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Count Hugh of Troyes and the territorial principality in early twelfth-century Western Europe [*]

Knowing the nation-state to be a modern invention, historians have in recent years increasingly turned away from the grand 'national narratives' that used to inform much research into the European Middle Ages.[1] One measure of this is the attention lavished upon exchanges of knowledge, ideas and practices across lines of separation during the period, and upon frontiers and frontier areas in general.[2] Another are the attempts that historians have made, working both in collaboration and individually, to assess the influence that diverging national historiographical traditions have exerted upon the study of particular historiographical topics.[3] In a similar vein, historians have explicitly tested

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[1] The bibliography here is very large, but P. Geary, *Myth of Nations: the medieval origins of Europe* (Princeton, 2003) stands out as a particularly powerful analysis of the role that the medieval past has played in nation-building.

[2] As a selection from the abundant recent literature on medieval frontiers, see D. Power and N. Standen, eds., *Frontiers in question: Eurasian borderlands, 700-1700* (Basingstoke, 1999); D. Abulafia and N. Berend, eds., *Medieval Frontiers: concepts and practices* (Aldershot, 2002); and K. Herbers and N. Jaspers, eds., *Grenzräume und Grenzüberschreitungen im Vergleich: der Osten und der Westen des mittelalterlichen Lateineuropa* (Berlin, 2007). There is even a new journal, *Medieval Encounters,* dedicated to studying cultural exchange across borders of various kinds.

[3] A good example of collaborative work is provided by the various papers in I. Alfonso, ed., *Comparing national historiographies of the medieval countryside* (Turnhout, 2007). A now classic example showing

approaches forged in one tradition against evidence usually assessed in others.[4] Yet there remain some topics whose investigation still seems shaped, wittingly or otherwise, by nationally-oriented approaches, and among them is that with which this article is principally concerned, the territorial principality in post-Carolingian Europe.

It is generally acknowledged that the fragmentation of the Carolingian empire towards the end of the ninth century was associated with the gradual development and elaboration of smaller units of political power.[5] What has been written about these units has however tended to diverge quite sharply along national lines. For many historians of France (not all of them French), these units – known commonly as territorial principalities – constituted a passing phenomenon, merely the temporary delegation or usurpation of public power to a lower level that was in due course retrieved by vigorous administrative kings like Philip Augustus (d.1223).[6] Historians of Germany (not all of them German) have for some time seen things rather differently. The fact that the Holy Roman Emperors never succeeded in centralising in quite the same way (the so-called medieval *Sonderweg*), or perhaps never even tried to do so, promoted distinctive

what individual historians can achieve is S. Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: the medieval evidence reinterpreted* (Oxford, 1994), scrutinising national historiographical traditions on medieval property-rights. See also C. Tyerman, *The Debate on the the Crusades* (Manchester, 2011), especially pp. 125-154.

[4] For example, M. Bloch's ground-breaking work on ministerials, a staple-theme of German history, in France: 'Un problème d'histoire comparée: la ministérialité en France et en Allemagne', *Revue historique du droit français et étranger* 4th ser., 7 (1928), pp. 46-91, reprinted in M. Bloch, *Mélanges historiques* (2 vols, Paris, 1963), vol.1, pp. 503-528. Cf. also R. Kaiser, *Bischofsherrschaft zwischen Königtum und Fürstenmacht. Studien zur bischöflichen Stadtherrschaft im westfränkisch-französischen Reich im frühen und hohen Mittelalter* (Saarbrücken, 1981), examining how far a development familiar in German historiography can be traced in western Francia, an approach subsequently developed in the more focused study of O. Guyotjeannin, *Episcopus et comes. Affirmation et déclin de la seigneurie épiscopale au nord du royaume de France (Beauvais-Noyon, Xe-début XIIIe siècle)* (Geneva, 1987).

[5] S. MacLean, *Kingship and politics in the late ninth century: Charles the Fat and the end of the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge, 2003) is a fine study of the details of this collapse.

[6] J. Dhondt, *Études sur la naissance des principautés territoriales en France* (Bruges, 1948); K.F. Werner, 'Kingdom and Principality in Twelfth-Century France,' in T. Reuter, ed., *The Medieval Nobility* (Amsterdam, 1979), pp. 243-290; J.W. Baldwin, *The government of Philip Augustus: foundations of French royal power in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1986). The importance of principalities has recently been re-emphasised by D. Barthélemy as part of his re-reading of the twelfth century, for example in his 'Mutation de l'an 1100', *Journal des Savants* (2005), pp. 3-28.

historical interpretations expressed through idiomatic terminologies that concentrated on the notion of aristocratic power as in some way autonomous from that of public authority, with obvious consequences for the study of regional political communities.[7]

Medieval historians of course did not and do not work in intellectual isolation, and there have been many attempts to compare the development of principalities in France and Germany and indeed more widely still, such as Heinrich Mitteis's wide-ranging work and several more recent collections of articles.[8] Yet these comparisons, however detailed and finely-worked in content, have tended to sustain rather than move beyond national narratives, in that 'French' patterns are compared with 'German', even though the very existence of the principalities could cast doubt on whether such labels are necessarily helpful in this period. The partial exception here is the 'lost kingdom' of Lotharingia, whose lack of a modern 'successor state' helps it to be seen as a transitional zone, a conduit for French influence into the Empire.[9] Contemporary national frameworks nevertheless continue in general to exercise a good deal of influence on how the history of the political organisation of space during this part of the Middle Ages is written. It was to reflect this influence that Susan Reynolds's ground-breaking *Fiefs and Vassals*, for example, was structured around modern. rather than medieval, political communities. Following Reynolds's lead in breaking down venerable interpretative schemata which

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[7] B. Arnold, *Princes and Territories* (Cambridge, 1991) and W. Hechberger, *Adel im fränkisch-deutsch Mittelalter* (Ostfildern, 2005) provide excellent historiographical syntheses. On the so-called medieval *Sonderweg*, see T. Reuter, 'All quiet except on the western front? The emergence of pre-modern forms of statehood in the central Middle Ages', in the collection of his essays edited by J. Nelson, *Medieval polities and modern mentalities* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 432-458.

[8] H. Mitteis, *Der Staat des hohen Mittelalters* (Weimar, 1940); *Principautés et territoires et études d'histoire lorraine* (Paris, 1979) (no editors given); more recently, though in precisely the same vein, B. Demotz, ed., *Principautés dans l'Occident médiévale: à l'origine des régions* (Turnhout, 2007).

[9] For the phrase, see J. Schneider, *Auf der Suche nach dem verlorenen Reich: Lotharingien im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, 2010). See also M. Gaillard, M. Margue, A. Dierkens and H. Pettiau, eds., *De la mer du Nord à la Méditerranée. Francia Media: une région au coeur de l'Europe (c.840-1050)* (Luxembourg, 2011).

lack adequate support in the sources, historians are beginning however to question whether differences in the historiography of territorial principalities quite match the differences in their history, and whether the implicit influence of national frameworks ought not to be explicitly confronted in this area too.[10]

This article seeks to advance this enquiry by means of a specific case-study concerning Hugh (c.1075-c.1130), a hitherto rather obscure eastern 'French' count of the city of Troyes in Champagne. Its argument proceeds in three steps. In the first, reassessing Hugh's role in the formation of a territorial principality, I will argue that if we look beyond an unfavourable medieval historiographical legacy and concentrate on his charters, Hugh emerges as a more significant figure of the history of the county of Champagne than usually appreciated. In the light of Thomas Bisson's recent and controversial book *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century,* I will then use these charters to characterise more closely the nature of Hugh's authority as a count in an emerging principality.[11] The article's third section brings together these two strands of enquiry, with the intention of showing by means of this juxtaposition not only that this relatively minor eastern French figure is ill-served by contemporary, nationally-oriented frameworks of explanation, but also that efforts to gain a proper understanding of Hugh contribute, in a small way, to developing a properly European history of political power in the twelfth century that recognises difference without pigeon-holing it.

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[10] A Franco-German project named *Territorium. Raum und Politik: Wahrnehmung und Praxis im Frankenreich und in seinen Nachfolgereichen vom 9. bis zum 11. Jahrhundert* has recently been set up to pursue just this question. Contributions to the project can be read at http://tobias-lib.uni-tuebingen.de/portal/territorium/.

[11] T.N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton, 2009).

Count Hugh, the youngest son of Theobald III of Blois (sometimes misleadingly known as Theobald I of Champagne) and Adelaide of Bar, inherited Troyes from the former and Bar-sur-Aube and Vitry from the latter.[12] In his childhood, Hugh may not have expected to become count, and did so only after the early death of his elder brother, Odo (IV).[13] Hugh has never been the subject of an extended study, and it must be admitted that he is far from well-known even to specialists in the field.[14] At first glance, such neglect is something of a puzzle. For Hugh had all the makings of a glamorous twelfth-century prince. Husband to a princess, uncle to a king and host to a Pope, he survived a serious assassination attempt, was a seasoned and effective warrior and accompanied bishops on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. What has made Hugh obscure in spite of this ostensibly promising biography is a particular convergence of medieval and modern historiographical concerns.

Around 1124, Count Hugh decided to leave Troyes and his county forever in search of a more spiritual life in what was to become the Order of the Temple, set up in Jerusalem by one of those who had attended his court in Champagne.[15] We cannot know whether this was the result of a sudden or intensified personal crisis, or the planned

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[12] On Count Theobald III, see the magisterial study of M. Bur, *La formation du comté de Champagne, v.950-v.1150* (Nancy, 1977), particularly pp. 193-230. A study of the principality of Blois is provided by A. Chédeville, *Chartres et ses campagnes, XIe – XIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1973). The extensive research by K. LoPrete on Theobald's family, which she calls the Thibaudians, is most easily consulted in her impressive *Adela of Blois, countess and lord (c.1067-1137)* (Dublin, 2007).

[13] Not to be confused with Hugh's cousin Odo III, who made his fortune in Anglo-Norman England as the lord of Holderness a generation earlier. See the genealogy appended to this article.

[14] Though he is not entirely ignored: for example, he is briefly discussed in E. Hallam and J. Everard, *Capetian France, 987-1328* (2nd edition: Harlow, 2001) on p. 49, though the statement that Hugh controlled Provins is inaccurate.

[15] On the origins of the Templars, R. Hiestand, 'Kardinalbischof Matthäus von Albano, das Konzil von Troyes und die Entstehung des Templerordens', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 99 (1988), pp. 295-325, is crucial; an up-to-date synthesis is offered by M. Barber, *The new knighthood: a history of the order of the Temple* (Cambridge, 1994).

fulfilment of a long-cherished ambition.[16] Whatever the case, the way in which Hugh left

power informed opinions of what he had achieved with it. Writing some years after the

event, Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis wrote with a sneer about Hugh's alleged inability to

match the expectations of his royal bride, Constance (the daughter of King Philip I),

particularly when compared with her second husband, the dashing Norman crusader

Bohemond.[17] The implicit slur on Hugh's masculinity was brought out with relish by

later chroniclers such as Alberic of Troisfontaines and the Anonymous of Laon, both

writing in the thirteenth century, who commented on Hugh's retirement with salacious

stories that focused on his alleged impotence and depicted him as a humiliated cuckold.[18]

Hugh's reputation is hardly a unique example of how failure to pass power onto a

biological heir shaped chroniclers' opinions: Hugh's nephew King Stephen of England,

for example, suffered a similar posthumous fate.[19] Yet decisions like Hugh's were by no

means unprecedented either. Just a generation earlier, another count in what is now

northern France had given up temporal office for monastic solitude, albeit rather closer to

home. Unlike Hugh though, he had widely been considered a saint for it.[20]

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[16] A letter of Bishop Ivo of Chartres suggests Hugh had had thoughts along these lines before, though it is difficult to date. It can be consulted most easily in J.-P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 162, col.252-3, no.245.

[17] Suger, *Vita Ludovici Grossi Regis*, ed. and tr. H. Waquet, *Suger – vie de Louis VI le Gros* (Paris, 1929), p. 48. J. Naus, 'The Capetians and the First Crusade, 1095-1110', forthcoming in *Nottingham Medieval Studies,* sheds more light on the interest in crusaders at the Capetian court.

[18] Alberic of Troisfontaines, *Chronicon*, M[onumenta] G[ermaniae] H[istorica] *Scriptores* vol.23, ed. P. Scheffer-Boichorst (Hanover, 1874), pp. 631-950, at p. 826; Anonymous of Laon, *Chronicon*, in *Recueil des Historiens de France et de la Gaule*, ed. M. Bouquet et al. (Paris, 1840-1904), vol.13, p. 687, in the notes (cf. the introduction in MGH *Scriptores* vol.26, ed. G. Waitz (Hanover, 1882), p. 442, though the relevant passage is not edited there). Alberic was relatively well-informed on Hugh's family, aware for instance that they were descended from the Carolingian count Bernard (*Chronicon*, p. 726).

[19] E. King, *King Stephen* (New Haven, 2010): see pp.282-286 for the arrangements over Stephen's succession, eased by the fortuitous death of his son and heir-apparent Eustace in 1153. For the fate of Stephen's other son William, see E. van Houts, 'The Warenne view of the past, 1066-1203', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 26 (2003), pp. 103-122.

[20] On Simon of Crépy, see M. Lauwers, 'Du pacte seigneurial à l'idéal de conversion. Les légendes hagiographiques de Simon de Crépy (1081-2)', in *id.*, ed., *Guerriers et moines. Conversion et sainteté aristocratiques dans l'Occident médiéval* (Antibes, 2002), pp. 559-588.

The key to understanding the very different way in which Hugh was treated rests in the specific political contexts in which the chroniclers wrote. Abbot Suger, for example, was keen to promote the marriage of Bohemond and Constance, little anticipating Bohemond's later difficulties and the disastrous consequences these had for the princess. Casting aspersions on her previous husband's manliness was a way of emphasising Bohemond's virtues, and of veiling over his dubious social origins.[21] Later champenois chroniclers for their part were eager to promote the memory of Hugh's successor Count Theobald IV of Blois, and given that Theobald seems to have elbowed out in a rather murky fashion a man named Odo identified with some plausibility as Hugh's son, stories questioning that son's paternity had a certain convenience.[22] It seems likely that some of the more strongly expressed criticisms of Hugh by modern historians, notably Henri d'Arbois de Jubainville in the nineteenth century, are derived in some form from the medieval chroniclers, even if de Jubainville's attacks on Hugh's masculinity overtly centred on his failure to partake on the First Crusade.[23]

The legacy of jaundiced and partisan chroniclers can however be sidestepped if we consider Hugh's activities through the only set of contemporary sources written without the aid of hindsight, namely the almost fifty charters issued to record his activities, of which some twenty four survive as originals, and as many again as later copies.[24] In spite

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[21] See on this N. Paul, 'A warlord's wisdom: literacy and propaganda at the time of the First Crusade', *Speculum* 85 (2010), pp. 534-566.

[22] Essential here are the careful arguments of LoPrete, *Adela*, Appendix 7, pp. 570-4.

[23] H. Arbois de Jubainville, *Histoire des ducs et des comtes de Champagne* (6 vols, Paris, 1859-66), in vol.2, for instance at pp. 95-7. For very similar views, see A. Fliche, *Le Règne de Philippe 1er, roi de France* (Paris, 1912), pp. 247-8.

[24] Hugh is the main focus of some 48 charters. This excludes texts in which Hugh plays only a minor or confirmatory role, a rough and ready distinction that is nonetheless reasonably clear in practice: see n.26 below. The text and shelfmark of all original charters issued before 1121 and preserved in France can be accessed via the database prepared by ARTEM (Atelier de recherche sur les textes médiévaux), a team based at the Université de Nancy II, which is now available online: http://www.cn-

of their potential value, these documents have been little studied as a body.[25] Scattered across various regional archives and libraries and often unpublished, they have been until recently difficult to access. M. Bur's 1988 unpaginated typescript pre-edition, now generously made publicly available via the internet, goes some way to remedy this situation, but cannot be compared with his remarkable edition of the charters issued by Hugh's great-nephew Count Henry the Liberal (d.1181).[26]

The neglect of Hugh's charters reflects a long abatement in the study and publication of the mass of twelfth-century French charters, one not compensated (in fact perhaps compounded) by the numerous unpublished editions languishing in *thèses de maîtrises* on university library shelves across France, and that is only recently showing signs of lifting.[27] Yet it also reflects the fact that, varying in script, *mise-en-page*, and authentication, Hugh's charters are typical of the early twelfth century in that they were drawn up and written by the beneficiaries, and not to a standardised format.[28] One of the key indices in the study of French (and other) principalities is centralised organisation,

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telma.fr/originaux/index/. This includes nineteen of Hugh's original charters (another five are not currently represented in the database, mostly because they date to after 1121). For ease of reference, I will cite those charters that appear in this catalogue according to their number within it, as Artem + no..

[25] A good modern introduction to the issues surrounding the study of charters is provided by O. Guyotjeannin, J. Pycke and B.M. Tock, eds., *La diplomatique médiévale* (Turnhout, 1993).

[26] M. Bur et al., eds., *Recueil des actes d'Henri le Libéral, comte de Champagne (1152-1181),* vol.1 (Paris, 2009). His pre-edition of comital charters concerning Champagne, from Heribert the Old through to Hugh, compiled in 1988 but put online in November 2011, can be accessed at http://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00638840/fr/. I am grateful to M. Bur for drawing this to my attention before this article went to press. This pre-edition is intended to be comprehensive, and so its total of 87 documents (of which 31 are originals) includes charters mentioning Count Hugh only in passing (for example giving his consent to another's donation) and references to now lost charters, as well as letters to or mentioning the count. It is not a definitive critical edition, but, as M. Bur's introduction states, is intended to serve as the basis for any future such edition.

[27] See for example B.M. Tock, *Les chartes de l'abbaye cistercienne de Vaucelles au XII siècle* (Turnhout, 2010), and J.M. Nieus, *Les chartes des comtes de Saint-Pol (XIe- XIIIe siècles)* (Turnhout, 2008).

[28] On beneficiary production, where the recipient of the transaction is responsible for drawing up the record, see the thoughtful discussion in B.-M. Tock, 'Auteur ou impétrant? Réflexions sur les chartes des évêques d'Arras au XIIe siècle', *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* 149 (1991), pp. 213-248.

foreshadowing the rise of administrative kingship.[29] The existence of a formal and

productive chancery is taken to be an important component of that development,

concentrating attention on those princes who are seen to be leading the way in this regard,

and away from those like Hugh who are not.[30]

It should in point of fact be noted that a number of Hugh's charters are witnessed by

comital chaplains, in particular a certain Albert whose name appears at the bottom of

eleven grants.[31] In one of these, still extant as an original, Albert is said to have

personally sealed the charter ('Albertus capellanus qui sigillavit').[32] Hugh in other words

took an interest in the charters recording his actions, and did not always leave everything

to the beneficiary. Had he wanted to produce his own charters, at least on a small scale,

he could surely have done so, so presumably he was content to let recipients arrange

matters. This 'outsourcing' of administrative work allowed the different institutions to

express and record the grant in the way they found most appropriate, so ensuring Hugh's

generosity would be suitably remembered by the institutions whose commemoration was

one of the key justifications for making grants in the first place. In any case, a lack of

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[29] In general, see C.W. Hollister and J.W. Baldwin, 'The Rise of Administrative Kingship: Henry I and Philip Augustus', *American Historical Review* 83 (1978), pp. 867-905. For excellent studies of this process in Champagne, see J. Benton, 'Written records and the development of systematic feudal relations', in T. Bisson, ed., *Culture, Power and Personality in Medieval France* (London, 1991), pp. 275-90, and T. Evergates, *Littere baronum: the earliest cartulary of the counts of Champagne* (Toronto, 2003).

[30] The studies collected in *Landesherrliche Kanzleien im Spätmittelalter. Referate zum VI. Internationalen Kongreß für Diplomatik* (Munich, 1984) include J. Richard on the court of Burgundy and T. de Hemptinne, W. Prevenier and M. Vandermaesen on the county of Flanders, both reaching back to the twelfth century. On episcopal chancery practices, useful for comparison, see the studies collected in C. Haidacher and W. Köfler, eds., *Die Diplomatik der Bischofsurkunde vor 1250* (Innsbruck, 1995).

[31] Albert witnesses Hugh's charters for Montiéramey, Molesme, St Pierre-aux-Monts, Marmoutier, St Denis of Rheims, St Leo of Toul, St Paul of Verdun, Toussaints of Châlons, and Montier-la-Celle.

[32] Artem no. 767 (see n.24 above), from 1118. The seal on this charter is sadly lost, but the method of attachment does seem similar to that used on others, raising questions about Albert's wider involvement. On Hugh's seals, see (still) H. Arbois de Jubainville, *Essai sur les sceaux des comtes et des comtesses de Champagne* (Paris, 1856), with illustrations; more generally, J.L. Chassel, 'L'usage du sceau en Champagne médiévale', in *id.*, ed., *Sceaux et usages des sceaux: images de la Champagne médiévale* (Paris, 2003), pp. 18-24.

centralisation is not necessarily a problem for historians wishing to understand the workings of power; in fact it could be seen as an advantage. Hugh's charters can be read as representations of his relations with a wide range of individuals and institutions over a long period of time, recorded from the perspective of a wide variety of parties, and so perhaps more revealing than a more tightly controlled medium expressing only the view from the court.

Hugh's charters give some reason to suspect that for the first few years after his accession c.1093, he was under the wing of his brothers Count Stephen-Henry of Blois and Bishop Philip of Châlons, and of his sister-in-law Countess Adela, the daughter of William the Conqueror. In these early years of his rule, between 1093 and 1096, Hugh issued no charters in his name alone.[33] After this point, Hugh seems to have come of age, and contrary to a recent suggestion, his subsequent activities give no reason to doubt that he was an entirely independent count who followed his own priorities with only cursory reference to his wider family of the kind usually paid to kinsfolk.[34] It is certainly true that his nephew Count Theobald took over the county of Troyes when Hugh left for Jerusalem, but it should not be forgotten that according to one well-informed contemporary chronicler, Theobald had to pay for it.[35] Arguments supposing that Hugh

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[33] Apart from the lack of charters, a further indication in this direction is given by an account of a relic translation at Hautvillers which ends with a note concerning the establishment of market rights at Rheims in 1095, in which Stephen-Henry, Hugh's brother Philip (bishop of Châlons), and Hugh's wife Constance, are said to share the *comitatus*; Hugh himself was not present.

[34] For this suggestion, see LoPrete, *Adela*, e.g. p. 17 and especially p. 69. Her argument relies heavily upon poorly-informed Fleury sources as well as the (early) Hautvillers text mentioned in the note above. Though she takes M. Bur to task for not perceiving that the family's 'senior branch' was western, Bur in fact anticipated elements of her argument: e.g. *Formation*, p. 275, n.154, listing the handful of Hugh's charters in which his Blois relatives are mentioned. For the routine involvement of kinsmen in donations, see S. White, *Custom, kinship, and gifts to the saints: the Laudatio Parentum in western France, 1050-1150* (Chapel Hill, 1988).

[35] Robert of Torigny, *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges*, *Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni* ed. and tr. E. van Houts (2 vols, Oxford, 1994-5), Book VIII, c.34, in vol.2, at p. 262.

was in a state of subordination to his relatives based in Blois throughout his rule rely on

pushing small fragments of evidence very hard indeed.[36]

In fact, we can go rather further. Viewed as a whole, their diversity notwithstanding,

Hugh's charters in fact allow us to state with some confidence that he stands at the

beginning of the emergence of the principality of Champagne, irrespective of the way he

left power.[37] This point is made most obviously by the title these charters conferred upon

him. While there remained some diversity in titulature, and institutions based in Troyes

not surprisingly thought of Hugh mostly as count of Troyes, from about 1100 nearly

twenty charters produced for institutions as diverse as Molesme, St Remigius of Rheims,

St Leo of Toul and St Peter of Sens termed Hugh *comes campanie* or *comes de campanie*.

Hugh is the first count of Troyes routinely to claim, or to be given, this title in reliably

authentic charters.[38] Of course, they were all redacted by beneficiaries, and as already

mentioned, Hugh was known by other titles too (for example, three charters call him

count of Vitry), so we should hesitate before thinking of this as Hugh's formal title; it is

nevertheless instructive that this was the terminology that a good number of institutions

selected.[39]

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[36] It is unclear to me how Theobald and Adela's presence c.1114 at Rheims, at a confirmation of a donation by Hugh to Epernay, shows 'their status as ultimately responsible for Hugh's domains should he die childless while away…' (LoPrete, *Adela*, p. 342); in any case the text was clearly written up after Hugh's death ('Hugo… suo tempore venerabilis'). Hugh lent military assistance to the young Theobald IV around 1111 (Suger, *Vita Ludovici*, p. 148), but this surely indicates alliance, not subordination.

[37] As indeed both Bur, *Formation*, with his sub-title on p. 259, and T. Evergates, *The Aristocracy in the County of Champagne, 1100-1300* (Philadelphia, 2007), p. 7, concurred – though both nevertheless put rather more stress on Henry the Liberal, and Bur even doubted whether Champagne was ever a real principality at all (p. 498); a sign of how awkwardly Champagne fits into French arguments about principalities, as discussed further below.

[38] His brother Odo IV was given the title *comes Campanie* in a royal charter in 1082 (Artem n.2095) which is usually considered as genuine, but this is a rare exception.

[39] The geographical term *Campania* appears more frequently around this period, for example in a charter to describe the site of the castle of Rosnay c.1107, 'quod est situm in campania' (*Cartulaire du prieuré de Saint-Leu d'Esserent (1080-1538)*, ed. E. Müller (Pontoise, 1901), no.11). LoPrete, *Adela*, questions (p. 66, n.90) whether 'family charters' give Hugh the title, but given that Hugh's charters were made by

More substantively, the charters also show Hugh at work in consolidating a political network. Known to have benefited from his patronage are some twenty-eight different ecclesiastical institutions (not counting their priories), located in dioceses across what is now eastern France: Troyes of course, but also Rheims, Châlons, Auxerre, Sens, Langres, Verdun and Toul. Nearly all of the institutions concerned received just one or two grants each, with only a couple, notably Montiéramey and Molesme, benefiting from more than that – and Hugh's generosity to the latter was in shared between its various priories, such as Isle-Aumont which he had founded. This might seem at first sight a network so dispersed as to suggest that Hugh had no co-ordinated 'policy' as such, but we might do better to suppose that Hugh was deliberately spreading his patronage over a wide area, and indeed his generosity to institutions in Rheims, Châlons, Verdun and Toul arguably put in place connections exploited by later counts of Troyes as they expanded their influence into these regions.[40]

Whatever the case, a dispersed *Klosterpolitik* was not incompatible with the growth of a more intensive political control in a particular region. Looked at more closely, Hugh's charters attest to a reasonably coherent political unit. The charters show how meetings of the count's court provided a kind of backbone to Hugh's rule, the means by which Hugh linked together the elites from the lands around the Marne and, increasingly, the upper Seine. The growing formality of that court and its meetings is suggested by

beneficiaries, it is not clear to me what a 'family charter' would be. Cf. Evergates, *Aristocracy*, p. 7. Some of those charters that call him count of Champagne are witnessed by Albert, his chaplain, where we might expect Hugh's involvement with the text to have been reasonably close: for instance one for St Leo Toul, Châlons, Archives départmentales de la Marne, D23/1 (not available via Artem, though it can now be consulted in Bur's pre-edition, as in n.26).

[40] For that expansion, see Bur, *Formation*, p. 414 and p. 503; Evergates, *Aristocracy*, p. 9.

their use of a technical word to describe it – *curia*, a word only recently pressed into service to describe formal meetings of this kind.[41]

Many of those named as present at these meetings were men of some importance in their localities, identified by toponyms, and flatteringly described in some charters as Hugh's *barones*, *magnates* or *optimates*. Most of those identified by a toponym appear more than once, implying that they were regular attendees upon Hugh. Wido of Vignory, for example, an influential figure in his own right who also visited the duke of Burgundy's court, attested eleven of Hugh's charters.[42] Also among these regulars were Hugh's *familiares,* men upon whom Hugh bestowed honorary household titles. Geoffrey of Méry, for example, who was for a time Hugh's steward (*dapifer*), is recorded as having been present on the occasion of no fewer than eighteen grants.[43] Hugh's other prominent steward, Josbert of Châtillon-sur-Marne, witnessed ten of Hugh's charters.[44] Other household officials, though less frequently attested, included seneschals, chamberlains, butlers and marshals. The frequent presence of the same people must have lent Hugh's court some internal stability.

Of course to say that Hugh's court possessed stability and coherence is not to suggest that it was static. We do not have enough information to reconstruct Hugh's itineraries in any detail, but we know that in addition to issuing charters from his palace at Troyes, he

[41] See L. Genicot, 'Le premier siècle de la 'curia' de Hainaut', *Le Moyen Age* 53 (1947), pp. 39-60. Cf. D. Carpenter, 'Second century of English feudalism', *Past and Present* 168 (2000), pp. 30-71, on the honorial court. An example is provided by Artem no.839 (for Molesme, issued in 1097).

[42] On Wido, see J. d'Arbaumont, *Cartulaire du prieuré de Saint-Étienne de Vignory* (Langres, 1882), who provides a useful catalogue of the charters of the lords of Vignory. See also Evergates, *Aristocracy*, pp. 171-2, noting that Wido's attendence at Hugh's court began 'the long process by which his successors gradually came under the sway of the counts of Champagne'.

[43] He appears in Hugh's charters for Molesme, Montiéramey, Montier-la-Celle, St Lupus, St Leo of Toul, Avenay, St Peter of Sens, Montier-en-Der and St Germain of Auxerre (an 1104 charter that identifies him as being from Saint-Phal).

[44] He appears in Hugh's charters for Montiéramey, St Eugend, St Remigius, and St Pierre-aux-Monts. See Bur, *Formation*, pp. 262-3.

made others at meetings held in his 'castles' or fortified sites at Vitry, Pringy, Epernay and Bar-sur-Aube.[45] As Michel Bur has shown, the counts of Troyes had at their disposal the largest network of castles in the region, and Hugh demonstrated how these sites could be put to use. Indeed, Hugh seems to have attempted to increase his control of castellan centres, for example by acquiring by 1121 the castle at Vendeuvre, pledged against 300 pounds in silver, having already consolidated his position enough to be able to grant rights over the woodlands in its vicinity to the monastery of Montiéramey in 1107.[46] On other occasions, Hugh held his court in monasteries, not simply because this was the best venue for staging donations to these institutions, but because they offered a convenient location, and moreover facilities, to host meetings.[47]

The charters seldom indicate what was discussed at these meetings beyond the grants they record. Often heading the agenda must have been the taking of counsel and advice (Hugh's charters frequently refer to this in the abstract) and the maintenance of good order, since several of Hugh's charters show the count resolving disputes. But course the best recorded activity is naturally gift-exchange, since all the charters concern gifts and counter-gifts of various kinds. All that survive are for ecclesiastical institutions or clerics, but we know that Hugh rewarded his retinue too, including knights, with grants of revenues, and presumably these grants must have been made publicly even if they were not recorded on parchment.

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[45] On the difficulties of the terminology of fortified sites, see M. Bur, *Le Château* (Turnhout, 1999). Quite possibly Hugh controlled other castles not mentioned in the surviving charters, like Stonne: see Bur, *Formation*, p. 271.

[46] Lalore, *Cartulaires*, vol. 7, nos. 23 and 18, pp. 38-41, 23-31. The lords of Vendeuvre later retrieved their castle, but the episode represents their increasing subordination to Hugh.

[47] For example, Artem no.869 for Molesme in 1108, which mentions how honourably (*honorifice*) Hugh was treated on his visit to Molesme when he went there to deal with his business ('pro negotiis meis... tractandis').

It is interesting that the charters indicate these gifts were increasingly framed by a code of conduct that one of Hugh's charters calls 'the law [or right] of the fief', *ius feodi*, and another *ius militare*, 'military law'.[48] Quite what this 'ius' entailed is never spelled out. It may not have had a clearly-defined content, but it certainly had some concrete implications.[49] For example, one 11121 grant in favour of the monastery of St Nicasius of Rheims explained that the transaction involved a tithe held by Ida and her son Arnulf from a certain Jacob, who held it from John *vicecomes*, who himself held it from Count Hugh: a real hierarchy of tenure, expressed in the language of fiefs.[50] It is significant that a dozen of Hugh's charters include the granting of permission for those who held land from him, often termed a fief (*feodum*), to pass this land onto an ecclesiastical institution. In fact, bestowing this permission was the sole purpose of one 1123 charter for Toussaints (Châlons), in which Hugh confirmed the donation of land 'long held by hereditary right from me' by a certain Adam of Vitry.[51] If permission of this kind was valued by so many institutions, this implies that Hugh exercised some kind of supervision over gift-exchanges taking place in his territory that was at least partially effective, reflecting a growing sway over how lands were alienated.

A stable court, the maintenance of networks and an increasingly formalised claim to supervise his followers' resources: all this gives the impression of an autonomous and coherent 'principality', or at least the roots of one. This perhaps has a teleological ring to

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[48] The former is edited in C.B. Bouchard, ed., *The Cartulary of Montier-en-der, 666-1129* (Toronto, 2004), no.153, from the cartulary; the latter is Artem no.62 from 1096 (see n.23 above).

[49] For a discussion of the later history of these ideas and their impact in Champagne, see Evergates, *Aristocracy*, particularly chapters 1 and 2.

[50] Rheims, Archives départmentales de la Marne (Depôt de Reims), 55 H 153/2. This original charter is not available via Artem but is edited by J. Cosse-Durlin, *Cartulaire de Saint-Nicaise de Reims* (Paris, 1991), at pp. 43-4.

[51] Châlons, Archives départmentales de la Marne, H 291 (not available via Artem, but it can now be consulted via Bur's pre-edition, as in n.26 above).

it, so it is worth emphasising that there is no reason to believe that Hugh was consciously working towards creating the principality of Champagne in the shape it took under successors such as Henry the Liberal, nor that events could not have turned out differently. It is nevertheless true that Hugh's efforts to develop a regional powerbase did prove instrumental to the later flourishing of Champagne. Judging from the charters, it was in Hugh's reign that southern counts like those of Bar-sur-Seine, Brienne, Joigny, Ramerupt and Reynel definitively entered the orbit of the counts of Troyes, where they would remain for generations; and it is interesting too to see an incipient association with the northern counts of Dammartin, particularly in light of Hugh's patronage of northern ecclesiastical communities.[52]

Further down the social scale, it is only in the later eleventh and early twelfth centuries that localised family lineages around Troyes become visible in the sources as they took on toponyms reflecting their increasingly secure anchorage in village estates and, probably, castles.[53] Judging from his charters, Hugh was successful at bringing these families, like those of Chaceney, Chappes, Charmont, Méry-sur-Seine and Vendeuvre who were usually called *domini* in the early twelfth century, into his entourage.[54] Again,

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[52] On the southern counts, see Evergates, *Aristocracy*, p. 8. Peter count of Dammartin appears in Hugh's 1104 charter for Montiérramey (Artem no. 4958), while J. Laurent, ed., *Cartulaires de l'abbaye de Molesme, 916-1250* (2 vols, Paris, 1907), vol.2, no.148 shows him holding land from Hugh in benefice ('a quo hoc beneficium tenebat').

[53] Evergates, *Aristocracy*, provides a useful synthesis together with selected case studies, pp. 167-189, but *id.*, *Feudal Society* remains helpful, particularly the discussion on pp. 96-110 of a dozen families who appear in documents in this period for the first time, and the appendix at pp. 155-207 with further details. For a study of lineages a little lower on the social scale as they become architecturally visible, see C. Coulson, 'Castellation in the county of Champagne in the thirteenth century', *Château-Gaillard*, 9-10 (1982), pp. 347-64.

[54] For Chacenay (whose lords attest half a dozen or so of Hugh's charters), Charmont (whose lord appears first in one of Hugh's charters), Méry (whose lords were officials of Hugh) and Vendeuvre (who pledged their castle to Hugh), see Evergates, *Feudal Society*, pp. 166-7, pp. 169-72, p. 187 and pp. 207-10. For the lords of Chappes, see *ibid.*, p. 169. Significant light on their relationship with Hugh is shed by an intriguing text in Lalore, *Cartulaires*, vol.1, no.1, pp. 3-4.

we should not assume that there was some pre-existing system compelling these men to visit Count Hugh as they built up their own powerbases in their locales; we should infer rather that Hugh was successful at attracting these castellan lords to his court, a success crucial for the projection of his authority, and which his successors later exploited.[55] That these people were in the same room at the same time as Hugh does not of course straightforwardly prove political subjection, but it does suggest that those minor counts and castellan lords were increasingly falling into Hugh's political orbit, and that in a rapidly changing social environment Hugh's court was becoming something of a regional hub to an extent that cannot be paralleled by any of his predecessors. In short, it was under Hugh that the count of Troyes began to exercise a real, sustained dominance over the neighbouring areas – perhaps why, as already mentioned, charters from after 1100, and particularly after 1114, talk of him as the count of Champagne as much as the count of Troyes.

Whether Hugh played a part in promoting the trade routes through Champagne that so enriched his successors cannot be known, though he certainly profited from tolls and moreover displayed a notable interest in merchants, several of whom appear in his charter witness lists.[56] Nor is there any evidence that his court acted as a cultural centre, which seems to have been a much later development.[57] We do know however that his successor

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[55] Chacenay, Chappes and Méry for example were directly integrated into the county of Troyes in the course of the twelfth century, becoming castellanies: see Evergates, *Feudal Society*, as note above.

[56] Seimer the traveller (*viator*), who witnesses Artem no.761 (1104, for St Lupus of Troyes), seems likely to be a merchant. He witnesses another of Hugh's charter in the company of Ancher, a *civis urbis*: Artem no.4958 (also 1104, for Montiéramey).

[57] Still seminal is J. Benton, 'The court of Champagne as a literary centre', *Speculum* 36 (1961), pp. 551-591. Peter Abelard established c.1122 a cell (the Paraclet) near Quincey in the diocese of Troyes, a reminder that the area was not entirely a cultural backwater earlier in the twelfth century. The foundation was supported by the lords of Nogent, a family in Hugh's orbit, and a later charter from 1182 suggests that Hugh also helped (Lalore, *Cartulaires*, vol.2, p. 29). See in general M. Clanchy, *Abelard*: *a medieval life* (Oxford, 2007)*, pp. 238-242.

Count Theobald sustained certain initiatives of his uncle, for example connections with the community of St Leo in Toul, upon which Theobald called in 1127 to reform the religious community at Epernay.[58] Still more to the point, we also know that Theobald was himself concious that his position as count of Troyes was based on that of Hugh. Explicit evidence for this is provided by an early modern transcription of a now lost original charter.[59] This text explains how Count Theobald and Bishop Hatto of Troyes, both quite new to their positions (Hatto had become bishop in 1123), unsure of their mutual positions, and in dispute, jointly sent to Jerusalem to appeal to Hugh's recollection of the proper relations between count and bishop in Troyes. Enjoined by the Master of the Temple to reply, Brother Hugh dutifully recalled that the count could not do justice to the men of the bishop, unless they were caught red-handed. Insofar as the text can be relied upon, we could not hope for a clearer indication of Hugh's significance in the eyes of his successor.[60]

In short, to appreciate Hugh's role in the history of the county of Champagne properly, we need to contextualise the evaluations of the medieval chroniclers by comparing their accounts with the very different picture presented by Hugh's charters. There had been significant counts of Troyes before Hugh, but none can be shown to have exercised the kind of regionally intensive power he developed; and inasmuch as that reflects a change in our evidence, that too points to the importance of Hugh's reign as a

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[58] Bur, *Formation*, p. 354.

[59] Troyes, Archives départmentales de l'Aube, G 465. The charter is to my knowledge not edited.

[60] Professor T. Evergates has counselled caution about the authenticity of the text (pers. comm.), but I cannot easily conceive of plausible circumstances for its fabrication, since its details are confirmed by somewhat later charters. Even if forged later in the twelfth century, it would still testify to a memory of Hugh quite different to the representations proposed by chroniclers like Alberic. For a succinct assessment of the relation between bishop and count in early twelfth-century Troyes (apparently without awareness of this text), see Kaiser, *Bischofsherrschaft*, pp. 390-2.

turning point.[61] In that sense, Hugh would seem to deserve a greater prominence in the story of the rise of the principalities.

That recourse to Hugh's charters gives a better sense of his activities than that provided by chroniclers whose interests lay elsewhere does not mean that Hugh's charters are always easy to interpret. An example of the difficulties they can present is provided by a text concerning a grant Hugh made in 1123 for the clerics of St Paul, an ecclesiastical community in Verdun, now in France but then in the Holy Roman Empire, regarding its priory in the village of Vanault (Marne). Acting as the advocate of St Paul's lands there, Count Hugh decreed that he would henceforth abolish the 'detestable custom which is commonly called …' – what? Unfortunately, it is impossible to know for sure, since the only surviving text of the document, preserved in St Paul's late thirteenth-century cartulary, has a gap at precisely this point.[62] The word has not been erased, nor does the charter break off here; there is simply a blank where the missing word ought to be.

As we shall see, historians have made educated guesses about what word was originally intended, but have otherwise paid little attention to an infuriatingly incomplete charter. What makes the text frustrating is also however what makes it important, for that blank steers our attention to an important question too readily overlooked. I have argued that Hugh was at the head of an emerging principality; but of what, practically, did

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[61] Bur, *Formation,* p. 6, indicates a documentary turning point from the 1090s, and this is born out by his pre-edition. For earlier medieval counts of Troyes, in general obscure figures, see I. Créte-Protin, *Église et vie chrétienne de Troyes* (Villeneuve, 2002), pp. 297-308.

[62] The cartulary is Verdun, Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms 751. H. Stein, *Bibliographie générale des cartulaires français ou relatifs à l'histoire de France* (Paris, 1907), catalogues it as no.4060. The sentence on p. 201 reads 'detestabilem consuetudinem quam vulgo [blank] vocavit', and inspection of the cartulary shows that there has been no erasure. The charter has not to my knowledge been published, but it can now be consulted via Bur's pre-edition: see n.26 above.

Hugh's power consist? It is easy to read the dozens of formal accounts of the exercise of power recorded in Hugh's charters without considering this question. Yet this is precisely the point on which a recent book by Thomas Bisson has insisted. For Bisson, the foundation of power after the public order of the Carolingians had broken down was ultimately violence, terrifying, personal and unaccountable. No matter what their pretentions or organisational techniques, in the long twelfth century princes and their agents were in reality nothing but 'bad lords'. Only in the thirteenth and later centuries did new, accountable and more representative standards of governance come, painfully and haltingly, into existence.[63]

Bisson, whose interpretative approach was honed on material from the south, can hardly be faulted for not explicitly discussing Count Hugh. What follows will nevertheless see whether Hugh's charters can be read as supporting Bisson's argument, that is whether Hugh can be conceived of as a 'lord-count', in Bisson's phrase. It is certainly apparent that the degree of consensus prevailing at Hugh's court should not be unduly exaggerated. In one revealing charter, two castellan lords whom Hugh had persuaded to make a donation subsequently complained that in reality their arms had been twisted, and that they had acted 'from fear and by coercion of Count Hugh', while another document talks of the warlike measures Hugh had taken against the counts of Brienne to protect a monastery.[64] Ultimately though our judgement must depend on a broader overview of the charters, reading them less for the point they were written to make, that is to record a particular set of transactions, and more to explore what actually

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[63] Elements of Bisson's approach were anticipated on an admittedly smaller scale by E. Searle on Normandy in her *Predatory Kinship and the creation of Norman power 840-1066* (Berkeley, 1988); like Bisson's, Searle's work has won respect but not wide acceptance among specialists. See n. 94 below.
[64] Lalore, *Cartulaires*, vol.7, no.23, p. 41, 'timore et coactione domini Hugoni'. For Brienne, see Artem no.4980 (1114, for Montier-en-Der).

was being transacted. Only then can we return to the question of how best to situate Hugh's authority in a broader European context.

The starting point is to observe that Hugh's power, insofar as it can be glimpsed through the charters, did not depend on landownership. Of course Hugh must have owned some land, and so too did his wives, since some charters reveal that the countesses of Troyes had their own, distinct estates, apparently by long-standing tradition.[65] But on the whole, comital landholding is not shown to be a priority or even much of a concern in Hugh's charters. Relatively few of them record transfers of land outright, and those that do deal with small grants of a few patches of ground, or else larger plots in remote, thinly settled areas, like the forest of Luiz. Even when Hugh gave away land, it was not always clear that he was really its owner. The canons of St Leo Toul, for example, were presumably delighted in principle to be granted lands at Larzicourt (Marne) in 1114 by Hugh for a priory, but were wise to travel to Laon first to clear the donation with the actual owners of the estate, the canons of Notre-Dame.[66]

Judging from the documentary material, far more important for Hugh than landownership were the revenues raised in the name of custom (*consuetudo*).[67] Custom justified the tolls taken from merchants, and a number of Hugh's grants deal in exemptions and revenues from tolls at Bar-sur-Aube, Vitry and Troyes, an indication of the growing prosperity of the markets centred on these settlements, which we might well

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[65] Laurent, *Cartulaires de l'abbaye de Molesme,* vol.2, no.453, pp. 417-8 (not extant as an original).

[66] Châlons, Archives Départmentales de la Marne, D 23/2 (an original charter not registered in Artem). For context, see G. Bönnen, *Die Bischofsstadt Toul und ihr Umland während des hohen und späten Mittelalters* (Trier, 1995), pp. 284-7.

[67] For a discussion of customs in Champagne, see Bur, *Formation*, particularly pp. 365-6. Still useful is O. Guillot, 'Les consuetudines au sens d'exactions dans la France des premiers temps capétiens' in E. Magnou-Nortier, ed., *Pouvoirs et libertés au temps des premiers Capétiens* (Maulevrier, 1992), pp. 232-46.

suppose that Hugh promoted in concert with the merchants at his court.[68] But more

prosaically, and sometimes associated with the concept of ecclesiastical advocacy to

which we will return, custom also provided the basis for levying dues, even – indeed

especially – from people inhabiting lands owned by other people or institutions. One is

surely entitled to wonder whether those living at St Remigius's estate of Courtisols would

have agreed in 1114 that they paid the count protection money 'spontaneously'

(*spontane*).[69] Equally, one can only guess what the villagers at Rouilly, Braux and

Fontenay thought of their obligation by custom (*consuetudo*) to make annual cash

payments to Count Hugh that were explicitly in addition to the monies they owed to the

ecclesiastical institutions (St Lupus of Troyes, Montier-en-Der and Montier-la-Celle)

from whom they held their land.[70]

It has been suggested that the denunciation of 'bad customs' to be found in such texts

reflects a sharpening of monastic rhetoric as much as anything else, and perhaps that is

partially the case, though we should be careful of reifying 'the Church' in our assessment

of documents created by various independent and separate institutions.[71] While

arguments have also been made that such exactions were in practice commonplace from

the Carolingian period onwards, it must be acknowledged that there is precious little

evidence for them, taking into account charters, letters and estate surveys, prior to the

later tenth century at the very earliest. In any case, the question of simple continuity is

beside the point. The issue is not whether any connection at all can be made between the

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[68] For example, Artem no. 763 (1104), exempting the canons of Troyes from tolls, and granting them a tithe of those he took.

[69] Artem, no.96 (1114).

[70] Artem, nos. 4573 (1100) and 4980 (1114), and Lalore, *Cartulaires*, vol.6, no.233 (1114), pp. 284-287.

[71] A perspective suggested by D. Barthélemy, *La mutation de l'an mil a-t-elle eu lieu? servage et chevalerie dans la France des Xe et XIe siècles* (Paris, 1997), e.g. pp. 18-19, 155, and further developed in R. Barton's stimulating *Lordship in the County of Maine, c. 890-1160* (Woodbridge, 2004), particularly at pp. 131-144.

rights claimed by Count Hugh and his dimly visible Carolingian and post-Carolingian predecessors – indeed I would argue that such a connection can be made, albeit not straightforwardly – it is rather whether these kinds of rights or exactions formed the backbone of these predecessors' power; and the answer here is a straightforward no.[72] In stark contrast, nearly all of Hugh's charters refer to customs or *justicia*, whether specifying that they were included in the grant, surrendering rights to claim them, or noting that they had not been given up. Sometimes transactions in these customs formed the main business of the charter. For instance, a charter was drawn up solely and specifically to record a gift by Hugh together with his viscount Rainald to Montiéramey of the justice (*justicia*) of the village of Saint-Martin and of what his predecessors used to take there.[73] Whatever the label for them, levies such as these not only generated revenues that sustained the comital household, they also formed the basis of the gifts that acted as the means of rewarding those in comital favour, and so underpinned Hugh's regional dominance.

It was perhaps precisely because they were not wholly hallowed by tradition, or had at least taken on a new structural importance in the exercise of power, that raising these revenues required an extensive set of agents prominent in Hugh's charters. Hugh's provosts and ministers (*ministri* or *servientes*) were numerous and apparently well-organised, sometimes explicitly based at particular centres of comital authority such the *potestas* (literally, 'power') of Rumilly.[74] They were also, at least in many institutions'

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[72] For a recent and penetrating analysis of these questions, see L. Feller, *Paysans et seigneurs au Moyen Age, VIIe-XVe siècles* (Paris, 2007). For the earlier counts of Troyes, see Créte-Protin, *Église,* as in n.61 above. For similar arguments on a broader scale, see C. Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome* (2009), pp. 508-528.

[73] Artem, no.770. Hugh's initial gift had been made in 1100.

[74] Laurent, *Cartulaire*, vol.2, no.453.

eyes, rapacious. Their efficiency in raising money in the count's name made institutions receiving grants from the count wary, and careful to specify the ministers' exclusion. This precaution was sensible, for we know these ministers might ignore or claim not to know about the count's decisions, and we hear complaints from institutions whose privileges had been infringed as a consequence. The convent of Avenay, for example, complained after two of Hugh's officials, Provost Heltrand and the *villicus* Hernaud, almost certainly based at Mareuil, took one of its dependents named Bavo to court, contrary to Avenay's judicial privileges; St Pierre-aux-Monts, for its part, had been forced to deal with *ministri* who apparently refused to honour a comital grant, and who proved evasive even when questioned directly by their count.[75]

Rapacious agents, the exaction of protection money: all this chimes very much with Bisson's arguments. The opportunity however to go beyond a sampling of Hugh's charters is provided by more careful consideration of the incomplete Vanault charter already touched on. In spite of one historian's imaginative proposal that the charter originally contained a reference to homosexuality, omitted by prudish monks, Michel Bur's suggestion that the missing word was *vicecomitatus* or some vernacular equivalent, that is the rights associated with a viscount (*vicecomes*), or viscounty, is by far the most plausible solution.[76] This is partly because references to 'custom' in charters usually have as referent some kind of judicial exercise of power, as we have seen. But there is also contextual evidence from the cartulary itself. The charter is copied in a section dedicated to St Paul's estates at Vanault, and to this section was appended a kind of table of

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[75] Edited from the cartulary of Avenay in L. Paris, *Histoire de l'abbaye d'Avenay* (2 vols, Paris, 1879), vol.2, Appendix, p. 73; St Pierre-aux-Monts, Artem no.4878 (1110).

[76] F. Hirschmann, 'Recherches sur Vanault-les-Dames et Vanault-le-Châtel', in P. Demouy and C. Vulliez, eds., *Vivre au village en Champagne à travers les siècles* (Rheims, 2000), pp. 123-135; Bur, *Formation*, p. 264.

contents; within this table, Hugh's charter is listed as dealing with (indeed, 'rooting out')

vicecomitatus.[77] Quite why the thirteenth-century scribe decided to leave out the word

when copying down the charter is mysterious: he may have hesitated before using a

vernacular word, or he may have been thinking of writing *advocatia*, which is what most

of the other charters concerning Vanault discuss; perhaps he simply could not make out

the wording of the now lost original.

Whatever the case, it is suggestive that *vicecomitatus*, a notion with a very official

ring to it, could be effectively treated as a 'custom', and not merely for the sake of

rhetoric but to the practical effect that it could be annulled if necessary like any other

unjust exaction; or to put it differently, that a kind of judicial pressure could be

conceived, at least by this monastery, as viscounty. In this, the Vanault charter can be

readily contextualised. Elsewhere too in what is now eastern France, rights of

vicecomitatus were bought and sold. Even closer to home, the viscounty of Troyes seems

to have been less a delegated office than the label given to the power exercised by a

particular family within and around the city, that of Milo of Troyes and his son Rainald.[78]

Their authority in reality overlapped with that of the count, rather than being

hierarchically subordinated to it. For example, as already mentioned Count Hugh granted

judicial rights over the village of Saint-Martin, but it took twenty years before Viscount

Rainald could be persuaded to let go of vicecomital rights over the same village.[79]

Further evidence from Vanault however allows us to go a little deeper in

contextualising Hugh's intriguing but decidedly difficult charter. St Paul had had estates

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[77] The Latin is 'extirpatio vicecomitatus'. Hirschmann provides good context for St Paul in his comprehensive *Verdun im Hohen Mittelalter: Eine lothringische Kathedralstaft und ihr Umland im Spiegel der geistlichen Institutionen* (2 vols, Trier, 1996), particularly vol.2, pp. 486-511.
[78] Suger, *Vita Ludovici,* e.g. p. 40. On the family, see LoPrete, *Adela*, pp. 225-7.
[79] Artem no.770.

at Vanault for a long time, in fact since the tenth century, but it was not the only

Lotharingian ecclesiastical institution to have lands there, for so too did the monastery of

Gorze near Metz in Lotharingia, which had acquired them as early as the late eighth

century.[80] Gorze managed to hold onto this champenois outpost in the tenth century,

fending off assaults from opponents like the mighty count Boso. It had less success in the

early twelfth century, when its estates at Vanault became the focus of a dispute between

the monks and an ambitious aristocrat named Hugh of Montfélix.

At some point between around 1120 and 1126, this Hugh began to assert himself

over Gorze's lands at Vanault, and began to build a castle there.[81] The monks of Gorze

were unsurprisingly concerned at this turn of events, and in 1131 appealed to the Pope,

Innocent II.[82] Despite the Pope's sympathetic involvement, putting pressure on local

bishops, the monks were compelled in the end to recognise Hugh of Montfélix's

dominance over Gorze's interests at Vanault, an outcome which Hugh's agreement to pay

a token rent of five shillings a year can scarcely have made much more palatable.[83] By

the thirteenth century, the monks had become peripheral figures at their own estate, most

of whose revenues were enjoyed by the castellans. In due course Hugh of Montfélix's

construction led to the division of the settlement into two, one based around his castle

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[80] St Paul had acquired Vanault in the tenth century, according to the *Gesta episcoporum Virdunensium*, in MGH *Scriptores* vol.4, ed G. Waitz (Hanover, 1841), pp. 45-51, at p. 46. See A. Girardot, *Le droit et la terre: le Verdunois à la fin du Moyen Age* (2 vols, Nancy, 1992), vol.2, p. 562, for St Paul's lands at Vanault-les-Dames in the late fourteenth century. The relevant charters from Gorze are edited in A. d'Herbomez, *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Gorze: MS 826 de la bibliothèque de Metz* (Paris, 1898).
[81] M. Bur, 'Les possessions de Gorze en Champagne', *Saint Chrodegang: communications présentées au Colloque tenu à Metz* (Metz, 1967), pp. 169-182, is a lucid study of Hugh of Montfélix's takeover at Vanault, though does not relate it to Count Hugh's charter. Dating for that takeover is provided by a reference to Ebles of Châlons, who died in June 1126; Bur suspects that developments began in 1120 (*Formation*, p. 375). M. Bur, *Inventaire des sites archéologiques non monumentaux de Champagne, 1. Vestiges d'habitat seigneurial fortifie du Bas-Pays Argonnais* (Rheims, 1972) pp. 94-101, includes a detailed map of the Vanault castle, based on excavations, and a genealogy of the Montfélix family.
[82] d'Herbomez, *Cartulaire,* no.153 (1132), pp. 273-5
[83] d'Herbomez, *Cartulaire,* no.155 (1138), pp. 277-8.

(Vanault-le-Châtel, destroyed in the wars of the later middle ages), the other based around St Paul's priory (Vanault-aux-Dames).

Hugh of Montfélix's toponym suggests he was an outsider to Vanault, since Montfélix is near Epernay and so a good 50 miles away. How then had he been able not only to build a castle at Vanault, but also to win a protracted contest against a very well-connected, albeit distant, monastery?[84] We should not necessarily be looking for technical legal justifications; his success is more likely to have been a question of local clout in Vanault. It is often supposed that Montfélix lay in the sphere of influence of Hugh's brother Stephen-Henry and nephew Theobald, but there is in fact no real evidence to support this conjecture.[85] It is true that Theobald was involved in confirming Hugh of Montfélix's presence at Vanault, but that was after Hugh's departure for Jerusalem. Given that Hugh of Montfélix demonstrably attended Count Hugh's court (attesting a charter in 1120), associated himself with others in the count's political orbit, and that Count Hugh himself had interests in Vanault which he was negotiating at around the same time, it is surely reasonable to presume that Hugh's local clout was due to his association with the count.[86]

The Vanault documentary records admittedly represent Hugh of Montfélix very differently from Count Hugh of Champagne. Gorze's cartulary depicts the former's castle-building as the product of sheer intimidation, while St Paul's presents Count Hugh

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[84] On Hugh's 'home' castle of Montfélix, see A. Renoux, 'Le château des comtes de Champagne à Montfélix et son impact sur l'environnement', in G. de Boe and F. Verhaeghe, eds., *Military Studies in Medieval Europe* (1997), pp. 119-130.

[85] The point is made by Renoux, *ibid.* (and in other articles by her); the reference directs the reader to M. Bur's *Formation*, but though Bur does identify the castle on p. 235 as belonging to Stephen-Henry, he does not give evidence in support of this claim here or in his detailed discussion of the castle at p. 457. Jubainville does not discuss the point, and Montfélix is not mentioned in LoPrete, *Adela*.

[86] For Hugh's association with Count Hugh, see the charter from the 1120s edited in C. Mougin, *Chronique de l'abbaye de St. Martin de Huiron* (Châlons, 1879), no.12, as well as Artem no.105 (1120).

as suspending a comital prerogative. Yet this could be a matter of differing strategies of representation, and indeed different outcomes, as much as differences in the reality of the power exercised. St Paul managed to persuade the count to give up his claims at least for a time, as they related to its lands (perhaps at some cost, though none is explicitly mentioned), while Gorze had less luck with one of the count's clients, whose influence at the same settlement presumably derived from the count.[87] We might infer that the Hughs decided to concentrate their efforts on Gorze's holdings, and made their peace with St Paul in order better to do so.[88]

The implication of this coalescence of activity centred around Count Hugh and Vanault in the 1120s is that Hugh of Montfélix's depredations give a good idea of what the *vicecomitatus* which Count Hugh gave up actually meant in reality. It would probably be wrong to think of the count as delegating his authority to men like Hugh of Montfélix, or for that matter Rainald of Troyes or any others: these men should better be thought of as sharing the count's power.[89] In the end, no fundamental distinction can be drawn between Hugh of Montfélix's extortions and coercion, and Count Hugh's formally titled but equally resented rights of *vicecomitatus*.

In the first part of this article, I proposed that a close reading of the documentary evidence for Hugh as count of Troyes suggests that Hugh played an important role in the

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[87] *Vicecomitatus* in fact reappears at Vanault in the thirteenth century: see Evergates, *Cartulary*, no.66 (1210).

[88] The counts of Champagne continued to act as powerful patrons for St Paul's land at Vanault, as indicated by later charters in St Paul's cartulary recording their persistent intervention on judicial matters. The Vanault section in Verdun, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 751 also includes charters issued by Count Henry the Liberal and Countess Maria. I have not been able to find the edition of Henry's charter for Vanault in Bur's *Recueil*.

[89] A similar sharing of rights at Alliancelles, one of St Remigius's estates, with Andrew of Baudement, is implied by a charter issued by Count Theobald in 1126: Rheims, Archives Départementales de la Marne, 56 H 102 (not in Artem).

emergence of a principality of Champagne, creating networks of association on which his more prominent successors would later build, and that this achievement should not be overshadowed by medieval readings of his rule, written in the light of, and to interpret, his abdication. I have also however suggested that Bisson's interpretation of the nature of power in the twelfth century resonates with Hugh's charters when these are subjected to careful and contextualised reading. It is the conjunction of these two points that brings us to the problem that lies at the heart of this article.

The historiography of the French territorial principality is dominated by the tropes of fragmentation and continuity. As Michel Bur has put it, debate has focused on whether public powers were seized in a political vacuum, or whether their redistribution reflected pre-existing fractures.[90] Like sherds of a broken mirror, each principality, whether the large, ducal formations of the early tenth century (notably Burgundy, Aquitaine, and Robertian Francia) or the smaller, more compact polities that emerged later (notably Flanders, Catalonia and Normandy), is considered a miniature replica of what had come before, and clearly to be distinguished from seigneurial or castellan power, though this at times threatened or even overwhelmed principalities.[91]

Yet there seems little in Hugh's charters that really distinguishes his authority or political practice from that of castellans or lords – and this not in a decayed or decaying principality, but at its point of origin.[92] His charters suggest rather that the foundation for

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[90] M. Bur, 'Remarques sur la formation des principautés en France', in *id.*, *La Champagne médiévale: recueil des articles* (Langres, 2005), pp. 27-44.

[91] On the threat posed by seigneurial power to principalities, see Hallam and Everard, *Capetian France,* e.g. p. 51, and Demotz, ed., *Principautés*, p. 56. See also M. Bur., 'The kingdom of the Franks from Louis VI to Philip II (b): the seigneuries', in D. Luscombe and J. Riley-Smith, eds., *New Cambridge Medieval History.* Vol. IV: *1024-1198* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 530-548. LoPrete's work is an important and valuable exception to this tradition, though her single-minded pursuit of family networks and prosopography brings its own limitations.

[92] Cf here O. Guillot, *Le comte d'Anjou et son entourage au XIe siècle* (Paris, 1972).

Hugh's rule was neither delegated nor usurped sovereignty, but a new conceptualisation of power over the subordinated peasantry, and the use of those resources thereby gained for political advantage. In this perspective, Hugh's authority seems rooted less in public or royal rights than in the exactions demanded in the name of custom, exactions which seem essentially new in their structural importance. There is maybe less explicit violence here than in Bisson's vision of the Middle Ages, and more dealing in a kind of reified justice; but Bisson's essential point, that administration and the exercise of power were inseparable, nevertheless remains plausible when tested against Hugh's charters.

This charter-based analysis therefore fits badly with the general explanatory framework for the emergence of the French principality. Yet it fits strikingly better with German historiographical traditions functionally equivalent to the 'rise of the territorial principality', associated with notions of *Landesherrschaft* or *Territorialisierung*. The field is heavily contested, but it can still be said that there is there less overall emphasis on fragmentation or the delegation or usurpation of authority, and rather more on the growth of new forms of territorial power from the bottom up, in competition with, but not opposition to, royal or imperial authority.[93] Bisson's arguments have admittedly not been embraced in German scholarly circles with especial warmth, but the general tenor of his

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[93] B. Arnold's *Princes and Territories* (Cambridge, 1991) offers an excellent Anglophone introduction, particularly pp. 61-73. W. Hechberger, *Adel im fränkisch-deutsch Mittelalter* (Ostfildern, 2005), offers a thorough overview; P. Moraw a historiographical survey, in *id.* and R. Schieffer, eds., *Die deutschsprachige Mediävistik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Ostfildern, 2005). These kinds of studies tend by their nature to be regional: examples based on areas neighbouring Champagne are provided by W. Reichert, *Landesherrschaft zwischen Reich und Frankreich: Verfassung, Wirtschaft, und Territorialpolitik in der Grafschaft Luxemburg von der Mitte des 13. bis zur Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Trier, 1983); M. Werner, 'Der Herzog von Lothringen in salischer Zeit', in S. Weinfurter, ed., *Die Salier und das Reich* (3 vols, Sigmaringen, 1991), vol 1., pp. 375-377; A. Gillen, *Saint-Mihiel im hohen und späten Mittelalter: Studien zu Abtei, Stadt und Landesherrschaft im Western des Reiches* (Trier, 2003); and O. Engels, 'Grundlinien den rheinischen Verfassungsgeschichte im 12. Jahrhundert', *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 39 (1975), pp. 1-27.

argument, as well as the findings from the charters discussed above, is nonetheless more readily compatible with German historiographical traditions than with French.[94]

This could reflect a problem in the conceptualisation of the French territorial principality. Yet it could also be a more straightforward reflection of socio-political realities. Champagne was, after all, in the far east of the West Frankish kingdom. Hugh's grand-nephew, Count Henry the Liberal, at one point threatened the French king that he would leave the kingdom for the empire.[95] Even if this were only bluster, Champagne's connections with the Empire were strong from an early date, like other territories in the east such as Flanders.[96] As already mentioned, Hugh patronised institutions in Toul and Verdun, whose bishop he accompanied on pilgrimage, both cities in the Empire. Pope Urban II wrote to Hugh about the estates of St Vanne, another prominent Verdun ecclesiastical community, and Hugh claimed rights too over the Lotharingian lands of Saint-Marie-Saint-Jean of Laon, claims conceivably stretching back to the mid tenth century.[97]

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[94] For reviews of Bisson in German, see C. Garnier in *Sehepunkte* 11 (2011) and C. Ehlers in *Historisches Jahrbuch* 290 (2010), p. 761, both expressing their appreciation while drawing attention to the book's geographical limitations, and without the excitement the book has provoked in Anglophone scholarship. For perceptive reviews in English, see J. Green, *ante* 125 (2010), pp. 680-81, and T. Riches, 'Review of The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government' (review no. 754) http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/754, with author's response.

[95] See in general M. Bur, 'Rôle et place de la Champagne dans le royaume de France au temps de Philippe Auguste', in R.H. Bautier, ed., *La France de Philippe Auguste, le temps des mutations* (Paris, 1982), pp. 237-254.

[96] Whose count Charles the Good was offered the imperial crown in 1125. For Flemish territories within the empire, see (still) F.-L. Ganshof, 'Les origines de la Flandre impériale', *Annales de la Société Royale d'Archéologie de Bruxelles* 46 (1942/43), pp. 99-171. For a recent evaluation of a seminal moment in twelfth-century Flemish history, comparable perhaps with the abdication of Hugh, see L. Feller, *L'assassinat de Charles le Bon comte de Flandre: 2 mars 1127* (Paris, 2012).

[97] See M. Bur, 'La frontière entre la Champagne et la Lorraine du milieu du Xe à la fin du XIIe siècle', *Francia* 4 (1976), 237-254. Cf Bur, *Formation*, pp. 165-7. For Hugh's travelling with Richard, bishop of Verdun, c.1113, see Laurentius of Liége, *Gesta Episcoporum Virdunensium*, in MGH *Scriptores* vol.10, ed. G. Waitz (Hanover, 1852), p. 504.

With this in mind, it is striking that Hugh's power was sometimes conceived in terms that would have been familiar to peers east of the Meuse, as ecclesiastical advocacy.[98] This was the label for the exercise of rights of justice on behalf of ecclesiastical institutions, and particularly monasteries, that lay at the heart of the power of many, if not most, secular princes of any importance in the Empire.[99] Hugh's authority certainly did not rest on advocacy as unequivocally or to the same extent as in regions further to the east, but it was clearly more important than, for example, it was in the Loire valley, where even the word advocacy had quite a different meaning, and was not central to the emergence of principalities.[100] Historians have noticed before that the prevalence of ecclesiastical advocacy north of the Alps maps onto a roughly east/west axis, with local forms of secular political authority most dependent upon it in regions like Bavaria and Thuringia, and least so in the Plantagenet empire.[101] No entirely convincing explanation for this divergence has yet been suggested, and for reasons of space the issue cannot be addressed satisfactorily here. The salient point for our purposes is simply that political culture did not depend entirely on political boundaries, for the difference was one of shading, not of absolute lines.

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[98] In charters for St Basolus (Rheims), Montier-en-Der, Avenay and St Paul (Verdun).

[99] For a discussion of the institution of advocacy in the Carolingian period, see C. West, 'The significance of the Carolingian advocate', *Early Medieval Europe* 17 (2009), 186-206. The extensive historiography on the post-Carolingian ecclesiastical advocate is mostly German and rather old; important exceptions are Bur's commentary in *Formation*, pp. 343-392, the contributions in *L'avouerie en Lotharingie,* ed M. Parisse (Luxembourg, 1984), and M. Clauss's recent *Die Untervogtei: Studien zur Stellvertretung in der Kirchenvogtei im Rahmen der deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte des 11. und 12. Jahrhunderts* (Siegburg, 2002), which provides plenty of references. The most stimulating recent contribution is an article by T. Reuter, 'Forms of lordship in German historiography', in M. Bourin and P. Sopena, eds., *Pour une anthropologie du prélèvement seigneurial dans les campagnes médiévales*, pp. 51-61.

[100] Barthélemy, *Mutation*, pp. 47-49.

[101] J. Yver, 'Autour de l'absence d'avouerie. Notes sur le double thème du développement du pouvoir ducal et de l'application de la réforme grégorienne en Normandie', *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie* 57 (1963), 189-283, at p. 189, no. 2. On the Plantagenet empire, see now M. Aurell and F. Boutolle, eds., *Les seigneuries dans l'espace Plantagenêt (c.1150-c.1250)* (Pessac, 2009).

In similar ways, the very process of consolidation in the principality of Champagne itself, usually considered 'late' by historians of France, seems more closely aligned to time-scales further to the east, where processes of territorial formation are seldom identified before 1100.[102] Looked at more broadly, Hugh's rule seem to evoke parallels with the emerging territories of Bar, Luxembourg and Lorraine as much as with those of Anjou, Maine or Normandy, in spite of his family connections with the house of Blois.[103] On reflection, this is hardly surprising. Why should regnal frameworks have conditioned the exercise of power in a period marked by strong regional autonomy? Historians no longer believe as once they did that early German principalities were ethnic, the French regnal, or that German aristocrats, and only they, exercised some kind of archaic lordship inherited from the Teutonic forests; the more recent studies suggest instead that the process of divergence between the various parts of the former Carolingian empire was slow and prolonged.[104] In short, although Champagne is usually discussed in the historiographical frameworks established by Dhondt and modified by Werner, Hugh's charters suggest that an alternative framework might be more appropriate. A 'German' reading of Hugh's achievements in building up a *Landesherrschaft* would allow us better to integrate a Bissonian reading of Hugh's power with a renewed appreciation of Hugh's political achievement.

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[102] Arnold, *Princes*, *passim*. It may be noted in passing that *Territorium* project (see n.10 above) is bringing into question the commonplace that 'territorialisation' began substantially earlier in southern France.
[103] M. Margue, 'De la Lotharingie à la Lorraine: les pouvoirs en Lorraine dans la deuxième moitié du XI siècle', in G. Bischoff and B.M. Tock, eds., *Léon IX et son temps: actes du colloque international organisé par l'Institut d'histoire médiévale de l'Université Marc-Bloch, Strasbourg-Eguisheim, 20-22 juin 2002* (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 471-494.
[104] This is the central point developed at considerable length by C.-R. Brühl, *Deutschland-Frankreich: die Geburt zweier Völker* (Cologne, 1990). For an influential earlier study focusing upon (and dismissing) the connections of German duchies with archaic German tradition, see H.W. Goetz, *'Dux' und 'ducatus'. Begriffs- und Verfassungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Entstehung der sogenannten 'jüngeren' Stammesherzogtums an der Wende vom 9. zum 10. Jh* (Bochum, 1977).

This article has used one particular body of material, the nearly fifty charters issued to record Count Hugh's grants and other actions, to reconsider his place in the narrative of the rise of the principalities. It has also however used that material to reconsider that very narrative in the wake of Bisson's exploration of how power was actually exercised. Finding Bisson's thesis to have some traction with champenois evidence, it has suggested that patterns of interpretation developed in German contexts do better at combining the organisation and the substance of power in the case of early twelfth-century Champagne. The point is emphatically not that Hugh was 'really' a German prince. After all, he nailed his colours to the mast with his support for King Louis VI when the latter was faced with a threatened imperial invasion in 1124, and many of Hugh's charters are dated by the regnal year of French kings.[105] The question however is not one of identity, it is about the form and nature of political authority, and in that respect there is much in Hugh's Champagne that reminds one of lands across the River Meuse that more or less served as a political boundary.[106]

Clearly this argument has special relevance to a frontier land like Champagne, since national frameworks of analysis almost inevitably obscure borderlands – and for all the recent attention to frontiers, the lands in eastern France have been far less well-studied than those in the west, where research has been fostered by the vibrant field of Anglo-Norman studies. Yet there are wider implications, too. The creation of new units of political authority between the tenth and thirteenth centuries was a phenomenon that took

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[105] On the threatened invasion of Emperor Henry V, see G. Spiegel, ''Defense of the realm': evolution of a Capetian propaganda slogan', *Journal of Medieval History* 3 (1977), pp. 115-133.

[106] M. Parisse, 'La frontière de la Meuse au X siècle', in M. Sot, ed., *Haut Moyen Âge. Culture, éducation et société. Études offertes à Pierre Riché* (Nanterre, 1990), 427-437, which ranges more widely than the title suggests.

place across Europe, but which, as already emphasised, tends still to be discussed predominantly in national terms, as if the boundaries of the lands formally ruled by kings and emperors exercised a determining influence on the patterns of cultural and political domination that unfolded across the European countryside.[107] Discussions of French principalities tend to take as their model regions to the west (Normandy, Flanders, Aquitaine and, to some extent, Anjou) while German ones, in contrast, concentrate instead on Saxony or Bavaria. In this way, the contrast between 'French' (or Anglo-Norman) and 'German' principalities is sharpened, allowing clear differences to be established, but discouraging more profound engagement with the scholarly traditions of these countries.[108]

Attention to the differences visible between the west of France and the east of the Empire is certainly valuable, reminding us of important differences in architectures of power carrrying implications that a Bisson-esque focus on power 'as experienced' tends to obscure. It is an important fact that the future of principalities on either side of the Meuse was to be different in the long term, with real implications for how power was experienced. Yet at the same time, regions like Champagne, as well as Lotharingia, have a role in showing that these differences were a question of shading, not of sharp delineation, an important nuance too easily lost in the writing of histories of France or Germany. Forms of power did not have an ethnicity, after all. What is needed is perharps not so much comparative history so much as a medieval kind of transnational history, in

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[107] E.g. J. Schneider, 'Le problème des principautés en France et dans l'Empire', in *Principautés et territoires,* pp. 9-39.
[108] The way that Germany is often sidelined in Anglophone histories of medieval Europe was repeatedly lamented by T. Reuter. A similar point is made in the preface to a study of the connections between medieval England and Germany: J. Huffman, *Family, Commerce, and Religion in London and Cologne: Anglo-German emigrants c.1000-c.1300* (Cambridge, 1998).

the sense of reorientating research away from nationally-specific approaches to power towards the study of trends and processes that did not respect political boundaries, though perhaps helped shape them. It may be that historians would find approaches traditionally used only for 'German' principalities have much to offer those interested in French (or Anglo-Norman) ones, as well as vice versa.

In other words, if we are to continue to work towards an adequately comparative understanding of the formation of new bases of power in the twelfth century, we need to work harder at reading between the lines: between the lines of medieval chroniclers whose moralising judgments continue to exert influence on their successors; between the lines of the documentary records whose evidence is slippery yet so important; but most importantly, between the lines of national boundaries, whose insidious importance in determining the questions we ask of our evidence continues perhaps to be underestimated, even in fields where ideas of nation themselves are no longer current terms of analysis. In this perspective, Hugh's charters, even with their gaps, offer not only an neglected insight into power and authority in north-eastern France c.1100, they perhaps have a small role to play, as an archive from a frontier land, in further developing a properly European perspective on crucial questions about the development of power in the twelfth century.

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Simplified genealogy of the Counts of Blois and Troyes in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, after Bur, *Formation*, p.308.