

---

**Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte**  
Herausgegeben vom Deutschen Historischen Institut Paris  
(Institut historique allemand)  
Band 15 (1987)

DOI: 10.11588/fr.1987.0.53163

---

Rechtshinweis

Bitte beachten Sie, dass das Digitalisat urheberrechtlich geschützt ist. Erlaubt ist aber das Lesen, das Ausdrucken des Textes, das Herunterladen, das Speichern der Daten auf einem eigenen Datenträger soweit die vorgenannten Handlungen ausschließlich zu privaten und nicht-kommerziellen Zwecken erfolgen. Eine darüber hinausgehende unerlaubte Verwendung, Reproduktion oder Weitergabe einzelner Inhalte oder Bilder können sowohl zivil- als auch strafrechtlich verfolgt werden.

altar in the process of restoration in 1976. In an opening essay Renate Neumüllers-Klauser of Heidelberg gives a paleographical description of the name entries on the altarstone and, on the basis of comparison with several other similar inscribed altarstones from southern France, proposes the dating. What is unique about these inscriptions is the fact that nearly half the names were painted on the stone in inks of varying colors which were in remarkably good condition due to the protected location of the stone. Dieter Geuenich then subjects the names to a linguistic analysis and, through a comparison with name lists in the Reichenau confraternity book (published by himself, Karl Schmid, and Johanne Autenrieth in 1979 – this volume is a supplement to that one) from the abbey on the same island, finds that most of the names come from the same region around the Lake of Constance. Geuenich is also responsible for the name register at the end of the volume which lists all of the names individually in their entirety, then breaks them down into their separate elements. In this he follows the system he developed for the publication of the names in the Reichenau confraternity book with cross references for variant spellings of the same elements. Photographs of the slab come at the end of the volume, first of the entire slab, then individual sections enlarged to actual size. A numbered grid with transparent overlays is provided with these enabling the reader to locate the names he is seeking precisely on the stone slab. In the final essay Karl Schmid undertakes an historical examination of the names (all are single names, about 10% with titles or other identifying terms such as *clericus*, *monachus*, etc. attached) in an effort to determine who these people were and why their names were entered on this altar. Here he follows the technique he and his colleagues at Freiburg and Münster have developed in recent years, namely, that of identification through intensive study of the various groups in which many of these names were entered on the altar (altogether it contains 36 separate groups of names). Reference to other contemporary sources for the history of the abbey of Reichenau, especially the confraternity book, made possible the identification of several people prominent in the 10th and 11th centuries, a fact of capital importance for the dating of the inscriptions. But the crowning touch in this brilliant essay came when the author found a passage in the 11th century chronicle of Thietmar of Merseburg describing a contemporary abbot cutting his name in stone on the altar where he celebrated mass as part of his prayer for forgiveness of sins and for salvation. Karl Schmid connects this passage with an episode in the history of the abbey of Reichenau in 1069–70 involving a designated abbot, Meginward, who was rejected by the monastic community but whose name nonetheless figures most prominently on the altarpiece.

At the time of the publication of this volume the process of identification of the individuals and groups had only begun: it is to be presumed that more will follow. Like other volumes to have come out of the Freiburg-Münster schools in recent years this is a model publication adhering to the highest scholarly standards and leaving nothing to be desired.

George BEECH, Kalamazoo

André DEBORD, *La société laïque dans les pays de Charente (X<sup>e</sup>–XII<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Paris (Picard) 1984, 585 p.

André Debord's book on lay society in western Aquitaine in the 11th and 12th centuries claims a distinguished place among the still growing list of regional monographs in social and political history written in France in the past three decades. The author treats most of the subjects which have become standard in works in this tradition and, in addition, profiting from his own more recent interests, fills out his panorama with evidence from the discipline of archeology. A sizeable part of the book is given over to political history, to establishing the power framework within which the history of this period unfolded. Economic developments

also receive extensive treatment, to a lesser degree towns and trade, but more importantly the progress of the agricultural economy. This includes landholding and tenorial systems; taxes, exactions, and services, and the clearing and exploitation of new land. But the book is above all a social history concerned with the aristocracy and the peasantry, their relative affluence, their relations with one another and with those in power, and changes in both over the period in question. This monograph is based upon a comprehensive study of all the relevant narrative sources for the region (few in number and furnishing little detailed information aside from the chronicle of Adémar of Chabannes) and all the existing charters and cartularies. A few of these latter are available only in manuscript. On the whole the region seems to be poorly documented compared with others like the Maconnais with its greater abundance of charters. In this regard a brief discussion of this point – i.e. numbers of surviving charters – would have been helpful for putting the findings of this study into better perspective. Unlike some of the other regions of medieval France which have been studied in this way, the Pays de Charente (the present day départements of the Charente and the Charente-Maritime) did not have any territorial or political unity in medieval times. As the provinces of the Saintonge and the Aunis they never fell under the political authority of a single indigenous prince. The Counts of Angoulême were the most powerful local rulers but they never controlled more than the southeastern part of the region. The Dukes of Aquitaine from their capital in Poitiers to the north were the dominant political powers during most of the period under question until finally the Plantagenet kings of England brought the entire region under their rule by the end of the 12th century. Ecclesiastically the medieval Saintonge and Aunis were divided between the dioceses of Angoulême and Saintes.

The very large number of important topics treated in the course of this large book (an in 4° volume of nearly 600 pages) makes it impossible to do justice to even a fraction of the former in a book review of conventional length. Thus I will content myself with calling attention to what seem to me to be the outstanding features of the book and to the author's most significant findings. First a brief summary of the chronological and topical divisions into which he organizes his subject.

After a description of the physical environment in the 10th century (including a brief section on the medieval as compared with the modern coastline) he summarizes the successive stages in the settlement of the region from Gallo-Roman times to the 10th century, citing evidence from toponymy, written texts (hagiography), archeology, and numismatics. Few if any of the earlier synthèses (Duby et al.) with which this book will be compared attempted settlement history on the same scale as Debord does here. This is one of the best sections of the book. Foreign peoples largely determined the political history of the Saintonge-Aunis region prior to the 10th century; first the conquest of Charlemagne led to its incorporation into the Carolingian kingdom of Aquitaine which was itself destroyed by Viking invasions of the mid 9th century. A late 9th century effort by Charles the Bald to bring the entire region under the rule of a new comital dynasty at Angoulême failed and in the 10th century the Counts of Poitou-Dukes of Aquitaine gradually established their rule over most of the Saintonge-Aunis. The construction of a mass of castles – nearly 150 in all – throughout the region in the next two centuries, but mainly in the eleventh, in turn steadily weakened the authority of the counts of Poitou and Angoulême and brought to the fore a new group of middle ranking aristocracy and castellans. Debord's discussion of the building of castles in this region is unusually detailed and thorough both in the questions posed (when and where were castles built and by whom?) and in the historical method applied, and is a highlight of his book. Where he improves on previous inquiries into the age of castles is in his appeal to archeological as well as written evidence. In addition to assembling all references in written texts, he has brought together a list of all surviving vestiges of mottes which may once have been part of motte and bailey castles

(based, however, not on field inspection in situ but on references found in 19th century local historians). On the question whether private or public, the author has no hesitation in concluding that most castles were built on private initiative without comital approval.

The decline of central authority and the newly acquired powers of the castellans brought about the restructuring of the aristocratic society of the Charente region, a topic of major importance in this book. Based on careful analysis of titles and descriptive terms used in the latin sources the author describes the distinctive traits of both the greater and lesser aristocracy with main attention to the landed wealth of each. Of particular interest is his analysis of the castellans: his generalizations in the text are based on a comprehensive listing of all 31 families in that category in a 70 page appendix where he gives a brief historical sketch of each accompanied by genealogical charts. A number of these families had never before been studied. Of perhaps even greater interest will be his conclusions on the pervasiveness and potency of feudal bonds linking members of the ruling classes. The rarity of references to fiefs, vassalage, homage, and service lead him to conclude that feudal ties and fiefs played a small role in the Saintonge-Aunis region prior to 1150 and that the society could not be called feudal. Most people, both aristocracy and peasants alike, held their lands in full ownership as allods with little or no service or taxes owed. The Count of Angoulême could be called a vassal of the Duke of Aquitaine but he did not hold his county as a fief nor did the Duke of Aquitaine ever intervene in his lands. Rather than feudal bonds or customs it was the greater wealth and prestige, hence power, of the higher aristocracy which attracted the lesser families into their orbits and enabled the counts, viscounts, and castellans to impose their rule. In this regard André Debord likens the relationship between rulers and ruled more to later Roman clientage than to a systematically organized feudalism.

Nor did the classic régime domanial flourish in the Charente region in the 11th and 12th centuries. Large rural estates with vast demesnes (villas) were rare, most landholdings being highly fragmented and widely dispersed. Little evidence exists about services peasants owed, *corvées* are never mentioned in the 11th century, and whatever its incidence in earlier times, serfdom had almost entirely disappeared by the 11th century. Much of the exploitation of seigneurial demesnes may have been done on a sharecropping basis.

This region did not however escape the sweeping economic changes which affected the rest of France in the 11th and 12th centuries. Population growth, rural expansion, clearing of new lands, increased production and growth of trade created new wealth for many. The author concludes that the aristocracy were particularly adept in imposing new and more lucrative rents and taxes on newly cultivated lands and thereby avoiding the relative impoverishment experienced by some aristocracy in other parts of France at the time. The acquisition of the Duchy of Aquitaine by Henry Plantagenet in 1152 and the determined, and finally successful, efforts of the English king and his sons to establish a centralized territorial state in Aquitaine brought an end to the relative independance of the aristocracy of the Saintonge-Aunis who nonetheless resisted fiercely in a series of revolts in the late 12th century. Henceforth all became vassals of the king (the king of France after the 1220's) and feudalization set in at all levels of society.

Thus while keeping pace with many developments in other parts of France at this time, the society of the Charente differed notably in several respects. How does André Debord account for this? For him the decisive factor was that Aquitanian society, descended from, and still reminiscent of late Gallo-Roman society, was basically different from its northern Frankish counter part. Its aristocracy resisted Frankish customs such as fiefs, vassalage, and service, and the failure of the Dukes of Aquitaine to establish an effective territorial state only promoted their resistance.

A summary of some of the central features of this book would not be complete without a reference to two of the most distinctive techniques used by the author in his presentation of his evidence. These are his reliance on maps on the one hand, and on charts and graphs for

supporting his contentions statistically on the other. The book is crammed with both, and both in greater numbers, I'm virtually certain, than I have ever seen in a monograph of this kind (in all, 159 maps, charts, diagrams, graphs, and photos), a fact which doubtless explains the high cost of the volume. I write this in admiration not in criticism. Many of the maps (there must be 30 or 40 in all) are drawn with care and illustrate eloquently the points the author is making. One minor reservation. None of the maps distinguishes the medieval Saintonge from the Aunis and that would have been useful. With regard to the use of charts and graphs the author adheres to the belief, firmly rooted in the historical method of the 1970's, that a statistical measurement of the frequency of this or that title or word carries more weight than mere selective sampling. This approach is conscientiously applied to questions of vocabulary – as, for instance, the frequency of usage of the word *miles* in contemporary texts (p. 204) – but to other matters as well. Genealogical charts also abound. The combined effect of maps, charts, etc. is clearly to enhance the cogency of the author's argument.

Until this book Aquitanian society had been neglected by historians of medieval French society. Now that gap has been honorably filled by a work which will stand as a point of reference for the foreseeable future.

George BEECH, Kalamazoo

Cartulaire de l'Abbaye de Saint-Amand de Boixe, publié par André DEBORD, Poitiers (Société archéologique et historique de la Charente) 1982, 377 p.

One important source for André Debord's study of aristocratic society in the Charente region was the cartulary of the Benedictine abbey of Saint-Amand de Boixe, a cartulary which the author himself published in 1982. The abbey of Saint-Amand de Boixe was founded by the Count of Angoulême, Arnaud Manzer, at the end of the 10th century in the northern part of the diocese of Angoulême. This edition, based on a 17th century copy of a lost 13th century original, makes available over 300 charters almost all from the 11th and 12th centuries and most of which had never before been published. Debord's edition is an admirable one in almost every respect. He has prefaced the volume with a brief history of the founding of the abbey, then, in a good introduction, treats many of the questions which are customary and desirable in editions of charters. This includes a description of the main monastic dignitaries, a chronological list of the men who held the offices (those who could be identified by family of origin came from the surrounding region), a discussion of the abbey's landed possessions and the stages in which they were acquired, and a list and map of the dependant priories through which the monks administered their domains. An informative appendix gives both location and dates of the parish churches acquired by the abbey in the 11th century. With almost all its domains and churches concentrated in a relatively small region nearby, Saint-Amand must be ranked as a monastic house of strictly local importance in medieval times. Its charters clearly reflect its standing. Most concern people so insignificant as to be unidentifiable whether as donors, sellers, recipients, etc. Thus the greatest utility of these charters will almost certainly be that they provide abundant information about the lesser aristocracy and affluent peasantry of the region, as well as about the local agricultural economy. And indeed the author has himself exploited these charters to these ends in his book ›Société laïque‹ (see review in this vol. of *Francia*). Famous people appear rarely in these documents with the exception of the counts and bishops of Angoulême who are represented by 15 and 11 previously unpublished charters respectively. If I were to make a single criticism of this edition it is that the author has provided almost no explanatory footnotes to aid the unfamiliar reader in identifying the local aristocracy visible in these charters. And yet he has himself identified and studied many of the same people in his ›Société laïque‹. On the other hand the tables at the end of the volume –