

THE CONSOLIDATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY
THROUGH THE DEFENSE OF THE CHURCH IN THE
ROYAL DOMAIN OF FRANCE UNDER LOUIS VI
(1101-1137)

By

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2007

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
May, 2008

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CROWN PRIOR TO LOUIS VI.....	16
III. COLLABORATION BETWEEN CROWN AND CHURCH	27
IV. EXTENSION OF ROYAL AUTHORITY.....	39
V. RESULTS OF ROYAL EXPANSION.....	51
VI. NEW NEED TO DEFEND THE CHURCH.....	60
VII. CONCLUSION	77
REFERENCES	83

MAPS

Maps	Page
1.....	30
2.....	31
3.....	32

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When Louis VI ascended to the throne in 1108 AD, he faced substantial challenges as the fifth monarch of the Capetian dynasty; he confronted the problem of stopping the general decline of the monarchy and achieved this in a way that reasserted the foundations of the crown as the sole dominant figure in the royal domain and a respected lord throughout the kingdom. For centuries, his predecessors struggled to retain the royal rights that had been slipping away since the death of Charlemagne. Louis VI's own father was unable to maintain basic control in the territory traditionally managed by the crown, the royal domain. Unlike previous works on the advancement of royal authority that limit the achievements of Louis VI merely to the elimination of the insubordinate nobles, this thesis examines further the relationship between the king and the local royal officials and the impact of the Church on this relationship. To overcome the problems threatening the very existence of the monarchy, Louis VI consolidated the authority of the crown within the royal domain by reducing the threat of local lords hostile to the crown and denying the attempts of royal officials to engineer a resurgence in the usurpation of royal rights on the local level. This process of consolidation of local authority occurring throughout the course of the reign contributed to the state-building process of the French kingdom by tying local government to the central administration.

The king relied on his connection with the French clergy, first to eliminate the presence of insubordinate vassals, and second to prevent the exploitation by royal officials.

Where his father, Philip I, had failed, Louis VI successfully established an effective cooperation with the French Church and the papacy. Presenting donations to various abbeys and priories and founding new abbeys and chapels were both products of his efforts to restore the damaged relationship between the Church and the monarchy. By repairing this relationship, he was able to maintain the Church's assistance in government administration and secure its approval in his conduct towards local lords. As part of the process of reconciliation, Louis VI exerted himself in defending monasteries against the aggression of the lower nobility, who had repeatedly harassed the clergy without penalty during the previous reign.

The legal justification for protecting the Church served the king's purposes well in his continuous conflicts with insubordinate castellans. These barons held small amounts of territory, but they were still hard to supervise due to their possession of fortified military structures. The French king regularly defended towns and ecclesiastical properties with mixed results against oppressive nobles, who had attacked these politically and militarily weak localities. In spite of some disappointing campaigns, his losses were negligible, while his victories brought the destruction or seizure of castles and towers of geographical importance. As he solidified his control in the royal domain, he began to broaden the range of his military involvement into the counties and duchies

outside of the Île-de-France.¹ This interaction in the other parts of the kingdom earned the crown a revitalized reputation that had been absent for centuries in Western Europe.

The achievements of Louis VI as a commander brought territorial and financial gains that directly affected the king's ability to extend his authority further. New royal castles provided stability instead of disorder to the surrounding countryside. The judicial and financial standing of the crown improved as more towns came under the direct management of royal officers. This general increase in royal control solidified the jurisdiction of the throne within the royal domain. While Louis VI succeeded in diminishing the authority of local lords, improving the tattered image of the throne, and increasing royal holdings, these were not his only achievements.

As royal officials began to replace barons as the source of public authority, the officials also inherited the responsibilities of government administration. The addition of new royal rights and the installation of local administrative officers, known as *prévôts*, represented the extension of royal authority into these new areas. Louis VI marketed these offices, and because of this lax means of employment, a number of the royal officers abused their judicial and financial authority. The *prévôts*' exploitation of the Church forced the king to intervene on behalf of the clergy again. This intervention prevented the local officials from establishing a local autonomy and reducing royal jurisdiction similar to that previously held by the castellans.

When examining the expansion of the king's authority in the royal domain, there is a need to consider the accessible sources. The difficulty in analyzing any aspect of Louis VI's reign stems from the limitations on the preservation of primary sources dating

¹ The Île-de-France is a term used to describe the royal domain because it was a small "island" of territory in the middle of France under the direct control of the king and surrounded by the powerful counties and duchies that comprised the rest of the kingdom.

from the period. Chronicles written by clergymen surviving from the reign comprise a significant number of the sources available to scholars, but present problems of interpretation. As members of the Church, the authors of the chronicles wrote their histories with religious undertones and often condemned or praised individuals who the clergymen recognized as impious or pious men. The writings of these ecclesiastics recount mostly the lives of royalty and nobility, including close to nothing in the categories of government administration or local history. On the other hand, these documents correspond with each other with regard to numerous specific events and dates, denoting their reliability for general information. Although the authors were all clergymen, their backgrounds varied significantly. They differed in their official positions within the Church, places of origin, political allegiance, and opinions of the French monarch. Because of this, these documents provide greater literary social and geographic diversity than is commonly accepted. In most of these sources, the authors dedicate modest amounts of their writings to the king and more to their particular regions or locations of origin.

Representing the most significant source of Louis VI's life, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat* focused on the interaction between the king, the nobility, and the Church, yet the author's biases require careful consideration.² Suger, who became a powerful advisor to both Louis VI and his son, was the abbot of St. Denis, a traditional favorite for the crown, from 1122 to 1151. The foremost concerns of Suger and his writings were the elevation of the monarchy's reputation through the acts of Louis VI, which implies that many of his accounts contain some degree of embellishment. Still, Suger's position in the royal

² Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, trans. Richard Cusimano (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992).

household as a close counselor to the king probably gave him firsthand knowledge or reliable secondhand reports of many of the events he described. The abbot was also not so predisposed towards promoting the image of the king as to avoid explanations of royal losses. Looking past the exaggerations of this source, a clear description of the king's achievements emerges pertaining to the specific local lords that Louis VI had difficulties with and fortifications he challenged. Hence, this is the most valuable source from the list of chronicles because of its concentration on the king.

Another such chronicle, *The Murder of Count Charles the Good*, related the events surrounding the murder of Count Charles of Flanders in 1127.³ Galbert of Bruges's biases stem from his devotion to the deceased Count and his denunciation of those involved in the murder. Nevertheless, the author was present in Bruges during the occurrence, which substantiates his importance as an eyewitness. Because Galbert held no direct allegiance to the king, there was little need to exaggerate any references to the king's actions. Although the core of Galbert's account revolved around the events occurring in Bruges, he supplied significant insight into the king's political and military influence in the territory of the royal vassal, the Count of Flanders. The clergyman also provided some details about the interaction between the king and the nobility of the northeastern county.

The author or authors of the majority of the *Chronicle of the Abbey of Morigny, France*, which source recounted parts of the history of the abbey, remain unknown.⁴ This text focused on the progression of the abbey through threats from neighboring churches

³ Galbert of Bruges, *The Murder of Charles the Good*, trans. James Bruce Ross (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940).

⁴ *A Translation of the Chronicle of the Abbey of Morigny, France, c. 1100-1150*, trans. and ed. Richard Cusimano (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003).

and barons, the addition of donations, and the communications between the monks of the abbey and the papacy. Perhaps the primary source that provided the least amount of information concerning the king, it also appeared to be the least subjective when commenting on the king's activities. The *Chronicle* offered some commentary on Louis VI's attempts to secure the protection of the abbey and its property and briefly described his encounters with a specific local lord.

The subject of Ordericus Vitalis's extensive writings was the development of the Church in England and Normandy under the rule of the English kings. His four-volume work, *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy*, contains valuable references to Louis VI.⁵ Although the majority of his work described events in territories controlled by the English, Vitalis devoted a considerable amount of time to the French king and his interactions with the clergy and his experiences against hostile nobles within the French kingdom. The clergyman portrayed Louis VI in a favorable manner, giving the monarch a significant degree of respect; however, it is likely that Vitalis received his information through secondhand accounts.

Abbot Guibert rendered a concise account of the murders of clergymen in Laon, occurring in 1116, following the description of his life as a monk in *The Autobiography of Guibert Abbot of Nogent-Sous-Coucy*.⁶ This source recounted Louis VI's response to the capture of Laon by a violent castellan and his dependents. Guibert's work presented the worst depiction of the king out of all the chronicles, as the clergyman referred to the king as greedy and lazy. He described an eventual ultimatum laid down by the high-

⁵ Ordericus Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy*, 4 vols. (New York: AMS Press, 1968).

⁶ Abbot Guibert of Nogent-Sous-Coucy, *The Autobiography of Guibert Abbot of Nogent-Sous-Coucy*, ed. G.G. Couton, trans. C.C. Swinton Bland (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1925).

ranking officials of the Church, yet the author offered a thorough description of Louis VI's endeavors to punish the insubordinate baron. Although Guibert's assessment of the king was more negative than the other sources, the basic elements of the monarch's activities continued to be consistent.

Aside from the chronicles, the only other remaining primary source is the collection of royal charters and acts that have endured since the reign and are found in Achille Luchaire's *Louis VI, le gros: annales de sa vie et de son règne (1081-1137)*.⁷ The different sorts of information included in the documents ranged from charters of acceptance for donations made to the Church by wealthy individuals, to commands sent to royal officials or members of the noble class. Dates, names of individuals holding royal or ecclesiastical offices, and locations were among the many significant pieces of information given in these documents. This compilation contained the most fundamental information concerning the administrative work of both the royal court and local government. From this source, forms of taxation, privileges of the peasantry, and royal rights become clearer. Perhaps the most important aspect of these sources was their general uniformity with the chronicles of the clergymen, confirming rather than refuting the activities recorded in their writings and giving the ecclesiastics additional credibility. Unique problems dissimilar to those of the chronicles arise when examining the royal charters. The records were concise and simple, failing to provide considerable amounts of detail pertaining to the specific topic of any given charter.

The secondary works that pertain to the reign of Louis VI focus on the king's problems with local and regional lords and with members of his central government. The

⁷ Achille Luchaire, *Louis VI. (le gros); annales de sa vie et de son règne (1081-1137)* (Paris: Auguste Picard, 1890).

earliest modern work emerged as early as the late nineteenth century, yet interest in the field has declined significantly since the 1970s because of the limitations of sources and the larger number of sources available for subsequent reigns. Most of the early monographs concerning the French king analyzed his military accomplishments and the territorial gains secured for his successors. The majority of recent publications that address Louis VI have done so in the context of wide-ranging topics, most commonly the Capetian dynasty as a whole. There have also been numerous works concerning the development of the French Church in the twelfth century. These publications have a tendency to concentrate on the expansion of monasticism in the French kingdom, while contending with the relationship between the clergy and the crown. Few monographs offer any insight into the local administration of the royal domain in the early twelfth century. At present, there is no work that focuses directly on the connection between the throne and the local government in the extension of royal authority under Louis VI.

One of the earliest secondary sources concerned primarily with the progression of the kingdom during the reign of Louis VI is the introduction to the *Annales de sa vie*, provided by Achille Luchaire in 1891.⁸ Within this source, Luchaire created a general survey of the king's life using primarily the government documents accompanying the work and the chronicle of Suger. Luchaire divided the narrative into the different stages of Louis VI's life: his youth, the time he spent as king-designate, and the years of his reign. He described the unsteady relationship between Louis VI and his vassals in the kingdom and argued that the king and the Church shared an important connection because of the clergymen's functions as the household officers and the king's rights over royal abbeys.

⁸ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, xi-cc.

Eight years prior to the publication of *Annales de sa vie*, Luchaire produced a two-volume work, *Histoire des institutions monarchiques de la France sous les premiers Capétiens*, on the different characteristics of the government throughout the early Capetian era.⁹ In this narrative on the history of the French kingdom, the author defined the different officials in the central and local governments. He described the various forms of taxation and royal rights under the control of the monarchy that provided the main sources of revenues through the centuries.¹⁰ Luchaire furnished for the first time the argument that the *prévôts* abused their duties, yet he described the abuses as a general occurrence under a number of the kings, not explaining the impact of these activities during particular reigns. Another assertion found within the work was the strong connection that existed between the Church and the monarchy.¹¹

The next significant secondary source constructed to investigate the reign of Louis VI was James Thompson's dissertation, titled *The Development of the French Monarchy under Louis VI, le Gros*.¹² Much like Luchaire, Thompson devoted a significant portion of his work to the military accomplishments of Louis VI along with the judiciary operations of the royal court. Thompson offered a limited amount of investigation into the local government of the realm. He suggested that the *prévôts'* exploitation of their offices benefited the king by solidifying royal authority within their localities and that special *prévôts*, known as *palatins*, became a supervisory office to handle specific complaints against local officers. A contradiction arose in Thompson's

⁹ Achille Luchaire, *Histoire des institutions monarchiques de la France sous les premiers Capétiens (987-1180)*, 2 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1883).

¹⁰ Luchaire, *Institutions monarchiques*, 1:92-107.

¹¹ Luchaire, *Institutions monarchiques*, for the abuses of the *prévôts*, see 1:228; for relationship between crown and Church, see 2:57.

¹² James Westfall Thompson, "The Development of the French Monarchy under Louis VI, le Gros, 1108-1137" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1895).

arguments as he asserted that the king selected *prévôts*, but later he admitted that the king sold the offices.¹³ For this author, the relationship between crown and Church differed significantly from Luchaire's findings. The king often disagreed with the French clergy and papacy over the investiture of ecclesiastical officials though not to the same degree as the Holy Roman Empire. Thompson argued that the two parties also disputed over the right of the king to bring clergymen to trial and that the king only donated to the monasteries for political practicality rather than intentions of spiritual kindness.¹⁴

A thesis pertaining to the activities of the reign is *Louis VI and His Domain*, composed by John Maple.¹⁵ In his work, Maple focused largely on establishing an inventory of the possessions of the monarchy. Part of the inventory included the possessions of the crown both inherited and gained (particularly the acquisition of property and royal rights through military conflicts and purchase), while the other part consisted of properties detached from the control of the crown largely through donations to the Church. According to Maple, the most significant factor in Louis VI's ecclesiastical donations was his desire for divine favor. Maple correlated the number of donations with the years of most significant military activity, yet a closer look at the donations made throughout the reign showed a substantial number and amount given almost every year.¹⁶ Maple did agree with Thompson in stating that the abuses of the *prévôts* strengthened instead of damaged the extension of royal authority. Unlike Thompson, however, Maple argued that the relationship between the king and the Church

¹³ Thompson, "Development of the French Monarchy," 55-56.

¹⁴ Thompson, "Development of the French Monarchy," 68-74.

¹⁵ John Thomas Maple, "Louis VI and His Domain" (M.A. diss., University of Virginia, 1973).

¹⁶ Maple, "Domain," 45-46.

extended beyond the political and administrative realm into shared financial investments.¹⁷

In 1980, Elizabeth Hallam published her comprehensive study of the social, political, and economic development of the French kingdom, titled *Capetian France*, which encompassed the entire Capetian dynasty.¹⁸ Hallam provided accounts of Louis VI's military conquests over local lords, and claimed that the king's work (although incomplete) made the royal domain safer and augmented the royal resources. She described the crown's connection to the Church as one of necessity; the clergy remained vital for the basic functions of Capetian central and local government. The subject of local royal officials received little consideration as Hallam only acknowledged that *prévôts* benefited from their office and at times caused problems for the king.¹⁹

The monograph entitled *France in the Making*, by Jean Dunbabin, concentrated on the progression of the monarchy and the regionalism of the kingdom as it became more unified during the early parts of the Capetian dynasty.²⁰ Rather than highlighting the campaigns of Louis VI (who she found was a failure as a general), Dunbabin focused on the king reasserting his rights as more than just the theoretical figurehead in the feudal social system for the basis of extending royal authority. Unlike Luchaire and Hallam, Dunbabin claimed that the actions of the *prévôts* caused their unpopularity, yet they contributed significantly to the authority of the princes of the kingdom. She further argued that the princes reprimanded these officials only to display their charity to the

¹⁷ Maple, "Domain," for the arguments on the *prévôts*, see 68; for the financial relationship between crown and Church, see 72.

¹⁸ Elizabeth M. Hallam, *Capetian France 987-1328* (New York: Longman Group Limited, 1980).

¹⁹ Hallam, *Capetian France*, for the military accomplishments, see 115-118; for the role played by the Church in government, see 6, 18; for the mentioning of the *prévôts*, see 85-86.

²⁰ Jean Dunbabin, *France in the Making 843-1180* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

public, while in actuality the princes commended the abuses of the officials.²¹ Thus, her approach concerning local officials tended to agree with the arguments of Maple and Thompson.

In 2002, Marcus Bull contributed a chapter titled “The Church” to the series *France in the Central Middle Ages* concerning the development of the French Church through papal reform and increased levels of monasticism.²² This article elaborated on the Church and its function during twelfth-century France. Bull argued that clergymen were often loyal supporters of the Capetian kings because of the royal protection usually provided to the monasteries. According to Bull, both the wealth and the education found in the Church were vital assets to the kings as they developed their authority within the kingdom.

While there have been numerous studies on the progression of the royal domain under the Capetian dynasty and Louis VI in particular, their explanations for the extension of royal authority are incomplete because they did not intend to include the impact of local authority in the scope of their publications. Some historians, including Hallam and Luchaire, found that the extension of royal authority comprised the elimination of local lords and the growth of the central government. This argument is important, yet it does not contend with the problems Louis VI confronted concerning the exploitations of *prévôts*. By preventing these aggressive royal officials from abusing their offices, the king essentially prevented them from developing the same military, judicial, and financial footing that the barons used to usurp royal control after the

²¹ Dunbabin, *Making*, for the feudal position held by the king, see 262-265, 295; for the appraisal of the *prévôts*, see 285-286.

²² Marcus Bull, “The Church,” in *France in the Central Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

collapse of the Carolingian dynasty. Simply put, the *prévôts* held the same local responsibilities that the local lords had started out with.

Other historians, such as Dunbabin, Thompson, and Maple, have dealt with the problem of *prévôtal* exactions, yet their conclusions bring new concerns to the development of the royal domain under Louis VI. They claim that the monarchy benefited from the harsh treatment of the *prévôts* towards the peasantry and the monasteries because it solidified royal control; however, this meant that Louis VI accepted a form of local autonomy similar to the form that occurred during the late ninth and tenth centuries that disintegrated the central authority of the Carolingians. This does not support the notion that the monarchy was heading towards a centralization of the government in the form of the king's court. Instead, the argument conforms to the same principle that allowed local lords to usurp public authority within the regions of the kingdom. Although these historians have created a strong foundation concerning the advancements of the monarchy during the reign of Louis VI, their arguments concern other aspects of the reign and not local government. This necessitates a reexamination of the king's interaction with the Church, the impact of that relationship on the elimination of local lords and the supervision of royal officers, and the consolidation of royal authority through the control of the *prévôts*, which is the purpose of this work.

The achievements of Louis VI in the advancement of royal interests in his domain did not end with the elimination of local lords. Although this began the resurgence of the kingdom, it was only the first step in asserting royal control on the local level, which itself represented an important factor in the centralization of government. Louis VI continued to display his dominance in the localities of the royal domain by restricting the

actions of the *prévôts* when those actions negatively affected the rights or image of the crown. Actions such as excessive taxation and abuses of judicial authority prompted the king to exempt populaces from specific rights of the royal officers. This continued display of direct royal control prevented the emergence of the officials as a new regime of local lords benefiting from the royal rights. Louis VI's consolidation of local authority within the royal domain allowed his involvement in matters outside of his direct domain and provided the means for his successors to extend the authority of the throne further than it had been in centuries.

Vital to the development of the king's authority, the clergymen were far from enemies of royal advancement. While the king did make many donations, this did not result solely from his desire for divine recognition but from his attempts to reconcile with the Church that had lost trust in the throne for their protection. Louis VI hoped to regain political support from the powerful ecclesiastical lords and to continue the use of clergymen as the primary source of government administration. The Church provided the means for the king to attack the autonomy of the local lords and later assisted in restraining the aggression of the royal officials. *Prévôts* abused their privileges with both the peasantry and the clergy alike; however, the limited access of peasants to the king rendered them helpless to the exactions of the local officials. Because of the close relationship between the crown and the Church, Church officials were able to communicate with the king and bring the unjust exactions of *prévôts* to royal attention. As the crown grew in military and political strength, so did the assurance of royal protection over the monasteries. While the relationship was at times tenuous, Louis VI

effectively established a working cooperation with the Church that lasted throughout the remainder of the Capetian Dynasty.

CHAPTER II

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CROWN PRIOR TO LOUIS VI

Following the death of Charlemagne in the early ninth century, the kingdom of the west Franks immediately began to experience problems that eventually reduced the French monarchy to a minimal figure in the governance of the kingdom. Warfare among the descendants of Charlemagne, the economic and political stress arising from the frequent Viking raids, and the increased authority of the great barons of the kingdom resulting from those raids reduced the crown to a theoretical figurehead of an increasingly violent social system known as feudalism. Although the king retained his status as the pinnacle of this social system, the nobles often ignored the weakened leader in their actions. As the monarchy lost much of its control over outlying provinces far from the political center of the royal domain, the crown and Church developed an important relationship that benefited them both. In exchange for protection, benefices, and support for the papacy, the kings received religious backing for their policies. Louis VI depended on his relationship with the Church and the ideology of his prominent position in the feudal hierarchy to begin the process of consolidating the kingdom. When he succeeded to the French throne, he had already understood the difficulties facing him; the weakness of the monarchy in 1108 was due to the breakdown of central authority occurring in the previous three centuries and continuing through the reign of his father,

Philip I. Thus, it is important to explain briefly that process to understand the significance of Louis VI's accomplishments because it was this relationship with the Church that allowed him eventually to regain dominance of the royal domain and supervise corrupt local officials.

The tradition of partible inheritance during the ninth century prompted the division of the vast empire Charlemagne and his father had built.²³ This division quickly became a source of political confusion in Western Europe. There were three sections of the former empire following the Treaty of Verdun in 843: East Francia, West Francia, and Lotharingia.²⁴ Verdun did not conclude the quarrels between the descendants of Charlemagne as they disputed over territorial boundaries and control of the *vassi dominici*.²⁵ Fighting among the Carolingians continued long after Verdun because of the desire of each to gain more land and authority at the expense of the other two. There were also issues of geographical influence. Everyone wanted part of the central area of Charlemagne's empire because that was the location of Carolingian political and financial strength.²⁶ These disputes led to political confusion for the powerful nobles of the old empire, who now had to decide which party to support.

Focusing more specifically on the West, the internal struggles between the Carolingians left the kingdom of west Francia vulnerable to outside attacks from the Saracens, Magyars, and particularly the Vikings in the ninth and tenth centuries. These attacks directly affected the political structure of the kingdom. Scandinavians used their

²³ During the ninth century, ruling families practiced partible inheritance, which was the division of an inheritance among the legitimate male descendants.

²⁴ Hallam, *Capetian France*, 4.

²⁵ Sidney Painter, *The Rise of the Feudal Monarchy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967); see also for the *vassi dominici*, who were officials that supervised government functions in the outer provinces of the empire, 8.

²⁶ Dunbabin, *Making*, 1.

advanced ships to travel up the French rivers and loot the towns and monasteries.²⁷

Kings were unable to respond quickly enough to defend successfully against the Vikings. These penetrations into the kingdom prompted the shift in society towards the primary need for defense, as counts began to maintain large private forces to maintain castles for that defense.²⁸

Viking attacks sparked the transition of the government in the Frankish kingdom from a central authority, whose power rested in the crown, to a decentralized structure where the great lords acquired or assumed the judicial and financial rights formerly controlled by the monarchy. As the military forces of the lords increased, the kings delegated more and more authority to the barons; officials formerly loyal to the crown, along with common landholders, became dependents of these counts or dukes rather than the king. The powerful counts, whose titles became hereditary, even converted the lesser nobility into vassals.²⁹

Dominant lords began to usurp the royal rights of taxation and justice by keeping the revenues rather than sending them to the central government and imitating the authority of the monarchy. These lords used the need to defend against the Vikings as justification. Counts under the early Carolingians held the responsibility of tax collection for the crown. As authority shifted to the counts, the king was unable to reverse the ability of the lords to collect and keep tolls from traveling merchants and further charges for participation at markets.³⁰ The lords also developed their own courts to handle legal disputes in their counties free from royal supervision. By the reign of King Odo in 888,

²⁷ Painter, *Feudal Monarchy*, 8.

²⁸ Dunbabin, *Making*, 40, 43.

²⁹ Painter, *Feudal Monarchy*, 8.

³⁰ Dunbabin, *Making*, 7.

the kings no longer hindered the growth of localized authority because they viewed this development as essential for containing the Viking raids. Powerful nobles began to replicate the execution of government administration by the kingdom for their own counties and duchies, relying on the authority of the king to substantiate their own.³¹

The distribution of authority did not stop with the counts and dukes; even lesser lords took advantage of the weak political structure to increase their own local strength. These local lords both received and seized local control from the king or the high-ranking counts. Castellans emerged in the eleventh century and began to pocket the revenues from taxes collected for their lords and to impose new forms of taxation on the peasantry, such as the forced use of county mills or wine presses owned by local lords.³² As the castellans' local authority grew, the sources of forced taxation became routine and were part of the hereditary privileges of the lords.³³ The peasantry was unable to complain with any measure of success because the castellans controlled the local courts.³⁴ Similar to the dukes and counts, the castellans were able to establish their positions as hereditary, not allowing their lords to reclaim castles. Others constructed their own castles without comital authorization.³⁵ Therefore, the accumulation of formerly royal privileges ranged over the entire noble class; the great magnates assumed authority from the king and the lower nobles from the counts and dukes.

This delegation of authority inevitably reduced the control of the monarchy over its vassals. Eventually, the kings would no longer have any authority within the counties

³¹ Geoffrey Koziol, "Political Culture," in *France in the Central Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 48, 54.

³² Dunbabin, *Making*, 147.

³³ Hallam, *Capetian France*, 12.

³⁴ Dunbabin, *Making*, 148.

³⁵ Hallam, *Capetian France*, 13.

without the permission of controlling barons.³⁶ When the kings permanently granted the lands to the nobles for proper defense against the Vikings, the royal power decreased because there was no longer an extended presence throughout the kingdom. This limited the control of the monarchy to the shrunken royal domain, which decreased the resources of the crown.³⁷ When Hugh Capet came to the throne in 987, the French monarch had only a limited area of direct control known as the Île de France, or the royal domain.³⁸ By the late ninth century, the barons had increased their combined political authority to such an extent that they were able to elect kings based solely on their ability to defend against the Vikings.³⁹ The elective nature of the crown also contributed to reducing the king to merely “the head of the feudal hierarchy.”⁴⁰ The early Capetians fared no better than the Carolingians, as the monarchy continued to lose authority in the early years of the dynasty.⁴¹ Establishing a continuous dynasty was one of the few accomplishments sustained by the first three descendants of Hugh Capet.

Because one of the major themes of this thesis concerns the relationship between the king and the counts and castellans, there is a need to explain the terms “feudal hierarchy,” “vassal,” and “homage” to understand the social structure of the early Capetian period and the position of the French monarchy in that system.⁴² In theory, a feudal relationship existed only within the noble class between a lord and his vassal. The

³⁶ Hallam, *Capetian France*, 13.

³⁷ Dunbabin, *Making*, 34; see also Hallam, *Capetian France*, 20.

³⁸ Hallam, *Capetian France*, 20.

³⁹ Dunbabin, *Making*, 29-30; see also Hallam, *Capetian France*, 23.

⁴⁰ Painter, *Feudal Monarchy*, 9-10.

⁴¹ Bull, “Introduction,” in *France in the Central Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 11-12.

⁴² Recently, the ideology of the feudal system has received criticism for its exclusion of all the members of medieval society not within the noble class and the general use of the term as a designation for various meanings; for this and other problems related to this topic see Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: the Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

lord provided the protection and livelihood to maintain a vassal, who, in return, gave his loyalty, counsel, and military service. To support a vassal, a lord provided a fief or benefice consisting of money or, more often, land.⁴³ To establish this social link, an individual presented himself in a ceremony to his eventual lord and swore fealty and homage. Ensuring the commitment confirmed through this ceremony, “the aim of fidelity and vassalage was to create artificial links between men to bind them as surely as if they were blood relations.”⁴⁴ This social structure benefited the early Carolingians, who maintained considerable control over their vassals; however, once the kings began to lose their authority, the hierarchy began to lose significance.⁴⁵

By the eleventh century, members of the nobility did not always adhere to this theoretical structure, which caused a number of significant problems for the kings. The hierarchy began with the king and extended to his immediate vassals, and then to their vassals, yet the political and military power in France did not extend from the top, so the ties of vassalage became less important.⁴⁶ The early Capetians struggled with keeping their rights and authority, while powerful counts and dukes surrounded them territorially. Even minor lords created problems by building strong fortifications and challenging royal rights.⁴⁷ During any given reign, the king did not always have the resources necessary to assert his authority over a vassal attempting to abuse his privileges or those of the crown.⁴⁸

⁴³ Hallam, *Capetian France*, 15.

⁴⁴ Dunbabin, *Making*, 34, 108.

⁴⁵ Hallam, *Capetian France*, 17.

⁴⁶ Hallam, *Capetian France*, 17.

⁴⁷ Painter, *Feudal Monarchy*, 12-13.

⁴⁸ Hallam, *Capetian France*, 17.

The question arises as to how the monarchy was able to endure during this weakened period until its resurgence in the twelfth century. The crown survived because of the political restraints the nobility placed on each other, and the kings maintained some of their important royal prerogatives. First, the nobility wanted to maintain the balance of power. None of the dukes or counts wanted to see their powerful counterparts usurp the title and become more powerful than themselves.⁴⁹ Although the authority of the Capetians seemed frail, the barons allowed them to maintain their position, believing the royal resources could not interfere with their own territories. Another factor preventing the nobles from discarding the king was the necessity to maintain at least the theory of the social hierarchy provided by feudalism. The monarchy's status was secure because "a duke or margrave could not repudiate the legitimacy of a king's office, a count repudiate a duke's, a castellan a count's, without repudiating the very basis of his own authority over his own subalterns."⁵⁰

While the Capetians had trouble with their local lords, lesser magnates had similar troubles with their own. Many other lords held fragmentary rights over their vassals similarly to the king. Powerful counts and dukes experienced insubordinate behavior from their vassals just as the kings had, hindering the resources of the lords. In this sense, the crown was not as weak as traditionally believed.⁵¹

The Capetian kings maintained their position as the dominant figure in the social structure keeping the possibility open for political resurgence. They were able to retain their right to issue charters and kept the right to require oaths of fidelity.⁵² Although the

⁴⁹ Painter, *Feudal Monarchy*, 13.

⁵⁰ Koziol, "Political Culture," 55.

⁵¹ Koziol, "Political Culture," 56-57.

⁵² Dunbabin, *Making*, 33.

nobles often defied the feudal hierarchy, they never completely discarded the theory. Even lords more powerful than the king did not claim independence from him.⁵³ As long as the vassals continued to offer fidelity and homage, it meant they accepted the jurisdiction of the king and his right to bring his vassals to court when legal arguments arose between them.⁵⁴ These valid claims of the monarchy allowed the Capetian kings to maintain their title through the periods of unsteady authority and resources.

The Church had sustained a significant role in the political sphere in Western Europe since the sixth century, and its participation in the feudal system and relationship with the French monarchy require a brief examination here. The royal government relied heavily on the Church because its universal use of Latin was vital to diplomacy across Europe, and Latin was the sole language of government documents and law.⁵⁵ On the local level, parish churches established an important position within the community, and the land controlled by monasteries raised their operations to that of lay landlords, including owning serfs, and demanding labor and charging rent from their peasants.⁵⁶ Many members of the clergy came from the noble class and their entrance into the Church often came with a non-returnable donation. Nobles who donated land also transferred ownership of the unfree tenants as well.⁵⁷

When Christianity encountered the early Germanic kingdoms, a close relationship quickly formed. The Church began to advocate the idea that the king “had been appointed by God to keep order, protect the weak from the strong, and especially to

⁵³ Robert Fawtier, *The Capetian Kings of France: Monarchy and Nation 987-1328*, trans. Lionel Butler and R.J. Adam (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 60.

⁵⁴ Dunbabin, *Making*, 34.

⁵⁵ Hallam, *Capetian France*, 6.

⁵⁶ Constance Burchard, “Rural Economy and Society,” in *France in the Central Middle Ages*, ed. Marcus Bull, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 98; see also Hallam, *Capetian France*, 18.

⁵⁷ Burchard, “Rural Economy and Society,” 98.

maintain the Christian church and faith.”⁵⁸ In France more specifically, the relationship between the crown and the Church remained a strong one. The clergy acted as vassals much as did lay barons, providing counsel and military aid through their retainers. Royal bishoprics and monasteries needed royal permission to fill vacant ecclesiastical posts, and before completing any elections, the monasteries had to confer with the king.⁵⁹ The clergy also made the connection between the peasantry and crown where the king could not; they included his name in regular masses and gave him an honorary position during important festival masses.⁶⁰ The Church chose to side with the king to protect its own interests against nobles hostile towards the clergy. Part of its influence rested in its ability to advocate the divine nature of the monarchy.⁶¹ The clergy’s attitude of royal support continued into and through the Capetian dynasty.

The immediate predecessor of Louis VI, his father Philip I, had positioned the crown in an even more precarious state than the previous rulers had by nearly severing the important relationship with the Church. By absconding with the Count of Anjou’s wife and arresting clergymen in opposition to this action, he was attacking one of the crown’s oldest supporters. Church officials summarily excommunicated him for his actions. At other times, Philip I prevented Prince Louis from punishing nobles. In 1102, the king deterred his son from attacking Chambli, the castle of an insubordinate noble, Mathew of Beaumont, after he had assisted in the unlawful seizure of the castle of Luzarches.⁶² Authors contemporary to the king from all parts of Western Europe labeled

⁵⁸ Painter, *Feudal Monarchy*, 2.

⁵⁹ Fawtier, *Monarchy and Nation*, 72-74.

⁶⁰ Fawtier, *Monarchy and Nation*, 76.

⁶¹ Painter, *Feudal Monarchy*, 2.

⁶² Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, 1102, Luzarches-Chambli no. 19, p. 11.

him as an inefficient ruler more preoccupied with his love affairs and culinary matters than government administration.⁶³

When Louis VI came to the throne in 1108, he faced significant problems resulting from the continued decay of royal power that had developed over the previous centuries. The great magnates, who controlled large portions of the kingdom with virtual independence, chose when and where they would adhere to the commands of the king, their feudal lord. The powerful dukes and counts did not heed royal decrees, and the royal domain was relatively small when compared to the combined territories of his more powerful vassals.⁶⁴ Within the royal domain, castellans continued to abuse their attained judicial and financial exploitation of the localities, and used their fortifications to defend against any royal threat of punishment. It appeared as though the monarchy was heading towards replacement by another, more powerful, dynasty or complete extinction as the mighty principalities became smaller independent kingdoms.

Yet Louis VI was able to use his seemingly feeble resources, kept intact through the centuries, to improve the state of the monarchy and return it to prominence. He restored the crown's relationship with the Church and used his right to protect its extensive network of abbeys and priories to eliminate insubordinate castellans within the royal domain, which will be discussed in the following chapter. When he had the necessary military presence available, he enforced his feudal right to call vassals to court for trial. Most importantly, he restricted the authority of the royal officials, or *prévôts*, who replaced the subdued castellans on the local level, preventing them from establishing a hereditary characteristic to their offices and succeeding the castellans as public figures

⁶³ Bull, "Introduction," 12; see also Koziol, "Political Culture," 46.

⁶⁴ Painter, *Feudal Monarchy*, 9.

of exploitation. These accomplishments allowed Louis VI's successors to regain large portions of the kingdom and reclaim their rights as the pinnacle of the feudal hierarchy over their vassals while maintaining their authority on the local level within the domain.

CHAPTER III

COLLABORATION BETWEEN CROWN AND CHURCH

Between 1108 and 1137, the Church played a central role in the development of the kingdom and its functions, and the king exploited his influence over the Church to advance royal authority. Louis VI needed the churchmen for the efficiency of his government and political support; however, he retained certain regalian rights over abbeys and bishoprics that proved politically and financially useful. For these factors, it was necessary for the king to intervene on behalf of the Church against barons who would violently seize its property. Thus, the crown's rapport with the Church was truly unique. Louis VI had to defend the abbeys and bishoprics to retain the support of the clergy that was so essential for royal accomplishment. Indirectly, this collaborative relationship with the clergy led to the centralization of the royal authority because the claims of the king for taking up arms against local nobles were often for the protection of the Church and its affiliates. It is not the purpose here to deny the personal piety of the king, yet the interaction between the two parties undeniably contained more than just religious objectives. To achieve any success in advancing the interests of the crown, Louis VI had to maintain an effective cooperation with the Church.

At the outset of the reign, Louis VI had to reestablish the throne's unsteady relationship with the Church. The religious institution had been, and would remain, a

strong supporter of the Capetian dynasty. As described in chapter two, many historians agree that this support was one of the reasons for the survival of the crown during the centuries of weak royal authority. Yet when Philip I died in 1108, he left damaged relations between the crown and the Church that required some degree of repair. When Ivo of Chartres denounced the second marriage of Philip I to the count of Anjou's wife, Betrada, the king had Hugh Le Puiset, a constant enemy of the clergy, imprison the bishop.⁶⁵ Early in his reign, Philip I exiled Bishop Guy of Beauvais, after which the bishopric's lands experienced repeated robberies. The king arrested Bishop Renaud of Langres and severed Raoul from his archbishopric of Tours in 1082.⁶⁶ Although not to the same degree as the Holy Roman Emperor, Philip I carried on some disputes with the papacy over lay investiture.⁶⁷ Philip I damaged his relationship with the Church by ostracizing himself from many leading members of the clergy, which may or may not have directly influenced his ability to control the royal domain. Whatever the consequences of Philip's reign may have been, Louis VI had to spend much of his reign to secure the support of the Church.

Louis VI quickly began to restore this rift through multiple actions that reconfirmed ecclesiastical support for his secular activities and the continuation of his rights over royal abbeys and bishoprics. Upon ascending to the throne, he immediately asked the clergymen to support him against their common enemies. Promoting their political involvement, the king asked for the clergy's support in eliminating destructive nobles in the French kingdom.⁶⁸ Although it is safe to assume that the king did not

⁶⁵ Bishop Ivo of Chartres, *Correspondance*, ed. Dom Jean Leclercq (Paris: Société D'Édition, 1949), 92.

⁶⁶ Hallam, *Capetian France*, 106.

⁶⁷ Hallam, *Capetian France*, 106-107.

⁶⁸ Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:425.

expect military assistance from the churchmen, this request illustrates his belief that royal success depended on the services and cooperation of the clergy.

Throughout the reign, Louis VI donated to existing abbeys and churches and founded others, which was another attempt to first reconcile then assure the support of the clergy. To the Abbey of Morigny, for example, he granted “a royal charter for the protection of this place and all our future and present possessions.”⁶⁹ A number of surviving charters demonstrate his donations and establishments throughout his rule. In 1109, early in the reign, Louis VI donated the vacant lands of Nids to the abbey of Saint-Père de Chartres and agreed not to collect any customs from its new inhabitants.⁷⁰ He was still bestowing lands on the Church in the last years of his reign. A sizeable piece of land went in 1137 to the priory of Notre-Dame of Longpont in the land surrounding Montlhéry.⁷¹ Although land was a frequent donation made by the king, it was not the only type of grant he presented to the Church. Other grants included the right to graze animals in forests, gifts of servants, and annual revenues.⁷²

Louis VI established new abbeys and churches to improve his relationship with the Church further. In 1113, “on the advice of the archbishops, the bishops, and the great [nobles] of the kingdom getting together at Châlons, the king found[ed] the abbey of Saint-Victor of Paris.”⁷³ Territories, rights over rivers, houses, and royal peasants were

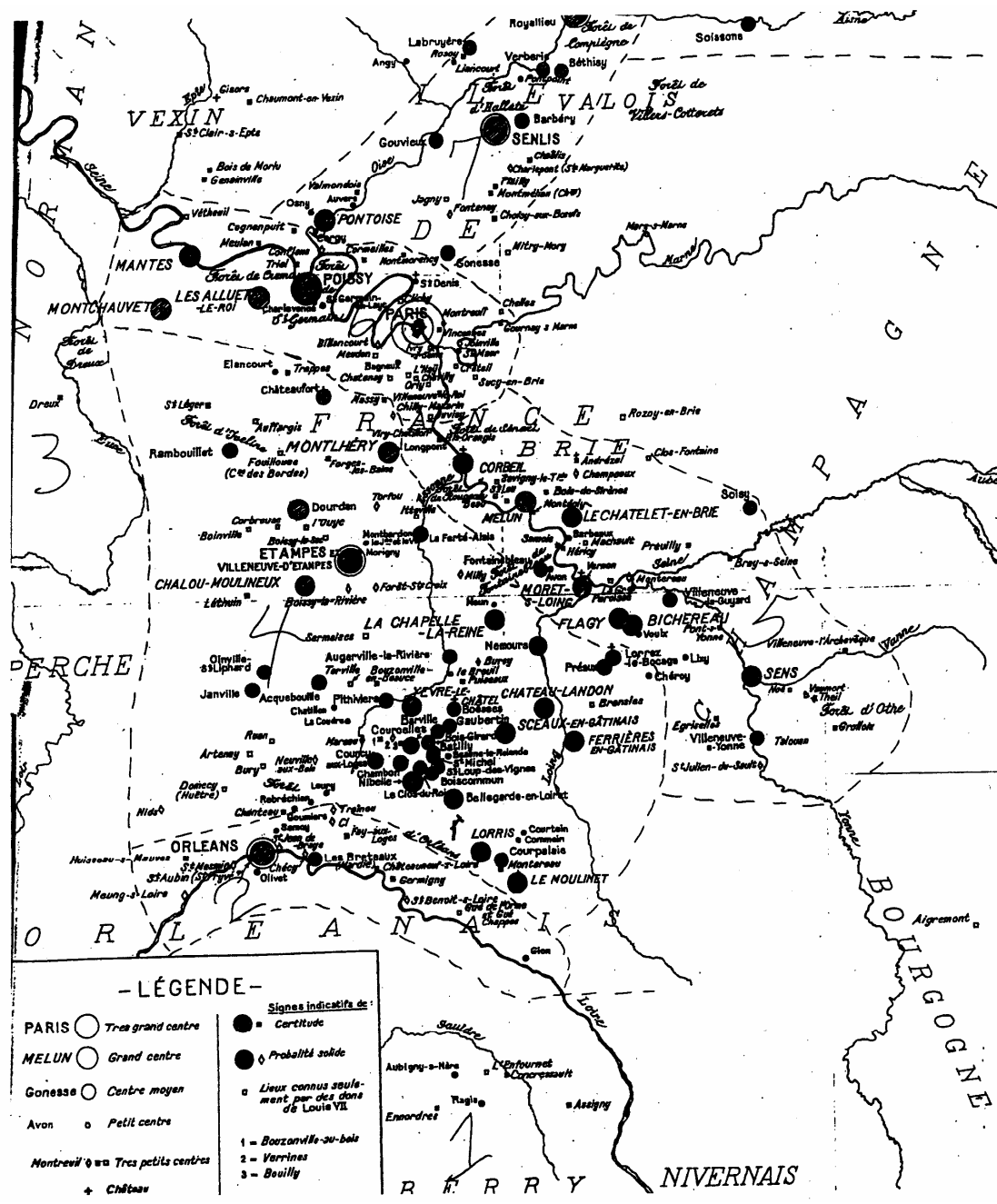
⁶⁹ *Morigny*, 75; for geographic locations of cities, abbeys, and fortifications, see maps on thesis p. 30, 31, 32.

⁷⁰ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 3, 1109, no. 86, p. 46.

⁷¹ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 1, 1137, no. 594, p. 269.

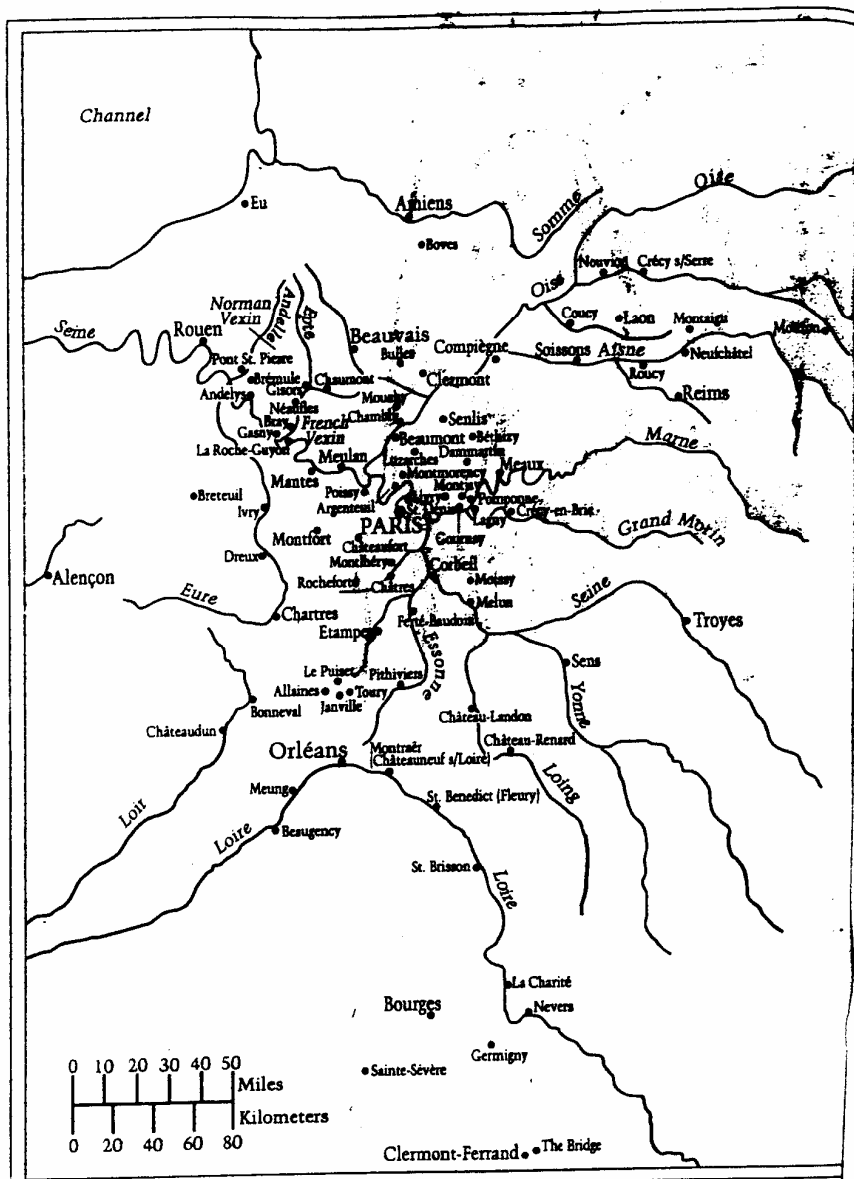
⁷² Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, July, 1137, no. 591, p. 268-269; August 3, Paris, no. 472, p. 219; October 13, 1131, Paris, no. 475, p. 220.

⁷³ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, May 20-August 3, 1113, Châlons-sur-Marne, no. 160, “Sur l’avis des archevêques, des évêques et des grands du royaume réunis à Châlons, le roi fonde l’abbaye de Saint-Victor de Paris,” p. 82.



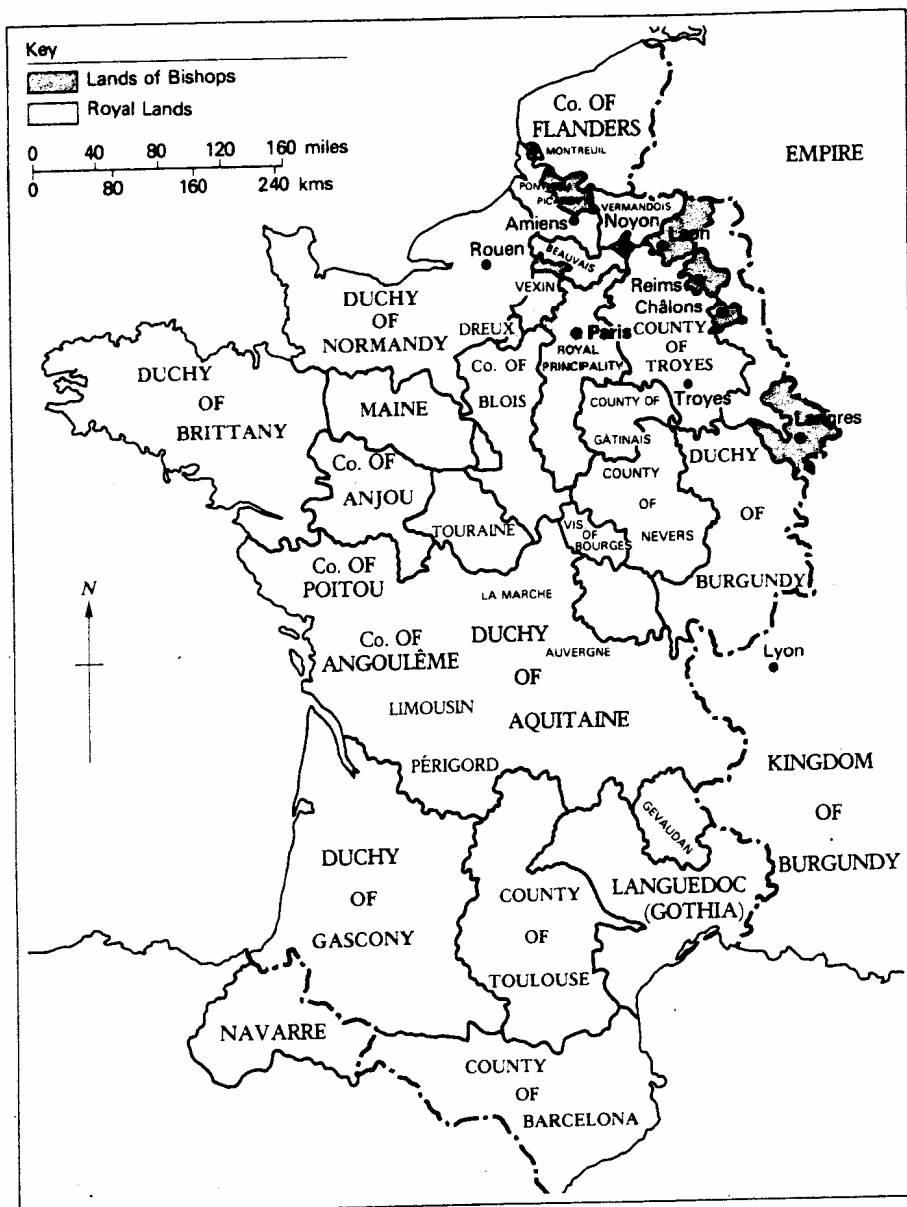
Map 1

Reprinted from John Thomas Maple, "Louis VI and His Domain," (M.A. diss., University of Virginia, 1973).



The towns, estates, and castles of central France mentioned in the *Deeds*.

Map 2
 Reprinted from *A Translation of the Chronicle of the Abbey of Morigny, France, c. 1100-1500*, trans. and ed. Richard Cusimano (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003), vii.



Map 1.4 France in the mid-eleventh century

Map 3

Reprinted from Elizabeth M. Hallam, *Capetian France: 987-1328* (New York: Longman Group Ltd., 1980), 5.

among the numerous possessions the king granted to this new institution.⁷⁴ As these donations and foundations illustrate, Louis VI continuously sought to strengthen his association with the Church by publicly displaying it as a recipient of royal favor.

The king also hoped to secure such positive relations for the reign of his son. After the future Louis VII had received the title of king-designate, his father began to include him in many donations. In 1137, Louis VI exempted the abbey of Notre-Dame de Montermoyen at Bourges from numerous taxes, pointing out he had done this “in the presence and with the consent of his son Louis.”⁷⁵ The king wanted to establish a positive image of serving the Church for his son before he ascended the throne and gained direct control of the government. The ideology of a unified relationship between the crown and the Church would continue in the reign of Louis VII.⁷⁶

Defending the Church and its affiliates was a high priority for the king, who initiated numerous acts of royal intervention against the nobles and local royal officials in his efforts to retain ecclesiastical support. First, Louis VI guarded the clergymen from local lords, who often stole property from monasteries and churches. He later defended the abbeys and priories from the financial burdens of heavy taxes imposed by royal officials. The king was so adamant about maintaining the security of the monasteries that he destroyed the fortifications of a traditional royal supporter, Burchard of Montmorency, who had refused to accept the decision of the royal court in a case of dispute with the Abbey of Saint-Denis.⁷⁷ To properly defend the Church and maintain a

⁷⁴ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, May 20-August 3, 1113, Châlons-sur-Marne, no. 160, p. 82; Louis VI also founded the chapel of Saint-Nicolas, 1108-1137, no. 627, p. 278.

⁷⁵ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, July, 1137, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, no. 587, “En présence et avec l’assentiment de son fils Louis,” p. 267; see also August 1, 1137, Paris, no. 593, p. 269.

⁷⁶ Marcel Paucaut, *Louis VII et son royaume* (Paris: SEVPEN, 1964), 67-68.

⁷⁷ Abbot Suger, *The Deeds*, 28.

positive rapport, Louis VI was willing to reprimand his own noble allies. Although these topics will receive further attention in later chapters, the king's attempt to protect the monasteries was another means by which he aimed to improve relations with the Church.

As king, Louis VI held a number of rights and privileges over royal abbeys and bishoprics. Religious institutions were still a source of patronage. One of the king's sons held two offices as abbot by his fifth birthday and would later receive four more. Another source of patronage came with the creation of new monasteries, such as the abbey of Saint-Victor of Paris. This provided opportunities for clergymen to seek ecclesiastical offices within these new institutions. Because of the loss of investiture during the reign of Philip I, Louis VI "did not sell bishoprics or abbeys, but he supervised elections, insisted on his consent being obtained, and maintained his regalian rights where he could."⁷⁸ While he could no longer interfere directly in elections, a ceremony still occurred for the homage and fealty of the bishops to the king for any secular power that might have come with their post.⁷⁹

Another privilege held by Louis VI was the regal right of spoil, which contributed to the financial assets of the crown. Because of the Church's dependence on the king for protection, he received the revenues from any vacant bishopric after the death of any royal bishop.⁸⁰ Those revenues included any profits made on the cultivation of lands under the ownership of the bishopric and the rights to any taxes levied on the peasants of the bishopric. The king continued to control the finances of the vacant office until an

⁷⁸ Hallam, *Capetian France*, 191-192.

⁷⁹ Lindy Grant, *Abbot Suger of St.-Denis: Church and State in Early Twelfth-Century France* (New York: Longman, 1998), 59.

⁸⁰ Luchaire, *Institutions monarchiques*, 2:58.

election declared a new bishop. Clergy and crown alike regarded this royal right as a temporary fund for the king's expenses in defending the Church.⁸¹

The king viewed new bishops as vassals who owed their lord homage, and the protection offered in return provided the opportunity for Louis VI to intervene in areas traditionally outside his authority.⁸² Although holding no direct rights within the Auvergne, south of the royal domain, the monarch used his right to protect the diocese of Clermont to travel into the Auvergne on two occasions. The king journeyed roughly two hundred and thirty miles south of Paris in 1122 and again in 1126 in an effort to restore the Bishop of Clermont back to the city, as Count William VI had illegally taken possession of it.⁸³ Without this right to protect the Church, Louis VI had no other opportunity to involve himself in this area of the kingdom. The king was so weak outside of his limited domain that he depended on the "material and financial resources of the Church and the goodwill of Rome."⁸⁴

Another, perhaps less important, reason for the king to defend the Church was the financial relationship between the two parties. Agricultural investments linked the king to specific churches in at least two instances. A charter completed between 1134 and 1137 illustrates an agreement of *pariage* involving Louis VI and the abbey of Saint-Pierre of Fossés and the priory of Châtres.⁸⁵ Within this charter, the abbey and priory gave the lands of Fontenai to the peasants of the king for agricultural production "on the

⁸¹ Luchaire, *Institutions monarchiques*, 1:119-120.

⁸² Hallam, *Capetian France*, 192. See also Marcus Bull, "The Church," 144.

⁸³ Abbot Suger, *The Deeds*, 133-134; see also Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, 1122, Bourges, Pont du Château, Clermont, no. 318, p. 147.

⁸⁴ Charles Petit-Dutaillis, *The Feudal Monarchy in France and England* (London: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), 93.

⁸⁵ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, 1134-1137, no. 597, p. 270; *pariage* was an agreement often between two lords where one lord provided land and the other provided the money needed to enlist peasants: Maple, "Domain," 72.

condition that the revenues for this land will be equally partitioned between them and him.”⁸⁶ The king established similar conditions with the monastery of Saint-Euverte d’Orléans concerning its lands of Boulai. The monastery provided the land, the crown provided the peasantry, and the two split the profits equally.⁸⁷ In 1136, the king made an agreement with the bishop of Paris for his chapter’s land, Champeau. For providing the land to the king, the bishop would receive a third of the revenues from the various taxes collected on the land. This charter goes further than the previous two, specifying that the royal *prévôt* gave fidelity to the bishop for that land.⁸⁸ Here, the financial projects between the crown and the clergy presented another reason for the king to intervene against local nobles and later the *prévôts*. Protecting the Church also meant protecting his agricultural investments.

The Church often offered political support to the king through its ecclesiastical authority. In politics, “archbishops and bishops from northern and north-eastern sees were among the Capetians’ most important supporters” because of the crown’s ability to protect them.⁸⁹ High-ranking church officials supported the monarch by applying ecclesiastical pressure on the opposing castellans.⁹⁰ Abbot Suger described how the clergy met at a council in Beauvais to renounce Thomas of Marle as a noble through the means of an anathema supported by a papal legate.⁹¹ Church officials had excommunicated another local lord named Leo before he died along with his men during

⁸⁶ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, 1134-1137, no. 597, “à condition que les revenus de cette terre seraient également partagés entre eux et lui,” p. 270.

⁸⁷ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, 1132, no. 492, p. 227.

⁸⁸ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 3, 1136, Paris no. 572, p. 261.

⁸⁹ Bull, “The Church,” 144.

⁹⁰ Hallam, *Capetian France*, 193.

⁹¹ Abbot Suger, *The Deeds*, 107.

the siege of his castle, Meung-sur-Loire, in 1103.⁹² Hugh Balver of Laversine received excommunication for his hostile acts towards a town under the ownership of the Abbey of Saint-Denis.⁹³ A dispute arose between the king and Hugh Le Puiset in 1111, and a royal charter described the conflict as a “feudal and ecclesiastic coalition against Hugh Le Puiset.”⁹⁴ This display of ecclesiastical assistance demonstrates the willingness of the Church to support the king against insubordinate nobles, especially those who had threatened the interests of the monasteries.

Clergy maintained government positions in the household of the monarch, which both served the interests of the king and advanced churchmen through royal offices. At the royal court, church officials held important positions as counselors and officers. Count Raoul of Vermandois was the only non-ecclesiastic who filled an office at the royal court.⁹⁵ Abbot Suger was one of the king’s most influential counselors, yet held no official lay title, maintaining only his abbacy. Before Suger, Stephen de Garlande held a considerable amount of control in the *curia regis* as seneschal and chancellor. He also possessed numerous ecclesiastical benefices, being a favorite of the king.⁹⁶ Thus, it was necessary for Louis VI to protect and enhance through royal offices this social group, which had accepted important responsibilities of central administration.

Church officials also fulfilled routine duties in the administration of the central government. Members of the church had access to the highest available educational

⁹² Abbot Suger, *The Deeds*, 36.

⁹³ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, 1122-1137, Bétisi no. 602, p. 273.

⁹⁴ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, March 12, 1111, no. 108, “Coalition féodale et ecclésiastique contre Hugué du Puiset,” p. 58.

⁹⁵ Hallam, *Capetian France*, 159.

⁹⁶ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*; Stephen de Garlande was archdiacre de Paris, no. 53, p. 206; he was archdiacre de Notre-Dame de Paris, no. 29, p. 128; he was doyen de Saint-Samson de Orléans, no. 272, p. 284.

training.⁹⁷ Furthermore, the clergy were the sole source of consistently educated men able to handle significant amounts of government documents.⁹⁸ The crown used the clerical skills of the churchmen in the different departments of government. These administrative clerics received revenues for living expenses from the royal household for their government functions. Men of low birth, such as Abbot Suger, played an important part in the political machinery even without formal government titles, and they did not have the military or financial independence to cause problems similar to those presented by the barons.⁹⁹ Essentially, the church officials were willing to provide religious support, the services of their clerical education, and government counsel in exchange for protection from local authorities and rewards through patronage.

On the local level, the clergy also held a great deal of authority. In the absence of secular nobility, “bishops were important agents of local government, with substantial public authority invested in them.”¹⁰⁰ An example of this authority comes from the writings of Ordericus Vitalis, who claimed that priests under the direction of their bishops led (but did not necessarily fight alongside) their parishioners on military campaigns in the ranks of the king.¹⁰¹ Because “most great churchmen were the younger sons and brothers of the great princes and magnates,” it was scarcely abnormal for them to retain high degrees of public authority.¹⁰² As ecclesiastical officials held royal offices and exercised public authority on the local level, it was necessary for Louis VI to maintain a

⁹⁷ Bull, “The Church,” 136; nobles although often educated were not available for considerable clerical service and few peasants had access to or funds to afford the necessary education for such use.

⁹⁸ Grant, *Abbot Suger of St.-Denis*, 58.

⁹⁹ Hallam, *Capetian France*, 160.

¹⁰⁰ Grant, *Abbot Suger of St.-Denis*, 58.

¹⁰¹ Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:425.

¹⁰² Grant, *Abbot Suger of St.-Denis*, 58.

positive and functioning relationship with them to promote his leadership in the royal domain.

Churchmen were also partially responsible for the increased prestige experienced by the French crown during the early twelfth century. Suger of Saint Denis, Galbert of Bruges, the unknown author of the *Chronicle*, and even Ordericus Vitalis (writing primarily about England and Normandy) portrayed Louis VI in a positive manner in their works. In his work concerning the monarch's actions against the nobility of the royal domain, Abbot Suger repeatedly claimed that Louis VI "could not put aside what he had grown accustomed to in his youth, namely safeguarding the churches, protecting the poor and the needy, and working for the peace and defense of the kingdom".¹⁰³ Galbert of Bruges described how the barons of Flanders yielded to his authority upon his arrival in Bruges.¹⁰⁴ The text of the *Chronicle* described the many ways in which the king provided for the abbey of Morigny's defense, and Ordericus Vitalis depicted the noble king and his campaigns against common criminals.¹⁰⁵ These churchmen portrayed Louis VI as restoring the authority of the French monarchy by commanding authority over the nobility and demanding respect from the other monarchs of Europe.

The development of literature depicting the French king favorably came at a time when the English kings were experiencing harsh criticism from ecclesiastics. The chronicles of England, also written by churchmen, did not approve of their kings in the same way the French counterparts did, for two important reasons. In England, the cost of war to defend the crown from competitors forced the Norman and Angevin kings to heavily tax their subjects, including the Church, while in France, nobles did not contest

¹⁰³ Abbot Suger, *The Deeds*, 64; see also 24.

¹⁰⁴ Galbert of Bruges, *Murder of Charles*, 194-195, 216-218.

¹⁰⁵ *Morigny*, 75, 77-79; see also Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:425, 428, 429.

the dynasty, which allowed the kings to limit the taxes imposed on the Church.¹⁰⁶ The second source of ecclesiastic frustration involved the vying for political favor through the court rituals in England. High-ranking clergymen sought to perform these rituals because it was a sign of political status. This aspect arose due to the English royal court being the sole social focal point of the realm. Across the English Channel, there were other social centers represented by the courts of the lesser nobility, keeping the court rituals of the king separate from politics.¹⁰⁷ By refraining from excessively taxing the Church and keeping the clergy from competing for political preference, Louis VI was able to maintain the reputation as a pious, effective ruler, who used his divinely sanctioned office to serve the needs of the Church.¹⁰⁸

While the monarchy continuously tried to defend the churches, abbeys, and priories, the barons and later *prévôts* targeted these ecclesiastical institutions for their wealth and political opposition. Rural monasteries were among the wealthiest landholders during the twelfth century. The majority of the members comprised the sons of wealthy nobles, who, unlike most peasants, were able to afford the costs for clerical training. The fathers of these monks often donated land to the abbeys where their sons lived. Abbeys also collected revenue from the tenants of their land and actively sought to purchase more surrounding estates.¹⁰⁹ Similar to the Viking raiders of previous centuries, the nobles and local officials realized the nonviolent nature of the clergymen, and targeted churches as a source for monetary extraction through forced taxation or by

¹⁰⁶ Geoffrey Koziol et al., "England, France, and the Problem of Sacrality," *Cultures of Power: Lordship, Status, and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. Thomas N. Bisson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 145-146.

¹⁰⁷ Koziol, "Problem of Sacrality," 147-148.

¹⁰⁸ Martha G. Mewman, *The Boundaries of Charity Cistercian Culture and Ecclesiastical Reform 1098-1180* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 180.

¹⁰⁹ Burchard, "Rural Economy and Society," 98-99.

means that were more violent. The local lords perceived Philip I's lack of intention to protect the abbeys and bishoprics when he was often in disputes with them and the papacy and punishing certain clergymen himself.

The different levels of the relationship between the crown and the Church stimulated the two parties to assist each other as much as possible, while still protecting their own private interests. Once Louis VI became the sole ruler, he retained the support and the services of a powerful institution in the Church without sacrificing his regalian rights over the royal monasteries. The Church was able to protect its interests involving lay investiture and lost no ground over free elections, yet the clergy backed the king against the nobility, provided its members as counselors to the king, wrote positive chronicles about the monarchy, and fulfilled the duties of the bureaucracy. Both king and clergy relied heavily on one other to carry out difficult tasks they were unable to fulfill themselves. Without the Church and its assistance in the various functions of local and central government the monarchy struggled to increase its authority, as seen in the reign of Philip I. Louis VI recognized the essential position the Church played in the development of his kingdom. Thus, when he protected the Church and its recipients, he was not merely preserving the property of the monasteries and the safety of its inhabitants; he was saving the foundations of royal support. Eventually, he would use his rights to protect abbeys and priories as the excuse to establish his authority within the domain and to begin the process of extending royal authority to the rest of the kingdom.

CHAPTER IV

EXTENSION OF ROYAL AUTHORITY

During the reign of Louis VI, one of his accomplishments that had previously eluded his predecessors was the consolidation of authority over the nobility within the royal domain. Nobles had asserted their authority on the local level with the protection offered by fortifications and the assistance of their own vassals. They dominated local government and benefited financially from the powers of justice and taxation, which had long been alienated from the control of the throne. Although these lords were vassals of the king of France, they did not adhere to the commands of the crown because of the relative weakness of the king's military capabilities. In an effort to reinstitute the authority of the monarchy, Louis VI began successfully to eliminate the nobles who did not submit to his authority. The French king used multiple reasons to justify his attacks on the nobility, including rights of inheritance and illegal seizure of fortifications, but the most successful tactic he employed involved calling rebellious nobles to the royal court for crimes committed against the Church. This legal justification brought support from other nobles and provided the necessary reason to eliminate the military structures maintaining the authority of the insubordinate lords. The removal of lords unwilling to accept royal authority within the king's domain allowed Louis VI to consolidate his control in these localities, take advantage of the financial gains that accompanied the

military success, and create a revived prestige for the French throne recognized by the greater vassals.

In 1107, before the death of Philip I and prior to the accession to the throne by Prince Louis, the prince realized he needed a stronger strategy than superior military forces to attain his goals. He came to this realization after his failed attempt to take over the County of Rochefort through questionable hereditary claims by means of military coercion. He carried out an extensive campaign against Guy of Rochefort and his fortifications at Chevreuse, Montlhéry, Bretencourt, and other towns belonging to the count. Guy of Rochefort was able to gain the aid of many nobles and successfully resisted Prince Louis.¹¹⁰ Following this defeat, Louis began to understand that he needed a stronger legal justification to acquire the necessary support, and a more focused management of his military resources to reduce the insubordinate nobles.

Learning from his earlier mistake, Louis VI was later careful to justify his acts of warfare against the nobles through legal means. One of the first nobles the French monarch challenged was Burchard of Montmorency, who had attacked the lands of the Abbey of Saint-Denis. Before advancing against Burchard and his allies, Louis VI called the baron to his court to stand trial for his actions. On another occasion, the king fought Mathew of Beaumont for improperly seizing the castle of Luzarches from his father-in-law. The king advanced against Beaumont only after the baron had not presented himself at the king's court upon royal command. Even the monarch's half-brother, Philip, was not exempt. After granting two castles to Philip, the king summoned him to court to answer claims that he had mistreated the poor. In 1109, Louis VI called Haimo of Berry to court for a case involving the absconding baron in an inheritance suit. Military forces,

¹¹⁰ Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:425.

led personally by the king, captured Haimo in Berry, brought him to trial, and finished the inheritance case.¹¹¹

Other nobles began to acknowledge the summons of the royal court and appeared before the king, which demonstrated the growing recognition of royal power. Hugue Balver of Laversine actually came to the court of the monarch upon command. This local lord had had suit brought against him by Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis. The abbot claimed acts of “violence and exactions committed by this seigneur at the place of Laversine, town of the abbey” as the primary reasons for excommunicating Balver for a year.¹¹² Louis VI was able to facilitate a peace agreement between the two groups, and if either broke that peace, the transgressor was to be subject to the courts of the realm.¹¹³

In an extreme instance, Louis VI used the legal justification of avenging the murders of a bishop, archdeacon, and numerous priests to subjugate the town of Laon in 1114. Thomas de Marle had taken the town north of Paris in an attempt to protect wealthy townsmen who had killed several ecclesiastics. A response to these acts of violence against churchmen came from other members of the clergy, as Thomas de Marle “had done such evil deeds everywhere that archbishops and heads of churches made complaint to the King saying that they would not carry on the services of God in his realm, unless he took vengeance.”¹¹⁴ The French king laid siege against Thomas de Marle at the improvised fortifications at the Abbey of St. John, Crécy, and later at his castle, Nouvion. Eventually, the king destroyed both Crécy-sur-Serre and Nouvion.¹¹⁵ It

¹¹¹ Abbot Suger, *The Deeds*, 29, 31, 82, 109-110.

¹¹² Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, 1122-1137, Bétisi no. 602, “violences et exactions commises par ce seigneur au lieu de Laversine, villa de l’abbaye,” p. 273.

¹¹³ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, 1122-1137, Bétisi no. 602, p. 273.

¹¹⁴ Abbot Guibert, *The Autobiography*, 195.

¹¹⁵ Abbot Suger, *The Deeds*, 107-108.

is interesting to note that unlike other nobles who lost their fortifications, Thomas de Marle escaped royal punishment temporarily through a payoff to the king.¹¹⁶ This might suggest that the king was willing to punish nobles financially, assisting his own assets, to attempt to avert costly military conflicts. Here, the justification for attacking the local lord appears to be stronger because the campaign came following not just the destruction of church property but the deaths of ecclesiastical officials.

These examples show the importance of the legal justification for the military conflicts of the king. Louis VI was unwilling to attack the nobles without a legal basis because that would have provided a cause for future complaints from the barons for unwarranted attacks, possibly negating any royal achievements. Legal justification also prevented any assistance for the insubordinate nobles from other lords, such as what had happened in the military loss against Guy of Rochefort, because the legal grounds gave no excuse for others to interfere lest they become the next royal target. As vassals of the king in the feudal hierarchy, if the nobles did not appear in the king's court after a direct summons, absence provided the legal basis needed for Louis VI to advance against the vassal without a trial. The king exerted his military capabilities and reasserted the rights of his feudal position by taking away the lands of his vassals.¹¹⁷ This process ensured that, following a royal victory, the extension of authority was concrete and any punishment was subject to the will of the monarch and not contestable.

The list of specific castles destroyed during Louis VI's time as king-designate and through his reign as king is quite extensive and needs clarification to impart the full scope of his achievements against the barons. Following the defeat of Buchar of

¹¹⁶ Abbot Guibert, *The Autobiography*, 197.

¹¹⁷ Hallam, *Capetian France*, 116.

Montmorency, Prince Louis burned the noble's buildings and destroyed his defenses in 1101. Victorious over Drogo of Mouchy in 1101 as well, the prince burned the castle, Mouchy-le-Châtel, to the ground. In 1103, Prince Louis set fire to the castle of Meung-sur-Loire with the defiant Leo of Orléans and his dependents still inside. Although Prince Louis forgave Viscount Milo of Troyes for capturing the castle of Montlhéry in 1105, the royal troops still destroyed the castle except for the main tower. When Hugh Le Puiset lost his castle some time before 1111, he later rebuilt it, and when he revolted again in 1112, the monarch had to destroy the fortifications of Le Puiset for a second time. As already mentioned above, the king dismantled the castles of Nouvion and Crécy-sur-Serre in 1114. Also in 1114, he destroyed the tower of Amiens. The last fortification eliminated by the king was Coucy in 1130.¹¹⁸

The account produced by Ordericus Vitalis that described the king's conflict with Count Theobald IV of Chartres and Blois explained the necessity for ridding the realm of hostile castles. Vitalis described the numerous disputes between the king and Count Theobald resulting from the actions of the latter's vassals. After committing acts considered injurious to the royal domain, the vassals of the count "sought refuge under the protection of their powerful lord, and, relying on his support, often dared to engage in criminal undertakings against God and the Church."¹¹⁹ Without the protection of the local lords, these knights were no longer able to perform the criminal acts and retreat to strong defenses.

¹¹⁸ Abbot Suger, *The Deeds*, 29, 30, 36, 43, 87, 90, 103, 107, 108, 143; see also, Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, 1101-1102, Beauvais, Mouchy-le-Châtel no. 18, p. 10; 1103, Meung-sur-Loire no. 25, p.15; 1105, Montlhéry no. 34, p. 21; March 12, 1111, no. 108, p. 58; 1112, Corbeil, Touri, Le Puiset, Janville no. 134, p. 70-71.

¹¹⁹ Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:429.

Louis VI experienced a great deal of success policing his domain; however, he did not always achieve his military goals, a failure which needs examination. While still only prince, Louis failed when he besieged Mathew of Beaumont and Burchard de Montmorency at the castle of Montmorency in 1101. Beaumont again bested the prince the following year at Chamblis.¹²⁰ In 1111, Count Theobald IV successfully defended his castle at Meaux against the crown's forces.¹²¹ Abbot Suger and Ordericus Vitalis both relate the conflicts between the French and English monarchs, and the overwhelming political and military strength of Henry I often gave him the edge over his French counterpart. Even with the justification necessary to subdue his enemies, their defenses were often too resilient for the royal forces.

So, how was Louis VI able to consolidate his authority when he had mixed military results? In many instances when he abandoned a campaign against an enemy, he later returned to succeed in subduing the noble (such was the case with Burchard at Montmorency and Beaumont at Chamblis).¹²² More importantly, the French monarch never lost his own fortifications or so many of his resources as to hinder future campaigns. Most of his losses came at sieges when he retreated; no sources contemporary to Louis VI have record of him taking a defensive position during a siege, while many of his victories came with significant benefits.

Louis VI asserted royal authority through peaceful measures as well with the acceptance of royal commands by the nobles or through royal justice. In a display of political power, "the king abolished certain unjust exactions which were made to profit

¹²⁰ Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, 426-427.

¹²¹ Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:429.

¹²² Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:427.

Eude, castellan of Beauvais.”¹²³ Eude had used his *prévôt* to decide court verdicts in the castellan’s favor.¹²⁴

In many of the cases involving royal justice, the Church was a significant benefactor. Another case described the attempts of a low-ranking noble named Stephen to recover a lost inheritance from the Church, but he abandoned the suit after royal intervention. Garsdon, a benefactor of the Abbey of Morigny, had donated the estate of Gomerville to the abbey at the time of his death; however, his mother Adelais and her niece’s husband, Stephen, tried to regain the donation through the right of inheritance. Eventually, Stephen claimed he would besiege the manor and murder the inhabitants if the monks did not relinquish the property. Louis VI interceded on behalf of the abbey, and threatened Stephen, who then relinquished the inheritance claim.¹²⁵

Another suit occurred between Hugh Le Puiset and Abbot Bernier of Saint-Florentin in Bonneval. Here, the baron forced multiple payments of *gîte* on the abbey for its lands of Baignolet, and the king ruled in favor of the Church again, declaring that Puiset could ask for the *gîte* only once a year.¹²⁶ Earlier in the reign, Louis VI had sent word to all of the ecclesiastical and lay barons in the domain “that he concedes to the abbey of Saint-Denis a market at Touri (on Beauce), and abolishes the oppressive customs established on the land of this abbey by the seigneurs of Puiset.”¹²⁷ For the second time, the king forced Hugh Le Puiset to abandon his claims to unjust customs

¹²³ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 3, 1115, Beauvais no. 198, p. 99.

¹²⁴ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 3, 1115, Beauvais no. 198, p. 99.

¹²⁵ *Morigny*, 77-79.

¹²⁶ *Gîte* was the right of a lord to demand from his vassals shelter for himself or his dependants, including monasteries and towns; see Maple, “Domain,” 74.

¹²⁷ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 3, 1122, Paris no. 323, p. 150; May 1, 1118, no. 237, “qu’il concede à l’abbaye de Saint-Denis un marché à Touri (en Beauce), et abolit les coutumes oppressives établies sur les terres de cette abbaye par les seigneurs du Puiset,” p. 115.

publicly.¹²⁸ These examples show that the nobility were no longer completely disregarding royal commands and court decisions. The king's military campaigns contrasted with Philip I's lack of enthusiasm towards the end of his reign. If the castellans did not adhere to royal orders, they at least had to weigh the gains and losses of potential retaliation for their insubordination. Lords began to understand that ignoring the crown now presented the possibility of military attacks from the throne.

Louis VI dedicated his reign to consolidating the central authority within the royal domain, something that his Capetian predecessors had been unable to accomplish. For centuries, the nobility had usurped the powers of the king to advance their own wealth and authority on the local level, destabilizing the central authority of the crown. With the aid of castles and towers, these lower-level nobles were long able to defy the monarchy with its few military resources, yet Louis VI's ability to focus on one local lord at a time allowed him to destroy the hostile sites or add them to his own assets. In most of his confrontations with the local lords, he used legal justification to ensure the longevity of any significant gains made through warfare. This validation, which consisted of attacking insubordinate vassals who did not appear at the court of their lord when summoned or simply refused to adhere to royal court decisions, stemmed from the feudal characteristics of the noble class that had been developing since the reign of Charlemagne. These same societal aspects provided Louis VI with the opportunity to wage war against those lords who chose to deny the rights of the king within the feudal hierarchy. Although he was not always successful in defeating his opponents through military campaigns, he never lost a battle to such a degree as to impede severely the progress of consolidation.

¹²⁸ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 3, 1122, Paris no. 323, p. 150; May 1, 1118, no. 237, p. 115.

Louis VI's active military role in the defense of the Church or in the punishment of those who murdered high-ranking ecclesiastical or noble subjects within the royal domain enabled him to extend his authority to his more distant vassals when the opportunities presented themselves. He called a vassal directly subordinate to the Duke of Aquitaine to the royal court by asserting his right to defend a bishopric under his protection. He also established himself as a dominant figure in the political and military situation following the murder of Charles, Count of Flanders.

Perhaps the most significant display of legal justification occurred when Louis VI commanded the Count of Auvergne, who governed lands outside of the royal domain in southern France, to appear at his court in 1126. The king had commanded the count to appear because of his unlawful capture of Clermont from the bishop of that town. Before any military engagements happened, the Duke of Aquitaine offered to deliver his vassal, the count, to the king's court personally in exchange for an immediate truce.¹²⁹ This illustrates that the king's claim as protector of the church allowed him to intervene beyond the immediate royal domain and to call nobles to his court for trial who were not his immediate vassals.¹³⁰

Another opportunity presented to the king to assert his command outside of the royal domain came following the murder of Charles "the Good", Count of Flanders, in 1127. Louis VI first took advantage of the open inheritance of the county, as the deceased count had no surviving heirs, by strongly recommending and successfully placing one of the crown's close allies, William Clito, on the seat of the county during a

¹²⁹ Abbot Suger, *The Deeds*, 133, 135.

¹³⁰ The rights of the monarchy outside of the royal domain did not include rights of administration, only the rights of a lord over a vassal; see Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, 1122, Bourges, Pont du Château, Clermont no. 318, p. 147.

quick election by the lords of Flanders. The king had already proclaimed William Clito as count before the arrival of the barons and only their confirmation was necessary, demonstrating significant royal influence.¹³¹ The lords submitted to the authority of the king in two instances: they accepted his request that they travel to Arras during the siege to elect a new count, and they agreed to the crown's nomination.

Later, upon arriving at Bruges, where the murder had occurred and where those responsible had taken up a defensive position in the castle, the king established control again when he undertook the military leadership of the siege. He maintained the organization of military procedures until the criminals surrendered, and continued to influence the situation by assuming a role in the judgment of the murderers, along with William Clito.¹³² Further, the king assisted William Clito in strengthening his hold on the county by besieging William of Ypres, who had falsely claimed inheritance of the county without the approval of the Flemish barons.¹³³

While William Clito was not the count for long, this does not reflect any weakness in royal support. After Thierry of Alsace asserted himself as the count of Flanders, Louis VI continued to support William Clito and only a small number of Flemish barons supported Thierry. William died during one of his sieges against his rival, yet both Galbert of Bruges and Ordericus Vitalis agree that the king's appointee was suppressing the revolts with a large measure of success until his premature death.¹³⁴

Louis VI's actions in Flanders and Aquitaine demonstrated the French crown's growing ability to engage in the affairs of more distant counties and duchies. With the

¹³¹ Galbert of Bruges, *Murder of Charles*, 194-195.

¹³² Galbert of Bruges, *Murder of Charles*, assault of the castle, 216-218; involvement in the judgement, 242.

¹³³ Galbert of Bruges, *Murder of Charles*, 248.

¹³⁴ Galbert of Bruges, *Murder of Charles*, 307; Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, 91-93.

augmentation of royal power in the Île-de-France stemming from the destruction or seizure of numerous castles and the financial benefits that accompanied this process, the king started to reestablish his rights in the feudal hierarchy. He asserted his rights as a lord over a vacant fief after the death of Count Charles of Flanders, and he succeeded in forcing his vassal the Duke of Aquitaine to present a sub-vassal at the royal court.

The account of Louis VI defending the kingdom further represents his elevated status throughout the realm. As the German Emperor, Henry V, planned an invasion of the French kingdom, Louis VI unified the counts and dukes of the various provinces of the kingdom to stand against the German army. Once Henry V realized the strength of the French army, he chose to halt his military campaign.¹³⁵ The French king was able to use his refurbished image to combine the independent forces of the kingdom for its own defense.

His accomplishments both gained him the acceptance and support of the population in the royal domain and bolstered his prestige in the surrounding territories. This latter development, coupled with the security of the royal domain, allowed him to extend his interests to the outer counties of the kingdom. As a legacy to his successors, Louis VI forced his vassals to respect (if not always comply with) the new foundations of royal political and military power.

Still, defeating the local lords was only the first step in consolidation. Simply eliminating the insubordinate lower nobility was not enough; it was necessary to assert his control over the territories through the actions of his local royal officers, as many of the offices developed because of the elimination of the lords as figures of public

¹³⁵ Abbot Suger, *The Deeds*, 127-128.

authority. It was vital for the king not to allow these officers merely to replace their predecessors in insubordinate behavior.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS OF ROYAL EXPANSION

Following the removal of numerous lords within the royal domain, the monarchy benefited both from having fewer hostile nobles to contend with and from the acquisition of new lands and military structures. The most obvious result of the military successes of Louis VI was the elimination of rival military factions close to royal territories and towns; however, the king also benefited financially from the extension of royal rights to new areas through justice and tax collection. He instilled new administrators in these areas to manage these royal concerns, namely *prévôts*. The monarch and his entourage were able to travel more freely through the royal domain and there was less fear of disrupted communications from Paris to the Orléanais. With all of these new advantages, the monarchy grew in political and financial strength, and the king became more directly associated with local authority.

The progression of royal power increased as Louis VI kept at least eleven of the castles that had formerly been in the possession of defiant nobles. Gournay, Saint-Sévère, Ferté-Boudoin (Alais), Mantes, Montlhéry, Corbeil, Germigny, Ypres, Châteaufort, Montmorency, and Rochefort all came into the ownership of the crown during the reign, as recorded either in the chronicles or in charters.¹³⁶ Most obviously,

¹³⁶ Abbot Suger, *The Deeds*, 58, 60, 68, 82, 83, 95, 109, 142; Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, March 16, 1108, no. 53, p. 28.

these centers represented royal military security and were from then on accessible for use in future campaigns. These possessions operated as bases of supply and fortification, available for the king and his forces to subdue neighboring lords. Castles and palaces were also places for the administration of the domain, and it was easier to move the king from one castle to another rather than to transport and set up his entire living quarters in rural areas.¹³⁷

While the king gained no strongholds when he destroyed the fortifications of barons, the annihilation of the fortresses had a significant effect. During his various military campaigns, Louis VI was able to destroy eight fortifications including towers, castles, and palaces: Montmorency, Mouchy-le-Châtel, Meung-sur-Loire, Le Puiset, Crécy-sur-Serre, Nouvion, Amiens, and Coucy.¹³⁸ These castles represented the military strength of the baronial opposition within the royal domain, and by removing that source of power for the barons, Louis VI enhanced his direct control over the territories formerly dominated by the castellans.¹³⁹ Defeat of castellans also brought safety to that area because of the elimination of a rival military threat.¹⁴⁰ This left the monarchy as the sole authority within that locality, represented either by the king personally or, as was more often the case, by his local officers. Louis VI and his successors profited from this new direct authority as the majority of taxes and customs collected thus went to the crown instead of the barons.

There appears to be no systematic principle used by the king to determine which castles to maintain and which to destroy. Much of the decision depended on the ease

¹³⁷ William Mendel Newman, *Le Domain royal sous les premiers Capétiens (987-1180)*, (Paris: Librairie du Recueil Sirey, 1937), 15.

¹³⁸ Abbot Suger, *The Deeds*, 30, 36, 87, 107, 108, 143.

¹³⁹ Maple, "Domain," 13.

¹⁴⁰ Hallam, *Capetian France*, 116.

with which he captured a castle. Leo and his men defended Meung-sur-Loire until the royal forces burned it down with the defenders still inside; however, other fortified structures, such as Le Puiset and Amiens, the king saw fit to dismantle following royal victories resulting from surrender. The distances of these castles from Paris were not a factor. Louis VI eradicated Nouvion and Crécy-sur-Serre, located around ninety miles northeast of Paris, while he kept Germigny and Saint-Sévère, established over one hundred and sixty miles to the south.¹⁴¹ There was also no connection between a stronghold and its proximity to a larger urban area. Again, Germigny and Saint-Sévère were located near Bourges and remained a part of the royal network, yet the king disposed of Meung-sur-Loire positioned near Orléans. This topic needs further investigation. For the purposes of this essay, it shall simply be accepted that the king felt that maintaining these fortifications would prove more valuable than their removal.

Royal authority progressed through the replacement of hostile castellans with trusted associates in possession of castles and towers as well. The monarch returned the castle of Luzarches to his loyal vassal, Hugh of Clermont, following the capitulation of Count Mathew of Beaumont. Louis VI led a siege against Hugh of Crécy at his castle of Gournay, after which the king “kept the castle for himself, entrusting it to the care of the Garlandes.”¹⁴² After recapturing the castle of Montlhéry from his rebellious half-brother, Philip, Louis VI entrusted it to his loyal vassal, Milo of Bray.¹⁴³ By providing these minor nobles with patronage, he ensured their loyalty in any future affairs involving those particular structures. The opportunity for gaining the benefices of former castellans was

¹⁴¹ Abbot Suger, *The Deeds*, for Nouvion and Crécy-sur-Serre, 107-108; for Saint-Sévère and Germigny, 60, 109.

¹⁴² Abbot Suger, *The Deeds*, 58.

¹⁴³ Abbot Suger, *The Deeds*, 31, 83.

also an incentive for other lords to become loyal to the king. Although these locations did not fall directly to the authority of the king and his officials, royal influence became more direct and common in these areas and there was no longer a hostile attitude towards the monarchy. Once a loyal baron replaced a hostile one, that location then accepted the king as the feudal lord with specific rights of justice.

There was not always a need to extend authority through warfare. Louis VI also bought five castles consisting of Moret, Châtelet-en-Brie, Böesses, Yèvre-le-Châtel, and Chambon from Fulk, Viscount of Gâtinais; and erected four more castles at Janville, either Chaumont or Montchauvet, Lorrez-le-Bocage, and Gres.¹⁴⁴ These castles assisted in expanding royal influence to the south and southeast of Paris. Their position also helped maintain secure routes to the southern towns of Orléans and Bourges. Yèvre-le-Châtel, Böesses, and Chambon were close in proximity and there existed a significant number of smaller villages in the countryside surrounding these castles. Moret and Châtelet-en-Brie could have provided safety for merchants or acted as important marketplaces because both were located on rivers.

While Louis VI already controlled numerous *prévôts* and the rights of justice in various localities in the royal domain, the expansion of territory necessitated the creation of new local officials and the establishment of the crown's rights in these areas. There were either twenty-one or twenty-two *prévôts* in existence at the end of Louis VI's reign, which included Beauvais, Bellegarde-du-Loiret, Bourges, Château-Landon, Compiègne, Corbeil, Dourdan, Dreux, Étampes, Laon, Lorris, Mantes, Melun, Monlhéry, Orléans,

¹⁴⁴ In the original Latin text the name of the castle *Montemcalvulum* is indistinguishable between Montchauvet and Chaumont; see Martin Bouquet ed. et al, "Ex Continuatione Historiae Aimonii Sive de Gestis Francorum Libro V," *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1876), 12:123; see also Maple, "Domain," 14.

Paris, Poissy, Pontoise, Senlis, Sens, Soisy, and perhaps Pithiviers.¹⁴⁵ There was a *prévôt* recorded in the charters at Sully as well, adding one more to the list.¹⁴⁶ At least three of these local administrators — Corbeil, Mantes, and Montlhéry — owed their positions to the military achievements of the crown. The addition of these officers brought the extension of royal privileges and control. Not only did this improve significantly the financial gains of the monarchy through tax collection, but more importantly, these officers signified the expansion in royal jurisdiction to these locations. This meant the king could personally impose his court over any judicial matters in these areas without having to respect the courts of the lower nobility.

Louis VI's actions in Flanders and Aquitaine, as mentioned in the fourth chapter, demonstrated the French crown's growing ability to engage in the affairs of more distant counties and duchies. Following the elimination of local lords as threats, the relative degree of control within the royal domain allowed the monarch to divert his attention to other parts of the French kingdom. There was no longer a need to maintain the ability for a quick response against sudden attacks in the territories under royal protection. With sufficient safety back home, Louis VI was able to travel abroad and not fear surprise assaults during his absence or on the return journey.

Another reason for the king's ability to extend his military engagements outside of the royal domain was the ease with which he was able to travel within the royal domain without hostility. The king and his forces captured or destroyed twenty fortifications in the royal territory. Prior to their destruction or seizure, these castles and towers often operated as geographical barriers for the movements of the king and his

¹⁴⁵ Pacaut, *Louis VII*, 149.

¹⁴⁶ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 3, 1113, no. 165, p. 84.

forces. The destruction or capture of these military bases allowed the king to move quickly and unhindered through his domain. Just to the south of Paris, simply traveling to Orléans, Louis VI had to avoid Montlhéry, Le Puiset, Corbeil, and Ferté-Alais, before he eliminated the threat of all four structures. To the north, Montmorency and Mouchy-le-Châtel were both hostile to the king at some point in the reign. Gournay stood to the east, Mantes to the northwest, and Rochefort to the southwest. At the outset of the reign, it appeared as though there was a hostile structure owned by an insubordinate lord in every direction around Paris. Traveling around these structures to avoid unwelcome military engagements must have required significant amounts of time.

The expeditions to both Aquitaine and Flanders were products of the new mobility of the king's forces. They occurred in the later stages of his reign after numerous campaigns in the royal domain resulted in the removal of hostile fortifications. To the northeast of Paris, towards Flanders, Coucy, Nouvion, and Crécy-sur-Serre were no longer in existence when Louis VI traveled to the county of the murdered Charles in 1127. Saint-Sévère and Germigny had recently come into the possession of the king when he traveled south to Clermont in 1126. These castles are positioned around seventy miles from the city in the Auvergne, which itself is two hundred and thirty miles south of Paris.¹⁴⁷ Abbot Suger understood the value of royal castles located in close proximity to those of his enemies so the royal armies could retreat to a safe position within a near castle rather than one farther away.¹⁴⁸

Movement of personnel was not the only royal function previously hindered by the castles of opposition; communications also suffered during the castles' existence and

¹⁴⁷ Abbot Suger, *The Deeds*, 107-108, 60, 109, 138.

¹⁴⁸ Abbot Suger, *The Deeds*, 30.

benefited after their removal. The military success of the king helped him establish sure communications between the various parts of his territory, creating a continuous and homogenous royal domain. Before the destruction of Corbeil and Montlhéry, the barons who owned these castles were enemies of the monarchy and often intercepted royal communications between Paris, Etampes, and Orléans. With the acquisitions of the new territories and fortifications, “the communications were open between Paris, Melun, Sens, the Gâtinais, the Etampois, the Orléanais, which formed from then on a single territorial cohesion,” solidified through the king’s purchases of Count Fulk’s holdings.¹⁴⁹

This argument pertaining to the improvements of communications has important implications for the ability of the crown to handle the inevitable internal administrative dilemmas, which will receive proper attention in the following chapter. With the attainment of new lands and towns came the necessity for new royal administrators eager to benefit from their offices; however, now the king was able to communicate much more efficiently with both those complaining about local officials and the local officials themselves. The local officials south of Paris had thrived in the knowledge that the hostile lords hindered royal supervision. Removal of those barons brought scrutiny and less independence to the royal administrators.

The elimination of the nobles also brought recognition and support from those comprising the majority of the population, the peasantry. One of the authors of the *Chronicle of the Abbey of Morigny* characterized Hugh of Crécy as “an oppressor of the poor and a greedy murderer of peasants who wanted to carry out all his crimes at

¹⁴⁹ Leon Mirot, *Manuel de géographie historique de la France*, (Paris: Auguste Picard, 1929), for the significance of Corbeil and Montlhéry on communications, see 95; “les communications furent ouvertes entre Paris, Melun, Sens, le Gâtinais, l’Etampois, l’Orléanais, qui formèrent dès lors un seul ensemble territorial,” 96; for the future implications of this accomplishment, see 98; see also Abbot Suger, *The Deeds*, 41.

once.”¹⁵⁰ Following the king’s conquest of Hugh of Crécy, “the safety that comes with peace gladdened the hearts of the peasants.”¹⁵¹ Ordericus Vitalis considered Le Puiset a safe haven for criminals, who did not fear the threats of the king or the Church because of their false perception of safety. After Louis VI defeated Hugh Le Puiset, “he razed the fortress, to the great joy both of travelers and the country people residing in the neighborhood.”¹⁵² With the new absence of the local lords, the peasantry became accustomed to the direct authority of the royal officials as representatives of the crown and considered themselves under his protection.

Through the crown’s relationship with the Church, a growth in hostilities with local lords occurred as Louis VI defended the Church resulting in the expansion of royal rights and jurisdiction. The king profited from the elimination of barons and the acquisition of new fortifications. The monarchy gained more funds to assist in any future military endeavors through taxation, extended direct royal justice to numerous towns and villages, and further developed the security of the royal domain. This would be a continuing trend during the reigns of Louis VI’s son, Louis VII, and his grandson, Philip II “Augustus”.

With this increased amount of local administration over the course of thirty years, there was also a need to expand the royal bureaucracy. To fill the gaps left in local government from the removal of the nobles, the king appointed new local officials to control and supervise the rights of the monarch in the new localities as the administration that existed at the beginning of the reign was insufficient. The number of charters or acts produced in the reigns of Philip I and Louis VI alone supports this notion. Including his

¹⁵⁰ *Morigny*, 47.

¹⁵¹ *Morigny*, 51.

¹⁵² Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:428.

co-rule with his father, Philip I produced only one hundred and seventy-one over a span of forty-eight years, while Louis VI confirmed three hundred and fifty-nine during thirty-nine years, counting his years as co-ruler.¹⁵³ Although the crown profited from the expansion of royal authority, there would be a continuing need to protect the Church, this time from royal officials. The local governments were able to operate with the addition of the new administrative officials, but there was no significant increase in the number of officials on the central level of government. The old and new local officials found a relative ease in abusing their authority for financial gains because of the still-limited or complete lack of central supervision. This development eventually required the direct intervention of the crown and limitations on the duties of the *prévôts*.

¹⁵³ Fawtier, *Monarchy and Nation*, 9.

CHAPTER VI

NEW NEED TO DEFEND THE CHURCH

The addition of new royal rights and the installation of local administrative officials, known as the *prévôts*, represented the extension of royal authority into the newly acquired areas, yet the exploitative acts of these new officials would necessitate further intervention by the king. Louis VI appointed these local officials, yet they also at times abused their judicial and financial authority. Although the crown extended the royal authority by buying territory and destroying or commandeering the castles of the rebellious nobles in the royal domain, the acts of extortion performed by the existing and newly installed *prévôts* forced the king to create reforms to minimize the economic stress caused by the corrupt local officials. The royal intervention that halted the unjust actions of the *prévôts* proved invaluable to the continuation of direct royal control over local administration. This is the real achievement of Louis VI as the king of France; he did not simply eliminate the threat of the baronial opposition in the royal domain, he consolidated his authority by not allowing the *prévôts* to usurp the royal rights and to revert the monarchy to one of limited influence.

Prévôts possessed many of the same governmental functions formerly controlled by the barons in government administration but differed in that the central government supervised the appointment of the *prévôts* and the office was not hereditary. Intruding on

the exactions of these local officials prevented them from attaining the same political and economic footing enjoyed by the insubordinate nobility and thereby causing the same problems for the monarchy as possible military threats. These reforms caused a redistribution of local authority. Louis VI eliminated the conflict of interest among the *prévôts* by delegating some administrative responsibilities to rural abbeys, thus establishing an extended bureaucracy without furthering central control. While Louis VI already controlled numerous *prévôts* and the rights of justice in various localities in the royal domain, the expansion of territory necessitated the creation of new local officials and the establishment of the crown's rights.

The responsibilities of the *prévôts* extended to most aspects of government administration on the local level. These officials held policing duties ranging from securing local fairs to capturing criminals. They acted as royal representatives when the presence of the king was unavailable. Tax collection was another responsibility they assumed. *Prévôts* also handled the implementation of the king's justice.

As the only group capable of maintaining the burden of police functions in their localities, the *prévôts* and their officers held a considerable amount of public power. Following the assassination of Gérard of Quierzi, the king ordered the *prévôt* of Laon to arrest Gaudri, the bishop of Laon, and his entourage, who were responsible for the crime. Louis VI also ordered the officials to burn the houses of these clergymen and to confiscate their property. During the fair hosted by the canons of Saint-Etienne of Dreux, the *prévôt* of Orléans and his officers received instructions to defend the fair against anyone who intended to do harm to the members of the church. Addressing the merchants of Paris, the king allowed the seizure of property of those who owed the

bourgeoisie outstanding debts. Louis VI ordered the *prévôt* of Paris to assist the merchants with a “forceful hand” if necessary.¹⁵⁴ These charters illustrate that once the barons lost their public authority, the policing responsibilities fell to the royal officials of any particular area.

Part of the policing responsibilities of the *prévôts* included detaining prisoners. In the event that any inhabitant of the town of Juvisi did not pay the required taxes to the priory, the *prévôt* of Montlhéry would detain the miscreant until he made payment. Guillaume of Ypres captured one of the murderers of Charles the Good and transported him to the *prévôt* of Bruges for confinement and torture “under the most severe of pain.”¹⁵⁵ The example of Ivo of Chartres’s imprisonment by Hugh Le Puiset mentioned in chapter two demonstrates that local lords had formerly held the responsibility of holding prisoners, yet the decrease in the number of barons in the royal domain meant such duties came under the aegis of the *prévôts*.

Prévôts also acted as royal representatives. The inhabitants of the town of Corbreuse were given permission to continue cultivating the land next to the forest of Notre-Dame. This consent rested “on the condition that the inhabitants of Corbreuse had four legitimate witnesses attest, in front of the royal *prévôt* of Dourdan, that these lands had been effectively cultivated” during the reign of Philip I.¹⁵⁶ The king intended this oath to prevent any encroachments on the lands of the forest.¹⁵⁷ The townsfolk swore to

¹⁵⁴ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, January 7, 1110, no. 93, p. 51; 1120-1129, no. 451, p. 210; August 3-October 25, 1134, Paris no. 533, p. 243.

¹⁵⁵ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 3, 1136, Paris no. 574, p. 262; April 11, 1127, Bruges no. 384, p. 178.

¹⁵⁶ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 3, 1116, Paris no. 211, “à condition que les habitants de Corbreuse fassent attester par quatre témoins légitimes, auprès du prévôt royal de Dourdan, que ces terres ont été effectivement cultivées,” p. 104.

¹⁵⁷ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 3, 1116, Paris no. 211, p. 104.

the *prévôt* in place of the crown, which signified his importance as a substitute for royal representation.

Another example of these local officials representing the crown occurred at the behest of the king again. When Louis VI and his son allowed the monks of Notre-Dame and Saint-Nicaise to hold a fair at Meulan, “order was given to all the royal *prévôts* to announce this fair to all the cities and all the castles of the crown.”¹⁵⁸ Therefore, the subjects viewed these officials as speaking for royal authority.

Collecting taxes came under the jurisdiction of the *prévôts*. In explaining the privileges of the abbey of Saint-Vincent of Senlis, the king commanded that all of the individuals under the jurisdiction of the abbey and any other merchants selling goods in the royal market had to pay the *hauban* to the royal *prévôts*, not the officials of the abbey.¹⁵⁹ The inhabitants of Sens had to pay the local official the sum of five sous.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, as will be shown later, the majority of the exemptions given to the churches and abbeys included freedoms from excessive taxes collected by the local officials.

Defense of the *prévôté* from outside invasion was another function of the royal officials. The king promised the clergymen of the abbey of Bethléem that in times of need, the *prévôt* would assist the monks against any threat within their castle. If the king or his son were unable to defend the monks personally, the *prévôt* proceeded in their stead. Louis VI declared that the monks of Montmartre became the benefactors of the

¹⁵⁸ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 3, 1132, no. 494, “Ordre est donné à tous les prévôts royaux d’annoncer cette foire par toutes les cites et tous les châteaux de la couronne,” p. 228.

¹⁵⁹ The *hauban* was a tax placed on individuals performing a specific trade authorized by the crown, see Maple, “Domain,” 74; see also Luchaire, *Institutions monarchiques*, 1:104.

¹⁶⁰ For detailed information regarding the different forms of taxation controlled by Louis VI and his officials, see Maple, “Domain,” 73-74; see also Newman, *Domaine royal*, chapter 1; see also Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 3, 1129, Senlis no. 446, p. 207; August 3, 1124, Lorris, no. 355, p. 163.

protection of the local *prévôt*.¹⁶¹ These examples illustrate that the royal officials held access to some degree of military force supported by the monarch.

Arguably, the most important role the *prévôts* served involved their position as the judicial authority within the *prévôté*. In a legal dispute over a fief, the Abbot Téoul of Saint-Crépin the Great claimed that Aloud of Soissons had taken the fief illegally. Upon the death of Aloud, the abbot hoped to assert control of the fief, disinheriting Aloud's daughter and son-in-law, Aude and Vilard. Having heard about the dispute, "the king, informing the litigants by a letter to Téoul, [sent] to Soissons the royal *prévôt*, Hugue Acharin, for judging the case and ending the disagreement."¹⁶² Again, further examples provided later in the chapter contribute to the significance of the *prévôts*' duties, as the king gave many exemptions from the justice of the *prévôts* to abbeys and churches. Here, it is important to note that the royal officials were responsible for the judicial proceedings for criminal cases and, in extreme circumstances, cases of litigation.

The overarching influence of the *prévôts* in every facet of government on the local level allowed them to take advantage of their offices. *Prévôts* generated more revenues for themselves by overtaxing the subjects, sending the expected amount on to the central administration, and appropriating the remainder. No one was able to defy these officials because of their military capabilities. Without royal intervention, these men pilfered the countryside and towns in ways similar to the approach formerly taken by the nobility.

Unlike the former barons, however, these officials appear to have been more directly subordinate to the king. Indirect involvement of the monarch, through written

¹⁶¹ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, October 23, 1132, no. 500, p. 230; 1133-1134, no. 550, pp. 230-231, 251.

¹⁶² Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, 1135, no. 562, "Le roi, instruit de litige par une lettre de Téoul, envoie à Soissons le prévôt royal, Hgue Acharin, pour juger la cause et terminer le différend," p. 255.

messages, sufficed to end any local problems, and no evidence exists that indicates multiple violations by any particular *prévôt*. Both of these characteristics differ from the accounts involving the barons. Once Louis VI exempted a locality from the demands of a *prévôt*, the absence of additional messages suggests no need for repeated intervention. As discussed in chapter four, the king often had to take military action against numerous barons, who disobeyed royal commands on multiple occasions.

While little evidence exists concerning the personal aspects of individual *prévôts* or their lives, it is important to attempt to determine the social status of the officials to explain the motives behind their abuse of power. Of the fourteen names provided in *Annales de la vie de Louis VI*, only one, Hugue de Lèves, has a title separate from the office. The rest of the named *prévôts* have no other titles, signifying that their status was below that of the noble class.¹⁶³ Many of the documents in which the name of a *prévôt* was given, recorded the men as witnesses to charters of donation along with men of high social status, such as archbishops, bishops, abbots, and counts. This implies that these officials were of a worthy status to note their presence among barons and clergymen; hence, their social rank eclipsed that of the common peasant. Combining these two pieces of evidence, the *prévôts* existed in the social hierarchy somewhere between the lower-noble and peasant classes.

Capetian kings did not directly appoint the individuals to fill the offices of the *prévôté*. The crown sold these local posts to the highest bidder in a fashion similar to an

¹⁶³ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 3, 1124, Lorris no. 350, p. 161; August 3, 1108, Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, dans le chapitre de l'abbaye no. 79, p. 43; January 7, 1110, no. 93, p. 51; August 15, 1110, Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, no. 101, p. 55; 1110-1111, Orléans, dans le chapitre de Saint-Croix no. 125, p. 66; August 3, 1112, Paris no. 139, p. 74; August 3, 1113, Etampes, dans le chapitre de Notre-Dame no. 161, p. 83; April 1114, Orléans, dans le chapitre de Saint-Croix no. 173, p. 88; June 24, 1118, no. 238, p. 115-116; April 11, 1127, Bruges no. 384, p. 178; August 3, 1119, no. 273, p. 128; 1122, Paris no. 324, p. 150; October 25, 1131, Chaumontois (près Orléans) dans le prieré no. 479, p. 222; 1135, no. 562, p. 255.

auction. This provided any individual, who held significant revenue, with the opportunity to purchase an office without concern for their social status or intentions. In return for the flat fee, these officials “administered the royal lands and pocketed the royal dues within the *prévôté* and the neighboring lordships.”¹⁶⁴ Therefore, the *prévôts* only regained their revenue by generating funds from the royal rights of taxation and justice.¹⁶⁵

The social status of the *prévôts* explains their incentive for unjustly generating funds. Because these men held no titles, the income received for their royal offices was more than likely their major source of revenue. It is easy to comprehend the reason for the crown to choose such individuals. Aside from the small incomes coming from lands or businesses they held prior to attaining office, their success depended on royal support. Maintaining a higher social and economic status than most peasants allowed them to purchase the office; however, they did not have the same resources as the nobility to present a political or military problem with their office unless the crown did not limit their aggressive pursuit of social advancement.

The king also used this technique successfully in the central government. This became the practice of Louis VI after almost making the costly mistake of allowing Stephen de Garlande to assume too much control of the central government. Garlande and his brothers were wealthy nobles.¹⁶⁶ Once Stephen de Garlande had accumulated the numerous ecclesiastical benefices mentioned in chapter three, and both the offices of seneschal and chancellor of the royal household, he attempted to establish his family (through his brothers) as the lawful inheritors of the offices.¹⁶⁷ Following this incident,

¹⁶⁴ Fawtier, *Monarchy and Nation*, 173.

¹⁶⁵ Fawtier, *Monarchy and Nation*, 176.

¹⁶⁶ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, p. xliv-xlv.

¹⁶⁷ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, p. l; the seneschal was the commander of the king’s army in his absence.

the king no longer allowed the same individual to occupy both offices within the royal household. As previously mentioned, counselors of the royal court, such as Abbot Suger, came from humble origins, and their success now depended on royal favor.

Yet this factor was not enough to keep the officials honest. Aspirations to climb the social ladder through the acquisition of land and vassals affected the *prévôts*, who attempted to use extortion to achieve those goals. Far removed from direct royal supervision, these men of lower social distinction than nobles aspired to gain sufficient funds for the opportunity to purchase lands, increase holdings, and elevate social status. They considered the offices their possessions because the point of purchasing the office was to procure as much profit as possible from it.¹⁶⁸ In essence, these officials hoped to “bridge the gap between the upper peasantry and the lower echelons of the aristocracy.”¹⁶⁹

There are multiple examples within the government records that describe a need for the king to intervene because the local officials had taken advantage of their administrative roles to oppress the abbeys. How did Louis VI amend these situations? These accounts rarely provided complete details of the reforms or the reasons for them; however, some contain either information involving the types of changes or a brief explanation.

Certain statutes disclose the direct abuses of the *prévôts*. Upon the request of Abbot Arnaud of Saint-Pierre le Vif, the king granted unspecified “liberties and exemptions accorded to the said monastery by his predecessors and notably by Robert

¹⁶⁸ Dunbabin, *Making*, 176, 182.

¹⁶⁹ Dunbabin, *Making*, 225.

II.”¹⁷⁰ The only liberty cited was the ability of the abbey to charge merchants that traveled through its domain, a custom usually reserved for *prévôts*. Excessive taxes placed on the abbey by the *prévôt* of Sens prompted the presentation of the abbey’s complaints to the king.¹⁷¹

Abbot Adam of Saint-Denis defended one of the towns under the control of the abbey by means of a grievance delivered to the king. Beaune-la-Rolande suffered from the exactions of the *prévôts* of Château-Landon and Sulli. Louis VI permitted the monks of the abbey to exercise the rights of justice on the land, yet the crown retained strict rights of taxation payable to the *prévôts* with substantial late fees.¹⁷² In this example, it appears as though the *prévôts* abused their rights of taxation to bring judicial charges against the members of the town. To alleviate this problem, the king permitted the abbey to hold justice over the inhabitants of Beaune-la-Rolande and the only penalty for unpaid taxes was a fine.

Louis VI gave multiple privileges to the priory, its monks, and the people of Bourges. The first concession effected the “abolition of the vexing customs exercised by the *prévôt*,” which included *gîte*, *hauban* and *mestive*.¹⁷³ The freedoms came at the request of Archbishop Vulgrin of Bourges. Accounts such as these provide the most direct records of the *prévôts* abusing their authority and the king’s direct intervention to curb the abuses.

¹⁷⁰ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, 1121-1136, Bourges no. 578, “abolition des coutumes vexatoires exercées par le prévôt,” p. 263.

¹⁷¹ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, 1108-1109, Champignelles no. 90, “Libertés et exemptions accordée audit monastère par ses prédécesseurs et notamment par Robert II,” p. 48; 1108-1109, Champignelles no. 90, p. 48.

¹⁷² Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 3, 1113, Château-Landon no. 165, p. 84;

¹⁷³ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, 1121-1136, Bourges no. 578, p. 263; *mestive* was a rent paid by way of grain; see Maple, “Domain,” 74-75.

Other examples involving exemptions from taxation or justice do not mention abuses of the *prévôts* specifically but do include their inability to violate the exemptions. This suggests that the king anticipated abuses of the royal officers and sought to prevent them. In response to Jean II, bishop of Orléans and Etienne, who was both royal chancellor and a monk of Saint-Aignan of Orléans, the king “accords to this same abbey the justice and the tonlieu, in the interior of the cloister and in all its towns.”¹⁷⁴ The declaration listed the *prévôt* as one of the officials unable to transgress these concessions.

After granting a fair to the abbey of Morigny, in 1117, the king informed Abbot Thomas that the monks of the abbey now held the rights of justice and all customs collected during the fair. The king ordered the *prévôt* not to interfere with the men of the abbey through trial or by holding them ransom. The jurisdiction of the local officials no longer included the monks of this abbey. Similarly in 1120, the monarch announced that the abbey of Trinity, a possession of Morigny, received the revenues from numerous local taxes and were not answerable to the justice of the *prévôt*, except for extreme crimes.¹⁷⁵

The king notified the priory of Saint-Pierre of Pithiviers that the knight, Gilbert, donated the revenues of all customs for a piece of property to the priory, and the monks retained the right to try all the inhabitants in the ecclesiastical court of the priory. Only on the authority of the monks could the *prévôt* assert any duties. Furthermore, when this official operated within this domain, he owed his loyalty to the monks.¹⁷⁶ This created a

¹⁷⁴ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, July, 1114, Orléans no. 176, “accorde a cette meme abbaye la justice et le tonlieu, dans l’intérieur du cloître et dans la ville,” p. 90.

¹⁷⁵ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 3, 1117, Paris no. 227, p. 111; August 3, 1120, Yèvre-le-châtel no. 292, p. 136.

¹⁷⁶ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 3, 1130, no. 457, p. 213.

relationship between the *prévôt* and the monks similar to one between a vassal and a lord, requiring fidelity and the subordination of the one to the other.¹⁷⁷

Unlike the previous accounts that refer to the unjust actions of *prévôts*, these appear to be preventative measures, suggesting that the king predicted unfair exactions from the royal officials over specific people, times, or forms of extortion. It is also important to note that these exemptions involved liberties traditionally held by the *prévôts*, whether they involved taxes or justice, causing them to be the most affected in a negative way by the king's orders transmitted through royal charters. The only order sent to the *prévôts* collectively as a network of local officials supports these arguments. Within this report, Louis VI claimed that the monks of Pontigni were exempt from all taxes throughout the royal domain.¹⁷⁸ To ensure the protection of the monks from any type of harassment, the king sent instructions to every *prévôt* under his authority. This message contained both protection from the authority of the *prévôts* and a preventative approach to any unwarranted exactions.

Still other accounts include instructions not to *prévôts* specifically, but generally instructions to all royal administrators. In Paris, the king granted the monks of the Châtre of Saint-Denis all of the liberties collected on the land between the abbey and the Seine. None of the royal officials maintained the ability to demand customs from those who lived in the abbey. In another situation involving unjust administrators, "the king recognizes the injustices of the *tailles* and exactions that his officers placed on the lands

¹⁷⁷ See Fawtier, *Monarchy and Nation*, for a complete understanding of the feudal relationship between lord and vassal.

¹⁷⁸ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, 1114-1137, no. 606, p. 274.

of Saint-Mellon de Pontoise.”¹⁷⁹ While these royal exemptions addressed a general group of royal officials and not the *prévôts* alone, these local officials customarily fulfilled the responsibilities surrounding the taxes and justice mentioned in the concessions. This indicates at least the inclusion of the *prévôts* in this group of officials; however, it is hard to say whether the king simply implied the *prévôts* and those under their supervision.

One particular proclamation holds substantial repercussions for direct royal authority on the local level, yet its unique nature requires careful consideration. In this charter, the king asserted his right to some taxes over Saint-Martin of Champs, but the rendering of these taxes would come directly upon the orders of the king. This excluded the *prévôt* from the process of tax administration. In this example, the monks received the promises of exemption from all customs, no *prévôtal* interference, and protection from the *prévôt*.¹⁸⁰ This charter’s unique nature results from its reduction of the local official to a near subordinate position under the monks. The *prévôt* was no longer able to fulfill his financial and judicial responsibilities in this location and had to protect the monks when dangers were present. While this represents an important account of redistribution of local authority, this was not a common occurrence.

There remain numerous other accounts that list exemptions from taxes and liberties provided to churches and abbeys in the absence of a need to protect. Acts of this nature often denoted the honoring and remembrance of particular individuals. These charters of donation are not the same as those listing exemptions from unjust exactions.

¹⁷⁹ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 3, 1115, Paris no. 191, p. 96; August 3, 1122, Pontoise no. 321, “Le roi reconnaît l’injustice des tailles et exactions que ses officiers prélevaient sur les terres de Saint-Mellon de Pontoise,” p. 149; the *taille* was a tax on the serfs and peasants living in the royal domain and on the peasants of the royal abbeys and bishoprics, see Luchaire, *Institutions monarchiques*, 1:92.

¹⁸⁰ Luchaire, *Annales de sa vie*, August 3, 1128, Janville no. 419, p. 193; 1133-1134, no. 550, p. 251.

The terminology used is different for the two types of records. In the acts made for protective purposes, the authors of the documents used terms such as “notification” and “unjust exactions” and addressed individuals who made requests of relief. The other form of acts, which announced the individual or group allocating the contributions, included words such as “donations” and “confirm”. Differences in the arrangement of these charters and the phrases used for both demonstrate the division between acts of administration and those of endowments.

Thus far, there has been a modest amount of evidence to link the rise of *prévôtal* corruption with the decline in the authority of the nobility. The examination of the geographical locations of destroyed fortifications or those coming into royal hands with the places where *prévôts* abused their authority along with the chronology further illustrates the connection. Following the destruction, purchase, or construction of castles by the king, royal documents sent to the officials describe the exemption of specific monasteries from the exploitations of specific *prévôts*. This demonstrates that the *prévôts* experienced a significant increase in their local authority with the removal of barons and their traditional baronial authority accompanying the loss of their castles. The enhanced royal presence brought about by the purchase or installation of new fortifications also increased *prévôtal* authority.

The city of Orléans experienced a significant change in the local authority during the reign of Louis VI, which accounts for the new abuses by the *prévôt*. A vassal of the bishop of Orléans, known only as Leo, controlled the fortification Meung-sur-Loire, located eight miles southwest of Orléans.¹⁸¹ When Leo died in 1103, Prince Louis destroyed his castle. The distance between Le Puiset and Orléans was around thirty

¹⁸¹ Suger, *The Deeds*, 36; all distances taken from the measurements of Richard Cusimano.

miles, which was a significant distance; still, the king's orders to Hugh Le Puiset not to overtax the city denote the baron's local control. Louis VI eliminated the castle of Le Puiset once in 1111 and again in 1112.¹⁸² As these nobles lost their castles, they also lost their ability to gain revenues from the city either legally or illegally, allowing the monarch's royal officials to succeed to the local administration. By the year 1114, the king had already found it necessary to restrain the *prévôt* of Orléans by exempting the Abbey of Saint-Aignan from his authority. After the removal of the noble presence near Orléans, there was a negligible period of time before the *prévôt* began to follow similar patterns of excessive taxation.

Bourges experienced similar circumstances, as the priory of Bourges dealt with a *prévôt* who taxed excessively following the removal of a defiant noble. The lord of Bourbon, Amon II, held the castles of Sainte-Sévère and Germigny located southwest and southeast of Bourges. While the distance between Sainte-Sévère and Bourges was fifty-five miles, Germigny was only thirty miles from Bourges. Subsequent to two military encounters with Amon II, Louis VI kept Sainte-Sévère in 1108 and Germigny in 1109.¹⁸³ Only well after the king came into possession of these two fortresses did records indicate the *prévôt* of Bourges beginning to exploit the city, some time between 1121 and 1136. Once the monarch had pushed aside Amon II as the dominant figure surrounding Bourges, the royal official filled the political and administrative power vacuum in the area and proceeded to implement heavy taxes on the priory of Bourges.

The area around the abbey of the Trinity of Morigny in Pithiviers underwent drastic changes as some fortifications disappeared and the crown bought others prior to

¹⁸² Suger, *The Deeds*, 85, 112.

¹⁸³ Suger, *The Deeds*, 59-60, 109.

prévôtal exploitation. Again, the location of Le Puiset was near this abbey, which suffered from the exactions of the *prévôt* of Yèvre-le-Châtel before the charter issued by the king in 1120. The last effort to refortify Le Puiset had occurred in 1118, just two years before the king created the charter of exemption. Louis VI had also purchased three castles in the area at Boësses, Chambon, and at Yèvre-le-Châtel itself, providing the necessary defenses to secure royal control of the area and ensure the dominance of the royal officials.¹⁸⁴ According to the charters, *prévôts* did not begin to abuse their authority until after the elimination of local lords, construction of new fortifications, or the purchase of castles. Once the *prévôts* began to abuse their privileges, the responsibility fell to the king to restrain his royal officials and by doing so, he was able to consolidate his authority on the local level through maintaining his control over the actions of the *prévôts*.

The arguments concerning the safe passage of communications in the royal domain, previously explained in chapter five, are also applicable to the general geographic locations of the majority of the decrees sent to the corrupt *prévôts*.¹⁸⁵ Early in the reign, hostile nobles intercepted royal communications dispatched south of Paris. All five charters referring specifically to unjust actions of *prévôts* originated south of Corbeil, Montlhéry, and Ferté-Baudoin, which was the exact direction in which the crown had formerly been unable to convey communications with any surety. Furthermore, of the eighteen fortifications that the king either destroyed or retained for himself, only five existed north of Paris. This shows the significant difficulty Louis VI had in communicating with his dependents in the south. Once the infrastructure strengthened,

¹⁸⁴ Bouquet, "Ex Continuatione," 12:123.

¹⁸⁵ See above, 56-57.

the king gained the ability to assess and manage the problems with local royal officials, which invariably benefited the Church.

Although all of the charters concern the clergy on some level, the *prévôts* implemented their exactions on the laity as well. Beaune-la-Rolande, previously mentioned in this chapter, was a town simply under the possession of an abbey and suffering from *prévôtal* aggression; however, there are no records of the king presenting exemptions for any individual or group not associated with the Church.¹⁸⁶ The reason for this lopsided documentation rested in the relationship between the crown and the clergy. As argued above, the role of the clergy in the various levels of government warranted protection of the Church from the king. High-ranking ecclesiastic officials, such as abbots and bishops, maintained the ability to communicate directly with the king and his administrative officers. This contact allowed the monasteries to bypass local courts operated by *prévôts* and appeal to the king's court, resulting in the charters of exemption. The peasantry did not possess the same privileges. People not associated with the Church were subject to the local courts and did not have the means to take their complaints of corruption to the king. Without the close connection between the Church and the crown, Louis VI could not have stopped the abuses of authority sustained by the *prévôts*.

The eradication of local lords was not enough to secure a new royal power base on the local level within the royal domain. Simply leaving the governmental management to the royal officials allowed them to exploit their offices to further their own interests. Instead, it was necessary for the king to retain an active role in limiting the extent of tax collection and the management of justice in the new areas of royal control. The *prévôts* held the same administrative and military privileges as the former nobles and

¹⁸⁶ See above, p. 68.

they more than likely used the new fortifications gained through the military accomplishments of the king, which gave them the potential to become a danger to royal control of the newly acquired territories. By carefully observing the actions of the *prévôts* and responding to the requests of the monasteries, he prevented these local officials from becoming the over-mighty subordinates who had given him so many problems throughout his reign. These limitations placed on the *prévôts* proved to benefit the monarchy even though those limitations reduced the rights of the king.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The reign of Louis VI ended in 1137, and his lasting legacy was one of increased royal power and prestige for the French monarchy. He contributed significantly to reclaiming authority within the royal domain and extending it into the largely independent territories of his vassals. Through his consistent cooperation with the French Church, he maintained the political and administrative support necessary to reduce the number of hostile castellans in the royal domain and to avert the unjust exploitations of royal officers. His royal right to defend monasteries provided him with the “weapon” to attack castellans hostile to the clergy and a “shield” of legal justification to call vassals to the royal court for their crimes and to secure all of the benefits of his military victories. When local officers abused their authority, the clergy was able to use its relationship with the king to bring attention to the issue and to end the exactions of the *prévôts*.

Louis VI contributed to the number of fortifications controlled by the king through both peaceful and coercive means and added to the financial and judicial rights of the monarchy. This brought the necessary security to the royal domain for the safe transmission of communications and travel. By focusing the majority of his military and administrative activities largely within the royal domain, he did not overextend his resources or lose sight of consolidating control of his immediate realm. Securing a

dominant control over the royal domain allowed his successors to operate more freely in the surrounding duchies and counties.

When the opportunities arose, such as the murder of Count Charles in Flanders or the capture of a bishopric under the direct protection of the monarchy in the Auvergne, Louis VI reestablished as many feudal bonds as his means allowed. These campaigns proved to the powerful vassals of the king that the crown was far from powerless. The improved geographical range of his activities and the recorded chronicles that approved of the king revitalized the prestige of the French throne. This allowed Louis VI to defend against a seemingly more powerful Holy Roman Emperor and stave off the English king. Through these actions, Louis VI was responsible for preserving the French monarchy. He demonstrated that the throne of his ancestors was reemerging as one of the dominant monarchies in Western Europe.

His greatest accomplishment was his consolidation of the authority he had gained, not allowing emerging local officials to usurp the royal rights he strove so hard to regain. Unlike the successors of Charlemagne, who granted provincial lords royal privileges bringing about the deconstruction of royal authority, Louis VI prevented his officials from reclaiming those privileges and using them independently from the king to further their own causes. When the use of royal rights went beyond the scope of the *prévôts'* authority, Louis VI decreased their responsibilities and privileges.

The monarchy that had once seemed headed for disintegration now turned towards centralization. Reconnecting the local government to the central administration by intervening in disputes involving the Church was a significant step towards state building. Within the royal domain, the crown reemerged as the supreme authority in

matters of justice, first through the subjugation of castellans, and second, through the regulation of the *prévôts*. While important, this was only an initial step in building the state of the kingdom. Eventually, in later generations, with increased territorial expansion, the need to develop the bureaucracy both in the central government and in the localities became clear as royal influence spread on the local level to previously independent duchies and counties. This culminated in the creation of the *seneschals*, one of whose functions was the direct supervision of the *prévôts* under Philip II. The achievements of Louis VI began the transition of the French kingdom from a kingship towards a medieval state.

This is not to say that Louis VI resolved the problem permanently. At the end of the reign, there was no formal procedure to limit the abuses of the *prévôts*. Throughout his reign, Louis VI handled each complaint made by the different clergymen on a case-by-case basis. He merely used his abilities to produce charters to contend with the government's inability to supervise the officials. Consequently, there was still a need to formalize a system of supervision for the local officials. Yet, eventually, with the precedents set by Louis VI, during the reign of Louis VII, the old administrator Abbot Suger would further diminish the *prévôts* as a threat to local royal control as he made these royal officials completely dependent on the crown. Further still in the reign of Philip II, the geographical area under direct royal control became the largest in over three hundred years. None of this would have been achievable without the foundation laid by Louis VI.

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Scope and Method of Study: Contemporary chronicles and government charters were examined to understand the condition and development of local authority under Louis VI, from 1101 to 1137, and how the French Church affected that development.

Findings and Conclusions: As the king began to consolidate authority within the royal domain, the Church played a crucial role in his ability to solidify the crown's control over local authority. The complaints of the monasteries and priories allowed Louis VI to bring the local nobles within the range of his royal justice and use military force when necessary to bring local government under royal supervision. As the insubordinate nobles lost authority, royal officials called *prévôts* replaced them in managing the local government. Soon, these officials began abusing their authority in much the same way that their predecessors had, which led to further complaints by the clergymen and additional royal intervention. Through this expansion of royal influence in the local government, the concept of the king altered, as his status within the French kingdom elevated from a weak political figure to a monarch recovering from centuries of continued alienations of royal rights and privileges.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Kristen Burkholder
