flodoard's chronicle up to 966, after which his account is original. He describes his own father, Rodulfus, as a *miles* of Louis IV (936–954) and describes in detail how in 949 he seized Laon by a stratagem for this king, and in 956 captured the family of the count of Hainaut, who had offended Queen Gerberga.[44] It is very interesting that a man so much in the confidence of the French king was apparently satisfied with the title *miles*. On the other hand, one of the charges against Charles of Lorraine, who contested the accession of Hugh Capet to the French throne, was that he had married *uxorem de militari ordine* ("a wife of the knightly order").[45] The knight was not necessarily, therefore, a person of the highest standing. Some were relatives of lords and held land, but others were mercenaries. In time, because they shared the lives, houses, and lifestyles of the great, they became assimilated to the nobility, but this happened only in the twelfth century. Essentially, they were the bully-boys of the great. Economic expansion increased their numbers, and enabled them to equip themselves with fine armour, weapons, and horses, and so to emphasize their distinction from the humbler in society. In reality, though, they were simply elite soldiers, such as had always existed, and, just because they came to the forefront all over France and served convenient masters, they did not change the balance between the king and the princes.

Castles

One further consequence of increased wealth that did change that balance, however, was castles. When Charles the Bald was faced by Viking raids he initiated a policy of

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40 Flodoard, *Annales*, year 948, 117; year 956, 143.

41 Flodoard, *Annales*, year 925, 28–31.

42 Hugh of Fleury, *Modernorum Regum Francorum Actus*, in Flodoard, year 924, 184.

43 Dominique Barthélemy, *La chevalerie: De la Germanie antique à la France du XIIᵉ siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2007), 126–27.

44 Richer, *Historiae*, year 949, 1:271–84; year 956, 2:14–19. Flodoard is briefer on these episodes and makes no mention of Rodulfus: *Annales*, 122–23, 142–43.

45 Richer, *Historiae*, 2:160–63.

fortifying bridges, by the Edict of Pîtres of 864. In this decree he also demanded the destruction of private fortifications:

> And it is our wish and express command that if anyone has built castles, fortifications or palisades at this time without our permission, such fortifications shall be demolished by the beginning of August, since those who live nearby and round about are suffering many difficulties and robberies as a result.[46]

The dukes, counts, and vicecounts—the "princes"—had been established in their positions by the Carolingian monarchy. In practice, their offices had been hereditary for at least two generations and were becoming inseparable from their personal lands, which were the real source of their strength. These had been acquired at various times by a variety of means. In principle, land was inherited, but there was no clear notion of primogeniture, and, even where the eldest son gained the greatest share, provision had to be made for all the male heirs and the dowries of daughters. This resulted in the subdivision of territory, and often the separation of rights, such as fishing or monopolies of ovens or rights to rents, from ownership of land. Sometimes land and rights were simply purchased as they became available. The result was that even the greatest lords did not hold consolidated blocks, but intermixed and interpenetrating scatterings of territory, rights, and claims.[47] Without a strong royal power there was nobody to enforce the disputes inevitable in such complexity.

In this context, a castle served as a secure home, or, in the case of the very great, a home for their itinerant way of life. It also provided safe storage for rents and renders due from an area and intimidated those who owed such rents and renders into paying them. Its purposes were never simply defensive, however, for a castle was a base acting as a deterrent or a threat to any ambitious neighbour. Around 1010 Alduin, bishop of Limoges, with the support of the duke of Aquitaine, built the castle of Beaulieu to protect his monastery of St. Junien against Jordan, lord of Chabanais. Once the duke had withdrawn, however, Jordan raised his forces and defeated the bishop in battle, forcing him to flee, and ultimately the fortress was destroyed.[48] In the tenth century castles were usually earthwork and timber and were controlled by the greater princes. These constructions demanded relatively little technical skill, though, and by 1100

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46 Edict of Pîtres of 864, in MGH, Legum *Cap* 2, 302–10, trans. Simon Coupland, at www.acade mia.edu/6680741/The_Edict_of_P%C3%AEtres_-_translation (accessed May 30, 2019); Brian Dearden, "Pont de l'Arche or Pîtres? A Location and Archaeomagnetic Dating for Charles the Bald's Fortifications on the Seine," *Antiquity* 64 (1990): 567–71. Simon Maclean, "The Edict of Pîtres, Carolingian Defence against the Vikings, and the Origins of the Medieval Castle," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 30 (2020): 29–54, argues that this prohibition was the result of a concern that nobles were not really staying true to their promise to assist in his measures against the Vikings, rather than an assertion of a royal monopoly on fortification.

47 See especially the excellent study of one of the great principalities, Bur, *Formation du comté de Champagne*, whose maps (148, 318) reveal just how scattered their lands were.

48 Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, eds. Pascale Bourgain-Hemeryck, Richard Landes, and Georges Pon [CCCM 129] (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), bk. 3, chap. 42.

they were becoming very widespread across France. In the twelfth century there was more building in stone, but earthwork and timber persisted.[49] The castle was a force multiplier, in that the defenders' advantages over the attacker were enormous in an age when all fighting was, ultimately, close-quarter combat. The castle, of course, weakened all authorities as against any subordinate who could manage to build one. It was not so much that a castle could not be taken, but a question of: at what cost? So, the French king really was a prince among princes, faced by restless castellans within his demesne, and distant princes beyond.

Nevertheless, the economic expansion of agriculture and its consequent stimulus to trade also enriched the Capetians. Their landholdings in the very productive lands of the Île-de-France were substantial and increasingly profitable. The merchants and the city populations of this flourishing area looked with favour on strong public authority. The colonization of the wastelands in the Île-de-France led to the creation of new villages, whose people looked to the monarch to allow them to govern themselves in return for payments and military support. They and the emerging cities wanted to control their own affairs and asked the king to grant them the right to govern themselves. This "communal movement" was an important way in which economic expansion benefited the monarchy. Communities, sometimes collections of villages, seeking to regulate their own affairs were ready to pay for the privilege. At Laon the citizens obtained a grant from the bishop, and when he tried to revoke it they rebelled and killed him in 1112. After a long struggle Louis VI granted a commune in 1128.[50] Paris became a trading centre in the twelfth century and its leading citizens obtained substantial economic but not political freedoms from the Crown. The terms granted to cities and other areas by the Crown varied considerably, but communes, including groups of rural villages, paid taxes and owed military service, especially those on sensitive borders.

Moreover, for the great, including the princes, landholding was very complex. Property was transmitted across the generations, in the process often divided and then augmented or reduced by marriage, gift, and purchase. These are random factors, and their complexity and the resultant disputes made an overarching public authority acceptable. The strength of monarchy was never a function of the personality of a monarch alone, important though that was. Ultimately, the great princes recognized that the monarchy legitimized their authority, and this meant that any rebellion on their part could legitimize revolt against themselves.

In addition, many churches looked to the monarchy for protection. Twenty-five bishoprics, some geographically far removed from the centres of royal power, looked to the monarch for protection, and were willing to provide financial and military support,

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49 Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 93–111.

50 Guibert of Nogent, *Autobiography of Guibert, Abbot of Nogent-sous-Coucy*, trans. C. C. Swinton Bland (London: Routledge, 1925), 152–55, 157–59, 161–64. On the communal movement in general, see Charles Petit-Dutaillis, *The French Communes in the Middle Ages*, trans. Joan Vickers (Amsterdam: North Holland, 1978). For a useful summary, see Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 181–209.

along with a few abbeys, such as St. Germain-des-Prés. The Crown was very able to capitalize on this support. In 1122 Louis VI gathered an army, and in alliance with Fulk of Anjou and the counts of Brittany and Nevers forced William of the Auvergne to restore the bishop of Clermont, who he had ejected from his see. In 1126 the king and the same allies once more restored the bishop, and this time obliged William IX duke of Aquitaine to acknowledge the king as his sovereign.[51] Such interventions extended the reach of the monarchy into areas hitherto inaccessible and strengthened the support of churchmen.

In the 250 years after the Norman conquest of England the French monarchy rose to great power status in Europe by defeating a series of challenges. The armies that the kings raised were very important in this, but force was only one of the means by which this was achieved. Other factors critical to the rise included, very notably, the Capetian house's pursuit of a rigid and highly successful dynastic strategy. Right through to the fourteenth century son succeeded father with little or no intrafamilial strife. In fact, the troubles at the accession of Henry I were the last such conflicts. Henry's son, Philip I, was a minor, and this certainly provided the opportunity for William of Normandy's conquest of England; his guardian, the count of Flanders, profited from the situation, but his actual succession was undisputed. Louis VII (1137–1180) fell gravely ill while his son, Philip II (1180–1223), was a child, but the survival of the monarchy was never in doubt. Louis IX (1226–1270) was also a child, but magnate unrest at the start of his reign was quelled and he passed the crown on to his son, who was succeeded by his grandson.[52]

Moreover, the monarchs insisted in all circumstances on recognition of their position and cultivated their royal status. In this way, when opportunities opened, such as the death of William X of Aquitaine leaving only a young girl, Louis VII was able to step in as her natural protector. Since the king was the fount of justice, Philip II Augustus was able to claim that he could judge in the dispute between John of England (1199–1216) and Hugh of Lusignan in 1205, giving a veneer of legality to his seizure of John's lands.[53]

The concomitant of the legalism of the Crown was a respect for the rights of the nobles. The Capetians did not openly challenge their positions but exploited fissures such as the quarrels of the Plantagenet family, though always with at least a veneer of legalism. Failures of succession were golden opportunities to intervene. It was only in the thirteenth century that a powerful bureaucratic administration emerged, able to run France independently, and even then noble rights were respected. This was essential to raising an army; and the rise of a great power such as the Anglo-Norman realm from among their ranks obliged the princes and their great followers to consider the opportunities and threats that it presented, as opposed to those of the monarchy.

Additionally, there was careful respect for the rights of the Church. The monarchy was careful to pose as its protector, so that even in the eleventh century some twenty-five

51 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §29.

52 Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 99, 164; Jacques Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, trans. Gareth E. Gollrad (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 49–68.

53 Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 157, 169–70.

bishoprics and a number of abbeys looked to the Crown for protection and contributed toward it. In 1122 Louis VI attacked Clermont on behalf of its bishop—370 km (230 miles) from Paris.[54] Although kings had their share of disputes with the Church, the relationship was generally very close and enhanced by the readiness of Capetian kings to take the cross and go on crusade: Louis VII (1137–1180) on the Second Crusade; Philip II on the Third (1180–1223); Louis VIII (1223–1226) on the Albigensian Crusade; Louis IX (1226–1270) to Egypt and to North Africa.

The rise of France to military preeminence was the result of very complex factors, and it was achieved over a very long period of time, to which we must now turn.

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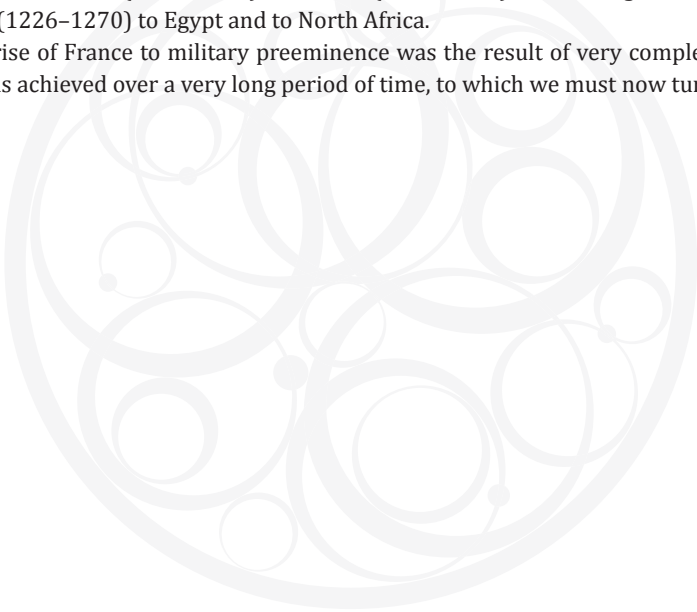
54 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §29.

Chapter 4

WARFARE IN FRANCE TO 1066

THE CRISIS OF the west Carolingian line in the 880s and Charles the Fat's concerns with Germany and Italy provoked a military crisis in France, which was attacked by the Vikings. In Scandinavia the eighth century appears to have seen the rise of a dominant warrior elite at the very same time that the conquest of Frisia and Saxony brought Frankish power very sharply to their attention. The excellent ships that these coastal peoples had developed already traded with Europe, and casual raiding was always an option for a crew of thirty or so strong, fit, and armed young men.[1] Success bred larger groups, and often substantial destruction for ordinary people on the coasts and rivers of Europe, and especially France. Very quickly, though, the Viking elite engaged with the politics of the Frankish world, often as allies of the contending Carolingian factions that fought each other after the 830s.[2] The pain their raids inflicted upon ordinary people was, for the Frankish elite, usually a consideration secondary to the politics of the great, in which Viking leaders were so often involved. Hence, we are told that, when in 859 the Vikings were attacking northern France and Flanders,

> The Danes ravaged the places beyond the Scheldt. Some of the common people living between the Seine and the Loire formed a sworn association amongst themselves and fought bravely against the Danes on the Seine. But because their association had been made without due consideration, they were easily slain by our more powerful people.[3]

In 867 a Viking army landed in the mouth of the Loire, perhaps seeking to exploit the tensions between the Bretons, whose land had never been fully subject to Frankish rule, and Robert the Strong, who held the March of Angers against them. Robert trapped the invaders in the church at Brissarthe and settled down to besiege them, but his men were not vigilant—a frequent weakness of medieval armies—and the Vikings burst out, killing Robert.[4] Charles the Bald established frontier zones, Marches, like that of Robert the Strong, against all his enemies, and, as we have noted began the construction of fortified bridges to check shipborne penetration, but with only limited success.

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1 For an excellent introduction, see Peter Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings*, 2nd ed. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1971).

2 Simon Coupland, "From Poachers to Gamekeepers: Scandinavian Warlords and Carolingian Kings," *Early Medieval Europe* 7 (1998): 85–114.

3 *The Annals of St-Bertin*, ed. Janet L. Nelson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), year 859, 89.

4 Regino of Prüm, *Chronicle*, trans. Simon Maclean (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 153–54.

We know that important places, such as Le Mans and Tours, were fortified only after 869, and as late as 882 Reims had no walls.[5]

The Siege of Paris

The British Isles had been a happy hunting ground for Viking armies, but in 878 Alfred the Great (871–899) inflicted a heavy defeat upon them, and by his treaty with Guthrum the existing Scandinavian population became settled.[6] Faced with English strength the Viking war bands turned back to France, where the difficulties over the royal succession offered rich opportunities. In late November 885 the ships of a large Viking army approached Paris.[7] The city was then located on what is now called the Île de la Cité, an island set in the middle of the Seine and sheltered by its Roman walls. It was connected by a stone bridge (*Grand Pont*) to the northern bank, which was protected by an unfinished tower.[8] A low wooden bridge (*Petit Pont*) reached to the southern bank of the Seine and was guarded by two wooden towers.[9] The Vikings demanded tribute and free passage, for their essential target was the rich lands of Burgundy, probably because they knew that Charles the Fat was at odds with the leaders of the area. Their demands were angrily refused by Count Odo of Paris and Bishop Gozelin.[10] As a result, the Vikings settled down to a full-scale siege. This was very unusual, because, in general, the Vikings were raiders and avoided open confrontations—which they usually lost, as when, in 881, Louis III crushed a Viking force at Saucourt.[11] The fleet that approached Paris in November 885 seems to have carried one of the largest Viking armies ever assembled, however. Abbo suggests that there were 40,000 warriors opposing a garrison of 200.[12] Such figures are clearly fantasies. It is generally accepted, however, that this army had 300 ships carrying perhaps 6,000 warriors.[13]

The fighting focused on the tower guarding the entry to the Grand Pont on the right bank of the Seine. An initial attack was thrown back, although great damage was done. The defenders then built a wooden tower on top of the damaged remains and again

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5 *The Annals of St-Bertin*, year 882; France, "La guerre dans la France féodale," 181.

6 Ryan Lavelle, *Alfred's Wars: Sources and Interpretations of Anglo-Saxon Warfare in the Viking Age* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010).

7 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*. Abbo, a monk of the abbey of St-Germain-des-Prés, was present throughout and wrote a long Latin poem—the only source for the siege.

8 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*, 20–21.

9 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*, 50–51.

10 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*, 17–19.

11 "Saucourt, Battle of," in *Oxford Encyclopaedia of Medieval Warfare*, 3:223–24.

12 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*, 24–25.

13 John Norris, *Medieval Siege Warfare* (Stroud: Tempus, 2007), 31; Carroll Gilmor, "War on the Rivers: Viking Numbers and Mobility on the Seine and the Loire, 841–886," *Viator* 19 (1988): 79–109.

fought off the Vikings.[14] When their first attacks failed the Vikings created a strong siege camp, and supplied themselves through the long siege that ensued by making great sweeps of the countryside to find food on horses, which they had seized or bought.[15] To keep such a large force fed was a tremendous logistical achievement, which points to the high degree of organization of the Vikings. The besiegers dug trenches around the tower as launch pads for their attacks. Both sides are said to have used *catapulta*, and the terms *ballista* and *mangana* appear, though exactly what these were is not clear. There is reference to lead missiles and to an arrow transfixing seven Vikings like a kebab. This suggests something like a Roman *balista* or perhaps just a large crossbow.[16] A ram was deployed also, but the most impressive weapons were the three siege towers deployed against the northern tower and the city itself.[17]

In January 886 the Vikings tried to fill in the shallows to isolate the tower, and then they sent fireships, which weakened the bridge.[18] In February, after bad weather, the wooden southern bridge gave way, isolating its guard tower, whose garrison the Vikings then killed.[19] After this the Viking army conducted a great raid southwards to replenish their stocks of food.[20] In the summer of 886 Count Henry of Saxony, at the behest of Emperor Charles the Fat, led a relief army. He attacked the Viking camp, but apparently failed to notice that it was protected by ditches. When he and his horse fell into one he was killed, and his army retired.[21] Count Odo then went off to see Charles the Fat, who eventually came with an army in October. He negotiated with the Vikings, granting them permission to pass Paris freely to sack Burgundy, where he had enemies,[22] and early in

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14 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*, 19–27.

15 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*, 28.

16 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*, 32–33. Medieval writers inherited terms for siege machines from the classical past, whose authors often mentioned these weapons that were based on the torsion principle. The *balista* was a large bow whose separate arms were fixed in vertically mounted skeins of hair. The string was drawn by a windlass and it could fire either an arrow or a stone. The *mangana* was a single vertical arm placed in a horizontally mounted skein of hair. The arm was wound down by a windlass, and when released crashed against a crossbar, causing the missile in its sling to be thrown. The violent impact of this concussion accounts for the nickname: *onager* ("mule"). By the eleventh century these weapons had been superseded by different machines based on the lever principle, but contemporaries continued to use these and other terms, such as *catapulta*, *tormenta*, and *mangonella*; for a short survey, see Fulton, *Artillery in the Era of the Crusades*, 1–14. It is very difficult to know what kind of catapults were used in this siege. Peter Purton, *The Medieval Military Engineer: From the Roman Empire to the Sixteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2018), 91, thinks the references are to lever weapons.

17 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*, 42–43.

18 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*, 44–45.

19 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*, 54–59.

20 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*, 60–61.

21 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*, 82–82.

22 Regino of Prüm, *Chronicle*, 196.

887 paid them 700 pounds of silver to leave the Seine. The defenders of Paris would not permit this free passage, forcing the invaders to drag their ships overland.[23] The siege had dragged on from November 885 to October 886, which is a tribute to the bravery of the defenders, the strength of their fortifications, and the determination, confidence, and skill of the Vikings.

It is often thought that the bravery of Odo, consolidated by what Abbo reports as a crushing victory of his cavalry over 10,000 Viking horsemen and 900 foot at the Battle of Montfaucon shortly afterwards,[24] and the reluctance of Charles to fight, led to the fall of the Carolingians and the elevation of Odo to the kingship of the West Franks in 888, but this is a simplification. When King Carloman died unexpectedly in 884 in a hunting accident the West Frankish lords were in a quandary, for he had no heir. His half-brother, Charles the Simple, was an infant, born after his father's death, and this cast some doubt on his paternity. In these circumstances the nobles turned to Charles the Fat, successively king of Italy and emperor, then king of the East Franks. Loyalty to the Carolingian house was obviously very important, instilled, perhaps, by the long reign of Charles the Bald, whose two sons succeeded him quite easily. There is no evidence that the Frankish nobles were discontented with Charles. He sent aid to Paris and eventually came in person and was greeted with rejoicing.[25] Moreover, there was nothing novel in a king paying off raiders, while Abbo had no sympathy for the Burgundians, who had not assisted Paris. Charles was apparently in poor health, though, and in November 887 in a general assembly of the East Franks at Tribur he was deposed in a coup led by a Carolingian bastard, Arnulf of Carinthia.[26] This coup had been an East Frankish affair, and it caught the West Franks entirely by surprise.[27] Given that Charles the Simple was only a child, and one about whose legitimacy doubts remained, the choice of Odo was hardly surprising. The fall of Charles the Fat was not a consequence of the siege of Paris, therefore, but the choice of Odo most certainly was, and it reflected anxieties about the mounting Viking attacks.[28] Across Europe there was a sudden efflorescence of kings marking the final break-up of the Carolingian empire. After Charles' death, Regino of Prüm remarked that

> the kingdoms which had obeyed his authority, just as though a legitimate heir was lacking, dissolved into separate parts and, without waiting for their natural lord, each decided to create a king form their own guts … .none so outshone the others that the rest deigned to submit to his rule.[29]

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23 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*, 90–95.

24 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*, 104.

25 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*, 90–92.

26 Regino of Prüm, *Chronicle*, 196–98.

27 Simon MacLean, "Charles the Fat and the Viking Great Army: The Military Explanation for the Fall of the Carolingian Empire (876–88)," *War Studies Journal* 3 (1998): 74–95 at 90–91.

28 MacLean, "Charles the Fat and the Viking Great Army," 94–95.

29 Regino of Prüm, *Chronicle*, 199.

Indeed, there was now Germany, the kingdom of Upper Burgundy, the kingdom of Provence, and the kingdom of Italy, as well as France. It is a mark of the fluidity of politics after Charles the Fat's death that the archbishop of Reims championed the accession of Guy of Spoleto. Odo gained recognition from Arnulf of Germany in 888, however, and stymied this.[30]

Two Threads of Warfare

In France two threads of warfare quickly emerged: internal quarrels among the Franks; and wars against external forces. In 893 a faction of the French nobility elected Charles the Simple as king:

> When King Odo was staying in Aquitaine, most of the great men of the Franks defected from him and at the urging of Archbishop Fulk [of Rheims] and Counts Herbert and Pippin [of Vemandois], Charles … was raised to the kingship in the city of Rheims.[31]

Charles quickly got recognition from Arnulf of Germany, who extended the same privilege to Odo, however, in 895. Charles and his supporters were unable to challenge Odo in the field, but kept up a war of raids and political subversion until, in 897, Odo recognized Charles as his successor and endorsed his control of lands in the region of Laon and Rheims.[32] Nevertheless, this was on condition of granting to Odo's brother, Robert, a vast authority over northern France in the title of "duke of the Franks" (*dux Francorum*).

Charles the Simple enjoyed considerable success working with the great princes, which culminated in 911.[33] In that year Robert duke of the Franks and Richard duke of Burgundy defeated a Viking incursion near Chartres, and Charles imposed a favourable settlement on their leader Rollo by the treaty of St. Claire sur Ept. According to Dudo of St. Quentin, the Normans were exhausted and happy to come to terms.[34] Rollo agreed to accept Christianity, to marry one of the king's daughters, and to protect France from other Vikings. In return he received the county of Rouen, and seems to have been expected to defend also against the Bretons, whose land had never been conquered by Frankish monarchs. This settlement provided protection for the heartlands of the kingdom against further Viking incursion, but also gave Charles another prince to play against the others. In the same year Louis the Child, Arnulf's successor as king of Germany

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30 McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, 262–68.

31 Regino of Prüm, *Chronicle*, 215.

32 Regino of Prüm, *Chronicle*, 216–17, 219; Geoffrey Koziol, "Charles the Simple, Robert of Neustria and the *vexilla* of Saint-Denis," *Early Medieval Europe* 14 (2006): 355–90 at 371–74; Dunbabin, "West Francia," 376–77.

33 Auguste Eckel, *Charles le Simple* (Paris: Bouillon, 1899).

34 Dudo of Saint-Quentin, *The History of the Normans*, trans. Eric Christiansen (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1998), 48–49.

(900–911), died. The nobles of Lorraine had never fully accepted their absorption into Germany, and Charles was able to seize the duchy, profiting by an enormous expansion of royal lands and the potential to raise troops.[35]

Charles thereafter spent most of his time in Lorraine, made lavish grants to Lorrainer nobles in the French heartlands, and relied heavily on Hagano, a noble from Lorraine. This provoked ill-feeling in France, and in 919 the princes refused to join Charles in an expedition against the pagan Hungarians whose raids across Germany caused terrible devastation in Lorraine.[36] At the same time Charles' situation in Lorraine became precarious. In a quarrel over the abbey of St. Servais of Maastricht Charles backed the enemies of Gilbert of Lorraine, who resorted to force, precipitating a civil conflict in the area, in which Gilbert enjoyed the backing of the German king Henry I (919–936).[37] In 921 Robert duke of the Franks made an alliance with the Normans without consulting the king, and in 922 he was crowned king by the princes of northern France. Charles fled to Lorraine and returned at the head of an army, but in June 923 he was defeated in battle at Soissons, although Robert was killed.[38] The rebel leaders, with Hugh, son of Robert, and Herbert II of Vermandois at their head, then elected Rudolf duke of Burgundy. Herbert and Hugh undoubtedly distrusted one another, so Rudolf (923–936) was a useful compromise, because Hugh's sister Emma was his wife, and her sister Adela had married Herbert. In 923 Herbert II seized Charles by treachery and held him until his death in 929, using him as a bargaining counter in his demands for land and office.[39] It seemed as though the crown of France was now the plaything of the princes, and for this there was a price, for by 925 Henry I of Germany (919–936) had persuaded the nobles of Lorraine to his obedience, and the divided French powers lacked the strength to reverse this.[40] In the west Normandy was allowed to expand to the Cotentin Peninsula, and some Vikings established settlements on the Loire.[41] France south of the Loire tended to drift away from the monarchy. William II duke of Aquitaine refused to recognize Rudolf, and did so only when Berry was ceded to him. Raymond Pons of Toulouse acquired control of Gothia and recognized Rudolf only in 932.[42] By and large, they did not renounce their nominal

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35 McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, 307–8; Dunbabin, "West Francia," 378.

36 Charles R. Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars: The Struggle for the Middle Danube, 788–907* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 235–67.

37 Brühl, *Naissance de deux peuples*, 198–200.

38 Flodoard, *Annales*, 6.

39 Flodoard, *Annales*, 15; Rodulfus Glaber, writing some seventy years later, remembered and described vividly the treachery of Herbert: *Histories*, 1:5. On Herbert's career and powerful influence till his death in 843, see Bur, *Formation du comté de Champagne*, 87–97.

40 Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Origins of Modern Germany* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), 49.

41 McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, 312–13.

42 McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, 313.

allegiance to the monarchy, though Barcelona and some Pyrenean lordships drifted into the Spanish sphere of influence.

As to the Vikings, although predatory and destructive, they could be and were curbed. King Odo's victory over the Vikings at Montpensier in the Auvergne in 892, following on from his successful repulse of the Normans at Paris, shows him as a truly effective soldier.[43] Flodoard and Richer of Rheims both report that, after initial quarrels, King Rudolf constructed a strong alliance with Herbert of Vermandois, Hugh the Great, and Arnulf count of Flanders, leading to victories over the Vikings in 931 and 936.[44] Brittany, which had always been largely independent, was massively attacked by the Vikings. Robert, duke of the Breton March, vanquished them in battle in 921, but he was acting in French interests, for the Bretons were regarded with suspicion by their neighbours.[45] The Vikings remained dominant in Brittany until a native count, Alan Barbetorte, submitted to the king of France and, with some aid from England, chased them out.[46]

We do have accounts of battles against the Vikings, but they can be very vague, and the question of numbers is insoluble. In 888 did Odo of Paris triumph with 1,000 French over 10,000 Viking horsemen and 900 foot, as Abbo reports, at the Battle of Montfaucon?[47] It seems as unlikely as the 40,000 cavalry attributed to Robert of Brittany in his victory over the Vikings in 921.[48] The difficulty is that our sources often say little about actual warfare. Flodoard was continuing the tradition of annal writing in his great church at Rheims, and, beginning in 922, he made yearly entries through to 966. Richer of Rheims, continuing this tradition, wrote a rather more discursive history covering the years 888 to 995, but for the period up to 966 he depended heavily on Flodoard. He was, however, the son of a distinguished soldier, with a real interest in war, and he provides us with battle descriptions, although these do have serious drawbacks.[49]

Richer says that King Odo crushed the Vikings seven times in battle and put them to flight nine times within five years.[50] He goes on to record seven other battles against the Vikings, of which the latest is dated 944.[51] He only really gives us details on two, however, and he mentions the Battle of Soissons in 923, which resulted in the deposition of Charles the Simple, only briefly.

His version of Odo's victory over the Vikings at Montpensier in the Auvergne in 892 is very detailed, though. He reports that Odo had 10,000 cavalry and 6,000 foot. No total

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43 Richer, *Historiae*, 1:20–26.

44 Richer, *Historiae*, 1:110, 133–35.

45 Richer, *Historiae*, 1:64–67. On the independence of Brittany, see Glaber, *Histories*, 2:4.

46 Dunbabin, *France in the Making*, 82–84.

47 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*, 104.

48 See below, p56, n54.

49 Richer, *Historiae*, 1:275–81.

50 Richer, *Historiae*, 1:16–17.

51 Richer, *Historiae*, 1:20–27, 64–69, 99–101, 102–3, 110–11, 183–87, 192–93.

is given for the enemy, but at the crisis of the battle they deployed a reserve of 4,000, eventually suffered 13,000 casualties, and lost numerous prisoners, so the implication is that Odo was outnumbered. As for tactics, Odo sent his infantry forward and their archers bombarded the enemy, opening the way for the cavalry. Just as the Vikings seemed to be in retreat, however, the 4,000 fresh troops of their reserve appeared, forcing Odo to regroup and fight hard for victory.[52] The tactics reported are similar to those that William the Conqueror attempted at Hastings, with an initial assault on the Anglo-Saxon line by archers and heavy infantry backed up by cavalry.[53] This may not be what happened at Montpensier, however. Richer was writing long after the event and we do not know the source of his information, and perhaps his account is coloured by knowledge of later battles.

His account of Duke Robert's victory of 921 over the Vikings in Brittany is even more problematic. He says Robert raised an army of 40,000 mounted men (*equites*), divided between groups (*legiones*) from Neustria (Brittany), from Aquitaine, and from Belgium, these last sent by King Charles the Simple, and confronted Vikings who had attacked along the Loire. Their army was 50,000 strong and they are described as *armatorum*, suggesting that they were not mounted; they formed an arc, anticipating an attack on their centre, which they could then outflank on both sides. Duke Robert launched the Aquitainians and reinforced them with his own Neustrians, who were duly encircled, but then the Belgians charged, crushing the enemy. This sounds splendid, although common sense suggests the numbers given are unlikely. More seriously, we have to recognize that Richer was a stylist, and also anxious to parade his classical learning. The editor of his work, Robert Latouche, suggests that for this battle Richer was essentially copying from Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae*, and describes the account as a "literary composition, purely bookish," and this is reinforced by the use of terms such as *legiones*.[54]

It is difficult, therefore, to say much about tactics, but the mention of battles should not be dismissed, for by the late ninth century the raiders could muster substantial "armies numbering in their thousands, but not tens of thousands"—broadly comparable to what the French could raise.[55] Richer accords great importance to cavalry in warfare. No fewer than five times he reports that the enemy fled or accepted defeat because of "fear of the royal cavalry."[56] This is paralleled by a report that in 933, at the Battle of the Riade, Henry I of Germany led his troops against the Hungarians, who were lightly armed horse-archers, and advised them:

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52 Richer, *Historiae*, 1:20–26.

53 Stephen Morillo, "Hastings: An Unusual Battle," in *The Battle of Hastings* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1996), 219–28.

54 Richer, *Historiae*, 1:64–67nn1, 2.

55 Simon Coupland, "The Carolingian Army and the Struggle against the Vikings," *Viator* 35 (2004): 49–70 at 58; and Halsall, *Warfare and Society*, 123–33.

56 Richer, *Historiae*, 1:62–67, 110, 134, 182; 2:11.

> When you sally out to the field of battle let no-one ride faster than another but keep together. The shields of each should guard his neighbour so that they can receive the first volley of arrows from the enemy [Hungarians]. Then charge very fast before the enemy can fire again for the weight of your armour will prevail.[57]

The suggestion is that French armies were recognizing the importance of cohesion and discipline in cavalry encounters in a way that was not notable beforehand. Of course, Richer also speaks of footsoldiers, however, and says they sometimes played an important role.

The pattern of battles recorded by Richer is interesting. As noted above, he records a lot of battles against the Vikings, of which the latest was in 944.[58] By contrast, thereafter he notes many fewer: the ambush of Louis IV''s army marching to the siege of Laon in 941; an occasion in 943 in which Hélouin of Montrueil unsuccessfully ambushed Arnulf of Flanders; King Lothar's fight to extract recognition from William Oakhead of Aquitaine in 954; and the Battle of Conquereuil in 992.[59] There was, clearly, a marked difference in temper between war against the invaders and the second strand of tenth-century warfare: conflict between the two royal houses involving the princes, which became the dominant kind of warfare in France. Battle was always a risky undertaking, and presumably soldiers were less willing to take the risk in factional conflict.

The death of King Rudolf in 936 produced a succession crisis in France. The powerful of the realm—Hugh the Great, son of Robert, who had been killed at Soissons in 923; Hugh duke of Burgundy; Herbert II of Vermandois; William Longsword duke of Normandy; and Arnulf of Flanders—were all rivals. Hugh Magnus was clearly the greatest of them, with enormous lands that dominated the area between the Seine and the Loire, encompassing counties such as Tours and Angers, which would later become real powers in themselves. He probably recognized, however, that his assumption of the crown would have been contested. As a result, he negotiated with Athelstan of England for the return of Charles the Simple's son, Louis, who had been a refugee at the English court.[60] He was only fifteen, and effectively in tutelage to Hugh the Great, whose title—duke of the Franks (*dux Francorum*), granted to his father by Charles the Simple in 914—was immediately confirmed by the new king in 936. A charter of December 26, 936, describes Duke Hugh as the first in the kingdom after the king.[61] Louis lacked a vast landholding but coveted Laon as a centre for his possessions in northern France. Despite his lack of royal lands, allying with other princes at odds with Hugh the Great, notably William Longsword and Hugh of Burgundy, offered the young king opportunities to build a position for himself.

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57 Widukind, *Rerum gestarum saxonicarum libri tres*, ed. Georg Waitz (Hanover: MGH, 1882), year 933.

58 See above, nn. 50, 51.

59 Richer, *Historiae*, 1:86–93, 164–65, 186–89; 2:11–13, 280–87.

60 McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, 314–15.

61 Olivier Guillot and Yves Sassier, eds., *Pouvoirs et institutions dans la France médiévale*, 2 vols. (Paris: Colin, 2003), 1:170, no. 4.

The hub of the fighting that ensued was Laon, a very important city in itself, partly because of its dominant position on a high crag overlooking the plains of northern France. King Rudolf had attacked it in 931.[62] In 938 Louis took the nearby fortress of Montigny-Longrain, and then in 939 besieged Laon, which Herbert held, breaching its walls, but the new tower by the royal palace did not fall immediately.[63] The assumption is that the tower was of stone, but this cannot be affirmed with certainty. Perhaps because of its strength the most elaborate machines, "*multisque machinis*,"[64] were used against this city. Louis IV deployed a siege tower on wheels and covered its approach to the walls by arrow fire[65] In 940 Louis granted the city to a son of Herbert II, and took an oath of fidelity from William Longsword of Normandy, thus dividing his enemies.

In 939, however, Gilbert duke of Lorraine rebelled against the East Frankish king, Otto I (936–973), and Louis supported him in the hope of regaining the duchy of Lorraine, which his father had held. Otto invaded, however, in alliance with Hugh the Great and Herbert of Vermandois, seized Laon, and imposed a settlement between Louis and the allies led by Hugh. In effect, he was now the arbiter in French affairs, later exercising power through his brother Bruno, archbishop of Cologne (953–965) and duke of Lorraine after 954, until his death in 965.[66] The Ottonians were chiefly interested in keeping Louis out of Lorraine, and to do so maintained good relations with the contending forces in France. In fact, Louis IV ceased intervening in Lorraine for the rest of his reign. He had other problems at home.

In 942 Louis and Hugh made a precarious peace, but it was not to last. In that year Count Arnulf of Flanders assassinated William Longsword of Normandy, whose lands passed to a child, Richard I.[67] In 843 Herbert II died, leaving his lands divided between four sons, with whom Louis promptly made peace, opening the way to exclude Hugh the Great from the affairs of Normandy. After initial success he was captured by the Vikings he had trusted and handed over to Hugh the Great. This radically changed the balance of power in France, provoking an invasion from Germany, and in 946 the king was released.[68] During his reign Otto I had no fewer than seven meetings with Louis, while Hugh, who had married Hadwig, Otto's sister, had almost as many. The absence of strong monarchy in the French lands and the question of Lorraine certainly focused German attention in a world where there was still a residual belief in the unity of the *regnum Francorum*.[69]

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62 Flodoard, *Annales*, 51.

63 Flodoard, *Annales*, 68–70; Richer, *Historiae*, 1:116, 118–20, 142–44, 277, 280.

64 Flodoard, *Annales*, 70.

65 See below, 63, n93.

66 Flodoard, *Annales*, 70–71.

67 McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, 316. Glaber, *Histories*, 3:39, believed that Theobald "the Deceiver" did the deed in cahoots with Arnulf.

68 Flodoard, *Annales*, 99–102.

69 Brühl, *Naissance de deux peuples*, 216.

Even the papacy had been dragged into the warfare in France. Artald, archbishop of Rheims, was a supporter of Louis, but in 940 Hugh and Herbert II seized Rheims and replaced him with Hugh, Herbert's son. Artald was restored only by an alliance of Otto I and Louis IV, who then convoked a synod at Ingelheim, which ratified Artald's restoration—a verdict confirmed by the pope—and declared Hugh excommunicate.[70] The war dragged on, with much fighting around Laon, and devastation of the countryside by all parties. Louis IV's siege of Laon in 949 was a major event, and success came as the result of a trick. Usually surprise was the best means of capturing a strongly fortified place. In 932 Adelbert of Artois seized Noyon and in 939 Arnulf of Flanders took Montreuil by this means.[71] Hugh had reinforced his garrison in Laon, though, and it was well prepared. Rudolf, Richer's father, who was a commander in Louis IV's army, devised a stratagem to capture the city, however. He noted that grooms from the city emerged in the evening to gather fodder for the animals. This suggests that the siege was something like a blockade, rather than a close siege employing siege engines, as in 939. Once they had gone down to the water Richer led a party of troops disguised as grooms, who entered the city during their absence, and seized the place, though the citadel held out until 950, when it was surrendered as part of a general peace between Hugh and Louis IV.[72]

There was no real peace, however. In 950 Renaud de Roucy seized Braine, to the annoyance of Hugh, at whose request Louis expelled the intruders. Then Theobald the Deceiver, one of the sons of Herbert II, seized Coucy and defied all parties.[73] While both major parties were at odds it is difficult to see whether these lords were really acting in their names or simply for personal aggrandizement. This is a testimony to the fact that very often power was slipping into the hands of lesser men.

In 951 Louis IV attempted to coerce recognition from the duke of Aquitaine, but the expedition was aborted when he fell ill. This was a rare intervention in the south. Confused fighting along the Meuse pitted Hugh's friends against those of the king, and were not even brought to an end by a sudden incursion by the Hungarians, who passed into Italy with great booty.[74] When Otto I went to Italy in 952 there was another flare-up in the fighting, turning largely on the establishment by both sides of castles threatening to the other, and this was interspersed with diplomatic overtures in which the Germans played a major role.[75] In 954 Louis associated Lothar, his young son, in the monarchy, and shortly afterwards he was killed in a hunting accident. He had achieved enough, however, to ensure that his son succeeded without serious contest. He was only a child,

70 Flodoard, *Annales*, 125; McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, 316–17.

71 Richer, *Historiae*, 1:118–20, 144.

72 Richer, *Historiae*, 1:277–81; Flodoard, *Annales*, 127.

73 Flodoard, *Annales*, 128.

74 Flodoard, *Annales*, 129–32.

75 Flodoard, *Annales*, 133–37.

though, and Hugh the Great seemed to be a formidable opponent, but he died in 956, also leaving a child, Hugh called Capet, so both houses were for a time in minorities.

It is very difficult to construct a clear view of warfare in this period. The contest between Hugh the Great and Louis IV depended on attracting the loyalty of lords and nobles such as Renaud de Roucy, who were quite prepared to change sides and were, essentially, interested only in self-aggrandizement. No party could support a substantial standing army, but could make a major effort from time to time, so the occasional great event was interspersed with constant harrying of the countryside, which was the true staple of war. What is very significant is the emergence during this confused fighting of lesser lords. After the coronation of the young king war broke out between Renaud de Roucy and Herbert II of Vermandois over lands near the Meuse, notably Monfélix. After some confused fighting the parties came to an agreement—without the intervention of either the royal court or Hugh the Great.[76] This is a clear indication of the fragmentation of power permitted by the feud between the Carolingians and their rivals. It affected the duke of the Franks as well. The great holdings of Hugh Magnus in the Loire seem to have been stripped away, so that Hugh Capet inherited a dramatically weakened position. It can be no coincidence that in this period the counts of Anjou began to emerge as real powers in western France.[77] In the game of politics and war in northern France there were more players than just the very great princes, and they were increasingly equipped with fortified places.

Lothar (954–986), according to a distinguished authority, "was the ablest of the last Carolingian kings."[78] At first he was dominated by Hugh Magnus. In 955 the king and Hugh led an army into Aquitaine, demanding recognition by William III, and besieged Poitiers. The siege was unsuccessful, but as they retreated they managed to defeat William and attacked the city again. Although it held out its duke was obliged to admit the authority of the king.[79] Lothar certainly exploited favourable circumstances very well. The death of Hugh Magnus in 956, and the minority of his son Hugh Capet, who then had to work his way into his position, permitted a considerable expansion of the power of the counts of Blois and Anjou, undermining the young man's position in the west.[80] At the same time Lothar conciliated the Vermandois family: Heribert II was accorded the title *comes Francorum*, a clear challenge to Hugh Capet, while Theodore the Deceiver was able to extend the county of Blois. Lothar was conciliatory and adept in his handling of the succession crisis of 965 in Flanders, in which Arnulf II (965–988) became an ally. He interfered in Burgundy, where in 980 he installed his cousin, Bruno, as bishop of Langres, making that important diocese a bastion of his power. Although Hugh Capet remained a major force, Lothar was able to rule and to head the French

76 Flodoard, *Annales*, 139–40.

77 Yves Sassier, *Hugues Capet* (Paris: Fayard, 1987), 146–49; see above, 37–38.

78 McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, 319.

79 Richer, *Historiae*, 2:10–11.

80 Dunbabin, "West Francia," 386–87.

aristocracy in a much more real sense than his father, and no fundamental challenge to his royal position emerged.

Lothar did not adopt any aggressive stance toward Lorraine and enjoyed intimate relations through his mother, Gerberga, with Otto I and his brother Bruno of Cologne until he died in 965. He had not lost interest in the area, however, especially as his mother's extensive lands there reverted to him after her death in 969. The death of Otto I and the succession of Otto II (973–983) changed matters, though, precipitating the major military activity of the reign. Otto was deeply convinced of his imperial task and took up residence at Aachen, emphasizing Saxon possession of this place so sacred to the Carolingians. Lothar's younger brother, Charles, resented the fact that the realm had not been divided between the brothers, following earlier Carolingian precedent. He accused Lothar's queen of adultery with the bishop of Laon, and to avoid punishment fled to the east, where, in 977, Otto made him duke of Lorraine. This also upset Hugh Capet, whose sister held land in Lorraine.[81]

In 978 Lothar and Hugh attacked Aachen, forcing Otto to flee. They pillaged the palace, but then retreated.[82] In response Otto proclaimed Charles of Lorraine as king and invaded France, directing his ravaging army toward Paris, where Hugh raised troops, and an army drawn from all over northern France gathered. Otto was unable to sustain his position and withdrew, suffering heavy losses in the retreat. The credit for this victory lay with Lothar, who concluded a peace at Margut with Otto, excluding Hugh from the proceedings. This ended the relative peace that had so far endured between Hugh and the king.[83]

The events of 978 had given Lothar confidence, though, and opportunity arose on the death of Otto II in 983. His son, Otto III (983–1002), was a child, but the regency was contested. Initially Henry of Bavaria had seized control of the child, contrary to the wishes of his mother, Theophanu, and grandmother, Adelaide, who enjoyed considerable support in Germany. Henry needed assistance, and he proposed to meet King Lothar at Brisach; almost certainly the intention was for Lothar to recognize him as king in return for control over Lorraine, where he already had some followers.[84] Henry never arrived at the meeting, however. Lothar had thrust into Lorraine confident in the strength of a strong mounted force, but his support waned as Theophanu's strength increased. When Lothar retreated he found his way through the rough country of Lorraine barred by local forces, who waged a guerrilla war, blocking roads with trees, ambushing his men, and bombarding them with bows and crossbows. Their aim, said Richer, "[w]as not to engage in open warfare, but to harass the rear of their enemies when they were stopped by obstacles on the top of the mountains." Lothar was rescued from this dangerous

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81 Dunbabin, "West Francia," 388.

82 Richer, *Historiae*, 2:87–89, 101–3.

83 Richer, *Historiae*, 2:102–7.

84 Eleanor Duckett, *Death and Life in the Tenth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), 107.

situation by his "light infantry," who attacked the enemy skirmishers and dragged down the barriers across the roads.[85] Nothing more plainly reveals the limitations of cavalry and the importance of topography, which so often favoured infantry, in war. Armies obviously needed footsoldiers for siege, but they could also be important in field warfare.

Although Theophanu and her party were very quickly in control in Germany, Lothar persisted in his assaults on Lorraine. He sent an army under Odo count of Blois and Herbert count of Troyes, which attacked Verdun in 985. Despairing of support, the city quickly capitulated. A strong enemy army occupied the city, however, and prepared to resist any renewed attack from Lothar. The king came to Verdun and prepared what seems to have been a siege tower on wheels with a sloping roof, dragged by oxen whose ropes were turned around stakes close to the wall so that, as they pulled the tower forward, they were not vulnerable to missiles from the defenders. The defenders promptly constructed a wooden tower on the threatened section of wall. Lothar's crew picked away at the wall under the protection of the siege tower, however, and the enemy again capitulated.[86]

The capture of Verdun in two expeditions, and using sophisticated siege machinery, suggests that the French king could raise considerable forces when the occasion demanded. His armies are not often described but they clearly included cavalry and infantry, some of whom were equipped with bows and crossbows. For the most part, though, the fighting in France under Louis IV and Lothar was not on a large scale. Raiding and devastation were the common methods of war, together with shifting combinations and alliances of aristocratic factions, who were happy to resort to intrigue and treachery. Theobald the Deceiver died in 975, but he was still well remembered half a century later when Glaber mentioned him.[87] Lothar had associated his son in the monarchy and seemed set fair to establish his dynasty, as we have noted.[88] But Lothar died after a short and terrible illness, and within a year his son Louis V had died in a hunting accident, on May 21, 987. This precipitated a major succession crisis in the French kingdom, because two candidates emerged.

The Ascent of the Capetians

Adalbert, archbishop of Rheims, always favoured a course of friendship with the Ottonian dynasty, and he was very friendly with Hugh Capet, who had no part in the aggressive policies of Lothar toward Lorraine. Adalbert's opposition to Louis V's forward policy in Lorraine reached such straits that the king convened a council of the magnates at Compiègne, which was clearly intended to depose the archbishop. Louis died before the council met, however, and Adalbero convened it to Senlis to consider the succession.

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85 Richer, *Historiae*, 2:124–27.

86 Richer, *Historiae*, 2:133–39.

87 Glaber, *Histories*, 3:6–8, 39.

88 See above, 32.

The choice of the nobles and clergy lay between Charles of Lorraine, the younger brother of Lothar, and Hugh Capet, both of whom could claim royal descent. Adalbero had been deeply offended by Charles' part in plots against Otto III and denounced him forcibly:

> We know that Charles has supporters who claim that he should rule by right of his birth. However, royalty is not just a matter of inheritance. But in truth only those who are distinguished by nobility of body and soul, and who protect the faith which is strengthened by their generosity deserve this elevation.[89]

The implication seems to be that royal descent, while important, cannot be the sole criterion for kingship, and the suggestion clearly is that Charles lacked "nobility of body and soul." Adalbert went further, attacking Charles directly:

> How can Charles be worthy of such a dignity: honour is not his guide, he is spineless and so debased himself as to serve a foreign king. He even married a woman of inferior knightly class.[90]

He could therefore focus his appeal on a comparison of qualities:

> Choose, therefore, the duke whose brilliance is revealed by his deeds, his nobility and military power. In him you will find one who will protect not just the state but also your own interests.[91]

Nobody else is recorded as speaking and there is no record of division, and such unanimity makes one very suspicious of the nature of this assembly, which may have been more hand-picked than we realize. Moreover, we owe our knowledge of it to a single source: Richer of Reims. He says that one of the charges against Charles was that he had married the daughter of a mere knight, but the likelihood is that she was actually the daughter of Herbert count of Troyes. This rather undermines Richer's credibility.[92] Hugh was crowned at Noyon on July 3, 987, and by Christmas of that year he had had his son, Robert, crowned as his successor.

When Charles of Lorraine invaded the West Frankish lands in 988 the ambitious Odo of Blois supported him, but there was no great rush of desertions to his cause. Nor did Hugh get enthusiastic support, for Charles quickly captured Laon and was easily able to hold on to it. In 988 Hugh Capet attacked Laon with a siege tower propelled by oxen pulling it up to the wall on ropes wound round stakes—just like Lothar at Verdun. The defenders built a wooden tower on the wall, however, and held out comfortably.[93] The stalemate was broken, but not by military means.

On January 23, 989, Adalbero of Reims died, and Hugh appointed Arnulf, a bastard son of King Lothar, to the archbishopric. This was presumably a scheme to

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89 Richer, *Historiae*, 2:160–61.

90 Richer, *Historiae*, 2:160–63.

91 Richer, *Historiae*, 2:162–63.

92 Brühl, *Naissance de deux peuples*, 255–56, suggests that Hugh was elected by his own vassals and representatives of families to which he was related.

93 Richer, *Historiae*, 2:178–79.

undermine Charles, but it backfired, because Arnulf handed over Reims to Charles. Hugh managed to conciliate Odo of Blois, and marched against Charles with a great army in 990, but retreated when Charles seemed ready to accept the challenge of battle.[94] Adalbero, bishop of Laon, nephew of the late archbishop, invited Charles to dinner, then captured him and handed him over to Hugh.[95] These acts of treachery, rather than battle, suggest that the great men of France were not willing to risk much for either pretender. Relations with the monarchy were no longer decisive for their fortunes.

A New Dynasty, a New Start?

The change of dynasty made virtually no difference to the military balance in France. The Capetians, like their predecessors, were the legal guarantors of the status of the princes and nobles, whose allegiance, however, was always conditional. Kings enjoyed extensive support within the Church, which saw the monarchy as its protector, and their sacral character was never denied. The overarching nature of royal authority was not challenged, but the princes did not bother to attend the royal court regularly, and those south of the Loire were very remote. The long feud with the Carolingians had depleted the landed holdings of both the monarchy and the duke of the Franks, limiting royal patronage. The emergence of Anjou, which has been traced above, was a powerful symptom of the loss of royal control.[96] Fulk Nerra was not hostile to the monarchy but he expected his king to recognize his growing power and saw no reason to seek permission for his ventures. For the magnates of northern France, the monarchy was one among several powers of which they had to take note—and not necessarily, in any given situation, the decisive one.

The real situation was nicely illustrated by Hugh's dealing with Odo I of Blois. The gift of Dreux in 991 had persuaded him to drop his support for Charles of Lorraine, but he also seized Melun. When Hugh besieged it he intrigued with bishop Adalbero of Laon to hand the realm to Otto III, under whom he would become *dux Francorum*. When this came to nothing Odo allied with the dukes of Normandy and Aquitaine and the count of Flanders, but they did not coordinate their actions, and Hugh was supported by Fulk of Anjou, the bitter rival of Odo, for dominance in the Loire Valley.[97] By 996 Odo had come to terms, but the point here is to recognize that Hugh acted as one prince among others. The intrigues of Odo were symptomatic of the fluidity of politics in the aftermath of the change of dynasty. Hugh's son, Robert II the Pious (996–1031), enjoyed an uncontested succession, and clearly had a more grandiose vision of monarchy.

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94 Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 88.

95 Sassier, *Hugues Capet*, 231–36.

96 See above, 37–38.

97 Sassier, *Hugues Capet*, 259–65.

Helgaud of Fleury was the king's chaplain and promulgated a very flattering view of him as a pious and devoted monarch.[98] Ademar of Chabannes, writing in Limoges, agreed, and the Burgundian Rodulfus Glaber thought him well educated.[99] He visited much of France, and in 1119–20 he travelled across Aquitaine, a huge area for so long removed from royal power and where the Capetian accession seems to have inspired opposition.[100] On the other hand, his interventions in the fighting between the counts of Anjou and Blois achieved little. Fulk of Anjou was able to kill Hugh of Beauvais, the royal favourite, "before the king's own eyes," because he seemed to favour the house of Blois. Fulk suffered no penalty for this terrible act.[101]

The most notable military act of the reign concerned Burgundy. In 1002 Henry duke of Burgundy, brother of Hugh Capet, died with no obvious heir. He had been appointed by Hugh in succession to another brother, Otto, who had died in 965.[102] The duchy was, therefore, an important asset of the Capetian family. The Burgundian nobles chose as his successor Otto-William count of Mâcon, however, who had been chosen as successor by Duke Henry and already held great lands to the east of the Saône in the German empire. Robert, joined in alliance with Richard II of Normandy, gathered a strong army, and they ravaged Burgundy before descending on Auxerre, whose bishop, Hugh of Chalons, seems to have been the king's only major supporter in Burgundy.[103] The assault on the city of Auxerre failed, though, and the king then attacked the great abbey of St. Germain, which was held for the rebels by Landri count of Nevers. The enraged king refused to listen to the prayers of Odilo of Cluny and Heldric, abbot of St. Germain, who were anxious to protect the abbey, and ordered an assault on the town; but it failed, with heavy casualties—due, so Glaber says, to a miraculous fog, which preserved the abbey.[104] The king then left Burgundy, ravaging as he went. By 1006 Robert had imposed himself on much of Burgundy, but it was only in 1015 that he seized Dijon. Peace came about in 1016, the year of the death of his most bitter enemy, Bruno of Langres. In the meantime, however, he ruled as duke, while Auxerre was attached permanently to the royal lands, and the bishops of Burgundy were brought to obedience. It was to take thirteen years of this kind of raiding before the Burgundian nobles agreed to accept French rule, and even

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98 Helgaud de Fleury, *Epitoma vitae regis Rotberti Pii*, ed. and trans. Robert-Henri Bautier and Gillette Labory (Paris: CNRS, 1965), 97.

99 Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*, 154; Glaber, *Histories*, 2:1.

100 Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 91–92; Richard Landes, "L'accession des Capétiens: une reconsidération des sources aquitaines," in *Religion et culture autour de l'an mil: Royaume capétien et Lotharingie*, ed. Dominique Iogna-Prat and Jean-Charles Picard (Paris: Picard, 1991), 151–66.

101 Glaber, *Histories*, 3:7.

102 Glaber, *Histories*, 2:1n1.

103 Glaber, *Histories*, 2:16; *Gesta Episcoporum Autissiodorensium*, ed. Louis-Maximilien Duru, in *Bibliothèque historique de l'Yonne*, vol. 1 (Paris: Société des sciences historiques et naturelles de l'Yonne, 1863), 309–520 at 387–88.

104 Glaber, *Histories*, 2:16.

then Robert could not absorb the duchy into the royal lands. He appointed his younger son, Henry, as its duke.[105]

There were reasons beyond the question of resources for Robert's determination in the matter of Burgundy. Otto-William was already ruler of considerable lands across the Saône in the kingdom of Burgundy, which was subordinate to the empire. If Otto-William succeeded there was the prospect of a powerful dominion largely outside the royal sphere. This was compounded by a dynastic issue. Otto-William was the son of King Berengar II of Ivrea, and through his family had royal and Carolingian blood. He was strongly backed by bishop Bruno of Langres, who was a Carolingian.[106] In this war, therefore, there were strong hints of a dynastic challenge.

This success, however qualified, stimulated Robert's ambitions. He had reluctantly permitted Odo II of Blois to acquire Troyes and Meaux.[107] Worried by the ambitions of Odo, however, he revoked this grant and made war on him, though with no real headway. In 1025 Robert's son and heir, Hugh, died and the king, needing recognition for his son Henry duke of Burgundy to succeed, accepted Odo's claims. Odo was related to Rudolf III of Burgundy, who had no issue, and had obvious ambitions to succeed him. The death of Emperor Henry II in 1024 with no obvious heir led to uncertainty in Germany, which Odo was anxious to exploit. Some of the Italian nobles, discontented with German rule, approached William V of Aquitaine and asked him to become their king, and to facilitate all this Robert was attached to the alliance in return for control of Lorraine while Odo claimed Burgundy.[108] Nothing came of this tripartite conspiracy, for Conrad II quickly established himself in Germany and Italy, but at least Robert was seen as a major figure in the affairs of Europe.

Robert's success rested upon weak foundations, though. The succession of Henry in 1031 was contested by his third wife, Constance of Arles, who demanded the throne for the younger son, Robert. Henry sought the help of Robert duke of Normandy, perhaps at the price of the border county of the Vexin.[109] In the end, Robert was bought off by the duchy of Burgundy.[110] Family crises of this kind were inevitable in a system of government based on hereditary succession, with its many ambiguities, but this cost the new king much demesne. Events show, however, that the famous evaluation of the Capetians by the Annals of Vendôme reflects Angevin pride and not reality:

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105 Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 94; Dunbabin, "West Francia," 392; Glaber, *Histories*, 5:6.

106 Glaber makes very frequent mention of Bruno in his *Histories*, 3:4, 5:6, and in his *Life of St. William*, vi, ix, xi, xii.

107 Glaber twice (*Histories*, 3:5–7, 37) speaks of Odo stealing these lands from the king.

108 Bur, *Formation du comté de Champagne*, 169–70.

109 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 4:74–78, explains the dispute over the Vexin by claiming that Henry I achieved his elevation to the throne of France over his brother, Robert, after soliciting the aid of Duke Robert of Normandy, to whom he gave dominion over the Vexin.

110 Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 95.

> Robert, the pseudo king, father of that other Hugh who was also made pseudo-king, as was his son Robert, whom we saw ruling like a dead man. His son, Henry, the present kinglet, has departed not a whit from his father's laziness.[111]

In 1032 King Rudolf III of Burgundy died and Odo II became obsessed with making good his claim to the kingdom against the Emperor Conrad II, with whom Henry concluded an alliance. Many of the lords of the Capetian heartlands backed Odo, however, who began to champion Henry's young brother Odo, who was landless. There was much fighting in 1033/34, but, though the king got the upper hand, he was greatly relieved by the defeat and death of Odo II in 1037 at the Battle of Bar by Gozelon duke of Lorraine. The manner of his death, reported in a manuscript note, casts light on the reality of French warfare at this time:

> Many say that his corpse could not be found for a long time and despite much searching, until his wife arrived and found him by the following sign: he had a wart between his anus and his genitals.[112]

Theobald of Blois then took up the cause of Odo, but the advance of Anjou under Geoffrey Martel gradually weakened his resolve. Henry had tried to play off Geoffrey and the young Duke William of Normandy but was quite unable to prevent the Angevin seizure of Tours in 1044. The scale of the fighting between these princely powers was at least as great as anything involving the king.

This was made very obvious by the Battle of Conquereuil, on June 22, 992. Siege was often the trigger for battle, as Conquereuil very clearly demonstrates. We have three accounts of the battle, from Richer of Reims, the *Chronicon Nemnatense* and the *Histories* of Rodulfus Glaber.[113] As we have seen, Fulk of Anjou was enmeshed in a struggle with the house of Blois for dominance in the Loire Valley in which the French king was deeply involved. Conan count of Rennes came into the struggle as an ally of the house of Blois because of his ambition to seize Nantes, and thereby enhance his claim to be duke of Brittany.[114] Conan seized Nantes in the spring of 990 but Fulk managed to retake the city, though the citadel held out. Conan massed his army to complete the siege, but Fulk had mobilized again, so the Breton lord withdrew to Conquereuil. Richer says that Conan dug trenches across the plain and disguised them, announcing that he would not attack but would meet the enemy. As the enemy appeared, however, the Bretons feigned retreat, causing the Angevins to pursue and to fall into these traps. Glaber, who reports nothing of the context, says that Fulk and Conan agreed to a battle in the plain of Conquereuil, but the Breton arrived first and dug hidden ditches into which the Angevins fell. The Nantes chronicle is much less elaborate and much more believable, reporting that the Angevins surprised the Bretons, but suffered heavy losses in attacking their entrenched

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111 Dunbabin, *France in the Making*, 133.

112 Glaber, *Histories*, 3:38, and n.e.

113 Richer, *Historiae*, 2:283–87; *Chronicon Nemnatense*, in Arthur L. M. de la Borderie, *Histoire de la Bretagne*, vol. 2 (Paris: Picard, 1896), 434–35; Glaber, *Histories*, 2:4.

114 For the circumstances, see above, 37–38; and Bachrach, *Fulk Nerra*, 27–61.

camp. In the pursuit of the Angevins that followed, Conan was somehow killed: Richer says that because of the heat of the day he stopped to take off his armour and was killed by enemies hidden by the wayside. It is certain he was killed, so this is not impossible. Glaber, the least well-informed source, says that Conan's hand was hacked off in the fighting, and that he surrendered to Fulk.

The Battle of Conquereuil appears as a confused affair, which beautifully illustrates Vegetius's warning about battle "where fortune tends to have more influence than bravery."[115] Whatever the nature of the enemy's preparations, Fulk and his men charged into a trap from which he and the other survivors were saved only by the chances of an overenthusiastic pursuit. Fulk's charge was on horseback, though this does not mean that his army was entirely mounted. Disciplining such forces made up of collections of men brought together for short periods of time was difficult, and we know that his was a composite, for it consisted *[t]am de suis quam conducticiis.*[116] There is an evident contrast between "his men" (*suis*) and those hired (*conducticiis*). Ferdinand Lot saw this as a first mention of mercenaries, but *conducticiis* is an uncommon word and may simply mean men, either from within or outside his lands, who Fulk paid.[117] But the mainspring of the battle was the need to control the city of Nantes, and this was repeated again in 1016.

In 1016 Odo of Blois was advancing with siege machinery to besiege Fulk's castle of Montrichard when Fulk surprised him at Pontlevoy. In charging home, however, Fulk's horse fell and his standard-bearer was killed, forcing a retreat. The Angevins were rescued by their ally, the count of Maine, whose attack was masked from the enemy by the blinding July sun of the evening. Odo and his cavalry fled, leaving the infantry to be massacred.[118] In 1044 Fulk's son, Geoffrey, was besieging Tours when he was urged by his seneschal:

> Leave the city [of Tours] which you are besieging. Summon your men from the fortifications, and you will be stronger to defend yourself. I shall hasten to you when you want to fight a battle. It is certainly better for us to fight together than to fight separately and get beaten. Battles are short but the victor's prize is enormous. Sieges waste time, and the town is rarely taken. Battles overcome nations and fortified towns, and an enemy beaten in battle vanishes like smoke. Once the battle is over, and the enemy beaten, there is a great domain waiting for you around Tours.[119]

It is a pity we know almost nothing about the consequent Battle of Nouy, on August 31, 1044, when Geoffrey crushed the men of Blois who had come to relieve the siege. Glaber says that Geoffrey prayed to St. Martin and marched out, so terrifying his enemies that they were unable to fight and fled, leaving 1,700 as captives. He attributes the victory

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115 Vegetius, *Epitome of Military Science*, trans. N. P. Milner (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993), 108.

116 Richer, *Historiae*, 2:283.

117 Ferdinand Lot, *Études sur le règne de Hugues Capet* (Paris: Bouillon, 1903), 167n3.

118 Bachrach, *Fulk Nerra*, 148–49.

119 *Chroniques des comtes d'Anjou et des seigneurs d'Amboise*, ed. Louis Halphen and René Poupardin (Paris: Picard, 1913), 55–56, trans. in Verbruggen, *The Art of Warfare*, 280.

to Count Geoffrey's devotion to St. Martin of Tours, as a result of which "[t]he whole mass of his army, horse and foot, seemed to be clad in shining white robes."[120] Geoffrey, secure in the Loire, pressed on to assert dominance over the county of Maine, whose northern edge was adjacent to the duchy of Normandy. This Angevin aggressiveness was probably the prime factor influencing Henry's policy to Normandy. The Norman dukes had generally been firm supporters of the Capetians, though they had usually extracted a good price for their support. In 1035 Duke Robert the Magnificent died on pilgrimage at Nicaea in the Byzantine Empire. Before his departure he had made the Norman lords promise that, in the event of his death, they would accept his very young illegitimate son, William, as duke.[121] What followed was a period of extraordinary violence as various parties seized control of the child and, therefore, the regency.[122]

After the death of Odo II and the defeat of his supporters King Henry enjoyed a much stronger position, but he needed a counterbalance to the rise of Geoffrey Martel. By 1045 many of the Norman lords, predominantly those from western Normandy, were rallying around an alternative duke, Guy of Burgundy, whose mother was a daughter of Duke Richard II. He was a younger son of Reginald count of Burgundy and had been given Brionne by his cousin, William. That he was the grandson of Otto-William, who had proved so dangerous to Robert II, may well have been a factor in Henry's strong support in this crisis for William. In 1046 a group of rebels tried to ambush William in the Cotentin. He fled to beg Henry for aid, and the rebels gathered a large army. The king and William joined their forces at Caen in the heart of enemy territory and confronted the rebels at Val-ès-Dunes near Conteville. One of the rebels, Ralph Tesson, defected, but battle was joined. Wace, the Anglo-Norman poet, writing in Norman-French at the behest of Henry II, portrays the battle as an encounter between groups of knights, a series of cavalry skirmishes, truly a poetic account making much of the unhorsing of King Henry by Haimo of Creully, who was killed before he could take further action. William of Poitiers gives all the credit for the victory to Duke William, but, given William's youth and the uncertainties about his rule, it seems we ought, rather, to ascribe this military success to King Henry's intervention.[123]

Henry and William remained allies against Geoffrey Martel and campaigned in the county of Maine, which both Normandy and Anjou coveted. By 1051 William was ascendant. This prompted Henry to change sides, in an effort to play off the major

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120 Glaber, *Histories*, 5:19.

121 Glaber, *Histories*, 4:20, points out that illegitimacy was no bar to succession in Normandy.

122 David Bates, *Normandy before 1066* (London: Pearson, 1982), is excellent for the Norman context.

123 William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi*, §§8, 11; Wace, *Roman de Rou et des ducs de Normandie*, ed. Hugo Andresen, 2 vols. (Heilbronn: Henninger, 1877–79), 2:3870–76, trans. in Edward M. Burgess, "Further Research into the Construction of Mail Garments," *Antiquaries Journal* 33 (1953): 194–203 at 194–97; David C. Douglas, *William the Conqueror* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 50–52. In his deathbed statement, as reported by Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 4:84–85, he made no mention of the role of King Henry.

powers of northern France, and he issued a call to arms to all the princes of France. He was supported by the duke of Burgundy and forces from Auvergne and the south, all of which showed that the king still commanded some allegiance beyond the Île-de-France. No great northern lord joined, however, and the alliance languished.[124] Henry remained determined to curb William's power, and in 1054, allied to Geoffrey of Anjou, he staged a double invasion of Normandy to support a rebellion by the count of Arques. He and Geoffrey invaded the area of Evreux, while another force under the king's brother, Odo, struck into the Pays de Caux. William moved against the king, while his trusted commander, Robert of Eu, led another force into the Pays de Caux. Odo's forces dispersed to plunder around Mortemer and were destroyed in detail by Robert's force. It was typical that an invading force became scattered, for soldiers had to plunder to get the means to feed themselves. By contrast, Wace notes the names of Norman leaders and explains their victory by discipline and cohesion, made possible because they "[c]ommanded the men in their territory, their relatives and their friends."[125] King Henry was more careful and had established his troops in a fortified camp, where he received the bad news of this defeat, and decided to break off the attack.[126]

In 1057 Henry came again, once more in alliance with Geoffrey of Anjou, leading so great an army that Duke William hesitated to oppose it. Instead, he strengthened his castles and fortifications, and shadowed the French. At Varaville the royal army had to cross the river Dives, but this took time because of the numbers, and because many of the soldiers were burdened by plunder. As a result, the tide came in before the crossing could be completed, and William was able to massacre the rear of the French army while King Henry sat helpless on the opposite bank.[127] Perhaps the most interesting detail about this battle comes in Wace's account, where he says that William had only a modest force, but called upon the peasantry, who, armed with clubs and simple weapons, helped to destroy the enemy. King Henry and his cavalry fled, leaving the lesser men and the foragers to be slaughtered.

Henry managed to recover his hold over the Capetian heartlands weakened by his disputed succession, and consolidated his government. He had little role in wider European affairs, however. Although he showed some interest in Lorraine, for the most part he recognized that he lacked the power to intervene in the area. He seems to have overestimated his military strength in attacking Normandy, though, perhaps as result of his victory at Val-ès-Dunes. In both his invasions of Normandy his armies became enmeshed in plundering—the common problem of all invaders—and their cohesion

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124 William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi*, 46–49.

125 Wace, *Roman de Rou et des ducs de Normandie*, 2:4815, trans. in Burgess, "Further Research," 195.

126 William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi*, §30–32, 50–55; William of Jumièges, *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, ed. Elisabeth M. C. van Houts, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 1:142–47.

127 William of Jumièges, *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, 1:151–53; William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi*, §34, 54–57; Wace, *Roman de Rou et des ducs de Normandie*, 2:5115–18, trans. in Burgess, "Further Research," 198–200, who provides a lot of detail, and also says it was the breaking of a bridge that divided the royal army.

collapsed. It would be another sixty years before a French king would openly challenge enemies in battle.

Henry died in 1060, leaving an eight-year-old son, Philip I, for whom Baldwin V of Flanders, whose daughter Mathilda was married to William of Normandy, acted as a wise and forceful regent. In the same year Geoffrey of Anjou also died, designating his nephew Geoffrey as his successor. His younger brother, Fulk, was given lands in Aquitaine, which were rapidly reconquered by the duke of Aquitaine. Fulk, called Réchin, then turned on his brother, and Anjou was wracked by a succession dispute that gravely weakened the county. The duke of Normandy moved into Maine, while Fulk conceded the Gâtinais to the king in return for recognition. Even more seriously, the leading vassals of the Angevin lands asserted their own control over comital castles committed to their charge, or built new ones, and so achieved a new independence.[128]

The regency in France and the weakness of Anjou were the conditions that permitted William of Normandy to invade England in 1066 and become its king. This radically changed the balance of power in France, because England was a tightly governed land and yielded rich taxes to its rulers.[129] There were now two kings, and, quite clearly, the king of France was not the more powerful. Moreover, William's capital, Rouen, is only 137 km (85 miles) from Paris, and between their lands lay areas of disputed allegiance, such as the Vexin. This was a new situation for the monarchy, but also for all the great princes of France, who now were forced to pick their way between two great powers.

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128 Dunbabin, *France in the Making*, 189.

129 Henry R. Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest* (London: Longman, 1962), 331–84.

A CLASH OF DYNASTIES 1066–1180

The French Monarchy and the Anglo-Norman State

BY THE LATER eleventh century the great principalities of France had largely become fixed items in the political landscape, and in theory they accepted that they were subject to the Capetian king. In practice the princes rarely attended the royal court, and the king's relations with them were comparable (but not identical) to those with foreign powers, in that occasions of compelling mutual (and often opposed) interest would bring them together. As we have seen, the monarchy's real focus had shrunk to between the Seine and Loire, and even there the rise of castellans meant that the king had to persuade rather than command. This condition affected all the principalities, however, and the king struggled to control those who owed him obedience. The more distant of the principalities ignored the monarchy almost totally. The dukes of Brittany were deeply concerned by aggression from Normandy and Anjou but had little to do with the monarchy. The counts of Toulouse and Gothia, especially under Raymond IV of St. Gilles, who absorbed the county of Provence and Arles, virtually ignored the Capetians.[1] Burgundy, though ruled by a cadet branch of the Capetian house, was very aloof. By contrast, Blois-Chartres to the west of the royal demesne, and Champagne to the east, both held by descendants of Herbert II of Vermandois, were intimately caught up with the monarchy. Flanders was a mighty power in the north, which marched with the Capetian sphere of influence. Ever menacing was the Anglo-Norman realm to the west, so close to Paris.[2]

None of these magnates, not even the Anglo-Norman king, ever denied the position of the king of France, however, let alone threatened to overthrow the monarchy or any particular king. The problem was the ambiguities of political organization. The authority of kings was not so very different from that of princes—and, indeed, of lesser lords—for all could act as judges, raise armies, often mint coins, and make alliances with others. How this worked out in any particular case depended almost entirely on the particular political situation.[3] The complexity of relationships was remarkable. Montchauvet was founded jointly by Louis VI and the count of Montfort, an important lord on the Norman border, in 1123; both paid rent to the abbey of St. Germain for the land, and when the

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1 John H. Hill and Laurita L. Hill, *Raymond IV de Saint Gilles, 1041/2–1105* (Toulouse: Privat, 1959), 1–22.

2 For a useful summary, see Constance B. Bouchard, "The Kingdom of the Franks to 1108," in NCMH, 4.

3 For a fine exploration of the ambiguities, see Jean-François Lemarignier, *Recherches sur l'hommage en marche et les frontières féodales* (Lille: Bibliothèque universitaire, 1945).

customs were written down they provided that the burgesses should remain neutral in the event of war between count and king.[4] There was no frontier in the modern sense between the Norman duchy and the kingdom, but merely a March, where loyalties could be very uncertain and the scope for lordly enterprise was enormous. In the area east of the Eure there were a great number of castles, which seem to have been built as a defensive screen against the Normans at the turn of the tenth and eleventh centuries. By 1100 none were in royal hands, though.[5] There were important lords on the Norman side, such as those of Eu, Mortain, and Evreux, who also acknowledged royal lordship in some areas, and on the French side families such as the Monforts and the Brévals might also turn to the duke. In 1077 Count Simon of the Vexin decided to enter a monastery, and Philip I managed to seize control of this great county, which stood between the Norman duchy and the kingdom, though his hold on it was never very certain.[6] According to Orderic Vitalis, the king invested his son and heir, Louis, with the Vexin.[7] The French king had relatively few castles in the Vexin, however, where his control depended on a limited number of centres, notably Pontoise, Chaumont, and Mantes. This last was confided by Prince Louis to his illegitimate brother in 1104, but he became disloyal and was deprived.[8] In general, the French kings did not try to seize or repossess castles along this frontier[9]—perhaps because they had enough problems elsewhere.

The first military challenge for King Philip emerged in Flanders. When Baldwin VI of Flanders and Hainaut (1067–1070) fell seriously ill he designated his eldest son, Arnulf, as his heir in Flanders, under the protection of his half-brother Robert the Frisian; his younger son, Baldwin, was to succeed in Hainaut, the land of their mother, Richilde. Baldwin's brother, Robert the Frisian, seized Flanders for himself, however.[10] Richilde appealed to King Philip, who gathered an army and came to Arnulf's support. William the Conqueror permitted his loyal supporter, William FitzOsbern, to support Richilde, who he may have hoped to marry. The allies and Robert confronted one another at Cassel on February 22, 1071.[11] As Verlinden long ago noted, the events of this battle are reported in different ways by the sources, making any reconstruction virtually impossible.[12] It appears that Robert was captured by Eustace II of Boulogne and perhaps subsequently traded for Richilde, who had also been captured, while the young Arnulf was killed,

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4 Daniel J. Power, *The Norman Frontier in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 87.

5 Power, *Norman Frontier*, 87.

6 Bouchard, "Kingdom of the Franks," 130.

7 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 4:264–65.

8 Power, *Norman Frontier*, 85, 87–88.

9 Power, *Norman Frontier*, 88.

10 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, 4–5.

11 Eljas Oksanen, *Flanders and the Anglo-Norman World, 1066–1216* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 16–17.

12 Charles Verlinden, *Robert Ier le Frison, comte de Flandre* (Paris: Champion, 1935), 65–70.

allegedly by his own men, and FitzOsbern shared his fate.[13] It would seem that this was a very confused affair. The upshot was a political settlement by which Philip recognized Robert the Frisian as count of Flanders. Richilde then submitted her county of Hainaut to the bishop of Liège, with whose help she vainly continued the fight.[14] Philip had hardly played a *beau-rôle*, but by the settlement Robert clearly recognized his kingship. The new count's stepdaughter was married to Philip, who thus acquired a useful ally against the Normans, and he was conceded the important land of Corbie.[15]

Philip was deeply concerned about the Anglo-Norman threat, especially as William refused homage on the grounds that he was also a king. In the classic way, Philip exploited familial disputes. In 1077 the Conqueror's eldest son, Robert Curthose, broke with his father, egged on by King Philip.[16] Robert and his French allies were penned in the castle of Gerberoi by William, but the young man led a sudden sally, putting the besiegers to flight and wounding his father.[17] William was much preoccupied by events in England and in his efforts to control Maine, where Philip supported those lords who resisted him, in alliance with Fulk Réchin of Anjou.[18] Philip continued to support Robert Curthose, however, provoking William to resurrect the Norman claim to the Vexin, leading in 1087 to a massive raid into the Vexin that culminated in the burning of Mantes, where he was fatally injured in a fall from a horse.[19]

The death of the Conqueror brought welcome relief to Philip, for it meant that the Anglo-Norman realm was divided. The elder son, Robert, received Normandy and the younger, William II Rufus (1087–1100), England. This outcome divided the lands of the great Norman aristocrats who held land on both sides of the channel, and affronted the ambitions of the two young men. Philip sold his support to Robert, in return for the town of Gisors.[20] Efforts were made by Robert and William to cooperate but, inevitably, they fell to quarrelling, so that in 1090 William supported Ralph of Conches in his feud with William of Evreux, essentially capitalizing on a personal quarrel to weaken his brother.[21] As a bonus to King Philip, Robert Curthose proved to be an incompetent

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13 Galbert of Bruges, *Histoire du meutre de Charles le Bon, comte de Flandre (1127–1128) par Galbert de Bruges suivie de poesies latines publiées d'après les manuscrits* (Paris: Picard, 1891), 236.

14 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, 8–11.

15 Fawtier, *Capetian Kings of France*, 105.

16 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 2:359; Charles Wendell David, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 17–22.

17 *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* ed. Dorothy Whitelock (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1962), 159.

18 Jim Bradbury, "Fulk le Réchin and the Origin of the Plantagenets," in *Studies in Medieval History*, 25–42 at 27.

19 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 4:78–81; David Bates, *William the Conqueror* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 202–5.

20 Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 100. Presumably not the castle, however, which was built by Robert of Bellême on the orders of William II: Marjorie Chibnall, "Feudal Society in Ordericus Vitalis," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 2 (1979): 35–48.

21 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 4:272.

and lazy ruler with little grasp of political realities. Orderic Vitalis noted that "Duke Robert was weak and indolent; therefore troublemakers despised him and stirred up loathsome factions."[22]

In 1089 Ascelin Goël, in vengeance for a personal slight, betrayed the important castle of Ivry, which he held of the Breteuil family, to Duke Robert. The result was a war in which the Goëls enlisted Richard of Montfort, an important French lord on the frontier with Normandy, and hired some of the household troops of King Philip, with whose aid they captured William of Breteuil. Once ransomed, William persuaded Philip and Robert Curthose to join him, and together they seized Brévol Castle with the assistance of Robert of Bellême, who designed a machine that was drawn close up to the wall—suggesting a siege tower, except that it cast great stones.[23] Robert felt slighted by the ensuing settlement, however, and attacked the castle of St. Céneri, resulting in another extension of the dispute.[24] This kind of weakness on the Norman frontier was very comforting to Philip I, but the onset of war between the brothers produced a real uncertainty.

After Pope Urban II (1088–1099) preached the crusade to Jerusalem in 1095 the papal legate, Jarento of St. Bénigne, made peace between Robert and William II, by which the English king paid his brother 10,000 marks so that he could go on the great expedition, and in return received Normandy, effectively in pawn.[25] By 1097 King William claimed the Vexin and sent forces into the area. According to Suger, Philip's son, Louis, responded vigorously—but to little effect, as his biographer admitted:

> King William, concerned at his need to hire more knights, quickly ransomed the English prisoners while the French wasted away in lengthy captivity, and there was only one way to get free. They had to undertake knightly service for the king of England … and make trouble for the kingdom [of France] and the king.[26]

William then came in person with a strong army in alliance with William of Aquitaine, and his attack was facilitated by the defection of two lords from the French Vexin, Robert of Meulan and Guy of Roche-Guyon. His offensive into the Vexin ground to a halt before the fortress of Chaumont, however, where he suffered very heavy losses, and the line of castles stretching down to Mantes whose lords remained loyal to the king of France.[27] He then switched his attack south of the Seine, where the lordship of Montfort stood firmly against him, though a few lords defected. In the end William

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22 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 4:114–15. Ordericus had, to say the least, little time for Robert Curthose, but this partisan view of the duke has been challenged by William M. Aird, *Robert Curthose: Duke of Normandy (c.1050–1134)* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008).

23 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 4:288–89.

24 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 4:287–96.

25 David, *Robert Curthose*, 91–96.

26 Suger, *Deeds of Louis the Fat*, 27. Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 5:214–15, says: "Louis was still too young to have acquired knightly skills."

27 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 5:217–19.

retired and a truce was concluded, under which defectors such as Robert of Meulan reasserted their fidelity to the French Crown. This was a major effort by William Rufus. Suger suggests rather vaguely that he aimed at the French Crown, but this seems very unlikely. Rather, he wanted to secure the Vexin, and he was able to attract the support of William IX of Aquitaine. Perhaps the most important achievement at this time was the building of Gisors as the lynchpin of Norman defence in the Vexin.[28] What was crucial in this war of devastation and sieges was the loyalty of the lords of the Vexin, and it is strange that young Louis is never recorded as coming to their aid. In fact, as Suger describes, he seems to have contested the very first Anglo-Norman incursions and then to have left the fray. Luchaire suggests that this was a result of tensions at the royal court between Philip and his heir, arising from King Philip's attempted divorce and remarriage, which perhaps meant that Louis's formal association in the monarchy did not happen until 1100.[29]

Philip had married Bertha of Holland in 1072 but he repudiated her in 1092 and married Bertrade of Montfort. He was subsequently excommunicated, precipitating a dispute with the papacy that rumbled on through the 1090s. In Suger's life of his son, Louis VI the Fat, Philip is castigated as lazy and pleasure-loving, but this is surely an exaggeration.[30] In return for recognition Fulk Réchin had ceded him the Gâtinais. In 1094 Curthose appealed to him against the depredations of his brother William, and, while the king's military power was limited, the idea of royal judicial supremacy was demonstrated.[31] He had checked the expansion of the Anglo-Norman monarchy with the seizure of the Vexin, and even as late as 1102 purchased Bourges from its viscount, who wanted to go on crusade. This was a huge purchase, perhaps costing as much as 60,000 *sous*, though this cannot be verified. Such a sum suggests that the Capetian demesne was far richer than its limited size suggests.[32] In his later years, however, he seems to have left military matters to his son Louis the Fat; and there was much need for military intervention in the lands of the monarchy.

Louis the Fat

Suger tells us that Burchard of Montmorency quarrelled with the abbey of St. Denis over customary rights—a common enough occurrence, as we have seen. Burchard refused

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28 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 5:214–17.

29 Achille Luchaire, *Louis VI le Gros: Annales de sa vie et de son règne (1081–1137)* (Paris: Champion, 1890; repr. Mégiarotis, 1979), xvi–xxiv; Dominique Barthélemy, "Rois et nobles au temps de la paix de Dieu," in *Suger en question: Regards croisés sur Saint-Denis*, ed. Rolf Grosse (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2004), 155–67 at 159, points out that this was a threat to Louis VI's claims to the throne.

30 Although Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 4:262–65, rather agreed.

31 Dunbabin, *France in the Making*, 139.

32 Fawtier, *Capetian Kings of France*, 104.

to accept a judgment against him in the royal court, but "he was not arrested there and then, for that is not the custom of the French."[33] This is an important revelation of the limits of royal power even within the Capetian sphere. The autonomy of aristocrats had grown as kings were preoccupied and lost their ability to reward and coerce. Capetian respect for noble autonomy was, essentially, a recognition of their limitations. Prince Louis pursued the matter, though. Suger says he needed troops provided by his uncle Robert of Flanders, and Orderic adds that Simon de Montfort supported him along with 100 knights from Adela of Blois. These men of Blois fled from contact with the enemy, however, and infected the rest of the troops with panic. So, while Suger says that in 1101 Louis ravaged the lands of Burchard and his allies "with fire, famine, and sword" and "Louis bent the humiliated man to his will," Orderic suggests it was no triumph.[34] Odericus also adds that the following year Louis was deserted in his action against Chambly in the same way. About the same time Louis intervened on behalf of the church of Beauvais against Drogo of Mouchy, who opposed him "amid a large force of knights, archers, and crossbowmen," who Louis charged through nonetheless to burn down the offender's castle.[35] The Capetians had contrived to impose a degree of order on the lords of their demesne during the eleventh century.[36] The phenomenon of castle-building posed a new challenge, however.

By the middle of the twelfth century no fewer than 148 "private" fortified sites have been identified in the general area of Capetian dominance, the Île-de-France, dating from before 1137. Many of these were earthwork and timber, and only some were later rebuilt in stone. It should be remembered that earthwork and timber castles were formidable, and that the decision to rebuild in stone reflected fashion and the desire for comfort as much as military necessity.[37] Although these relatively petty lords were clearly not the robber-barons they were once thought to be, and generally accepted royal authority, castles served as guarantors of their possessions. The monarchy was obliged to accept the relative autonomy of such people, and to intervene in their affairs only with caution. Thus the feuds of the Montlhéry and Rochefort clans, and the disappearance of heirs, allowed Philip I to acquire control of the castle of Montlhéry, which stood on the road between Paris and Orléans, and the king is said to have later commented to his son:

> Beware, my son, keep watch and guard that tower; the distress I have suffered from it has nearly made an old man out of me. Its plots and vile treachery have never allowed me good peace and quiet.[38]

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33 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §2.

34 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:158–59; Luchaire, *Louis VI le Gros*, no. 15: 8–10.

35 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §2; Luchaire, *Louis VI le Gros*, 18:11.

36 Dunbabin, *France in the Making*, 162–69.

37 Châtelain, *Châteaux forts et féodalité*, 225–27.

38 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §8.

Castles had been relatively few, and their possession confined to the great princes of France before the middle of the century. Indeed, Fulk Nerra had, as we have seen, built his dominance on a network of such structures. Even for the house of Anjou, though, maintaining control of them was very difficult, and the disorders after the death of Geoffrey Martel in 1060 enabled castellans to exercise control for themselves.[39] Louis VI (1108–1137), even before his accession, recognized the threat and took vigorous steps against what he regarded as abuse of power.

In 1111 the castle of Le Puiset served as a base for Hugh of Le Puiset to attack the properties of the young Theobald count of Blois, because it stood at a critical point between the lands of Theobald and the royal demesne. His ambitions were fed by the English king, anxious to foment trouble for Louis. Theobald appealed to King Louis VI for help, and, when Hugh declined to appear before the king, Louis consulted with the archbishop of Sens and other senior clergy, who testified against Hugh. Suger of St. Denis, later to be Louis VI's biographer, was intimately involved in the siege that followed, and from him we have an unusually vivid account.[40]

King Louis prepared his attack carefully. Le Puiset was an earthwork. In the eleventh century it consisted of a great enclosure, a ditch, and a bank crowned with a walkway and palisade, 420m long and 260 wide. To its northeast was a motte conjoined to the ditch but separate from the main enclosure.[41] The outer enclosure was unusually large, and may well have served as a communal protection at some earlier time. Suger was sent to his abbey's estate of Toury, close to Le Puiset, and ordered to gather supplies and men, because the king intended to use it as a fortified base. Once Louis had gathered his "host of knights and footsoldiers," they besieged Le Puiset. The royal army drove Hugh's men back into the wider enclosure, but they were faced with "a surprising volley of missiles which even the boldest amongst them found almost unbearable." The king's men pushed blazing carts against the gate, while Count Theobald's men attacked from another direction, only to be repulsed and to suffer heavy losses from a force of Hugh's cavalry operating from outside the fortification. At this point, however, a "bald priest" hacked a hole into the palisade on top of the bank and the royal army surged into the great enclosure, forcing Hugh to take refuge in "the motte and the wooden tower on top of it," though he quickly had to surrender and was imprisoned. The role of the priest and his footsoldiers needs some explanation. According to Orderic, the bishops of France had told the priests to form military communities of their parishioners to support the king, so presumably this was an instance of them in action. The same people are referred to in the royal action against Thomas of Marle.[42]

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39 Dunbabin, *France in the Making*, 188–90.

40 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §19, is the source for what follows. Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:154–57, 159–61, has a short version of the struggle with Hugh.

41 Châtelain, *Châteaux forts et féodalité*, 93–95.

42 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:156–57, 258–59.

This was not the end of Hugh. While captive he inherited Corbeil, and traded that place to the king in return for his freedom. He then rebuilt Le Puiset, erecting a small motte within the slighted great enclosure. At the instigation of Henry, and in alliance with Theobald of Blois, in 1118 he tried to take the fortified place of Toury, and when he failed was again besieged by the king. Louis was unable to defeat Hugh, who was joined by 500 Normans sent by Henry I of England. There followed a round of bitter fighting around fortified places until Count Theobald was wounded, and his desertion, permitted by Louis, enabled the king to triumph, disinheriting Hugh and wrecking his castle of Le Puiset.[43] This was not a final solution, however, for Hugh rebelled again, but this time not only was the castle destroyed but Hugh later went to Jerusalem, where he died in 1132.[44] The whole affair nicely illustrates the dangers posed by the castellans of the royal lands. Castles were difficult to capture, and rebellion could be supported by external enemies.

In military terms the first siege of Le Puiset was a very simple matter. The attackers pushed Hugh's men back into the defended area and hacked their way through the palisade despite considerable opposition. Hugh fled to the tower on the motte, only to negotiate a surrender. This suggests that Hugh's forces were inadequate to defend such a large enclosure whose fortifications were not especially strong. When Prince Louis attacked Mouchy-le-Châtel in 1101, as we have seen, he charged into the forces of its owner, Drogo, and pushed through into the castle, which is what happened at Le Puiset.[45] In 1118 Hugh of Le Puiset had formidable assistance, and, although the fighting revolved around the possession of fortified places, there is little evidence of complex machinery.

Sometimes, however, we have no details about the conduct of royal sieges. In 1102 Louis took the part of Hugh of Clermont, whose son-in-law, Matthew of Beaumont, had seized Luzarches in 1102. His attack failed and Hugh was captured, but before he could return King Philip intervened to bring a peace.[46] At Montlhéry in 1105 fierce fighting in the castle was ended before Louis could arrive to support the royal troops against the Garlande attackers.[47] In 1115 Louis took the castles of Crécy and Nouvines and disinherited Thomas of Marle, whose violence and cruelty were denounced by Guibert of Nogent: "His cruelty surpassed anything that our times had ever heard of.[48] But Louis forgave Thomas, who continued to menace his neighbours from his castle at Coucy. Ralph count of Vermandois persuaded Louis to mount a joint attack on this castle, in which

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43 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §21; Luchaire, *Louis VI le Gros*, 236:114–15.

44 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §22; Luchaire, *Louis VI le Gros*, 429:199

45 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §2.

46 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §3; Luchaire, *Louis VI le Gros*, 19:11.

47 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §8; Luchaire, *Louis VI le Gros*, 34:21.

48 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §24; Luchaire, *Louis VI le Gros*, 189:95; *A Monk's Confession: The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent*, ed. and trans. Paul J. Archambault (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 167, cited by Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 150.

Ralph killed Thomas in 1130.[49] On an expedition to the Auvergne to rescue the bishop of Clermont, who had been expelled by the count of Auvergne, Louis took Pont-du-Château in 1122, but we have no details.[50] Bribery, as at Ferté-Baudouin in 1108, was always useful.[51] Specialized siege machinery was well known by this time, however, and in frequent use by the French kings. Nevertheless, in the sieges at Chambly in 1102, Meung, Montfort, and Auvergne, we are simply told that siege engines or machines were used, without any more specific details.[52] At Montaigu in 1103 Thomas of Marle was besieged by his baronial enemies, who built siege towers along their palisade that surrounded the castle, and was rescued by Louis VI.[53] In 1107 Louis led an elaborate siege of Gournay in which a tower with a drawbridge was constructed to assault the castle; Jerusalem had been taken by just such a machine in 1099.[54] Ultimately, assault was not needed, because Louis defeated a relief attempt by the count of Blois and the place surrendered.[55] In 1110 Louis VI besieged the castle of his half-brother Philip at Mantes, deploying "various siege engines, ballistas and catapults."[56] Alas, as is so often the case, it is not at all clear what these engines were, though quite evidently missile throwers were at play.

Overall, the French monarchy used every means possible to attack castles, and certainly was clearly acquainted with the latest equipment for the conduct of siege warfare and could, if necessary, threaten the very basis of vassals' power: their castles. Louis also built castles of his own to control the demesne, notably at Montchauvet, Lorrez-le-Bocage, Grez, Corbeil, and La Ferté-Alais.[57] A careful reading of Suger's record of Louis VI's sieges suggests, however, that, generally, even after military action, the quarrels that led to them were settled by agreement. These were not wars to the death, but fairly limited quarrels within a polity that was, by and large, accepted. In an age when the elite were consolidating rather than conquering, it was appropriate for all parties to come to terms. This reinforced a pattern of royal respect for the great lords, however.[58]

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49 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §31; Luchaire, *Louis VI le Gros*, 461:215–16.

50 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §29; Luchaire, *Louis VI le Gros*, 318:147.

51 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §15.

52 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §§4, 6, 29.

53 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §7; Luchaire, *Louis VI le Gros*, 26:15–16.

54 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §11; Luchaire, *Louis VI le Gros*, 51:27; John France, *Victory in the East: A Military History of the First Crusade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 349–52.

55 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §§7, 11; Châtelain, *Châteaux forts et féodalité*, 117–18.

56 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §18.

57 Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 152.

58 Barthélemy, "Rois et nobles au temps de la paix de Dieu," 159, remarks that Suger's portrayal of a triumphant monarch is grossly exaggerated, but accepts that Louis VI was a vigorous monarch in his "Quelques réflexions sur Louis VI, Suger et la chevalerie," in *Liber Largitorius: Études d'histoire médiévale offertes à Pierre Toubert par ses élèves*, ed. Dominique Barthélemy and Jean-Marie Martin (Geneva: Droz, 2003), 435–54.

France and Crusading

Prominent among Suger's villains in his paeon to Louis VI were Thomas of Marle and Hugh of Le Puiset—both of whom had participated in the First Crusade, which was the greatest military event of the age. To a remarkable extent this would turn out to be a largely French affair. The crusade was launched at Clermont in the Auvergne, where, in November 1095, Pope Urban II proclaimed an expedition to liberate Jerusalem. It was an appeal to the military elite, and as such it was universal. Urban played upon the contradiction between the growing piety of the leaders of society, which engendered a sense of sin, and fear of the punishment beyond the grave for their warlike activities. In effect, Urban wanted to harness their turbulence to the goals of the papacy, and this was embodied in his proclamation, which promised any individual who joined the expedition a personal spiritual reward. This was truly salvation through slaughter, and the idea travelled at enormous speed across Europe:[59] "Whoever for devotion only, not to gain honour or money, goes to Jerusalem to liberate the Church of God can substitute this journey for all penance."[60] In practice, though, the crusade was overwhelmingly French, and this demands explanation.

Urban II was himself of a noble family from Champagne, had been educated at Rheims, and later became prior of the great monastery of Cluny.[61] One account of his speech at the Council of Clermont, written about 1108 by a cleric who claimed to have been present, emphasizes the pope's appeal to the "Franks" to remember their glorious past:

> May the deeds of your ancestors move you and spur your souls to manly courage—the worth and greatness of Charlemagne, his son Louis and your other kings who destroyed pagan kingdoms and brought them within the bounds of Christendom.[62]

Even before Clermont Urban had secured the support of Raymond of St. Gilles, and he went on to make Ademar, bishop of Le Puy, the papal legate.[63] Overwhelmingly, Clermont was attended by clergy from the French kingdom. In the aftermath Urban toured the south of France to recruit troops.[64] Urban's strategy was obviously to attract powerful

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59 John France, "Cutting the Gordian Knot: Urban II and the Council of Clermont," in *Crusading Europe: Essays in Honour of Christopher Tyerman*, ed. Jessalynn Lea Bird and Gregory E. M. Lippiatt (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), 73–91.

60 Robert Somerville, *The Councils of Urban II*, vol. 1, *Decreta Claramontensia* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1972), 80, trans. in Riley-Smith, *First Crusade*, 29.

61 *The Crusades: An Encyclopaedia*, ed. Alan V. Murray, 4 vols. (Santa Barbara: Clio, 2006), 4:1214–17.

62 Robert the Monk, *History of the First Crusade*, trans. Carol Sweetenham (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 80.

63 Hill and Hill, *Raymond IV de Saint Gilles*, 23–32.

64 René Crozet, "Le voyage d'Urbain II et ses arrangements avec le clergé de France (1096–96)," *Revue Historique* 179 (1937): 270–310; Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951–54), 1:91–92.

men whose influence would guarantee that many of their armed followers would join the expedition.[65]

The start of the crusading movement marked an embarrassment for the French monarchy. King Philip I was excommunicate as a result of his putting away of his wife Bertha in favour of Bertrade of Montfort, the wife of the count of Anjou—and, indeed, this sentence was renewed at the Council of Clermont in 1095, when Urban II launched the First Crusade. The appeal of the expedition to Jerusalem was so astonishingly powerful, however, that at a Capetian family conference Philip agreed in writing to submit to Urban and to send his brother, Hugh of Vermandois, on the great journey. It has been argued that Philip exerted considerable influence on the great men of northern France who went on the crusade in order to associate himself with the prestige of the movement. The rather indifferent performance of Hugh was glossed over by some of the accounts of the crusades originating in the Capetian sphere.[66] Hugh had an undistinguished role on the crusade and left the army at Antioch in July 1098. Subsequently he joined the "Crusade of 1101" in order to fulfil his vow, and died of wounds suffered in battle with the Turks on October 18.[67]

Hugh was only one of a number of broadly French participants who were closely linked by family relationships. Stephen count of Blois was married to the sister of Robert Curthose duke of Normandy, whose mother, Mathilda, was the aunt of Robert of Flanders. They all travelled together to southern Italy, where Robert of Normandy and Stephen wintered while Robert of Flanders pushed on to the appointed meeting place, Constantinople. Godfrey de Bouillon, although he was an imperial vassal in Lorraine, was the younger brother of Eustace III of Boulogne, a vassal of Robert of Flanders, while his youngest brother, Baldwin, who also joined the crusade, had married into the great Norman house of Tosny. By far the largest army was that of the Provençals, led by the count of Toulouse. In addition, those armies that are collectively (and quite wrongly) called the "People's Crusade" were partly drawn from northern France, though large contingents came from Germany and Italy. The French thus formed a substantial share of the armies of the First Crusade.[68] Even the Normans of south Italy under Bohemond of Otranto had connections with Normandy.

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65 John France, "Patronage and the Appeal of the First Crusade," in *The First Crusade: Origins and Impact*, ed. Jonathon Philips (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 5–20, repr. in *The Crusades*, ed. Tom Madden (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 172–93.

66 Fawtier, *Capetian Kings of France*, 18: Philippe Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Berolini, 1885–86), 1:688; Marcus Bull, "The Capetian Monarchy and the Early Crusade Movement: Hugh of Vermandois and Louis VII," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 40 (1996): 25–46; James Naus, *Constructing Kingship: The Capetian Monarchs of France and the Early Crusades* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 28–56.

67 Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, 2:24.

68 France, *Victory in the East*, 80–121.

The participants in the crusade were very well aware of the differences between them, yet they seem to have been happy to regard themselves as *Franci*, and, of course, the Muslim sources always refer to Europeans as *Franj*, "Franks." The anonymous author of the *Gesta Francorum* was almost certainly a participant, but he came from south Italy. He persistently refers to the crusaders as Franks, and clearly identified himself with that name. He praises the military worth of the Turks, but remarks: "They have a saying that they are of common stock with the Franks, and that no men, except the Franks and themselves, are naturally born to be knights."[69]

The military significance of the First Crusade was that the westerners adapted to the fighting methods of the Middle East. The Middle East is classic cavalry country, in which light horse can be easily raised or imported from the nearby steppe. The Turks were the dominant people in the area at the time, and they were a steppe people, predominantly horse-archers, whose main tactic was to surround their enemies and erode and break up their formations with sleets of arrows, before closing in for the close-quarter fight. The crusaders learned very quickly to keep tight formations, and to use their infantry to keep the horse-archers at a range at which they could not kill horses and mounted men.[70] This was so effective that it was adopted as the fighting pattern of the principalities established in the Middle East.[71] It is difficult to know who on the First Crusade devised these methods. The single most effective leader was the south Italian Norman leader Bohemond, but the Byzantines, who advised the leaders, were already well aware of Turkish tactics. Certainly, it would be rash to say this was a French innovation. In fact, the most distinctively French leaders had only limited impact on events. Stephen of Blois deserted during the siege of Antioch in May 1098 and returned to the west. In July that year Hugh of Vermandois was sent back to Constantinople on a diplomatic mission, and chose to return from there to France. His companion, Baldwin of Hainaut, was killed on their way to Constantinople. Robert of Flanders and Robert of Normandy were valiant fighters. The leading roles, however, were played by Bohemond, Raymond of St. Gilles, and Godfrey, who became the first ruler of Jerusalem.[72]

In fact, the crusade had little impact upon military methods in France. The Middle East was a very different world militarily. Certainly, the leaders would have recognized the value of the discipline and cohesion that developed in the crusader armies and made possible their victory, but applying this in France, where forces were recruited for short periods from people who did not know one another, would have been difficult. The "Crusade of 1101," which set off to follow up the victory of 1099, had strong French

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69 Anonymous, *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, ed. Rosalind Hill (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1962), 21; for a discussion on the importance of these distinctions on the crusade, see John France, "Ethnicity and Authority on the First Crusade" (forthcoming).

70 France, *Victory in the East*, passim.

71 John France, "Crusading Warfare in the Twelfth Century," in *The Crusader World*, ed. Adrian J. Boas (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 68–83.

72 France, *Victory in the East*, 269–70, 297.

contingents led by William IX duke of Aquitaine and William II of Nevers, though German and Italians predominated. They were all defeated.[73]

The crusade did have a lasting legacy for France and its monarchy, however. Suger, abbot of St. Denis, presented Louis VI as a righteous king and asserted the connection between the ruling Capetians and this new and powerful impulse.[74] It cannot be doubted that the states established in the east, Outremer, became strongly French in the course of the twelfth century, and even more in the thirteenth. The language of the settlers, both in Outremer itself and later in Cyprus, was French, and it was used in the records as well as literary productions.[75] The Order of the Temple was founded at Jerusalem in 1119 by a nobleman, Hugh of Payens, whose family were connected to the counts of Champagne, within whose county they held land.[76] Subsequently most of the masters of the Order were French. The Order of the Hospital of St. John at Jerusalem shared this character.[77] These Orders of fighting monks, devoted to the defence of Jerusalem, were one of the great crusading innovations providing the settlers with well-disciplined regular troops, and their Masters were usually French in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, although they recruited and received donations across Europe.[78] In addition, members of many French families settled in the east, creating a bond between France and the Holy Land that would last for centuries.

The crusade also had a more immediate result. On August 2, 1100, William II Rufus was killed by an arrow while out hunting. Robert Curthose had returned from the east by this time, but had dallied in southern Italy, where he married Sybilla of Conversano, with whose rich dowry he hoped to redeem his duchy of Normandy.[79] His delay permitted his youngest brother, Henry, to seize the English throne, though Curthose was welcomed back to Normandy. By July 1101 he was able to launch an invasion of England, but allowed himself to be bought off by Henry I (1100–1135), who proceeded to crush all opposition within the kingdom.[80] The separation of the two lands was inherently unstable, because the great lords and churches held land on both sides of the Channel, and, fundamentally, neither Robert nor Henry was satisfied by the arrangement.

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73 James L. Cate, "The Crusade of 1101," in *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 1, *The First Hundred Years*, ed. Marshall W. Baldwin (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1955), 343–52.

74 Naus, *Constructing Kingship*, 59–84.

75 Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, 119–20.

76 Malcolm Barber, *The New Knighthood: A History of the Order of the Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 6–19; Helen Nicholson, *The Knights Hospitaller* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993).

77 Nicholson, *Knights Hospitaller*.

78 Judith M. Upton-Ward, *The Rule of the Templars: French Text of the Rule of the Order of the Knights Templar* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1992), trans. of Henri de Curzon, *La règle du Temple* (Paris: Nogent-le-Rotrou, 1886), provides insight into their organization and fighting methods.

79 David, *Robert Curthose*, 146.

80 Judith A. Green, *The Government of England under Henry I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 12–14.

The powers of northern France seem to have regarded this situation complacently, happy with the division of the two lands. Louis VI was able to use the turbulence to assert full control of the Vexin, Geoffrey of Anjou was relieved of pressure in Maine, and Robert of Flanders was no longer bothered by Norman advances into his lands. Henry hardly made a secret of his ambitions. In 1101 he concluded the Treaty of Dover with Robert of Flanders, the "Jerusalemite," by which Robert promised, in return for the sum of £500 per year, to provide Henry with 1,000 knights, each with three mounts, at a month's notice. If the kings of France and England were at odds, Robert was to press the French king to peace. In the event that his persuasive efforts failed, Robert promised to go the French king with only twenty soldiers, sending the other 980 to Henry.[81] Not only was Henry rich, he also possessed a central military household capable of effective military organization.[82] King Philip was ageing and Fulk Réchin had reached accord with his neighbours. In fact, when Henry turned his attention to Normandy he made only very slow progress. Curthose was not a strong ruler, but the Norman lords knew how dominating Henry was in England and hardly looked forward to such a regime. In 1106 Henry defeated and captured Robert at the Battle of Tinchebray, however, although his son, William Clito, escaped.[83] The Anglo-Norman realm was unified once more, and with it the threat to all the powers of France, above all, the Capetians. This ushered in nearly twenty years of serious and large-scale, albeit intermittent, warfare.

Philip and subsequently Louis had to accept the new situation created by Henry's victory, but there was considerable tension, and in 1109 the English king seized Gisors which had been entrusted to a neutral castellan. This represented a grave threat to the French position in the Vexin, provoking the king to ally with the house of Blois and the count of Anjou. Henry was able to foment the rebellion of Hugh of Le Puiset and to detach the house of Blois, however, driving Louis to a peace in 1113 in which Henry's gains, including dominion over Maine and Brittany, were recognized.[84]

Many of Henry's Norman nobles became disaffected. Orderic says that "most of the Normans were whole-heartedly" for Curthose's son, William Clito.[85] In concert with Louis they rebelled, championing William's claim.[86] In the previous conflict there had

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81 *Diplomatic Documents Preserved in the Public Record Office*, vol. 1, *1101–1272*, ed. Pierre Chaplais (London: HMSO, 1964), no. 1; Oksanen, *Flanders and the Anglo-Norman World*, 59–63. See also Elisabeth M. C. van Houts, "The Anglo-Flemish Treaty of 1101," in *Medieval Warfare 1000–1300*, ed. John France (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 27–32.

82 Michael Prestwich, "Military Household of the Norman Kings," *English Historical Review* 96 (1981): 1–37.

83 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:85–93; Jim Bradbury, "Battles in England and Normandy 1066–1154," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 6 (1983): 1–12 at 6.

84 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:181–83.

85 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:184–85

86 Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 152–53.

been an implicit challenge to the legitimacy of Henry I, but it now became explicit. In 1118 Henry I seized St. Claire sur Epte, but Louis profited by alliance with Baldwin VII of Flanders and Fulk of Anjou to attack Normandy through the Vexin, in a war of ravaging and sieges. Suger records a sudden attack by Louis that seized the village of Gasny, which his troops fortified as a base, "opening up to pillage and fires a land that long peace had made rich." This forced Henry to construct a fortress nearby, and both sides plundered to force the other out by starvation. In the meantime a castellan of the Vexin, Enguerrand of Chaumont, took advantage of the confusion to seize Andelys and raid its hinterland.[87] Hugh of Gournay devastated whole expanses of land in Normandy.[88] In 1119 Fulk V of Anjou was besieging Alençon on the bitterly disputed frontier with Maine. He established a "park"—essentially, a fortified camp—from which to attack the town. Henry took an army to relieve the siege. The Angevin troops inside the "park" made a series of cavalry attacks on Henry's men, which seem to have made very little impression. Angevin reinforcements under Lisiard of Sablé happened to be approaching, however, and they took the Anglo-Norman army by surprise, inflicting heavy casualties and forcing a retreat, which caused Alençon to capitulate.[89] Chance and diplomacy quickly reversed Louis's fortunes, though. Baldwin of Flanders was wounded attacking Eu and subsequently died,[90] while in 1119 Fulk of Anjou agreed to marry his daughter, Mathilda, to Henry's heir, William.[91]

Battle of Brémule

Louis nonetheless continued the war, in which the Norman countryside was savagely devastated by raids from both sides. At one point Henry instructed Robert Goel to arrange a tournament with enemy knights, during which he burned the city of Evreux and soon afterwards took prisoner the distinguished garrison.[92] Louis and his army attacked to the southeast of Rouen, to ravage and thereby strengthen the Norman rebels. Henry's army was operating in the same area but in total ignorance of the enemy's movements. On August 20, 1119, his "rapacious foragers" were busy seizing corn when the lookout men watching over them saw Louis's army approaching, apparently intent on seizing Noyon Castle by treachery. The French and their Norman allies had blundered into Henry's army at Brémule that day.

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87 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §26, 113–14.

88 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:190–95.

89 Suger only alludes to the battle as a defeat for Henry. The best account is given in Paul Marchegay and André Salmon, *Chronique des Comtes d'Anjou* (Paris: Renouard, 1871), 144–51, and the main outlines are confirmed by Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:234–42; for a good discussion, see Bradbury, "Battles in England and Normandy," 7–8.

90 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:190–91.

91 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §26, 115, alludes to the wheel of fortune.

92 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:230–33.

Neither side had a very large army. Louis had about 400 knights, and Orderic adds that there were numerous foot drawn from the militias organized by the French bishops.[93] Louis seems to have arranged his cavalry in two groups, however: one under his command and the other under a Norman rebel, William Crispin. Henry's army seems to have had about 500 knights plus an unknown number of archers and foot.[94] The senior men on both sides advised their kings to back off from conflict, but their council was disregarded.[95] This was very unusual: no French king had engaged in all-out battle since Henry I's disastrous failure at Varaville in 1057. Strickland thinks Louis was pursuing a deliberate strategy of seeking battle at a time when Henry's prestige was relatively low after Alençon. Morillo, on the other hand, in a discussion of contemporary military culture, makes the case that Louis simply became exasperated.[96] Perhaps both kings were exasperated by the long and intense period of fighting and wanted to put an end to it. It should be remembered, however, that Louis had used charges into the enemy ranks during his campaigns against troublesome lords in the Capetian demesne, at Mouchy and against Hugh of le Puiset. This time, though, he was faced by tough professionals in the employ of Henry.

Henry was cautious and left it to his enemy to open the fighting. He chose to dismount most of his knights in two dense formations, either side by side or one behind the other, though a small cavalry force was thrown forward. According to Suger, "King Louis and his men … deemed it unworthy to plan carefully for battle," and he seems to have launched his knights in a mass charge, with William Crespin's division leading the way. The rebels scattered the Anglo-Norman cavalry screen, then seem to have tried to move around the mass infantry formations to attack Henry. The French force under Louis then apparently crashed into the infantry. Both formations seem to have become enmeshed in a bruising mêlée with the close-order dismounted knights of the enemy. William Crespin appears to have pushed through the struggle and made a great lunge at Henry, but his blow was deflected by the king's helmet and not fatal.[97] In the end only four knights were killed, and Orderic commented that this was because they "spared each other on both sides, out of fear of God and fellowship in arms … [A]s Christian soldiers they did not thirst for the blood of their brothers." Perhaps they also had hope

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93 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:244.

94 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 236–37.

95 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 234–35.

96 Matthew Strickland, "Henry I and the Battle of the Two Kings: Brémule, 1119," in *Normandy and Its Neighbours, 900–1250: Essays for David Bates*, ed. David Crouch and Kathleen Thompson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 77–116 at 111; Stephen Morillo, "Kings and Fortuna: The Meanings of Brémule," in *Military Cultures and Martial Enterprises in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Richard P. Abels*, ed. John D. Hosler and Steven Isaac (Martlesham: Boydell, 2020), 99–116 at 115.

97 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:338–39.

of ransoms, for 146 French knights were captured. Louis fled, became lost in a forest, and was rescued by a peasant.[98]

The Battle of Brémule did not altogether end the fighting, for Louis's men were soon back in Normandy waging a war of devastation.[99] Louis was forced to a disadvantageous peace in 1120, though, in which he recognized Henry's conquests and ceded Gisors with its commanding position in the Vexin. It was promised that Henry's son William would do homage in person to the French king, however, something that Henry had always refused. Fulk of Anjou went off on pilgrimage to Jerusalem.[100] Baldwin VII of Flanders had designated his cousin, Charles the Good, as his successor. He had spent much time in Jerusalem, and in 1123 may have been offered the kingship of Jerusalem. He had little interest in the affairs of Normandy.[101]

Then, just as the wheel of fortune had turned against Louis in 1119, so it turned against Henry. On November 25, 1120, his son and heir, William, set off from Barfleur to return to England in the "White Ship," but he was shipwrecked and drowned.[102] This reopened the whole question of the English succession and prompted rebellion among the Norman lords in favour of William Clito. Louis was at first cautious, but when Fulk of Anjou returned from Jerusalem in 1122 they stirred up rebellion in Normandy together, forcing Henry to return to the duchy in 1123. He had already established good relations with the king of Germany and emperor, Henry V (1099/1111–1125), who married his daughter Mathilda in 1109. In 1121 Henry himself married a daughter of the duke of Lorraine.[103] This was a threatening diplomacy, and even before it bore fruit the rebels in Normandy were almost wiped out in the spring of 1124. Waleran of Meulan was returning from his attempt to relieve the siege of his castle at Vatteville when he found his road blocked by local forces led by Odo Borleng, a member of Henry's military household. The rebels numbered about forty mounted men, including all the major rebel leaders, notably Aumary de Montfort, scion of an important family on the French side

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98 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:240–41.

99 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:247–52.

100 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:235–8; *Liber Monasterii de Hyda*, ed. Edward Edwards (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, & Dyer, 1886), 316–18. There is a newer edition of this source: *The Warenne (Hyde) Chronicle*, ed. and trans. Elisabeth M. C. van Houts and Rosalind C. Love (Oxford: Clarendon, 2013). Both Bradbury, "Battles in England and Normandy," 8–9, and Stephen Morillo, *Warfare under the Anglo-Norman Kings 1066–1135* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1994), 171–72, have outlined the events of the battle.

101 Riley-Smith, *First Crusaders*, 159, 176.

102 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:296–301; Richard Huscroft, "The Prince's Tale: William Atheling and the White Ship Disaster," in *Tales from the Long Twelfth Century: The Rise and Fall of the Angevin Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 3–21.

103 Austin Lane Poole, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta, 1087–1216* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), 126–27.

who claimed the Norman county of Evreux. Odo's forces were about 300, including many archers, a circumstance arising from the fact that they were drawn from local castles held for King Henry. The royal forces dismounted, with their archers thrown forward and under orders to fire at the enemy horses. Contrary to advice, Waleran insisted on leading a charge, in which almost all the horses were cut down by Odo's bowmen. As a result, few were killed but virtually all made prisoner. The more obdurate were blinded but William and Aumary were imprisoned and later restored. This was something of a skirmish rather than a battle, but Norman rebellion had been decapitated, and Louis deprived of his best allies.[104]

Louis would enjoy his triumph too, however, albeit of a different kind. In the summer of 1124 Henry V of Germany, in support of his father-in-law Henry I, invaded eastern France, intending to seize Rheims. Louis called upon the nobles of France to rally to his support, and poured resources into raising a great army. Suger presents this as a great triumph in uniting the forces of the realm. Notable in rallying to this call to arms were Theobald of Blois, the duke of Burgundy (who, of course, was a Capetian), and the count of Flanders, who apparently came with a small force. As he prepared to lead his forces, Louis VI went to Suger's abbey of St. Denis, where he received the standard of the Vexin, "which he held as a fief from the church [of St. Denis]."[105] This was later called the oriflamme, the war banner of the French monarchy.

Suger presents the army thus gathered as a vast host drawn from the whole of France, and, indeed, it was a triumph to enroll the duke of Burgundy and the count of Blois. Most of the other lords Suger names, however, were either from within the Île-de-France or the immediately threatened area. The count of Anjou and the duke of Aquitaine, as Suger admits, were not present. In the face of this Henry V withdrew, though there was no fighting.[106] In Suger's narrative the events of 1124 were a good way of erasing Louis's humiliation at Brémule, with Louis appearing at the head of a kingdom, achieving a glorious repulse of the enemy. This recalled the events of the German invasion of 978 and King Robert's appeal to the princes in 1051. This was, first and foremost, a political triumph for a monarchy whose legitimacy was enhanced by such widespread recognition. It is instructive to compare Louis with Henry I, whose troops fought battles at Tinchebrai in 1106, Alençon in 1118 (which he lost), Brémule in 1119, and Bourgthéroulde (at which he was not present) in 1124.[107] Because of his uncertain claim to the throne, he was faced with exponential threats and, therefore, was ready to take risks. In 1128 Henry's daughter Mathilda married Geoffrey, son of Count Fulk of Anjou, and Henry made her his successor, but this stored up problems for the future.[108]

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104 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:346–56; Bradbury, "Battles in England and Normandy," 9.

105 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §28, 128.

106 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §28, 127–32.

107 Bradbury, "Battles in England and Normandy," 6–9.

108 David A. Carpenter, *The Struggle for Mastery: The Penguin History of Britain 1066–1284* (London: Penguin, 2004), 161.

The Murder of Charles the Good of Flanders

The great event of the late 1120s was the murder of Charles the Good, count of Flanders, on March 2, 1127.[109] Suger presents a very particular view of the consequences of this major event. According to him, Louis rushed off to Flanders, not caring about the war with Henry I (which had actually ended) and restored proper order in the county, virtually on his own, bestowing on William Clito the countship.[110] In fact, as the murderers were under siege in the church where they had murdered Count Charles at Bruges, Louis responded to the barons of Flanders at Arras, adjudicating between the many claimants, and awarded the county to William Clito "[a]fter designation by King Louis, emperor of France, and election by all his barons and those of our land."[111] This was accepted by the great cities of Ghent and Bruges. Louis went to Bruges to supervise the siege of the killers of Count Charles, which lasted until April 19, and he received and organized their surrender. Louis left Flanders on May 6 having, apparently, intervened very successfully in the affairs of a great principality and installed a ruler who would be a good ally against Henry I. William alienated the people of Ghent, however, and other towns began to turn against him, perhaps under the influence of Henry of England, for whom William Clito was anathema. Thierry of Alsace emerged as the strongest of all the other claimants. Louis remained steadfast in support of Clito, whose position appeared immensely strong after his victory in battle over Thierry at Axspoele on June 21, 1128.[112]

This was very different from Brémule. Thierry's forces were besieging a castle at Tielt when William arrived. His army seems to have been quite small, about 400 to 500, made up entirely of cavalry, and he reconnoitred carefully to see how many of Thierry's troops were army (*exercitus*) or mere supporters (*turba*). Although his forces were much the smaller William prepared to fight, and divided his men into three groups, one of which was concealed. Thierry advanced with two groups of knights and a fierce battle began; it seems that Thierry's foot simply followed up the cavalry. Numbers at first prevailed, and William appeared to flee, but the pursuing enemy then fell victim to his hidden reserve.[113] Clearly, William was able to impose good order, unlike Louis at Brémule, and this won the day. The Flemish conflict was preeminently a war of sieges and raiding, however, so the battle was not decisive. On July 27 or 28, 1128, William Clito was besieging Aalst when he was thrown from his horse and wounded in the hand. The wound festered and he died soon afterwards, leaving Thierry as count.[114] Galbert

109 Galbert of Bruges, *The Murder of Charles the Good*, ed. James Bruce Ross (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 111–14; Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:370–71.

110 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §30, 138–42.

111 Galbert of Bruges, *Histoire du meutre de Charles le Bon*, §52, 194–95.

112 Galbert of Bruges, *Histoire du meutre de Charles le Bon*, §114, 297–301.

113 Jan F. Verbruggen, "La tactique militaire des armées de chevaliers," *Revue du Nord* 29 (1947): 161–80 at 171–72, suggests that this is an example of feigned flight.

114 Galbert of Bruges, *Histoire du meutre de Charles le Bon*, 307–8; Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:376–77.

records: "He [Thierry] finally went to the kings of France and England to receive from them fiefs and royal gifts."[115] Louis actually lacked the military force to impose his candidate in the turmoil of Flanders.

Louis's reign ended with a great triumph, though—one that was notably political rather than military. In 1137 William X duke of Aquitaine fell ill during a pilgrimage to St. James of Compostela, and on his deathbed declared that his heiress, the young Eleanor of Aquitaine, should be taken into the wardship of the French king. This decision does not seem to have arisen from a personal relationship. At some time between 1097 and 1102 Philip I had purchased Bourges, and this served as a base for Louis VI's interventions in the Auvergne in 1122 and 1126, which had somewhat irritated the duke.[116] There was a certain familiarity, though, and, in any case, it is difficult to see who else could have acted, especially as William was at odds with the Anglo-Normans. This illustrates the special position of the French monarchy. Louis immediately married Eleanor to his son, Louis VII (1137–1180).[117] The duchy was vast, but the duke's power really rested on the Poitou and the area of Bordeaux. Between these two areas the great lords of the Limousin were much less amenable to control from above, while Guienne, bordering the Pyrenees, was distant and subject to Spanish influence. The lords of these area were far more turbulent than those of the Île-de-France, and they could appeal to other powers, notably the counts of Toulouse, who had claims in the area. It was probably a consequence of Eleanor's claim to Toulouse that Louis VII apparently planned an expedition against Toulouse, though we do not know if it took place.[118] Nonetheless, this marriage enormously extended the reach of the monarchy.[119]

A French authority on the medieval French military has remarked: "In general the Capetian kings were neither great warriors nor cunning strategists."[120] This applies especially to Louis VII, whose military record is, to say the least, undistinguished. The situation on his accession was quite promising. Henry I had made his daughter Mathilda his heir, but on his death the throne was seized by Stephen of Blois, younger brother of Theobald IV of Blois and Chartres, who had inherited Troyes and Meaux to become count of Champagne, as Theobald II, in 1125. The tensions in England were mirrored in Normandy, whose elite cordially hated Mathilda's husband, Geoffrey of Anjou.

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115 Galbert of Bruges, *Histoire du meutre de Charles le Bon*, §122, 312.

116 Fawtier, *Capetian Kings of France*, 104; Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, §29.

117 Geoffroi de Breuil, *Chronica*, ed. Pierre Botineau and Jean-Loup Lemaître, trans. Bernadette Barrière (Paris: Société de l'histoire de France, 2021), cap. 48; *Historia gloriosi regis Ludovici VII, filii Ludovici grossi*, in RHGF, 12:125; Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*, 6:490–91. Naus, *Constructing Kingship*, 96, suggests that the fragmentary *Historia Gloriosi* was the work of Suger.

118 Richard Benjamin, "A Forty Years War: Toulouse and the Plantagenets, 1156–96," *Historical Research* 61 (1988): 270–85 at 270–71.

119 Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 157; Ralph V. Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

120 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 1.

This combination of circumstances offered an opportunity for Louis VII to turn against Theobald IV of Blois, who had so often allied with the Anglo-Normans against Louis VI. Moreover, as a result of the inheritance, his lands lay to both the west and east of the royal demesne, with which its territories were intimately interwoven. As count of Blois and Chartres, Theobald was bound to be anxious about the development of Bourges as a royal centre, which promised competition for influence in Berry. Such anxieties were only increased by Louis's emergence as duke of Aquitaine.[121]

The tensions with Theobald were intensified when Louis intervened in the episcopal election at Bourges and attempted to force the chapter to repudiate its choice and elect a royal ally. Theobald captured the moral high ground by supporting the original election, and in this he espoused the same cause as his distinguished friend Bernard of Claivaux, who was the outstanding spiritual leader of the age. Louis VII then backed his ally Raoul of Vermandois, who repudiated his wife, who was Theobald's niece. Louis's support continued even when Pope Innocent II excommunicated Raoul and laid an interdict on the royal lands. In 1143 Louis occupied much of Champagne and ravaged it by fire and sword. At Vitry his men burned down the church, reportedly killing some 1,500 people within it,[122] though we may doubt the numbers. It is often said that Louis's conscience was so terribly plagued by the massacre of Vitry during this conflict that it influenced his decision to go on the Second Crusade.[123] He refused to break off the dispute, however. Moreover, he continued to wage war in this way. In 1152 he tried to contest Duke Henry (as he then was) Plantagenet's possession of Normandy and devastated the country, burning the town of Tillières. Shortly afterwards he broke the terms of his truce with Henry when it seemed to his advantage.[124]

Devastation was so essential a part of war that no leader could afford this kind of conscience. In the case of Vitry, Louis was faced by the condemnation of notable ecclesiastics, above all St. Bernard, who denounced him angrily:

> But you will not receive any peaceful overtures or keep your own truce or accept sound advice … I tell you, you will not remain unpunished if you continue in this way.[125]

This combined with papal hostility, and military failure, to drive him to a settlement in 1144.[126] The fight with Theobald was so preoccupying that Geoffrey count of Anjou was

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121 Dunbabin, *France in the Making*, 310–18.

122 Guillaume de Nangis, *Chronique*, ed. Hercule Géraud (Paris: Renouard, 1843), 35.

123 Jonathan Phillips, *The Second Crusade: Extending the Frontiers of Christendom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 64.

124 *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, ed. Bruno S. James (Chicago: Regnery, 1953), no. 297, 364–66; Steven Isaacs, "All Citizens High and Low: Louis VII and the Towns," in *Louis VII and His World*, ed. Michael L. Bardot and Lawrence W. Marvin (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 62–85 at 69–70; Richard W. Kaeuper, *Medieval Chivalry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 202.

125 *Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, no. 297, 364–66.

126 Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 158; Marcel Pacaut, *Louis VII et son royaume* (Paris: SEVPEN, 1964), 42–45.

able to exploit his wife's claim to the Anglo-Norman realm and the civil war in England to overrun much of Normandy, so that by mid-1145 he was in a very strong position. His rise was noted by Louis VII and Thierry of Flanders, however, who entered Normandy in 1144. As a result, Geoffrey conceded the Norman Vexin to the king—such was his need for recognition and legitimization.[127] Since his wife was in great difficulties with her claim to England, this at least had separated Normandy and England. At about this time came a reminder of the problems of his father, when Gaucher de Montjay in the Marne rebelled and was crushed by Louis.[128]

The Second Crusade

Louis's attention to such events was distracted for many years by his crusade, however. On December 24, 1144, the city of Edessa, which had been captured by the First Crusade, was captured by Zengi of Aleppo, and an appeal was sent to Europe for aid to reconquer it. Pope Eugenius III faced grave difficulties with a political movement, the Commune of Rome, which opposed his rule of the city, but on December 1, 1045, he issued the Bull *Quantum Praedecessores*; this was, in the first place, addressed to Louis VII and the nobles of France, urging them to go to the rescue of the Holy Land,[129] and it is a reflection of the perceived close relationship between France and the settlements in the Levant. Louis VII called together an unusually large Christmas court at Bourges, and expressed his wish to lead an expedition to recover Edessa. He may have been moved by guilt over Vitry, but there is little doubt of his personal piety, and Suger had gone to great trouble to link the monarchy with the crusading cause.[130] The papal bull had not yet been received, though, and so the matter was put off till the Easter court of 1146, and support was asked of St. Bernard. Accordingly, the author of the *Historia gloriosi regis Ludovici VII* says, a great gathering of nobles from all of France met at Vézélay at the end of March 1146. Among them were Alfonso-Jordan of Toulouse and Count Thierry of Flanders, and, while most of the participants were from the immediate Capetian sphere of influence, this was a tremendous constellation of the elite from most of the lands over which Louis claimed some sway.[131] St. Bernard, who would become the chief preacher of the crusade, addressed this crowd and a huge number took the cross, following the

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127 Robert of Torigni, *Chronicles*, trans. Joseph Stevenson, in *Church Historians of England*, vol. 4, pt. 2 (London: Seeleys, 1856), 69–70; John Hosler, "The War Councils and Military Advisers of Louis VII," in *Louis VII and His World*, 11–28. Daniel J. Power, "Henry, Duke of the Normans (1149/50–89)," in *Henry II: New Interpretations*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Norman Vincent (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), 85–128 at 124, draws attention to this significant French intervention in the affairs of Normandy.

128 *Historia Gloriosi*, 125–26; Pacaut, *Louis VII et son royaume*, 42.

129 Phillips, *Second Crusade*, 37–60.

130 Naus, *Constructing Kingship*, 59–84, 87–90.

131 *Historia gloriosi regis Ludovici*, 125–26.

example of Louis and his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine.[132] To escape from his difficulties with the Commune of Rome, Pope Eugenius went to France, where he spent most of 1146 and 1147 assisting the crusade. Bernard, as the chief preacher, travelled extensively, and even persuaded Conrad III of Germany (who had not yet been crowned emperor) to join the crusade.[133] No major western ruler had so far attempted the journey to Jerusalem, so what was projected was truly a journey into the unknown and demanded careful thought and organization, and this took time.

Preparations were careful and thorough. On February 2, 1147, Louis and his leading men, along with St. Bernard, met delegates from Conrad and his chief men at Châlons-sur-Marne. Two weeks later at Étampes a great gathering of French nobles approved the appointment of Suger, abbot of St. Denis, as regent of France. He had long been a senior adviser of the king. Louis appears to have written to many of the rulers and great lords of Europe to prepare his way. Crucial to the progress of the crusade was the attitude of the Byzantine emperor Manuel Comnenus (1143–1180), who professed to be anxious to support the crusaders provided that oaths were taken to cross his lands peacefully and to return any former imperial territory they conquered; this was what the First Crusade had promised. Manuel had concerns about the French, who had close relations with his declared enemy, Roger II of Sicily (1130–1154). Moreover, he had only recently forced Raymond of Antioch, brother of William IX of Aquitaine, who was seen as French, to recognize Byzantine overlordship, and he feared that the crusade could encourage him to rebel again.[134]

Another of Louis's respondents was Roger king of Sicily; he sent ambassadors to Étampes, who "pledged his realm as to food supplies and transportation by water and every other need and promised that he or his son would go on the journey."[135] This seems remarkably generous, but it is reported in rather general terms, and we may wonder what really was intended. An offer to transport the French army by sea to Jerusalem would have been staggeringly generous, but perhaps no more was intended than to help them across the Adriatic.[136] Our informant is Odo of Deuil, who went on the crusade and whose account of events clearly expresses great hostility to the Byzantines, who, he believed, had betrayed God's army. He refused to use the emperor's name, saying it was not recorded "in the book of life," while praising Roger, because he "came originally from our part of the world [and] cherished the Franks."[137] In any case, this was an offer that

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132 Phillips, *Second Crusade*, 61–79.

133 Jason T. Roche, *The Crusade of King Conrad III of Germany: Warfare and Diplomacy in Byzantium, Anatolia and Outremer 1146–48* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), 67–74.

134 Phillips, *Second Crusade*, 120–21.

135 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, ed. and trans. Virginia G. Berry (New York: Norton, 1948), 10–11.

136 John France, "Logistics and the Second Crusade," in *The Logistics of Warfare in the Age of the Crusades*, ed. John H. Pryor (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 85–128 at 79–80.

137 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 11–15.

Louis was obliged to refuse. Conrad III was closely allied to Manuel against the Sicilians, for whom even the pope had no regard.[138] The refusal of Roger's offer closed the route to Constantinople through Italy, so the French had to follow the Germans down the Danube Valley. This had the advantage that they could use the bridges across tributaries that the Germans had built, but also meant they were passing through countryside somewhat denuded of food. The choice of this route meant that Louis had to make diplomatic approaches to Geza II of Hungary (1141–1162), and these were supported in a letter from Pope Eugenius.[139] At the same time Louis stayed in touch with Manuel to clear their way through the Byzantine Empire. There can be no doubt of the care with which Louis organized the journey for his army, and, although they had their difficulties, they arrived at Constantinople reasonably well provisioned. Indeed, both the German and French forces travelled much more quickly than the armies of the First Crusade, which had used the same route.[140] What of his army, however?

In early June 1047 he processed to the abbey of Saint-Denis, where, in a splendid ceremony, alongside Pope Eugenius III and Abbot Suger, he received the oriflamme, the sacred war banner of the monarchy.[141] After this ceremonial departure from Paris Louis joined the French forces concentrating at Metz. There, according to Odo of Deuil, "[a]lthough the king found nothing there which belonged to him by right of domain, he nevertheless found all subject to him voluntarily, as had already been true at Verdun." This is a clear expression of the intimate link between landholding and authority; and this "voluntary" subjection had limits, because, in agreement with the major leaders, Louis issued a law code for the army: "But because they did not observe them well, I have not preserved them either."[142] This comment reflects hindsight, of course, but in essence the situation facing the king on crusade was little different from that of any commander of a medieval army. Fighting hosts were made up of the retinues of the great, and the soldiers within them looked to their immediate lords rather than to the overarching commander, reflecting the general conditions of their life. Only those drawn from his own lands and centres of power could the king truly command. Almost immediately after this, when the army arrived at Worms, there was violence against the citizens and men were killed; it was quashed by the prompt action of the bishop of Arras.[143] It was a consequence of this fragmented nature of armies that logistics were equally individual, or, at least, the responsibility of individual groups. When Louis received food from the

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138 Phillips, *Second Crusade*, 116.

139 Eugenius III, Epistolae, in RHGF, 25:440–41; Virginia G. Berry, "The Second Crusade," in *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 1, *The First Hundred Years*, 463–512 at 469–70; Phillips, *Second Crusade*, 115–17.

140 France, "Logistics and the Second Crusade"; John W. Nesbitt, "Rate of March of Crusading Armies in Europe: A Study in Computation," *Traditio* 19 (1963): 167–82.

141 Naus, *Constructing Kingship*, 85.

142 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 20–21.

143 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 23.

Byzantines he passed it on to his immediate followers, but other contingents had to fend for themselves. This was why the elite brought silver tableware, to sell for food and services, as Odo shows.[144] It is against this kind of background that we must judge Louis as a soldier.

There was considerable hostility to the Byzantines in the higher reaches of his army, as Odo stresses, and this hostility was fanned by the news that Manuel had made a twelve-year truce with the Seljuks of Anatolia, largely because Roger of Sicily had attacked Corfu and the Peloponnese.[145] Louis sensibly refused to attack the emperor, however, and continued his discussions with Manuel, and these eventually bore fruit after the French had been shipped across into Anatolia. Louis and his leading men agreed to do homage to Manuel, and were granted markets and permission to ravage if they were lacking.[146]

It is likely that the French army were envious of the Germans, who had crossed before them and pushed on into Anatolia, leaving Nicaea around October 25. Much of their infantry and non-combatants left them and took the coastal road. Even so, by the time Conrad and his main force had reached Dorylaeum they were moving slowly, partly because they still had large numbers of infantry. They were so severely harassed by the Turks that they could not forage and were suffering heavy losses, so they decided to retreat to the coast road. The retreat became a route, however, and the disorganized and demoralized survivors met the French near Nicaea. Conrad III accompanied the French down to Ephesus, but was compelled by illness to go to Constantinople, regrouping such of his army as remained with him, and he went to the Holy Land by sea.[147]

It must seem astonishing that Conrad had not waited for the French, for, as we have seen, there was liaison between the two armies before departure. Had the two armies moved together there would have been a very severe problem of logistics, but, as Jason Roche emphasizes, that was a major problem anyway and at the root of clashes with imperial forces before they arrived at Constantinople. It is possible that Conrad was hoping to get to Antioch before the winter, was overconfident in his strength, and was misled by the speed of the march down the Danube.[148] Louis now faced the prospect of march alone, burdened by the knowledge of the quality of his enemies.

The coast road to Ephesus (modern Izmir), which they reached in late December, proved difficult, and food was in short supply. There the army turned up the Maeander Valley. This is a deep and broad valley with the river itself running down the middle, and it was swollen by the winter rains. From Izmir the army set out to march to the first major

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144 France, "Logistics and the Second Crusade," 83–84; Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 22–23.

145 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 55.

146 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 82–83.

147 Jason T. Roche, "Conrad III and the Second Crusade: Retreat from Dorylaion?," *Crusades* 5 (2006): 85–94; and *The Crusade of King Conrad III of Germany*, 229–79.

148 Phillips, *Second Crusade*, 175–78.

Byzantine city, Antioch-on-the Maeander, near the modern town of Kuyucak.[149] Louis prepared the army for a fighting march: he set a strong vanguard and a strong rearguard, placing the baggage and the vulnerable non-combatants in the middle, protected by a flankguard. This was in evident anticipation of harassment from the Turks. Since he had a number of Templars in the ranks, perhaps he did this by their advice.[150]

The Turks were a steppe people, and their manner of war was radically different from that of the west. Life on the steppe depended on movement, on shifting flocks of sheep and horses between pastures. A single horse needed about 120 hectares of grassland to feed it. In addition, hunting was a vital resource, and this was a collective activity, in which all the men of a group would form a crescent and drive animals over several kilometres into an obstacle, where they could be killed. This ingrained a sense of discipline. Their primary weapon was the composite bow, which was short enough, at about 1.2 metres (4 feet), to be used in the saddle. A wooden core to which was glued sinew on the outside and bone on the inside gave it great power. So the Turkish horseman had great hitting power, and speed that could be sustained over a period of time, because each man had a string of mounts. They were fierce warriors, but because they were not generally armoured they could not challenge heavy cavalry, such as the French knights, at close quarters. Their tactics were to harass, using arrows to kill and injure, eroding enemy formations, and often feigning flight to draw them out.[151] These tactics had certainly defeated Conard III's march to Iconium. In the face of these formidable enemies, Louis sensibly adopted a close-order formation to fight his way through them.

As the French approached Antioch-on-the Maeander they had to find a ford and so cross the swollen river. Hitherto the Turks had harassed, riding close to the ranks and firing arrows, retreating when challenged. As long as the crusaders maintained their formation, such tactics could only weaken. The slow process of crossing a very full river was obviously dangerous, however, and the Turks massed at the front and rear of the French army. Their main forces pressed too close, though, and the vanguard under Henry of Champagne, Thierry of Flanders, and William of Maçon charged into them, scattering the force trying to block their way, while the king led an attack at the back. This inflicted heavy casualties on the Turks, some of whom fled into Antioch-on-the Maeander.[152] Odo took this as an example of Greek collusion with the enemy and the emperor's duplicity, but actually Manuel's word probably carried little weight in this frontier zone, where local arrangements would have been more important. Moreover,

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149 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 110–12, simply refers to Antiochiae, which Berry translates as "Antiochetta" – a name usually applied to Antioch-in-Pisidia (Yalvaç), which is quite a lot further into Anatolia. I am very grateful to Jason Roche of Manchester Metropolitan University for clearing up my confusion on these places.

150 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 111.

151 France, "Crusading Warfare in the Twelfth Century."

152 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 111–12.

imperial influence was even weaker as they marched south toward Adalia, some 200 km (125 miles) from Antioch-on-the Maeander.

After passing the site of the massacre of the Germans under Bishop Otto of Freising, who had left Conrad to take what they thought was a safer route, the French approached Mount Cadmus. They evidently knew this was a formidable obstacle, because Louis ordered that camp should be made at its foot, and planned to spend the following day crossing it.[153] Nevertheless, the vanguard under the Poitevin, Geoffrey de Rançon, ignored these orders and passed easily over Cadmus to make a comfortable camp on the other side. The vulnerable baggage train then followed, seeking Rançon's force, but struggled on the ascent, while the rearguard, in which Louis VII was situated, seems to have lagged somewhat. The column, which hitherto had rolled along like a battering ram, was now effectively decapitated, and the Turks rushed in, massacring the vulnerable mass of non-combatants and foot. The king had not set his infantry in formation because he had expected to be in camp, so he led his cavalry forward through the baggage train in an attempt to repel the enemy. On the rough ground, though, the French knights found their horses clumsy, while the Turks, on their agile ponies, could manoeuvre and fire their arrows with deadly effect. Many were killed or lost their horses, and the royal guard was virtually destroyed. Louis himself was almost killed, but, leaping onto a high rock, he defended himself manfully. Only nightfall and the desire of the Turks to carry away their loot saved Louis and the French.[154] The king rejoined the scattered cavalry with the remains of the baggage train, but the army had been badly mauled. The worst damage was the loss of horses, for, without infantry in formation, Louis and the knights had tried to fight on horseback and fallen victim to the arrows of the enemy.

The next day Louis handed the command of the army over to the Templars and their Master Evrard of Barres. The whole army became associates of the Templar Order and swore to obey its officers. The remaining knights were placed under the command of the Templar Gilbert, who formed then into companies of fifty, each controlled by a Templar knight. All were to act in concert and the rearguard was heavily weighted with bowmen, among them many lords and knights.[155] Inspired by this discipline, the army marched on toward Adalia. The Turks continued their harassment, and drove farm animals ahead of the French to eat the grass. The army was starving and its horses were dying, but they marched on, inflicting some defeats when the enemy stopped to fight.[156] Eventually the army limped into Adalia.

It is very easy to blame Louis for the disaster on Mount Cadmus. Odo blames the disaster on Geoffrey de Rançon and the carelessness of the army, and praises Louis for his valor.[157] Equally, he also notes the failure of Louis to deploy the foot effectively for the

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153 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 115.

154 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 115–21.

155 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 125.

156 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 125–29.

157 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 122–25.

journey. Moreover, Louis seems to have blamed himself, because it was extraordinary for a king to delegate full powers of command to the Templars, to whom he even said he was willing to subject himself.[158] In her edition Virginia Berry remarks: "The elementary nature of these commands makes the former disorder of the army very apparent."[159] This is a little unfair, because Louis had brought his army through a difficult march in the face of the enemy. In any case, it was precisely these "elementary commands" that medieval armies, with their loose structures, were worst at carrying out. At Christmas 1142 Mathilda, who claimed the English throne in opposition to Stephen, was besieged in Oxford, but sloppy watchmen allowed her to escape.[160] Fragmented authority made discipline exceedingly difficult, and, whatever Louis' personal failings on this occasion, it was Geoffrey de Rançon's actions that really opened the army to attack.[161]

At Adalia the army found food and shelter from the heavy rains, but little fodder for the remaining horses, which could not even graze because the enemy were so close to the city. Louis called a meeting, at which his leading men pointed out that most of the knights and nobles had lost their horses and were unable to buy others, while the foot were exhausted. The road to Antioch, they thought, would be difficult and passed through barren lands. Therefore, they urged the king to proceed by ships, which they believed the Greeks could supply. Louis in response suggested sending the foot and non-combatants, who had proved a liability, on by sea while the lords and knights fought their way to Antioch. The nobles pointed to the shortage of horses, however, and said: "We will follow it [Louis's suggestion] if we can find horses with which to re-equip the knights." Since there was a patent lack of horses, Odo says that "the barons forced the king to risk shipwreck willy-nilly."[162]

The French endured high prices and harassment by the enemy, and the ships, when they came, demanded much money for passage. Many of the poor could not afford this and were resolved to march by land. Louis gave them money and some leadership and, distrustful of the Greeks, arranged that the count of Flanders should stay for a while to see that the sick were admitted to the city and guides provided. Ultimately, these troops perished from Turkish attack and, as Odo says, Greek treachery.[163]

Odo of Deuil's narrative stops at this point, and thereafter it is very difficult to assess the military contribution of the French to the crusade. At Antioch Louis was received with great honour, and evidently he still had substantial forces, because Raymond of

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158 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 124–27.

159 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 124n6.

160 Jim Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda: The Civil War of 1139–53* (Stroud: Sutton, 1996), 122–24.

161 Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda*, 122n5. Berry notes that Geoffrey de Rançon continued to enjoy royal favour. Of course, the Rançons were a very influential family of the Poitou, though, so Louis as duke of Aquitaine, and certainly his wife Eleanor, were obliged to treat him with care. Command went with rank, not military competence.

162 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 130–33.

163 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*, 137–43.

Antioch made specific proposals of an ambitious nature. His hopes for French support would have been very high because he was Queen Eleanor's uncle and had showered rich gifts upon the royal couple. Raymond urged an attack on Aleppo, and this certainly made sense. Zengi, the conqueror of Edessa, had died in 1146 and his lands were divided with his son, Nur ad-Din, newly installed in Aleppo. William of Tyre commented:

> He felt a lively hope that with the assistance of the king and his troops he would be able to subjugate the neighbouring cities, namely Aleppo, Shayzar and several others.[164]

This might also open the way to the original purpose of the expedition, the recovery of Edessa, which the Frankish rulers of the East had probably written off, for the city had been destroyed. It is not clear why Louis refused to consider this; perhaps he was disconcerted by the realization that Edessa was no longer a possible target, but, for whatever reason, he pressed on to Jerusalem. This caused enormous offence, and it is a mark of the bitterness that rumours arose that Raymond and Eleanor had an adulterous relationship. The upshot was that Raymond would have nothing more to do with the crusade.[165] Louis then set off to Jerusalem, offering no aid to Raymond II of Tripoli, through whose lands he passed. Louis arrived in Jerusalem to participate in a great meeting with Baldwin III of Jerusalem and Conrad of Germany and all their leading nobles at Palmarea on June 24, 1148. For all the splendor of the occasion, Conrad III had already agreed with the leading military figures in the kingdom to attack Damascus, so Louis had little choice but to follow suit.[166] The expedition against Damascus was a fiasco, which ended in bitter charges that the Jerusalemites were bribed by the citizens of Damascus to end the siege.[167] Presumably Louis and the French played a part in the vicious fighting and the subsequent withdrawal, but we have no details. Louis stayed in the Holy Land till Easter 1149, spent some time in Italy with the pope, and returned home late in 1149. Little wonder that the author of the *Historia Gloriosi*, after detailing the great following of the king, simply records that, after he performed his devotions in Jerusalem, the king returned home.[168] Inglorious as this may seem, however, in the following years the princes of the east turned time and time again for help to Louis VII.[169] He had shown great personal courage and much generosity to others—qualities that were widely admired. Moreover, his participation had reinforced the very intimate link between France and the Holy Land, which would persist right till the end of the

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164 William of Tyre, *Historia Rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*, ed. Robert B. C. Huygens, 2 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), 2:754, English translation by Emily A. Babcock and August C. Krey, *A History of the Deeds Done beyond the Sea*, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia, 1943), 2:180.

165 Phillips, *Second Crusade*, 207–12, deals very judiciously with the charges against Eleanor.

166 Roche, *Crusade of King Conrad III*, 290; Phillips, *Second Crusade*, 213, 216.

167 Phillips, *Second Crusade*, 217–27; Pacaut, *Louis VII et son royaume*, 53–55. Guillaume de Nangis, *Chronique*, 44–45, blames the greed of the native barons of Jerusalem for the failure.

168 *Historia gloriosi regis Ludovici*, 127.

169 Jonathan Phillips, *Defenders of the Holy Land: Relations between the Latin East and the West 1119–1187* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Naus, *Constructing Kingship*, 98–107.

crusading movement. In addition, the crusade was proof of the king's personal piety—a reputation that meant he stood well with the Church.

On their return to Italy the pope insisted on a rapprochement between King Louis and his wife, and this apparently took place, for in the summer of 1150 Eleanor bore him a second daughter, called Alix. She had not produced a son and heir, however, and this was probably the decisive factor that led to Louis's decision to seek an annulment on the grounds of consanguinity, which was duly endorsed by a council of bishops at Beaugency on March 21, 1152.[170] The trouble was that Aquitaine passed back to Eleanor, or whoever she might marry, and she was, therefore, a very attractive bride—for, of course, marriage at this social level was always about politics.

Louis VII and the Angevin "Empire"

Louis had accepted the annexation of Normandy by Geoffrey the Fair, count of Anjou, before he left for the crusade, largely because this secured the separation of Normandy and England. At the very end of 1149 or early in 1150, however, Geoffrey had invested his son, Henry, with Normandy. This was an affront to the king, and in 1151 he responded to an appeal by Giraud Berlay of Montreuil-Bellay against Geoffrey's seizure of that castle, and declared that he would recognize Eustace, son of Stephen of England, as duke of Normandy. What followed was the usual war of ravaging, during which Louis burned Sees. Ultimately, the Angevins conceded Gisors and most of the Vexin, and Henry, accompanied by his father, came to Paris and did homage in person for the duchy. This was a very limited royal success, for the Angevins were now a formidable power.[171] Nevertheless, the division between England and Normandy was perpetuated, Henry's pretentions to the English throne were languishing after a lacklustre campaign in 1149, and Geoffrey would have to accommodate both his sons, who were likely to be jealous of each other. The game of divide and conquer—or, at least, balance—seemed to be going very well.

There followed a remarkable sequence of events, however, to which Louis contributed to his own disadvantage. On September 7, 1151, Geoffrey the Fair suddenly died, and Henry seized all his lands, disinheriting his younger brother Geoffrey, who promptly appealed to Louis. After the annulment of the marriage to Louis, in March 1152 Eleanor was allowed to return to Poitou, but on May 18, 1152, she married Henry. Louis backed the young Geoffrey, who tried to attract support in Anjou while Louis attacked Normandy. He acquired the castle of Vernon and burned Verneuil and Tillières, but Henry ravaged the French Vexin, and still went to fight for his cause in England in 1153.[172] Louis's declaration that he retained the duchy of Aquitaine was

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170 Pacaut, *Louis VII et son royaume*, 59–62; the *Historia gloriosi regis Ludovici*, 127, would have us believe that the king acted on the instigation of some of his family, concerned about the issue of consanguinity.

171 John Gillingham, "Doing Homage to the King of France," in *Henry II: New Interpretations*, 63–84.

172 Robert of Torigni, *Chronicle*, in *Chronicles in the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard 1*, ed. Richard Howlett, 4 vols. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1889), 4:174–75 [*Church Historians of England*, vol. 4, pt. 2:728–36].

patently a nonsense.[173] Although Henry's campaign of 1153 in England was not very successful, by the summer King Stephen appeared ready to accept Henry as his heir. Stephen's own son, Eustace, rebelled, but died on August 17, so that by the Treaty of Winchester of November 1153 Henry really became heir to England, and on October 25, 1154, this became a reality when Stephen died.[174] Subsequently Louis made peace, surrendering the castles of Vernon and Neuf-Marché in return for 2,000 marks.[175] At the time of his divorce Louis had agreed that his wife could return to Aquitaine, but he was unusually scrupulous in adhering to this condition, while he mistimed his intervention in Normandy.

Essentially, this was an extraordinary sequence of events that were somewhat beyond his control; but he was now faced by a prince who was nominally his vassal, but also a king, holding a vast empire stretching from the Scottish border to the Pyrenees. It was a daunting prospect, for it completely upset the military balance in France, whose king was at risk of being overshadowed by a man who ruled more of France then he did. Moreover, the French situation was further complicated because an ambitious young monarch had arisen in Germany: Frederick Barbarossa (1152–1190), whose court could exert a powerful attraction on the princes of northern and eastern France.[176]

Louis did have certain strengths, however. He was on good terms with Henry the Liberal, count of Champagne, with whom he had campaigned on the Second Crusade and in the attack on Normandy, and who became "the most reliable of King Louis VII's great lords."[177] For the counts of Flanders, the Plantagenet dominion was an unwelcome and uncomfortably close neighbour; Count Thierry had supported Louis VII's campaign in Normandy.[178] Aquitaine was not wholly an asset for Henry, because its turbulent lords resented any control, and so it could absorb resources. Additionally, in 1154 Louis married Constance, daughter of the king of Castile, as a counter to Henry's friendship with Barcelona and consequent influence in the south.[179]

It was, therefore, natural that Louis should pursue an opportunistic policy, seeking to check the Plantagenet ruler by exploiting his status as overlord and seeking diplomatic support. In 1156, when Geoffrey approached Louis to regain his inheritance, the king was bought off by Henry, who made homage for every one of his lands: Normandy,

173 Pacaut, *Louis VII et son royaume*, 63–64.

174 Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda*, 165–95.

175 Robert of Torigni, *Chronicle*, 4:180 [*Church Historians of England*, vol. 4, pt. 2:737].

176 John B. Freed, *Frederick Barbarossa: The Prince and the Myth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

177 Theodore Evergates, *Henry the Liberal: Count of Champagne, 1127–81* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2106), vii.

178 Oksanen, *Flanders and the Anglo-Norman World*, 32.

179 Robert of Torigni, *Chronicle*, 4:176 [*Church Historians of England*, vol. 4, pt. 2:736].

Aquitaine, Anjou, Maine, Touraine, and all their dependencies.[180] This was a signal triumph for the Capetian, especially as Geoffrey died in the following year. In 1157 the two kings arranged the marriage of Henry's son and heir, Henry, and Louis's daughter, Margaret, whose dowry would be the Vexin. The key castles of this critical area were handed over to the Templars until such time as the very young couple were old enough to be married. This promised to regulate the French succession, for Louis had no male heir, and to offer a solution to the Vexin problem, in which both sides had a long-term interest. Subsequently Louis aided Henry's seizure of Nantes, a prelude to the conquest of Brittany in the 1160s. This was an area where the French kings had never had any real authority.

Through his marriage to Eleanor, Henry II had inherited the claims of the dukes of Aquitaine to overlordship of the wealthy county of Toulouse. Henry allied with the Trenceval family and the counts of Barcelona, who both had extensive claims against Raymond V of Toulouse. When Henry raised a huge army in 1159 it seemed likely that Toulouse would soon be incorporated into the vast landholdings of the Angevin, but Raymond V had married a daughter of Louis VII. Unwilling to precipitate a direct confrontation with Henry II, Louis encouraged his brothers and the bishop of Beauvais to ravage eastern Normandy, while he rushed to Toulouse and entered the city.[181] Unwilling to be seen to attack his overlord directly, Henry backed down, but, although the city was saved, the allies made substantial territorial gains.[182] Peace was made in 1160, but it was clearly very provisional, for Henry obtained a dispensation that allowed him to carry through the marriage of young Henry and Margaret, and to receive the Vexin and its fortresses from the Templars.[183] Henry had consolidated his power as a result of this latest round of hostilities, but Louis had scored a success in a part of France where hitherto the monarchy had been only a memory.

For most of the 1160s the French king avoided major direct challenges to Henry II, and pursued a policy of capitalizing on changing circumstances. He had other problems as well. The Emperor Frederick Barbarossa was intent on reviving the kingdom of Burgundy and Arles, which had been absorbed by the German monarchy in 1033 but had been totally neglected and allowed to disintegrate. This created a centre of attraction to the nobility of the east, and notably the archbishop of Lyons, for whom it offered rich possibilities. This was complicated because Frederick, in pursuit of his Italian ambitions, supported an anti-pope, Victor IV, against Alexander III, who enjoyed the loyalty of Louis VII and most of the French clergy. Frederick deployed

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180 Roger of Howden, *Chronica magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, 4 vols., ed. William Stubbs (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, & Dyer, 1868–71), 1:215, trans. Henry T. Riley, *The Annals of Roger of Hoveden* (London: Bohn, 1853), 255.

181 Pacaut, *Louis VII et son royaume*, 185–86.

182 John Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire* (London: Arnold, 2001), 29–30. According to Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, 1:217 [*The Annals of Roger de Hoveden*, 257], Henry "wasted his treasures in various expenses, still he was able to effect nothing there."

183 Pacaut, *Louis VII et son royaume*, 186.

mercenaries in the area to support nobles favourable to his cause, but the churches and monasteries overwhelmingly provided aid to Louis VII because he was loyal to Alexander, and in any case Barbarossa had concerns elsewhere. For a minimal military effort Louis had made many friends in the east. In 1163 he intervened in the disputed inheritance of the county of Auvergne, which was closely involved in the politics of Aquitaine, while Raymond V of Toulouse remained an ally, though one obliged to appease Henry II from time to time. In 1167 William count of Auvergne switched allegiance from Henry to Louis. Henry invaded the Auvergne with fire and sword, and when the two kings failed to agree on the rights and wrongs there were heavy raids across the Norman frontier, though with no definite result.[184] Louis's support for the Breton rebels brought little success, as by 1169 Henry had crushed them.[185] Henry had suffered a major rebellion by the lords of Aquitaine, however, led by the Rançons, the Lusignans, and the count of Angoulême, which weakened his position in the Aquitaine badly.[186] As a result, the two kings met at Montmirail on January 6, 1169, to hammer out an understanding.

Essentially, the settlement reached at Montmirail revealed that Henry's dominion was no empire, although contemporaries sometimes used the term *imperium*.[187] England and Normandy were ruled by a common administrative elite fired by the frequent presence of Henry, but Anjou (including Tours and Maine), Brittany, and Aquitaine lacked this kind of centralization, and their social elites often felt excluded from power by the presence of royal creatures in the seats of power. Aquitaine had always been a wild agglomeration of fiefs with uncertain boundaries and a turbulent aristocracy. William X of Aquitaine had wanted to marry Emina, the heiress to the viscounty of Limoges, but she was kidnapped by William Taillefer, the son of Vulgrin count of Angoulême.[188] One modern authority has described it under Henry II as in a state of "permanent rebellion," in which power was "a fragile commodity."[189] In 1168 Patrick earl of Salisbury, who had been supposed to lead a military expedition against the troublesome Lusignan family

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184 Robert Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075–1225* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 23–24.

185 Pacaut, *Louis VII et son royaume*, 187–200, provides a good summary of the complex diplomacy of this period. He takes a very optimistic view of Louis's activities.

186 Robert of Torigni, *Chronicle*, 4:235–36; Geoffroi de Breuil, *Chronica*, cap. 66.

187 This is the conclusion of Wilfred L. Warren, *Henry II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 627–28, in his definitive biography, and it represents a consensus among historians of this era. In general, however, Warren essentially tells the story of an English king, but Henry was French. For correctives, see *Henry II: New Interpretations*.

188 Geoffroi de Breuil, *Chronica*, cap. 48.

189 Martin Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire 1154–1224*, trans. David Crouch (London: Pearson, 2007), 187–97; John Gillingham, "Events and Opinions: Norman and English Views of Aquitaine c.1152–1204," in *The World of Eleanor of Aquitaine: Literature and Society in Southern France between the Eleventh and Thirteenth Centuries*, ed. Marcus Bull and Catherine Léglu (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), 57–82 at 59.

there, was murdered by them.[190] In the words of James Holt: "These lands were simply cobbled together. They were founded and continued to survive, on unholy combinations of princely greed and genealogical accident."[191]

At Montmirail Henry the younger did homage to Louis for Normandy, Maine, Anjou, Brittany, and Touraine, while Richard did the same for Aquitaine. Henry had already earmarked Brittany for Geoffrey, his younger son. The union of all these territories depended upon the person of Henry. At Montmirail Henry also agreed to forgive the rebels in Brittany and Aquitaine. For both sides Montmirail brought a relief, but it was not to last long. In 1170 Henry had his son, Henry the younger, crowned, though not his wife, Louis's daughter. Louis invaded Normandy and was forced to a settlement. Henry fell ill, however, and divided his lands among his sons along the lines indicated at Montmirail. In addition, Louis had given shelter to Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, whose assassination on his return to England in 1170 sent a grave shock through Christendom and damaged Henry's prestige. By contrast, Louis had sheltered him, and thereby gained admiration in the Church.[192]

Louis VII had improved his position in France with a minimum of military effort. His demesne had been augmented, perhaps not greatly, but its yield had increased with the expansion of agriculture. The cities of the demesne were cultivated by the Crown, yielding taxes and troops to the king. In addition, the administration of the royal lands improved, enabling the king to tap into the new riches generated by economic recovery.[193] Moreover, the reach of the monarchy had been vastly extended. In the east, and even in the south, churches saw Louis as their protector, and he had many friends among the great nobility. These were substantial achievements. This was the paradoxical consequence of the rise of the Plantagenet empire, and it was greatly assisted because the Capetians had a record of respecting the rights of their great nobles. The monarchy was stronger than ever before, and this gave Louis confidence. The birth of a son, Philip II, in 1165 must also have helped, for before then his likely heir had been Henry the younger.

Circumstances gave him an even greater opportunity. There was plenty of discontent in Henry's lands, because many of the great aristocrats felt ignored or even damaged by Henry's masterful government and his ruthless exploitation of their lands.[194] These malcontents were given focus and leadership by the revolt of Henry's sons, which broke

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190 David Crouch, *William Marshal: Court Career and Chivalry in the Angevin Empire 1147–1219* (London: Longman, 1990), 35.

191 James C. Holt, "The End of the Anglo-Norman Realm," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 61 (1975): 223–65 at 239–40.

192 Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

193 Pacaut, *Louis VII et son royaume*, 120–38, 139–60.

194 The extent and nature of these grievances is explored by Power, "Henry, Duke of the Normans," 100–109.

out in 1173. This resulted in a great military explosion and direct involvement of Louis VII's forces in a resulting confrontation on an unprecedented scale.

Louis and the Great Revolt

Henry II had agreed at Montmirail in 1169 that his eldest son and heir to England, FitzHenry, married to Louis's daughter since 1160, should do homage to the French king for Normandy, Brittany, Maine, and Anjou, while Richard did likewise for Aquitaine. The young Geoffrey subsequently did homage to Henry the younger for Brittany. Henry II seems to have regarded all this as future provision, though. He himself continued to act as head of the family business, conceding no real power to his son Henry the younger, who was, however, given substantial cash incomes.[195] This was galling to Henry the younger, especially after his royal coronation in England in 1172, made worse because Richard was being schooled by his mother as future duke of Aquitaine.[196] There is little doubt that Louis VII encouraged the young king in his discontent, for the promptness of French action in his support speaks for itself. The spark that set off the great conflagration of 1173, however, was Henry's determination to make landed provision for his youngest, and favourite, son, John. On February 2, 1173, Henry II held a gathering at Montferrat attended by Henry the younger, Raymond V of Toulouse, Alfonso II of Aragon (1164–1196), and many regional notables. He was determined to provide for his youngest son, six-year-old John, for whom he had arranged a marriage to the heiress of the county of Maurienne. This would have extended Henry's influence into southeastern France, the Alps, and northern Italy. Shortly afterwards Raymond V of Toulouse did homage to Henry and Henry the younger in a great court at Limoges.[197] As part of the arrangement John was given a number of castles and lands in the Loire, and this endowment deeply offended the young king, who had no land of his own.[198]

Henry the younger fled to the French court, where he was welcomed, and a powerful alliance emerged so quickly that it is almost certain that there had been considerable contact with the young man before the breach with his father became open. Leading French nobles, such as the counts of Champagne, Blois, and Sancerre, had feared Henry II as a great neighbour, and rallied to the royal cause. Philip count of Flanders and his brother, Matthew of Boulogne, were equally eager to join with the young king. In England the earl of Leicester found ample support from discontented nobles, while the Scottish king, William the Lion (1165–1214), saw a chance to extend his southern frontier into northern England. There were considerable elements in Normandy, the Loire, and Brittany restive at Henry II's despotic attitudes. Moreover, Queen Eleanor had

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195 Aurell, *Plantagenet Empire*, 263–64; for another discussion of the empire, see Gillingham, *Angevin Empire*, 2–5.

196 Frank Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England 1042–1216* (London: Longman, 1988), 330–31.

197 Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, 2:45 [*The Annals of Roger de Hoveden*, 366].

198 Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, 120–22.

become estranged from her husband, and brought her sons, Richard and Geoffrey, into this great uprising, which was orchestrated by Louis VII.[199] The alliance was a triumph for Louis's diplomacy, for it opened up the prospect of checking Henry's ability to raise funds in England, his real treasury, which might even be open to invasion by Flemish ships, at the same time as providing for far-flung rebellions across the whole extent of the Plantagenet lands. This had to be backed up with military power, however, directed in a sensible strategy. Coordinating action over such distances was a real problem for Louis, especially as all the allies had rather different objectives, and each controlled his own forces.

Louis's immediate focus was Normandy. It was the link between England and the continental lands, and adjacent to the lands of his most important allies. A three-pronged attack was launched. Henry the younger had been supplied with some 400 knights by the French king, and, in the company of Philip of Flanders and his brother, Matthew of Boulogne, he attacked from the northeast, seizing Aumale in June 1173, while Louis attacked Verneuil in the southeast and the Breton rebels stirred up trouble in the west. In England much of the Midlands was quickly in revolt, while the Scots invaded the north, although they proved unwilling to face an English army in the field. After Aumale Henry the younger pressed on to Drincourt, which was on the point of surrender when Matthew of Boulogne insisted on storming the place. The castle fell, but he was wounded, and soon afterwards died; this precipitated a succession crisis, for Matthew was his brother's heir, and as a result Philip pulled out of the war. The young Henry then joined Louis at Verneuil, which, after a month of siege, was starving. Louis agreed that the garrison could have three days of respite, after which, if Henry II had not appeared, they would surrender. Henry II had not been idle and recruited a very large mercenary force, with which he challenged Louis to battle. The French managed to prevent knowledge of Henry's imminence from reaching the garrison of Verneuil, which surrendered, only to be sacked by the French, in breach of the terms of surrender. Louis and his army then fled in panic fearing attack by Henry II. In the meantime Brittany burst into rebellion. Henry sent a strong army of mercenaries led by his elite household knights, who, on August 20, defeated the rebels in battle at Dol. Quite why the Breton rebels, in contrast to Louis VII at Verneuil, risked battle is uncertain, Perhaps they were carried away by early successes and hoped to defeat the royal forces before the king himself could arrive. In the event, they were destroyed, and their leaders forced to take refuge in the castle at Dol. Henry II then force-marched, even though carrying siege equipment, covering the 320 km (200 miles) between Rouen and Dol by August 23. The rebels surrendered on August 26, and, as they included Hugh, earl of Chester, this was a great relief for the royalist forces in England.

This first round of warfare had gone to Henry, and in a peace meeting arranged at Gisors in September 1173 he made a generous offer to his sons, but stopped short of offering them real authority. Louis is often seen as the ringmaster of the conspiracy,

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199 Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, 119–50.

egging on Henry's sons, yet in a contemporary letter to the pope Giles, bishop of Evreux, stated that Henry the younger refused the terms, despite the advice of Louis. Indeed, Louis might well have felt he wanted to cut his losses.[200] In the event, he was obliged to go for broke in the company of his protégés. Despite their losses, he and young Henry still held the initiative and had considerable assets. Above all, there was disaffection among the magnates of the Plantagenet lands, very notably in England, which was the main source of Henry II's wealth.

Count Philip of Flanders was now back in contention, and in September 1173 he provided mercenaries and a fleet, which landed Earl Robert of Leicester in East Anglia, where he joined Hugh Bigod, earl of Norfolk. His immediate intention was to relieve the royal siege of Leicester, and perhaps to join with William the Lion in an invasion from the north. The depredations of the Flemings were unwelcome to Earl Hugh, however, so Robert set out for Leicester, only to be ambushed and his army destroyed by royalists at Fornham St. Genevieve, leaving Hugh isolated. Henry II now took his army into Anjou, and was fortunate to capture his rebellious wife, Eleanor. While he put down rebellion in Aquitaine, though, Count Philip and Henry the younger prepared a large force at Gravelines to join a new invasion of England by William the Lion, which was supported by Roger de Mowbray, an important northern magnate, and many of the lords of the Midlands. In these circumstances Henry II returned to England, arriving before the main enemy fleet, delayed by unfavourable winds, could sail. Encouraged by the king's return, the English loyalists raised an army to attack the Scots, who had settled down to devastating Northumberland. In July 1174 King William allowed his forces to disperse while he and an escort of about 100 knights blockaded Alnwick Castle. The royalists at Newcastle learned from spies that he was vulnerable, however, and mounted a raid, which captured William. While Count Philip and FitzHenry dithered in Flanders, Henry mopped up the English rebels.

Louis VII had played no obvious role in these events of 1174, but now he moved to centre stage. He brought together an imposing alliance and laid siege to Rouen, the very heart of Plantagenet power in Normandy. Henry the younger and Count Philip left Gravelines to join him, along with the duke of Burgundy and the counts of Champagne and Blois, in a powerful army with a large infantry contingent drawn from the royal towns. The French army approached Rouen along the northern bank of the Seine, but the city could still draw in supplies via the bridge to the south bank, which Louis's forces could not occupy. In these circumstances, to have any chance of success they needed to assault the city, even though it was strongly fortified. In any case, a quick outcome was essential before the arrival of Henry II. On July 22 the assault began, and we are told that the attackers divided their troops into three units, each attacking in turn while the others rested. In this way the city was placed under constant attack by perriers, stone-throwing catapults, which battered the defenders, who in turn organized themselves in the same way to meet the twenty-four-hour attack. On August 10 Louis granted a

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200 Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, 172.

day of respite to the city in honour of St. Lawrence, his patron saint. It was perhaps the provocative rejoicing of the citizens, or, more probably, the prospect of advantage, that persuaded Louis and his men to assault the unsuspecting city.[201] The stealthy approach of the attackers was spotted by the defenders, however, who threw them back with heavy losses. The very next day Henry II arrived; the elite knights of his household were backed up by mercenaries and about 1,000 Welsh allies. We are told:

> The King sent the Welchmen beyond the river Seine; who, making way by main force, broke through the midst of the camp of the king of France and arrived unhurt at the great forest and on the same day killed more than a hundred men of the king of France.[202]

Henry then ordered the gates of Rouen opened so that his army could march through to confront the allies. Louis VII withdrew, burning his siege equipment, and soon afterwards he and Henry the younger concluded a truce with Henry II that formally excluded Richard, who was, thereby, forced to surrender. The conflict came to an end with the Treaty of Montlouis of September 1174, by which the sons, and even their followers, were very leniently treated. Louis VII and Count Philip had to withdraw their forces and surrender the castles and lands that they had seized.

What does this great conflict tell us about the royal army of France? Louis VII certainly showed himself to be a skilled diplomat, constructing and keeping together a powerful alliance. His resources were clearly much greater than earlier in his reign, for not only had he waged war but he had provided 400, and even on occasion 500, knights for Henry the younger. He could hardly be blamed for such a random event as the death of Matthew of Boulogne. The uprisings in England and Brittany were poorly coordinated with events elsewhere, but, in an age of poor communications, that was an inherent risk. The curious dithering of Henry the younger and Count Philip at Gravelines perhaps resulted from Philip's view of the risks he was prepared to take in a cause that was important, but not vital, to his interests. This kind of event was natural in any alliance of people with different aims. Failure did not shatter Louis, and even after the capture of William the Lion he carried on the fight. The rout at Verneuil and the humiliation at Rouen exposed him as an uncertain field commander, though. It is understandable that he wanted to avoid battle, for he had taken up arms for limited objectives that hardly warranted the risk. Moreover, the example of his allies in Brittany and England who did engage was hardly encouraging. It is also likely that his own people were very reluctant to fight a general engagement. Henry II's armies depended heavily on mercenaries, whose style of warfare was altogether more ruthless than that of their knights.[203] Fighting between gentlemen was one thing, but mercenaries were distinctly players in the game of war. Indeed, it has been argued that, in general, war between social equals

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201 William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, in *Church Historians of England*, vol. 4, pt. 2, chap. 36: 1–3.

202 Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, 2:65–66 [*The Annals of Roger de Hoveden*, 384].

203 John Hosler, "Revisiting Mercenaries under Henry Fitz Empress," in *Mercenaries and Paid Men: The Mercenary Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. John France (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 33–42.

in France was conducted in a fairly equitable way.[204] Even so, there was a degree of bluff in Henry II's challenge of battle, which Louis VII failed to exploit. The manner of his failure was ignominious.

Henry II had great wealth and was obviously moved by a grim determination to maintain his position. None of the allies could match his riches or his commitment, and, collectively, they lacked his iron sense of purpose. The heart of his lands was England, and the rebels there were confronted by a network of strong royal castles, which ensured that they were unable to seize any crucial point in the realm and so deprive Henry of the revenues that enabled him to pay his mercenaries. Thus, although Henry II was hard pressed, he always disposed of the means to defend his position. Moreover, he was served by able men whose loyalty had been built up over years, and it was they who beat down his enemies when he was not present. Louis, although dogged, could not inspire his allies as a war leader. In an age when armies were short-term and incoherent forces, the character of the commander was of immense importance.

Nevertheless, Louis VII had achieved a great deal. The royal demesne had been increased. Henry II never sought to overthrow Louis and always showed respect for the royal position, and his attempts to advance his power had been checked. Above all, the Maurienne match had been scuppered. In the Auvergne many disliked Henry's rule, though the acquisition of La Marche in 1177 strengthened his position. In Aquitaine he faced continuous rebellion, and even in Normandy resentment smouldered. All this offered opportunities for the French monarchy. Louis VII in his later years was clearly overshadowed by his great vassal, whose prestige stood high in Europe. He had lost nothing, however, and his overlordship had been acknowledged in eastern and southern France in a manner unknown to his ancestors. Louis VII had shown himself to be a just lord in a way pleasing and acceptable to the great lords of France. The contrast with Henry II could hardly, from their viewpoint, have been greater. This was his inheritance to his son, Philip II, who proved to be more aggressive than his father.

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204 Notably Barthélemy; see above, 11, n14.

Chapter 6

PHILIP II AND THE RISE OF FRANCE

LOUIS VII'S SON, Philip, who assumed power when his father became ill and was then crowned in 1179 at the age of fourteen, was a very different personality.[1] He also inherited a radically different situation. Louis VII had blocked the expansion of the Plantagenet empire and had shown that he could interfere in all parts of that great collection of lands. Even in the far south he was a factor in maintaining the independence of Toulouse. He had checked the ambitions of Frederick Barbarossa in the east and shown himself as the protector of noble powers there. Although he had not struck any fatal blow at Henry II, he had greatly curbed his ambitions. In addition, he had done all this with an ostentatious respect for noble privilege. This was a huge step forward from the situation he had inherited, and, while he had achieved no great accretion of royal demesne, his political activities were clearly backed by considerable wealth, derived from the economic expansion of the west.

The Early Reign

Because he was only fourteen, Philip was at first subject to the regency of Philip of Flanders, who had been a close ally of his father. The count strengthened his own position at the French court by arranging for Philip to marry Elizabeth of Hainaut, daughter of Count Baldwin V of Hainaut. As dowry of his wife, the young Philip was given considerable lands around Artois, though Count Philip was to retain control of them for his lifetime, and if there was no heir of the marriage they would revert to Elizabeth's father, Baldwin count of Hainaut. King Philip soon resented the ascendancy at his court of the Flemish count. Tension grew, and in 1181 Count Philip demanded the return of the castle of Breteuil from Raoul of Clermont, who appealed to King Philip and hostilities began. Count Philip, supported by Baldwin of Hainaut, burned Noyon and ravaged entire countrysides, until he confronted the royal army at Crépy, but there was no battle and truces were made at the approach of Christmas. It is a mark of the prestige of the French monarchy that Henry the younger, heir of Henry II, in person and with a strong following of knights, supported the French king.[2] The war resumed in the new year, with Baldwin of Hainaut ravaging as far as Compiègne. Baldwin was diverted by his long-running conflict with the duke of Louvain, however. At this time the countess of Flanders died. This round of fighting ended at Crépy with the mediation of Henry II,

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1 Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, 3–7.

2 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, §97.

effectively confirming Count Philip in all he held.[3] Philip of France lacked the military strength to defeat the count of Flanders in the open field, as Gilbert of Mons remarked.[4]

In 1183 King Philip permitted major figures at the royal court to bring proceedings that would effect his divorce from Elizabeth of Hainaut, causing her to walk barefoot through the streets of Senlis begging deliverance from this fate. Undoubtedly, Baldwin of Hainaut's support for Count Philip had made him and his daughter unpopular, and the king probably saw this as a means of putting pressure upon him, and, therefore, obliquely, upon Count Philip.[5] Then, even more boldly, in May 1184 King Philip, in the course of negotiations, nominated Baldwin of Hainaut as one of his guarantors, infuriating Count Philip, who felt he had been betrayed.[6] This played into a rather different set of events that bred distrust between Flanders and Hainaut. The following events, a dispute between major vassals, were of enormous interest and would ultimately profit the French king, in that they changed the balance of military advantage between him and the count of Flanders.

In 1163 Count Henry the Blind of Namur and Luxembourg, heirless and elderly (born in 1112), had made Baldwin IV of Hainaut (1120–1171) his heir. Count Henry subsequently had considerable doubts about this decision, and, indeed, even married again and conceived a child, leading to frequent conflicts with Baldwin V (1171–1195).[7] Neighbouring lords, especially the dukes of Brabant, sharply contested the claims of the counts of Hainaut to the Namur inheritance. Philip of Flanders, as overlord of both contestants, had never formally endorsed the settlement of 1163, perhaps for fear of alienating one of the other interested parties. In any case, the Namur inheritance, to whichever of the parties it went, would have created an entity capable of undermining his hegemony in the Low Countries.

In 1184 the dispute between Hainaut and Brabant came to a head when Baldwin V built a new castle at Lembeq. Count Philip had consistently refused to endorse the claims of Baldwin of Hainaut, and, indeed, had started to display considerable friendship to the duke of Brabant. Now deeply suspicious of the count of Hainaut because of his "betrayal" in the negotiations with Philip II, he clearly leaned to the Brabanters. Open war broke out between the count of Hainaut and the duke of Brabant, culminating in a battle at Lembeq in which eighty knights of Hainaut and 340 of Brabant were killed.[8] Flemish knights of note had sided with the Brabanters, and, in the light of this clear indication of hostility from Flanders, Baldwin V made a formal alliance with King Philip.[9]

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3 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, §§99–107; Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, 16–19.

4 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, §103.

5 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, §108; Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, 18.

6 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, §110.

7 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, §§33, 58, 57, 122, 142–46, 150–53, 208–10, 253.

8 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, §112.

9 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, §113.

There can be little doubt that the real cause of the estrangement between Baldwin V and Count Philip was the Namur inheritance, but this now played into Philip's hands.

Count Philip enticed Jacques d'Avesnes to defect from Baldwin and, in alliance with Godfrey of Brabant and Archbishop Philip of Cologne (who had his own grievances against Baldwin), invaded Hainaut. Calculating on King Philip being preoccupied with Count Philip's other ally, Stephen of Sancerre of the house of Champagne, the allies launched an invasion of Hainaut, ravaging the countryside. Baldwin V and his men retreated to their castles. Baldwin ordered his men to hold their castles, and issued a rallying cry that is highly illuminating of the realities of warfare in this age:

> Take comfort and be strong, because our enemies will withdraw at some time, and leave our lands to us, because they cannot take the lands with them.[10]

This is a very nice encapsulation of the basic reality of French medieval warfare: the enormous advantage of holding strong castles. This in part explains the French monarchy's careful handling of its noble subjects. It was Henry II's control of such fortresses that had enabled him to survive the revolt of 1173, and they were always a powerful factor in conflicts. The allies had not planned on a long campaign, and Baldwin had scorched the countryside, making it difficult to supply the army, so they retreated, with Archbishop Philip defecting from the alliance. The war went on, with both sides burning and looting the land until it merged into the great conflict with the king of France.[11]

King Philip did not intervene directly in the struggle in the Low Countries, although he was quickly able to end his conflict with the count of Sancerre. He raised a very large army, which, Gilbert of Mons suggests, contained 2,000 knights. The count of Flanders moved against him, but because he needed to garrison castles against the count of Hainaut he could raise only 400 knights, and this disparity brought him to submission. This was game, set, and match to the king, who profited enormously, without actually doing any fighting, by the settlement of the Treaty of Boves of 1185. According to Gilbert, by this agreement Count Philip continued to hold Amiens, Mondidier, Choisy, Thourotte, Bretueil, Poix, Milly, Bulles, Hangest, the vicelordship of Piquigny, and the lordships of Boves and Moreuil with associated land, but the towns of Noyon, Corbie, Montreuil-sur-Mer, and Saint-Riquier were now fully in royal hands. Moreover, it was provided that Count Philip's lifetime interest in Vermandois and Artois would revert to the Crown on his death. All this was confirmed by the agreement of Henry II at Gisors in 1186. Poor Baldwin V got little, and was forced to grant peace to Jacques d'Avesnes. King Philip had done virtually no fighting; the feuds of others had played into his hands and he was able to manipulate royal claims to place a façade of legality on what was effectively conquest.[12] The key event was the concentration of forces at the critical time when Philip of Flanders had overreached himself badly. This must have been a huge investment, especially, as

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10 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, §114.

11 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, §§113–17.

12 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, §118.

Gilbert says, the French and Flemings confronted one another over a period of three weeks. In an era when nobody could afford a standing army, such timing represented a significant manifestation of military skill and a huge financial investment. Moreover, the outcome was a considerable accretion of power and prestige to the French royal house. In 1187 King Philip visited Tournai, and Gilbert of Mons remarked:

> It was unheard of that any of his ancestors had ever come there. But the citizens, who had always obeyed their lord the bishop alone, were subdued to the king's will then because afterwards they obeyed the king according to his will in giving money and in expeditions.[13]

Henry II had not attempted to intervene against King Philip, and, indeed, his sons had been supportive. Philip showed no gratitude for this benevolence, however, recognizing that the Plantagenet ascendancy threatened to eclipse his power. The crushing of the great rebellion of 1173 had not ended tensions within the Plantagenet family. Henry the younger had considerable incomes but still no territory of his own and was intensely jealous of Richard, who enjoyed effective rule over Aquitaine during his mother's captivity.

In 1175 Richard was charged by his father with reducing the troublesome barons of the Aquitaine to obedience. Since outside Poitou and Bordeaux there was no effective machinery of government, this left no alternative for a determined duke except to intimidate the turbulent barons, who resented all control and had the means to resist. In addition, because they were so formidable and the duke's means so limited, mercenaries had to be recruited.[14] Because these were expensive, Richard's efforts were inevitably episodic. John, bishop of Poitiers, defeated the count of Angoulême in 1176.[15] Richard then made his name as a soldier as his father's governor in Aquitaine. Faced with a major rebellion of the southern lords, Richard crushed them in battle "between St. Mégrin and Bouteville" in May and went on to capture the leaders at Angoulême.[16] Faced with renewed rebellion, he crowned a series of campaigns in 1179 by taking the supposedly impregnable castle of Taillebourg. Once arrived at the castle, he set his army to devastate the countryside, and the garrison were so angered that they sallied out to attack his camp, which was pitched very close to the gates. Richard rallied his men, however, and drove into the castle to capture it.[17] These conflicts in the south were important to Philip II, though, because they exposed continuing rifts in the Plantagenet family.

The great barons of the Limousin were alarmed by Richard's harsh rule, and Henry II's purchase of the county of La Marche in 1178 had altered the balance of power in

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13 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, §137.

14 Ralph V. Turner and Richard R. Heiser, *The Reign of Richard Lionheart: Ruler of the Angevin Empire, 1189–1199* (London: Longman, 2000), 57–61.

15 Ralph of Diceto, *Historical Works*, ed. William Stubbs, 2 vols. (London: Longman, 1876), 1:407.

16 Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, 2:412.

17 Ralph of Diceto, *Historical Works*, 1:431–32; Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, 2:493–94.

the area.[18] In 1182 a major rebellion ensued, and, alarmed by its extent, Henry II moved into the Poitou and called his son and heir, Henry, to assist Richard in suppression of the revolts. The rebels, especially in the Limousin, proved very difficult to put down wholly, and they found support in Henry the younger, whose rebellion in 1173 they had supported. The rebels were aware of the tensions between him and Richard, which exploded in 1183 when Henry II demanded that Richard do homage to Henry the younger for Aquitaine. Richard refused, and war began between the siblings, with Henry II's younger son, Geoffrey of Brittany, supporting Henry the younger,[19] who proceeded to Limoges, where the rebellious barons led by Aimery of Limoges welcomed him. Philip II did not offer overt help but sent a substantial force of mercenaries, the Palearii, to assist the young king. En route they sacked St. Leonard of Noblat, and when they reached Limoges Henry the younger, unable otherwise to pay them, stripped the shrines of St. Martial of Limoges and Rocamadour of their treasure. No doubt it was with Philip's connivance that the duke of Burgundy and the count of Toulouse decided to join FitzHenry's army.[20] In the event, however, Henry the younger died of an illness at Martel on June 11, 1183, taking the heart out of the revolt.[21] Ultimately, Richard was fairly successful in imposing peace, but a minor episode of this war in 1184 reveals something of the reality of the ravaging that was the staple of all war.

Geoffrey de Vigeois was a monk of St. Martial of Limoges who later became abbot of Vigeois, and produced a history of the Limousin, from 994 to 1184. He happened to be at Arnac to celebrate the feast of its patron, St. Pardoux. This was evidently an important local event, drawing people from the whole region. Before the festivities began, news came that Richard's mercenaries were besieging the castle of Pompadour. This proved to be false, but it set off a great panic, and the congregation fled. On the next day, though, when it was evident that the mercenaries were near, the clergy took their more portable valuables for safe keeping into the castle of Gouffiers. In the confusion a wall in this castle collapsed, wounding Geoffrey. The mercenaries then arrived, "killing men and animals, sparing neither age nor infirmity and playing no heed to the sufferings of children." Despite ransoms being paid by the monks, the priory of Arnac was despoiled and many other places destroyed. One mercenary died in the fires they set, while another, evidently a Fleming, was killed by local peasants.[22] This was a small episode in a rather obscure war, but it illustrates just what the war of destruction was about: its uncertainties and its horrors. Richard set about pacifying the Aquitaine, fighting off attempts to seize lands by his brothers Geoffrey and John and recovering from Raymond of Toulouse territory that Henry II had won in 1159.

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18 Ralph of Diceto, *Historical Works*, 1:475.

19 Turner and Heiser, *Reign of Richard Lionheart*, 66–67.

20 Geoffroi de Breuil, *Chronica*, 107.

21 Geoffroi de Breuil, *Chronica*, 112; Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, 306–26.

22 Geoffroi de Breuil, *Chronica*, 260–62.

The death of Geoffrey in 1186 created new uncertainties, however, about the inheritance of Henry II.[23]

Philip must have been very struck by the discontents within this "empire" of the Angevins and was keen to exploit these family discontents. He had cultivated Henry II's younger son, Geoffrey of Brittany, whose early death in 1186 was a blow. In 1186 Richard threatened Toulouse in pursuit of the claim to overlordship that his father had raised in 1159.[24] Philip intervened, with very limited success, and made raids in the Vexin, which came to little. This proved to be the start of a war, however, that went on to last until 1214, though with some interruptions. In 1187 King Philip of France attacked the lands of Henry II and his son Richard, thrusting at Châteauroux. Baldwin V of Hainaut, whose daughter had married Philip, went to his aid with 110 chosen knights (*militibus electis*) and "eighty mounted sergeants with chain mail" (*servientibus equitibus loricatis*). According to Gilbert, on this occasion all Baldwin's men, with the exception of one knight, "had horses equipped with iron armour. Among the sergeants, many were armed as knights and had horses equipped with iron armour."[25] In 1188 there was an episode, recorded in the *History of William the Marshal*, that revealed much about the way in which both sides waged war. Philip's forces launched a surprise attack on Gisors, the key fortress in the Vexin. They were beaten off by Henry II's mercenary foot and retired, but only after doing a great deal of damage by looting and destruction, notably cutting down the famous elm of Gisors, which had often been a meeting place for the kings of France and the dukes of Normandy. On his return to royal territory Philip dispersed his forces—the usual pattern of saving the costs of keeping up an army. William the Marshal advised Henry to pretend to disperse his forces, but to concentrate them secretly at Pacy, from where they ravaged French territory all the way to Mantes, gathering enormous loot.[26] Neither side wanted battle: this war of destruction was less risky and promised to be effective, for, as the same source remarks elsewhere,

> when the poor folk can produce nothing and are unable to pay their rents they're forced to leave the land and seek a living elsewhere—so the lords, too, find their wealth declining and many are in serious want.[27]

Richard feared, however, that his father would disinherit him for his favourite, John, and Philip exploited this situation, allying with Richard in open warfare in 1188/89, which ended with the death of Henry II. This merely meant, though, that he was faced with a younger and more aggressive Plantagenet. The ramifications of the destruction of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1187 and pressure on both Philip and Richard to go to

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23 Turner and Heiser, *Reign of Richard Lionheart*, 66.

24 Benjamin, "Forty Years War."

25 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, §131.

26 *History of William Marshal*, 108–10. This episode is brilliantly described in Gillingham, "War and Chivalry."

27 *History of William Marshal*, 34.

the east finally led to their departure together in 1190. Philip's gains in Picardy were important, but he had made no gains against the Plantagenets.[28]

The Third Crusade

Despite the fiasco of the Second Crusade, the rulers of Jerusalem had several times appealed to Louis VII for aid as pressure from the Muslim world increased, and this points to the affinity between the peoples of France and the Holy Lands.[29] The collapse of the Kingdom of Jerusalem after the Battle of Hattin in 1187 produced an outpouring of grief and rage in Europe, which is why Philip, Henry II, and Richard, were moved to take the cross.[30] Before Richard and Philip could compose their quarrels, however, the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa had departed with a magnificent army.[31] Richard and Philip agreed to form one army and, though Richard's contribution was much the larger, to share equally in any gains and plunder. Many French barons had already departed to the east. All the kings made careful preparations, and these were to be paid for by the "Saladin Tithe," a levy on all of Christian Europe. Richard was able to collect it, but Philip, faced with opposition from his barons, could not, so this limited his army.[32] Philip and Richard finally departed from Vézélay in July 1190. Delays on their journey meant that they were obliged to winter at Messina. There Richard intervened in the disputed succession in the Sicilian kingdom, extracting huge sums from Tancred of Lecce, who subsequently became king. These riches were divided with Philip, in accordance with their agreement. Philip's smaller fleet arrived at Acre on April 10, 1091, but Richard stopped at Cyprus, which he conquered, and he arrived only on June 7.[33]

The purpose of the crusade was to liberate the holy city of Jerusalem and restore the kingdom destroyed in 1187, but the immediate task was the siege of Acre, which had long been the most important commercial centre of the kingdom. It had surrendered to Saladin immediately after Hattin, and by the autumn almost all of the Latin Kingdom had fallen, except Tyre.[34] Saladin twice threatened Tyre, but it had formidable fortifications, and its defence was organized by Conrad of Montferrat, who many of the surviving aristocracy of Jerusalem regarded as their leader. The contingents of troops from the west gathered around this last remnant of the old kingdom, but found themselves inactive; Conrad and his supporters thought it best to wait for the major armies they

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28 Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, 19–27; Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 164–66.

29 Phillips, *Defenders of the Holy Land*.

30 John France, *Hattin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

31 Andrew Jotischky, *Crusading and the Crusader States* (London: Pearson, 2004), 155–56.

32 Jean Richard, *The Crusades, c. 1071–c. 1291*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 222–23.

33 Peter Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades 1191–1374* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1–12; Richard, *Crusades*, 223–24.

34 France, *Hattin*, 104–12.

knew were coming from the west. In summer 1188 Saladin freed King Guy, who had been captured at Hattin, thereby dividing the Christian camp. Many blamed him for the disaster at Hattin, and Conrad refused him entry to Tyre. Guy was backed by Bohemond III, lord of Antioch and Tripoli, however, and on August 28, 1189, he led the hitherto unemployed western forces from Tyre to besiege Acre. A peace was patched up between Guy and Conrad so that Tyre became the base for the siege of Acre, which formed the focus for the crusade.[35]

Saladin had been somewhat distracted by fears about the arrival of Frederick Barbarossa, but the emperor died in Cilicia and his formidable army was then decimated by plague.[36] Even allowing for this, Saladin had failed to check Guy's assault on Acre when it was at its weakest, and permitted the besiegers to create a formidable strongly fortified camp. Saladin's army had established itself on a series of hills close by, and whenever there was an assault on Acre he had countered by attacking the camp, forcing the crusaders to turn and repel his forces. This stalemate had reduced both the city garrison and the besiegers to a state of misery. By the time Philip arrived the fortifications were badly damaged, and the prospects of any relief for the garrison uncertain.[37] The coming of the French lifted the morale of the crusaders, though.

Philip's army was of modest size, for it had been transported on only ten Genoese ships, which had to carry equipment and stores as well as soldiers. There were many French already at Acre, however, notably Henry II of Champagne and Theobald V of Blois, who had arrived by August 1090.[38] Their force was big and well enough equipped to inspire a determined assault, accompanied for the first time by artillery.[39] The defenders set the catapults alight, though, and the attack failed. Nonetheless, many of these men remained, and Philip's numbers were increased when the duke of Burgundy arrived with 650 knights, 1,300 horses, and 1,300 squires.[40] The king must have brought skilled men, and perhaps some machines, for by May 30 seven new trebuchets were bombarding the city, described as *petrariis et mangonellis et aliis ingeniis*.[41] It is typical of medieval sources that they use these terms without really specifying the kinds of engines involved. There were certainly traction trebuchets, but Philip (and perhaps other major leaders) are credited with particularly impressive machines, which may

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35 France, *Hattin*, 114–15.

36 Graham A. Loud, *The Crusade of Frederick Barbarossa: History of the Expedition of the Emperor and Related Texts* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010), 18–20.

37 For a full description of the siege of Acre, see John D. Hosler, *The Siege of Acre 1189–91: Saladin, Richard the Lionheart, and the Battle that Decided the Third Crusade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 7–101.

38 *Itinerarium peregrinorum et gesta regis Ricardi*, ed. William Stubbs (London: Longman, 1864), 92–94, trans. Helen Nicholson, *The Chronicle of the Third Crusade* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), 97–99.

39 Fulton, *Artillery in the Era of the Crusades*, 186–90.

40 John H. Pryor, "Transportation of Horses by Sea during the Era of the Crusades: Eighth Century to 1285AD," *Mariner's Mirror* 68 (1982): 9–27, 103–25, at 20, repr. in *Medieval Warfare 1000–1300*.

41 Hosler, *Siege of Acre*, 110.

have been counterweight trebuchets capable of damaging the walls of the city.[42] Philip's attack created a breach in the city wall, into which the French moved, only to be thrown back. The situation was so dangerous that Saladin was prompted to mount attacks on the siege camp, which brought the assaults to an end.[43]

With the arrival of Richard of England on June 8, Philip was somewhat eclipsed. Richard arrived with twenty-five ships and the news of many more closely following. The Pisans gave Richard their support and even the count of Champagne, who was impoverished after his long participation, offered him submission. Whereas Philip had offered knights three bezants per month for their service, Richard offered four, and so he garnered yet more troops. Richard's arrival intensified the divisions within the army, because, while Philip had favoured Conrad of Montferrat as ruler of the kingdom, Richard leaned to Guy, whose Lusignan family were his vassals in Aquitaine. Philip urged an immediate assault, and, when Richard declined to join him, sent in yet another failed effort.[44]

The French kept up the pressure on Acre, and by this time a substantial number of trebuchets were being deployed, in conjunction with miners attacking the base of the towers and walls. As a result, sections of the wall collapsed and the city's defences weakened. The garrison responded, even burning the strong "cat" from which Philip had been in the habit of firing his crossbow.[45] On July 3 a large section of the wall collapsed and the French tried to rush in, but they were held off. Immediately after this the commanders of the garrison approached King Philip with surrender terms, but Richard would not agree to anything, and so bitter was the division between the two kings that they almost came to blows.[46] The garrison was by now desperate, though, and Saladin suggested they sally out and attack the crusader camp at a time when he was assaulting it from the outside; in this way the garrison, though not the city, would be saved. This attack was a failure, perhaps because the crusaders were alerted by a deserter. On July 11 the Cursed Tower, the object of much attack, was undermined, but, caught by surprise, the attackers lacked the strength to break into the city. On August 12 terms were agreed and the besiegers entered, bickering over the spoils.[47]

At this point Philip declared his intention to return home.[48] He was much abused for this desertion, but there was an obvious priority for the king. On June 1 Philip of Flanders had died at the siege of Acre, and his only heir was his daughter, who was

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42 Fulton, *Artillery in the Era of the Crusades*, 9–14, 190–96.

43 Hosler, *Siege of Acre*, 108–12.

44 Hosler, *Siege of Acre*, 112–20.

45 Fulton, *Artillery in the Era of the Crusades*, 194–96; Hosler, *Siege of Acre*, 120–24. The "cat," or "sow," was a heavy wooden box, often with a sloping roof, from which a besieger could fire missiles and yet be protected from those of the besieged.

46 Hosler, *Siege of Acre*, 126–28.

47 Hosler, *Siege of Acre*, 133–40.

48 Hosler, *Siege of Acre*, 141.

married to Baldwin V of Hainaut. Of vital importance to Philip was that the terms of the Treaty of Boves, by which he stood to gain the rich lands of Vermandois, Valois, and Amiens, should be observed.[49] Perhaps he even hoped to gain much more by sending his officers to seize control of the whole county of Flanders, putting him in a strong position to bargain with claimants. By the time Philip had got back to France, though, Baldwin V of Hainaut had seized the county of Flanders in right of his wife, Margaret, the daughter of the deceased count. Baldwin went to Paris to ask for recognition, but Philip refused his homage and even tried to capture him. Both sides prepared for war but a settlement was reached at Péronne, by which Baldwin promised to pay the enormous relief of 5,000 silver marks and to cede important territories.[50] Philip had made very substantial additions to the royal demesne, which would provide the sinews for the war to come.

The War with Richard Lionheart

On leaving Acre Philip had promised Richard that he would respect his lands in France, something that he was, in any case, bound to do because of Richard's status as an absent crusader.[51] Richard, returning from crusade, was captured by Duke Leopold of Austria, however, and handed over to the Emperor Henry VI (1191–1197). Philip made every effort to persuade the emperor not to ransom him or to surrender him to France in return for payments.[52] Richard's younger brother, John, was persuaded to become an ally, and rebellion in the south was fomented. Philip invaded the Vexin, where its key fortress, Gisors, was betrayed to him, and he soon controlled much of eastern Normandy. Richard was released in early 1194 and, en route to England, recruited allies in the Low Countries, among them Baldwin V's enemy, the duke of Louvain, and this inclined Baldwin to the French.[53] Richard quickly crushed John's revolt in England, and, when he arrived in Normandy in 1194, John switched sides. Richard forced Philip to lift the siege of Verneuil[54] and recovered some castles, though after some fighting in the Touraine, by a surprise attack, Philip forced John to abandon the siege of Vaudreuil. Philip again moved into Normandy and burned Fontaines near Rouen, while Richard, moving into the Loire to recover castles (notably Loches, which his agents had surrendered to Philip during his captivity), extorted 2,000 marks from Tours.[55] At the same time Philip had subsidized the barons of Aquitaine, but Richard's ally, Sancho prince of Navarre,

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49 See above, 149; Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, §64; Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, 15–16.

50 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, §§184, 186, 188.

51 Hosler, *Siege of Acre*, 141.

52 Turner and Heiser, *Reign of Richard Lionheart*, 144.

53 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, §§197–98.

54 Ralph of Diceto, *Historical Works*, 2:114–15.

55 André Salmon, *Recueil de chroniques de Touraine*, 2 vols. (Tours: Ladavèze, 1854), 1:144.

attacked the county of Angoulême with an army within which were 150 crossbowmen.[56] Philip, with the French army, took Fréteval before moving on to besiege Vendôme. Richard camped in close proximity to the siege, and challenged Philip to battle, but the French king declined and fell back northwards along the south bank of the Loire. His army was encumbered by a huge tail of carts and packhorses bearing supplies, booty, and the royal archives, for the French court was still itinerant. Richard followed him along the north bank of the great river with his lightly armed mercenaries and cavalry, then crossed the river and hid his forces in the forest of the Plain of Lignières. As the French supply train came up on July 5, 1194, the Angevin force, which was especially strong in archers and crossbowmen, ambushed them. The French cavalry were in the vanguard, and they turned back to counter this attack, but were heavily repulsed by Richard's cavalry, and Philip chose to flee.[57] In the war of ravaging and sieges this was almost a battle. It is notable that Philip had refused direct confrontation at Vendôme and did not press for one at Fréteval. It was an expensive defeat, for Philip lost his entire treasury and all the royal archives.[58] It was not fatal, though, for in a military sense it caused the loss of some strong places, but that was all. This was to be a war of attrition, in which spectacular events were rare. Philip agreed to a truce at Tillères on July 23, 1194, however, which froze the status quo in Normandy, but left Richard free to deal with the rebels in Aquitaine.[59]

Such truces were little more than intermissions, and by the summer of 1195 there was more fighting in Normandy. Philip suffered some losses but, by the Peace of Louviers of January 1196, he retained control of the critical Vexin. Richard was able to strengthen his position in the Loire and the Aquitaine, though in 1196 he abandoned his family's old claims over Toulouse in return for an alliance with its count, Raymond VI.[60] The Bretons were supportive of Arthur, Richard's nephew, son of his brother Geoffrey. Despite the cruelties visited upon them, the Breton nobles succeeded in getting Arthur to safety in Philip's court. Desultory fighting in the summer of 1196 delivered Aumale and Nonancourt to Philip. In that year, though, Richard began the building of the great fortification at Les Andelys that we call Château Gaillard. This immense and complex structure, with its web of outlying fortifications, threatened Philip's hold on the Vexin and interdicted any move from there against Rouen. It was built under Richard's personal supervision, and completed at great speed—within two years. The cost was immense: something like £12,000.[61]

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56 Ralph of Diceto, *Historical Works*, 2:116–17.

57 Ralph of Diceto, *Historical Works*, 2:117; John Gillingham, *Richard I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 285.

58 It was after this that Philip established a permanent archive in Paris.

59 Ralph of Diceto, *Historical Works*, 2:118.

60 Benjamin, "Forty Years War," 283.

61 Gillingham, *Richard I*, 303.

The Peace of Louviers had specified that Les Andelys should remain unfortified, so the construction of the new castle was a flagrant breach, and it signaled a renewal of the war, with extensive raids by both sides. Normandy suffered badly, while England was taxed. Roger of Howden records the immensely complex machinery devised to ensure that all the money was collected.[62] Raid and counter-raid ensued, with growing savagery. Richard won the allegiance of Baldwin IX of Flanders, however, and many of the lesser princes of the Low Countries, while his nephew, the Welf, Otto of Brunswick, challenged the Hohenstaufen for the empire. Richard even captured the bishop of Beauvais, who had acted for the French in trying to persuade Henry VI not to release Richard. Philip was obliged to march to relieve a Flemish threat to Arras, but was unable to sustain his relief attempt, and so came to a truce with Richard and Baldwin in September 1197, losing much territory in northern France to Baldwin. This proved no more effective than earlier attempts at peace, and within a year the war resumed.[63]

In September 1198 Richard seized the castle of Courcelles, and it was probably its proximity to Gisors that prompted Philip to advance from Mantes with a force of 300 knights and many infantry in an effort to prevent its fall. Richard confronted the French army with a small force, while the bulk of his troops remained hidden until they suddenly fell upon the French, who fled toward Gisors. Such was the rush of heavily armed men and horses that the bridge at Gisors broke, and King Philip "had to drink of the river." Richard, who acknowledged the role of his mercenary leader, Mercadier, captured more than 100 knights and 200 horses, 140 of them armoured. In his letter to the bishop of Durham he boasted of his victory, but he also admitted that he had decided on the attack "contrary to the advice of all our people."[64] It was a remarkable victory, yet only over a part of the French king's power. Philip was finally driven to serious negotiations for peace, which would have left him with Gisors, though little else. Before the discussions came to fruition, however, Philip had stirred up trouble in Aquitaine, and on April 6, 1199, Richard died from a crossbow wound received at the siege of Chalus.[65]

The Seizure of Normandy

This created an entirely new and very favourable situation for Philip. Richard had no direct heir, so the Angevin lands faced a choice between Richard's youngest brother, John, and Arthur, the son of his elder brother, Geoffrey of Brittany. On his deathbed Richard had declared that John was his heir.[66] There was no certain rule of choice between two such candidates, however, and, although English and Norman precedents

62 Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, 2:420–22.

63 Turner and Heiser, *Reign of Richard Lionheart*, 236–38.

64 Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, 2:429–30.

65 John Gillingham, "The Unromantic Death of Richard I," *Speculum* 54 (1979): 8–41.

66 Thomas K. Keefe, "England and the Angevin Dominions 1137–1204," in NCMH, 4:578.

favoured John, Anjou, Brittany, and the Loire preferred Arthur. Eleanor threw her influence behind John, and this was decisive in Aquitaine. Arthur had been brought up at the French court, and the Breton nobles resented Richard's harsh treatment of them. Many of the nobles of Anjou and the Loire felt isolated from power, while Aquitaine was proverbially restless under Angevin rule. John had alienated many by his numerous betrayals, though since 1194 he had served Richard well. In the *History of William Marshal* Hubert Walter, archbishop of Canterbury and Richard's chief minister, is portrayed as favouring Arthur, but is persuaded to come around to John by William Marshal, who urged: "Without question the son is the nearer heir to his father's land than the grandson."[67] There was clearly a real division of opinion, however, which meant that, as overlord of the continental lands, Philip could choose to throw his influence as he wished with a display of legality. It is hardly surprising that he chose the twelve-year-old Arthur, but this was, perhaps, a first gambit. His first act was to support the Breton army in the Loire counties, an act that almost resulted in the capture of John.

Philip invaded Normandy and seized Evreux, then sent forces into Maine, which captured Ballon, but his refusal to give this to Arthur alienated many of Arthur's supporters. In the meantime Eleanor used her influence in Poitou to swing key magnates over to John, and this helped to persuade many in Anjou and the Loire to follow suit. In the north Philip faced pressure from Baldwin of Flanders, while his desire to put aside his Danish wife, Ingeborg, and to marry Agnes had provoked the papacy to place France under interdict in 1199. At Péronne in 1200 Philip agreed that Baldwin of Flanders could enjoy the gains he had made in recent campaigns in alliance with Richard and John. The French king had his own problems, therefore, and the upshot was the Treaty of Le Goulet of May 1200.

By this Philip agreed to accept John as Richard's heir to all the lands in France and that, while Arthur would rule in Brittany, it was as a vassal of John. In return, John paid homage and an entry fine—the first ever by an Angevin—of 20,000 silver marks and conceded Evreux and its area, along with some territories in the Berry. He also promised to terminate his treaties with Baldwin of Flanders and others in the north.[68] This did not, on the surface, much change the balance between Philip and the Angevins, but other factors were at work. In the Poitou Eleanor had made considerable concessions to local magnates such as the Lusignans, and, although Anjou had ultimately rallied to John, it was only after much havering, while Brittany was manifestly hostile. Quite large sections of Normandy had been impoverished by the fighting since 1194, and John had to make concessions to some of the Norman barons to hold their loyalty.[69] Substantial financial pressure had been exerted upon England. Much, therefore, would depend upon John's

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67 *History of William Marshal*, 151.

68 Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, 94–98; Gillingham, *Angevin Empire*, 86–89.

69 Daniel J. Power, "Les dernières années du régime Angevin en Normandie," in *Plantagenêts et Capétiens: Confrontations et héritages*, ed. Martin Aurell and Noël-Yves Tonnerre (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 163–92.

ability to inspire trust and loyalty, and the purpose of much warfare was precisely to change minds on such crucial matters.

On August 24, 1200, King John married Isabella, daughter and heir of the count of Angoulême. This was a very advantageous marriage, because her family's lands in the Limousin lay across communications between John's major strongholds around Poitiers and Bordeaux. The lady was already betrothed to Hugh of Lusignan, though, and he demanded some compensation. John was not disposed to offer anything; the past record of Lusignan–Angevin relations was not a good one, and, most particularly, Hugh had acquired the county of La Marche in the vacuum of power after Richard's death.[70] Hugh appealed to King Philip as overlord, but he did not take immediate action. John attacked Lusignan's counties of La Marche and Eu, however, and opened negotiations with his nephew, Otto of Brunswick, a pretender to the German throne. Philip then took up the Lusignan complaint, and, when John refused to appear in his court, Philip declared John's fiefs confiscated in April 1202 and awarded them to Arthur.[71]

This was a careful and self-interested legalism, and it was no coincidence that it came at a time when international events had weakened John's position. By 1202 the Fourth Crusade was under way, and important possible allies such as Baldwin count of Flanders were away. The count of Champagne died before departing, leaving a child who fell under King Philip's protection—which allowed him access to the wealth of the county. In the south Philip had won the allegiance of the count of Toulouse, while Navarre, a strong ally of Richard, was under pressure from Castile, whose king had claims on Gascony.[72]

Philip then invaded eastern Normandy and seized a number of castles easily, while Arthur met the Lusignans and other rebels in the Loire. John moved south to Le Mans, where, on July 30, he received news that the rebels had penned up his mother, Eleanor, at Mirebeau, as the town had surrendered, forcing her to take refuge in the castle.[73] John had the support of William des Roches, the most notable of the Loire barons. He moved very rapidly indeed covering the 160 km (100 miles), and on August 1 surprising the rebels while they were still at dinner, capturing Arthur, Hugh, and all the leaders along with 200 knights.[74] Philip retreated from the siege of Arques, and this decisive victory should have ended the rebellion in the south. That it did not was due entirely to John's behaviour in refusing good treatment to the prisoners and excluding his strongest supporters, notably William des Roches, from reward and influence. Worst of all, though, Arthur disappeared, and John was widely suspected of having murdered him.

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70 *The Chronicle and Historical Notes of Bernard Itier*, ed. Andrew W. Lewis (Oxford: Clarendon, 2012), 60–61, mentions the marriage again: 172.

71 Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, 97–98.

72 Gillingham, *Angevin Empire*, 89–91.

73 Gillingham, *Angevin Empire*, 91.

74 *Histoire des ducs de Normandie et des rois d'Angleterre*, ed. Francisque Michel (Paris: Renouard, 1841), 93–95.

By early 1203 most of the Loire and Brittany had declared for King Philip, and many of the Norman aristocracy were wavering, although Rouen with its important English economic connections remained loyal.[75]

After more initial successes, in which treachery certainly played a part, Philip turned his attention to Château Gaillard in September 1203. This remarkable fortress had been built by Richard between 1196 and 1198 at a cost of some £12,000 sterling. It served Richard as a base for counterattacks on Philip, and provided a block to his advance on Rouen. It is often suggested that Château Gaillard was inspired by the castles of the Holy Land.[76] It does not resemble any of the eastern fortresses, however, and the fact that the Seine, and its tributary the Gambon, were essential to its defence argues against this idea, for running water was rare in the Holy Lands. Essentially, the castle is formed by its carefully chosen site. It occupies a ridge running roughly southeasterly from the cliffs that rise about the Seine. A triangular outwork defends the castle from the only likely approach to the south, and beyond that lies a deep gulley before the middle bailey, and then an inner bailey within which stands an immense, round donjon tower, though this may not have existed at the time of the siege.[77] The inner bailey connects with the settlement of Petit Andely and the fortified islands on the Seine, while Grand Andely lies to the northeast.

Much of Philip's success against castles hitherto was the result of treachery. That was not an accident, of course, because most of the fighting since 1192 had been in Normandy, and that had eroded the loyalty of its nobility. Richard was powerful and vigorous, and, although the constant movements of his troops exhausted the countryside, few would have dared object. John was a different proposition. Moreover, King Philip seems to have learned from his part in the Third Crusade, when his army had been efficient and effective in the siege of Acre. It was notable that it was to him that the Muslims addressed an early attempt to surrender on terms.[78] Philip clearly saw the assault on Château Gaillard as the decisive act in the campaign. He raised a very large army, which he had to support over the winter of 1203/04. We have three French accounts of the siege. The chronicler Rigord, in his *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, gives a very simple outline and provides little insight into the size or make-up of the army, except to say that, at the end, the French lost four knights killed, and captured the garrison commander, Roger de Lacy, and thirty-six knights.[79] Guillaume le Breton provides two accounts. His *Gesta Philippi Augusti* is much more detailed, while the account in his poem the *Philippidos* is even

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75 Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, 192–93.

76 As, for example, Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 168.

77 "Château Gaillard," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology*, ed. Clifford Rogers, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1:368–69.

78 Hosler, *Siege of Acre*, 126–28.

79 Rigord, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, in *Oeuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton*, 1:1–167 at 159–60.

longer. The only figures he mentions, though, are that the garrison on surrender had forty knights, 120 *satellites*, and "many others" (unspecified).[80]

Philip's approach was systematic. Earlier forays had enabled him to seize Boutavent in 1202, while powerful Vaudreuil was betrayed by Robert Fitz Walter and Sauer de Quincy.[81] This opened the way for an attack on Château Gaillard itself. Savage fighting from boats brought about the fall of Les Andelys and the islands in the river: Guillaume remarks that one Gaubertus and his swimmers were vital in the attack on the islands, and reiterates this in the *Philippidos*. A camp defended by a deep ditch was established on the plateau to the south of the castle—the only possible approach—and shelters built for the troops. Philip, anticipating a long siege, remembered Acre and how useful the earthwork defences of the camp around Acre had been against Saladin's relief attempts. Catapults were set up to bombard the castle, but the defenders had them as well, and these and their crossbowmen inflicted heavy losses on the attackers. In order to preserve his supplies in the winter, de Lacy expelled all the civilians who had taken refuge in the castle. The French refused to let them pass through, and most died, exposed to the weather and trapped in the moat between the defenders and attackers.

In the end the French mined and assaulted the walls, and eventually they broke into the outer bailey.[82] They then faced the deep moat that defended the middle bailey, but were able to penetrate it thanks to a chapel built by King John.[83] A permanent bridge connected the middle to the inner bailey, and this was forced with catapults and mining. Thereafter the fall of the castle was inevitable, despite the determined resistance of the garrison. It came on March 6, 1204.[84]

A castle is only as strong as its garrison and their prospects of relief, and King John attempted to break the siege. At an early stage he sent a force overland under William the Marshal that was intended to coordinate its attack with a flotilla coming up the Seine. Guillaume says that this force was made up of mercenaries with a few knights (*cotarellos … et ruptarios cum pauci militibus*) and claims they were repelled by Guillaume des Barres and knights (*milites*) supported by others of better spirit (*alii meliori animi*), who are unspecified. There is a deliberate attempt, not wholly convincing, however, to contrast John's reliance on mere mercenaries with the nobler soldiers of the French.

In fact, the nature of the French army that made the assault is not at all clear. As we have seen earlier, knights were generally important in French armies, yet, despite the

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80 Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, in *Oeuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton*, 1:168–333 at 182.

81 Both were later major leaders in the rebellion against John that produced Magna Carta, on which see James C. Holt, *The Northerners* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961).

82 Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:218–19.

83 Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:219–20.

84 There are problems with reconstructing the events of the siege, because the castle was considerably changed in the centuries after the siege of 1203/04, and these uncertainties are explored by Pierre Héliot, "Le Château Gaillard et les fortresses des xiie et xiiie siècles," *Château Gaillard: Études de castellologie médiévale* 1 (1962): 53–75.

strength of the castle and the ferocity of the fighting, which we are told inflicted heavy casualties, only four French knights were killed. Guillaume le Breton was very much a creature of the court, but, even in the *Philippidos*, of the nobility active in the siege he mentions only Guillaume des Barres, Count Robert of Alençon, Hugh of Neufchatel, and one Simon. He praises the swimmers, however, as noted, and the entry to the middle bailey is credited to Peter Bogis/Bougis, who is not specified to be a knight but received a knight's fee somewhat later. His name is joined in the *Philippidos* with Eustachius, Manasses, Auricus, Grenier, and their group, which is suggestive of mercenaries, and Jordan, the king's crossbow commander, is mentioned. Most interestingly, though, Guillaume makes it clear that Cadoc, the leader of Philip's mercenaries, was at the siege. Overall, the impression is that, while knights were certainly present, the business of siege and assault was carried on by altogether humbler people comparable to the unspecified *satellites* of Roger de Lacy. The English sources are very brief, noting, like Roger of Wendover, the bravery of the commander, Roger de Lacy, but giving no details.[85]

The capture of Château Gaillard was decisive. John returned to England and Rouen fell by the end of June 1204, ending Angevin domination in Normandy. The Loire counties had by then largely gone over to Philip. In Poitou Hugh of Lusignan was dominant and exercising great influence in the Limousin. He had proclaimed his allegiance to the French king, but it was always clear that this was a matter of convenience. Angevin power remained only over the far south, where a Castilian invasion was repelled by local forces. The collapse of many of the Angevin lands in France was so sudden and so spectacular that it has attracted enormous attention from historians, though the story has mostly been told as an explanation of the Angevin loss rather than the Capetian gain.[86]

The army with which Philip took Normandy in 1204 was composed of knights, mercenaries, and common foot. The Prisée des sergents shows that he could recruit very substantial forces, including crossbowmen, from the cities of his lands, and presumably could also commute such service for money.[87] In this respect, it clearly mirrored the forces with which the Angevins had dominated for so long. Such armies were very expensive, so how was this possible? Louis VII had been able to sustain his own forces and provided support for some of his allies in 1173/74, and this was a harbinger of the future.[88] By 1190 Philip had increased his lands in northern France, as we have seen, and, of course, he enjoyed the huge entry fine that John had paid by the Treaty of Le Goulet. He was certainly free to concentrate all his resources on Normandy in 1202 to 1204 because

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85 For a recent study, see Peter Purton, *A History of the Early Medieval Siege, c.450–1200* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), 322.

86 As exemplified by the title given by Powicke, *The Loss of Normandy, 1189–1204: Studies in the History of the Angevin Empire*, which was for long the dominant work. It is above all, however, a study of the "empire" and the way it worked rather than a military explanation of the event.

87 "Prisée des sergents," in *Les Registres de Philippe Auguste*, vol. 1, ed. John W. Baldwin (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1992), 259–62; Carl Stephenson, "Les 'aides' des villes françaises au xiie et xiiie siècles," *Le Moyen Âge* 33 (1922): 274–328.

88 See above, 107–11.

John lacked allies in the north and he had nothing to fear from intervention from Spain. Once the rebels in the Loire, Brittany, and Aquitaine had thrown off Angevin power the French king could concentrate his resources in Normandy, the very hinge of John's lands. It used to be suggested that the reason for his victory was that Philip had become richer than John, notably by James Holt.[89] The evidence for this was always problematic, though, and further research has shown it to be unlikely.[90] Of course finances mattered, and Philip was employing expensive mercenaries on a substantial scale under their chieftain, Cadoc, who was so important at the siege of Château Gaillard. John, like his father and brother, also used mercenaries, but his employment of such men as Brandin, Martin Algais, Gerard d'Athée, and Louvrecaire in very high positions is a revelation of the distrust he inspired among his nobles. In 1203, a critical moment (as we have seen), John forced the Norman nobles to swear to protect and respect Louvrecaire, who was forbidden to pillage friendly countryside.[91] Mercenaries were terrible ravagers—Philip used them for that purpose—but they plundered any population, friend or foe. Worse than that, on John's side they alienated the nobles. In his life of William Marshal, he is made to comment:

> But let me tell you first why the king failed to win the hearts of his men and draw them to his side. Why was it? Truly it's because he let Louvrecaire mistreat the people so, plundering the land of everything in his path as if it were enemy territory.[92]

Important as finance was, though, in the end success in war rested very heavily on good leadership and careful direction of soldiers. Historians have always been fascinated by the development of centralized government in England under the Norman and, most particularly, Angevin kings, partly because this left substantial written evidence compared to the more limited and informal methods of the Capetians. That it was the Capetians who triumphed is usually attributed to John's incompetence. John had a fine grasp of administrative processes, however, and showed great skill in applying royal power.[93] The centralizing processes of Angevin government had a price, though. In 1173 Henry II suffered defections on much the same scale as John from 1202 to 1204, and the pressures exerted by Richard created resentment. John came to the throne after a long period of war, with all the discontents that had bred. Additionally, the Angevin despotism focused everything on the personality of the king. John was unattractive as a

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89 Lot and Fawtier, *Premier budget de la monarchie française*; Holt, "Loss of Normandy and Royal Finance."

90 Notably by Nick Barratt, "The Revenues of John and Philip Augustus Revisited," in *King John: New Interpretations*, ed. Stephen Church (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), 75–99. The discussion of comparative incomes is admirably outlined by Gillingham, *Angevin Empire*, 95–99.

91 Powicke, *Loss of Normandy*, 340.

92 *History of William Marshal*, 159. It should be noted that William Marshal despised mercenaries, perhaps because their career so closely paralleled his own: David Crouch, "William Marshal and the Mercenariat," in France, *Mercenaries and Paid Men*, 1–15.

93 James C. Holt, *Magna Carta and Medieval Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), offers a notable defence of John.

leader and seen as untrustworthy. Even worse, he reacted badly to problems and was a very inconsistent military leader. The *Life of William Marshal* is not an objective record, but the picture it paints of John's inaction and flight after the fall of Château Gaillard tallies well with what other sources tell us.[94]

By contrast, the French kings had always, perforce, had to work with their nobles. Philip continued this and managed to win their loyalty, to the extent that he was able to conduct war on a substantial scale from 1194 to 1204, and (as we shall see) beyond. This underlay the success of his armies, whose make-up was shaped by this collaborative approach. Of course, Philip's collaborative approach was adopted only out of necessity, and he soon showed a different side, but the French monarchs were always respectful of their great men—and in 1204 this paid off handsomely. An important military factor is that Philip had managed to fight the war, even against Richard, largely on enemy soil, and this may well have undermined the loyalty of the Norman nobility.

King John's War of Recovery

Great as the triumph of 1204 was, however, it did not mark the end of the Capetian–Plantagenet feud. John was determined to recover his continental lands, and bent all his efforts to that end. It was an awareness of this that prompted Philip II to begin an ambitious program of castle building to protect his lands.[95] In the events that followed the French monarchy came to play a much wider European role, because the scale of war escalated and its international ramifications became ever more complex.

After the fall of Normandy Philip concluded a truce with John. Possession of Normandy had always been his primary objective, although he did take Poitiers in 1205 and, subsequently, the great fortresses of Loches and Chinon. As ever, though, the loyalty of the magnates of Poitou and the Limousin was uncertain, and they tended to rally to John, ever ready to choose the weaker over the stronger master. Effectively the greatest man in the Poitou was Hugh of Lusignan, whose loyalty to the Capetian was nominal.[96] Philip had little to fear from this region and much to lose by any effort at conquest. In England there was great fear of a French invasion, increased by the hostility of the powers of Flanders. Immense sums of money were raised, castles were put in readiness, and all able-bodied men were prepared to fight the invaders, with severe penalties for refusal. When this threat failed to materialize, John mustered his forces for an attack on France. The barons resisted, however, and in the event only small expeditions were sent to shore up resistance in Niort, La Rochelle, and elsewhere. In 1206 John arrived with a substantial army, which drove the Castilians out of the south and strengthened his position in Poitou. He even sacked Angers, but retreated

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94 *History of William Marshal*, 160–62.

95 Charles Coulson, "Fortress-Policy in Capetian Tradition and Angevin Practice: Aspects of the Conquest of Normandy by Philip II," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 6 (1984): 13–38; André Châtelain, "Recherche sur les châteaux de Philippe Auguste," *Archéologie médiévale* 21 (1991): 115–61.

96 Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, 194–95.

when a French army mobilized against him.[97] His efforts were then dissipated by the need to mount expeditions to Scotland, Ireland, and Wales from 1210 to 1212; these were very successful.[98] Then John refused to accept Innocent III's choice of Stephen Langton as archbishop of Canterbury. In 1208 Innocent placed England under interdict, until, in late 1209, John was excommunicated. The king's levies on the Church raised substantial sums for his wars, but the excommunication had diplomatic repercussions on his efforts to gain allies. In fact, the Capetian–Angevin feud was gradually taking centre stage in Europe.

John clearly wanted revenge, but, initially, much was favourable to Philip. Theobald III of Champagne died in 1201, leaving a posthumous son, Theobald IV, whose mother, Blanche of Navarre, leaned heavily upon the king for support. Brittany hated the Angevins and was within Philip's sphere of influence, while by 1213 Philip's ally, Peter of Dreux, was in control there, by which time the king had been able to conquer the county of Auvergne.[99] Renaud of Danmartin had a history of playing off Angevin and Capetian, but he was lured into the Capetian sphere by grant of the county of Boulogne, though the engagement of his daughter and heiress to one of Philip's sons promised an eventual return of land to the monarchy. Count Baldwin IX of Flanders had gone on the Fourth Crusade. He became Latin emperor of Constantinople, but was defeated and captured by the Bulgarians at the Battle of Adrianople in April 1205 and died shortly thereafter. His brother, Henry, succeeded to the Latin Empire.[100] The regent of Flanders, Philip of Namur, agreed to marry one of Philip's daughters and accepted royal wardship over the late count's two daughters. This enabled King Philip to choose a husband—Ferrand of Portugal—and to gain 50,000 livres as entry fine from him. The king's son, Louis, took advantage of the weak situation of the new Flemish count to seize all the lands ceded to Baldwin IX in 1197.[101]

The situation in Germany was a major concern for Philip, not least because the principalities of the Low Countries were, in part, vassals of the empire, and so the German monarchs traditionally exerted great influence there.[102] The death of Henry VI in 1197 prompted a conflict for the succession in Germany between the Welf, Otto IV, a nephew of John, and the Hohenstaufen, Philip of Swabia. Philip backed the Hohenstaufen, whose death in 1208 was a blow, because Otto IV became king of Germany and emperor soon

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97 Poole, *Domesday Book to Magna Carta*, 441–42; Gillingham, *Angevin Empire*, 105.

98 For these expeditions, see Robin Frame, *The Political Development of the British Isles, 1100–1400* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

99 Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, 197–99.

100 Michael Angold, *The Fourth Crusade* (London: Pearson, 2003), 132–33.

101 Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, 200–202.

102 Gilbert of Mons records a number of occasions when Count Baldwin V of Hainaut attended the emperor. In 1187 he was present at a meeting of Frederick Barbarossa and Philip of France in the course of which Gilbert acted as a judge: Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, §136.

afterwards. Otto reneged on his promises to Pope Innocent III, however, to respect the papal position in Italy and to leave Sicily to the young Hohenstaufen, Frederick, the son of Henry VI. Otto was excommunicated, and Philip and Innocent III supported a group of German princes who chose Frederick as German king at Nuremberg in 1211. By 1212 this young claimant was in a divided Germany—which suited King Philip.[103]

This favourable international situation for Philip unravelled, however. Renaud of Danmartin turned against Philip, who had also exasperated Ferrand of Flanders by his high-handed treatment. Renaud worked with Hugh of Boves, one of John's mercenaries, to create an anti-Capetian alliance among the powers of the Low Countries. At Soissons in April 1213 Philip and his barons agreed to mount an invasion of England, commanded by Prince Louis. This was prohibited by Innocent III, because John not merely accepted Stephen Langton but did homage for England and promised to go on crusade.[104]

The Campaign of Bouvines

When Ferrand refused to join the proposed invasion of England Philip sent his fleet to Damme to coerce him. John's flotilla, under the command of his half-brother, William earl of Salisbury, Renaud of Boulogne, and Hugh of Boves, surprised the French fleet at Damme on May 30, 2013, the English destroying or capturing many ships. It seems that much of Philip's army had already disembarked, because, when John's troops tried to land, they were repulsed. Nevertheless, Philip could no longer sustain an attack on Flanders, let alone invade England, so he burned his remaining ships and retreated.[105]

Naval tactics at this time were limited, with each ship trying to run down and board an enemy. The English fleet may have had some specialized warships of the knarr type, because the Cinque Ports were obliged to provide fighting vessels to the Crown, but the bulk of both fleets would have consisted of merchant ships, notably the deep round cogs popular at the time and hired or impressed for military service.[106] At Damme, however, Philip's commanders allowed the troops to land seeking loot, which meant that many ships were undefended.

Count Ferrand, the counts of Namur and Holland, and the dukes of Limbourg and Louvain now turned to John. The recruitment of Otto IV added prestige to the alliance,

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103 David Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 95–130.

104 Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, 202–11; Poole, *Domesday Book to Magna Carta*, 425–58.

105 On the Battle of Damme, see Frederick W. Brooks, "The Battle of Damme, 1213," *Mariner's Mirror* 16 (1930): 264–71, who thinks the French burned the ships that were beached and had survived the attack. Susan Rose, *Medieval Naval Warfare 1000–1500* (London: Routledge, 2002), 28–29, points to evidence that it was the English who burned them.

106 Cogs could be equipped with castles, from which the crew could fire down onto the enemy, but there is no evidence of any like this at Damme: Richard W. Unger, *The Ship in the Medieval Economy 600–1600* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 136–40.

though he brought very few troops to the cause.[107] This was a powerful coalition. Its leaders agreed that King John would attack Philip from Poitou while the allies invaded from the north. King Philip had the advantage of "interior lines": he was in the centre and could move his forces freely while his enemies were separated. Furthermore, in an age of poor communications, synchronizing the movements of forces as widely separated as those of the allies was a major problem. In 1124 Henry I of England had allied with the Emperor Henry V, but coordination failed, and the German invasion of eastern France was a fiasco.[108]

On February 16, 1214, John landed at La Rochelle. The barons of England stayed at home, but his force was sufficiently large to draw Philip, with his son, Louis, and a very large army, to concentrate at Châteauroux. John may have hoped to march into Normandy, even though its nobles had little time for Plantagenet rule.[109] He seized Nantes and Angers, but his advance stalled before the castle of La Roche-au-Moine on June 19. Although his father had taken away much of the army on news that John's allies were moving in the north, Prince Louis went boldly to the relief of La Roche-au-Moine, and on July 2 deployed for battle against John. The English king was ready to fight, but the Poitevin barons were not prepared for such a hazard, and John fled back to La Rochelle.[110]

La Roche-au-Moine was not a great castle, but the determination of its garrison had exercised a crucial influence on events—a clear illustration of the importance of fortifications in medieval warfare. John's flight before Prince Louis was probably wise. His Poitevin allies refused to fight because the victory of either king would establish over them a strong overlord, which was the last thing they wanted. Moreover, John's army, originally large, had been campaigning for some five months, a long period by medieval standards. It would have been reduced by leaving garrisons in many places and by disease and desertion. Even so, Philip had to leave something like 800 knights, 2,000 other mounted troops, and 7,000 infantry under Prince Louis to check John.

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107 John France, "The Battle of Bouvines 27 July 2014," in *The Medieval Way of War: Studies in Medieval Military History in Honor of Bernard S. Bachrach*, ed. Gregory L. Halfond (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2015), 251–72.

108 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros*, 127–32.

109 We may doubt whether John could have gone so far, because his relations with the Norman barons were deeply compromised, on which see Daniel J. Power, "King John and the Norman Aristocracy," in *King John: New Interpretations*, 117–36; and "The End of Angevin Normandy: The Revolt at Alençon (1203)," *Historical Research* 74 (2001): 444–64.

110 The campaign in the south and the check at La Roche-au-Moine have received very little attention. The best account is that of Sean McGlynn, *Blood Cries Afar: The Forgotten Invasion of England 1216* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2011), 94–102, but see also Martin Aurell, "La bataille de la Roche-aux-Moines: Jean sans terre et la prétendue traîtrise des Poitevins," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres* 161 (2017): 459–89, who analyses the flexibility of allegiances among the baronage of Aquitaine.

The Battle of Bouvines

The coalition, as is the way of such creations, was slow to come together. Otto was delayed in Germany, though Ferrand and the other allies concentrated in Hainaut, from where they ravaged hostile lands, capturing the French royal centre of Tournai, whose citizens paid 22,000 livres to persuade them to refrain from plundering the city. Philip's army gathered at Peronne and marched east, recovering Tournai on July 26. Otto IV joined the allies at Valenciennes on July 23, and together they reached Mortagne, about 14 km (8 miles) southeast of Tournai, on the same day that Philip seized Tournai.[111]

These dates should command our attention. Philip had gathered an army centred on men he knew and trusted, such as Guillaume des Barres and Matthew de Montmorency. Of special importance on the day of battle was the Hospitaller, Guérin, now bishop-elect of Senlis.[112] Beyond this inner circle were great magnates such as Odo duke of Burgundy, Henry count of Bar, Raoul of Soissons, and Walter count of St. Pol, who, because he was regarded with suspicion, cynically promised to be a good traitor on the day.[113] Most of the troops were drawn from the northern parts of Philip's lands, but those of Champagne would not have known comrades from the Vexin. Their loyalty to the king was mediated via their immediate commander, and their familiarity with tactics and sense of solidarity was limited to the circle with whom they fought. As a result of the long wars, however, Philip could count on a core of seasoned troops under commanders who knew his mind. They were greatly assisted by the presence of strong infantry forces drawn from militias of the royal cities.

In contrast, the coalition members had come together for the very first time only days before the great battle. They had no obvious leader. William Longsword, earl of Salisbury, and Hugh of Boves had a small English force and represented John, the paymaster. How far, though, could William command Ferrand of Flanders and Renaud of Danmartin, let alone the Emperor Otto?[114] The size of each contingent is unknown, but, except for the Germans and the English, they were drawn from the Low Countries, and, while many were related, they had often fought among themselves. This was a disparate army bound together by hatred of Philip and by King John's money, and lacking a unified command. Both armies had been assembled hastily, but Philip had a loyal and practiced core of senior men, and they were unequivocally under a single command.

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111 Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:266–67.

112 Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:272, mentions this inner circle in some detail. Some of them are noted, along with the magnates of France such as the duke of Burgundy, among the "high men" who accompanied Philip by the Anonymous of Béthune, *Chronicle*, in RHGF, 24:768, trans. in Duby, *Legend of Bouvines*, 194.

113 Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:276. In 1210 the count of St. Pol had pledged the loyalty of the castellan of St. Omer in the sum of £1,000. Plenty of others had to do the same: *Registres de Philippe Auguste*, vol. 1, no. 19, 397, and see other pledges in pages to 407.

114 Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. Henry R. Luard, 7 vols. (London: Longman, 1872–83), 2:152, says of Hugh "*dux omnium videbatur*," but this seems unlikely.

Jan Verbruggen has produced a scholarly analysis of the numbers in the two armies. The knights are always the focus of attention in chronicles because of their social status.[115] Guillaume le Breton says that there were 2,000 knights in the French army that marched against King John in 1214, and that Philip left Louis with some 800 when he went north against the allies.[116] This figure, in the region of 1,200, is sustained by an analysis of the *Servitia Feodorum*, a list of the military contingents owed to the French Crown, which probably underestimates, however, the total that could be raised in a major effort.[117] Overall, it seems likely that Philip had 1,200 to 1,300 knights and about 300 mounted sergeants at his command. Verbruggen's figures for the French foot are more impressionistic, but his suggested total of 5,000 to 6,000 seems reasonable. As to the allies, in all our accounts of the battle Ferrand of Flanders appears to have had the largest contingent of mounted men, and we know that in 1182 his predecessor, Count Philip, had raised 1,000 knights.[118] Since then, though, Flanders had fallen on evil times, and Verbruggen's suggestion of 650 seems reasonable. Otto IV had very few knights, because Ferrand sent 200 to escort him through the lands of the hostile bishop of Liège to Valenciennes. Probably the other leaders between them raised 600, so each army had about the same number of knights. We are totally ignorant of the number of allied foot, though the 400 to 700 mercenaries of Renaud of Danmartin made a great impact.[119] It is perhaps safest to conclude that the allies would not have risked battle if they had been outnumbered, so the armies were of the same order as the two sides had been at Hastings in 1066.[120]

On July 26, 1214, therefore, two substantial armies were surprised to find themselves in close proximity (see Map 6.1). According to Guillaume le Breton in the *Gesta*, when the king heard that the enemy were only 14 km (8 miles) away at Mortagne, he proposed an attack, but was dissuaded by his barons because the approach was narrow and difficult.[121] Therefore he decided to retreat, in order, as Guillaume le Breton testifies, to find another route to ravage Hainaut.[122] Thus Philip was not seeking a battle when, on July 27, early in the morning, the French rapidly moved westwards toward their base at Lille. Throughout his career Philip had always avoided pitched battle, and he knew

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115 To give another example, numbers on the First Crusade are highly contentious, but at least at one point the total number of mounted men can be estimated: France, *Victory in the East*, 122–42, esp. 129–30.

116 Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:262–64.

117 *Servitia Feodorum*, in RHGF, 23:693, 807.

118 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, 77.

119 Verbruggen, *Art of Warfare*, 240–47.

120 Bernard S. Bachrach, "Some Observations on the Military Administration of the Norman Conquest," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 8 (1985): 1–26; Gillingham, *Richard I*, 83–84.

121 Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:267.

122 Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:267: "Per aliam viam planiorem Henonie fines invaderunt."

better than to change at this point. He knew that the coalition was unstable; his daughter had married Duke Henry I of Brabant, who had joined it reluctantly and secretly stayed in touch with Philip up to the battle.[123] Time and some well-judged ravaging could well loosen such uncertain bonds.

Our sources record an angry debate between the coalition leaders at Mortagne as to whether they should fight on a Sunday. According to Roger of Wendover, Renaud of Boulogne "stated that it would not be honourable to wage a battle on such a solemn day," and Otto agreed. John's mercenary leader, Hugh of Boves, called Renaud a "despicable traitor," however, and, in the name of King John, demanded an immediate battle. The Minstrel of Rheims says that Otto challenged Philip to battle and then rejected a pious request that the conflict be put off until the next day because it was a Sunday. Interestingly, the Marchiennes account, which is so anxious to present Philip as a pious king, makes no mention of the issue of fighting on a Sunday. The Anonymous of Béthune, like Guillaume le Breton, says that Philip would have preferred not to fight on a Sunday.[124] In the *Philippidos* Guillaume le Breton makes Philip regret fighting on a Sunday in rather more dramatic terms, but only briefly.[125] Perhaps the Sunday issue was raised among the allies, but the key decision was whether to go for battle or not. Most scholars now accept that the decision for battle in medieval times was always a difficult one, and could well have aroused passions.[126]

Battle was risky, but the Earl of Salisbury and Hugh of Boves knew that King John had made an enormous financial effort that could not easily be repeated, and suspected that without a decisive victory the alliance might collapse—something that King Philip was counting on. They prevailed in the debate. We do not know the precise intentions of the allies, and they can only be guessed in the light of their actions, which, in turn, can be understood only in the light of geography.

Philip intended to retreat to Lille, about 23 km (14 miles) east of Tournai. The allies were about 14 km (8 miles) southeast of Tournai. They would have known that the bridge at Bouvines over the river Marcq, about 14 km (8 miles) east of Tournai, was a major bottleneck that would delay the French army. The Marcq was a small river, but in the Middle Ages its banks would have been marshy, making it a formidable obstacle. North of Mortagne the Chaussée Brunehaut led directly northwest through the woods to Bouvines via the abbey of Cysoing, and this was the route the allies followed.

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123 Balduinus Ninovensis, *Chronicon*, in MGH SS, 25:539; Guillaume le Breton, *Philippidos*, 2:672–79; Sergio Boffa, "Le rôle équivoque joué par le duc de Brabant Henri Ier à la bataille de Bouvines (27 juillet 1214)," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale, X^e–XIIe siècles* 59 (2016): 337–56.

124 Roger of Wendover, trans. in Duby, *Legend of Bouvines*, 206; Minstrel of Rheims, in MGH SS, 26:538, trans. in Duby, *Legend of Bouvines*, 214; Marchiennes account, in MGH SS, 26:390, trans. in Duby, *Legend of Bouvines*, 192; Anonymous of Béthune, in RHGF, 24:768, trans. in Duby, *Legend of Bouvines*, 194.

125 Guillaume le Breton, *Philippidos*, 2:831.

126 Gillingham, "Richard I and the Science of War in the Middle Ages"; "William the Bastard at War"; and "War and Chivalry"; Morillo, "Battle Seeking."
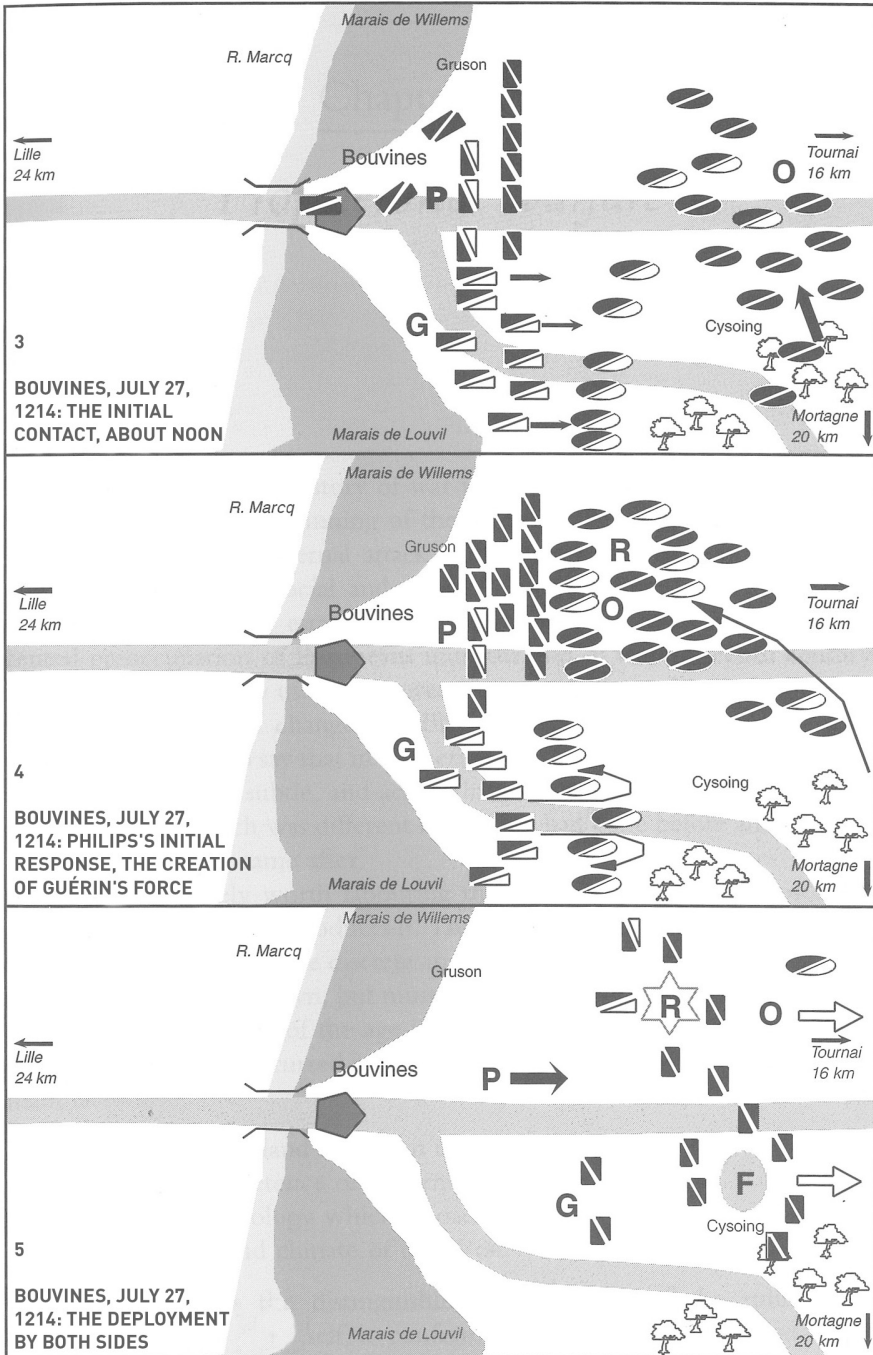
Map 6.1 The Battle of Bouvines. The battle is represented in five stages. Reproduced from
France, *Western Warfare*.

1

BOUVINES, JULY 27, 1214: THE CRISIS OF THE BATTLE

Marais de Willems

R. Marcq

Gruson

Lille 24 km

Bouvines

P

B

Tournai 16 km

MELUN'S FORCE RETIRES

Cysoing

Marais de Louvil

Mortagne 20 km

2

BOUVINES, JULY 27, 1214: VICTORY, RESISTANCE OF RENAUD OF BOULOGNE.

Marais de Willems

R. Marcq

Gruson

Lille 24 km

Bouvines

G

P

Tournai 16 km

Cysoing

Marais de Louvil

Mortagne 20 km
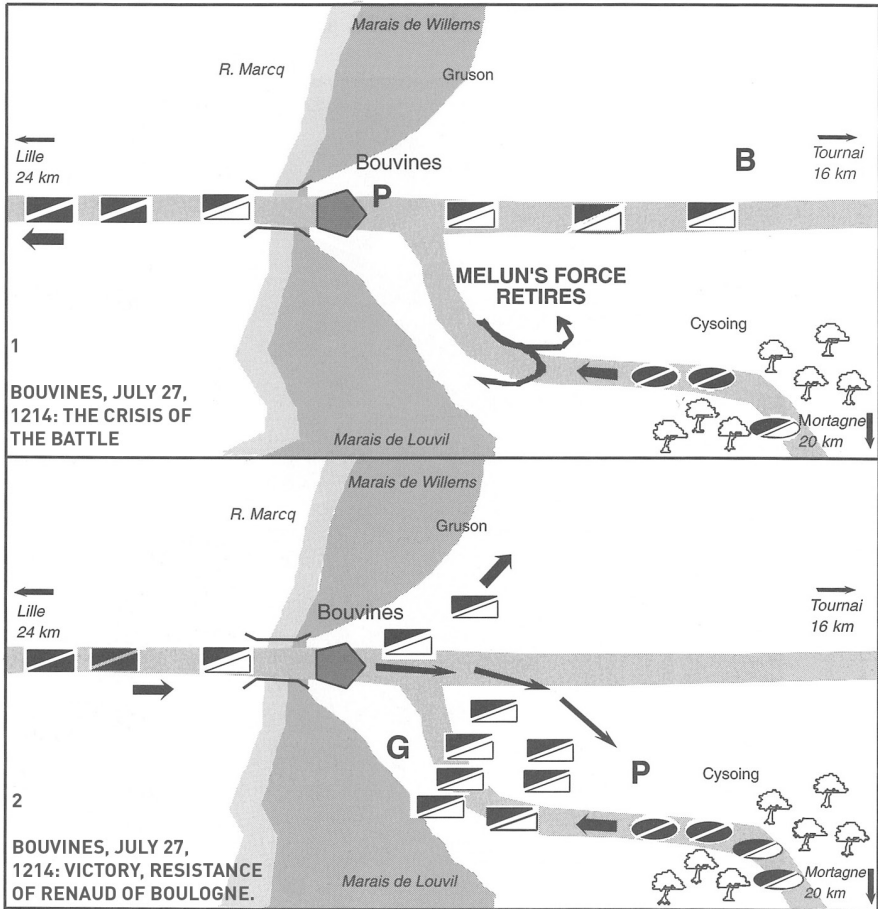
Military forces

French

	Infantry
	Cavalry
P	Philip Augustus
B	Duke of Burgundy
G	Guérin

Allied

	Infantry
	Cavalry
O	Otto IV
R	Renaud of Boulogne
F	Count of Flanders surrenders

Location

R. Marque

Lille

Gruson
Bouvines

Tournai

Cysoing

Louvil

Mortagne

N

10 km
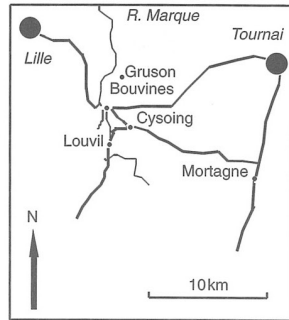
Map 6.1 (*continued*)

This involved a march of some 19 km (12 miles) and offered the opportunity to ambush Philip. His army had set out early in the morning from Tournai, and, according to the Béthune account, "all those who saw them said that they had never seen such a great armed host riding at such a speed." By midday Philip was at Bouvines, where he lunched while the bulk of his infantry crossed over the bridge, leaving the cavalry on the eastern bank of the Marcq.[127] Philip, now over halfway to Lille, seems to have been confident, even complacent.

The vicecount of Melun and Guérin took a detachment to watch the enemy, however, apparently not on the instructions of the king, for Guillaume never tells us that. The Anonymous of Béthune says Guérin returned to warn the king, who was eating, and that he promptly prepared for strife. Guillaume le Breton says that Guérin left the vicecount and told Philip the enemy were approaching, pointing out that they had sent their infantry ahead, which he regarded as a sure indication of their intention to fight. The king and his advisers were unconvinced, however, and decided to continue their retreat to Lille. Guillaume adds that the enemy seemed to be turning toward Tournai as they crossed a stream, and this may explain the decision. In any case, Philip's army continued on its way, and the king stripped off his armour to enjoy lunch at Bouvines. This was rudely interrupted by the arrival of emissaries from the vicecount saying that the enemy were close and in contact with the rearguard of the main French army, under the duke of Burgundy.[128] It seems from this that the vicecount and Guérin had taken the Chaussée Brunehaut to watch the enemy, whose army would have been strung out over perhaps 7 km (4 miles) on the narrow road through the forest. The French crossbowmen and light cavalry tried to contest their advance but had been pushed back to Cysoing, about 1 km (just over half a mile) southeast of Bouvines, where the road led into an open plain, forcing the duke of Burgundy—in the rear of the main force—to reinforce them.

Philip had been complacent, and he now faced a terrible crisis. The enemy vanguard was only 1 km away to his southeast, at Cysoing, while much of his army, mainly the infantry, had already crossed the bridge at Bouvines. If he tried to retreat across the bridge, his cavalry, the flower of his army, along with other elements east of the bridge, would be massively outnumbered and probably massacred. Philip now acted decisively. Ordering timber to be laid alongside the bridge so as to expedite the return of his infantry, and pausing only for a brief prayer to rally his men, he led the mass of his cavalry "so that no-one stood between him and the enemy." This, says Guillaume le Breton, shocked the enemy—which was precisely Philip's intention.[129]

The allied army had no way of knowing what to expect as it exited from the woods along the Chaussée Brunehaut into the plain by Cysoing. Had it been presented with a scene of panic and withdrawal as it debouched into the plain before Bouvines, there

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127 Anonymous of Béthune, in MGH, 24:768, trans. in Duby, *Legend of Bouvines*, 194.

128 Anonymous of Béthune, in MGH, 24:769, trans. in Duby, *Legend of Bouvines*, 194–95; Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:267–71.

129 Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:271.

is no doubt it would have charged and pinned the French against the Marcq. Instead, it found itself confronted by a reasonably well-organized mass of cavalry, and had no obvious means of knowing what lay behind. In these circumstances, the massive charge that Philip obviously feared was out of the question.

Both armies now had to deploy for a set-piece battle on an open plain bounded on the west by the marshy valley of the Marcq, on the north by the Marais de Willems, and on the south by the Marais de Louvil. North to south was about 2 km (just over 1 mile), a considerable distance offering both sides opportunities to outflank, and it was roughly bisected by the Bouvines–Tournai road. Both had to reorganize, however; hence the comment by the Anonymous of Béthune that, "[a]s the hosts came close enough to see each other clearly, they stopped for a long time and put their affairs in order."[130]

Philip needed to get his men back across the bridge and the allies had to sort out their army strung along the Chaussée Brunehaut. This process seems to have occupied the armies deep into the afternoon, for we are told that when battle was joined the sun in their eyes blinded the allies, who were facing west. Guillaume le Breton, who stood close to the king throughout, makes it clear that, before actual combat began, Philip took position, surrounded by his most trusted men, close to the bridge at Bouvines. Here he could organize his returning troops and direct them to strengthen his forces. He left the great mass of his cavalry, about 700, to the south of the road under the command of Guérin, who ordered them to spread out across the space between the road and the Marais de Willems to form an unbroken line to guard against being outflanked. Guillaume, in the *Gesta*, says they were spread out over 1,000 paces, while the whole front of the two armies was some 2,000. Guérin put the best knights in the front rank, and, when some nobles insisted on joining them, he pushed them into the second line.[131] In response, Ferrand created a similar mass of cavalry to protect the unscrambling of the allied army. Otto IV turned north behind the cavalry and established his men on an eminence close to the road opposite King Philip.

Guillaume le Breton's account of the battle is constructed around three episodes: the cavalry duel in the south; the attack by Otto IV on Philip's position; and the savage fighting centred on a strong force of mercenaries under Renaud of Danmartin, supported by the English troops under the earl of Salisbury. This has been taken to show that Renaud was on the right (northern) wing of the allied army.[132] In the *Philippidos*, however, he is said to have been in the centre, where the major allied attack was staged.[133] I do not think there was a northern wing. As Philip's forces poured back across the bridge they would have been fed into the struggle, so that around Philip was an expanding bubble of

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130 Anonymous of Béthune, in MGH, 24:769, trans. in Duby, *Legend of Bouvines*, 195.

131 Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:274–75; and *Philippidos*, 2:187–88.

132 This is the analysis of Verbruggen, *Art of Warfare*, 239–60, and McGlynn, *Blood Cries Afar*, 107–8.

133 Guillaume le Breton, *Philippidos*, 2:199.

armed men, most of whom were footsoldiers. The allies, it is said, had agreed to focus on killing or capturing Philip as the swiftest path to victory.[134] Whether this is true or not, the French army could not be outflanked because it was pinned against the Marcq, so the fighting was bound to focus on the bridge where Philip stood. It is likely that Renaud and the English formed part of the great charge—perhaps poorly coordinated—and they were opposed by Robert count of Dreux, the bishop of Beauvais, and others in the French "bubble." Armies at this time commonly divided into "battles," which were useful for command and control, but on this occasion circumstances did not favour such a tidy deployment.[135]

To summarize the disposition of the armies.

a. The French, with their backs the river Marcq, were deployed in an arc, bisected by the Bouvines–Tournai road, extending roughly 2 km from the modern village of Louvil in the south toward Gruson in the north.
b. The main body of the cavalry on both sides lay to the south of the road on a front of about 1,000 m. The allies were led by Ferrand and the French by Guérin and the duke of Burgundy.
c. King Philip and the Emperor Otto faced one another approximately on the line of the Tournai road. They both had a retinue of knights around them and a mass of footsoldiers.

Guillaume le Breton describes the battle in three distinct phases, of which the first two were clearly the most important. There is good geographic reason for this division, but we have little idea of how the two phases related in time. In the first phases he describes how the French cavalry had taken up an essentially defensive stance south of the Bouvines–Tournai road, but they were far from passive. Guillaume reports that the count of St. Pol suggested to Guérin that he attack Ferrand with 150 mounted sergeants (*servientes*) from Soissons.[136] They were clearly a "forlorn hope," sent to disrupt the process of organizing the allied cavalry into orderly units – an already difficult process, because Ferrand had to deal with several unfamiliar contingents. The Flemings scorned to charge the sergeants, but killed all their horses and two of the men; the remainder continued the fight on foot. Mounted sergeants were usually armoured at this time, but very few could have afforded horse armour.[137]

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134 Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:286; and *Philippidos*, 2:189; this has been strongly contested by Barthélemy, *Bataille de Bouvines*, 120–22, who thinks it a later invention.

135 An obvious example is Hattin in 1187, on which see Raymond C. Smail, *Crusading Warfare, 1097–1193*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 189–97; another was the Tagliacozzo in 1268, for which see France, *Western Warfare*, 181–84.

136 Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:276–77.

137 Barthélemy, *Bataille de Bouvines*, 11–12, argues that Bouvines was not as grand a battle and suggests that, as part of their ethos of war, knights preferred to kill horses rather than other knights. This may well have been a tactic, but I see this as a hard-fought battle.

The Flemings apparently received their charge standing still, but this onslaught must have delayed the ordering of the allied cavalry, who were quickly subjected to a sterner test.[138] The Anonymous of Béthune mentions that the archers defending the Flemish knights were scattered by the castellan of Rasse.[139] Then the Flemings, Walter of Ghiselle and Baldwin Buridan, charged the knights of Champagne, only to be captured. One of their knights, Eustace of Machalen, who had cried out "Death to the French," was killed in the scrimmage when a French knight tore off his helmet from behind, and another cut his throat. Ferrand then charged, but the count of St. Pol broke through them, returning as the count of Melun charged. The duke of Burgundy led his men into the fray. His horse was killed and he had to be rescued by his knights; the Béthune author records that a Flemish knight tried to push a knife through the slits of his helmet.[140] The count of St. Pol had withdrawn from the fray with his men to rest—essential on such a hot day. Suddenly he saw that one of his knights was trapped and he rushed again into the mêlée to save him, in the process creating havoc in the enemy ranks to such an extent that Henry of Brabant, always an unwilling participant, fled the field. Such vignettes illustrate the intimacy of knightly warfare; this was truly battle corps-à-corps. Unhorsed knights continued fighting on foot.

There was no general cavalry charge, for knights normally fought in small assemblages, conrois, which were probably based on kin and locality, and on a wider scale in the retinues of their lords.[141] Accounts of the battle therefore somewhat resemble those of a tournament; but tournaments were a form of knightly training, and often escalated into outright killing.[142] The picture we have of relatively small groups charging into battle and then emerging to rest and return accords well with our only contemporary handbook of war, in the *Rule of the Temple*.[143] This suggests that knights expected to be in and out of battle in just the way described by Guillaume le Breton and others. This is not to say that mass charges were impossible, but they would have been very risky. In the end, the Ferrand, unhorsed and, badly wounded, was forced to surrender—an event that signalled the dissolution of his cavalry and the flight of the Flemish foot. By that time, however, other things had happened.

In Guillaume le Breton's second phase Otto IV, apparently while the cavalry battle to the south was still raging, unleashed a great charge in which there were some knights with the great mass of the allied infantry aimed at Philip by the bridge. By this time the

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138 What follows on the cavalry contest is drawn from Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:277–81, and *Philippidos*, 2:321–28.

139 Anonymous of Béthune, in MGH, 24:769, trans. in Duby, *Legend of Bouvines*, 195.

140 Anonymous of Béthune, in MGH, 24:770, trans. in Duby, *Legend of Bouvines*, 195–96.

141 Verbruggen, "Tactique militaire des armées de chevaliers," 163–68; France, *Western Warfare*, 53–63.

142 Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, 59, 67–68; for Baldwin of Hainaut's presence at other tournaments, see 56, 57, 62, 63, 71, 73, 76, 80, 81, 85, 88.

143 See Upton-Ward, *Rule of the Templars*, esp. 59–60.

city militias, the last of the French forces, had taken station ahead of the knights grouped around the royal standard. The allied charge, spearheaded by the Germans, brushed the militias aside and crashed into the royal bodyguard. In the scrum a group of Germans reached Philip, caught a billhook in the king's mail between his head and chest, and dragged him from his horse. In the terrible confusion he was rescued by his knights. The same intimate killing that we have seen in the cavalry battle continued, however. A royal knight, Stephen Longchamp, was killed by a thrust through the slits of his pothelm of a slim knife, triangular in section and sharp on all edges, which Guillaume regarded as an innovation.[144]

About this time the earl of Salisbury and his men crashed into the men of Dreux but were checked when the bishop of Beauvais hit the earl with a mace and captured him. Gradually this vicious conflict around Philip turned in favour of the French. The French knights then attacked Otto IV and, but for his bodyguard, he would have been captured by the famous Guillaume des Barres. Guillaume himself became isolated in the scrimmage and was saved only by a concerted charge of horse and foot. This check of Otto's charge in the centre coincided with the capture of Ferrand and the flight of the allied cavalry, and so the rout became general, but not universal.

The third of Guillaume's phases clearly took place after the others, for he says that by this time most of the enemy had fled. Renaud of Danmartin and his knights stood within a circle, perhaps a horseshoe, of highly disciplined mercenaries in a double or treble line armed with lances and bills. Despite the flight or the collapse of the rest of the allied army, Renaud and his knights continued to sally out from within this tight and bristling circle to inflict damage upon the French, withdrawing back into it to rest. The mercenaries used their staff weapons to hold off the French, allowing men with double-headed axes to savage the enemy.[145] These tactics, combining infantry and cavalry, were remarkable for the day, and they certainly impressed Guillaume deeply.

Mercenaries, both mounted and on foot, were a well-established phenomenon used extensively by both the Capetians and Angevins, but only Renaud's are mentioned at Bouvines[146]. During one of his sallies Renaud and his horse were evidently brought to a halt in the press of bodies, and a footsoldier, Pierre de la Tourelle, was able to creep alongside, lift the flap of the horse's armour and stab the poor creature in the belly. Renaud was then captured by Guérin, who ended an unseemly quarrel among a group of knights over who should receive his surrender, and therefore a rich reward. The mercenaries, perhaps 700 strong, fought on but were massacred by the fifty cavalry and 2,000 infantry that Philip sent against them.[147] We hear little of the rest of the footsoldiers. The levies

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144 Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:281–83; and *Philippidos*, 2:328–33.

145 Compare Flemish tactics in 1302, recorded in Verbruggen, *Battle of the Golden Spurs*, 222–43.

146 France, *Mercenaries and Paid Men*; John D. Hosler, *Henry II: A Medieval Soldier at War, 1147–89* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Sergio Boffa, "Les mercenaires appelés 'Brabançons' aux ordres de Renaud de Dammartin et leur tactique défensive à la bataille de Bouvines (1214)," *Revue du Nord* 99 (2017): 7–24.

147 Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:289; and *Philippidos*, 2:585–718.

of the Flemish cities were present, but they never properly engaged, and deserted when Ferrand was captured—and who can blame them, for Otto IV fled the field, and so did Hugh of Boves, who, Matthew Paris alleges, was the first to run.[148] Archery is mentioned only very briefly, perhaps because there was little time to organize archers as both sides tried frantically to get their men onto the field.

The victory was pretty well total, though that was not apparent at the time, so Philip forbade any sustained pursuit. His army had virtually beheaded the opposition, capturing five counts, including Ferrand, Renaud of Danmartin, and King John's brother, the earl of Salisbury, together with twenty-five other leaders of comparable noble rank.[149] Ferrand was not released until 1226, after Philip's death, while Renaud died in prison in 1227.[150] The others, and over 100 knights, were allocated to the king's major leaders and to the cities that had provided so many troops.[151] This was a rich harvest of ransoms with which to reward his followers, and they cost Philip nothing. Moreover, on the field itself there was, as Guillaume noted, much looting of horses, armour, weapons, and the wealth of the great men who had fallen or been captured.[152]

Why did Philip win at Bouvines, that July 27, 2014? The armies seem to have been evenly matched in numbers, and, although no mercenaries are mentioned among the French, they may well have been omitted to bestow all the glory on the knights. Cadoc, Philip's mercenary leader, accompanied his master to the Loire, so it is possible that he and his men may have stayed with Prince Louis. The French were a more coherent force than their enemies, however, and they had a clearer chain of command.

On balance, the allies probably made the right decision when they chose to fight immediately: delay might well have led to the dissolution of their army; and in taking the Chaussée Brunehaut they succeeded in catching Philip in an appallingly difficult situation. He retrieved the situation wonderfully, though, by his rally of the French cavalry toward Cysoing as soon as the enemy's approach became certain. It is not at all clear who among the allied leaders could have taken a similarly rapid decision when they saw the plain filled with French knights. Moreover, the 19-km (12-mile) march from Mortagne on a hot morning would have exhausted them and tired the horses. A general charge from Cysoing toward Bouvines might well have overwhelmed Philip's forces, but, given the uncertainty, who among the allied leaders had the authority to take such a risk?

Here is the huge difference between the two armies: leadership. Philip was in charge and his will was imposed on all his men; we do not see anything comparable on the allied side. The long pause as the allies unscrambled their force strung out perhaps 7 km (4 miles) along the road gave Philip time to organize, and he seems to have got the last

148 Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, 2:152.

149 Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:289–90.

150 Barthélemy, *Bataille de Bouvines*, 145–74, discusses the fate of all the prisoners.

151 "Catalogue des captifs," in *Registres de Philippe Auguste*, 1:561–66.

152 Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:348–50, trans. in Duby, *Legend of Bouvines*, 204.

of his men into line before Otto IV made his crucial charge. Leadership was displayed not just by the king, however. He had able lieutenants such as Guérin and Burgundy, whose aggressive defence helped to spoil the assembly of Ferrand's cavalry, and he had trusted men about him. Because the sources focus on the cavalry fight it is easy to miss the simple fact that Otto IV's charge was the real crisis of the battle. If Philip had been killed or driven from the field the efforts of Guérin would have gone for nothing. It almost succeeded, and in the light of this one wonders why it failed. Perhaps it comes down to lack of coordination, command, and organization. The Anonymous of Béthune was thinking only of the cavalry battle, but his comment surely sums up the real reasons for Philip's victory:

> Thus the King had his echelons put in formation and they rode forward. You could see among them many noblemen, much rich armour and many noble banners. The same was true for the opposite side, but I must tell you that they did not ride as well and in as orderly a manner as the French, and they became aware of it.[153]

The real fruit of Bouvines for Philip was the strength and security of his position in France and in Europe, for, as the Anonymous of Béthune commented,

> After this, no one dare wage war against him, and he lived in great peace and the whole of the land was in great peace for a long time to come so that his bailiffs could exact much and his son's bailiffs even more from all the land he had come to hold: it was one of his sergeants called Nevelon, who was bailiff of Arras, who put into such servitude the whole of Flanders, inherited by Louis, that all those who heard about it marvelled that one could suffer so and endure.[154]

Despite this triumph, when Philip led an army to Poitou he gained little, because its great lords preferred to switch to John, and a five-year truce was agreed at Chinon.[155]

Philip had won a spectacular victory, and he could take personal credit for leadership at a crucial moment. His dependable and well-ordered army was made possible by the long and careful husbanding of resources by the Capetian monarchy, however, and by the policy of cooperation with the aristocracy, who provided the knights who formed the backbone of his army. This was achieved with a minimum of coercion. The monarchy had made a virtue of its limited power—in order to rise to power undreamed of.

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153 Anonymous of Béthune, in RHGF, 24:769, trans. in Duby, *Legend of Bouvines*, 195.

154 Anonymous of Béthune, in RHGF, 24:770, trans. in Duby, *Legend of Bouvines*, 197.

155 McGlynn, *Blood Cries Afar*, 120.

Chapter 7

THE EXPANSION OF FRANCE

BOUVINES ESTABLISHED PHILIP as a major power in Europe, on a par with the emperor, and conferred great prestige upon his fighting forces. There were limits to its benefits within France, however. The rights of the great nobles continued to be respected, even those of Ferrand's wife in Flanders, though Prince Louis exploited the county harshly. When Prince Louis, by then Louis VIII (1223–1226), died unexpectedly in 1226 he left a child, and some of the nobles tried to exploit this situation, in what Dominique Barthélemy has called the "fronde des barons." In fact, Barthélemy argues that the French king's powers over the high nobility remained somewhat precarious until the time of St. Louis, but it is difficult to see how his reform of government would ever have been possible without Bouvines.[1]

The Invasion of England

The truce at Chinon did not end the war with John, however, for victory created an appetite for more glory. In England many of the barons rebelled, driven by the financial exactions and the personal vindictiveness of John. In May they persuaded London to join them, forcing John to agree to the Magna Carta on June 15, 1215. By August 15, however, he was absolved from the obligations it placed on him by Innocent III, who was anxious to support, as he saw it, a vassal against rebels and a sworn crusader against those whose actions delayed his departure. England now fell into civil war, and many of the rebels appealed to Philip' son, Prince Louis, to be their king.[2] Philip and Louis delayed, however, while the rebels in London were inactive. John organized an efficient, largely mercenary army, which attacked Rochester on October 13. This was a very strong castle, whose great donjon still stands, but John pressed the siege. He mined one of the corner towers of the donjon, commanding his justiciar: "We order you to send to us night and day with all haste 40 bacon pigs of the fattest and those less good for eating to use for bringing fire under the tower."[3] To this day the result

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1 Barthélemy, *Bataille de Bouvines*, 175–96.

2 The civil war and the French invasion of England that resulted have been somewhat neglected by historians. For a very full context, see David A. Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Keith J. Stringer, "Kingship, Conflict and State-Making in the Reign of Alexander II: The War of 1215–17 and Its Context," in *The Reign of Alexander II (1214–49)*, ed. Richard Oram (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 99–156, is excellent, but, for a more extensive study, see McGlynn, *Blood Cries Afar*. I have drawn heavily on these works. Poole, *Domesday Book to Magna Carta*, 476–86, is old but has a useful short summary.

3 Trans. in Poole, *Domesday Book to Magna Carta*, 480n1.

is visible, for, after the tower collapsed, it was rebuilt as a round tower, quite distinct from those on the other three sides.[4] John then went on to conquer the strongholds of the Midland and northern barons. By a subtle mixture of savage plundering and generous terms to those who surrendered he was highly successful. He was about to turn on London when, in late April 1216, Philip's son, Prince Louis, agreed to go to England.[5] The French involvement gave the war a new aspect. Prince Louis was an experienced soldier. He had checkmated King John in 1214, and in 1215 he had taken the cross and joined the Albigensian Crusade against the heretics of southern France. On this expedition he had led a substantial army and conducted himself with great common sense.[6]

King Philip was unwilling to show open support for his son's adventure, although his protestations to the papal legate that he had nothing to do with the matter seem hollow, for at any time he could have scuppered the expedition by prohibiting his men from joining. There were good reasons for Philip to keep out of direct intervention, though. The Chinon treaty was still in effect and the pope had excommunicated the rebels in England and all who supported them. Such a penalty imposed upon the king would have caused diplomatic complications. Many French nobles were following Simon de Montfort in the Albigensian Crusade in southern France, depriving the king of their services. Moreover, just as Louis was launching his campaign, Philip had to deal with the increasingly bitter and violent struggle for the succession to the county of Champagne, where Philip's candidate, Theobald IV, was challenged by Erard of Brienne, who had very substantial backing among the nobility.[7] Philip knew that not all the great nobles of England had backed the recent rebellion or proffered homage to Louis, and that some, such as William Marshal, were loyal to John. Surrogate warfare suited Philip, because it prevented any revanchism by John and possibly offered prospects of great benefit to the French monarchy, for strictly limited liability.

The scale of Prince Louis's expedition shows that it could not have been mounted without the king's support. According to the Anonymous of Béthune, some 800 ships gathered; so many that they had to use the ports of Calais, Gravelines, Boulogne, and Wissant to embark a very large number of troops, including 1,200 knights—as many as Philip had mustered at Bouvines.[8] The fleet was under the command of Eustace the Monk, a mercenary adventurer who had served John but transferred his allegiance after Bouvines.[9] Among the distinguished leaders of the army were Guillaume des Barres and

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4 Ifor W. Rowlands, "King John, Stephen Langton, and Rochester Castle, 1213–15," in *Studies in Medieval History*, 267–79.

5 Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, trans. John A. Giles, 2 vols. (London: Bohn, 1849), 2:358.

6 Marvin, *Occitan War*, 224–28.

7 Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, 197–98.

8 Anonymous of Béthune, in RHGF, 24:770–72.

9 He was later the subject of a romance biography, on which see Glyn S. Burgess, *Two Medieval Outlaws: Eustace the Monk and Fouke Fitz Waryn* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1997).

others who had fought at Bouvines. On May 20 the fleet sailed, managed to avoid John's ships, and landed the next day at Stonor on the Isle of Thanet.

John's army moved up to meet them, but he showed little of the resolution and vigour that he had demonstrated so clearly in the previous months, and he withdrew. This may not have been mere personal weakness. He knew most of the barons of England had deserted him, so he had only one army, and if it was destroyed there was little hope of raising another. Perhaps also he distrusted his troops, and feared to engage Louis, who had checked him at La Roche-au-Moine, especially when his army contained some of the troops who had fought so well at Bouvines. The limitations of John's success in the preceding months now became apparent. Louis offered a bold figurehead around whom the disaffected could rally, and his prestige must have been accentuated when John fled to Winchester while the French marched toward London.

Louis met the rebellious barons, hitherto supine in London, at Rochester, which promptly surrendered. Louis was cheered, and when he entered London on June 2, 1216, to an enthusiastic reception, very quickly more barons defected to him.[10] Although Dover held out, most of the southeast declared for Louis, who set out westward to attack Winchester. John did not offer battle, but set fire to the city and garrisoned its two castles, one royal and the other episcopal, which held out for a while. Louis then pushed further westward, seizing Porchester and Odiham, whose little castle and its garrison of three knights and ten soldiers resisted for a week and were treated well for their bravery.[11] Another army soon achieved a dominating position in East Anglia, while both Lincoln (though not its castle) and York fell, and Louis's ally, Alexander II of Scotland, invaded the northern counties. Louis dominated the southeast and had acquired strong outposts elsewhere, and John was being deprived of lands to tax to pay his mercenary army. Even some of his household knights defected.[12] He still controlled a lot of powerful castles, however, into which he had fed strong and amply supplied garrisons, notably Lincoln, Windsor, and Dover.

The bone in Louis's throat was Dover, which commanded his communications with France. Henry II had spent considerable sums, effectively rebuilding it as a modern fortress in the years 1180 to 1189, at a cost of between £5,000 and £6,000.[13] John entrusted it to his staunch supporter Hubert de Burgh, who in 1205 had held Chinon to the bitter end, along with a strong garrison that included 120 knights. On July 25 Prince Louis arrived there and began a systematic siege. This was very much in line with his father's efforts at Château Gaillard thirteen years beforehand. He chose to assault the main gate on the north of the defences, probably because the land outside was higher.

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10 David A. Carpenter, *Henry III 1207–58* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 7; Catherine Hanley, *Louis: The French Prince Who Invaded England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 94–95.

11 Hanley, *Louis*, 106–7.

12 Stephen D. Church, *The Household Knights of King John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 100–117.

13 Poole, *Domesday Book to Magna Carta*, 338.

Perriers were deployed and a high tower constructed to overlook the defenders. His miners burrowed under the outer barbican of timber and wood, which Louis quickly seized.[14] Vigorous efforts by his miners then collapsed the eastern tower of the main gate.[15] Savage fighting ensued but the defenders were able to improvise barricades on its ruin, and fought off the assault.

The garrison was well led, aggressive, and confident. Moreover, the attackers were harried by irregulars under the command of "Willikin of the Weald," a royal bailiff: William of Kensham. His guerrilla warfare was savage, with enemies being ambushed, tortured, and beheaded. Such warfare was uncommon in medieval conditions, and on its own could hardly have been decisive. Nevertheless, it complicated the siege, made supply difficult, and affected morale.[16] In September Alexander II of Scotland made a remarkable march the whole length of England to meet Louis at Dover—revealing how fragile John's position was. Spectacular though this was, however, Dover held out. It was probably an error to attack Windsor at the same time, dividing Prince Louis's forces, which, in any case, were eroding as French and Flemish knights returned home.

When John moved toward Windsor, then turned away north and east to ravage rebel lands, the besieging forces pursued him, but they turned back to London, leaving him free to raid into East Anglia as he turned north toward Lincoln, whose besiegers fled. His path probably crossed during this period with that of the returning Alexander II, but nothing suggests John was seeking battle. This campaign was a great chevauchée aimed at punishing and impoverishing his enemies. John fell ill at Lynn, then his army became mired in marshes, losing his baggage train and many troops. He died at Newark on the night of October 18/19. This was not entirely good news for Louis and the rebels. John left a nine-year old son, Henry III, for whom William Marshal headed a regency council. One of the old king's last acts was to send money to Dover, a clear recognition of its importance in this war of position.[17]

Prince Louis held London and most of southeast and eastern England, while the west and the Welsh March was dominated by royalists. The rest of the country was divided, though Louis had strong support in the north. Overall, ninety-seven baronies were in revolt, and only thirty-six stood for King Henry. Because John had surrendered England to the pope, however, the papal legate was a powerful influence, and the English Church was decisively loyalist.[18] Moreover, on his death John held many powerful castles: Corfe, Dover, Windsor, Northampton, to name but a few. The council of regency was dominated

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14 John Goodall, "Dover Castle and the Great Siege of 1216," *Château Gaillard: Études de castellologie médiévale* (2000): 91–102.

15 The tunnels still exist, though remodeled by later works: Jonathan Coad, *Dover Castle* (London: English Heritage, 1997).

16 McGlynn, *Blood Cries Afar*, 169–70.

17 Stephen D. Church, "King John's Testament and the Last Days of His Reign," *English Historical Review* 125 (2010): 505–28.

18 Carpenter, *Minority of Henry III*, 19–20.

by John's loyalists—William Marshal; Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester; Ranulf earl of Chester; and the papal legate, Guala Bicchieri—and they enjoyed the strong support of the old king's mercenary leaders, such as Fawkes de Bréauté, but of course their men would serve only as long as the money held out. On October 28, 1216, the child, Henry III, was crowned at Gloucester.[19] In November the regency council headed by William Marshal reissued in modified form the Magna Carta, the agreement that had failed to bring peace in the previous year. Louis must have been concerned about the loyalty of the English rebels, and the first omen was not good. Louis went to Dover and asked Hubert de Burgh to surrender and become one of his chief advisers—and he was refused. Louis did successfully seize some lesser castles, however, such as Berkhamsted and Hedingham, while eastern England was largely secured. The royalists did much the same, consolidating their territorial positions. John's death and the reissue of Magna Carta produced a stalemate.[20]

In February 1217 Louis decided to seek more money and men by going to France, though he had first to promise to return. He reached Winchelsea but was isolated by an English fleet in the channel and Willikin's men on the Weald, and he and his starving people were saved only by the arrival of a French fleet. The Cinque Ports became royalist, though, and there were other defections to Henry III, notably of the earl of Salisbury and William Marshal the Younger. Despite the papal declaration that fighting for Henry III was a crusade, however, and the tensions over the spoils of war between rebels and French incomers, allegiance in the end depended on success. Some royalist successes, notably the capture of Winchester and south coast ports, put that success in doubt, so Louis returned from France on April 22 with a substantial force, 120 knights and many mercenaries, bearing with them a counterweight trebuchet, destined to attack Dover. He recaptured Winchester, and when some of his troops were massacred by the Dover garrison resumed the siege there using his trebuchet. His fleet was badly mauled by the royalist fleet operating in the channel, however, making precarious his communications with France.

One of Louis's key problems was the amorphous nature of this fight. It is tempting to see it as a struggle for "hearts and minds," but in fact it was for "lands and castles." The rebel barons felt that John had been a tyrant who threatened all their possessions, and also prevented them from making legitimate gains. The reissue of Magna Carta offered hope for the future but did nothing for those who felt they had lost out under John. Neither it nor the modest royalist gains that followed resulted in a wave of defections. Distrust of those who had been John's men certainly played a part, especially personal feuds such as that between Ranulf earl of Chester and Saer de Quincy. Even more decisively, many barons sought to retain what they had gained in the war, or to receive lands to which they aspired. Both sides had to balance the claims of their supporters, but Louis had a special problem in that he had to be careful to whom he gave captured

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19 Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, 2:380.

20 Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 302.

places as between the rebel barons and those who had followed him from France. His denial of Marlborough may well have been the real reason why William Marshal the Younger deserted him.[21] It was considerations of this kind that led to the major battle of the struggle.

The Battle of Lincoln

Mountsorrel, which was held by Saer de Quincy, earl of Winchester, one of Louis's most loyal adherents, was besieged in late April by a powerful royalist army under Ranulf earl of Chester, who had long believed in his right to the castle. Louis had little option but to agree to send something like half his available forces to its relief. According to Roger of Wendover, this was a force of 600 knights and 20,000 foot; these numbers may be suspect, but it was certainly a substantial force.[22] According to Roger, their march from London was marked by terrible scenes:

> These wicked French freebooters and robbers roved through the towns around them, sparing neither churches nor cemeteries, and made prisoners of the inhabitants of all ranks, and, after dreadfully torturing them, extorted a heavy ransom from them.[23]

This was, of course, the common way in which the war was fought. Hearing of their coming, Ranulf retired to Nottingham, burning his siege camp. Hugh d'Arras commanded the rebel force at Lincoln, where the castle was held for Henry III by the formidable Nichola de la Haye. The rebels had seized the city in 1216, but their conduct of the siege had been desultory.[24] When the siege of Mountsorrel was lifted Hugh suggested that the army join him in the siege of the castle of Lincoln. This seemed a good use of their forces, and, perhaps buoyed up by their success at Mountsorrel, the army marched east to Lincoln, ravaging as it went, and arrived in early May.

William Marshal was gathering royalist forces at Northampton, and was angry when news came of the lifting of the siege of Mountsorrel and concerned about the threat to Lincoln. He recognized an opportunity, however: only a part of the enemy forces were at Lincoln, for the remainder were in the south with Prince Louis, whose absence deprived those at Lincoln of their real figurehead. The Marshal raised a substantial force and set out to Newark, stripping garrisons to the bone. Eventually he raised a fairly modest force of 406 knights and 317 crossbowmen, of which *The History of William the Marshal* says that "but though they were few they made a fine show."[25] Since the pope had proclaimed their struggle a crusade they wore white crosses in token of their noble cause.

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21 Carpenter, *Minority of Henry III*, 27–35, has a lucid discussion of these problems, which affected both sides.

22 Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, 2:389–90.

23 Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, 2:389.

24 Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, 2:373.

25 *History of William the Marshal*, 195–97.

They approached Lincoln indirectly, marching to Torksey, some 16 km (10 miles) north of the city, so that they could approach the city along the line of the high ridge on which it stands. If they had taken the direct route of the Fosse Way they would have arrived at the foot of the ridge down which the city and its fortifications lie in a sprawling oblong, losing more than 50 m (175 ft) of height in almost 650 m (700 yards).[26] The castle and cathedral lay at the top of this enceinte, to the northeast and northwest respectively, so any effort to contact the garrison would have involved a laborious and uphill fight. As it was, they approached the north gate very close to the castle.

The force of northern rebels and French that had seized Lincoln, but not its castle, had not pressed their siege with any vigour. The castle is in the northwestern corner within the walls, with access to the open country via its west gate, which the attackers seem not to have tried to block. The besiegers were joined by the Mountsorrel force, and thereafter, it seems, the siege was pressed vigorously, because the garrison were dismayed by the damage inflicted on their walls.[27] The life of William Marshal says the besiegers numbered 611 knights and 1,000 foot plus the English rebels. These figures and those given for the loyalists need to be treated with care. Minimizing the royalist army and maximizing the enemy magnified the victory. Both sides probably had more infantry than these figures suggest. At the Battle of Axspoele in 1128 it will be recalled that William Clito spied out the enemy army to see "how much of it was a band of auxiliaries and how much a real army."[28] The Marshal's force would have needed servants, at the very least, and they could have contributed to a force of "auxiliaries," common spearmen who were regarded as beneath notice. Crossbowmen, of course, were formidable, and they seem to have been mercenaries under Faulkes de Bréauté. As his army approached the city from the north the Marshal ordered the army into four battles, led respectively by Ranulf earl of Chester, the Marshal and his son, the earl of Salisbury, and Peter des Roches, in whose squadron were the crossbowmen. They were clearly challenging to battle.

The French sent out scouts, who returned suggesting they sally out to defeat the numerically fewer loyalists. Roger of Wendover says that the count of Perche demanded a recount in the French manner by banners, and that his men did not realize that English lords each had two banners, one with the fighting men and another on his section of the baggage train.[29] This story is credible if we assume the loyalist army had a large train of "auxiliaries." Wendover uses it to explain why the French decided to man the city gates with part of their army, leaving the rest to press the siege of the castle. The French and their allies had a choice; they could have sallied out and attempted to destroy the loyalist forces in the open field. Battle was risky, however, especially if they thought the royalists were more numerous than themselves. It was probably clear to them, though, that the

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26 I owe these figures to McGlynn, *Blood Cries Afar*, 207–8.

27 McGlynn, *Blood Cries Afar*, 199.

28 Galbert of Bruges, *Murder of Charles the Good*, 297.

29 Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, 2:393–94.

royalist army was not big enough to storm the city or to impose a thorough blockade. Nothing suggests that the Marshal's army had siege equipment with them, and the castle was in desperate straits after its long siege. The loyalists could reinforce the garrison, but to sally out into the town via the castle's east gate would have been difficult. So the decision to stay in the city was sensible, and, as we know, the main French force concentrated in the open ground outside the east gate of the castle, ready to receive a sally, were prepared for assault from the obvious direction: through the western castle gate. Events turned against them, however.

William Marshal sent his nephew, John, to find an entry into the town, which he did, entering the west gate of the castle, whose east gate offered access—but, obviously, expected access—into the town. About this time the Marshal moved the army around to the west gate of the castle. He ordered Peter des Roches and his crossbowmen to protect against the enemy right flank (his left, uphill of his position outside the castle west gate), and instructed that 200 mounted men should be prepared to kill their horses and form a barricade there with the bodies. He was clearly envisaging an attack on his own left by the French sallying out from the north gate of Lincoln. The author of the life of the Marshal did not know Lincoln and confesses himself confused by the stories he had been told. Nevertheless, he says Peter des Roches entered the castle, saw the devastation caused by enemy attack, and exited it to the north via a postern. Still within the circuit of the city walls, he discovered an old blocked city gate that could be cleared to permit entry. At about this time Faulkes de Bréauté and his men, who were firing their crossbows from the castle walls, made a sally through the east gate of the castle, only to be repelled—and Faulkes himself was briefly captured. Then, led by the Marshal, who was so eager to charge that he almost forgot to put on his helmet,[30] the cavalry broke into the city, presumably via the blocked gate and along the north wall of the castle. Once in the city they turned, "leaving the cathedral on their left."[31] What seems to have been a madcap charge crashed into the French ranks on the open ground between the castle and the cathedral, killing the count of Perche and so leaving his army leaderless. The French then retreated down the main street of Lincoln, but rallied and counterattacked, with no success, fighting all the way till they were driven out of the city, though the outer south gate was jammed by a wandering cow, causing yet more chaos.[32] In the end there was a great haul of prisoners, including Saer de Quincy, earl of Winchester, and his son and the earls of Hereford and Hertford. Few deaths of notables were recorded: the count of Perche, his killer, Reginald de Croc, and a handful of others, but, of course, the chroniclers took little notice of humbler men. What really mattered was the number of important rebels taken—partially decapitating their leadership.

The decision of the rebels and their French allies to stay within the city was sensible in the circumstances, but they were woefully negligent in not recognizing the danger of

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30 *History of William the Marshal*, 20.

31 *History of William the Marshal*, 201.

32 Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, 2:395.

the poorly blocked gate, especially after besieging the castle for such a long time, and even more negligent for allowing Peter des Roches to walk around the northern part of the city unchecked. They were prepared for a sally through the east gate of the castle, but totally surprised by an attack from the north. The life of the Marshal underlines this by recounting that the engineer in charge of their siege machinery assumed the knights coming from the north were French. He was still giving commands to his men when his head was chopped off. It is not at all clear who was in command of the Anglo-French force, but the killing of the count of Perche removed a determined leader. Once driven off the high plateau on which the castle and cathedral stand, the French and the rebels were fighting at a huge disadvantage, and never recovered. In any case, the English rebels were quick to surrender.[33]

Louis was at Dover when he heard the news. As he was expecting reinforcements from France he decided to wait for them before returning to London, but on May 29 his fleet was mauled by English ships, so he received fewer men and munitions than expected. His return to London on June 1 effectively ended the siege of Dover. Prince Louis faced a difficult situation, for there were many defections and the royalist army was operating close to London, whose adhesion to his cause was feared to be shaky. In the event, he was given the opportunity to negotiate by the arrival of a high-level ecclesiastical delegation seeking support for the Fifth Crusade (1217–1221). Louis was prepared to renounce his claim to the English throne in return for safeguards for his followers and a reissue of Magna Carta. He refused to abandon his four chief ecclesiastical supporters to the mercy of the Church, however, and so negotiations collapsed. It is difficult to know if this talking was anything more, from his point of view, than gaining time.[34] The talks showed those who had backed him that he was not deserting them, and once they were over he resumed the familiar pattern of ravaging hostile lands. The royalists too faced problems, for some wanted to attack London, while others felt it was beyond their strength. Despite the victory at Lincoln, therefore, and the generous terms offered by both sides for a peace, the war and the deadlock continued.[35]

Battle at Sea: Sandwich and the Endgame

Louis appealed to his father for support, but the Champagne succession had flared into civil war and Louis had just cleared up his differences with the papacy, so he refused any direct support. Nonetheless, he did not prevent Louis's wife, Blanche of Castile, from raising troops and money to aid her husband to the tune of 300 cavalry, of whom 100 were knights, including distinguished men such as Guillaume des Barres the Younger, accompanied by a substantial infantry force. Given that some 200 knights had escaped

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33 Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, 3:24.

34 Carpenter, *Minority of Henry III*, 41–42, 45–46, points out that the terms discussed were very like those of the Treaty of Kingston, which ended Louis's adventure.

35 Hanley, *Louis*, 167–70.

from Lincoln, and that others had been ransomed into freedom, this was certainly enough to tip the balance of military advantage. The royalists were well aware of what was afoot and the Marshal gathered every available ship at Sandwich, promising the Cinque Ports all their privileges and placing Hubert de Burgh in charge of the fleet with an experienced sailor, Philip d'Albini. They sailed on St. Bartholomew's day, August 24.

The French fleet had some eighty ships, of which ten were large, probably cogs, which provided superb fighting platforms; of these four carried knights and six sergeants. All these, and the lighter vessels, were heavily laden with supplies, including the "great ship of Bayonne," which acted as flagship, all under the command of Eustace the Monk and the royal cousin, Robert of Courtenay. Hubert de Burgh had rather fewer than twenty major ships, supported by an equal number of small vessels, perhaps knarrs, capable of relatively fast manoeuvre.[36] Most of the French ships were probably mere cargo vessels, of limited fighting value, so the fleets were reasonably evenly matched.

The fleet from France had a following wind and seems to have been making fine progress, while the English must have been obliged to wear out (sail against) the wind and tide from Sandwich. It is very difficult to follow what exactly happened next, and the accounts differ. The life of William Marshal gives a very simple account. The English fleet moved out from Sandwich, causing the French to furl their sails in anticipation of an attack. The leading English ship, bearing Hubert de Burgh, passed by the invaders, who jeered, but then, the author claims, the French "were soon to be outmanoeuvred, cornered." Thereafter we have a detailed account of how the enemy flagship, "the great ship of Bayonne," "sailing at speed, well ahead of the rest," was boarded. It was attacked by two English ships, and, because it was heavily laden, with a trebuchet among other stores, and very low in the water, the men in the attacking cog "had huge pots of quicklime that they hurled on those below"[37] before boarding. The account of the boarding is detailed and rhetorical, and culminates in the decapitation of Eustace the Monk, who the royalists regarded as a traitor, although thirty-six knights, including Theobald of Blois, were captured. The *Histoire des ducs de Normandie* says that, after the battle, Eustace's head was stuck on a spear and borne ashore.[38]

The rest of the battle is described only in the vaguest generalities. The enemy were pursued almost to Calais, some 4,000 were killed, and a vast booty taken.[39] This account raises major questions. What happened to the rest of the fleets during the fighting? More importantly, the French fleet had the wind behind it and should have crashed into the enemy at speed, but the English evaded it, so how could they have been able to make choices (the author says the first English ship held off from the attack on the "great ship of Bayonne" until another had come up to support it)? This new ship is explicitly described as a cog, so it was not a light oared vessel, and could therefore

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36 McGlynn, *Blood Cries Afar*, 226–28, discusses the figures in some detail.

37 Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, 2:399, also reports the use of lime.

38 *Histoire des ducs de Normandie*, 202.

39 *History of William the Marshal*, 205–10.

have manoeuvred like this only if it had the weather gage. Guillaume le Breton says that Robert de Courtenay ordered his great ship to attack the English, who were perceived at first to be less numerous and to have smaller ships, but his vessel became isolated and was captured.[40] This accords with the life of the Marshal, but leaves the same crucial questions unanswered. Roger of Wendover says that the French declined battle, but the English attacked the rear of their fleet. His account of the fighting that followed is highly generalized but suggestive of a savage struggle, in which he gives considerable credit to the crossbowmen of Philip of Albini.[41] This suggests that the English fleet had acquired the weather gage, because otherwise they could not have caught up with the French or thrown lime. This is confirmed by the *Romance of Eustace the Monk*, which tells us that the English passed across his track and explicitly says that, because the wind was against Eustace and his men, the English were able to throw lime, which blinded his men.[42] Matthew Paris was a much later writer, and he gives two accounts of the battle, one clearly based on Roger of Wendover and the other on information he claims to have received from Hubert de Burgh. He insists that the critical factor was that the English gained the weather gage, and that this was the key to their victory.[43] The mention of the throwing of lime clearly suggests that the English fleet had the weather gage, for otherwise it would have been blown back on them.

Quite how this was achieved is not altogether clear. It seems unlikely that the royalist fleet actually passed across the front of the French fleet to attack from the northeast, as the language of the *Romance of Eustace the Monk* suggests. Most probably Hubert de Burgh's ships turned to the southeast while the French, slowing as they unfurled their sails, drifted northward. In this way they ended up behind their enemy and with the wind behind them. The French ships were heavily loaded and so the royalists were able to overtake them and choose their targets. It is most likely that the "great ship of Bayonne" lagged behind the others because of its massive burden and so was targeted; chroniclers probably assumed it was at the head of the fleet because it bore the leaders, Robert of Courtenay and Eustace the Monk.[44] All the sources make clear that the French fleet was well equipped and had brave men aboard, so the defeat was due to tactical error, as were the earlier defeats at Damme and Lincoln.

This was an impressive victory for the English fleet, producing vast amounts of booty—so much, in fact, that, after all had been shared out, a hospital of St. Bartholomew

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40 Guillaume le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:314.

41 Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, 2:399–400.

42 Eustace the Monk, *Li Romans de Witasse Le Moine*, ed. Denis J. Conlon (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), ll. 2266–307.

43 Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, 2:399–400; Henry Lewin Cannon, "The Battle of Sandwich and Eustace the Monk," *English Historical Review* 27 (1912): 649–70 at 649n1.

44 As suggested by Charles D. Stanton, *Medieval Maritime Warfare* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2015), 238. Eustace the Monk was decapitated immediately, though the French knights were allowed to surrender: Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, 2:400.

was established with the remaining proceeds at Sandwich.[45] The loyalists armies now closed in on London, with a fleet in the Thames blocking all hope of relief, and opened negotiations with Louis. The result was the Treaty of Kingston, a peace under which Louis renounced his claims to the English throne. For him, the real humiliation was that he and his followers had to parade publicly in penance in order to get their excommunication lifted. The Marshal and many of the royalists now wanted peace and were prepared to pay Louis to avoid renewal of his claims. They were also ready to avoid acrimony by being generous not merely to the French nobles but also to their own rebels.[46]

Why had Louis's campaign failed? It is tempting to see in the royalist campaign hatred of the foreigners breeding a sense of Englishness. In 1204 Philip had demanded that all Norman barons had to choose between English and Norman lands so that the leaders of society were no longer Anglo-Norman. The harassing of the enemy by Willikin of the Weald and his followers seems to point in the same direction, as does the readiness of the sailors of the Cinque Ports and elsewhere to fight.[47] It is true that the reissue of Magna Carta ultimately did excoriate and expel foreigners, but the Crown and barons decided who "foreigners" were: broadly, those opposed to their interests. The loyalist barons were in fact as French as those they fought, and they had as little in common with the ordinary people of the English realm as those who supported Louis. We are told that the death of the count of Perche at Lincoln saddened both sides, and throughout the war noble prisoners continued to be ransomed. The same chivalric code inspired the elite on both sides, in what was, essentially, warfare between French barons.

Willikin of the Weald was a royal bailiff who harnessed hatred of ravagers—who in that area were mainly French. The Cinque Ports were not enthusiasts for the royal cause, but they inclined to whoever was winning and could put pressure upon them. Louis was not fighting a nation but a landed elite whose loyalties had been strained by King John. The majority of those who supported Louis in 1216 were still with him in defeat in 1217. Louis had considerable resources from his father's realm; Philip had other matters to consider, especially coming to a settlement with the papacy, and so never gave him full backing. Even so, Louis initially had about 1,200 knights—as many as had fought for his father in 1214 at Bouvines. Louis had much going for him in his struggle. He made mistakes, though. Dividing his army for the siege of Mountsorrel has been regarded as one.[48] It was vital for him to retain the loyalty of Saer de Quincy, however, and the expedition was successful at Mountsorrel and could easily have taken Lincoln Castle if his supporters had shown rather more military competence. This was a problem for the loyalists as well. Both sides had to consider many interests, and so found concentrating force difficult. At Sandwich the French fleet seems to have been fooled. It is notable that

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[45] *History of William the Marshal*, 210n647.

[46] Carpenter, *Henry III*, 10.

[47] McGlynn, *Blood Cries Afar*, 240, leans toward this view of the birth of English nationalism.

[48] Norman Vincent, *Peter des Roches: An Alien in English Politics 1205–38* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 136.

at Lincoln and Sandwich Louis was not present. It is true that he failed before Dover, but this was largely because of the strength of the place and because he was not able to concentrate his forces there. In fact, Louis showed himself to be a good war leader and an adept chief of a difficult coalition, which he held together well. He had reached the nadir of his fortunes after fifteen months of savage warfare. Even as negotiations proceeded, though, he was thinking of a breakout battle—and who knows what might then have happened?

From the viewpoint of the Capetian monarchy, while Louis had failed to gain a crown, Philip was no longer troubled by Plantagenet revanchism. Moreover, in the longer run Henry III was weakened by his lack of resources and the perpetual conflict with his barons, as he tried to raise more taxes to regain his lost lands. The weakness of John's son was an important reason for the glowing career of Louis IX, the crusading king par excellence.

The South and the French Monarchy

Prince Louis clearly had a taste for military adventure. After the death of Simon de Montfort in 1218 at the failed siege of Toulouse, the crusade against the heretics languished. The pope persuaded Louis once more to take the cross, however, and he gathered a large army. Aumary de Montfort, Simon's son, was conducting the siege of Marmande, though with no success. Louis directed his forces there, in 1219. With his aid Marmande was stormed, and a massacre of its citizens, appalling even by the standards of the war against heretics, was perpetrated.[49] It is hard not to see this as a deliberate act to terrorize all resisting communities, after the recent failures. When Louis attacked Toulouse, though, he enjoyed no success at all, and quickly returned north.[50] He was not finished with the south, however.

Louis VIII (1223–1226) was a ruthless war leader. When he came to the throne he refused to continue the truce that his father had agreed with Henry III's minority government in England, and decided to take advantage of its weakness to conquer the Poitou. He came to terms with Hugh of Lusignan, whose castles and lands could serve as a base for his army, which gathered at Tours on June 24, 1224. At Limoges Bernard Itier noted that "[i]n the first year of his reign, King Louis began to take for himself the entire duchy of Aquitaine," by taking Niort and Saint-Jean-d'Angély, then moving to La Rochelle.[51] La Rochelle was an important port, however, where Plantagenet kings had landed, as John had in 1214, and it enjoyed a profitable wine trade with England. Louis established a formal siege and bombarded the place with trebuchets until, after a month, it capitulated, but only after a vigorous defence.[52] Roger of Wendover alleges that Louis bribed the citizens to capitulate, but the fact was that England was

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49 For an indication of the temper of the Albigensian Crusade, see Sean McGlynn, *Kill Them All: Cathars and Carnage in the Albigensian Crusade* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2015).

50 Marvin, *Occitan War*, 297–301.

51 *Chronicle and Historical Notes of Bernard Itier*, 206–7.

52 Guillaume de Nangis, *Chronique*, 172.

still in turmoil and no help was likely to be forthcoming.[53] Louis then offered Hugh of Lusignan Bordeaux if he could conquer Gascony.[54] The French king clearly had in mind a final solution to the Plantagenet problem. Hugh was held at bay only because, in 1225, the London government raised the staggering sum of £40,000 to pay for a large army—at the cost of reissuing Magna Carta in what became its definitive form.[55] Richard of Cornwall, the king's brother, was sent to Bordeaux, where he demanded oaths of loyalty from the towns and notables; he laid siege when the fortress of Rieux resisted. Hugh of Lusignan mobilized a strong force to relieve Rieux, but when he was advised of this Richard ambushed his force in the woods and routed them.[56] Louis now had Poitou firmly in his grasp, however, and possession of La Rochelle deprived Henry III of any port through which to reverse this situation. The possessions of the Plantagenets had shrunk to the duchy of Gascony in the far south with its important port of Bordeaux.

The Albigensian Crusade

Louis still faced a problem, however, and one that had punctuated his lifetime. This was the Albigensian Crusade and the fate of southern France, which for so long had been outside the range of the French monarchy. In 1179 the Third Lateran Council had condemned the heretics of southern France and offered spiritual rewards to those who took up arms against them.[57] In 1208 the murder of the papal legate to the area, Peter of Castelnau, provoked Innocent III into proclaiming a crusade against them, and the result was the arrival in the south of an army largely made up of northern Frenchmen led by Simon de Montfort, who had zealously led the breakaway group who left the Fourth Crusade when it attacked the Christian city of Zara.[58] The south of France was politically fragmented and studded with castles and fortified cities, so the war largely assumed the form of a series of sieges.[59] Almost the first act of the crusade was an attack on Béziers, which the large crusader army reached on July 21, 1209. The city was strongly held and well fortified, and its garrison sallied to attack and taunt the besiegers. It seems as if the humbler camp followers in the crusader army, the *ribaldi*, exasperated by this taunting, attacked the citizen militia, pursued them into the city,

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53 Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, 2:450.

54 Carpenter, *Henry III*, 30.

55 Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 307.

56 Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, 2:458–59.

57 Carl J. von Hefele, *Histoire des Conciles*, ed. Henri Leclerq, 9 vols. (Hildesheim: Olms, 1973), 5.2:1106–108.

58 Joseph R. Strayer, *The Albigensian Crusades* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1992), 10–12; and see below, 169.

59 Laurence W. Marvin, "War in the South: A First Look at Siege Warfare in the Albigensian Crusade, 1209–18," *War in History* 8 (2001): 373–95 at 376–77; and *Occitan War*, 13–14.

and proceeded to a savage and devastating sack that was made worse as knights and others joined in eager for their share of the proceeds. It was an unusual siege, and its outcome illustrates nicely the influence of sheer chance on events, but it got the crusade off to a good start.[60]

After the fall of Béziers three towns became the targets of the crusaders: Cabaret, Minerve, and Termes.[61] In June 1210 Simon attacked the small town of Minerve. It has an immensely strong position on a rock peninsula between two deep river gorges, and the obvious approach from the north was blocked by a citadel. In addition, this was an area of poor agriculture, and so all supplies had to be brought across hostile country.[62] The place was isolated by the attackers, and, because the gorges were narrow, three mangonels—presumably traction trebuchets—were set up to the north, south, and west. A fourth machine of unusual power and size was brought to bear; this may have been a counterweight trebuchet, for it inspired great interest, and in the following year what was unmistakably a counterweight machine was deployed against Castelnaudry.[63] A great deal of destruction was caused by the catapults, but, ultimately, it was lack of water that forced the capitulation of Minerve in July. The terms were relatively generous, though all heretics who refused to recant were burned.[64]

Even in 1214, though, de Montfort was still attacking these lesser places, deploying substantial forces and using extensive engineering skills. Casseneuil was a small fortified town surrounded by rivers and a large water-filled ditch. Machines were set up to bombard the place, and they inflicted much damage. A pontoon bridge was built to carry an assault across the great ditch, but the bank on the defended side was so much lower than the side from which it was pushed that it simply fell in. A second bridge was built to lodge on the banks, but it proved too short, and the attackers were humiliated and damaged by perriers deployed by the defenders. In the end the French engineers designed a five-story siege tower, which was pushed up to the edge of the ditch. It was well protected and its garrison provided covering fire for others who the filled in the ditch with rubble, opening the way for an assault. At this point the mercenaries in the garrison fled, leaving the city to be sacked.[65] The determination of the attackers is impressive, but the siege had lasted from June 28 to August 18. It is evident why the Albigensian Crusade was so drawn out.

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60 Marvin, *Occitan War*, 37–45.

61 Malcolm Barber, "Catharism and the Occitan Nobility: The Lordships of Cabaret, Minerve and Termes," in *The Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood*, vol. 3, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1990), 1–19.

62 Because of the poor soil, the area now specializes in wine production; Minervois is an appellation.

63 France, *Western Warfare*, 122–23.

64 Marvin, *Occitan War*, 76–79.

65 Marvin, *Occitan War*, 208–13.

Battle of Muret

De Montfort's greatest triumph was a battle that arose from a siege. Simon was seeking to build a new principality in the Languedoc after Raymond of Toulouse had been adjudged to be a supporter of heresy. This conflicted with the ambition of Peter II of Aragon (1196–1213) to make good his claims to territory north of the Pyrenees. In early September 1213 Peter's army crossed the Pyrenees and met with the forces of Toulouse, which were closely besieging Muret, and established a camp some 3 km (just over 2 miles) from the place. The reason for this separation of forces is unclear. The siege was clearly incomplete, however, because Simon entered the town with a force of 800 knights, far fewer than the allied army. The clergy with him tried to make peace, but King Peter was confident, while Simon thought that, if he sacrificed Muret, other places would turn against him.[66] The count of Toulouse wanted to continue the siege and suggested that the Aragonese should stay in their camp and shoot down Simon's men if they attacked, sallying out only when they were weakened. James II rejected this and moved his cavalry out, and about 2.5 km (around 1.5 miles) northwest of the city formed them into a line between the river Saudrune and the marsh of Pesquiès. They were divided into three divisions, each of two lines, and he took his place in the front line. All their infantry were left in the camp, while the forces of Toulouse continued a partial close siege. On September 12 Simon led his troops out of the city in three divisions, two of which he sent crashing into the Aragonese cavalry at the point where Peter II was. His own division on the right turned around the marsh and took the enemy in the flank, causing a panic and flight, in the course of which Peter II was killed.[67] It was a remarkable victory for the French crusaders. The root cause was the inability of the allies to act together; in effect, their army was divided into three parts, two of which never engaged. Apparently the troops of Toulouse had no idea what had happened until the victors returned to the city. The result was a massacre, while the crusaders lost only one knight and a few sergeants. Peter's cavalry outnumbered the crusaders, however. Peter's son, James I (1213–1276), writing in his memoires, explained this disastrous failure:

> And thereon they [the French] came out to fight in a body. On my father's side the men did not know how to range for the battle, know how to move together; every baron fought by himself and against the order of war. Thus through bad order, through our sins and through those from Muret [the French] fighting desperately since they found no mercy at my father's hands, the battle was lost.[68]

This analysis, that "bad order" caused defeat, is strikingly like the verdict of the Anonymous of Béthune on Philip II's victory at Bouvines.[69] Simon's army was small but very experienced, and it had been together for a long time, while the Aragonese seem to have lacked coherence.

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66 *The Chronicle of William of Puylaurens*, ed. William A. Sibly and Michael D. Sibly (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), 46.

67 France, *Western Warfare*, 167–69; for a recent study, see Martín Alvira Cabrer, *Muret 1213: La batalla decisiva de la Cruzada contra los Cátaros* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2008).

68 *The Chronicle of James I: King of Aragon*, ed. John Forster (Farnborough: Gregg, 1968), 17–18.

69 See above, 146 and n153.

Muret was an incredible success but it was not decisive. The Fourth Lateran Council agreed, however, that Simon should have all the lands of the heretic count of Toulouse, which gave him both status and the means to reward followers. It is appropriate that de Montfort died in a siege. In September 1217 Raymond count of Toulouse regained control of Toulouse, with the enthusiastic agreement of its citizens, and the following month de Montfort attacked the city. Its fortifications had been largely dismantled and the citadel, the Château de Narbonne, just outside the city proper, served as headquarters for the attackers. Their initial thrust into the city was thrown back, with citizens blocking the narrow streets and throwing down stones from the roofs. The French then set about a systematic siege, but they lacked the numbers to surround such a large place, and when, on June 26, 1218, Simon was killed by a stone from a mangonel the siege was abandoned.[70]

Louis VIII Intervenes

In the south the crusade against the heretics was now languishing, to the extent that Simon's son, Aumary de Montfort, fled to the north in 1224. The pope appealed to Louis VIII, who, with the backing of the French Church, agreed to join the crusade. In his Latin epic poem on the deeds of Louis VIII, Nicholas de Bray portrays him "fortified by the banner of the cross upon the king's chest," but Louis clearly had the monarchy's interests at heart, for he first received in gift all of Aumary de Montfort's lands, thus establishing himself as overlord of all the south.[71] A huge army was gathered, and many of the lords of the south hastened to make submission to the king. Raymond of Toulouse did not, however.

Louis's great French army arrived at Avignon, and asked to pass through the city using its bridge over the Rhône. The citizens at first agreed, but for reasons that are unclear then thought better of it. On June 10 Louis began a siege of the city, which was powerfully fortified. Engines were set up to batter the place, but the initial assaults were repulsed and Louis's engineer, Amaury Copeau, was killed. The real problem was logistics, though. Count Raymond of Toulouse had devastated the area around the city. This made supplying the huge French army difficult, especially as the count's men ambushed the French foragers. Then the army was ravaged by disease. A bridge was built across the river to carry a major assault, but it collapsed, with heavy losses, and many more men were lost to a sudden sally from the city. Louis himself fell ill and withdrew to a nearby monastery. After three months, though, the city surrendered, albeit on terms.[72] Louis then led his army through the south to Toulouse, where he arrived in October, but his army was now much reduced and a siege was clearly impracticable. Louis then fell ill, and on November 8, 1226, he died.

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70 *Chronicle of William of Puylaurens*, 61; France, *Western Warfare*, 110–11.

71 "Vexilloque crucis munito pectore regis": Nicholas de Bray, *Gesta Ludovici VIII Francorum regis*, RHGF, 17:330, l. 1070.

72 Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, 2:478–83; Hanley, *Louis*, 212–21.

Louis VIII ruled for only three years, but he proved himself a very able war leader. He extended his lands hugely in the Poitou and harnessed the crusading impulse to his ambitions. He was a natural warrior who seems to have enjoyed the business of war, and his successes had given great glory to the monarchy. He had also created a very strong royal position in the south, for, although he had not conquered Count Raymond, he had established a clear claim to dominion in the area, and had left garrisons to give reality to that claim. He had agreed with Count Raymond that his younger son, Alphonse, would marry the count's daughter and heir, and, as the couple died together, the whole passed into the royal demesne in 1271.[73]

The importance of the Albigensian Crusade is that it reveals the limitations of royal military power. The crusade was led by Simon de Montfort, whose family were very long-standing vassals of the French Crown in the Île-de-France.[74] It was, of course, international, and we do hear of pilgrims from beyond the limits of Capetian power, but for the most part it was men from the north of France who followed Simon. It is true that Simon suffered from grave uncertainties about manpower, and even the support of the Church was far from consistent. Philip Augustus always refused aid, partly for fear of driving the count of Toulouse and his supporters into the hands of King John.[75] Even so, the long-sustained large-scale conflict and sophisticated technology of the armies that Simon mobilized and equipped were remarkable, especially when we remember that the Occitan War was fought out in parallel to the conflict between Philip and King John. The siege of Casseneuil played out from June 28 to August 18, precisely coinciding with the crescendo of conflict in the north, which culminated in the Battle of Bouvines on July 27.[76] It is remarkable that France could sustain two such efforts, and points to the inability of the French Crown, even under Philip Augustus, to exploit all the resources of France. Nevertheless, the failure of the crusade left the way clear for Louis VIII to intervene, and his seizure of virtually the whole of the south and political settlement with Raymond VII of Toulouse opened the way for a wider control in France than the Capetians had ever known.

The attempted conquest of England and the Albigensian Crusade reveal the very considerable military potential of France. Much of it was beyond the reach of the French monarchy, because the kings had long adopted a policy of cooperation with the high nobility. Thus their army represented only that part of the military capacity whose leaders chose to mobilize on behalf of the French monarch. Of course, success made the nobility more willing, because it brought with it rewards such as loot and ransoms. Nonetheless, the military achievement of the French monarchy was remarkable, in that a military consensus had emerged in favour of service to the monarch. This consensus would reach its apogee under Louis IX, but it was replaced by a more rigidly institutional approach by his successors.

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73 Marvin, *Occitan War*, 301–2; Hallam, *Capetian France*, 236–39.

74 Châtelain, *Châteaux forts et féodalité*, 19–20.

75 Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France,* 238–39.

76 Barthélemy, *Bataille de Bouvines*; and see below, 133–46.

Chapter 8

LOUIS IX AND THE APOGEE OF FRENCH POWER

The Early Reign

THE EARLY DEATH of Louis VIII in 1226 led to a regency by his very able wife, Blanche of Castile, for his young son, Louis IX (1226–1270). The absence of an adult male successor inevitably opened the way to aristocratic factional struggle for influence over the young king—what Barthélemy has called the "fronde des barons."[1] Peter Mauclerc, duke of Brittany, and Philip Hurepel of Boulogne were both of Capetian stock; they and Theobald IV of Champagne were the primary forces in this internal conflict. Mauclerc was a special threat because his duchy had once been held of the Plantagenets, and Henry III was anxious to profit from internal struggles in France. All the competitors had different objectives, however. In 1226 Mauclerc rebelled, but submitted when the queen bought him off and raised a strong army, which she deployed into the Touraine to curb Hugh of Lusignan's contacts with Henry III. Henry strove to raise an army, but his agents made a truce to last into 1228.[2] In 1228, in alliance with Hurepel, Mauclerc kidnapped the child Louis IX. The militias of the towns of the Île-de-France rescued Louis. Louis cherished this memory, as John of Joinville, writing in the early fourteenth century, recalled of his journey back to Paris: "The roads had been thronged with people, armed and unarmed, all calling on our Lord to grant their young king a long and happy life and guard him from his enemies."[3] Mauclerc was again in rebellion in 1230, however, supported by discontented barons of Poitou and a major army led by Henry III. Henry had gathered an army in 1229, but there were insufficient ships to transport them across, and he and Mauclerc agreed to put the expedition off.[4]

In 1230 Henry again raised an English army and landed at St. Malo. His force was perhaps smaller than intended because, before leaving, he sent 160 ships home. He set out for Nantes, where his army delayed. He probably knew that the French were in great difficulty.[5] Theobald of Champagne was a major force whose influence on the regency, and boundary disputes with others, had inflamed tensions, especially with Hurepel, the count of Flanders, and the duke of Burgundy. Louis and his mother persuaded the allies to make

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1 Barthélemy, *Bataille de Bouvines*, 175–85.

2 Carpenter, *Henry III*, 62–63; Barthélemy, *Bataille de Bouvines*, 178.

3 John of Joinville, "The Life of St. Louis," in *Joinville and Villehardouin Chronicles of the Crusades*, trans. Margaret R. B. Shaw (London: Penguin, 1963), 163–354 at 182; noted by Barthélemy, *Bataille de Bouvines*, 179–80.

4 Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, 2:531; Carpenter, *Henry III*, 83–85.

5 Carpenter, *Henry III*, 85–90.

a truce with Theobald and to join the army, which he led toward the Loire to check Henry III. They had more pressing interests, however, for, as Roger of Wendover remarked, "All the nobles of France were engaged in war against one another." In June Louis's army disintegrated, and Henry, although he had some support in Normandy, decided to move into Poitou.[6] There Henry received the homage of many barons and made his way down to Bordeaux. Nevertheless, Hugh of Lusignan remained loyal to Louis, Henry's army was wasting away, and money was running out. Truces were made and the war fizzled out. Henry's only gain was the Isle of Oléron, which offered a point of entry into Poitou.[7]

After a truce Henry III renewed his Breton alliance, but this quickly collapsed and by 1235 things had quietened. It is a revelation of the military power of the French monarchy that during these events a French army under Henry of Beaujeu, supported by the papal legate, brought about a favourable territorial settlement in the south. The count of Toulouse retained most of his lands, but swore allegiance to the monarchy, as did the count of Foix. Much of the old imperial territory east of the Rhône went to the Church, including Avignon, but a huge tranche of territory around Avignon fell to the French. Moreover, the count of Toulouse accepted the marriage of his daughter to Louis VIII's younger son, Alphonse. This Treaty of Paris of 1229 marked a triumph for the regency in a time of troubles.[8]

The Angevin Problem

In the course of the 1230s Louis IX's position within France became very secure and he began the process—required by the will of his father, Louis VIII—of providing apanages for his younger brothers. Robert received Artois in 1237, but trouble arose when Louis knighted his brother, Alphonse, at Saumur and made him count of Poitou. The king and Alphonse then processed to Poitiers to receive the homage of his vassals there, only to discover that Hugh of Lusignan, count of La Marche, would not submit and was in a strong position to cut them off from France. Hugh, asserted Louis's biographer Joinville, was egged on by his wife, Isabella, and Louis and Alphonse had to make concessions to escape from Poitiers.[9] The barons of Poitou, led by Hugh of Lusignan, clearly understood that Alphonse' arrival would bring down upon them the yoke of Capetian government, which had hitherto treated their independence with circumspection, and turned to Henry III as the more distant and weaker claimant to their allegiance. Hugh enjoyed the support of Bordeaux and other cities and vassals of Henry III in the duchy of Guienne, and Raymond VII of Toulouse joined this alliance, which had the more distant support of the Emperor Frederick II and the rulers of Castile and Aragon, all of whom had watched the advance of Capetian power with hostility.[10]

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6 Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, 2:535; Barthélemy, *Bataille de Bouvines*, 152.

7 Carpenter, *Henry III*, 90–93.

8 William C. Jordan, "The Capetians from the Death of Philip II to Philip IV," in NCMH, 5:279–313 at 285.

9 John of Joinville, "Life of St. Louis," 188.

10 Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, 102–4.

Henry III of England was perpetually troubled by financial problems, and he could hardly have forgotten the fate of his 1230 expedition, but this was a golden opportunity to recover the lost lands. He had persisted in friendship with some of the lords of Aquitaine, to whom he had paid substantial sums of money through the 1230s. He now set about raising a great army, ordering 50,000 crossbow bolts, 15,000 horse shoes, 100,000 nails, wine barrels, and carts.[11]

The actual size of the army coming from England was fairly limited, however. Matthew Paris says Henry III was able to bring only eighty English knights,[12] though they would have been supported by the followings of his chief vassals and backed up by infantry. In any case, he was joining his allies, and there was no shortage of swords for hire in the area and Henry had raised enormous amounts of cash.[13]

In the face of this Louis IX now made a demonstration of his military power, gathering an army at Chinon that Matthew Paris numbers at 4,000 knights and 20,000 foot, including many crossbowmen. In May 1242 Henry III ordered the Cinque Ports to attack French interests, then arrived at Royan with a small force, joining his Poitevin and southern allies and gathering a total of 1,600 knights and 20,000 foot, including 700 crossbowmen.[14] There is little reason to accept either set of figures as precise, but they do indicate that large armies were operating.

Louis IX's army advanced south aggressively, taking castles with relative ease, including all the major strongholds of Hugh of Lusignan. This was possible because, in this first phase of the war, Hugh had defied Louis without waiting for support from Henry III.[15] In response, Henry moved to Saintes and established control of the bridge at Tonnay-sur-Charente. There was another bridge over the Charente at Taillebourg, however, and it was essential to seize control there to prevent Louis advancing southward. On the "French" side of the river was the great fortress of Taillebourg, which belonged to Geoffrey de Rançon, guarding the bridge and dominating the town. Henry seems to have assumed that Geoffrey was friendly, but he had a personal feud with Hugh of Lusignan and had sworn never to cut his hair until he had secured revenge—so he welcomed Louis IX.[16] Matthew Paris tells us that there was considerable dissension on the allied side, with the count of La Marche denying he had ever agreed to support Henry.[17] Moreover, the French were able to build a wooden bridge nearby across the Charente. Richard of Cornwall went to the French camp and arranged a very short truce with Louis IX; presumably he had realized that Henry's force was outnumbered and

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11 Carpenter, *Henry III*, 250–53.

12 Paris, *Chronica Majora*, 4:192, 210.

13 Carpenter, *Henry III*, 254–55.

14 Paris, *Chronica Majora*, 4:195, 208–9, 210.

15 For an account of the confrontation, see Charles Bémont, "La campagne de Poitou, 1242–43: Taillebourg et Saintes," *Annales du Midi* (1893): 289–314; and Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, 180–85.

16 Bémont, "Campagne de Poitiers," 299–300.

17 This is supported by John of Joinville, "Life of St. Louis," 189.

that retreat was sensible, especially as Louis had collected boats to force the passage. Richard returned and urged Henry to flee with him because of the treachery in the ranks. In this way Louis was able to cross the Charente without a fight.[18] He then set off toward Saintes, where the French quickly overran the much smaller army of Henry and pursued them so eagerly that a few of the French rode into Saintes, only to be captured.[19] Henry had hoped to be secure in Saintes, but he was informed that Louis intended to capture him, so he fled southward followed by the wreckage of his army. After defeating Henry Louis reduced the barons of Poitou to obedience and conquered the lands of Raymond VII of Toulouse, which were now effectively annexed to the Crown.[20] The size of the army and ease of his victory point to the sheer power of the French army under determined leadership. The French monarchy was now able to enfold an enormous amount of the military capacity of France.[21]

Apart from the crusades, there would be no more major land campaigns involving the French army on its own soil till the end of the thirteenth century. In 1259 Henry III and Louis IX agreed on the Treaty of Paris, by which Henry's possession of Gascony and parts of Poitou was affirmed. Many of the French royal council resented Louis's generosity in returning much of southern Poitou, however, especially as Henry III did not fully renounce all his claims to the old Angevin Empire.[22]

The Crusades of Louis IX

On December 14, 1244, Louis IX, recovering from a severe illness, took the cross. This was a major step for any king, but Louis was able to enlist a huge army in this holy enterprise. Despite the hardships and disappointments of the Third Crusade, the call of Jerusalem had remained enormously strong in France, and the Fourth Crusade began as an almost entirely French affair.

The Fourth Crusade and the Context of Enthusiasm

Within a year of being elected, Innocent III (1198–1216) issued a call for another crusade. The wars of the Capetians and Plantagenets, and troubles in the German Empire, prevented the participation of any king. Theobald III of Champagne and his cousin Louis of Blois, both grandsons of Louis VII, took the cross during a great tournament at Ecry-sur-Aisne in November 1199. They were joined by Baldwin IX of Flanders and a glittering host of northern nobles, including Geoffrey de Villehardouin, marshal of Champagne, who became the expedition's chronicler, and Simon de Montfort,

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18 Bémont, "Campagne de Poitiers," 300–305.

19 Bémont, "Campagne de Poitiers," 306–7.

20 Bémont, "Campagne de Poitiers," 312–13.

21 Guillaume de Nangis, *Chronique*, 194–97.

22 Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 283, 342–43.

later leader of the Albigensian Crusade. The death of Theobald on May 24, 1201, led to the inclusion of the Italian lord, Boniface of Montferrat, who became the overall leader.[23] The leaders agreed a contract with Venice for the transport of an army of 35,000 (4,500 horses, 4,500 knights, 9,000 squires, and 20,000 foot) to attack Egypt directly. This was an extraordinarily big army, and the idea of a very bold direct attack on Egypt was unique to this crusade. Only a third of the numbers hoped for turned up at Venice in 1204, however. This was a disaster for the Venetians. They had hoped to establish a strong position in Egypt, and in order to produce the huge fleet (and the fifty war galleys they had promised) required to carry 33,500 had suspended all other activities for a year.[24] In order to discharge their debt to the Venetians the crusaders first attacked Zara, which the Venetians regarded as a dangerous threat to their trade, although the king of Hungary was a fellow crusader. It was at this point that Simon de Montfort and many others left the crusade. In order to pay their debts the army then attempted to install a friendly emperor at Constantinople, and, when he failed to satisfy them, captured the city on April 12, 1204, establishing a Latin Empire under Baldwin of Flanders. The French army fought well, and as they broke through the walls cried out "Holy Sepulchre," seeing this as a step to their goal. It has to be said, however, that the Byzantine forces were half-hearted in their resistance, and it was the Venetian fleet whose attack through the Golden Horn broke the sea walls of the city.[25]

This was a period when a virtual explosion of crusading sentiment affected the French aristocracy. As the envoys sent to Venice to negotiate the terms of shipment were returning to France they met Count Walter of Brienne, leading an army containing many from Champagne to overthrow the German dominion in southern Italy. Walter promised to join the crusade when his task was done, but he and his army were defeated long after the crusade's departure.[26] In 1210 John of Brienne, a relatively minor lord of Champagne, was chosen to marry Maria, the heiress of Jerusalem, thereby acquiring a crown, though only in his wife's name. He probably owed his election to the influence of settlers from Champagne in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, and the support of Philip Augustus, who saw him as a political nuisance.[27] Cyprus under its Lusignan kings was largely colonized from the dispossessed of Outremer, but it was pre-eminently French-speaking in the

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23 Donald E. Queller and Thomas F. Madden, *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 1–39.

24 Angold, *Fourth Crusade*, 76.

25 Queller and Madden, *Fourth Crusade*, is the authoritative account; for a different perspective on events, see Angold, *Fourth Crusade.*

26 See Queller and Madden, *Fourth Crusade*, 22–23; and, for a more extended consideration of the subject, Joseph R. Strayer, "The Political Crusades of the Thirteenth Century," in *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 2, *The Later Crusades, 1189–1311*, ed. Robert Lee Wolff and Harry W. Hazard (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1962), 377–428, and Guy Perry, *John of Brienne: King of Jerusalem, Emperor of Constantinople, c.1175–1237* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 33–36.

27 Perry, *John of Brienne*, 40–50.

thirteenth century.[28] At almost the same time large numbers of French knights and other soldiers were attracted to the Albigensian Crusade, which raged in southern France from 1209 to 1218.[29] It is, therefore, not surprising that the Fifth Crusade, which also attacked Egypt, enjoyed only limited support from the French kingdom, especially as Prince Louis was deeply involved in his war in England.[30]

It was not until 1234 that Theobald IV of Champagne responded to Pope Gregory IX's call for a crusade. In the following year Gregory tried to divert the crusade to assist John of Brienne, emperor of Constantinople, but Theobald and his people were focused on the Holy Land, as was the other great respondent, Richard of Cornwall, brother of Henry III. Theobald's campaign did not get under way till 1239, and Richard's not till 1241.[31] In military terms this expedition was a disaster. Each of the great barons had his own ideas, and Henry of Bar led a raiding expedition of some of them to Gaza, where, on November 13, they were totally crushed by a local force. Nevertheless, Theobald was able to exploit the bitter divisions between the Ayyubids of Syria and those of Egypt, whereby Jerusalem and much of the old kingdom were surrendered to the Christians, and this was confirmed by the English expedition of Richard of Cornwall, which arrived the following year.[32]

Louis IX's Crusade to Egypt

All this activity reveals the immense enthusiasm of the French aristocracy and the military potential of the kingdom of France, of which the monarchy had for long been able to tap only a part. Louis IX had triumphed over his internal enemies, however, so that when he resolved to go on crusade he was able to mobilize a really mighty and well-equipped and -supplied army. Louis constructed a new port, Aigues Mortes, the first royal port on the Mediterranean.[33] He ordered the building of ships and hired others from Genoa, including specialized horse transports. Joinville was a distinguished knight who accompanied the king, served in his armies, and became a friend. As a result, he provides us with a remarkable and closely observed account of what happened. He records how the king sent ahead vast supplies to Cyprus, where his army was to concentrate, remembering that the king's cellarers had travelled two years in advance,

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28 Edbury, *Kingdom of Cyprus*, 2–22.

29 Marvin, *Occitan War*.

30 James M. Powell, *Anatomy of a Crusade 1213–1221* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986); and, for Louis's war in England, see above, 147–59.

31 Michael Lower, *The Barons' Crusade: A Call to Arms and Its Consequences* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 1–12.

32 Noel Denholm-Young, *Richard of Cornwall* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1947), 32–34; Peter Jackson, "The Crusades of 1239–41 and Their Aftermath," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* l (1987): 32–60; Lower, *Barons' Crusade*.

33 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 12.

with the result, that on arrival in Cyprus, "[w]e found abundant supplies laid in for his Majesty's use: as for instance, a good store of money in his treasury and plentiful stocks of wine and grain."[34]

The king could count on the yield of clerical taxation, as we have noted, but its collection was slow and contested, so that recourse had to be made to loans. In addition, though, Louis had inherited vastly greater lands than any predecessor, and developed a highly efficient and responsive governmental structure with which to exploit them, as a distinguished historian of the crusades has noted:

> The mounting of Louis IX's first crusade was a remarkable achievement and reveals the strength of the French monarchy, particularly its ability to harness the resources of its subjects.[35]

The crusade was financially burdensome. The proceeds of the clerical tax were to be handed to the major leaders of the crusade to defray their expenses, and, when the great abbey of Cluny resisted, the duke of Burgundy seized many of the abbey's possessions. The royal government demanded 1,200 livres from Roye in Picardy, and this town subsequently raised another 1,000 in various payments to the Crown.[36] Overall, it is estimated that this crusade and the four years spent in the Holy Land cost between 1,500,000 and 2,000,000 livres, though much of this came from the taxes levied upon the Church.[37]

Louis's army was certainly very large, although historians have differed in their estimates of its make-up. Le Goff suggests 2,500 knights with an equal number of squires and valets, accompanied by 10,000 foot and 5,000 crossbowmen. Richard, who draws attention to the 200 English knights, opts for 2,500 to 2,800 knights, 5,000 crossbowmen, and 15,000 others.[38] At its heart was the Hôtel du Roi, the king's household, comprising a substantial number of knights, perhaps more than 300, together with administrators and foot, among whom the crossbowmen were notable.[39] Similar but smaller households accompanied the princes and barons. Joinville had a retinue of two bannerets and nine knights, and by the time the army arrived in Cyprus he had to ask the king for financial aid because he had run out of money.[40] In fact, the king was effectively the guarantor of the great men who followed him.[41]

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34 John of Joinville, "Life of St. Louis," 197.

35 Norman Housley, "Review of *Louis IX and the Challenge of the Crusade: A Study in Rulership*, by William Chester Jordan," *Medium Aevum* 50 (1981): 186–88 at 187.

36 Richard, *Crusades*, 341.

37 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 203–5.

38 Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, 133; Richard, *Crusades*, 345.

39 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 83–88.

40 John of Joinville, "Life of St. Louis," 198.

41 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 93–97.

Louis's purpose for the crusade was to attack Egypt, following the precedent of the Fifth Crusade and the recommendation of Richard Lionheart. This made perfect sense, for the Ayyubid dynasty was torn by rivalries between its Syrian and Egyptian branches, while in Egypt there was a very substantial Christian population, which would give any crusader regime a political base. Whereas the Fifth Crusade had sailed to Acre, however, Louis chose Cyprus, perhaps because it had a better agricultural base, and was well placed for his active diplomacy in the area. St. Louis tried to seek local allies, even corresponding with the Mongols, though none of these attempts had much result.[42] In the event, because of delays in gathering troops and other factors, the army stayed on the island from September 1248 to May 1249. Cyprus played little direct role in the events of the crusade. Under a child king, Henry I (1218–1253), it had been divided by a long civil war, which eventually produced the ascendancy of the Ibelin family, and it took time to recover.[43]

Louis managed to hold his army together over the long period of inactivity, but in the spring of 1249 preparations began for a landing in Egypt. The goal was the same as the Fifth Crusade, Damietta, but Louis's army was very well prepared. Their great ships carried small boats, which were to deliver the army onto the Egyptian coast near Damietta. This should have been a very difficult operation, because the sultan had dispatched good troops to defend the place. There were inevitable accidents; Joinville tells us that one Plonquet, a fully armed knight, missed his target when dropping from the great ship into the landing skiff and drowned. Joinville was ordered to land by the royal standard, but paid no attention, simply pushing on to the beach in front of the enemy cavalry. His men planted their spears and fought off the attack, and were reinforced by others, notably the great galley of the count of Jaffa, which beached nearby. The Muslim soldiers showed little determination, perhaps because they thought the sultan, who was ill, had died. In their panic they abandoned Damietta, and even left the bridge that gave access to the city undamaged.[44] Louis IX enjoyed much luck, but his men achieved a most difficult operation, an opposed landing, with aplomb. Their bravery and determination were remarkable, though it should be noted that even Joinville ignored orders. On June 6 Louis took possession of a city that had defied the Fifth Crusade for a year.

There were good reasons for the delay that followed. The army was still awaiting more troops, and the Nile flood prohibited movement. Perhaps another factor was the king's planning for the future of his conquests. He had taken ploughs and other agricultural equipment, presumably intending a colonial settlement, and he began rebuilding Damietta. During this time much of the army remained in a camp outside the walls, subject to enemy attacks. In one of them a knight, Gautier d'Autriche, charged into the enemy contrary to the king's orders; after he died Louis remarked "that he would not care to have a thousand men like Gautier, for they would want to go against his orders as

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42 Richard, *Crusades*, 343–44.

43 Edbury, *Kingdom of Cyprus*, 49–73.

44 John of Joinville, "Life of St. Louis," 201–3.

this knight had done."[45] It was a significant indicator of the real problems of the French army, already indicated by Joinville's own ignoring of orders.

Battle at Mansourah

It was not until November 20 that the army left Damietta. The decision had been taken to march on Cairo. The alternative, to attack Alexandria and so cut off the Egyptians from the profitable Mediterranean trade, was rejected, chiefly on the advice of the king's brother, Robert of Artois. Despite some harassing, the army made its way to the Bahr al-Sagir, opposite Mansourah. There the French engineers tried to throw a dyke across the waterway, but the Turks simply dug away the opposite bank. The French built towers to cover their work but the Turks used trebuchets to throw "Greek fire" and burn them, something the French had not encountered before.[46] Then a local inhabitant told them of a ford, and on February 8, 1250, the king sent Robert of Artois to pass over and make it secure for the rest of the cavalry, which followed. The French camp was left under the command of the duke of Burgundy. Robert slipped across, then led his force in a charge into the enemy camp, which killed their commander, Fakhr al-Din. This was a spectacular success, but the Turks regrouped under Baibars and withdrew into the town. Robert, contrary to the advice of the Templars, then charged into the town, where pretty well his whole force was destroyed in the narrow streets.

By this time the main body of the French cavalry, led by the king, were across the watercourse and moving toward Mansourah, when they were attacked in force by the enemy, preventing any aid to the beleaguered French in Mansourah, and they were driven back toward the river. They were now cut off from the support of the duke of Burgundy, in command of the remainder of the cavalry and all the foot across the waterway. It was during this time that Joinville decided on an excursion of his own: "I and my knights had decided to go and attack some Turks who were loading their baggage in their camp on our left."[47] They were then attacked and had to be rescued by the intervention of Louis's brother, Charles of Anjou (later king of Sicily). There follows an account of what it was like to fight in a medieval battle:

> Hugues d'Écot received three wounds in the face from a lance, and so did Raoul de Wanou, while Frédéric de Loupey had a lance thrust between his shoulders, which made

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45 John of Joinville, "Life of St. Louis," 208–9.

46 Joinville, "Life of St. Louis," 215–17. "Greek fire" was originally a combustible liquid projected from a ship by a siphon: John Haldon, Andrew Lacy, and Colin Hewes, " 'Greek Fire' Revisited: Recent and Current Research," in *Byzantine Style, Religion and Civilization: In Honour of Sir Steven Runciman*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 291–325. Because this mechanism was complicated and dangerous, however, it fell into disuse, and the term became attached to any means of throwing fire, such as by pots projected by a trebuchet. Fire weapons were widely used in the Middle East during the crusader period, but they seem to have been a nasty surprise for the French here.

47 John of Joinville, "Life of St. Louis," 220.

so large a wound that the blood poured from his body as if from the bung-hole of a barrel. A blow from one of the enemy's swords landed in the middle of Érard de Siverey's face, cutting through his nose so that it was left dangling over his lips. At that moment the thought of St. James came into my mind, and I prayed to him: "Good Saint James, come to my help, and save us in our great need."[48]

There followed hard and grim fighting, in which Louis kept his head and managed to lead his army to the original crossing point, where his engineers were able to throw a pontoon across. The army spent the night in the Egyptian camp, and awoke in the morning to find they were under attack by enemy foot, who they repulsed, only to reveal a cavalry force, behind which the Turkish main body was formed up. After the previous day's fight Joinville says that "neither I nor my knights could put on our hauberks because of the wounds we had received."[49]

Defeat

The French fortified their camp, skirmishing the while with the enemy until, on February 11, the new sultan, Turanshah, surrounded it while simultaneously sending a force of Bedouin light cavalry against the original French camp, commanded by the duke of Burgundy. Because of the palisade around the camp the Turks threw "Greek fire," burning the defences and men, at one point even singeing King Louis. They were repulsed, however, and withdrew. In turn, the French withdrew to their original camp. Effectively, all the fighting around Mansourah had resulted in a draw, which favoured the sultan.

Both sides now entered into negotiations, which centred on the idea of trading Damietta for the Kingdom of Jerusalem. They failed, because, as security for handing over Damietta, the Turks demanded the person of King Louis.[50] It is possible that the sultan had only kept up these discussions, then entered this unacceptable condition, because he was developing a strategy that would deliver the French over to him, for the French were suffering from sickness and were weakening by the hour. In the meantime Egyptian ships blocked the route downriver back to Damietta, so that when, finally, on April 5 Louis decided to cut his losses and retreat there was no way back. The whole army was either slaughtered or captured, including Louis, who was released only in return for the evacuation of Damietta and the payment of a ransom of 400,000 livres.[51] Once released Louis went to Acre, where he acted to strengthen the defences of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The ruins of Caesarea still stand as a testimony to his work. Perhaps most significantly, on departure he left a group of 100 knights under his companion, Geoffrey of Sergines, and this became a permanent obligation of the French kingdom—a very tangible symbol of the connection between France and the lands of Outremer.[52]

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48 John of Joinville, "Life of St. Louis," 221.

49 John of Joinville, "Life of St. Louis," 229.

50 John of Joinville, "Life of St. Louis," 239.

51 Richard, *Crusades*, 348–50.

52 Christopher J. Marshal, "The French Regiment in the Latin East 1254–1291," *Journal of Medieval History* 15 (1989): 301–7.

Joinville provides us with a vivid picture of the French field army in action. It is an unvarnished picture. He admits that some men ran away, such as those who tried to flee to the duke of Burgundy on that terrible first day at Mansourah, and tells us that, at the very end, the engineers failed to break down the bridge to prevent enemy attacks during the French withdrawal.[53]

France and Europe

French soldiers and French armies were engaged elsewhere, however, with royal support, most of all in southern Italy, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

The origins of the French involvement in the Sicilian kingdom lie in the feud between the papacy and the Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen. The papacy regarded his attempt to unify the old Italian kingdom in the north of the peninsula with his realm of Sicily as a threat to papal independence and, ultimately, its leadership of Christendom. When Frederick died excommunicate in 1250 Innocent IV (1243–1254) wrote:

> Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be filled with gladness. For the fall of the tyrant has changed the thunderbolts and tempests that God Almighty held over you heads into gentle zephyrs and fecund dews.[54]

The papacy claimed to be the overlords of the old Norman kingdom and so to have a right to seek a suitable ruler, most especially to prevent any of the excommunicate Hohenstaufen becoming king. The instrument of crusade, invoked against Frederick II, came to be used regularly to protect the papal dominions. Innocent IV applied this sanction against Frederick's son Conrad IV, whose early death in 1254 strengthened the papacy, as his son, Conradin, was very young. Sicily fell into the hands of Frederick's illegitimate son Manfred, but the papacy refused to accept him as king even when the Sicilian barons did.

Since the pope was hardly able to lead an army, a military champion was sought who could conquer Sicily. Henry III of England offered his younger son, Edmund, but the English barons baulked at the costs of supporting a military expedition to Sicily, and this contributed to the internal conflict that erupted in 1258.[55] Discussions with Louis IX's ambitious brother, Charles of Anjou, which began in 1252/53, were somewhat stymied by the English candidacy. During this delay Manfred had established himself firmly in Sicily, despite numerous abortive expeditions sent against him by the pope. By 1261 he was the dominant power in central and north Italy and was threatening Rome itself, where his supporters were anxious to make him senator. This ascent to power prompted greater urgency on the part of the papacy, which began serious negotiations with Charles of Anjou.[56] Neither St. Louis nor Charles had at first shown much enthusiasm

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53 Richard, *Crusades*, 350–53; John of Joinville, "Life of St. Louis," 223, 240.

54 Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers: A History of the Mediterranean World in the Later Thirteenth Century* (London: Penguin, 1960), 31.

55 On the English repercussion, see David A. Carpenter, *The Reign of Henry III* (London: Hambledon, 1996).

56 Norman Housley, *The Italian Crusades: The Papal–Angevin Alliance and the Crusades against Christian Lay Powers, 1254–1343* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 16–18.

for meddling in Sicily. Charles was ambitious, but the scale of the undertaking and the implicit risks gave pause for thought.[57]

Sicily: the French Intervention

Charles was, perhaps, the most military of all the Capetians—a worthy son of Louis VIII.[58] He had fought on the crusade of St. Louis, rescuing Villehardouin and his men from grave difficulties at the Battle of Mansourah.[59] He was also wealthy and powerful. Louis VIII had provided in his will that his younger sons should receive substantial apanages, and in 1246 Charles received Anjou, Maine, and Tours, to which by marriage he added the county of Provence, which was held of the Holy Roman Empire.[60] It took Charles some time to enforce his rule in Provence, where his robust ideas of centralized government provoked clashes with local authorities, leading to the execution of the leaders of the Marseilles rebellion in 1263. Status, experience, and wealth combined to make him an attractive prospect for the papacy. In that year Louis, under papal pressure, overcame his scruples about Conradin's legitimacy and sanctioned Charles' bid for a royal crown, perhaps because he hoped that it would facilitate the crusade.[61] Under the terms of his agreement with the pope Charles had to swear to hold the kingdom of the pope, to whom he promised a payment of 50,000 marks on accession and an annual tribute of 8,000 ounces of gold. The separation of his new kingdom from central and northern Italy had to be recognized as absolute, and he promised to protect the lands of the pope. Within the kingdom he was to rule by the good laws of William II and to renounce interference in the affairs of the Church.[62]

This was a major military undertaking, so it is hardly surprising that the negotiations dragged on and were interrupted by events. In summer 1263 the Guelfs[63] in Rome elected Charles as senator of Rome, fearing the growing influence of Manfred, who enjoyed a dominant position in Italy. This put pressure on both the negotiating parties, and Charles sent a small army under James Gantelme, his vicar at Rome, by sea to protect the city. The papacy had wanted its candidate to pay the costs of the conquest—hence the hostile reaction of the English barons to Edmund's candidature—but the pope had to agree to levy a tenth on the French Church. The slow collection of this meant that resort had to be made to the Tuscan bankers, forcing the papacy to mortgage lands as security. Thus the papacy was drawn into financing the conquest, because there was no alternative

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57 Jean Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou: Power, Kingship and State-Making in Thirteenth-Century Europe* (London: Longman, 1988), 129–32.

58 For his life, see Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*.

59 John of Joinville, "Life of St. Louis," 221; on this crusade, see above, 176.

60 Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, 206; Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, 12–14.

61 Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, 131.

62 Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, 153–54.

63 The terms "Guelfs" and "Ghibellines" by origin denoted parties in Italy favouring respectively the papacy and the empire in their struggle for supremacy. Each was actually made up of factions, which could change allegiance according to the turn of events.

champion with the strength to get rid of Manfred and the Hohenstaufen, whose scion, Conradin, offered a challenge that might well reach deep into the future. In fact, Charles of Anjou's war in south Italy became a crusade financed by the papacy. In 1265 the papacy plunged massively into debt in order to ensure that Charles' army remained intact.[64]

Armies are expensive, and this was to be a French army. Self-evidently, the magnates of the *regno* who had sworn allegiance to Manfred were not going to be helpful, although some who had been exiled as rebels were dependable. Guelf allies from Tuscany and Lombardy were available, but at a cost, and the tendency for Italian factions to change sides was so well known that they could not be depended upon. The papacy had declared Charles' expedition a crusade, and this may have influenced some French knights, though probably only those considering such a step anyway. Charles had a reputation as a good soldier, and the backing of Louis IX was reassuring to French participants. A quarter of the force came from Charles' possessions. Some were former rebels seeking favour, others faithful followers, many of them men whose families had been impoverished by Charles' ruthless exploitation of his possessions.[65] Others served for pay. He attracted adventurers such as Henry of Castile, whose royal birth as a younger son provided little to satisfy his ambition. All of them needed to be paid, and that was costly. Charles sent a trusted familiar, Peter of Beaumont, to recruit in the Limousin:

> Peter of Beaumont, a knight, came to Limoges and promised a wage to all who would take the cross: ten shillings and thirty pounds for preparations to knights, and five shillings and fifteen pounds for preparations to crossbowmen. He gave more to others who were specially commanded to him. For this reason many from the town and diocese of Limoges took crosses … He also promised to all who took the wage that he would restore to them any horses, arms and armour that they lost in the service of the said Charles.[66]

All this took time, however, and Manfred was in a strong position, so in May 1265 Charles sailed for Rome with an advance guard. Manfred's fleet did nothing to block his journey, and Charles' arrival strengthened the Guelf cause, already enlivened in the north and Tuscany by his diplomacy and news of the coming of his main army. This departed in October, numbering in its ranks Philip of Montfort with his brother Guy, bishop of Auxerre, and the counts of Flanders and Vendôme, arriving at Rome on January 15, 1266. Manfred was curiously passive at this time, perhaps because he assumed that Montfort's forces would face resistance from Ghibelline forces in Lombardy and Tuscany, but as it turned out they were not prepared to fight. Charles wasted no time and marched south on January 20. Manfred awaited his enemy at Capua, perhaps assuming that his garrisons along the way would take a toll of the advancing Angevin force, but they collapsed quickly. Possibly treachery was at work, although Charles had plenty of siege equipment and certainly deployed a trebuchet. The fall of St. Germano by Monte Cassino enabled Charles to turn toward Benevento. Manfred promptly occupied the city

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64 David Abulafia, "The Kingdom of Sicily under the Hohenstaufen and Angevins," in NCMH, 5; Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, 131–33; Housley, *Italian Crusades*, 222–27.

65 Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, 166–68.

66 *Maius chronicon Lemovicense*, in RHGF, 21:771, trans. in Housley, *Italian Crusades*, 148.

and seized the bridge over the river Calore, giving him the option of confronting the Angevin army on the plain to the west of the river. On February 26 Charles' army left its camp and descended the slope toward the bridge to attack Manfred's troops, who had crossed and deployed for battle with the bridge behind them.

Battle of Benevento

Many in the French army were reluctant to fight, because they were tired after marching through difficult country, their horses were in poor shape, and they were short of food and fodder. All this Charles admitted in his letter to the pope after the battle, but he pressed on. Manfred could have stood on the east side of the Calore, making his enemy force the bridge. Hitherto he had shown little initiative in the face of the Angevin challenge, and Villani suggests he should have awaited reinforcement, especially as Conrad of Antioch's troops were approaching from the rear of the French. It is hard to avoid the view that he now pressed for battle, and by crossing the Calore made retreat difficult, because he feared betrayal and wanted to put his army in a position where it had to fight.

It is always difficult in this period to know the size of armies. Andrew of Hungary, whose account incorporated information from Hugues de Baussy, a participant, says Manfred had 5,000 cavalry and 10,000 infantry, among whom were many Saracen archers from Lucera. His cavalry were divided into three battles, and he himself stayed in the rear with the biggest, which apparently had many foot. Villani reports that Charles' army was divided into three major units of French and Flemings, each apparently of about 1,000, and a fourth, composed of 400 Italian allies.[67] This suggests Manfred had more cavalry than Charles, and, if it is true, it was perhaps a factor in his decision to give battle. Both sides had infantry, but Andrew of Hungary simply ignores them and describes a purely cavalry battle. His account suggests that the four French battles took up formation in depth, with one behind the other. The Provençal battle led the way, followed by Charles, who Villani says had 900 French, while the third was of French and Flemings. They moved from their camp down the slope toward the bridge. Both agree that the 800 German knights of Manfred's leading division, in tight formation, crashed into the French and drove them back with their long swords. Charles then called on his men to fight at very close quarters using their daggers. This turned the tide, and, when Manfred moved forward with his very large unit, many of his troops fled without fighting. Manfred died in the struggle that followed. Saba Malaspina says that the battle opened with the Italian foot coming forward and being scattered by 1,000 French sergeants.[68]

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67 Giovanni Villani (ca. 1260–1348) was a Florentine banker and diplomat, who wrote his *Croniche Fiorentine* in Italian.

68 Giovanni Villani, *Cronica*, ed. Giovanni Aquilecchia (Turin: Einaudi, 1968), 51; *Villani's Chronicle: Being Selections from the First Nine Books of the Chroniche Fiorentine*, ed. Phillip H. Wickstead, trans. Rose E. Selfe (London: Constable, 1906), 209–16; Andrew of Hungary, *Descriptio Victoriae a Karolo Reportatae*, in MGH SS, 26:575–77; Saba Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia* (Milan: RIS, 1726), 8:825–28. For a detailed account of the battle, see France, *Western Warfare*, 178–81.

The Battle of Tagliacozzo

This was a remarkable victory, but it was soon followed by another. One of the reasons why Manfred may have doubted the support of some of his people was that Conradin could be regarded as the true heir. He was in the care of his uncle Louis of Bavaria, who had disregarded invitations to contest Manfred's possession of the *regno*. After Charles' victory at Benevento the Ghibelline cities of Lombardy and Tuscany begged Conradin to come to their aid, but the decisive influence was probably that of Henry of Castile. Charles had been made senator of Rome, but the pope had never been comfortable sharing the city with one of such power, and persuaded him to resign in favour of Henry of Castile, who had lent Charles money and fought for him at Benevento. Henry, the younger brother of the king of Castile, was an ambitious man who had led a wandering life seeking a greater fortune than any he could gain in Spain. Charles was slow to repay his debts, and, indeed, many of those who had followed him found employment in the armies of the Italian cities as they awaited settlement of what was owed to them. Henry felt so disappointed by his rewards that he renounced his former attachment and begged Conradin to come. Perhaps he hoped to manipulate the teenager, who had been born only in 1252. The Ghibelline cities of the north welcomed Conradin when he came to Italy in the autumn of 1267. Charles at first moved north, probably to shore up the Guelfs, but Conradin's agents stirred up trouble in Sicily, and the Muslims of Lucera rebelled, forcing him to move south to safeguard his position there.

Conradin's march now became a triumphal progress, reaching Rome on July 24, 1268. Since the garrisons of the cities and castles to the south of Rome were strongly loyal to Charles, Conradin's army turned east on the Via Valeria into the Apennines, intending to march south in the lands of the sympathetic Lancia family to link up with the core of the rebellion at Lucera. To block this approach Charles went north, encamping at Scurcola, west of Avezzano, from where he could command the narrow Mount Bove pass, which descends into the plain in which lies Tagliacozzo on the little river Salto. Because he thought that Conradin had moved even further northward, however, he moved his army northeast to Ovindoli. In fact, Conradin turned south down the east bank of the Salto, passing through Borgorose on a road that led him into the northwest corner of the Palatine plains. Because of this Charles returned, and on August 22 the armies encamped on the opposite banks of a small stream, the Riale, crossed by a wooden bridge in the Palatine plains somewhat to the southeast of Magliano de'Marsi.[69]

On the morning of August 23 the battle opened with an unusual and barbaric act (see Map 8.1). On its march south from Lombardy Conradin's army had defeated an Angevin

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69 Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, 126–27, followed by France, *Western Warfare*, 181–82, argue that Conradin descended on the west bank of the Salto and confronted Charles on the bridge over the Salto that carries the Via Valeria. Nevertheless, Peter Herde, "Die Schlacht bei Tagliacozzo: Eine historisch-topographische Studie," *Zeitschrift für Bayerische Landesgeschichte* 28 (1962): 679–744, followed by Federico Canaccini, *1268: La Battaglia di Tagliacozzo* (Bari: Laterza, 2019), point out that the west bank of the Salto is marshy, the bridge carrying the Via Valeria was stone, and from Borgorose the road down the east bank led easily into the northwest of the Palatine plain. The Riale no longer exists. I must thank Federico Canaccini for his help in understanding the geography of the area.
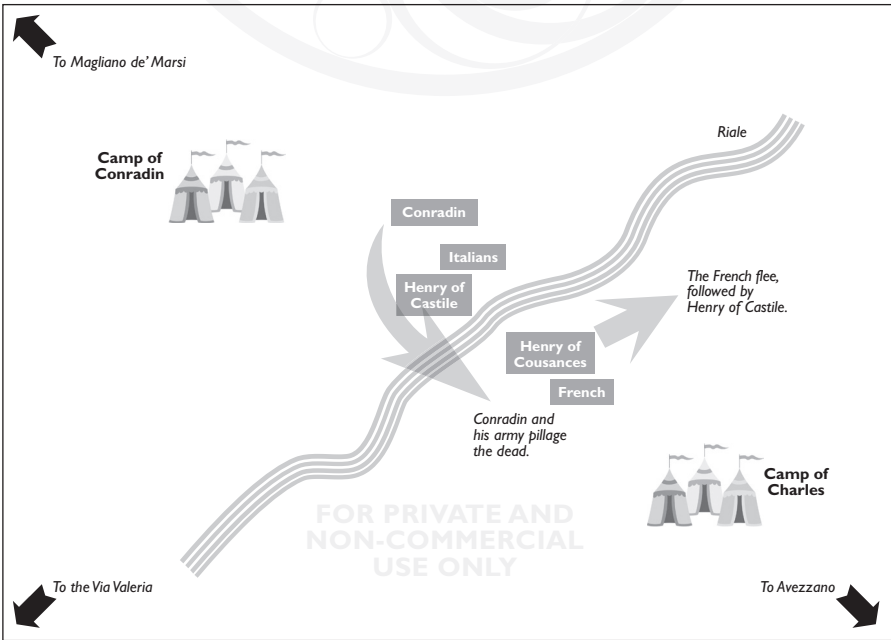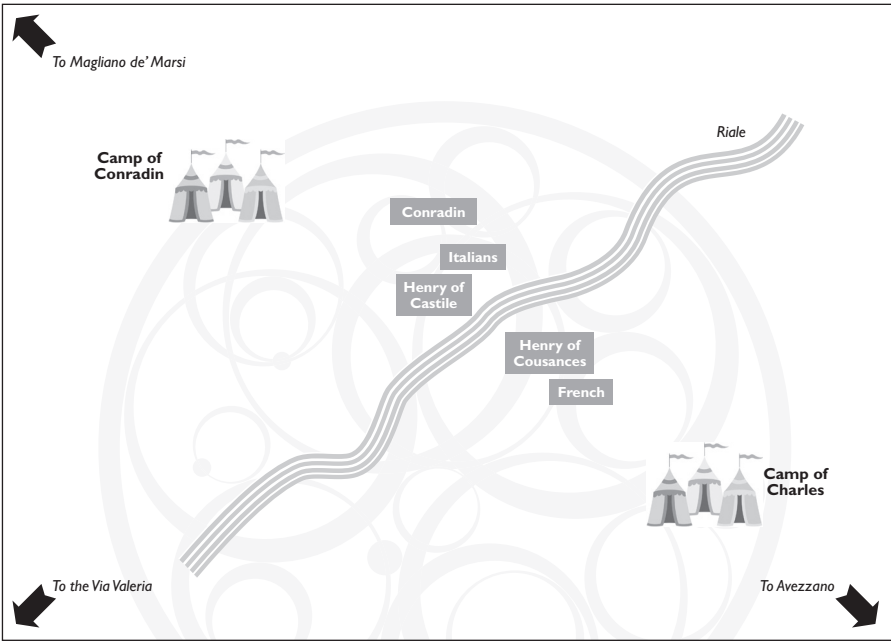
Map 8.1 Battle of Tagliacozzo in four phases. Plan by author.

Camp of Conradin

To Magliano de' Marsi

Riale

Henry of Castile pursues the French northward.

Charles attacks from his camp, crushing the enemy — which has dispersed in order to ravage the area.

Camp of Charles

Conradin flees to the Via Valeria.

To the Via Valeria

To Avezzano

To Magliano de' Marsi

Camp of Conradin

Riale

Henry of Castile returns and is defeated.

Charles is victorious.

Camp of Charles

To the Via Valeria

To Avezzano

Map 8.1 (*continued*)

force on June 25, 1268, at Ponte a Valle, capturing its commander, John of Brayselve.[70] As the armies prepared to close for battle he was brought out of his lodgings and killed. This was effectively a declaration that there would be no prisoners, and, indeed, it set the tone for the savagery that followed.

Conradin's force, of perhaps some 5,000 to 6,000, was drawn up in three divisions. Henry of Castile led the first of these, with 300 Spanish knights and substantial numbers of Romans and Campanians. A second corps followed, composed of knights from Lombardy and Tuscany and a few Germans. Conradin remained in the third and smallest, guarded by Germans. There is no mention of infantry in any of these, or in the army of Charles, so this was an entirely cavalry battle. Charles sent two divisions against them. The first was largely made up of Provençals and Italian Guelfs under his marshal, Henry of Cousances, who wore the royal colours. John of Clary commanded the second, which was largely French in composition. Charles retained control of his own force, of about 800 to 1,000 picked French and Provençal knights.[71]

Although the main outlines of the battle are clear enough, the location and activities of this last force are a cause of difficulty, because of the divergence of the sources. Henry of Castile led his contingent across the bridge, but was held up until some of his men found a ford across the Riale to the south of the bridge and charged into the enemy flank, putting both divisions to flight with great slaughter. Among the casualties was Charles' marshal, who was cut to pieces. Since he was in royal regalia, it was presumably assumed that Charles was now dead. Henry of Castile's force then pursued some of the Angevin army northward, while Conradin crossed the river to the east side, where his men and others who were not in the company of Henry of Castile scattered in order to pillage. At this point Charles and his third division appeared, putting Conradin to flight down the road and across the Salto on the Via Valeria, and killing everyone they could. Henry of Castile and his men turned back, and a savage struggle ensued in which Charles was victorious.

Charles wrote to the pope immediately after the battle. He gives few details and simply says he "charged into them quickly and manfully" and was victorious after "bitter fighting."[72] The *Annales Placentini Gibellini*, written very close to these events, are very brief. They record the sequence of the divisions on each side and alone mention the Riale, and, like Charles' own account, suggest a very rapid progression of events.

A very much more expansive account is given in the work of John of Vignay, which is a French translation made in 1335 of the chronicle of Primatus, a monk of St. Denis at Paris, which covered the period from 1248 to 1277. How far this was a close translation is not clear. It is highly rhetorical in tone and places the battle at the crossing of the Salto.

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70 Saba Malaspina, *Rerum Sicularum Historia*, 8:839.

71 Herde, "Schlacht bei Tagliacozzo," 699–703.

72 Charles of Anjou, letter to Clement IV (1265–1268), ed. Herde, in "Schlacht bei Tagliacozzo," 741–44, trans. in *Medieval Italy: Texts in Translation*, ed. Katherine L. Jansen, Joanna Drell, and Frances Andrews (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 135–37.

It gives some nice details—notably of Guy de Montfort's discomfort when his helmet was twisted, blinding him. The main problem, though, is that he suggests that Charles had hidden his reserve some distance away from the battlefield. According to this account, Charles observed the destruction of his forces but, on the advice of a veteran crusader, Alard of Saint-Valéry, refrained from doing anything about it, partly at least because he was a long distance way. It was only after a longish period, by which time Conradin's army had dispersed, that he unleashed his men, who fell upon the scattered enemy forces, putting Conradin to flight. His men then had time to take off their equipment and rest until Henry of Castile returned, and he, in turn, refreshed his men in Charles' camp before joining battle. Charles' victory in this third struggle is ascribed to Alard of St. Valéry's feigned flight, which opened up the close formation of Henry of Castile.[73] It has been pointed out that Alard was an experienced crusader and that, in the east, hidden reserves and feigned flights were well-known tactical tricks.[74] All of this could be true, or it could be the work of a later writer explaining a puzzling sequence of events and thereby enhancing the reputation of Charles. It should also be said that feigned flight was not simply an eastern tactic: William the Conqueror used it at Hastings, while at Axspoele in 1128 a concealed reserve was vital to victory.

The difficulty with this "crusader" view is that the Palatine plain is very flat and open. Herde suggests that Charles hid his force on the high land near Antrosano on the advice of Alard, but this is comfortably over 1.5 km (1 mile) away. Moreover, it seems beyond belief that Charles would have taken his key reserve so far away and then calmly stood on high ground watching his main force being destroyed. There is a much simpler explanation of the failure of Conradin's force to spot Charles. Both sides had camped the night before close to the Riale. Charles says he ordered his men to camp on a hill, which would have provided cover for their movements during the battle.[75] Primatus/ Vignay says that the Angevins were surprised by the early deployment of the enemy, and it is possible that the first two Angevin divisions were rushed into place in poor order, and, therefore, quickly scattered.[76] Henry of Castile was drawn into an unwise pursuit, enabling Charles to rally his remaining men, put Conradin to flight, destroy those of his enemies who were plundering the dead, and then defeat Henry.

By any standards, this, like Benevento, was a remarkable victory. Conradin was captured and later killed, while Charles abandoned his policy of toleration to the lords of the south who adhered to the Hohenstaufen cause and was able to distribute land and booty to those who fought for him, though the island of Sicily remained a largely

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73 John of Vignay/Primatus, *Chronique*, in MGH SS, 26:656–63.

74 Herde, "Schlacht bei Tagliacozzo," 706–11; and "Taktiken muslimischer Heere vom ersten Kreuzzug bis 'Ayn Djalut (1260) und ihre Einwirkung auf die Schlacht bei Tagliacozzo," in *Das Heilige Land im Mittelalter: Begegnungsraum zwischen Orient und Okzident*, ed. Wolfdietrich Fischer and Jürgen Schneider (Neustadt: Degener, 1982), 83–94.

75 Letter to Clement IV, 742–43, trans. in *Medieval Italy*, 136.

76 John of Vignay/Primatus, *Chronique*, 26:656.

royal demesne. Why had Charles been able to triumph so gloriously? Charles organized his army carefully, but his main problem was financial, for he had to delay payment. Nevertheless, his reputation as a strong leader of men stood him in good stead, and he recruited a core of able and loyal soldiers drawn from the French military class, who formed the backbone of his armies. He did hire others in Italy and he had allies, but the key to his success was shrewd leadership and discipline of his loyal French troops. This was no doubt cemented by the common code of chivalry, but even more by the hope of loot and land. Manfred, by contrast, had a very composite army of Germans, Italians, Sicilians, and Saracens, and there is little evidence that he had a dependable and disciplined core. In addition, he was a hesitant fighter, who held off action against his enemy and then finally committed his army to battle at Benevento in difficult circumstances. Charles demonstrated the quality of his leadership at this battle by demanding that his cavalry close to intimate action against the German knights. At Tagliacozzo he did not give up when all seemed lost and drove his men on to victory. The sheer quality of his core troops is impressive.

What is notable in both battles is the dominance of cavalry. At Benevento both sides had archers, crossbowmen, and ordinary foot, yet they played only a minor role. At Tagliacozzo the armies were marching rapidly and manoeuvring, so perhaps they really had no infantry with them. Of course, the sources always do emphasize the knights, and perhaps what really mattered was the professionalism of the mounted men on both sides. They were paid troops, drawn from the French elite, whose values they shared. Moreover, Charles seems to have kept a group of able subordinates together in a coherent force whose members trusted him as a war leader. There is no doubt that these victories enhanced the reputation of the French army. In fact it was not just humble knights who served Charles in south Italy. A number of important French families, such as the Dampierre counts of Flanders, remained very close to him. Perhaps his most important associate, though, was Robert of Artois, who actually served as bailli of the kingdom after Charles' death and the captivity of his son, Charles II.[77] The close association of some of the French elite with the Sicilian kingdom may have had considerable impact on French culture and administration, but little on military matters. After all, Charles' reputation for victory was somewhat dented in the later thirteenth century by his failures against the Sicilian rebels.[78]

Charles of Anjou and the Mediterranean World

Charles of Anjou was a man of extraordinary ambition. He had enormous influence over the papacy, partly as senator of Rome, from 1263 to 1266, then again from 1268 to 1278, when Nicholas III sought to reduce Angevin influence in the city, and once more from

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77 Jean Dunbabin, *The French and the Kingdom of Sicily 1266–1305* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 101–88.

78 Dunbabin, *French and the Kingdom of Sicily*, 189–274.

1281. At times he had a very substantial influence on papal elections, notably in the choice of Martin IV (1281–1285). As papal vicar general in Tuscany he dominated this crucial area, and was able to tap the moneylenders of Florence. So important was his leadership that Florence and the cities of Tuscany remained loyal to his cause, and that of his son Charles II, even after the crisis of 1282. As ruler of Provence he had enjoyed influence in northern Italy, which was strengthened by his successes in the south, but his power there was ephemeral and vanished after 1282.[79] As ruler of south Italy Charles had a real interest in the Balkan coastline, and in 1271 he seized Durazzo, claiming the title of king of Albania, from where he became the protector of Frankish Greece. By the Treaty of Viterbo of 1267, under papal auspices, he had agreed to restore the Latin Empire of Constantinople, which had collapsed in 1261. It is true that his commitment was singularly vague on timing, but this treaty legitimized his involvement in the politics of the Balkans. Byzantine hostility was, naturally, a consequence. By 1280 he was actively planning an expedition to seize Constantinople, and by 1282 a great fleet was assembling in Messina for that purpose.

Louis IX and the Crusade to Tunis

Charles always retained his close connection with Louis IX, and in 1270, although he had many other prospects, he joined Louis IX's crusade against Tunis. On March 25, 1267, Louis IX took the cross with a great ceremony in Paris. He had invited—indeed, urged—his old companion Joinville, who would later write his life, to come to Paris, presumably in the expectation that he too would join the new expedition. Joinville was not well, however, and had family commitments. Writing with hindsight, he comments:

> Now it so happened that on the following day the king took the cross, and his three sons with him. And afterwards the Crusade turned out to be of little profit, just as my priest had foretold … I will not attempt to describe the king's journey to Tunis, nor tell you of anything that happened.[80]

Joinville was appalled by the king's decision to go on crusade at a time when he was clearly ill, and, indeed, very weak, as he says. This zeal for the cross can be put down purely to Louis's deep personal piety and the need to atone for the failure of his earlier crusade. It was, however, a very carefully prepared expedition. A large fleet was created and the first ever French admiral, Florent de Varennes, was appointed to command it. A diplomatic effort enlisted the support of Prince Edward, son and heir of Henry III, and Louis's brother, Charles of Anjou. The eventual goal of the journey was a strange one, though. St. Louis sailed from Aigues Mortes, but, instead of meeting Charles of Anjou at Syracuse, the rendezvous was to be Cagliari in Sardinia, and from there the combined forces were to attack Tunis. The genesis of this change may be the embassy from the Hafsid ruler of Tunis, Sultan Mustansir, which reached Paris in October 1269.

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79 Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, 77–88.

80 John of Joinville, "Life of St. Louis," 346.

The real purpose of this embassy is uncertain, though perhaps the sultan was seeking Louis's help to settle difficulties with Charles of Anjou.[81] The sultan was prepared to pay tribute to Sicily, and had long been doing so, but complications had arisen because Hohenstaufen refugees had taken refuge at his court. The idea seems to have arisen that the sultan, who employed a guard of western knights and permitted the Dominican Order to keep a house in Tunis, would perhaps convert to Christianity. At the same time the Mongols settled in Persia were making progress against the Mamluks of Egypt, who held Jerusalem. Here was a favourable moment for the crusade, and Baybars, the Mamluk sultan, was certainly fearful of a western incursion. Charles of Anjou had ambitions to re-establish the Latin Empire of Constantinople, which had fallen to the Greeks in 1261.[82] He had advised against attacking Tunis, but he was anxious to support his brother, and the conquest of Tunis could promote the trading economy of the Sicilian kingdom.[83]

In military terms, the crusade was a disaster. It was well prepared and led by a galaxy of royals and great nobles of France. Apart from Louis IX there were his three sons, including his heir, Philip, his brother, Alphonse, Theobald of Champagne, king of Navarre, Robert of Artois, the counts of Brittany and La Manche, and many others. The army numbered about 7,000, and they were well equipped and supported by a strong fleet, which shuttled between Tunis and Sicily with supplies.[84] They landed on July 18, 1270, and seized Carthage before settling down to a siege of Tunis.

Louis put off any assault on the city until Charles of Anjou had arrived. Tunis was well fortified, and the sultan had prepared by hiring troops and asking Baybars for aid. His troops harassed the French, who were forced to build a strong encampment. The real problem, though, was that, in the height of the Tunisian summer, sickness took root in the army, and on August 25 Louis died, even before Charles arrived. Charles took command of the expedition, and gave the army a sense of purpose by pressing the siege. After inflicting defeats on attempts to relieve the city, he arrived at a settlement with the sultan on October 30. By this he established suzerainty over the sultan, who expelled the Hohenstaufen refugees, and agreed to pay the costs of the expedition, as well as promising an annual tribute to Charles of 2,777 ounces of gold.[85] Many of the French notables wanted to go on to the Holy Land, but the fleet was severely damaged by a storm in Trapani, and so they returned to France.[86] Edward of England arrived too late to participate in the siege of Tunis, and went to the Holy Land.[87]

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81 Jean Richard, *Histoire des Croisades* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), 441–43.

82 Steven Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, 152–57.

83 The whole complex of factors that favoured a crusade at this time is comprehensively analysed by Michael Lower, *The Tunis Crusade of 1270: A Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

84 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 58.

85 Richard, *Histoire des Croisades*, 445.

86 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 13.

87 Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 238–39.

Charles, if nobody else, had profited from the fiasco of the crusade, and his prestige was immense. In 1276 Maria of Antioch sold her claim to the throne of Jerusalem to Charles.[88] Charles sent Roger of San Severino to Acre as his vicar general, where he linked with the troops the French monarchy had maintained at Acre since the visit of Louis IX.[89] In all these involvements French soldiers formed the cutting edge of Charles' armies, but, of course, they cost money. Since his coasts were vulnerable and much of the wealth of the regno came from trade, Charles tried to create a great fleet.[90] All this was a heavy drain on the kingdom, on which Charles levied heavy and often arbitrary taxes. Under St. Louis and Charles of Sicily, French power dominated Christendom. It seemed that a great empire was forming in the Mediterranean. At the core of the French armies that achieved such glories were the lords and knights of France, who now seemed the very incarnation of chivalry and the unfailing token of victory in warfare.

Louis IX achieved an extraordinary and very striking ascendancy over the peoples of his realm, and undoubtedly this personal charisma was the reason why men fought and died so willingly for him. The military consensus that had emerged before his reign remained the basis of recruitment: a series of individual tacit agreements about military service. Louis had undertaken considerable changes in the administration of France, however, which extended the royal machinery of government into most corners of the land.[91] His successors may have been less charismatic, but Louis's administrative work created the basis for substantial changes in military affairs.

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88 Riley-Smith, *Crusades*, 30.

89 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 17.

90 John H. Pryor, "The Galleys of Charles of Anjou, King of Sicily c.1269–84," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 14 (1993): 33–103.

91 Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, 547–73.

Chapter 9

THE PROBLEMS OF POWER

THE DOMINATING POSITION that Charles of Anjou had obtained in the Mediterranean world by 1280, and his close alliance with the papacy, seemed to represent a French ascendancy, for he was always deferential to Louis IX, and after his death continued to be close to his nephew, Philip III (1270–1285), who he once suggested as a candidate for emperor.[1] He also had many enemies, however. The Byzantines feared him because of his commitment to a reconquest of Constantinople. The Ghibellines in the cities of Italy were profoundly hostile and resisted his attempt to interfere in the area. King Peter III of Aragon (1276–1285) had married Manfred's daughter, thereby inheriting the claims of the Hohenstaufen dynasty. In addition, Charles' raids and threats had established an ascendancy over the emir of Tunis, and this meant that Catalan merchants found it difficult to pass the waist of the Mediterranean, the narrow strait between Sicily and Tunisia. There is no doubt that these powers were all in contact with one another, but whether there was "the great conspiracy" suggested by Steven Runciman is somewhat doubtful, for all of them were totally surprised by the quite unexpected event that brought Charles down.[2]

The War of the Vespers

On the evening of Easter Monday, March 29, 1282, a revolt against Charles' rule broke out in Sicily. It is said that in Palermo as crowds left Vespers, the evening service, a French sergeant, Drouet, forced himself upon a Sicilian lady, provoking a riot that turned into an uprising against the French. This was only the occasion of the revolt, for there were underlying causes. Not only had Charles levied heavy taxes but he was also an absentee, rarely visiting Sicily. This meant that the local nobles had little access to his person, while his representatives on the island, although few, were hardly emollient, being largely French administrators and soldiers in castle and city garrisons. They were rather few because Charles had kept the island largely as a royal demesne, endowing there very few of his French followers. So, when the rebellion spread, the rebels were able to triumph very quickly. Once they had driven out the creatures of the Angevin king, though, they knew they faced terrible retribution.[3]

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1 Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 355; Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 15.

2 Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, 222–35.

3 Dunbabin, *Charles I of Anjou*, 99–113; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, 236–50; for the very wide consequences, see David Abulafia, *The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms: The Struggle for Dominion* (London: Routledge, 1997).

At the moment of the outbreak Charles was preoccupied by the assembly at Messina of a great fleet and army to attack Constantinople. When the city fell to the rebels, however, he responded by besieging it, though this was firmly resisted under the active leadership of Alaimo of Lentini. Many of the Sicilians had hoped for recognition from the papacy as communities under papal jurisdiction, but Pope Martin V was closely aligned to Charles and refused. Unsurprisingly, the Sicilian leaders turned to Peter III of Aragon, who arrived at Trapani on August 30, 1282, and was proclaimed king at Palermo on September 4. Charles had suffered considerable losses at Messina, and now withdrew from the island altogether.[4] His enemies in central Italy, and even in the *regno* itself, were threatening, and Charles turned to Philip III, who had already sent troops to assist in quelling the rebellions in the papal states provoked by the election of Martin IV. He now sent more French troops under Robert of Artois and the count of Alençon, who were important in supporting the Angevin monarchy down to 1291.[5]

The "War of the Vespers" was now not merely a rebellion but a European war involving the papacy and, inevitably, the king of France.[6] An attempt at a diplomatic solution led to a decision for Charles and Peter to fight a duel with 100 knights each to decide the issue, and in 1283 they travelled to Bordeaux, but avoided the contest.[7] Martin IV declared a crusade against the Aragonese and the Sicilians. The pope suggested to Philip III that one of his sons should be nominated as king of Aragon. After some thought Philip agreed, putting forward the ambitious Charles of Valois, on condition that the Church pay the costs of the necessary military expedition.[8] Philip now set in train the assembly of a great army, and this was supported by the considerable changes in military organization that had been implemented after the reign of Louis IX.

The Development of the French Army

When Philip Augustus conquered Normandy he drew on Norman and Plantagenet precedents to draw up the *Feoda Normanniae*, a careful record of the military service owed to the king by each and all of the lords of the duchy.[9] This survey of 1207 was imperfect, and it was redone in 1220. This stimulated enquiry into the situation in the traditional Capetian demesne.[10] No effort was made in subsequent

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4 Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, 236–50.

5 Guillaume de Nangis, *Chronique*, 258; Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 20; Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 356.

6 Dunbabin, C*harles I of Anjou*, 99–113.

7 Guillaume de Nangis, *Chronique*, 259–60; Runciman, *Sicilian Vespers*, 259–61.

8 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 21.

9 *Registres de Philippe Auguste*, 1:267–79.

10 Baldwin, *Government of Philip Augustus*, 281–98; Contamine, "Armée de Philippe Auguste," 590–93.

reigns to systematize the summons to the army, however. The underlying assumption was that the king was entitled to the military service of all his vassals. This was not defined, however, so the numbers owed, for example, from Flanders or Brittany were uncertain. The tenants of these great lords really responded to the calls only of their immediate masters. This was the military consensus that had emerged by the end of the twelfth century, by which great men acknowledged unspecified military duties to the Crown.[11]

By the end of the twelfth century the monarchy could count on the lands of its immediate demesne and the lords nearby, plus about thirty bishoprics and a dozen or so royal abbeys. The conquests of Philip Augustus had given the monarchy direct control of a large number of great lordships, and therefore access to their vassals. Normandy, annexed to the Crown, was obviously very important in this respect. After Louis VIII many great fiefs, such as Anjou, had been given out as apanages to his sons, but they remained tied to the Crown, which, therefore, had access to their military resources. As a result, there was little need to seek a definition of duties, because, overall, the Crown could raise enough and there were risks in introducing quotas. Moreover, the charismatic personality of Louis IX had ensured a more than adequate host when it was needed. Overall, though, the balance between Crown and nobility had changed substantially in favour of the former. Nevertheless, the process of administrative rationalization and development so notable in many spheres under the reforms of St. Louis had not been applied to the military.[12] This situation changed radically in the last third of the thirteenth century, when royal prestige and the wishes of professional administrators demanded the rationalization of military obligation under Philip III (1270–1285) and Philip IV (1285–1314).[13]

In 1272 Philip III called all his vassals to put down a revolt by the count of Foix. The general summons of the host was out of all proportion to the threat posed by the rebellion, which arose from a local feud in the Languedoc.[14] It was settled by a short royal siege of the castle of Foix, after which the count was imprisoned for a year.[15] Moreover, it produced a mass of documentation, which exceeded anything that had gone before it.[16] The summons would have been delivered to great men personally by the king's servants

11 Contamine's verdict in his survey of the army of Philip Augustus is apposite: "The army of Philip Augustus? Hardly an army, rather an occasional agglomeration of small autonomous forces." This is just, and truly applicable to any army at this time: "Armée de Philippe Auguste," 593.

12 Louis Carolus-Barré, "La grande ordonnance de réformation de 1254," *Comptes-rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres*, 117 (1973): 181–86; Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 309–45.

13 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 111–15.

14 Justine Firnhaber-Baker, *Violence and the State in Languedoc, 1250–1400* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 67.

15 Guillaume de Nangis, *Chronique*, 242–43.

16 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 108, citing RHGF, 23:734–82.

in the localities, the baillis in the north and the seneschals in the south.[17] The lord in turn convoked meetings of all those eligible to arrange for their participation. The great lords obeyed the summons in numbers, but the response at a lower level was rather limited. On this occasion we have three lists of those called. Even in those from the north there were great variations between lordships not merely in numbers sent but in how service owed was seen, with some owing twenty days and others forty. Guillaume d'Yville-sur-Seine, for example, claimed that he did not owe personal service but was obliged to pay when the king called the army together.[18] In the south the performance was even more varied and insubstantial.[19] Big though the army was that gathered at Pamiers, it was now clear that the military capacity of the lordships of France was only partially mobilized. The government regarded those who had failed to come as defaulters. This was proclaimed in a great royal ordonnance of 1274, which required all absentees to pay the full costs that they would have incurred on the campaign, and, in addition, a fine for not having attended.[20] For a baron, this probably amounted to about 300 livres; 60 livres for a knight banneret; 30 livres for a knight; and 15 livres for a sergeant. The government pursued such people relentlessly, with heavy fines. The monarchy was effectively proclaiming its right to tap the whole military capacity of the realm.[21]

In 1274 another appeal was made, this time for an expedition against Castile, which was convoked to gather at Sauveterre in 1275. Once again the king insisted on the full military service of all the lands of France, leading to much resistance in the courts. This expedition was intended to go beyond the frontiers of France. Traditionally military obligation applied only within them, so for the Crown to insist upon service was in itself a novelty. As a result, the king accepted that he had to pay the troops, and a consistent pattern of wages was worked out. Equally, though, he insisted that all were obliged to obey the summons, including cities. Moreover, with the king's agreement to pay wages, the notion of a forty-day limitation vanished. In many cases lords and others preferred to pay rather than serve or provide troops, and there is every sign that the Crown was happy with that. Under Philip IV, in response to the wars against Edward of England, the principle was firmly established that all who aspired to nobility were obliged to serve the king at his call.[22] This extended not merely to knights but also to obligations to provide footsoldiers and, especially, crossbowmen. Such wide-ranging pretentions caused discontent and legal challenges by individuals, such as the unsuccessful appeal to the Parlement of Paris in 1275 by the inhabitants of Carrière-Saint-Junien against the

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17 On the powers of these local servants of the monarchy to raise troops, see Joseph R. Strayer, *The Administration of Normandy under St. Louis* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1932), 56–69.

18 RHGF, 23:754.

19 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 117–20.

20 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, citing RHGF, 23:34–82.

21 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 121–31.

22 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 39, 131–46.

decision of the seneschal of Périgord that they should follow the people to St. Junien to the host.[23] The monarchy had created a powerful precedent, however.[24]

Once the monarchy had established its right to control the military potential of its realm, the subsequent claim to a monopoly of violence within France was a logical development. The culmination of royal efforts to access military capacity came after the defeat at Courtrai in 1302, when Philip IV issued a ban et arrière ban—a demand that all men could be called to service by the Crown. This was justified as an ancient right, but, effectively, it was quite new and enabled the Crown to mobilize huge forces.[25] It was politically possible because the military class shared in the shock after the defeat at Courtrai, which had offended aristocratic culture deeply, and produced so many the deaths.

The French monarchy was very firm in its insistence that all who could be considered noble should claim knighthood, but this insistence was not limited to France.[26] In England the second half of the thirteenth century saw a real effort to enforce the obligations of knighthood, though quite quickly this became a matter of raising taxes in lieu of personal service.[27] In France, however, there was always a very high priority given to creating a mounted knightly army. There were very good reasons for this.

As far as we can establish them, the daily wages of horsemen and foot in the French armies by the end of the thirteenth century were as follows:

knight banneret: 20 sous tournois
knight: 10 sous tournois
squire (écuyer): 5 sous tournois
infantryman: 1 sous tournois (= 12 deniers)[28]

Robert of Artois attacked English Gascony, the remnant of the old duchy of Aquitaine, in 1296. The accounts for a period of three and a half months of this expedition suggest that he paid out 80,000 lives tournois. For this money the government was getting fully equipped knights, each of whose weapons and armour would be valued at between 45 and 28 silver pounds. Horses were an even greater expense, for a knight would need

23 *Actes du Parlement de Paris de l'an 1254 à l'an 1328*, ed. Edgard Boutaric (Paris: Plon, 1863), no. 1971, 181.

24 Elisabeth Lalou, " Les questions militaires sous le règne de Philippe le Bel," in *Guerre et société en France, et en Angleterre and en Bourgogne XIVᵉ–XVᵉ siècle*, ed. H. Maurice Keen, Charles Giry-Deloison, and Philippe Contamine (Paris: Institut de recherche, 1991), 37–62.

25 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 159–68.

26 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 43, 45.

27 "Distraint of Knighthood," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology*, 1:541–42.

28 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 216–19.

a warhorse, a palfrey, and at least one rouncey, which would represent an investment of well over 30 pounds.[29] Such animals could be very expensive, however; the records of the expedition of 1302 to Flanders, for example, show the purchase of three horses costing together 300 pounds.[30] This was why the Crown tried to insist that all with a certain income (200 pounds for a knight and 1,500 for a bourgeois) should maintain horses – and why kings were willing to pay for horses killed in their service, Philip IV at the rate of about 30 pounds for the campaign of 1285.[31] Payment for the loss of such an investment was, therefore, essential. In effect, the insistence on knighthood was a levy on the military class, and it is little wonder that many sought to avoid it. It should also be remembered that knights lived in the retinues of the great, to whom demands for service could be made and fulfilled at minimal expense. Moreover, they were already trained, largely by participation in the tournaments that were so popular in France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[32] Even if the monarchy was offsetting many of the costs of war onto the nobles, however, the intensity of war at the end of the thirteenth century would demand new and exceptional taxes.

France and the War of the Vespers

In the case of the attack on Aragon in 1285, because it was a crusade like those of Louis IX, it was supported by the Church to a very considerable degree. It paid no less than 1,228,000 livres tournois for this crusade, which in all cost some 1,230,000.[33] About 170,000 was paid for the king's household troops, who numbered between 600 and 1,000, but he also spent another 109,000 for knights attached to them, which means that this core was augmented by several hundred.[34] The army was alleged to have been 100,000 strong, but in fact careful research suggests that this was a gross exaggeration and that a force of about 7,500 to 8,000, including 1,500 to 2,000 knights, crossed the Pyrenees.

Philip may well have calculated that Peter did not have a large army since many of his troops were fighting in Sicily, while the French had the support of James of Majorca, who resented his elder brother.[35] For the first time this major operation by the French army had the support of a large fleet, which carried supplies and seized ports at which

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29 A palfrey denoted a smooth-gaited well-trained horse for riding; a rouncey was a general-purpose horse.

30 Ludovic Notte, "Les écuries de Robert II, comte d'Artois (v.1293–1302)," *Revue du Nord* 81 (1999): 467–88 at 467–68.

31 Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, 94.

32 On tournaments, see above, 22–23.

33 Joseph R. Strayer, "The Crusade against Aragon," in *Medieval Statecraft and the Perspectives of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 107–22; Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 205–6.

34 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 100–101.

35 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 1–2.

to land them. The army cut through a lesser route to avoid Peter's fortifications across the major passes and drove south, supported by a French fleet from which they could draw supplies. On June 27 they began the siege of Gerona. Peter harassed them, but avoided any direct confrontation. The campaign was decided at sea. The French fleet was attacked by Catalan ships at Rosas; then the brilliant Italian admiral Roger de Lauria, who was in the service of Peter III, destroyed the rest at the battle of Les Formigues.[36] The fall of Gerona to the French on September 7 became an irrelevance.[37] Starvation threatened the French, who were already suffering from disease, forcing a withdrawal, during which they were harassed by Peter III, notably in a skirmish at the Col de Panissars. King Philip III contracted the disease spreading in his army, and died on October 5, 1285, at Perpignan.[38]

The French army had performed well in what had proved to be difficult terrain. Gerona was a strong city and its defenders resolute, but the French displayed persistence and discipline, and ultimately managed to take it. Subsequently they held together in a difficult retreat. The strategy of sending a fleet to support the army was, in itself, sensible. The logistical planning depended on sea power, however, and the problem was that the French fleet was inadequate, and certainly inadequately prepared to face the brilliant Roger of Lauria and his battle-hardened sailors.

Naval Warfare

The French experience of naval warfare in the thirteenth century had been pretty dire.[39] Their fleet was destroyed at the Battle of Damme in 1213 and the Battle of Sandwich in 1217.[40] St. Louis had used a great fleet on his crusade, however, and Charles of Anjou created one to guard his coasts and pursue his Mediterranean-wide interests, and placed it under an admiral. St. Louis built Aigues Mortes on the Mediterranean coast as a naval base for his crusades. In 1248 his army embarked here on an assortment of ships bought or hired from Marseilles and Genoa. Such was the pressure on shipbuilding that all this activity generated that the count of St. Pol, who participated in this expedition, commissioned a vessel built in Scotland. The fleet was under the command of two experienced Genoese sailors. Reliance on the Mediterranean cities was essential, because the French monarchy had little experience of maritime affairs, but matters changed under St. Louis after this. In 1265 he based a small fleet of galleys at La Rochelle, conveniently close to Guyenne, which was held by the English king. In the

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36 John H. Pryor, "The Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria," *Journal of Medieval History* 9 (1983): 179–216 at 202.

37 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 21–22.

38 Guillaume de Nangis, *Chronique*, 263–67; Strayer, "Crusade against Aragon," 105–11.

39 Charles Jourdain, "Le commencement de la marine militaire sous Philippe le Bel," *Revue des questions historiques* 28 (1880): 398–429.

40 See above, 155–58.

fighting of the late thirteenth century in the south, La Rochelle proved an important base, because English shipping was exposed to a long run by sea on its way to Bordeaux. For the crusade of 1270 Louis had a substantial number of ships built, some of them war galleys to protect the transports, and they sailed under the command of Florent de Varennes, the first French admiral. Unfortunately, Louis's great fleet was wrecked by a storm as the army left Tunisia. Under Philip III the admiral became one of the great officers of state, below the constables but above the marshals.[41]

Philip III seems to have rebuilt the fleet in the Mediterranean, because he is said to have obtained 300 ships to support his invasion of Aragon. Sea fighting in the Mediterranean was developing, however. Charles of Anjou had a strong fleet, whose strike force was the galleys, but the Italian admiral Roger of Lauria was placed in charge of the Catalan fleet, and he defeated an Angevin fleet at the Battle of Malta on July 8, 1283.[42] On June 5, 1284, he tempted a large Angevin fleet under King Charles' son, Charles, out of its secure port at Naples and destroyed it in the Battle of Castellamare. Fundamentally, naval warfare remained a matter of showering enemy ships with missiles then laying alongside and boarding, but Lauria showed it was possible to adopt tactics to enable his ships to do this on advantageous terms.[43] Aragon was a great trading centre and so could supply skilled sailors, who easily outclassed the French at Les Formigues on September 4, 1285. Philip IV continued to aid the Angevin government till 1291, but came to terms with Aragon, liquidating the Mediterranean commitments of his father. He had other fish to fry, in which naval power would play a role.

One Problem Leads to Another

The Treaty of Paris of 1259 had not ended the problems between the French monarch and the English king as duke of Gascony, with its important centre at Bordeaux. The anomalies along the borders and the rights of each of the parties were bound to be complicated, especially because both monarchies were becoming bureaucratic and increasingly demanding clarity and definition in their relationships. Goodwill in solving problems was less influential than bureaucratic ambition backed by royal demands. In addition to border problems, the long sea route from England to Bordeaux was susceptible to piracy from the French ports of Bayonne and La Rochelle. In 1293 these tensions produced a sea battle at St. Matthew's Point. Edward I had problems with Wales and Scotland, so he was very conciliatory, agreeing to surrender key fortresses pending a solution.[44] The French king decided to take advantage of his preoccupations,

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41 Contamine, *Histoire militaire de la France*, 1:110–13.

42 Lawrence V. Mott, "The Battle of Malta 1283: Prelude to Disaster," in *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages*, ed. Donald J. Kagay and L. J. Andrew Villalon (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999), 143–72.

43 Pryor, "Naval Battles of Roger of Lauria."

44 Michael T. Clanchy, *England and Its Rulers 1066–1272* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 217–25. For Edward's preoccupations, see also Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

however, and by rapid military action overran much of the duchy.[45] Edward responded by withdrawing homage and raising great armies and taxation from all the lands of the British Isles. His army made some progress in 1295 but in 1296 Philip appointed Robert of Artois, who in 1297 soundly defeated a second English expedition at Bonnegarde.[46] Edward's demands for taxes and military service provoked rebellion in Wales and an alliance between King John of Scotland and Philip.[47] In turn, Edward sought allies and turned to Flanders, where Capetian demands of precisely the same kind both Edward and Philip were making elsewhere had provoked hostility. Moreover, the Flanders wool industry depended heavily on England for raw material, so it was hardly odd that Count Guy of Dampierre joined with Edward, who went to Flanders in 1297. There was enormous opposition to the entanglement in Flanders, however, at a time of conflict in Scotland and Wales.[48]

This was a dangerous escalation of the war, and Philip was determined to quell the rebellion in Flanders. Robert of Artois, already famous for his exploits in Italy, was recalled from the south and given command of an expeditionary force, which defeated a comital force at the Battle of Furnes on August 5, 1297. This need not have been decisive, but Guy had divided his forces among a number of fortresses, seeking to defend everything, and thereby losing all. Guy received little help from Edward I, whose barons strongly resisted the expedition to Flanders. Edward opened negotiations with Philip, and, in the face of immense French pressure, Guy submitted in 1300 and was imprisoned.[49] This seemed to be a total victory for Philip, who had played shrewdly on the divisions among the Flemings; Bruges, for example, had never really supported Guy and quickly defected to the French. As so often the war was about the allegiance of the great nobles, and in this case also the important cities, and purely military operations such as the sieges of Lille and Furnes were important levers of persuasion.

Philip's victory came at a price. In the south his need for troops enabled Edward's friends to win back much territory, and in 1303 Philip accepted a peace in the area, which restored the status quo of 1294. This war was marked by considerable naval activity, and Philip recognized that he was at a disadvantage compared to Edward, who could count on warships provided by the Cinque Ports. Philip treated with the king of Norway and the Hanseatic League to hire ships for the Flanders campaign. The reconquest of much of Spain meant that Christian shipping could now exit from the

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45 Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 360.

46 John A. Wagner, "Anglo-French War (1294–1303)," in *Encyclopedia of the Hundred Years War* (Woodbridge: Greenwood, 2006), 51–52.

47 Michael Brown, *Disunited Kingdoms: Peoples and Politics in the British Isles 1280–1460* (London: Pearson, 2013), 10–33.

48 Malcolm G. A. Vale, "The Anglo-French Wars, 1294–1340: Allies and Alliances," in *Guerre et société en France*, 15–35; Malcolm Barber, *The Two Cities: Medieval Europe 1050–1320* (London: Routledge, 1992), 300–301; Michael Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 77.

49 Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France*, 360–61; Verbruggen, *Battle of the Golden Spurs*, 8–19.

Mediterranean through the Straits of Gibraltar, and this enabled him to hire Genoese galleys. In 1292 Philip established the Clos des galées at Rouen, where, largely with Italian manpower, the construction and maintenance of a fleet of war galleys began. The hiring of a famous Genoese admiral, Benedetto Zaccaria, led to a policy of harassing English shipping and raiding ports, which certainly put pressure on Edward I and the Flemings. In the longer run the Clos des galées became a major force in the balance of power in the English Channel.[50]

The triumph of Philip in Flanders was conditional, though. The rebellion of Count Guy had divided the nobility, and those on the losing side had their lands confiscated. The adherents of the king proceeded to take revenge upon them and their tenants, however, creating chaos and violence across the county. In the cities the rich elites had been divided in their allegiance, and were generally at odds over whether and to what degree they should share political influence with the very numerous artisan class. These inner tensions were exacerbated by financial considerations arising from the conflict between count and Crown. The cities had been fortified during the recent upheavals, at great cost, and the financial pressures were increased by fines levied upon those on the losing side. An aristocrat such as the new royal governor, James of St. Pol, was hardly accustomed to such an environment and its pressures, but he was backed by a strong French army.[51]

In 1301 King Philip toured Flanders, where he enjoyed a good reception. In Ghent he abolished the tax on beer and mead, as requested by the mass of the population. The elite of Bruges were appalled, because this would mean that the weight of paying the city's debts would have to fall on them. This was why they forbade the artisans from cheering when the king arrived in the city. This cool reception was all the stranger because the city militia had fought for the royal cause in the recent war. After Philip left there was violence between the parties in the city, and James of St. Pol imposed a peace, dismantling the fortifications and demanding hostages, many from the pro-French party. By contrast, at Ghent St. Pol, at the request of the elite, affirmed the remission of the beer and mead tax, avoiding trouble. At Bruges, however, there was real disaffection; John, count of Namur, and his younger brother, Guy, the sons of the deposed Count Guy of Dampierre, sent Willem van Jülich to fan the discontent. His brother had been killed at Furnes and the family had been deprived of their lands. Willem was able to give leadership to the malcontents at Bruges and attempted to stir up revolt at Ghent, though St. Pol managed to retain control there. This seemed to turn the tide in favour of the royal government, and the royalists in Bruges appeared to have the upper hand, expelling the rebels. Then St. Pol, contrary to the advice of the wealthy burghers, insisted on entering

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50 Contamine, *Histoire militaire de la France*, 114–20; Éric Reith, "Le clos des galées de Rouen: lieu de construction navale à clin et à carvel," in *Medieval Ships and the Birth of Technological Societies*, vol. 1, *Northern Europe*, ed. Christiane Vilain-Gandossi, Salvino Busuttil, and Paul Adam (Msida, Malta: Foundation for International Studies, 1989), 71–77.

51 Verbruggen, *Battle of the Golden Spurs*, 19–21; Kelly DeVries, *Infantry Warfare in the Fourteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1996), 9.

Bruges with his troops on May 17. This caused much alarm, and the commoners secretly called back the exiles and fell upon the French soldiers and their Flemish allies, who were quartered in small groups throughout the town. St. Pol escaped, but 300 of the French were massacred and some eighty-five nobles were captured.[52] This "Matins of Bruges" to a degree resembled the famous Sicilian Vespers, and certainly in one respect it had the same effect: Bruges had burned its boats and now faced the wrath of the French monarchy.

The Flemish Revolt

It was not just the wrath the Bruges faced but what was regarded as the best army in Europe. The city's militia was itself very well organized and equipped, however. The city guilds, each of which represented a trade, purchased equipment such as carts and tents. Individual members were required to produce their own weapons and armour, which seems generally to have amounted to good mail tunics and helmets, shields, and long spears or pikes. The elite, the rich burghers of the city, were expected to come mounted for battle, and could obviously afford the best armour. The army was divided into units of ninety-six burghers and 511 artisans, who formed a *vouden*. Numbers of *vouden* could be sent out depending on the expected threat. This was overwhelmingly an infantry force, but it was effective because the guilds imbued solidarity and cohesion among men who, in any event, were fighting alongside relatives, friends, and colleagues. The artisans of Bruges, who formed the overwhelming mass of the army, gained immense political importance in city affairs because of their participation in military affairs.[53] The arrival of John and Guy of Namur and Willem van Jülich provided experienced leadership, and they set out to win over maritime Flanders. Their success was limited, though. At Cassel the castle was held by Flemish lords who supported the French king, and Ghent, while restless, remained under royal control. Courtrai, a formidable fortress, rallied to the king, so the whole army of Bruges concentrated there on June 26, 1302.

The French response seems to have been heavily conditioned by the events of 1300. Robert of Artois had then formed a vanguard, which proved far superior to the forces of Count Guy, so that it was not necessary for Philip to gather the much greater forces that he had initially envisaged. Robert was now ordered to gather an army at Artois.[54] It was primarily made up of 2,500 to 2,800 cavalry, of great lords, knights banneret, knights, and squires, for that was the great strength of the French army. Almost all were from provinces immediately adjacent to the Flemish theater, such as Artois, Champagne, Normandy, Vermandois, and Ponthieu, with a substantial commitment from Hainaut and Brabant and some other parts of Flanders. Within this force were soldiers of the highest

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52 Guillaume de Nangis, *Chronique*, 311–20; Verbruggen, *Battle of the Golden Spurs*, 21–26; Joseph R. Strayer, *Philip the Fair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 324–46.

53 Verbruggen, *Art of Warfare*, 151–91.

54 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 332.

quality. In addition, about 1,000 crossbowmen in a total of 5,000 to 6,000 infantry were available.[55] This was a formidable army, only slightly smaller than the one that had triumphed in 1300, so Robert had every reason to feel confident. On the other hand, his long experience in southern Italy would have impressed upon him the problems of overcoming a determined enemy, and no doubt the "Matins of Bruges" reminded him strongly of the Sicilian Vespers.

The Battle of Courtrai

For their part, the rebels had not made the same error as Count Guy: they had concentrated their forces at Courtrai.[56] The core of the army were the militia of Bruges, numbering between 2,440 and 3,470. None of the rich burghers joined this force, which therefore lacked cavalry, though over 300 crossbowmen, an elite force in the communal army, were present. The county of Bruges brought between 2,300 and 3,000 troops, while between 2,300 and 3,000 were raised from East Flanders, notably volunteers from Ghent. Although the majority of Flemish nobles either supported the king or held aloof, there were between 400 and 600 nobles in the ranks of the rebel army. In rough terms there were between 8,000 and 10,000 troops in all, overwhelmingly townsmen and peasants.[57]

Robert of Artois must have been aware that speed was of the essence. The army of Bruges had brought over to their side most of maritime Flanders. The situation in Ghent was precarious, and, while the men of Ypres had joined the rebels, the burghers of the city had not, and even at Bruges the elite had not joined with the artisans, and were not represented in the communal army. In this situation military success was crucial to achieve political momentum, and Robert must have known that further rebel advances could destabilize the whole French position in Flanders. This probably explains why he was so eager to confront his enemies, and perhaps also suggests why he committed his forces in an unfavourable situation, and pressed on with that commitment to the bitter end.

By July 8 the French army was encamped to the south of Courtrai, and on July 9 and 10 attempted to storm the rebel forces blocking the southern gates of the city, with no success. Artois knew that the garrison of Courtrai castle was small and lacked food, and that its fall would mark a success for the rebels, but it seems that at first he hesitated to attack the main force of the Flemings, who held a very strong position.

The Flemings were drawn up in Groeninge field to the east of the town. Their right flank rested on the city wall while the centre and left enclosed a bend of the river Lys, making a front of about 1 km (just over half a mile). To the south the Grote Beek

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55 Verbruggen, *Battle of the Golden Spurs*, 182–94.

56 In his *Battle of the Golden Spurs*, 40–126, Verbruggen has provided an exhaustive analysis of the sources for the battle.

57 Verbruggen, *Battle of the Golden Spurs*, 152–82.

protected them, while to the east was the Groeninge stream. The river Lys shielded them completely from attack from the north, but of course also rendered any flight impossible. They were organized in three groups, with the men of Bruges on the right, the men of the county in the centre, and the East Flemings on the left. A reserve was placed behind them, and the small force drawn from the men of Ypres was stationed outside the castle to protect against any attack from the rear. It is assumed that the town gates were also held, but nothing is known about that (see Map 9.1). This was an ideal position, a kind of watery fortress, for an inexperienced force drawn from different places and somewhat lacking its usual leaders. Guy of Namur and Willem van Jülich stood in the ranks, and overall command was entrusted to Jan van Renesse, who controlled the reserve. Of course, the army could not stay there forever, and they must have been worried that Artois, encamped on the strong position of the Pottelberg, would adopt Fabian tactics and fall upon them when they exited into open country. He, however, was under pressure of time.

Robert of Artois was an experienced commander, who appreciated the problem of attacking the Groeninge field. Not only were the rebels protected by the watercourses but he knew that they had prepared the battlefield by digging ditches along their front to check any assault, as he had obtained knowledge of the whole enemy position from a defector, and this must have shaped his thinking and the discussion in the council of war early on July 11.[58] On that morning Artois told his cavalry to get into battle formations, stimulating preparations on the other side. The rebel army formed itself into a single tightly packed formation. As it stretched for 1 km, and allowing for the substantial reserve, it seems likely that they were about eight deep. They established themselves reasonably close to the streams that formed the walls of their fortress, with the 300 crossbowmen thrown forward. Their spears were longer than the lances of the French cavalry, and, with their butts planted in the earth, could hold them at bay, provided the men kept their nerve. Throughout their ranks were men equipped with *goedendag*, much shorter heavy wooden clubs set with a spike, who could then sally out once a charge was stalled, to fell the horses and kill riders. All were instructed not to plunder and not to accept surrender. This was very unusual, because in fighting between knights surrender was usually accepted, not least because ransom could then be extracted in return for freedom. Peasants and townsmen were excluded from this chivalric world, however,

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58 DeVries, *Infantry Warfare*, 9–22, places considerable emphasis on these ditches, which are mentioned in many of the sources, both French and Flemish. He also draws attention to a map of the battleground that Robert of Artois had drawn up on the basis of the defector's information. In contrast, Verbruggen, *Battle of the Golden Spurs*, 222–43, not only fails to mention this map but also denies the existence of the ditches. He thinks that the watercourses alone defended the rebel army. This is very odd, because his discussion of the sources for the battle is exemplary and is integrated with an exceptional analysis of the topography of the battlefield. My own reading is that he regarded the ditches as an excuse made up by the French for their defeat, and he preferred simply to emphasize the valor of the Flemish footsoldiers and their skill in choosing a naturally strong position.
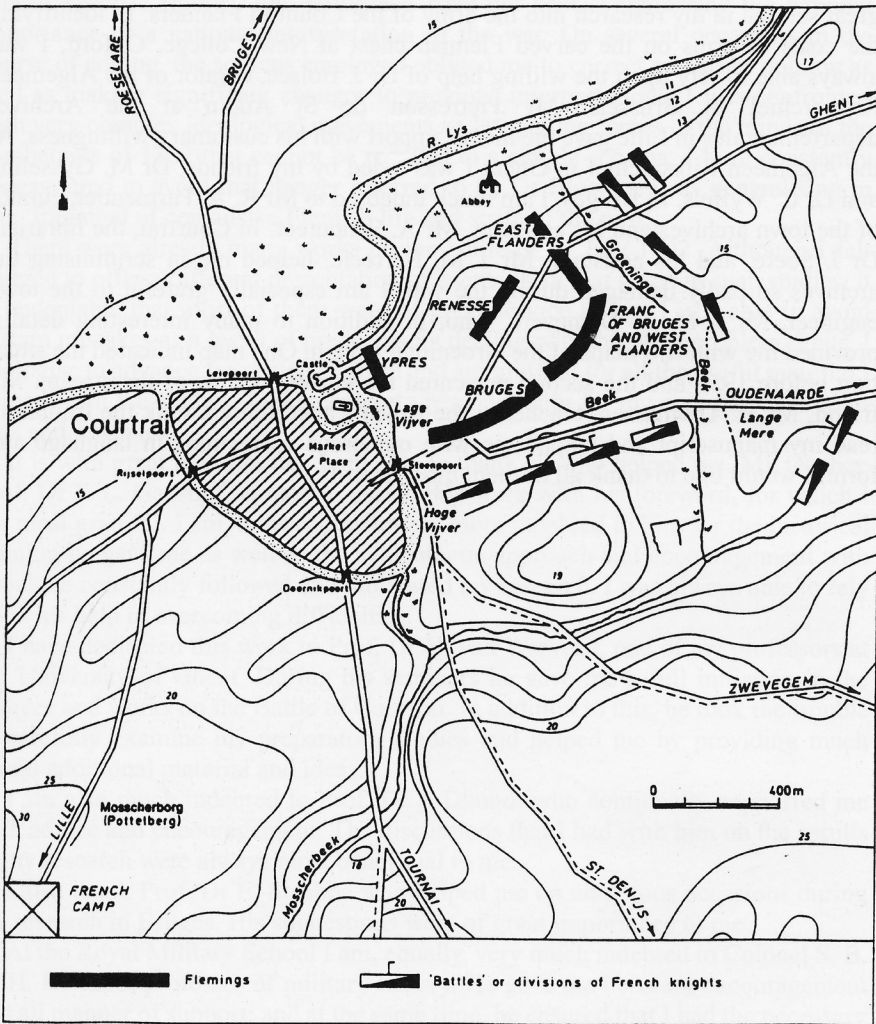
Map 9.1   The Battle of Courtrai. The Flemings stood eight deep in a long battle line within their watery fortress. Map courtesy of Kelly DeVries.

and they were aware that if they were defeated they would probably be massacred, for retreat from their position would be almost impossible. Moreover, Flanders had been subject to three years of warfare, which had impoverished many, and even the nobles in the rebel ranks had suffered deprivation of lands and property. They were not in a mood to act chivalrously.

The French leaders clearly saw all the problems posed by the enemy position, and in their council of war not all were in favour of an attack. Artois pressed for immediate action, though. He really had little choice. Apart from the need to check the rebel progress, he knew that the massacre of 300 French soldiers and the capture of many nobles at Bruges demanded revenge. Furthermore, although the rebels were in a sort of fortress, from the safe distance of the French court it would seem he had them cornered. How could be not attack, and what would the king make of a retreat at this point? Moreover, although the two streams were formidable obstacles and would become more dangerous if the rebels were allowed to concentrate on their far banks, there was a solution. If the crossbowmen and infantry could drive the rebels back from the edge of the waterways, the cavalry could then cross, re-form, and charge. This was the French battle plan.

The French cavalry had formed up in ten "battles" each of about 250 knights, but for the attack they divided into two groups of four "battles" each. Artois himself commanded the attack from the east over the Groeninge stream, while Raoul of Nesle was in charge of those crossing the Grote Beek from the south. Two "battles" were held in reserve. The French infantry were thrown forward and the crossbowmen opened a brisk fire on the Flemings, whose own archers responded, but were driven back. It would seem that the crossbow fire inflicted only very limited damage on the rebels. This suggests that the tightly packed rebels either were already some distance away from the watercourses or were driven back by the crossbow fire. Modern crossbows used for hunting are much more accurate and powerful than medieval examples, and their quarrels are more consistent. Even so, hunters reckon 60 m (about 200 ft) as the extremity for a killing hit, and a distance of 40m (about 130 ft) is safer. The front ranks of the rebel army were the best armoured, and equipped with shields, so we can perhaps see why the barrage of 1,000 crossbowmen was relatively ineffective and ran out of ammunition. Obviously, though it did succeed in its main purpose, which was to keep or drive the rebels far enough back from the watercourses for a charge to be possible. The infantry were then recalled. This was necessary, for the crossbowmen had literally shot their bolts, while the light French infantry, the bidauts, could not possibly attack the heavily armed rebels.

The "battles" under Raoul of Nesle were the first to cross. They had some immediate losses in the water, but regrouped and launched their charge. As must have been universal experience, some smashed into the enemy ranks while others checked, but, overall, the result was the same: the charge failed to break through the massed ranks of the rebels. Those who did get into the mass were soon surrounded and brought down, while many animals were undoubtedly checked at the spear wall. To the east there was the same story. Only in the centre of the line did the French make some progress through the men of the county of Bruges, but they were then checked by the reserves under Jan van Renesse. A sally by the garrison of the castle was easily repulsed. After the check of the French charge the rebels pressed forward, and this had the effect of narrowing the strip of land between their front and the watercourses. So the French knights, once halted, could not easily pull back, turn, and try again, especially as their movement was hindered by the ditches into which many had fallen. Robert of Artois, whose "battle" had been held back, saw the problem and launched a charge in the hope of breaking

through, but this too was checked, and he was killed. Pressed back to the watercourses on tired and battered horses, the French knights, many of whom tried to surrender, were massacred. Even the French rearguard, which had not engaged, suffered losses when it tried to save some property before retreating.

French losses were horrific. In total about 1,000 died. This included all the commanders of the "battles" and substantial numbers of well-known noblemen, as well as masses of ordinary knights. Virtually all from Artois were killed with Robert. How to account for such a disaster? Robert of Artois was a very experienced leader, who must have known that, in general, cavalry should never charge steady formed infantry. He is supposed to have said that "a hundred knights are worth a thousand footsoldiers,"[59] but from his Italian experience he knew just how dangerous well-trained infantry were. In the fighting in south Italy the French encountered the Catalan Almogavars, tough light infantry raised on the frontier between Christianity and Islam in Spain. In one encounter 300 French knights attacked a force of these men, who "[h]urled darts so that it was the devil's work they did, for at the first charge more than 100 knights and horses of the French fell dead to the ground. Then they broke their lances short and disembowelled the horses."[60] Perhaps Artois saw the collection of peasants and townspeople who faced him as being quite different, however, and easily frightened by a charge of heavily armoured knights on well-protected horses with lances couched. The deployment and charge of the French knights must have been very intimidating, and clearly he hoped they would shake their opponents. The horsemen had suffered losses after difficult crossings of the watercourses, though, and had to pick their way round the ditches, so their momentum on wet ground over a very short distance, between 40 and 60 m, was limited. Once the initial charge had failed there was no room to retreat and try again, so the balance of advantage swung heavily against the horsemen. It was a gamble, and one that Artois thought had to be taken, but it failed.

The battle was enthusiastically celebrated by the rebels, who hung 500 pairs of golden spurs (the symbol of a knight) taken from the defeated French in the nearby Church of Our Lady. Ghent and the major cities now swung to the rebels. The widespread attention paid to their victory by contemporary writers is a testament to the shock that it produced across Europe.[61] It did not end the war, though, and it certainly did not fundamentally weaken the military potential of the French monarchy. Philip IV was obliged to come to terms with Edward I, surrendering all the gains made since 1294. In August 1302 Philip summoned a great army, which advanced into Flanders, but he hesitated to engage a confident enemy, and even engaged in peace talks.

In 1303 Willem of Jülich led a strong Flemish army against St. Omer. Its leading elements were ambushed by 1,300 French heavy cavalry supported by a strong infantry

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59 Dunbabin, *French and the Kingdom of Sicily*, 264.

60 Ramon Muntaner, *Chronicle*, trans. Anna Goodenough, 2 vols. (London: Hakluyt, 1920), 2:457–58.

61 This is noted in the survey of sources by Verbruggen, *Battle of the Golden Spurs*, 40–126.

force under Jacques de Bayonne. The fighting was intense, but once Willem's main force arrived on the scene the French fled back to St. Omer. Willem's force suffered very heavy losses, however, and he was widely blamed for his loose control. In fact, the French cavalry demonstrated all the advantages of mobility, and their considerable ability to savage enemies when well handled.[62] In August Philip IV raised another great army to attack Flanders, but he was unable to pay them and so concluded a truce with the Flemings.

Once the monarchy had time to prepare carefully, however, the full military capacity of the French monarchy became clear, and a great army concentrated at Arras.[63] There was heavy fighting toward Gravelines in which Guillaume Guiart, infantryman and chronicler of the expedition, distinguished himself by storming across a deep moat around a castle at La Haignerie despite being badly wounded.[64] The counts of Flanders had long contested control of Zeeland with the counts of Holland. In 1303 Guy of Namur seized Walcheren and in 1304 he besieged Zierikzee. King Philip's fleet, under the command of Rainier Grimaldi, had been operating along the coast, and now it went to the aid of the count of Holland. It consisted of thirty French and eight Spanish cogs, along with eleven Genoese galleys. On August 10 they confronted Guy with thirty-seven Flemish vessels in the fairly narrow silted passage, which restricted manoeuvre. Guy's attempt to launch fire ships was foiled by a change of wind. Nevertheless, the larger French ships were grounded and seemed to be helpless, but then the tide changed. The next morning it was apparent that the Flemish ships had lost formation, and Grimaldi sent in the galleys, followed up by his heavier ships, winning a decisive victory and capturing Guy of Namur.[65]

The Battle of Mons-en-Pévèle

It was extraordinary that Guy had mobilized a substantial force of 2,400 men at a time when Philip was gathering a great army of 3,000 cavalry and around 10,000 infantry, which he led in person in the invasion of Flanders in August 1304. The Flemings, led by Willem of Jülich, Philip of Chieti, and John of Namur, raised something between 12,000 and 15,000 troops. Made confident by their success at Courtrai they conducted

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62 Hélary, *Armée du roi de France*, 379–80; Verbruggen, *Art of Warfare*, 194–97. DeVries, *Infantry Warfare*, 23–31, points out that it is very difficult to make sense of the battle from contemporary sources.

63 Guillaume Guiart served as an infantryman in this French army and wrote a poem in French of 21,000 lines recounting French history: *Branche des royaux lignages*, ed. Jean Alexandre Buchon, 8 vols. (Paris: Verdière, 1828), and RHF, ed. Natalis de Wailly and Léopold Delisle (Paris: Palmé, 1865), 22:171–300, l. 10500. Partial English translation in Kelly DeVries and Michael Livingston, *Medieval Warfare: A Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), no. 57, 117–21.

64 Guiart, RHF, 22, ll. 10890–920.

65 Guiart, RHF, 22:391–404, ll. 10150–494; Contamine, *Histoire militaire de la France*, 120–21; Verbruggen, *Art of Warfare*, 166–68.

an aggressive defence, marching directly toward Philip's army and encamping close by on August 13 at Mons-en-Pévèle. The next morning the Flemings massed in a single formation on a slope facing the enemy, with their left flank resting on the village and the right on a brook. Their rear was protected by a mass of carts, some of whose wheels were removed to prevent anyone towing them out of formation. Their camp was further back from the battle line. They were clearly challenging for battle. The French infantry and crossbowmen were thrown forward, and exchanged missiles with the enemy, while the cavalry formed up behind them. The French infantry were called off and the knights trotted up to the enemy ranks, but only as a demonstration, for they did not intend to assault the close-packed ranks directly. Instead they retired, and their infantry resumed its exchanges with the enemy, supported by five catapults—almost certainly light perriers—though these were soon put out of action by a Flemish sally. This skirmishing in hot weather was wearing on both sides, and on August 14, 15, and 16 negotiations were conducted, though without result.

On August 17 the French cavalry, supported by foot, attacked the Flemish phalanx in fierce fighting. They were unable to break through. Then French footsoldiers, backed by some knights, went around the enemy flanks and tried to infiltrate the masses of carts drawn up in close order. All efforts to break through this failed, probably because of a lack of troops. If more cavalry had gone around, the French knights and their infantry in front of the Flemings would have been very vulnerable. Moreover, many of the infantry stormed the Flemish camp, plundered it, and played no further part in the battle. There was deadlock, both sides suffered from the heat of the summer's day, and negotiations were restarted.

As evening came, though, the Flemish leaders decided to launch a sudden attack, which caught the French by surprise, and King Philip himself was nearly captured. The advantages of cavalry now became apparent, however. There was severe fighting in the camp as the French rallied. With plenty of room for the knights to manoeuvre, they regrouped and inflicted heavy losses, including killing Willem of Jülich. Some of the Flemish army had not joined the attack and marched off, while many of the men of Bruges who had attacked decided to leave. Casualties on both sides were heavy, but Philip was left holding the field, and he had certainly not been defeated.[66] French losses had been considerable, though, and there was no triumphant progress into Flanders. The upshot of this intensive warfare from 1302 to 1305 was the Treaty of Athis-sur-Orge, by which Robert, the new count of Flanders, was recognized by the king, but promised to pay a huge indemnity and to demolish fortifications. The cities refused to accept this until the terms were modified in 1309, and even then the indemnity was never properly collected.[67]

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66 Verbruggen, *Art of Warfare*, 198–203; DeVries, *Infantry Warfare*, 32–48. These two reconstructions of the battle differ in detail, although the main outline of events is clear.

67 Hall and Everard, *Capetian France*, 361–62.

The field army was the key element in the French military establishment. No matter how good siege equipment was and how adept the engineers who operated it, no matter that the usual form of activity was ravaging and bullying peasants, any army had to count on being challenged to battle. By the standards of the age the French army in the thirteenth century was efficient and adapted to the challenges which it faced. It was the product of a very particular political and social evolution. For long the monarchy had been unable to challenge the great nobles who were its most important subjects, though often only nominally. The Capetians chose to cooperate with them, and, by exploiting the rights of kingship, to bring these great men broadly into obedience, while always respecting their rights and aspirations. This was a long process, starting with the petty lords of the Île-de-France, through the marriage of members of the royal family into the great nobles, whose apanages were assumed into the royal demesne. The creation of a military household and the hiring of mercenaries at need were, essentially, supplementary. By middle of the twelfth century the kings could draft the able and active members of the social elite into royal service. In effect, a tacit political consensus had been arrived at by which military leadership was firmly vested in the nobles and their dependants. The monarchy perceived the need for other kinds of soldiers. Engineers were needed, especially for sieges,[68] while infantry continued to be essential and were found by calling up city and country militia or by demanding tax in lieu to pay professionals: the men-at-arms, who were increasingly important. The rising prosperity of the thirteenth century offered knights and nobles more choices of career than ever before, so that, to a degree, many of those who fought were seasoned men who had made the choice to become soldiers. One such fellow begged help from the monarchy because "I have served you and your ancestors in the year they went to Damietta, and to Sicily, and at the siege of Marseilles and that of Tunis."[69] Such men would have been formidable soldiers, available either as part of a contingent or as a sword for hire. The price of the political consensus was a massive investment in and focus upon cavalry, however. Infantry were always present, and the existence of a royal Master of the Crossbowmen shows the value attached to this select group. By the thirteenth century, though, the major cities of France had long lived in a relatively peaceful environment, so that, although they were willing to provide troops, they were unpractised, and kings preferred to levy cash in lieu of service which supported mercenaries. This did not assist in the production of solid heavy infantry, and there was no equivalent method of raising solid footsoldiers.

Nonetheless, the war with Flanders showed that the French had not recognized that increasing wealth was enabling non-nobles to acquire good weapons and strong armour. Military expectation rested upon known enemies. Once the Plantagenet lands in France had been overwhelmed, it was clear that the king of France could mobilize more and better troops than his enemies. Flanders and her allies were defeated in 1214, while

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68 Purton, *Medieval Military Engineer*.

69 France, *Western Warfare*, 133.

Henry III had posed little threat because his barons were hostile both to service abroad and to the taxation to pay for it. French armies performed well in southern Italy and on crusade. The failure against Aragon was not one of fighting power, and steps were taken to remedy the lack of a good fleet. French infantry remained rather limited, though. It must be recognized that in European countries military development did not come from centrally controlled institutions but from necessity and circumstance; government was reactive rather than innovating. This was necessarily the case because there was no standing army and the social inhibitions of the elite governed everything. They invested massively in horses and armour for themselves: each man had to equip himself. Since all this worked perfectly well down to 1302, there was little need for change, which in any case would have been very difficult.

A comparison with the English experience is enlightening. Edward I needed large infantry forces because the terrain in Wales and Scotland where he fought was not always good for cavalry. The continuous war with Scotland from the late thirteenth century placed the onus on communities in northern England, and, to a degree, on the Welsh March, to protect themselves and make considerable use of the longbow, which was relatively cheap and capable of rapid fire. Gradually the royal government recognized its value in conjunction with heavy infantry; the Battle of Boroughbridge in 1322 seems to have focused attention. By the Battle of Duplin Moor in 1332 we can see a new system of dismounted cavalry (nobles and others) fighting with longbowmen.[70] This process had taken time, and was the product of the special circumstance of continuous war in northern England and Scotland. We can see the same process at work in France at Mons-en-Pévèle. The French cavalry still charged the massed Flemings, but also they used infantry and cavalry attacks to erode and weaken them, especially by flanking movements. The use of perriers was not a wild success, but it was a clever idea. The indiscipline of the French infantry and the slack attitude of the knights, which almost killed their king, were weaknesses typical of medieval armies, as was the failure of powerful elements in the Flemish army to participate in the final attack.

Medieval armies were heavily dependent on the native skills of the population on which they drew. The cooperation of Crown and nobility made mounted warfare the military skill in France. It must also be stressed that the mobility, striking power, and strong protection of cavalry were always important. The social milieu in which they interacted discouraged change, however, and there was no real threat that demanded it. Flanders was never a direct threat to the monarchy, and its great subjects and Mons-en-Pévèle seemed to be an answer to Courtrai. As a result, there was little change when the English challenge appeared in 1337.

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70 Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages*; John France, "The English Longbow, War and Administration," *Journal of Medieval Military History* 15 (2017): 215–26.

Chapter 10

PERSPECTIVES ON THE ARMY OF THE KINGS OF FRANCE

BY THE THIRTEENTH century the French army stood out as the supreme force in western Europe. The best indication of this is that, after 1214, most of its campaigns took place outside the borders of France. The wars of Louis VIII in the 1220s established royal domination in Provence and Languedoc, areas where it had been weak. Henry III Plantagenet's attempts to recover his family lands were poorly managed and never in any real sense threatened the Capetian realm. The wars in Guyenne and Flanders at the end of our period were, essentially, the result of French aggression and overconfidence. Edward I had shown no signs of aggression and Philip IV simply seems to have tried to take advantage of his preoccupations within Britain to eliminate his territorial position in France, probably because for a king to do homage to another was always a difficult situation. Elsewhere French armies had conquered south Italy, were active in Frankish Greece, and dominated in the crusader states and Cyprus. This remarkable efflorescence of French power had many complex causes, but it clearly attests to the remarkable success of the French way of war. How and why had that come about?

The French royal army was, in principle, no different from that of any other power of northwest Europe. Medieval armies were very close reflections of the societies that produced them. A relatively poor society dominated by a narrow elite produced a precisely parallel kind of army—in the words of Contamine, an "occasional agglomeration of small autonomous forces."[1] By the end of the thirteenth century the monarchy had spelled out the military obligation of the population and could raise a much more cohesive force. The outcome of Courtrai was a defeat, but despite that the planning and control exerted by an able commander is very evident. This had come about, however, solely because military service to the monarch had become accepted.

The great nobles remained vital in mobilizing troops from among the petty nobility of their families and their dominions, though increasingly they had to accept the authority of the royal officers who supervised them. The mass of foot was recruited from the cities and the urban militia, augmented by mercenaries when necessary. In addition, a general belief that in time of necessity all freemen had an obligation to serve the king was emerging. The tightening of military obligation so evident in France in the late thirteenth century had English parallels, but no other western kingdom had managed to enforce such provisions so firmly and so widely. The political evolution of the French kingdom made this possible.

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[1] Contamine, "Armée de Philippe Auguste," 593.

The Capetians enjoyed good fortune, especially in that sons succeeded fathers with relatively little disruption. Given their weakness, they had to resort to manipulation, and in this they were notably successful. Fortuitous events such as the captivity of Richard Lionheart played into the hands of Philip Augustus, but, conversely, he could easily have drowned at Gisors. It was his acumen in exploiting opportunities that enabled him to profit from the family quarrels of the Plantagenets, who had not mastered handing on power from generation to generation smoothly, like the Capetians. Thereafter, especially in the reign of Louis IX, the monarchy established a real supremacy over all the noble subjects.

This was achieved by consensus, however, and by acceptance of the rights of the nobility. The growth of royal bureaucracy in the time of Louis IX and his immediate successors enabled the Crown to tap the military potential of the kingdom much more efficiently, and even to assert in principle the Crown's monopoly of violence. There was never a general attack on the rights of the great nobles, though, such as John of England had made. The French army thus existed within a political consensus whose members enjoyed a highly pervasive common culture, which we call chivalry. The participation of the French kings in crusades enhanced the sense of identity among the elite. All this gave the army considerable coherence, which was cultivated by the monarchy with its own royal ideology. This was backed up by the monarchy, which could afford to construct and maintain castles and to keep stocks of weapons and to pay specialized engineers when needed.

The technology and weaponry of the army were no different from those of neighbouring areas. The heavily armed knight was common across most of western Christendom and formed the central element in almost all armies. Increasingly, even infantry were better armed, while expensive weaponry such as siege engines and crossbows were available and the royal army could make good use of them. The French army was characterized by a heavy reliance on cavalry at the expense of infantry, so that even in the emergency after 1302 many footsoldiers were lightly armed. The relative neglect of the infantry probably owed much to the political consensus between monarchy and nobility. Chivalry bred a sense of noble entitlement and contempt for those outside its golden circle. French commanders had to work within the limited technology of the age. They displayed no special strategic or tactical skill, and were forced to work within the framework of fortresses. By the later thirteenth century, though, they had at their disposal forces that were uniquely coherent, and it was this that lay at the root of their success.

The Influence of the Crusades?

Given the massive French participation in crusades and the fact that families such as the Montforts had members in the settlements of Outremer, which were predominantly French in language and culture, one might ask if the experience of crusading and knowledge of the east had any influence upon French warfare in the west.[2] Those who went on crusades,

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2 For a survey of French involvement, see Laura Morreale and Nicholas L. Paul, eds., *The French of Outremer: Communities and Communication in the Crusading Mediterranean* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018).

after all, recalled their experiences, whether good or evil, and even created memorials in stone and glass.[3] At Mansourah in 1250, however, the army of Louis IX was, as noted above, apparently surprised by the enemy's use of "Greek fire" against them.

It is very unlikely that western nobles and kings looked to eastern military architecture for models. The chief influence on the structure of castles (apart from the means of the builder) was site. It is true that concentric fortifications became more common in the twelfth century, but the idea of concentricity, of inner and outer defences, was already an old one in the west. Moreover, the urge to build stone castles was already evident, as we have seen, by about 1000: wealth and the taste for luxury increased their numbers. Toward the end of the twelfth century two castles were built by returned crusaders. Gent was begun about 1180 by Philip, count of Flanders, and Château Gaillard was constructed from 1196 to 1198 by Richard Lionheart. Both these men had a pretty intimate knowledge of the military affairs of the east, but neither fortress can be related to anything in Outremer.[4]

As to field warfare, it cannot be overemphasized that rulers were dependent on the skills and equipment that their soldiers brought with them. There were no academies at which ideas could be recorded and discussed; nor could crusaders sit around training in new ways before departure. The author of the *Gesta Francorum* was deeply impressed by the skill and fighting ability of the Turks when he met them on the First Crusade. Moreover, that experience was repeated, but the west could not generate clouds of light horsemen endowed with expertise in the use of the composite bow; that was a product of the steppe lifestyle, which they brought to war. Time after time western armies fell for their tactic of feigned flight.

East and west also shared much the same technology of siege developed to the same degree. The use of "Greek fire" was possible in the east because oil seeped from the ground at various places—and it did not in the west. Otherwise, much the same siege equipment was used by Islamic armies, though they had a special ability in mining.

What is true is that the conditions of warfare in the Middle East placed a heavy emphasis on *disciplina militaris*—the idea that armies needed to be coherent and disciplined. All commanders knew how important that was long before the era of the crusades, however, though perhaps the difficulties of war in the east underlined the problem. The French army achieved a relatively high degree of coherence as a result of political circumstances and not of copying what happened in the east.

It is possible that the scale and logistical problems of crusading armies made commanders think more carefully about military problems. The preparations for the Fourth Crusade involved building a major fleet, the Fifth endured a long and bitter

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3 Norman Housley, *Fighting for the Cross: Crusading to the Holy Land* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 262–89.

4 John France, "Fortifications East and West," in *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria*, ed. Hugh Kennedy (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 281–94.

siege and subsequently came near to victory, while Louis IX was exemplary in his preparations. Perhaps this rubbed off in France and Europe generally. Nevertheless, the better preparation for war can just as easily be linked to improvements in governmental administration that were not generated by crusading. Of course, we cannot tell, but, overall, the experience of crusading seems to have had remarkably little impact on European military affairs. Crusades contributed to the glory of the French monarchy, but the muscle that powered it was generated by developments nearer home, as were the factors that detracted from its glory.

At a moment of apparent supremacy, the army of the French monarchy went down to a massive defeat at Courtrai in 1302. At first sight this appears to question the whole wisdom of dependence on heavy cavalry. In fact, though, the Flemish formation was testimony to the value of cavalry, for only by such immobile solidity (which had disadvantages) could the speed and momentum of cavalry be countered. At Courtrai (and Mons-en-Pévèle) the Flemish infantry fought in a kind of fortress. It had always been recognized that cavalry should not attack steady infantry in such strong positions. In this case, the political imperative to halt a rebellion that was gaining momentum governed the conduct of their commander, Robert of Artois.

Moreover, the French army had really little option but to rely on cavalry. The English were faced with similar dense infantry formations at Falkirk in 1298, when their cavalry stood off while archery demolished the Scottish *schiltrons*. The English army had been fighting over difficult terrain with largely infantry armies for nearly twenty years, however, during which time raiding and counter-raiding involved large numbers of ordinary people who used the longbow. In time the English elite came to recognize its value and to consider tactical systems incorporating its strike power.[5] In Spain the rough countryside of the frontier between Aragon and the Islamic areas, and centuries of wars along it, bred *almogavars*, hardy and lightly equipped footsoldiers well capable of fighting cavalry, who were naturally incorporated into Spanish armies.[6] The cities of Italy and Flanders bred sound footsoldiers because city pride, together with occupational and family solidarity, made it possible.[7]

In the area of operations of the French army there were no such armed frontiersmen. There were cities, and they did provide footsoldiers, but as an obligation to the Crown, rarely fighting on their own account. No doubt the French elite looked down upon the mere foot, but it must be remembered that the military establishments of the day lacked facilities for training, especially the training of masses of infantry. The French army, like

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5 Clifford J. Rogers, "The Military Revolutions of the Hundred Years War," in *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe*, ed. Clifford J. Rogers (Boulder: Westview, 1995), 55–94.

6 Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 94.

7 Aldo A. Settia, "Infantry and Cavalry in Lombardy (11th–12th Centuries)," trans. Valerie Eads, *Journal of Medieval Military History* 6 (2008): 58–78; and "Military Games and the Training of the Infantry," trans. Valerie Eads, *Journal of Medieval Military History* 11 (2013): 1–24.

that of the states around them, depended upon the native skills that their populations brought to war, and France had a substantial supply of able horse warriors.

This was why, at Mons-en-Pévèle, the French cavalry appeared to repeat the error of Courtrai by frontally attacking the massed Flemings. On this occasion, however, they had room to retire and regroup. The indiscipline so characteristic of noble armies showed when they were surprised by the Flemish charge. There was willingness to change tactics, with flanking attacks and attempts to use infantry boldly. Moreover, when the Flemings broke formation they suffered very badly indeed, because the French cavalry rallied, with room to manoeuvre. The flexibility of cavalry made it the most effective element in the army, and the difficulties of adapting military force made it almost essential to stay with it. There was nothing especially French about slow adjustment to new circumstances, and for any army it would have been folly to throw away its greatest asset. Cavalry had to be used wisely, however, and within its limitations. It would take time and much pain to work these out.

Of course, France did not exist in a vacuum. The year 1066 had seen the monarchy squeezed between the Anglo-Norman (later Angevin) power and the German empire. By the thirteenth century, after a series of quarrels with the papacy, the empire largely became fixed on events in Italy. This enabled the French kings to exploit their claims in the borderlands of the Low Countries. Early in his reign Philip Augustus could not raise as many troops as the count of Flanders, but adroit diplomacy changed that. After 1214 England had a civil war, and its legacy was a weakened monarchy. After 1214 France was effectively unchallenged, and no monarchy could raise an army capable of posing a real threat.

By 1300 the French army stood supreme in Europe because, by the standards of the age, it had achieved a high degree of coherence and élan. Ultimately, much rested on the consistent leadership that the Capetian monarchy had provided. This would be abruptly halted in the early fourteenth century, by the failure of the line, although this lies outside the scope of this book. At the same time, however, Courtrai in 1302 was a warning of changes in warfare that no power was yet planning for. The French army was frozen in the thirteenth-century age of cavalry dominance. The circumstances that created its supremacy were bringing in new and increasingly conscious developments, to which it would be forced to adapt in the future.

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Abbreviations

CCCM   *Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Medievalis*

MGH   *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* 1819–1969
          Scriptores, Leges, Diplomata, Epistolae, and Antiquitates

NCMH   *New Cambridge Medieval History*, *The*. 8 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008–15.

RHGF   *Recueil des historiens de la Gaule et de France*. 24 vols., 2nd ed. Paris: Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres, 1869–1904.

A NOTE ON SOURCES

ONE OF THE legacies of the classical world was the desire to record events, and this was particularly transmitted to the medieval west through the work of Eusebius. This urge was often expressed by entering brief records in Easter tables, which were used by churches to calculate the date of Easter. These grew into year-by-year records or annals, often memorializing events of local importance to a particular church or monastery. The seventh-century *Chronicle of Fredegar* was a notable effort at a universal history based on ancient sources, but it is of chief value for its history of the Franks. *The Royal Frankish Annals* cover the period from 741 to 829, and, while they are certainly the work of many hands, they were composed at the courts of Charlemagne and his successor, Louis the Pious, and have a notably official character centred on the doings of these emperors.[1] After a gap these were resumed at Rheims in the *Annals of St-Bertin*, which cover the period from 830 to 882.[2]

This tradition was revived by Flodoard, a priest of Rheims, and carried through to 966, when he died. He had a real interest in the politics and warfare of his age and provides quite lively descriptions, though he is often very brief.[3] Flodoard's account was continued by Richer, another priest of Rheims, whose work spans the period from 888 to 995.[4] Richer made extensive use of Flodoard, but from 966 his work is wholly original. He was a rather more discursive writer than Flodoard, and particularly important to this book because his father had been a soldier of Louis IV (936–954). Richer was fond of parading his classical knowledge, however, and he can be very misleading.[5] Between them, these two works provide a kind of backbone for the earlier part of this book. Among the other sources, Abbon's account of the siege of Paris is extremely important, while that of Regino of Prüm is essential for our knowledge of Lorraine and the borderlands

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1 *Annales regni Francorum 741–829*, ed. Friedrich Kurze (Hanover: MGH, SrG, 1895); English translation: "Royal Frankish Annals," in *Carolingian Chronicles*, trans. Bernhard Walter Scholz and Barbara Rogers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1970), 37–125.

2 *Annales de Saint-Bertin*, ed. Félix Grat, Jeanne Vielliard, and Suzanne Clemancet (Paris: Klincksieck, 1964); English translation: *The Annals of St-Bertin*, trans. Janet L. Nelson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991).

3 Flodoard, *Annales*.

4 I have used the Latouche edition of Richer's work because I have not had access to a new edition, *Richer of Saint-Rémi: Histories*, ed. and trans. Justin Lake, 2 vols. (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 2011).

5 Richer, *Historiae*, 2:160–63.

between what became France and Germany down to 915.[6] Some royal and other records have survived, such as those collected by Lauer, but they are few and provide limited information on military matters.[7]

After about 1000 there was a great efflorescence of writing. Helgaud's life of the second Capetian, Robert the Pious, is a paeon to his sanctity, of great value on the mentalities of the age, but with little information on the king.[8] Much more important for the very early eleventh century are two major chronicles. Ademar of Chabannes was writing at Limoges and produced an important *Chronicon Aquitanicum* down to 1028, which, though local in its focus, tells us a great deal about contemporary France.[9] Rodulfus Glaber wrote an untidy history of his age ending in 1047, but he was very interested in the Capetians.[10] Thereafter the history of the Capetians is drawn, in the words of Fawtier, from "a mosaic of incidental information."[11] An exception is Suger's life of Louis VI "the Fat."[12] Suger must be used with care, though, for as abbot of St. Denis he is constantly exalting that abbey, and he is concerned to portray Louis as a soldier of God, a kind of quasi-crusader for holy Church and St. Denis.[13] Suger's Louis is the very embodiment of contemporary chivalry, marching against wrongdoers at the head of his knights; the king's employment of footsoldiers drawn from the militia organized by the bishops is largely concealed. His opponents are portrayed as wicked men, while the king tries always to protect the poor and helpless. In fact his opponents, while troublesome, were working within an accepted political framework, and never challenged the royal position.[14] The long reign of Louis VII attracted no biographer, though the incomplete account of his crusade is very valuable, but it should be noted that its author, Odo of Deuil, was a creature of Suger of St. Denis.[15] In the late thirteenth century Guillaume de Nangis, a monk of Denis, wrote a world history to 1300, paying considerable attention to the French monarchs. Up to 1113 he repeats Sigebert of Gembloux, but thereafter he provides a useful narrative of French history. It is only toward the end, however, that his account becomes really useful.[16]

Although a good number of charters and related acts have survived (some 798 in all),[17] records of royal government for his and earlier reigns are scarce. This is a great contrast with England, where very substantial records from the twelfth century have

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6 Abbon, *Siège de Paris par les Normands*; Regino of Prüm, *Chronicle*.

7 *Recueil des actes de Louis IV, roi de France*, ed. Philippe Lauer (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1914).

8 Helgaud de Fleury, *Epitoma vitae regis Rotberti Pii*.

9 Ademar of Chabannes, *Chronicon*.

10 Glaber, *Histories*.

11 Fawtier, *Capetian Kings of France*, 2.

12 Suger, *Vie de Louis le Gros* [*The Deeds of Louis the Fat*].

13 Naus, *Constructing Kingship*, 59–84.

14 Barthélemy, "Quelques réflexions."

15 Odo of Deuil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*.

16 Guillaume de Nangis, *Chronique*.

17 Fawtier, *Capetian Kings of France*, 8.

survived. This lack was not due to slower development in France but an accident of war. The French royal archives were captured by Richard I of England when he ambushed King Philip II's army at Fréteval.[18] As a result, much of Louis VII's reign, and those of his predecessors, has been written from Anglo-Norman sources. After 1066 the Anglo-Norman realm witnessed a blossoming of historical writing, which was sustained across our whole period—and, of course, because the rivalry of the ruling houses was so intense, English writers were well informed about the Capetians. For the eleventh and earlier twelfth centuries (down to 1144) Orderic is essential, while Howden is well informed on events toward 1200.[19]

An essential work for the military history of the French monarchy is the chronicle of Gilbert of Mons, chancellor of the count of Hainaut. Gilbert paid the bills for his master and knew a great deal about soldiers and warfare. Hainaut lies in the border lands between France and Germany, and its count was a vassal of both the French monarch and the German emperor. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that Gilbert is very useful as a source for diplomatic history. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the work is the manifest movement of Hainaut into the orbit of the French monarchy in the reign of Philip II.[20]

Philip II was very conscious of the need for propaganda. Rigord, who wrote the *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, was his chaplain, and so was Guillaume le Breton, who continued and developed it after 1206, and also wrote a long-winded poem, the *Philippidos*. Nonetheless, these are important works for anyone interested in the wars of Philip II, not least because they contain accounts of the siege of Château Gaillard and the Battle of Bouvines.[21]

Philip bequeathed an enormous gift to historians, however. After Fréteval Philip Augustus established the royal records in Paris. Because of this we have a much closer knowledge of the workings of French government for the rest of his reign and for all those who succeeded him. There are, of course, gaps, but even for his reign there is an enormous amount of material, and much has been edited and published.[22] The availability of such material underlies the excellent work of Xavier Hélary and others on the thirteenth century. In addition, we have local chronicles and crusader histories, which fill in great gaps in our knowledge.[23]

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18 See above, 122–23 and n. 57.

19 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia aecclesiastica*; Roger of Howden, *Chronica* [*Annals of Roger de Hoveden*].

20 Gilbert of Mons, *La Chronique de Gislebert de Mons*, ed. Léon Vanderkindere (Brussels: Kiessling, 1904); and *Chronicle of Hainaut*.

21 Rigord, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, 1:141; Guillaume le Breton, *Philippidos*, 2:415–740.

22 For example, *Les Registres de Philippe Auguste*, vol. 1; and, later, the *Actes du Parlement de Paris de l'an 1254 à l'an 1328*.

23 For the southwest, Geoffroi de Breuil, *Chronica*, provides an interesting picture of the advance of royal power in that area in the early thirteenth century, while *The Chronicle of William of Puylaurens* offers us the horrors of the Albigensian Crusade.

As a portrait of a king and his men at war, however, Joinville's life of his king and friend, Louis IX, has few peers. In particular, Joinville knew what war was like, and this informed his decision to refuse to go on Louis's crusade to Tunis. For the period of fighting in Flanders the work of Guiart gives us a remarkable insight into the business of an ordinary soldier at the start of the fourteenth century.[24]

Finally, I include a note on the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, to which readers may often see references. This is a compilation of chronicles from the earliest times of the French monarchy translated into French. It used to be assumed that this was compiled at the request of St. Louis, because the earliest versions end in his reign. All the manuscripts are de luxe productions with elaborate pictures. The royal origins of this work are now doubted, however, and its numerous continuations to later dates appear to be the work of great noble families anxious to assert their status and connection with the royal family.[25] The manuscripts of this work are very beautiful, but the content adds little to our knowledge.

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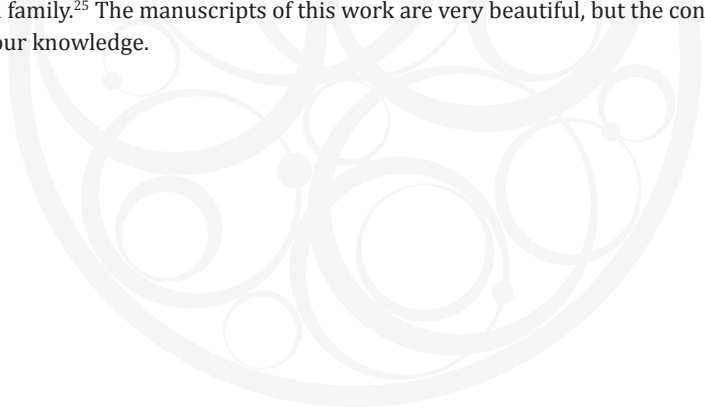
24 John of Joinville, "Life of St. Louis"; Guillaume Guiart, *Branche des royaux lignages*; and RHF, 22:171–300; partial English translation in DeVries and Livingston, *Medieval Warfare*, no. 57, 117–21.

25 Antoine Brix, "The Making of the *Grandes Chroniques de France*: Reassessing a Literary Success," *Revue historique* 694 (2020): 3–39.

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