Introduction

[xi] In the late twelfth and the thirteenth centuries when the armed might of the nobles and monarchy of Northern France began to expand south into the Midi, the Northern French discovered in Southern France and Catalonia a society very different from their own. The society with which the Northern French barons were familiar was a feudal one in which a great portion of the land was held feudally as fiefs, and in which feudal duties consisted of regular military service, regular court service, and special dues or aids rendered to an overlord by his vassal (who tended to be essentially a fighting man). This was not true of the Midi. Many years later, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, historians who were engaged in examining France's institutional past became aware of this fact. Since that time scholars have often noted various unique aspects of the society of these regions. They have noted the prevalence of allodial land to be found there, the important role played by women in society and in the feudal system, a great emphasis on money, an apparent institutional and class fluidity, the survival of Roman and Visigothic law, and the weak or negative nature of the feudal obligation -- all of which are in contrast to the Northern French custom and practice. (1)

Are these features which distinguished Southern French and Catalan society from that north of the Loire merely regional peculiarities -- variants of the institutions and customs which are to be found in Northern France? Or do they represent something more than that? This is the first question which needs to be answered. And if they do represent more than regional differentiations, are there sufficient similarities among the various portions [xii] of Southern France and Catalonia, as a whole, so that one can view the society to be found there as a unit which can be studied from an institutional point of view?

While the following pages will attempt to answer this last question in the affirmative, it might be well in advance to note that in the late eleventh century there was already a consciousness of such a unity present in Southern France and Catalonia. This explains why those nobles who followed Raymond of Saint-Gilles and Bishop Ademar of LePuy on the First Crusade called themselves Provençals and so distinguished themselves from their Norman and Northern French companions of arms. It also explains why some decades earlier Raoul Glaber, in commenting on the customs and habits of those nobles who followed Constance of Provence north upon her marriage to King Robert of France, should be so struck by the traits which they displayed and which marked them off from the Northern French society of which he approved. By the time of the Albigensian Crusade such differences were to be settled in blood. As early as the eleventh century, then, before the Troubadour society of the Midi had developed, one can distinguish in contemporary accounts and attitudes a certain fundamental difference between Southern French and Catalan society and its feudalism, and that found in Northern France.

In the light of these facts it seems surprising to note that there exists no study of the origins and development of Southern French and Catalan society as a whole, except in Molinier's fragmentary and out-dated article, written many decades ago for the revised Histoire Générale de Languedoc, concerning its feudal institutions. Nor does a great deal exist in the way of regional studies from which
such a synthesis might be constructed. True we have Brutail's examination of Roussillon, and Breuil's view of eleventh-century Gascony. We possess Poupardin's studies of the Rhone Valley region in his histories of the kingdoms of Provence and Burgundy, as well as Manteyer's and Bousquet's studies of Provence proper. We possess the admirable works of Abadali de Vinyals on Catalonia, and Higounet's history of the county of Comminges, as well as his important demographic studies. We possess Boutrouche's illuminating views on the Bordelais. We have a series of important articles concerning the role of Roman law in the Midi and Catalonia written by Tisset, Gouron, Hilaire, Didier, Valls-Taberner, and others. We even get some view of Auvergne in certain works by Saigne and Boudet. But only in Tenant de la Tour's history of the Limousin or Fournier's work on Auvergne do we find the kind of regional study which makes Duby's Maconnais and Garaud's article on Poitou so valuable to the institutional historian.

[xiii] On the other hand original sources from which such a study might be constructed are surprisingly full in comparison with their nonexistence for many regions north of the Loire. For the earlier Carolingian period, for instance, we possess a number of reliable chronicles, as well as the charters and capitularies of the monarchs themselves. After the time of Charles the Bald, when such Carolingian materials become scantier and less pertinent, we begin to find hundreds of charters from every region collected in the cartularies of important cathedral churches and abbeys, as well as some contemporary eleventh-century chronicles. For one region, the Spanish March, such materials have only recently been made available to historians through the work of Catalan scholars in publishing their rich documentary collections. For the other regions of the Midi the more significant collections have long been available in published form. Except for Gascony and Provence, as a matter of fact, sufficient published and unpublished materials do exist to allow one to trace the origins and development of Southern French and Catalan society with some hope of success.

What seems to have hindered such a study, then, is not the lack of materials from which it might be constructed -- at least as far as the sources are concerned -- but something else. This something else has been the particular preoccupations of those able and talented historians who have examined these regions. In general such gentlemen have used one of two approaches in their studies. First, they have insisted on treating Southern France and sometimes Catalonia as parts of a France which was then considered as a unit. Historians using this approach have begun by considering these regions as parts of a centralized Carolingian system which began to disintegrate about the end of the ninth century. Their eyes have been fixed and their attention riveted on the Carolingian element which Southern France and Catalonia had in common with other parts of France. Naturally, under the circumstances, a concern with Charles the Bald or the comital agents of the Carolingian monarchy has seemed more important than an examination of the society of the Midi and the Spanish March in which they had to function. Carolingian machinery of government, even in disintegration, has been the chief interest of such historians until they can pick up the story again in the thirteenth century with an analysis of the Capetian governing system.

A second preoccupation of historians examining Southern France and Catalonia has been equally important in preventing them from dealing with the society of these regions. I refer to what, for want of a better term, might be called their genealogical interests. This, of course, began early with Baluze and DeVic and Vaissette in the seventeenth century, and [xiv] has continued ever since. Those who have shared it have concentrated their efforts on the discovery of the origins of the various noble houses which arose in the Midi and Catalonia in the tenth and eleventh centuries. They have carried back their interest into the earlier Carolingian period where, with remarkable ingenuity, they have attempted to untangle the family relationships of those nobles who held comital and viscontal charges from the Carolingians in these regions.
Such studies have given us important information, but in their zeal to uncover family relationships, they have tended to ignore the society in which such families functioned and had their being. Individual noble houses, as a result, have emerged from the obscurity of charter and chronicle. The society in which they lived and breathed has remained more unknown to us than is necessary.

While the author of this study would be the first to acknowledge his deep debt to such scholars as Lot, Halphen, Levillain, Auzias, Bloch, Dhondt, and others, too numerous to mention, whose point of view is different from his own, it is his belief that much can be gained by viewing the origins of Southern French and Catalan society in a way somewhat different from theirs. The following pages will attempt to do this, by concentrating attention upon the society of the Midi and Spanish March itself from the eighth to the mid-eleventh centuries. They will, whenever possible, use local chronicles, charters, and the like -- even those of Carolingian origin -- rather than those which may reflect a more distant scene. It is hoped that what may emerge, then, is a history of this whole region which recognizes its relationship to external forces like the Carolingian monarchy or the Papacy, but which is more concerned with local manifestations of even these external influences. It is hoped further that out of this will emerge a clearer picture of the society which had developed in Southern France and Catalonia by the year 1050 than exists at the present time.

Finally the author wishes to express his debt of appreciation to the many scholars, archives, and libraries in Southern France, Catalonia, and the United States that have assisted him in so many ways in his research. In France he is indebted to the archivists and staffs of the archives of Nîmes, Marseille, and Toulouse who made materials available to him, and particularly to M. Marcel Gouron and his assistants, of the archives of Hérault, who gave him every possible assistance for so many months. To M. de Dainville, archivist of Montpellier, go his thanks for special help and encouragement. Above all he is grateful to Professors Pierre Tisset, André Gouron, and Jean Hilaire of the University of Montpellier; Philippe Wolff, of the University of Toulouse; and George Duby, of the University of Aix-en-Provence; all of whom generously gave him of their time and made valuable suggestions.

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Notes for Preface

1. On these peculiarities perhaps the best brief account is to be found in the excellent monograph by F. Ganshof, *Quest-ce que la féodalité?* pp. 97, 107-109, 114, 155-156, 169-170, 184-185, 207. See also R. Boutruche, *Une société provinciale en lutte contre le régime féodal: L'alleu en Bordelais et en Bazadais du XIe an XIIe siècle*, and Seigneurie et féodalité; and H. Richardot, "Le fief routurier à Toulouse," in *Revue historique de droit français et étranger*, vol. XIII (1935) and "Francs fiefs: essai sur l'exemption totale ou partielle des services de fief," in *ibid.*, vol. XXVII (1949).