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Abstract: This article surveys the extensive registers of homages and *dénombrements* from the voyage of King Charles VI to Languedoc in 1389–1390 as evidence of the reinforcement of seigneurial power through interaction with the royal government. These records established a consensus view of aristocratic power in the seneschalsies of Toulouse and Carcassonne, but differentiated those who owed homage or fealty to the king. This distinction revealed a consistent gap within the stratification of social status and judicial rights of the men and women in these groups, even as references to lordship across this corpus remained stable. Lordship and nobility were thus malleable but separate concepts, and lordship cut across the divide between the categories of high and low justice often prioritized by normative models of power. The negotiations surrounding seigneurial authority suggest a decentralized and dynamic alternative to top-down models of the political development of the late medieval French kingdom.

Empowering Lordship in the Registers of Homage to Charles VI (Languedoc, 1389–1390)

In 1389, wrote the chronicler Jean Froissart, King Charles VI of France (r. 1380–1422) “desired and decided to visit his kingdom and to see the distant region of Languedoc, for a king in his youth ought to visit his lands and know his people, and to understand and learn how they were governed.”¹ This ambition reflected the challenge inherent to ruling the ever-expanding late medieval French kingdom. How was the royal administration at Paris to grasp local structures of power? As part of this undertaking, from September 1389 to February 1390, Charles received over four hundred aristocratic homages across the three seneschalsies of Languedoc (Figure 1).² This process exchanged information between the king and his tenants through two documents. The first was the royal letter attesting that homage and/or fealty had been performed. The second comprised the *aveu* and *dénombrement* (alternately referred to as a *dénommemment* or *dénomination*). Produced by the tenant but conforming to the standards of the central administration, they acknowledged (*avouer*) the terms on which the lands and rights concerned were held from the king, and declared in detail (*dénombrer*) their nature and extent.

¹ “Il ot dévotion et ymagination de visiter son royaume, voire les loingtaines marches de la Languedoch [...] car ung roy en sa jeunesse devoit visiter ses terres et congnoistre ses gens et sçavoir et apprendre comment ils estoient gouvernés”: Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Froissart*, 14:30–31. For an overview of this voyage, see Henneman, *Clisson*, ch. 8; Sumption, *Divided Houses*, 665–75, 713–17; Autrand, “L’Allée du roi”; Lehoux, *Jean de Berri*, 2:246–60; Rey, *Domaine*, 102–03, 122–24, 221–23; Guenée and Lehoux, *Entrées*, 8–9, 13–14. I am preparing a further article on its socio-political significance and logistical aspects.

² Petit, “Séjours,” 445–46. Unless otherwise specified hereafter, dates from September–December refer to 1389, and January–May to 1390.

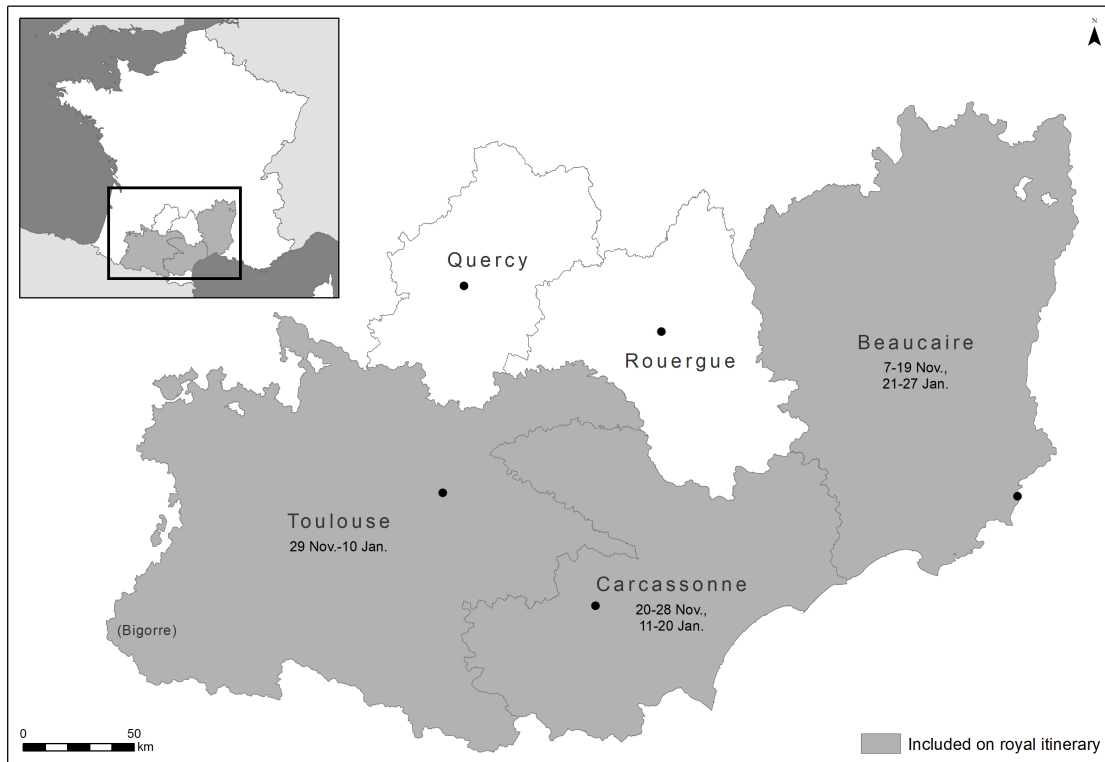


Figure 1. Map of the seneschalsies of Languedoc and their primary cities, with approximate dates of Charles VI's visit in each area.³

This documentary dialogue allowed the royal bureaucracy an increasingly systematized understanding of the king's aristocratic tenants from the thirteenth and especially the fourteenth centuries onwards. But as with other formulaic administrative records, these have often been dismissed as stereotypes of power, and certainly the pitfalls of “feudal” models of

³ Adapted from Pélaquier, *Atlas de Languedoc*, “Les sénéchaussées du Midi du XIIIe s. au XVe s.,” and drawn by Hans Blomme. I have identified locations where possible, according to *département*, *arrondissement*, and (as necessary) *commune*, with the help of the topographical dictionaries of Sabarthès, *L'Aude*; Thomas, *L'Hérault*; and Emile Connac, *Dictionnaire topographique du département de la Haute-Garonne*, 1882 (unpublished), consultable at <https://rosalis.bibliotheque.toulouse.fr/> (BMT, Num. Ms. 1694).

power as a means of social analysis are rightfully well-known.⁴ The need to make disparate, regional authorities transparent to the central administration could lead to a simplification and regularization of the forms of seigneurial power, especially with the progressive emergence of a conventional schema of hierarchical relations from 1250 or 1300.⁵ However, the intensified interaction between actual seigneurial practices and their documentary codification in the later medieval period only increases the need to scrutinize the feedback between them.⁶

After all, communicative processes between the royal center and local elites have begun to replace unilateral, top-down models of the emergence of new political structures in precisely this period. In this interpretation, administrative efforts to bring order to the growing kingdom offered those lower down the socio-political hierarchy a means of asserting control in return. Such mutually “empowering interactions” were essential to the stable distribution of power in a heterogeneous, compound polity like the French kingdom, where coexisting jurisdictions remained the norm.⁷ The conceptual implications of this process, which have foregrounded the role of peasants, urban elites, and representative assemblies, can be pushed further to shed light on the “convergence” between seigneurial and monarchical power structures.⁸

⁴ Marion, “Aveux,” 55–57; Brown, “Tyranny of a construct”; Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*, esp. 5–14. I refer to “aristocracy” rather than “nobility” in part because not all royal tenants were noble, but especially to foreground the actual exercise of power: Reuter, “Medieval Nobility,” 167–68. It is also advantageous to use a term rare in contemporary sources, which therefore cuts across and encompasses more diverse aspects of lay elite authority.

⁵ Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*, ch. 7, esp. 258–59; Taylor, “Formalising,” 50–55, 59–62.

⁶ Cf. Reuter, “Medieval Nobility,” 167, 183.

⁷ Blockmans, Holenstein, and Mathieu, *Empowering Interactions*, xxxiii–xxxiv; Holenstein, “Introduction,” 5, 26–28; Torre, “Intertwining Jurisdictions,” 319. Their research builds on Jean-Philippe Genet and Wim Blockmans’ project on the *Origins of the Modern State*, but revisits its premise of “state-building from above.”

⁸ Morsel, *L’Aristocratie*, 279.

Seen through this lens, the letters of homage, *aveux* and *dénombrements* from 1389 offered a consensus on aristocratic power between the king and his tenants that recognized regional diversity and established the respective authority of both parties. I will unpack this process in three stages. Through a close examination of how the 1389 documentary corpus came to be, I show that a distinction between the performance of homage and fealty offers a framework for assessing several sub-groups within this elite society. I then use these comparisons to demonstrate the malleability of and divergence between titles of nobility and lordship, which are often treated as both fixed and interchangeable. Finally, I develop the concept of lordship specifically through its associations with rights of justice, establishing different priorities among the regional aristocracy from those emphasized in the historiography on royal jurisdiction. Ultimately, the royal administration's efforts to disaggregate hierarchical groups amid the ongoing fluidity of different concepts of aristocratic authority sheds light on the resilience of that power in a period of political change.

From Homage to Register

Charles VI's encounter with his Occitan tenants is now documented primarily through three registers or inventories of letters of homage and *dénombrements* (Table 1):

<i>Manuscript</i>	<i>Pages</i>	<i>Century of MS (date range of entries)</i>	<i>Contents and original title (if applicable)</i>	<i>Seneschalsies</i>
AN, P 1143	132 numbered paper folios + 25 folio table	14 (1389–1390)	Summaries of letters of homage and <i>dénombrements</i> , arranged by seneschalsy (421 entries) “The register of the homages to our lord the king made during his voyage in Languedoc, which were given to the personnel of the accounts established in the said land” ⁹	Beaucaire (29 entries), Bigorre (3 entries), Carcassonne (130 entries), Toulouse (240 entries), Quercy (2 entries), and “several seneschalsies” (17 entries for lands in some combination of the above areas plus Rouergue) ¹⁰
AN, P 591	150 parchment folios + 14 folio table	14 (1389–1390)	Summaries of letters of homage/fealty and full text of <i>dénombrements</i> (184 entries) “Book of fiefs concerning the homage and oath of fealty done to the king and to his seneschal in the seneschalsy of Carcassonne and Béziers in the year 1389” ¹¹	Carcassonne
BMT, MS 634	127 numbered paper folios	17 (1389–1494)	Excerpts of <i>dénombrements</i> , arranged geographically and chronologically; reprises 2 lost registers from the seneschalsy archives of Toulouse ¹²	Toulouse (<i>jugeries</i> of Lauragais [subsection, diocese of Mirepoix], Rieux, Albigeois, Villelongue; omits Rivière, Verdun, <i>viguerie</i> of Toulouse)

Table 1. Overview of the primary manuscripts containing the homages and *dénombrements* from Charles VI’s southern voyage: Paris, Archives Nationales (hereafter AN), P 1143 and P 591, and Toulouse, Bibliothèque Municipale (hereafter BMT), MS 634.

⁹ “Le registre des hommages fais au roy nostre seigneur durant son voyage de Languedoc qui ont este bailliez aus gens des comptes ordenez *de par ycelui seigneur* oudit pais *de Languedoc*”: AN, P 1143, f. 1 (italics indicate interlinear notes added in a different hand). An early cover entitled it “Homages faiz en Languedoc en lan mil ccc iii^{xx} ix, le roy estant oudit pays.”

¹⁰ Beaucaire begins on f. 1; Carcassonne, f. 11; Toulouse, f. 52, 85v (plus a false start on f. 16); Quercy (*condam Caours*), f. 85; “plusieurs senelchauciees,” f. 124; Bigorre, f. 132.

¹¹ “Liber feodorum de homagio et juramento fidelitatis factis regi et eius senescallo in senescallia Carcassone et Bicteriis ab anno mil ccc iii^{xx}ix,” according to an inventory of the *Chambre des comptes* undertaken in 1489, which also noted its red binding: AN, P 1139, f. 29v.

¹² The entries in MS 634 refer to two volumes: the “livre cotte n° 2 armoire 4e,” its primary source, and “n° 1.” The 1669–70 inventory by François Joffre did indeed describe cabinet 4, no. 2, as a green-bound volume of 200 written parchment folios with homages and *dénombrements* to the king from 1389–1447 (sic, but the cross-references from MS 634 belie this end-date); since he noted that the register was signed on 15 September 1395 by Pierre Barradat, the fifteenth-century material was likely later added piecemeal: ADHG, 1A 2, vol. 1, f. 83v (and cf. no. 3, summaries of the 1389 homages in Toulouse and elsewhere). The so-called register 1 was probably that in *armoire* 6, identified by several early modern extracts of *dénombrements* as a “Liber (or Registrum) homagiorum et fidelitatis juramentorum”: AMT, II54/3 (Arnaud Bernardin [AN, P 1143, f. 105v], 1533); ADHG, 1 J 720, no. 36 (Jeanne de Terride [AN, P 1143, f. 98v], 1645); AMT, II93/23 (Jacques de Montaut [AN, P 1143, f. 64], 1666); but cf. Archives Départementales de l’Aude (hereafter ADA), 8 J 4 (Antoine Mage [AN, P 1143, f. 93], s.d., probably after 1690), which describes a *liasse*. In 1690, the archives of all the seneschalsies of Languedoc were transferred by royal edict to the *Cour des comptes, aides et finances* of Montpellier, where most were subsequently destroyed in the Revolution: Martin-Chabot, *Les Archives*, i, vi, ix–xii, xxiii–iv (and xxiv–vi on Joffre’s inventory).

These complex sources sit at the intersection of several scholarly discussions regarding the evolution of the later medieval administration. Underlying the surviving texts was a ritual action, the actual performance of fealty or homage. While earlier historiography held that the ceremony declined in importance in the later Middle Ages in favor of written documents that mediated these ever more distant hierarchical relationships, we now recognize this as a misleading dichotomy: rather, the physical and written acts reinforced one another.¹³ Similarly, an emphasis on the production of registers as evidence of an increasingly “rational” approach to bureaucracy from the thirteenth century on has given way to an awareness of how registration responded to the contingent social and political needs of the government.¹⁴ At the same time, this centralizing view of the collection of homages and compilation of registers as tools of state or princely authority must be balanced by our understanding of these processes as a series of interactions and interpretations by multiple participants: the tenant and the king, of course, but also the notary or other administrative professionals involved in the composition of each text, and the royal clerks who accepted them for their records and summarized them.¹⁵ An understanding of how these records came to be is thus not only a prerequisite for undertaking effective quantitative analysis, but actually underpins why such analysis is useful in the first place. In the following discussion, I stress how the distinction between homage and fealty remained salient at successive levels of documentation, and how different interests

¹³ Andenmatten, “L’Hommage vassalique,” surveys this shift and its implications for studying late medieval homage; cf. Johans, *Armagnacs*, 171; and Weiler, “Meaning of Ritual,” for the thirteenth century. I am grateful to Prof. Andenmatten for sharing his work with me prior to publication.

¹⁴ Bourlet, Bove, and Claustre, “Les Acteurs,” 181–82; Gauvard, “Conclusion,” 82.

¹⁵ Morsel, “Quand enregistrer,” 415; Nieuw, “Formes et fonctions,” 152; Hicks, “Personal Monarchy,” 17–18; Mattéoni, “Conclusion,” 517.

contributed towards a dynamic yet regulated portrayal of power.

Two ceremonial processes, the homage and the oath of fealty (*serment de feaulte*), established relationships between the king and his tenants. Generally speaking, the homage indicated a pledge of service, represented by joining hands and exchanging a kiss, while fealty meant a promise of loyalty, sworn on holy objects.¹⁶ However, in the context of Charles' voyage, the most significant difference lay in who took part in each ritual. Guillaume du Vivier's *aveu* explained the procedural difference between these obligations: "he holds everything from our said lord the king by oath of fealty to be given to the lord seneschal of Carcassonne in the name of our said lord the king, and by homage to be done to the said lord king himself."¹⁷ The homage was performed in person in the king's presence, while the oath of fealty entailed a greater social distance.¹⁸ There was in practice, however, some blurring of the theoretical lines. Charles received directly thirteen oaths of fealty during his voyage, while a few tenants who ought to have done homage gave only their *serment* after his departure.¹⁹

¹⁶ For a concise overview of each ceremony, see Evergates, "Fealty," and "Homage." For further complexities of aspects of these ritual acts, see Hyams, "Homage and Feudalism," esp. 15–26; Major, "Bastard Feudalism"; and Andenmatten, "L'Hommage vassalique" (the latter two are especially relevant to the later medieval period).

¹⁷ "Omnia tenet a dicto domino nostro rege sub fidelitatis juramento prestando domino senescallo Carcassone nomine dicti domini nostri regis et sub homagio ipsi domino nostro regi faciendo": AN, P 591, no. 43; see BMT, MS 641, f. 79v, for his fealty. Cf. AN, P 1143, f. 40, for a similar statement.

¹⁸ Perhaps for this reason, Timbal, *Annexion*, 40n4, associated the *aveu* and *dénombrement* with the performance of fealty, but while seneschal's court handled both tasks the two processes were independent, at least in 1389, and often took place on different days (even months apart) and sometimes even in different seneschalsies.

¹⁹ AN, P 1143, ff. 46v, 72v–73v, 101v, 106, 115, 122, 123, 126v; AN, P 591, nos. 165, 176. More broadly, the social implications of each act were not clear-cut, and varied by time, place, and context; for ongoing debate on homage versus fealty, especially in canon law, see Ryan, "Oath of Fealty," and Pennington, "Feudal Oath."

Nevertheless, homage and fealty were consistently recognized as distinct processes, with the potential to mark differences in hierarchical relationships.

Both homage and fealty were then represented textually by the king's tenants and the royal administration. As the following example from the 1389 registers shows, this exchange relied on a useful blend of conventionality and specificity:²⁰

Milord Guillaume-Arnaud de Château-Verdun, knight, did faith and homage to the king our lord for a certain part of the lordship of Floure (Aude, Carcassonne), and for all that he holds and should hold from the king our lord in the said seneschalsy of Carcassonne, as appears by the letters of the king our said lord given the 27th day of December 1389.

And the said knight has presented the *aveu* and *dénombrement* of the fief which he holds in the

Charbonnier, *Autre France*, 407n3, views the distinction as especially characteristic of the south, but even here we can see an evolution. For eleventh- and twelfth-century Languedoc, Débax, *Féodalité*, 158, 212, concluded that fealty was the more fundamental commitment, while homage was a common but less strict and, in effect, less necessary form of obligation. In 1389, all tenants still owed fealty, and just over half of them owed homage as well—a rate, in fact, somewhat lower than that found by Débax (210) in her small sample of infeudations. However, the balance of homage and fealty no longer privileged the latter. An administrator's note on the *dénombrement* of Jacques Vital, lord of Ensérune (Hérault, Béziers), questioned whether Jacques owed homage for his lands or, as Jacques had claimed, the “oath of fealty alone (*simplement*)”: AN, P 1143, 20 bis. This position contrasts sharply with that of the lord of Brissac in 1122, who had readily acknowledged homage but resisted the oath of fealty: Débax, *Féodalité*, 141, 216. Still, some ambiguity remained: in March 1390, Pierre Lenoir de la Redorte held lands both “by oath of fidelity alone and no more (*solum et dumtaxat*),” and “not only by homage [...] but also by oath of fidelity (*non solum ad prestationem homagii [...] sed etiam ad prestacionem juramenti fidelitatis*)”: AN, P 591, 156. The causes of this shift are beyond the scope of the present study, but it should be noted that there is no particular correlation between the domains confiscated during the Albigensian Crusade, thereafter subject to the customary laws of Paris (cf. Timbal, *Annexion*, 39–83), and the obligations of fealty or homage.

²⁰ Cf. the findings of Marion, “Aveux,” and Johans, “Hommages et reconnaissances.”

seneschalsy of Carcassonne as follows, by letters sealed with the seal of the court of the seneschal of Carcassonne, given at Carcassonne the 14th day of January 1389 [o. s.]. And the said lord Guillaume gave his *dénombrement* as follows. And first, the place of Floure in low jurisdiction up to 60 *sous tournois*, and the high jurisdiction belongs to the said lord our king, and he [Guillaume] has annual rents in the said place and collects as follows. First, in annual fees, 100 *s.t.* Likewise, in customary monetary levies, 5 *s.t.* or thereabouts. Likewise, in grain levies, three measures of barley or thereabouts. Likewise, in harvest taxes, three measures of grain or thereabouts. Likewise, in fixed rent, two hens or thereabouts. Likewise, he has the fees from property sales and transfers in the said place, worth each year 10 *s.t.* or thereabouts. Likewise, the profits of jurisdiction each year are worth approximately 20 *s.t.*²¹

The first part summarized the distinctive features of the letter of homage: the individual's name, the type of ceremony (*foy et hommage* or *serment de feaulte*), brief details of their holdings in the relevant seneschalsy, and the date of the letters issued at the ceremony.²² These documents

²¹ “Messire Guillaume Arnault de Chasteau Verdun, chevalier, a fait foy et homage au roy nostre seigneur de certaine partie de la seignorie de Floren et de tout ce quil tient et doit tenir du roy nostre seigneur en la dicte seneschaucie de Carcassonne, sicomme il appart par les letres du roy nostredit seigneur donneez le xxvii jour de decembre lan mil ccc iii^{xx} et neuf. Et le dit chevalier a baille ladveu et denomenament du fief quil tient en la seneschaucie de Carcassonne ainsi quil sensuit par letres seellees du seel de la court du seneschal de Carcassonne, donneez a Carcassonne le xiiii^e jour de janvier m ccc iii^{xx} et neuf. Et dictus dominus Guillelmus denominavit ut sequitur. Et primo locum de Florano in bassa juridictione usque ad lx s.t., et alta juridictio est dicti domini nostri regis, et habet in redditibus annualibus in dicto loco et percipit que sequuntur. Primo in quista annuali c s.t. Item in usaticis denarionum v s.t. vel circa. Item in usaticis bladi tria sestaria ordeï vel circa. Item in tasquis tria sestaria bladi vel circa. Item in censibus annualibus ii gallinas vel circa. Item habet laudimia et forsicapia in dicto loco valentia pro anno x s.t. vel circa. Item emolumenta jurisdictionis vel circa pro anno valent xx s.t.”: AN, P 591, no. 66.

²² Some letters mention only “all that s/he holds,” rather than specific fief(s). Odart Morchesne's formulary, compiled for Charles VII's chancellery in 1427, criticized this usage: Guyotjeannin and Lusignan, *Formulaire*, 4.1.a.

were drawn up by a chancellery clerk (or, in the case of fealty, the seneschal's administration), generally in French; but they relied in part on information transmitted, quite possibly orally during the ceremony, by the tenant themselves. The full letters would also contain standard phrases instructing local officials to recognize the tenant's legitimate claim. The *Chambre des comptes*, which registered these notifications of homage, would then only release the letters to the tenant and regional officials after they received the *dénombrement* in due form.²³

This *dénombrement* likewise outlined specific information according to a broadly consistent format. It listed each property in turn, noted any jurisdiction, and described whatever other rights came with that holding and their approximate annual value. Other information could include specific buildings, sub-tenants or co-lords, financial or service obligations to the king, and (in Carcassonne) the particular legal regime under which the land was held. The length of any given *dénombrement* thus varied significantly depending on not only the size of a lord's estate, but on how in-depth their characterization went, though on the whole these particular *dénombrements* were "very extensive and detailed," according to a later compiler.²⁴ Again, these documents were the product of input from both the tenant, who knew what they held, and the notary, secretary, or court official who knew how to write it up in Latin or, about a third of the time, in Occitan. And while tenants may have been tempted to

²³ See AN, P 1143, f. 128, for an example of the stages of this process, including the letter issued in the king's name by the chancellery, the letter sent out by the *Chambre*, and the *dénombrement*. Morchesne's formulary made special note of the *Chambre*'s obligation not to release the letter to the tenant until the receipt of the *dénombrement*, and was particularly attentive to the Crown's rights in this regard: Guyotjeannin and Lusignan, *Formulaire*, 4.1.b–c. On the other hand, sometimes the *Chambre* neglected to release the letter even then, provoking complaints: AN, P 1143, f. 50v. On the processing of these letters, see Jassemin, *Chambre des comptes*, 236–43.

²⁴ "Fort amples et par le menu": ADA, 4 E 69, f. 74, specifically those from the seneschalsy of Carcassonne.

underreport the value of their property to minimize royal exploitation, there was also a countervailing pressure to ensure that the full extent of their rights were adequately documented, for the *dénombrement* could substantiate such claims for years to come.²⁵ What resulted was an agreed-upon version of reality, processed to suit both sides.

The earliest of the surviving registers from Charles' voyage, AN P 1143, was produced to document the exchange of information between the king and his tenants as it happened. This register was begun en route, incorporating paper in use by the municipal government of Toulouse in the late 1380s, and was wrapped up soon after the return to Paris.²⁶ Organized by seneschalsy in the order of the royal itinerary and progressing roughly day-by-day, the register was apparently used to collate the paperwork passing through the hands of several accountants. They recorded the homage details first, leaving space below for a brief summary of the *dénombrement* in French, so that in a few cases longer entries had to be crammed in.²⁷ The corresponding entry for the sample *dénombrement* above reads:

The said knight has presented the *aveu* and *dénombrement* of the high and low justice and lordship of the place of Floure and of its appurtenances to the accountants of the king our said lord

²⁵ Cf. Charbonnier, *Autre France*, 20–21.

²⁶ P 1143 features two styles of watermark (each with variations): a pear or fig with two leaves, and a tulip. Both were commonly found on late-fourteenth-century paper from southern France and elsewhere (see similar examples and remarks in Briquet, *Filigranes*, 2: nos. 6639, 7345–71). One of the fruit designs corresponds exactly with AMT, CC1851, f. 92, and CC1853, f. 117 (treasurer's accounts for 1385–87 and 1387–88, respectively), noted in their "Base de données 'Filigranes'": <https://www.archives.toulouse.fr/archives-en-ligne/consultez-les-archives-numerisees/les-filigranes-anciens>. Véronique Gorczynski of the Archives Nationales generously verified the watermarks for me during the pandemic. The latest date mentioned was 17 May 1390: AN, P 1143, f. 6.

²⁷ See, for instance, AN, P 1143, ff. 12v, 54v. Changes of ink show how entries were updated when the *dénombrement* was received or filed, e.g. ff. 2v–3.

established for the land of Languedoc, as appears by the letters of the said *aven*, given the 14th day of January 1389 [o. s.]. And they have been filed with the others.²⁸

These synopses identified the main fief(s), if not listed under the letter of homage, and sometimes rights of justice, but left aside the financial details.²⁹ The final note showed that the *dénombrement* had been quite literally strung together with the other letters of the same type.³⁰ Some 70 letters which could not be fully processed by the time of the king's departure from Languedoc also noted they were sent separately, between the end of January and mid-May.³¹

P 1143 shows clear signs of being a working document, with regular edits that vary in scale from corrected words to whole entries struck out (usually transcriptions under the wrong seneschalsy). Thirty *dénombrement* entries were left blank, though this does not always mean

²⁸ “Le dit chevalier a baillie ladveu et denommement de la haulte et basse juridicion et seigneurie du lieu de Flourenne et des appartenances pardevers les gens des comptes du roy nostre dit seigneur ordonnez ou pays de Languedoc, sicomme il appert par les lettres du dit adveu donnees le xiiiie jour de janvier mil ccc iiiixx et neuf. Et sont enfileez avec les semblables”: AN, P 1143, f. 35.

²⁹ Earlier in the trip this information was usually spelled out in the homage, but it became increasingly relegated to the *dénombrement* thereafter; I suspect that as things got busier the accountants found it easier to simply note the homages as they occurred and copy the details from the *dénombrement* in due course.

³⁰ Cf. Bruel, *Série P*, xvi–xvii, on the material conditions of the *Dépôt des Fiefs*.

³¹ 47 of the entries that record a date “exped.” in this way were for homages in January as the king returned from Toulouse, while 21 were from November or December (2 are of unknown date). The royal accountants seem to have spent much of February processing these weeks-old submissions. By March, with the court back in Paris, the gap narrows between the acceptance date of the *dénombrement* and the send-out of the homage letter; it is unclear whether these later submissions (most notably in April, from the seneschalsy of Beaucaire, which may have also impacted the gaps in recorded *dénombrements* discussed above) reflected a delay in the presentation of the *dénombrement*, in its approval by the seneschalsy courts, or in the accounting of the *Chambre des comptes*.

there was no *dénombrement*.³² Conversely, a few extant documents scattered around the archives are absent from this compilation.³³ These errors probably reflect the pressures of handling the volume of paperwork while on the move. They can, however, be instructive: while homage was the expected ceremony during the king's voyage, the distinction between homage and fealty was still given particular attention in P 1143, as mistakes in writing the one for the other were assiduously corrected.³⁴

On the heels of this immediate need to deal with the incoming and outgoing paperwork, came the issue of preserving and using these records long-term. The clerks of the *Chambre* clearly saw ongoing value in the abbreviated records of P 1143, since they furnished it with a table of contents to facilitate the navigation of its entries. For all its rough edges, the register effectively surveyed the king's transactions with his tenants during the voyage, and the accompanying administrative feat. More practical, however, were the separate registers containing the complete *dénombrements* for each seneschalsy alongside their letters of homage. Such volumes were kept by both the central and regional administrations. The *Chambre* was interested in preserving the king's knowledge of his domain (an act of governance in itself).³⁵ The seneschals' records helped them supervise feudal tenures, and offered a local repository

³² See for instance the homage of Raymond-Aton d'Apelle, without a *dénombrement* in AN, P 1143, f. 111; and excerpts from his *dénombrement* two days prior in BMT, MS 634, ff. 81v, 83, 84, 87v, 90v, 91. Six other gaps resulted from duplicate entries.

³³ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (hereafter BNF), MS nouvelles acquisitions latines 2090, no. 240 (Pierre *Manentis*); Carcassonne, Archives Départementales de l'Aude, 2 J 1016/2, doc. 6 (Ermengaud de Cascastel); and cf. BMT, MS 634.

³⁴ AN, P 1143, ff. 101v, 106, 115, 121v, 128v.

³⁵ Cf. Mattéoni, "Conclusion," 517.

of these carefully documented rights from which official copies could be drawn for legal evidence or to replace lost or damaged copies in family archives.³⁶ Each process of registration reveals different considerations that impact the interpretive possibilities today.

The register for Carcassonne held in the *Chambre des comptes*, now AN, P 591, was a finalized reference rather than a checklist like P 1143.³⁷ Nevertheless, it too was preoccupied with retaining the distinctive information over the generic. Most notably, in transcribing the *dénombrements*, the clerks tended to launch straight into the property list and omit the original introductory clauses, which varied from the formality of a notary's *instrument publique* ("Let all know that so-and-so recognizes and acknowledges that they have, hold, and possess...") to more casual constructions along the lines of, "I, so-and-so, recognize that I hold," or, "The following is the *dénombrement* made by so-and-so."³⁸ We must therefore rely primarily on the letters of homage for the tenants' personal details, and on the *dénombrement* for details of their properties, though I will consider the interplay between the two more fully later on.

The contents of P 591 are largely complementary with the section on the seneschalsy

³⁶ See the examples cited above, note 12; Contamine, "La Seigneurie," 27; Charbonnier, *Autre France*, 20.

³⁷ Similar registers were once held by the seneschalsy. These included a book "covered by wooden bookboards (*aix*) in white sheepskin (*bazanne blanche*)" of 128 parchment folios: BMT, MS 641, ff. 27 (c. 1650). This manuscript is in turn related to two other collections: BMT, MS 642 (sixteenth century), and ADA, 4 E 69 (formerly Carcassonne, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 9551/MS 87) (seventeenth century); and cf. Montpellier, Archives Départementales de l'Hérault, 203 J 73–77. However, BMT, MS 641 is the most complete and reliable for the sections which concern us here. The original *dénombrements* seem to have likewise been kept by the seneschalsy: BNF, Languedoc Doat 252, ff. 205–10v.

³⁸ "Noverint universi quod [...] recognovit et confessus fuit se tenere et possidare"; "Jeu [...] reconoc a tenir"; "Aysso es la denominacio que fa...": AN, P 591, respectively ff. 110v–11, 18v, 8v. Often, these included the statement of the *aven*, unless those clauses appeared later in the document.

of Carcassonne in P 1143. Only 22 entries from the latter are absent in P 591, and the dates given in both largely agree.³⁹ More significant inconsistencies shed light on how the accountants navigated the complexities of the documentary trail. Multiple *dénombrements* could be produced if a lord held property in more than one seneschalsy; held lands in their own right alongside tutelage of a minor; or indeed, held some lands by homage and others by fealty.⁴⁰ Omissions in a *dénombrement* could also be corrected at a later date (though some simply chose to preemptively disclaim responsibility for any unintentional oversights).⁴¹ Given this tendency for proliferation, it is unsurprising that P 591 featured errors of collation, switching the *dénombrements* of two individuals with the same name or copying the *dénombrement* for the wrong lands; fortunately, comparison with P 1143 helps unknot most of these tangles.⁴²

But P 591 also goes beyond P 1143 to incorporate the oaths of fealty from the few months following Charles VI's departure, and even takes these two phases as its organizing principle. The entries in P 591 are divided into two sections: the first comprises 101 entries, all of which appear in P 1143; but the second, labelled "seremens de feaulte," consists of 83

³⁹ The few minor discrepancies were likely mis-copied Roman numerals: AN, P 591, nos. 9, 15, 22, 54, 67, 69.

⁴⁰ Multiple seneschalsies: AN, P 1143, e.g. ff. 14/53v, 30/97v, 60/85, 127v, 128v; but see ff. 124, 128, 136v, and AN, P 591, no. 99, where they were combined. Tutelage: AN, P 1143, e.g. ff. 12v/16v, 25/74, 88v/90; contrast these with lands held jointly by the tutor and pupil: AN, P 1143, f. 40; AN, P 591, nos. 2–4, 47, 91. Homage versus fealty: AN, P 1143, ff. 27, 83/106; AN, P 591, nos. 12, 45, 56/156, 118.

⁴¹ Addenda: AN, P 1143, ff. 58/60v; AN, P 591, nos. 12, 14, 19, 129; omissions: AN, P 591, e.g. nos. 78, 119.

⁴² See e.g. AN, P 591, nos. 19, 67, and AN, P 1143, ff. 19, 35v (Pierre Helié junior and senior); AN, P 591, no. 61, and AN, P 1143, ff. 30, 97v (Bonne de la Tour), cf. Toulouse, Archives Municipales (hereafter AMT), II91/7, for her surviving letter of homage for Toulouse; AN, P 591, no. 10, and AN, P 1143, ff. 14, 53v (Bernard de Saint-Félix); AN, P 591, no. 4, and AN, P 1143, ff. 12v, 16v (Jacqueline de Bruyères); AN, P 591, no. 49 (cf. 118), and AN, P 1143, ff. 27, 114v (Bernard Bonne d'Hautpoul and Bernard d'Hautpoul).

entries, of which only 2 relate to those in P 1143. In fact, the homagers also owed the oath of fealty, but many of them had already fulfilled this obligation prior to the king's visit.⁴³ Rather, P 591 presents only the oaths received by Pierre Boyer in his capacity as regent for the seneschalsy after the removal of Roger d'Espagne from his post along with the other two sitting seneschals of Languedoc on 1 January, until 17 March when Pierre de Mornay was appointed in Roger's place.⁴⁴ This chronology explains why this register was compiled by at least three scribes who appear, from the occasional Occitanisms in their French, to have been from the area.⁴⁵ It was probably composed at the end of his tenure and provided to the *Chambre des comptes* as a final, official record of the transactions associated with this particular "project."

Unfortunately, we cannot recover the same before-and-after picture for the other seneschalsies, as their comparable registers have been lost. Their long-term relevance at the regional level, however, is attested by BMT, MS 634, drawn from the Toulouse register some three centuries later. Rather than transcribing individual documents, the compilers inventoried the material geographically, listing places alphabetically within each *jugierie* (judicial district), then proceeding chronologically through the *dénombrements* and homages for each location.⁴⁶ This approach facilitated an understanding of the domain, at the expense of the people or documents involved, which may have been seen as less pertinent centuries later. Accordingly,

⁴³ BMT, MS 641, ff. 78–88, attests a steady stream of oaths of fealty from the summer of 1389 on; cf. AN, P 591, no. 175.

⁴⁴ Sumption, *Divided Houses*, 713; Dupont-Ferrier, *Gallia regia*, 1:nos. 4877–78, 4927.

⁴⁵ E.g. *rial* (nos. 8, 139), *senesqual[ia]* (no. 23), *notari* (no. 52), *thesauraria* (no. 164). Nevertheless, it was not identical to the registers kept by the local administration: 7 of the 22 entries omitted from P 591 can be found in BMT, MS 641.

⁴⁶ Cf. Van Elsuwé, "Jugeries."

snippets from any given *dénombrement* appear scattered across this record, preserving the details (in French translation) but stripping them of their original context.⁴⁷ If this register cannot offer the same scope of analysis as the contemporary volumes, just over three-quarters of the *dénombrements* in P 1143 reappear in MS 634, so that it rounds out the earlier material to delineate a sample of Toulousain homagers alongside those of Carcassonne.⁴⁸

Altogether, this corpus yields an unusually detailed picture of lordship in the Languedoc region at a single point in time, including 507 people with stakes in more than 1,000 properties held from the king.⁴⁹ Although it is representative rather than exhaustive, both the size of the sample and its breadth, from lords with numerous tenants of their own to people who held nothing more than a field or cow-shed, make it eminently suitable for the analysis of “ordinary” aristocratic power.⁵⁰ Moreover, the discursive context of this information shows how the attributes of regional lordship were worked out between the local elites and the crown.

⁴⁷ Compare, for instance, the *dénombrement* of Jacques de Montaut, copied in AMT, II93/29, with BMT, MS 634: in order, the same information is found on ff. 2, 32, 81v, 2v, 2, 85v, 2v/92v, 2v. On the other hand, cross-references to the original registers would have formerly allowed users to trace this information back to its source.

⁴⁸ At the same time, MS 634 contains information from thirty-eight records not attested in P 1143, but I omit these from the discussion as their context cannot be verified.

⁴⁹ This figure excludes the neighbors, co-lords, sub-tenants, and so on who were also mentioned in these documents: a larger project focusing on these networks would certainly yield productive results.

⁵⁰ Several clear gaps demonstrate the data’s incompleteness. Some documents named co-lords whose own paperwork we lack (if it was ever produced): e.g. AN, P 591, nos. 16 and 17, 20 and 43 (cf. no. 21). Not all the shares in a given lordship were necessarily represented here: e.g. BMT, MS 634, f. 40; AN, P 591, nos. 169, 170. Some lords had already performed homage earlier in Charles VI’s reign, especially in 1383, 1387 and 1388, including members of the Lévis, Voisins, and Bruyères families, among the foremost in the region: AN, P 1143, ff. 16v, 45, 128, 128v. Others must have held lands only from other overlords, or without such obligations at all.

By using the letters of homage and the *dénombrements* in tandem, as complementary interpretations of a given scenario from different perspectives, we can more effectively understand the structural significance of key characteristics of aristocratic authority, and the degree to which these remained dynamic points of reference rather than fixed.

At the same time, the central government's documentary efforts aimed to curate the heterogeneity of the regional aristocracy into a coherent order. The boundary between homage and fealty, first physically enacted and then replicated in P 1143 and especially in P 591, was far from delineating two wholly separate social groups within the tangled networks of the local elite. However, its persistence makes it a useful lens for analyzing the distribution of power among royal tenants. I will compare and contrast patterns of status and power in three groups, designated as "homage" groups for each of Toulouse and Carcassonne, as well as a "fealty" group for Carcassonne, as they are outlined in the manuscripts.⁵¹ This schematic approach highlights sufficiently robust trends that, whatever fuzziness blurred their borders, it is clear that the two homage groups followed one trajectory and the fealty group another.

Categories of Nobility and Lordship

Nobility has long been the preeminent analytical category for research on French aristocratic society and its political relationships with the monarchy in the later Middle Ages.

⁵¹ This approach counts one person twice: AN, P 591, nos. 56, 156. Pierre Lenoir, or Lenoir de la Redorte, initially produced a *dénombrement* (in Occitan) for all of his properties on 20 December, before performing homage on 27 December; he then gave his *serment* on 1 March, followed by a second *dénombrement*, this time in Latin, which detailed mainly those properties for which he did not owe homage. I have also omitted the handful of churchmen who appeared here, as I am concerned with individual rather than institutional lordship: AN, P 591, nos. 134, 135; AN, P 1143, ff. 46, 116, 123v.

It has, in effect, become a catch-all term for aristocratic power *tout court*, inextricable from and interchangeable with lordship and fiefholding.⁵² This conflation is not necessarily surprising given the predominance of the upper echelons of the aristocracy in scholarship on the kingdom as a whole, for dukes, counts, and barons were inevitably noble.⁵³ More broadly still, Philippe Contamine has argued for an “organic link” between nobility and “the feudo-seigneurial regime.” That is, although some lordships were held by non-nobles and some nobles lacked fiefs, most often nobility and seigneurial fiefholding went hand-in-hand. Medieval lists of aristocratic titles could thus move seamlessly from dukes, counts, and barons—all titles associated with specific holdings—to knights, squires, and gentlemen.⁵⁴

Despite their close association, however, it is more critically useful to disentangle the concepts of nobility, feudal tenure, and lordship. In the 1389 corpus, nobility remained the most prevalent means of identifying social standing, but it was complicated by the two forms of tenurial relationships. The nobles of Carcassonne and Toulouse were more likely to owe homage than fealty alone, while the fealty group identified a higher proportion of non-noble titles. Moreover, the framework of noble status was distinct from and complementary to that of lordship, as seigneurial titles were less frequently used but more evenly spread across the entire sample. The flexibility of such referents in these documents, as well as their distributions across tenant groups, shows that the different aspects of aristocratic power, status, and

⁵² See for instance Caron, *Noblesse*, 31–38, 127–28, 155–57; Prosser, “*Noblesse*,” 189. The collection *Seigneurs et seigneuries* and Charbonnier, *Autre France*, are notable in foregrounding lordship, though some interchangeability with *noblesse* remains in both cases.

⁵³ Lewis, *Polity*, 195–99; Cazelles, *Société*, 64–67.

⁵⁴ Contamine, *Noblesse*, 9, 77–78; Contamine, “*Chevalerie*,” 285. For an overview of the debates surrounding the evolution and relationships of such categories earlier in the Middle Ages, see Morsel, *L’Aristocratie*, 116–26.

relationships were neither monolithic nor fully integrated at the level of either the regional elite or even the royal administration.

Comparing social standing within this sample requires some caution. The letters of homage specified an individual's rank or position for only about half the people involved, but the absence of such designations was not automatically significant.⁵⁵ *Dénombrements* could include titles omitted by the letter of homage (or vice versa), and even if neither mentioned nobility, another tenant's paperwork might; but relying on such chance cross-references risks distortion.⁵⁶ In later centuries, there seems to have been an impulse to regularize this discourse: MS 634 and other early modern compilations often described individuals as "noble," but these cannot be conflated with contemporary labels. The primary move towards systematization by the medieval compilers lies in their preference for the formulation in the letter of homage over that of the *dénombrement*, so often omitted. I have chosen to follow their lead in my quantitative assessment to achieve a maximum consistency across these sources, although the results must be contextualized with these considerations in mind. As an additional advantage, the letters of homage favored specific designations, such as *chevalier*, *écuyer*, *maître*, and so on, over the "generic" classification of *noble*, yielding a more detailed picture of the social

⁵⁵ Toulouse: 127 out of 259 individuals (49 percent); Carcassonne (homage group): 81 of 149 (54 percent); Carcassonne (fealty group): 32 of 99 (32 percent).

⁵⁶ The few *dénombrements* with clauses introducing the tenant suggest these letters of homage were no more or less likely than the *dénombrements* to include or omit noble and seigneurial titles. Such variations presumably came about based on what was said, understood, transcribed, and approved when each document was drawn up. For an unusually thorough illustration of miscommunication at some stage(s) of this process, compare the familial relationships outlined in the letter of homage and the *dénombrement* in AN, P 591, no. 173.

stratification of these groups.⁵⁷

This approach, however, privileges masculine categories of status: only *damoiseau* had a female equivalent, and women were more often designated by familial ties than by their personal rank. This problem is not trivial, as women consistently accounted for just over one-fifth of the tenants in these seneschalsies (Table 2).⁵⁸ Most of them had inherited their lands directly, though they usually held them in common with their husbands. Only seven women acted solely as tutors.⁵⁹ Fourteen widows may have held dower lands, but if so these lands were

Tenants	Toulouse	Carcassonne	
		Homage	Fealty
Women	17%	23%	27%
Men	83%	77%	73%
<i>Total Count</i>	<i>259</i>	<i>149</i>	<i>99</i>

⁵⁷ Charbonnier, *Autre France*, 312n3, remarks on a similar tendency in early fourteenth-century charters to refer to specific titles rather than to nobility as a general quality; cf. Grémois, “*Vir honestissimus*,” 211–12. Marion, “Aveux,” 56, hesitates whether specific titles always establish noble status. Social climbing via documentation cannot be ruled out, but should not distort the cumulative statistical picture, especially in light of the evidence for the tendency to omit rather than to claim such distinctions in this corpus.

⁵⁸ If anything, these figures might be a slight underestimate: for instance, Pierre Hélié shared a fief with “Bernardi Rogerii, domicello, seu eius uxore, domino de Caucio,” but Bernard Roger himself did not mention his wife: AN, P 591, nos. 19, 50. Likewise, Jeanne de Voisins did not appear in her husband’s homage and *dénombrement* for her lands: AN, P 1143, f. 126; cf. BMT, MS 641, f. 60.

⁵⁹ AN, P 1143, ff. 30/97v, 61v, 98v, 116; AN, P 591, nos. 61, 138, 147, 173. Nine men likewise acted as tutors: AN, P 1143, ff. 74, 88v, 91v, 99; AN, P 591, nos. 3, 47, 93, 130, 173.

Table 2. Gender distribution of fiefholders.

not distinguished here from outright inheritance.⁶⁰ This trend is comparable to the few studies of female inheritance in the high Middle Ages: women held 17–20 percent of fiefs in the county of Champagne, and inherited lordships in England 19.5 percent of the time.⁶¹

It is nevertheless significant that female inheritance persisted with such stability across the fourteenth century, a period when women's status has been thought to decline.⁶² Such a drop-off must necessarily be gauged by multiple factors, but the long-entrenched traditions surrounding inheritance preserved the mechanisms by which women could at least lay claim to land and power.⁶³ Fiefholding by women remained routine, not exceptional, and we must

⁶⁰ AN, P 1143, ff. 11, 11v, 13v, 37, 40, 43v, 46v, 57v, 70, 78v; AN, P 591, no. 127, 131, 149, 176, cf. nos. 8, 91, and the sole mention of dower in no. 146.

⁶¹ Evergates, *Champagne*, 28; Waugh, *Lordship of England*, 19–20. This rate partly reflects the statistical likelihood of families failing to produce sons: Smith, "Women's Property Rights," 165; LoPrete, "Gender and Lordship," 1928. Nonetheless, these figures are not universally representative for the fourteenth century: in neighboring Rouergue, for instance, Johans, *Armagnacs*, found the proportions markedly lower.

⁶² Tanner, "Legal Capacity," esp. 83–84, 96–97; and for a historiographical overview, Graham-Goering, *Princely Power*, 15–16. For Languedoc specifically, Carbasse, "La Condition," 101, posits that women's juridical capacity continued across the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

⁶³ It is not clear that the different legal traditions of northern and southern France had a material impact on the frequency of female inheritance. Although the customary laws of Paris continued to influence matters of succession in the domains where they had been imposed up to the mid-fourteenth century (Timbal, *Annexion*, 114, 131), the women who held fiefs in 1389 were equally likely, where specified, to hold lands subject to either customary or written law. Note that these documents cannot speak one way or the other regarding married women's day-to-day authority, as the interactions of homage (rooted in issues of military service) conventionally

account for them in any profile of regional tenants. Fortunately, the bias inherent to the masculine codification of titles can be somewhat corrected with reference to women's familial context. Since medieval convention assumed that a wife adopted her husband's status, an extension of this principle allows us to apply his designation (if any) to her, minimizing the discrepancy between the representation of women and men in this sample.

Following the most common categories in the letters of homage, I have classified each individual as a knight (*chevalier/miles*), squire (*écuyer/scutifer*, *damoiseil(le)/domicellus.a/donzel*), or "other" (including university graduates, *bourgeois*, and merchants of various sorts) (Table 3). This last category, while not automatically exclusive of noble status, is distinctive in making no reference to nobility.⁶⁴ The resulting distribution shows a strongly consistent baseline for the

		Carcassonne	
Status	Toulouse	Homage	Fealty
Knight	12%	10%	4%
Squire	36%	38%	10%
Other	1%	6%	19%
Total	49%	54%	34%
<i>Total Count</i>	<i>259</i>	<i>149</i>	<i>99</i>

centered the husband regardless of the power dynamics at home. For a revisitation of the north/south divide and assessment of women's role in high medieval Languedoc, see Smith, "Unfamiliar Territory," esp. 19, 34–40.

⁶⁴ Pierre Boyer, for instance, ennobled in 1381, here appeared only as "docteur en decret": AN, P591, nos. 22, 70, though cf. 26; Challet, "Peuple et élites," 222. On noble *bourgeois* in southern France, see Lamazou-Duplan, "Identity and Difference," 325.

Table 3. Social distribution of individuals.

homage group across both Toulouse and Carcassonne. Knights and squires, in similar proportions made up 48 percent of the total in each case.⁶⁵ In both seneschalsies, there were likewise only a handful of other identifications: in Toulouse, a university graduate, the criminal magistrate of Carcassonne, and a *bourgeois*; a priest and four graduates and/or their wives in Carcassonne.⁶⁶ The fealty group, by contrast, had less than a third as many knights and squires, whereas non-noble titles accounted for one-fifth of the total group.⁶⁷ Furthermore, among the latter, only five had the title *maître* (including two royal notaries), while the rest were identified as *bourgeois* (seven individuals), mercers (five), or merchants (two). The social positioning of the fealty group was markedly inferior to that of the homage groups of either region.⁶⁸ The

⁶⁵ For comparison, when Philippe III received the fealty of the Toulousain nobility in 1271, about a quarter of them were knights. However, at the centralized military musters of Charles VI's reign up to 1392, knights usually comprised around 11 percent of the total: Contamine, "Chevalerie," 258, 260. The correlation between these figures derived from different sources suggests that the decrease was indeed more than a reflection of the evolving methods of military recruitment, though Contamine notes that there could be significant regional variation. Johans, *Armagnacs*, 222–23, also notes geographical and chronological shifts in the proportion of nobles.

⁶⁶ AN, P 1143, ff. 12, 13, 13v, 19v, 20, 28v, 29v, 36v, 54v, 96, 114v.

⁶⁷ Even if references to nobility in *dénombrements* were added to the total, it would still fall short of the proportion of knights and squires in the homage groups. The *dénombrement* of one knight in the fealty group, Raymond de Rieux, described him as a graduate in canon law and royal lawyer in the seneschalsy: AN, P 591, no. 146.

⁶⁸ We cannot attribute this discrepancy to a difference between noble and common tenure, since *fiefs nobles* and *fiefs de chevalier* (*cavalbayrin*) were common in the fealty group, even for tenants with non-noble titles. Cf. Rouergue: Johans, *Armagnacs*, 198–99; and Auvergne: Charbonnier, *Autre France*, 360, though he approaches the division economically rather than via tenure.

wider social salience of noble identity was filtered rather than homogenized through tenurial relations with the monarchy.

Meanwhile, seigneurial titles—primarily *seigneur* and *dame*, though sometimes *vicomte* and rarely *comte*—complemented designations of noble status in these records. That is, around half the seigneurial titles appeared alongside, rather than in place of, *chevalier*, *écuyer*, and *damoiseil*; they provided different pieces of information.⁶⁹ Moreover, in contrast to the variations of status between those who performed homage or fealty, the prevalence of seigneurial titles cut across all three groups. It was *never* the usual practice to refer to someone as “lord/lady of such-and-such a place.”⁷⁰ Rather, such styles occurred in only 17 percent of the homages from Toulouse, 21 percent of those in Carcassonne, and 18 percent of the Carcassonne *serments*.⁷¹ These figures are on par with those for other references to lordship (“la seigneurie de...,” “ces terres et seigneuries,” etc.) in P 1143, which appear in less than one-fifth of its entries.⁷² Such proportional stability in designating lordship set against the variability of the social status of individual tenants demands that a clearer analytical distinction be maintained between nobility and lordship than has often appeared in practice.

⁶⁹ This proportion necessarily reflects male titles only.

⁷⁰ Not to be confused with the use of *dominus*.a and so on as courtesy titles preceding the individual’s name.

⁷¹ In a handful of instances, this usage appears in the *dénombrement* instead, but this does not materially impact the overall picture: AN, P 591, nos. 9, 10, 21, 98. I include here higher-ranking titles such as count and viscount.

⁷² A similar assessment for P 591 is difficult, because most *dénombrements*, in Latin, had no equivalent to French *seigneurie*. In addition, a more generalized usage in the *dénombrements* of the terms (co-)seigneur/dominus/senhor is somewhat reminiscent of the sporadic mentions of nobility discussed above. That is, someone like Jeanne, widow of Pabine de Gontaut, could refer to “the king and the other co-lords” of Pennautier without ever referring to herself as “dame de Pennautier”: AN, P 591, no. 2; cf. nos. 3, 6, 32, 44, 70, 149, 155, 157. These represent, however, only a modest increase (6 percentage points) in total references to lordship.

This is not to say that the terminology of lordship was used systematically.⁷³ Its restricted usage went hand-in-hand with a high degree of subjectivity designating the *seigneur/sire* (here interchangeable) or *dame* of a specific place. Titles could be compounded or simplified as individuals prioritized different lordships.⁷⁴ Other people could even supply a seigneurial title where one was absent from the lord's own letter of homage.⁷⁵ Some of these variations constituted two ways of interpreting the same scenario, as when Guillaume-Bernard de Saint-Félix, "seigneur pour partie [i.e. co-lord] pour [sic] de Villefloranis," became the "dominus de Gorgoneto" for fellow co-lord Niel de Nielle, making reference to a specific domain within Villefloure.⁷⁶ These variations could reflect links within aristocratic society, but such logic is not always apparent. Nor was a given individual necessarily consistent, introducing

⁷³ Cf. Lamazou-Duplan, "Identity and Difference," 323–4, who notes the variability of such titles across different documentary contexts.

⁷⁴ Jean de Faugères (Hérault, Béziers) was "Jean, sire de Fougueres" in his letter of homage, but Amaury de Narbonne called him "Johannes, dominus de Falgueriis tamquam [as well as] dominus de Ruppe Celsa," presumably because Jean held Roque-Haute (Hérault, Béziers, Portiragnes) from Amaury: AN, P 591, nos. 78 and 21. Likewise, Etienne Martin appeared as lord of Saint-Julia-de-Bec, Saint-Ferriol, and Laval (all Aude, Limoux), but Hugues de Castelpor referred to him only as co-lord of Saint-Julia when discussing their shared holdings at Saint-Ferriol: AN, P 591, nos. 14, 58.

⁷⁵ Pierre Izarn, a graduate in law with holdings at Beaufort (Hérault, Béziers), was styled lord of Beaufort by the Benedictine abbot of Caunes-Minervois (Aude, Carcassonne), from whom Pierre also held the nearby *bastide* of Villerambert: AN, P 1143, f. 20; AN, P 591, no. 135. See parallel cases in nos. 19 and 26; 28 and 72/76; 29 and 55; 50 and 19.

⁷⁶ AN, P 591, nos. 108, 109. Villefloure/Gourgounet: Aude, Carcassonne. Cf. Pierre-Etienne d'Auriac, lord of La Palme (Aude, Narbonne), whose *dénombrement* then referred to the specific property (*terminale*) of Saint-Pancrace within La Palme: AN, P 591, no. 1.

different versions of their title over the course of their *dénombrement*.⁷⁷ Lordly titles were highly contingent on context and perspective, rather than absolute.

To some extent, this flexibility captures different perspectives between the letters of homage and the *dénombrements*. However, there was clearly no single correct way of identifying or characterizing seigneurial titles. Looking at *aveux* to the counts of Vendôme, Christophe Marion has demonstrated a growing tendency to specify titles of nobility and lordship (he does not distinguish the two), but the rate did not surpass 50 percent before the fifteenth century in his region. He argues that this reflected the progressive crystallization of an official view of lordship, which developed more swiftly among the count's administrators than among the lords themselves.⁷⁸ In light of the scholarly emphasis on the royal standardization of property- and power-holding, it is striking to see a similar degree of inconsistency even at the level of the clerks of the *Chambre des comptes* during this same period, as well as that of the Languedocian tenants themselves. Belying the apparent conventionality of these documents, the relatively weak imposition of bureaucratic conformity in the 1389 registers left space for the variegations within local practice even at the political center.

Categories of Lordship and Jurisdiction

The relative infrequency and variable application of references to lordship calls for a closer examination of the contexts where they appeared and how they related to other ways of framing power in these documents. While medieval lordship comprised a myriad of privileges,

⁷⁷ Amaury de Narbonne styled himself primarily as “lord of Talairan” (Aude, Narbonne) for most of his extensive *dénombrement* (though the title was omitted from his homage); but after the introduction of Magalas (Hérault, Béziers), the two titles appear interchangeably: AN, P 591, no. 21.

⁷⁸ Marion, “Aveux,” 65–67.

rights of justice served as a particular marker of distinction and, in the 1389 corpus, the concepts of jurisdiction and lordship were especially closely intertwined.⁷⁹ On a basic level, the two could function as synonyms. In the French letters of homage, *juridicion* was the most common term for this right, as was *juri(s)dictio* in the Latin or Occitan *dénombrements*. However, *seigneurie*, *dominatio*, and *senhoria*, respectively, were exact substitutes.⁸⁰ That is, “haute et basse seigneurie” was equivalent to “haute et basse juridicion,” although the homages were about five times more likely to use the latter than the former. Similarly, the homage could use “lordship” to interpret what the *dénombrement* reported as jurisdiction. This congruence was possible because rights of jurisdiction were widespread among the tenants of Languedoc, but the particular shape of this distribution reveals greater contextual nuances to the conceptual interplay of lordship and justice.

Such attention is needed, moreover, because their relationship in the late medieval period is insufficiently understood from a practical point of view. Laetitia Cornu and Antoine Follain point out that seigneurial justice has been studied primarily from a legal and institutional angle rather than from the standpoint of social history. Meanwhile, the historiography of lordship has given only a “decidedly secondary” place to the role of justice, instead prioritizing its economic dimensions.⁸¹ In part, this oversight comes from the relative scarcity of surviving judicial sources for lay lordships before the later fifteenth century.⁸² In offering a survey of the

⁷⁹ For an overview of these types of rights, see Charbonnier, “Redevances,” esp. 144–45.

⁸⁰ *Dominatio* appears usually to have been distinguished from *dominii*, which appears regularly in phrases such as “cum laudimiis, foriscapiis, retentionibus, et aliis directis dominiis” (AN, P 591, no. 22), referring to financial property rights. Rare instances of interchangeability can be seen in AN, P 591, nos. 16 bis, 47, 111, 119.

⁸¹ Cornu and Follain, “Guide bibliographique,” 394.

⁸² Cf. Guyotjeannin, “Registres des justices,” esp. 71.

distribution and (to some extent) the implementation of lordly jurisdiction, the *dénombrements* bring an important systematic perspective to complement more scattered judicial corpora.

Above all, they push back against the pervasive narrative that late medieval lords suffered a steady erosion of their judicial powers by the royal government. According to this view, the late Capetian and Valois monarchies persistently sought to dominate seigneurial jurisdiction through three primary strategies.⁸³ First, a system of appeals to the royal courts curtailed lords' judicial independence and so vitiated their authority. Second, the progressive formulation of a royal monopoly on judgement for certain crimes (*cas royaux*) reduced the judicial competences of seigneurial courts.⁸⁴ Third, royal legislation cut across the judicial heterogeneity of the growing kingdom and increase the king's oversight and control of the legal process. This largely progressivist account of state-building sees a fundamental opposition between lordly and royal jurisdiction, the latter being more impersonal and institutionalized.⁸⁵ Accordingly, while the broad category of "feudal relations" plays a causal, contextual role in these developments, the lords themselves are conspicuously absent as actors.⁸⁶

This exclusion is perhaps the inevitable outcome of a perspective grounded in

⁸³ For the main outlines of this model, see Strayer, *Medieval Origins*, 29–30; Strayer, *Statecraft*, 78; Guillot, Rigaudière, and Sassier, *Pouvoirs et institutions*, 2:206–10; Rigaudière, *Penser et construire*, esp. chs. 6, 8, and 12.

⁸⁴ Not everyone seems to have been clear on the idea in 1389. While Bernard de Poulle excluded from his jurisdiction the cases reserved to the king, Bertrand d'Arse asserted his rights to "los quatre cases appartenenz al dit nostre senhor lo rey": AN, P 591, nos. 83 and 48. This curious claim seems to be the result of conflating the *cas royaux* (which were more than four: Perrot, *Cas royaux*, esp. 330–31) and the four major crimes associated with high justice (typically theft, murder, rape, and arson, although these were not universal).

⁸⁵ Strayer, *Statecraft*, 71; Rigaudière, *Penser et construire*, 184, 194, 198–99.

⁸⁶ On the development of feudal structures in state-building, see Genet, "Féodalisme," 241; Strayer, *Statecraft*, 80; Morsel, *L'Aristocratie*, 283–84.

theoretical legal developments at the center.⁸⁷ By contrast, studies such as that of Justine Firnhaber-Baker, which puts royal *ordonnances* in dialogue with seigneurial practices and actual litigation, reveal a more dynamic and often symbiotic relationship between local elites and the king's administration. She demonstrates that the growth of royal authority in maintaining public order was possible only with the lords' concurrence, and that they in turn used the royal system to help entrench their own prerogatives.⁸⁸

The *dénombrements* offer a new seigneurial perspective on the structures of jurisdiction. The assertion of judicial rights in documents registered by the royal government reflects lords' ongoing investment in these prerogatives as part of lordship, and their effective consolidation within the monarchical system. But it also reveals a different set of priorities than those emphasized in the traditional royalizing model focused on encroachment from above aimed at the upper reaches of seigneurial authority. In the context revealed by the present study, the boundaries between greater and lesser jurisdictions were less strict and so encouraged a broader understanding of lordly justice.

Rights of jurisdiction could come in three varieties, *haulte* (high), *moyenne* (middle) and *basse* (low). At the same time, these categories were often complemented and completed by the phrase *mere et mixte empire*, a two-tier system borrowed from the Justinian code that approximated the categories of high and low justice.⁸⁹ In neither case were the boundaries between each category entirely fixed, but the key distinction here was the binary contrast

⁸⁷ Cf. the remarks by Holenstein, "Introduction," 18.

⁸⁸ Firnhaber-Baker, *Violence*.

⁸⁹ Occitan: *juridictio auta, meiana et bassa, meri et miext emperi*. Latin: *jurisdictione alta, media et bassa, meroque et mixto imperio*.

between high and low justice.⁹⁰ High justice was equated with the right to dispense capital punishment (though the crimes in this category varied).⁹¹ Low justice, also referred to as “petite seigneurie,” “mendre juridiction” or “juridiction minoris,” dealt with crimes (usually civil) punishable by fines of up to sixty *sous*, though in a few cases reduced to a mere five *sous*.⁹² Few lords had middle but not high justice, and the phrase “juridicion haulte, moyenne et basse” was only around 30 percent as common as “juridicion haulte et basse.”⁹³ Middle justice thus comes across as less a distinct classification than an extra, denoting the plenitude of the seigneurial power of justice (*omnimoda jurisdictione*, a recurring expression). Ultimately, we are less concerned with particular distinctions between these categories, than the existence of a hierarchy of jurisdictional privileges which could distinguish some tenants from others.

Accordingly, we can survey the overall distribution of jurisdiction among the tenants in 1389. Table 4(a) compares the homage and fealty groups within Carcassonne based on the highest level of jurisdiction attested in each *dénombrement* and/or letter of homage/fealty.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Per Follain, “Rapport de synthèse,” 21–22, the categories of high, middle, and low justice only crystallized in the early modern period. Mathieu, *Justices*, 60n56, disputes this chronology, suggesting that even by the fourteenth century the categories were well understood, if subject to a certain degree of contextual variation. Guenée, *Tribunaux*, 77–89, posits a slow evolution across the twelfth to sixteenth centuries, with a complex interaction between theory and practice, which seems borne out by the imprecisions visible in the 1389 corpus.

⁹¹ AN, P 591, e.g. nos. 17, 20, 88, 101.

⁹² Alternate terms: AN, P 1143, f. 39v; AN, P 591, nos. 51, 82, 85. Jurisdiction at five *sous*: AN, P 591, nos. 35, 48, 160. On different categories of fine, see Guenée, *Tribunaux*, 260–61.

⁹³ For middle justice distinguished from high justice, see AN, P 591, nos. 43, 48, 83, 135, 148, 153. Middle justice also appears liable to conflation with low justice: see e.g. nos. 133, 153, and cf. 43, 149.

⁹⁴ For example, Pierre Boyer had high, middle, and low justice at Montclar, low justice at Aragon, and no justice at Pennautier (all Aude, Carcassonne); he has been counted in the “high justice” category: AN, P 591, nos. 22/70

(a)	Carcassonne		(b)	Carcassonne		
Justice	Homage	Fealty	Justice	Toulouse	Homage	Fealty
High	60%	16%	High	80%	75%	41%
Middle	0%	4%	Middle	0%	0%	9%
Low	13%	19%	Low	10%	16%	47%
Unspecified	5%	1%	Unspecified	10%	8%	3%
None	22%	60%				
<i>Total Count</i>	98	80	<i>Total Count</i>	182	84	32

Table 4. Distribution of jurisdiction (a) within Carcassonne homage and fealty groups; (b) within all three sample groups, where jurisdiction is reported.⁹⁵

This breakdown again reveals a stark contrast within the seneschalsy of Carcassonne. Nearly four-fifths of the homage group had jurisdiction, and a solid majority even had high justice.

(a single count, conflating the duplicate records; cf. nos. 157/158). Four entries are excluded from this set: two homages (nos. 29, 61) that are properly for the seneschalsy of Toulouse, and two *serments* (nos. 134, 135) by monastic institutions. I have given the benefit of the doubt and assumed the higher category where the text is contradictory or unclear: nos. 2, 6, 16, 43. Where the *dénombrement* contradicts the homage/fealty (e.g. nos. 112, 133), I have preferred the evidence of the former. The “unspecified” entries (nos. 4, 26, 19 [cf. 67], 90, 119) do not classify the rights of justice they may have had according to the standard categories.

⁹⁵ Due to rounding, not all categories add up to exactly 100 percent. I here count the tenants collectively (where multiple people were represented by a single homage/*serment* and *dénombrement*) rather than individually, as in the previous section.

The fealty group reversed these proportions. Most reported no jurisdiction at any level, and of those who did, middle and low justice slightly outweighed that of high justice. Table 4(b) sets this comparison into a wider context with reference to the situation in Toulouse.⁹⁶ Both homage groups were unquestionably dominated by lords with high justice, whereas the balance tipped in favor of low justice—though less radically—in the fealty group.

The status of “seigneur haut justicier” has long been accorded special historiographical attention.⁹⁷ To some degree this importance is reflected in the 1389 *dénombrements*, of which thirty-two specified additional details about their “exercise” of justice high or low.⁹⁸ The tools of high justice, including gallows (*forcas/furcas patibulares*), pillories (*costel/costellum*), and stakes (*pal*), as well as prisons and occasionally fortifications, were visible signifiers of this prerogative. The squire Géraud de Lodève described the landscape of his jurisdiction in some detail, including “my manor, called Cap de Castel [*lit.* head of the castle], located in the middle of the fortress where the prisons are, and below which court is held.”⁹⁹ This arrangement placed Géraud bodily at the center of his high judicial authority. These lords’ interest in documenting

⁹⁶ The fragmentary nature of P 1143 and MS 634 means that only positive references to jurisdiction can be reliably studied, so I have recalculated the Carcassonne groups accordingly. I also include in the Carcassonne homage group eight additional records from P 1143 with mentions of jurisdiction that do not appear in P 591. On the basis of the patterns of terminology discussed above, I have included in the “unspecified” category for Toulouse a number of records mentioning “seigneurie” or related titles, in order to not under-represent likely instances of jurisdiction; however, their omission would not significantly affect the overall statistical picture.

⁹⁷ Cornu and Follain, “Guide bibliographique,” 394.

⁹⁸ AN, P 591, nos. 7–9, 11, 16–17, 20, 21, 28, 29, 32, 35, 43, 47, 48, 52, 55, 58, 59, 68, 83, 88, 95, 98, 101, 144, 149, 156, 160, 176, 178.

⁹⁹ “Hospicium meum vocatum Cap de Castel situm in medio fortalicii in quo sunt carceres et infra quod curia tenetur”: AN, P 591, no. 88.

the physical manifestations of their judicial power attests the ongoing significance attached to this tier of rights as part of seigneurial status and even identity.¹⁰⁰

At the same time, we must reassess the analytical prioritization of high justice when its sheer prevalence means these rights were, functionally, the default form of justice rather than a distinguishing feature.¹⁰¹ If high justice was an essential part of what lordship was, as Pierre Charbonnier would have it, what standards did it set for the exercise of justice *tout court*? Both high and low justice, all the way down to five *sous*, could display an equal sophistication in their judicial apparatus.¹⁰² The exercise of justice cited in the *dénombrements* depended on personnel such as a magistrate (*judex ordinarius* and/or *judex appellacionum*), bailiff (*bainulus*), seneschal, *viguier* (equivalent to a northern French provost), sergeant (*serviens* or *praeco*), notary, procurator, field warden (*banderium*), and so on (*autres officiers necessaris, alios ministros necessarios ad jurisdictionem*).¹⁰³ These officers, listed here in approximate order of frequency, were key to “imitating the

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Guenée, *Tribunaux*, 313–16, 321–22, although his distinction between “justices de village” and “châtellenies champêtres” does not emerge clearly from the present corpus.. Charbonnier, *Autre France*, 423, suggests that the “maintien de la seigneurie” in fourteenth-century Auvergne showed that the region was somewhat behind the times, but the same was evidently true in Languedoc despite its more intensive connections with the royal administration.

¹⁰¹ Charbonnier, *Autre France*, 353, 359. In Rouergue, Johans, *Armagnacs*, 196, found that only around a quarter of the princely tenants held high justice, though note that his sample contained *fiefs roturiers*.

¹⁰² Catarina, *Justices*, 22–23, suggests that by the end of the *ancien régime* the personnel associated with low justice had become more circumscribed. See AN, P 591, no. 52, for an example of one lord maintaining an equivalent staff for both low and high justices.

¹⁰³ The appointment of field wardens was not, however, necessarily dependent on rights of jurisdiction: AN, P 591, no. 155. On the most important of these seigneurial officers, see Dognon, *Institutions*, 50–51.

improvements of the judicial system adopted by the royal administration.”¹⁰⁴ But this imitation served lords’ own interests, since increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of their courts ensured their ongoing utility.¹⁰⁵ That this concern and this model applied to jurisdiction across the board suggests a certain degree of functional continuity bridging high and low justice.

Since judicial officers were associated with all levels of jurisdiction, they could also help negotiate the distribution of jurisdiction among tenants with concurrent rights within a given lordship.¹⁰⁶ For instance, Jean Jouglari and Pons de Châtillon shared half of the high and low justice of Villefloure indivisibly with the king.¹⁰⁷ The lords shared a magistrate, but each had their own bailiff, or one in common if agreed with the royal procurator.¹⁰⁸ Likewise, Amaury de Narbonne shared the high and low justice of Fitou by *pariage* with Jean de Son, and that of Villesèque-des-Corbières with Guillaume de Peyrepertuse, with a joint magistrate in each

¹⁰⁴ “ [...] ce qui correspondait à la nécessité d’imiter les perfectionnements du système judiciaire adoptés par l’administration royale,” though he emphasizes specifically the role of the bailiff: Charbonnier, *Autre France*, 410. The *dénombrement* of Raymond de Castelpor showcased this parallel: at Cailla, where he had half the high justice and all the middle and low justice, he had a judge and other necessary officers; but at Saint-Louis, the king “is accustomed to place his officers for the regulation and governance of all justice”: AN, P 591, no. 28. Cailla, Saint-Louis-et-Parahou: Aude, Limoux.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Charbonnier, *Autre France*, 607–14. The stereotype of seigneurial courts as inefficient, slow, and corrupt (Guenée, *Tribunaux*, 280–303, 318–21) has been progressively dismantled for the early modern and now medieval periods: Mathieu, *Justices*, 17.

¹⁰⁶ On judicial hierarchies (albeit in a different seigneurial context), see Guenée, *Tribunaux*, 89–99.

¹⁰⁷ Specifically, Jean had four-fifths of the half, while Pons had the remaining fifth: AN, P 591, nos. 35, 59.

¹⁰⁸ Jean’s *dénombrement* implies the involvement of the magistrate of Carcassonne, but this appears to be a mis-transcription of “commune”. Cf. no. 176.

location.¹⁰⁹ But Amaury also had a judge of appeals for each lordship, reserving for himself the higher judicial authority.¹¹⁰ Further down the scale, the low justice of *la bastide de Surlac en la Val de Daigne* was shared in indivisible thirds, of which two were held by lords with other, more significant holdings elsewhere. Katherine, who alone used the seigneurial title, claimed for her third a full complement of judicial officers, reflecting her greater investment in the process compared to the absentees.¹¹¹ The regularization of jurisdiction served as a structural mechanism not just in the wider hierarchy connecting the lords to the king, but also on a very localized level, safeguarding the interests of all concerned.

Another point where high and low justice overlapped was in their profitability (or lack thereof). Despite a recurring historiographical insistence that the financial benefits of seigneurial jurisdictions outweighed their socio-political significance, these *dénombrements* only infrequently mentioned incomes associated with justice, unlike their other prerogatives.¹¹² The annual sums given ranged from 20 *l.t.* down to 5 *sous* (or, in one case, “I have never in my whole life had more than two *sous* because of this jurisdiction”), with a mean hovering shy of

¹⁰⁹ AN, P 591, no. 21. Fitou, Villesèque-des-Corbières: Aude, Narbonne. Additionally, Jean owed homage to Amaury. On *pariage*, see Gallet, *Pariage*.

¹¹⁰ For other claims to *premier ressort*, with or without co-lords, see AN, P 591, nos. 68, 98, 176, 178. Others acknowledged appeals to the royal courts directly, or to another lord: nos. 16, 52, and cf. 16 bis. Such statements indicate that seigneurial jurisdiction worked effectively as part of a hierarchy, rather than being curtailed: cf. Morsel, *L'Aristocratie*, 170. Charbonnier, *Autre France*, 623, and Guenée, *Tribunaux*, 239, note the rarity of appeals in practice, particularly for smaller justices.

¹¹¹ AN, P 591, nos. 9, 11, 12. Labastide-en-Val: Aude, Limoux.

¹¹² Dognon, *Institutions*, 113; Catarina, *Justices*, 94–95.

4 *l.t.* and a median of 2 *l.t.*¹¹³ Within this spectrum, a higher degree of jurisdiction did not automatically correspond to higher revenues. Co-lordship could reduce the value of individual shares, as in the case of Bernard d'Athon, who did homage for “a half-*denier* on all the jurisdiction” of Gardouch.¹¹⁴ But fragmentation meant little when the net worth of different jurisdictions varied considerably: one-twelfth of Hautpoul brought in 60 *s.t.* while a quarter of Rustiques came to only 5 *s.t.*¹¹⁵ Accordingly, the court fees from the low justice at *Tour* yielded 10 *l.t.*, while the high justice at Maureilhan amounted to 4 *l.t.*¹¹⁶ Not only were some lordships bigger than others, but the revenues associated with low justice were also more reliable.¹¹⁷ It may also be that, as Charbonnier found for Auvergne, justice was rendered largely at-cost in these small courts because it was necessary and prestigious, rather than generating profit.¹¹⁸ This concern could help explain the maintenance of larger groups of personnel even in lesser courts, and the insistence on registering judicial prerogatives in the *dénombrements* even when the values involved were trivial.

The relative ubiquity of high justice may thus ironically have helped blur the line between it and lesser jurisdictions, a process perhaps further helped along by the greater daily

¹¹³ “Dico me non habuisse ratione jurisdictionis dicti loci de toto tempore vite mee nisi ii solidos turonensium”:

AN, P 591, no. 51; see nos. 5 and 32 for the two ends of the spectrum.

¹¹⁴ “Une petite maille sur toute la juridicion haulte et basse du lieu de Gardouch”: AN, P 1143, f. 115v; BMT, MS 634, f. 18v. Gardouch (Haute-Garonne, Toulouse) was an exceptionally fragmented lordship, with the jurisdiction divided among at least twenty-one co-lords in fractions ranging from 1/4 to 1/400.

¹¹⁵ AN, P 591, nos. 49 and 32. Hautpoul: Tarn, Castres, Mazamet; Rustiques: Aude, Carcassonne.

¹¹⁶ AN, P 591, nos. 52, 53. Latour-de-France: Pyrénées-Orientales, Prades; Maureilhan: Hérault, Béziers.

¹¹⁷ Charbonnier, *Autre France*, 614; Guenée, *Tribunaux*, 264–68.

¹¹⁸ Charbonnier, *Autre France*, 607, 620.

relevance of low justice.¹¹⁹ High justice may be better understood as greater *potential*, a higher ceiling on seigneurial authority, which might not be reached in practice. This overlap underlies the consistent levels of seigneurial titles used in the letters of homage (and to a lesser extent the *dénombrements*), as they suggest that lordship was associated with justice of any sort, without distinction. Among the Carcassonne homagers, only two of the thirty-one individuals styled as “lord” or “lady” of a given place did not claim any powers of jurisdiction there.¹²⁰ Both exceptions exercised justice elsewhere but apparently derived their title from their primary residence, which may account for the discrepancy.

But while this correlation could simply reflect the fact that most members of this group *had* rights of justice, it remained the rule within the fealty group, where all those identified as lords were among the minority of tenants who held jurisdiction.¹²¹ Moreover, in both the homage and fealty groups, the proportional representation of high and low justice followed the trends of the group at large, meaning most notably that seigneurial titles in the fealty group were slightly more likely to reflect low justice than high. We might have expected, however, for the higher concentration of judicial power among the homage groups of Toulouse and Carcassonne to be reflected in a proportionally greater use of seigneurial titles. Instead, the letters for tenants with justice in the fealty group, drawn up by the seneschalsy courts rather

¹¹⁹ Charbonnier, *Autre France*, 620–22; Guinée, *Tribunaux*, 268, 317–18.

¹²⁰ Jacqueline de Bruyères, lady of Aigues-Vives (Aude, Carcassonne), and Raymond Siran, lord of Poussan-le-Bas (Hérault, Béziers): AN, P 591, nos. 4, 44.

¹²¹ Jean de la Combe, co-lord of Palaja (Aude, Carcassonne), mentioned no justice, but the *dénombrement* of one of his fellow co-lords stated that they all shared justice—a reminder of the imperfection of these records: AN, P 591, nos. 119, 149. Guillaume Constantin (no. 161) held his title from Amaury de Narbonne (no. 21) and exercised jurisdiction there while giving his *dénombrement* for other properties to the king.

than the *Chambre des comptes*, were statistically *more* likely to refer to their lordship than those of their counterparts in the homage groups.¹²² The more marginal forms of power were emphatically assimilated to the category of lordship, even as the preponderance of justice of all sorts may help explain the relatively low frequency of explicit *seigneur(ie)s* within these documents, if the concept was already implied by the possession of jurisdiction itself.

Two conceptual distinctions thus cut across each other to frame the judicial hierarchies in Languedoc. The distinction between degrees of justice compounded that seen in social status, entrenching the similarities across both seneschalsies within the homage group while further demarcating two levels of prestige and power across the homage/fealty divide. Meanwhile, a different threshold, between those with and without justice, mattered more in characterizing the concept of lordship specifically.¹²³ Both trends call for a reevaluation of the narrative surrounding the crown's judicial encroachment. The resilience of the high justice characteristic of most, even relatively minor lords reminds us that whatever hierarchies existed above this level, these seigneurial courts remained privileged as the first and most concrete manifestation of justice, capable of regulating local order in their own right. At the same time,

¹²² Charbonnier, *Autre France*, 359, found only a financial explanation for why tenants without high justice “dared” to use seigneurial titles. Here, note that the judicial revenues mentioned by lords with titles in the fealty group (two having low justice, and one middle) were if anything on the low end of the reported range: AN, P 591, nos. 109, 144, 153.

¹²³ This latter principle came up also in 1354, when Jean II renewed Charles IV's permission (1324) to the non-noble inhabitants of Toulouse to acquire noble properties so long as they had no rights of jurisdiction and owed neither homage nor fealty: Laurière et al., *Ordonnances*, 2:556–57. These restrictions were no longer rigorously enforced by 1389, if they ever had been, but they illustrate the conflation of high and low justice (across the categories of homage and fealty) as a distinguishing criterion across the elite. Cf. AN, P 591, no. 165, which acknowledged homage and fealty *despite* having no jurisdiction.

the attenuation of practical distinctions between high and low jurisdiction suggests that the impact of the monarchical reforms emphasized by the historiography may have, in targeting the powers of the greater lords, largely bypassed these local aristocrats. From their perspective, royal administration's regulation served more to guarantee than to restrict their authority, and reorienting our scholarly focus will recognize their ongoing agency in this process.

Conclusions

When Charles VI left Languedoc, he appointed three *réformateurs généraux* to receive, if necessary via the seneschals, all oaths of fealty by the regional laity for the next four years, as well as all homages “excepting [those of] counts, viscounts, and knights banneret.”¹²⁴ This arrangement drew a very different distinction, based on a more familiar gradation of rank, from that made during the king's voyage. Such restructuring serves as an important reminder that the homage and fealty groups were not fixed divisions within elite society. Indeed, the performance of fealty and/or homage (and the categorization it implied) was merely an occasional part of these tenants' lives.¹²⁵ Not all the patterns here will readily transfer to other contexts, even in the same region or period. In the registers from Charles's voyage, however, this analytical approach helps identify several key considerations for how we study the empowering interactions between the king and local aristocracies.

In the first instance, we should reconsider how centralizing frameworks dealt with the complexities of regional authority. The availability of the standardized vocabulary of power identified by historians for the later Middle Ages did not automatically lead to a fixed hierarchy,

¹²⁴ “Exceptez Contes, Vicontes, & Bannerez”: Laurière et al., *Ordonnances*, 7:330–31.

¹²⁵ Cheyette, *Community*, 5.

as the inconsistent application of noble and seigneurial titles in these registers shows. Meanwhile, the order imposed by the administration here focused on clarifying aristocratic relationships to the king in context, rather than defining their power via-à-vis one another or in absolute terms.¹²⁶ The negotiability of power was, after all, useful. For instance, if certain lords distinguished themselves as high justiciars, others benefitted from the leveling effect of seigneurial titles that overlooked specific degrees of jurisdiction. Likewise, tolerating variation was a more effective approach to governing the heterogeneous kingdom than trying to impose an arbitrary, one-size-fits-all model, especially when the administrators outsourced much control over information to those closer to the ground.

Furthermore, the distinct dynamics of nobility and lordship have implications for our historiographical priorities regarding the development of the French polity. *Noblesse* became increasingly clearly defined in the later medieval and early modern periods, both as socio-economic practice with the idea of “living nobly,” and bureaucratically with letters of ennoblement from the thirteenth century on.¹²⁷ But the proliferation of letters of homage and *dénombrements* similarly reinforced other systems of preeminence.¹²⁸ Noble rank should not obscure or assimilate the category of lordship, which draws attention to a different aspect of power. The structural role of the nobility has been framed primarily through royal military service, with attention to the lists of *ban* and *arrière-ban* that, structurally, concentrated aristocratic power at the center of the kingdom.¹²⁹ The judicial connotations of lordship (or

¹²⁶ Cf. experiments with variable classifications of the aristocracy in other contexts: Cazelles, *Société*, 64.

¹²⁷ For the social angle, see Lewis, *Polity*, 173–83, and Contamine, *Noblesse*, esp. ch. 1. For the administrative angle, see Arriaza, “Anoblissement,” and Wood, *Nobility*, 25.

¹²⁸ Contamine, “La Seigneurie,” 29, 42.

¹²⁹ Gunn and Jamme, “Military Networks,” 49–53; Contamine, *Guerre*, 26–55; Nassiet, “Noblesse”.

even, given their relative mentions in these records, the seigneurial connotations of justice) must prompt a decentralized consideration of the aristocracy as a function of the power they exercised in their own domains. France's political trajectory was aristocratic not only at the very top, but "massively seigneurial" all the way down—as Charles VI himself understood when he set out for Languedoc.¹³⁰

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