

## **Family Continuity and Territorial Power in West Francia. A Reconsideration of the 'House' of Vermandois (9th-10th Centuries)**

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The political history of post-Carolingian West Francia has long been conceived of as the story of influential aristocratic families, such as the Carolingians, the Bosonids, or the Capetians.<sup>1</sup> Well into the twentieth century, such families were portrayed in scholarship as clear-cut patrilineal lineages or dynasties, in command of more or less static and uniform territories. Despite considerable progress in the fields of early medieval space and kinship, the transmission of *honores* and properties within aristocratic families is still perceived as an underlying strategy, whose basic goal was to safeguard, consolidate and enlarge the family patrimony. In this essay, I shall examine the territorial power and social status of successive members of the so-called 'house of Vermandois', one of the lineages that frequently surface as a textbook example of a kin group whose influence steadily increased over the course of the ninth and tenth century. Combining the most recent insights of the debates on early medieval space and kinship, I shall demonstrate that the pagus of Vermandois and its surrounding area encompassed a patchwork of dynamically-shifting constellations quarreled over between a number of political forces rather than the harmonious juxtaposition of properties under the command of a single ruling family consciously passing on territories and offices from one generation to the other.

### **Space and Kinship in the Early Middle Ages**

When dealing with perceptions of space in the (post-)Carolingian world, it has long been asserted that aristocrats dominated extensive and strictly defined territories such as kingdoms, duchies or counties, levying taxes, appointing bishops and abbots, and calling their subjects to arms.<sup>15</sup> Susan Reynolds even goes as far as to parallel early medieval society

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<sup>1</sup> My gratitude goes out to Dr. Fraser McNair and the anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments and suggestions.

<sup>15</sup> For example, the development of France would have started in the île de France, steadily subjecting the periphery to the dominant centre: Sidney Pollard, *Marginal Europe. The Contribution of Marginal Lands since the*

with Max Weber's definition of a 'state': homogeneous territories with clear borders and with rulers who more or less successfully controlled the legitimate use of physical violence in that territory.<sup>16</sup> However, from the mid-twentieth century, it became understood among landscape historians that in the early Middle Ages territories were divided by fluid, deserted zones without a ruler.<sup>17</sup> Roger Dion and Robert Fossier coined the terms *déserts-frontières* ('desert frontiers') and *terres sauvages* ('savage lands') respectively, to refer to such uninhabited inter-territorial zones.<sup>18</sup> It is nowadays increasingly accepted that the landscape should be seen as a complex, dynamic patchwork of cities, strongholds, abbeys, churches and lands, woven between these *terres sauvages*. Several secular and ecclesiastical rulers claimed control over these places, alternately collaborating and fighting one another, but power was never territorialized, centralized or institutionalized.<sup>19</sup>

More broadly, questions of space and power in the Early and Central Middle Ages have been addressed in close relation to the concept of 'lordship'. This concept concerns the ability of an individual to exercise coercive power as a structural force in early medieval society, often sharply contrasted with late medieval models characterised by formalized institutions, centralized administration and rationalized legislation. Medievalists by no means agree on a definition of lordship (horizontally or hierarchically structured, defined in territorial or social terms), the timing (Carolingian origins or post-millennial turn) or even the necessity of lordship as an explanatory theoretical framework.<sup>20</sup> In talking of lordship before the eleventh century, Charles West has recently made a convincing case for erring on the side of

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*Middle Ages* (New York, 1997), 10. Other recent examples of a rigid territorial approach: Bernard Demotz ed., *Les principautés dans l'occident médiévale. A l'origine des régions*, (Turnhout, 2012); Régine Le Jan, "La noblesse aux IXe et Xe siècles : continuité et changements," in *Femmes, pouvoirs et société dans le haut Moyen Âge* (Paris, 2001), 193-196.

<sup>16</sup> Suzanne Reynolds, *Fiefs and vassals: the medieval evidence reinterpreted* (Oxford, 1994), 278.

<sup>17</sup> Jean-François Lemarignier, *Recherches sur l'hommage en marche et les frontières féodales* (Lille, 1945), 70; Paul Bonenfant, "À propos des limites," in *Hommage à Lucien Febvre: Eventail de l'histoire vivante* (Paris, 1953), 73-79; Bernard Guenée, "Des limites féodales," in *Les lieux de mémoire: la nation 2*, Pierre Nora ed. (Paris, 1986), 11-33.

<sup>18</sup> Roger Dion, *Les frontières de la France* (Brionne, 1979), 11; Robert Fossier, "Sur les principautés médiévales," *Actes des congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l'enseignement supérieur public* 4 (1973): 10-11; Robert Fossier, *Enfance de l'Europe*, 126-192. Leopold Génicot describes the habited zones as *Menschenstraßen* ('streets of people'): Léopold Génicot, *Ligne et zone: la frontière des principautés médiévales* (Brussels, 1970), 29.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example: Stuart Airlie, "Partes, termini, confinia regnorum. Innere und Aussere Grenzen," in *Kaiser und Kalifen. Karl der Grosse und die Mächte am Mittelmeer um 800*, ed. Philipp von Zabern (Berlin, 2014), 214-229; Hans-Werner Goetz, "Définir l'espace politique: la formation des duchés dans le royaume franc de l'Est vers l'an 900," in Philippe Depreux, François Bougard and Régine Le Jan, *Les élites et leurs espace: mobilité, rayonnement, domination (du VIe-XIe siècle)* (Göttingen, 2007). These insights have also been corroborated by medievalists studying the territorial power of ecclesiastical offices and institutions: Dominique Iogna-Prat, "Churches in the landscape," in *Cambridge History of Christianity, III, Early Medieval Christianities c.600-c.1100*, ed. Thomas Noble and Julia Smith (Cambridge, 2008), 363-380; Florian Mazel, *L'espace du diocèse. Genèse d'un territoire dans l'Occident médiéval (Ve-XIIIe siècle)* (Rennes, 2008).

<sup>20</sup> Charles West, "Lordship in Ninth-Century Francia: the Case of Archbishop Hincmar of Laon and his followers," *Past&Present* 226 (2015), 3-40; Thomas N. Bisson, "Medieval Lordship," *Speculum* 70 (1995), 743-759; Richard E. Barton, *Lordship in the County of Maine, c. 890-1160* (Suffolk, 2004), 2; Robert Fossier, *L'enfance de l'Europe,, Xe-XIIIe siècles: aspects économiques et sociaux* (Paris, 1982), 802-807.

caution: he argues that Carolingian 'lordship' was created by historians in order to grasp the non-institutionalised exercise of power that was typical to the early medieval world, but that one should bear in mind that it is but an artificial term of convenience hallowed by tradition, rather than an authentic, direct translation of immanent medieval values.<sup>21</sup> That said, it is at least agreed on that power before the turn of the millennium remained precarious and prone to disruptions, because it depended on fluid and reciprocal social interactions.<sup>22</sup>

These questions dovetail with the debate about the *mutation féodale*, a radical change that is supposed to have taken place around the year 1000 as royal power collapsed and Carolingian administrative structures increasingly made way for small-scale territorial units like seigniories and castellanies, in the hands of local families who juggled titles, offices, castles and lands as hereditary possessions.<sup>23</sup> Even though Léon Vanderkindere's and Jan Dhondt's original narratives of the 'rise of territorial principalities' as a result of the disruption of Carolingian royal power in the ninth century have been thoroughly nuanced, scholars still widely agree that something changed fundamentally in practice: tenth-century polities had indeed become more localized, with regional rulers to some extent detached from royal authority. Nonetheless, since Frankish emperors and kings already worked through local patronage networks, it is now suggested that we are dealing with a gradual transformation process induced by the Carolingians themselves - deliberately endowing allies with considerable wealth and properties - rather than a sudden, disruptive take-over by the local aristocracy.<sup>24</sup>

A central issue in these debates - and of major significance for the ninth and tenth century - is the distinction between *pagus* and *comitatus*. The term *pagus* has long been read as a reference to a specific territory, established as part of Merovingian and Carolingian

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<sup>21</sup> Charles West, "Lordship in Ninth-Century Francia: the Case of Bishop Hincmar of Laon," *Past&Present* 226 (2015), 38-40.

<sup>22</sup> Matthew Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages. The Middle Rhine Valley (400-1000)* (New York, 2000), 10; Florian Mazel, *L'évêque et le territoire. L'invention médiévale de l'espace (Ve-XIIIe siècle)* (Paris, 2016); Barbara Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space. Power, Restraint, and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe* (Manchester, 1999); Hans-Werner Goetz, "La perception de l'espace politico-géographique de la Francia Media," in *De la Mer du Nord à la Méditerranée. Francia Media, une région au coeur de l'Europe (840-1050)*, ed. Michèle Gaillard (Luxembourg, 2011), 111-129.

<sup>23</sup> On the different voices in this debate, see: Elisabeth Brown, "The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe," *The American Historical Review* 79 (1974): 1063-1088; Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vazals: the Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford, 1994); Jean-Pierre Poly and Eric Bournazel, *La mutation féodale, Xe-XIIe siècles* (Paris, 1980); Dominique Barthélemy, "Revisiting the Feudal Revolution of the Year 1000", in *The Serf, the Knight and the Historian*, ed. Barthélemy (Ithaca, 2009); Thomas N. Bisson, "The Feudal Revolution," in *Past&Present* 142 (1994): 6-42; Charles West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution. Political and Social Transformation Between Marne and Moselle, c.800-1100* (Cambridge, 2013).

<sup>24</sup> Léon Vanderkindere, *La formation territoriale des principautés belges, II* (Brussels, 1902); Jean Dhondt, *Etudes sur la naissance des principautés territoriales en France* (Bruges, 1948); Susan Reynolds, "The Historiography of the Medieval State," in *Companion to Historiography*, ed. Michael Bentley (London, 1997), 122-128; Matthew Innes, *State and Society*, 253-259; Jennifer Davis, *Charlemagne's Practice of Empire* (Cambridge, 2015), 18; Simon MacLean, *Kingship and Politics*, 17-23; Charles West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution*, 137-148.

administrative structures. Control over these *pagi* was delegated by emperors or kings to local representatives, but over the course of the ninth century these structures eroded. *Comitatus* - so the new, more localized polities - supposedly filled the organizational gap.<sup>25</sup> However, recent studies by Mathew Innes, Charles West and Thomas Bauer have convincingly reassessed this view. They define a *pagus* as a socio-geographical unit, determined by informal social practices, and as such the result of a bottom-up instead of a top-down process. In their opinion, a *pagus* did not correspond to a territory under the command of a duke or count. A *comitatus*, on the other hand, had a more political connotation, referring to the authority of someone who held the title of count and his personal ability to exert influence. In spatial terms, thus, 'comital' power consisted of scattered holdings rather than ultimate executive authority within a well-delineated territory.<sup>26</sup>

Moving away from space towards early medieval kinship, sociological and anthropological research has cast a long shadow over the study of this topic. The nineteenth-century sociologist Emile Durkheim developed a five-step evolutionary model known as the 'law of contraction', according to which the extended clan-family (a unitary cluster of individuals related by blood and by marriage) slowly evolved into the contemporary nuclear family (with the marriage between husband and wife and their children at the centre).<sup>27</sup> Marc Bloch, a student of Durkheim, introduced this model into the field of history, after which it was further popularized by his colleagues in the influential Paris-based *Annales*-school.<sup>28</sup> The German scholar Karl Schmid detected a similar evolution in the early medieval Rhineland around the year 1000, from *Sippe* (amorphous, horizontally-organized extended families) to

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<sup>25</sup> Jean-François Lemarignier, "La dislocation du 'pagus' et le problème des 'consuetudines' (Xe-XIe siècles)," in *Mélanges Louis Halphen* (Paris, 1951), 401-410; Ulrich Nonn, *Pagus und Comitatus in Niederlotharingen. Untersuchungen zur politischen Raumgliederung im früheren Mittelalter* (Bonn, 1983); Louis Ganshof, "The impact of Charlemagne on the institutions of the Frankish realm," *Speculum* 40 (1965): 47-62; Wilhelm Niemeyer, *Der Pagus des frühen Mittelalters in Hessen* (Marburg, 1968); Hans Schulze, *Die Grafchaftsverfassung der Karolingerzeit in den Gebieten östlich des Rheins* (Berlin, 1973); Cauchies, "Le pouvoir dans les principautés," in *Les principautés dans l'occident médiévale. A l'origine des régions*, ed. Bernard Demotz (Turnhout, 2012), 95-142; Fredric L. Cheyette ed., *Lordship and Community in Medieval Europe. Selected Readings* (New York, 1970).

<sup>26</sup> Innes, *State and Society*, 9-10; West, *Feudal Revolution*, 140-142; Charles West, "Principauté et territoires, comtes et comté," in *De la Mer du Nord à la Méditerranée. Francia Media, une région au coeur de l'Europe (c.840-c.1050)*, ed. Michel Margue, e.a. (Luxembourg, 2011), 131-150; Thomas Bauer, "Raumeinheiten und Raumbezeichnungen: die Pagi und Gauen des Mittelalters in landeskundlicher Perspektive," in *Geographische Namen in ihrer Bedeutung für die landeskundliche Forschung und Darstellung*, ed. Heinz Peter Brogiato (Trier, 1999) 43-66; Thomas Bauer, "Die mittelalterlichen Gauen," in *Geschichtlicher Atlas der Rheinlande. Beiheft / 4, 9* (Publikationen der Gesellschaft für Rheinische Geschichtskunde / N.F., 12, Abt. 1b (Lfg. 7)), (Cologne, 2000)

<sup>27</sup> Emile Durkheim and Marcel Maus, "La famille conjugale," *Revue philosophique* 91 (1901), 39-62; Mary Ann Lamanna, *Emile Durkheim on the Family* (Thousand Oaks, 2001), 44-55.

<sup>28</sup> Marc Bloch, *La société féodale. La formation des liens de dépendance* (Paris, 1939-1940); Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Les paysans de Languedoc* (Paris, 1966); Philippe Ariès, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1960); Georges Duby, *La société aux XIe et XIIe siècles dans la région mâconnaise* (Paris, 1953); Jacques Le Goff, *Civilisation de l'Occident médiévale* (Paris, 1964). David Herhily has coined the similar term "theory of progressive nuclearisation": David Herlihy, *The Social History of Italy and Western Europe* (London, 1978).

*Geschlecht* (patriarchal, vertically-organized lineages centered around and often named after the familial castle). As this model spread amongst historians, though, it was under increasing attack by anthropologists. Claude Lévi-Strauss criticized Durkheim's model, emphasizing the universal character of the social structure of kinship and therefore insisting that the nuclear household was already the standard in 'primitive' societies as found in the early Middle Ages.<sup>29</sup> From the 1980s onwards historians have adopted Lévi-Strauss' structuralist view, although sometimes blending it with remnants of the Durkheimian model.<sup>30</sup>

The anthropologist David Schneider has published a revolutionary study titled *A critique of the study of kinship*, although this has yet found nearly no reception in medieval studies. Schneider questions the age-old axioma that kinship ties are the cornerstone of social structures, exposing it as a biased assumption rather than the result of an objective, systematic analysis. In his view, the importance traditionally attributed to concepts of birth, family, inheritance and succession follows from the innate bias of the scientist performing the study.<sup>31</sup> Other anthropologists have reinforced Schneider's argument. For example, Maurice Godelier argues that the potential importance of biological ties does not imply that these ties were the glue that kept society together, while Florence Weber pleads in favour of an individualization of kinship.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Claude Meillassoux objects the idea that consanguinity constituted a universal substratum of society. Any tie - whether biological, juridical or social - equally takes meaning only if it is socialized by the informer.<sup>33</sup>

Kinship ties have also been studied in the specific context of early medieval West Francia. The works of Régine Le Jan on family structures in the Frankish Empire between the fifth and the tenth century have been particularly influential, her underlying theoretical framework bearing the mark of both Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss. Most notably, she holds on to the idea of a society organized in aristocratic clans, placing the emergence of patrilineal, regionally-

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<sup>29</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté* (Paris, 1949).

<sup>30</sup> David Herlihy, *The History of Feudalism* (London, 1971); Jack Goody, *l'évolution de la famille et du mariage en Europe* (Paris, 1985); Régine Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir dans le monde franc (VIIe-Xe siècle). Essai d'anthropologie sociale* (Paris, 1995); Amy Livingstone, *Out of love for my kin. Aristocratic family life in the lands of the Loire* (Ithaca and London, 2015); Eleanor Searle, *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power 840-1066* (Berkeley, 1988); Thomas Bisson, "Nobility and family in medieval France: a review essay," *French Historical Studies* 16 (1990); 597-613; Robert Fossier, "L'ère féodale," in *L'enfance de l'Europe, Xe-XIIIe siècles: aspects économiques et sociaux* (Paris, 1982), 360-384; Katharine Keats-Rohan, *Family Trees and the Roots of Politics: The Prosopography of Britain and France From the Tenth to the Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge, 1997); Pierre Guichard, "De l'Antiquité au Moyen Age: famille large et famille étroite," *Cahiers d'Histoire* 24 (1979), 45-60; Peter Laslett, *Household and Family in Past Times* (Cambridge, 1972); Martine Segalen, *Sociologie de la famille* (Paris, 1981).

<sup>31</sup> David Schneider, *A critique of the Study of Kinship* (Ann Arbor, 1984), 3-10; Chloé Mailet, "À quelle anthropologie de la parenté se réfèrent les historiens? L'histoire de la parenté spirituelle médiévale à l'épreuve des *new kinship studies*," *L'Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques*, accessed April 2 2017, DOI: 10.4000/acrh.2768.

<sup>32</sup> Maurice Godelier, *Métamorphoses de la parenté* (Paris, 2004); Florence Weber, *Le sang, le nom, le quotidien, une sociologie de la parenté pratique* (Paris, 2005).

<sup>33</sup> Claude Meillassoux, "Parler parenté," *l'Homme* 153 (2000), 153-165.

embedded lineages in the tenth century. In her opinion, *les anciennes solidarités* - the idea of natural solidarity between relatives - never loosened. She defines the family as an 'even more consolidated political finality', with successive generations protecting the family patrimony.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Eleanor Searle attributes the successful rise to power of the Dukes of Normandy between the tenth and the twelfth century to the network of relatives 'who could trust one another at a deeper level of confidence', as well as to the pursuit of territorial indivisibility.<sup>35</sup> By contrast, other early medievalist have criticized approaching families as homogenous and internally-coherent power blocs. Michel Margue, for example, argues like Claude Meillasoux that the early medieval 'family' should be defined in socio-cultural rather than biological terms; while Constance Bouchard and Heather Tanner assert that, in practice, extended groups of relatives did not necessarily hold property in common, nor did the members of such groups necessarily act in concert.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, a recurrent theme in studies about kinship is the correlation between a name and the lineage the name bearer belonged to. The basic principle is that noblemen named their children after illustrious ancestors, so-called *Leitnamen* or *noms-souches*. For example, the names 'Charles' and 'Louis' were characteristic for the Carolingian dynasty, while 'Robert' and 'Hugh' indicate Capetian descent. The concentration of certain names in particular lineages has prompted historians to connect individuals to a lineage solely on the basis of an onomastic correspondence, as with Le Jan's claim that names symbolized *l'unité de filiation, du groupe des proches parents et la force de la parenté fraternelle*.<sup>42</sup> A more plausible argument is that of Constance Bouchard, who acknowledges that onomastical patterns could indicate awareness of the connection between generations, but also points out that this happened far from systematically. The same names surfaced in unrelated lineages, names other than those of ancestors were frequently used, and the picture was clouded because the ancestors of both the mother and the father (and thus different lineages) could

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<sup>34</sup> Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir*, 381-427, 569-571.

<sup>35</sup> Eleanor Searle, *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power 840-1066* (Berkeley, 1988).

<sup>36</sup> Constance Bouchard, *Those of my blood: creating noble families in Medieval France* (Philadelphia, 2001); Heather Tanner, *Families, Friends and Allies. Boulogne and Politics in Northern France and England, c. 879-1160* (Leiden and Boston, 2004); Michel Margue, "Structures de parenté et processus d'identification dans la Lotharingie des Xe et XIe siècles. Le cas du groupement familial dit 'd'Ardenne,'" in *Splendor Reginae: Passions, genre et famille. Mélanges en l'honneur de Régine Le Jan*, ed. Laurent Jégou (Turnhout, 2015), 79-91.

<sup>42</sup> Karl Schmid, "Über die Struktur des Adels im früheren Mittelalter," *Jahrbuch der frankische Landesforschung* 19 (1959): 1-23; Karl Ferdinand Werner, "Liens de parenté et noms de personnes. Un problème historique et méthodologique," *Publications de l'école française de Rome* 30 (1977): 13-18; Wolfgang Braunfels, *Karl der Grosse, Lebenswerk und Nachleben I Persönlichkeit und Geschichte* (Düsseldorf, 1965), 83-142; Hans Walter Klewitz, "Namengebung und Sippenbewusstsein in den deutschen Königsfamilien des 10.-12. Jahrhunderts," *Archiv für Urkundenforschung* 18 (1944): 23-37;" Le Jan, *Famille et Pouvoir*, 179-223.

serve as inspiration. We should therefore avoid employing names as more than supplementary pieces of evidence.<sup>45</sup>

Summarizing these two scholarly trends, it is noteworthy that a major lacuna persists: studies of space largely remain silent about innovations in the field of kinship and vice versa. A clear case in point is Michel Margue's analysis of the counts in the Ardennes region (10th-13th centuries). Margue provides an excellent summary of the ongoing debate in French and German scholarship about the spatial component of comital power, yet he still imputes the foundations of that power to the transmission of *honores* and properties within aristocratic families as long-term power blocs.<sup>46</sup> Even Florian Mazel, who has been at the forefront of the movement to re-evaluate modern-day perceptions of early medieval territories with ground-breaking research on bishoprics, clearly adheres to the view of lineages as strategically passing on properties and offices to protect and increase the family patrimony, with the family castle as the key catalyst for their local entrenchment from the mid-tenth century onwards.<sup>47</sup> In other words, even though it has become apparent that united territories did not exist and that power needed constant maintenance, historians are nonetheless persistent in presenting successive generations of lineages as having a relatively firm grip on a set of adjacent cities, strongholds, lands, churches or monasteries in an area that is considered their - albeit ill-defined - sphere of influence.

### **The House of Vermandois**

The house of Vermandois provides a representative case-study for post-Carolingian West Francia, as a family descending from Charlemagne that is supposed to have been at the summit of West Frankish politics for almost two centuries. The traditional picture of this house in general histories of early and central medieval France is indebted to the pioneering

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<sup>45</sup> Bouchard, *Those of my blood*, 7; Gerd Althof, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue. Zum politischen Stellenwert der Gruppenbindungen im frühen Mittelalter* (Darmstadt, 1990), 27-28; Gerd Althoff, "Genealogische und andere Fiktionen in mittelalterlicher Historiographie," in *Fälschungen im Mittelalter* (Hannover, 1988): 417-441; George Beech, Monique Bourin and Pascal Chareille, *Personal Names Studies of Medieval Europe* (Kalamazoo, 2002); Monique Bourin and Pascual Martinez, *Anthroponymie et migrations dans la chrétienté médiévale* (Madrid, 2010); Dieter Geuenich, Wolfgang Haubrichs and Jörg Jarnut, *Nomen et gens. Zur historischen Aussagekraft frühmittelalterlicher Personennamen* (Berlin, 1997).

<sup>46</sup> Michel Margue, "Pouvoirs et espaces comtaux. Le cas des comtés ardennais (Xe-XIIIe siècle), *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 89 (2011): 507-532.

<sup>47</sup> Florian Mazel, "Des familles de l'aristocratie locale en leurs territoires France de l'Ouest (IXe-XIe siècles)," in Philippe Depreux, François Bougard and Régine Le Jan, *Les élites et leurs espace: mobilité, rayonnement, domination (du VIe-XIe siècle)* (Göttingen, 2007), 361-398. Illustrative of this attitude is also his portrayal of episcopal sees monopolized by successive generations of aristocratic families: Mazel, *L'espace du diocèse*, 77-89.

work of Karl Ferdinand Werner, later on repeated and elaborated on by Helmut Schwager.<sup>48</sup> Paul Chaffenet, zooming in on the ties of the eleventh-century counts Albert II, Eudes and Herbert IV of Vermandois to the chapter of St-Quentin and the abbeys of Saint-Prix and Homblières, argues that these counts' 'ambition to safeguard the cohesion of the dynastic patrimony in the margins of the county of Vermandois' remained the main rationale behind their socio-religious actions.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, in spite of the convincing reappraisal of territorial power and kinship during the studied period by the likes of Matthew Innes, Thomas Bauer and many others, the construct of a regionally-embedded lineage still plays a significant role in otherwise excellent studies of West Frankish politics; plenty of historians continue to apply the phrase 'of Vermandois' as a substantive analytical category - drawing a straight line between the properties and offices of different generations of the lineage - rather than merely as a term of convenience.<sup>50</sup>

The first members of the house are seen as coming from Bernard of Italy, showing up in Picardy in the ninth century and then pushing northwards. The growth of the family's patrimony is typically presented as the result of a continuous, long-term process, starting in the ninth century from their power base around Péronne and St-Quentin. The reign of Count Heribert II (†943), who controlled extensive territories and posed a major threat to three successive West Frankish kings is considered the apex of the family's power. In particular, Heribert II's imprisonment of King Charles III the Simple from 923 until the king's death in 929 and the appointment of the count's son Hugh as archbishop of Reims in 925 are referred to as proof of the family's unprecedented dominance, successfully challenging royal authority in the Carolingian heartlands.<sup>51</sup> These two episodes also received ample treatment in post-

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<sup>48</sup> Karl Ferdinand Werner, "Untersuchungen zur Frühzeit des Französischen Fürstentums (9-10 Jahrhundert)," *Die Welt als Geschichte*, 20 (1960): 87-119; Helmut Schwager, *Graf Heribert II. von Soissons, Omois, Meaux, Madrie sowie Vermandois (900/06-943) und die Francia (Nord-Frankreich) in der 1. Hälfte des 10. Jahrhunderts* (Kallmunz, 1994), 293-310.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Chaffenet, "Imitation et innovation dans les politiques religieuses des comtes de Vermandois (XIe siècles)," *Trajectoires 2* (2017): <http://trajectoires.revues.org/2179>.

<sup>50</sup> David Bates, "West Francia: the northern principalities," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History c.900-c.1024*, III, ed. Rosamond McKitterick and Timothy Reuter (Cambridge, 1999), 398-419; Jean Dunbabin, "West Francia: the Kingdom," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History c.900-c.1024*, III, ed. Rosamond McKitterick and Timothy Reuter (Cambridge, 1999), 372-397; Yves Sassier, *Hugues Capet: naissance d'une dynastie* (Paris, 1987); Charles West, *Reframing the Feudal Revolution. Political and Social Transformation Between Marne and Moselle, c.800-1100* (Cambridge, 2013), 125-126; Pierre Desportes, "Saint-Quentin en Vermandois: la collégiale et la ville," in *Les collégiales et la ville dans la province ecclésiastique de Reims (IXe-XVIe siècles)* (Amiens, 2010), 151-157; Geoffrey Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor. Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, 2012), 275-281; Geoffrey Koziol, *The Politics of Memory and Identity in Carolingian Royal Diplomas: the West Frankish Kingdom (840-987)* (Turnhout, 2012), 252-254; Constance Bouchard, "Consanguinity and noble marriages in the tenth and eleventh centuries," *Speculum* 56 (1981): 282-284; William M. Newman, Theodore Evergates and Giles Constable, *The Cartulary and Charters of Notre-Dame of Homblières* (Cambridge, 1990), 6-8.

<sup>51</sup> Philippe Lauer, *Robert Ier et Raoul de Bourgogne* (Paris: Champion, 1910), 41, 42, 48, 53, 64, 70, 160-185, 205; Philippe Lauer, *Le règne de Louis IV d'Outremer* (Paris: Boullion, 1900) 13-14, 19, 51-54; Auguste Dumas, "L'église



tenth-century chronicles, following the contemporary author Flodoard of Reims who devoted a major part of his historical works, the *Annals* and the *History of the Church of Reims*, to them.<sup>52</sup> Finally, after Heribert II, the power of the family supposedly faded away as their territory crumbled and his descendants subsequently lost their central position in West Frankish politics.

### **Pippin I and Heribert I: how to become a West Frankish count**

The study of individual family members is complicated by a problem typical to the 'long' tenth century, a period that until recently has been maligned as the darkest of the Dark Ages because of the deficient preservation and the fragmentary nature of the source material.<sup>53</sup> In the Reims area, we are dependent on merely three narrative accounts that elaborate on specific members of the family (the *Annals of St-Bertin* and the two chronicles of Flodoard), supplemented with a handful of records in other chronicles, vitae, diplomas, obituaries and letter collections. Nonetheless, the paternal line is documented from the eighth century onwards. Heribert II was the son of Heribert I (†900/906), supposedly the count of Vermandois, Meaux and Soissons. Heribert I was born to Pippin (†894), traditionally presented as the lord of Senlis, Péronne and St-Quentin and the first count of Vermandois. Pippin was a son of King Bernard of Italy (†818), who originated from an illegitimate marriage of King Pippin of Italy (†810), the second child of Charlemagne.<sup>54</sup> As such, the tenth-century members of the house of Vermandois were of Carolingian descent. However, this also implies that the family's presence in Francia was a relatively recent development, since Heribert II's ancestors had resided in northern Italy until the middle of the ninth century.

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de Reims au temps des luttes entre Carolingiens et Robertiens (888-1027)," *Revue d'histoire de l'église de France* 30 (1994): 5-38; Ferdinand Lot, *Etude sur la règne de Hugues Capet*, 397-413; Werner, "Die Nachkommen," 458.

<sup>52</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 16-154; Flodoard, *Histoire de l'Église de Reims*, ed. François Guizot and Nathalie Desgrugilliers (Clermont-Ferrand, 2004), 271-310; Richer, *Histoires*, ed. Lake, I, 143-145, 211-217, 247, 287, 303-345, II, 21-23; Hugh of Flavigny, *Chronicon*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS8, 361-364; Hugh of Fleury, *Liber qui modernorum regum francorum continet actus a. 1108*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS9, 382; Albéric de Trois-Fontaines, *Chronicon*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS23, 759; *Annales Remenses*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS13, 82; Widukind, *Res Gestae Saxonicae*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS3, 451; *Annalista Saxo, a. 741-1139*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS6, 606; Ekkehard, *Chronicon Imperatorum ab origine Francorum ad a. 1114*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS6, 187; Sigebert of Gembloux, *Chronica cum continuationibus*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS6, 349; 66-249.

<sup>53</sup> Recent studies nuancing the negative picture of the post-Carolingian era: Timothy Reuter, "Introduction: reading the tenth century," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History c.900-c.1024*, III, ed. Rosamond McKitterick and Timothy Reuter (Cambridge, 1999), 1-26; Heinrich Fichtenau, *Lebensordnungen des 10. Jahrhunderts. Studien über Denkart und Existenz im einstigen Karolingerreich* (Stuttgart, 1984); Simon Maclean, *Kingship and Politics in the Late Ninth Century* (Cambridge, 2013); Rosamond McKitterick, "The Legacy of the Carolingians," in *Carolingian Culture: emulation and innovation 317-322* (Cambridge, 1994), 317-323; John Howe, *Before the Gregorian Reform: the Latin church at the turn of the first millennium* (Ithaca, 2016).

<sup>54</sup> Schwager, *Graf Heribert II*, 22-24: sketches a detailed picture of the link between the Heribertians and the Carolingian dynasty.

Placing Heribert II's immediate ancestors in the *pagus* of Vermandois appears to be based on an optimistic interpretation of the source material. As mentioned, Pippin was the first of the family to surface in Frankish sources. In 834, according to the *Annales Bertiniani*, he lent his support to Emperor Louis I.<sup>55</sup> Next, Nithard records him in the entourage of Charles the Bald in 840.<sup>56</sup> In these documents, neither a specific title, nor Pippin's properties are mentioned. Karl Ferdinand Werner assumes that he was count of Senlis first because he appears in the sources next to other *principes* (and he thus must have been of equal rank); second because at the end of the ninth century Senlis was under the command of a nobleman called Bernhard. The only evidence, therefore, is a name sometimes associated with the house of Vermandois (along with many other lineages), with no further indication of a kinship tie between Pippin and Bernhard.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, both Nithard and the author of the *Annales Bertiniani* explicitly and systematically mention the titles of other noblemen in their texts. Since a title is omitted in the case of Pippin, it is likely yet that he did not hold the title of count.<sup>58</sup> Werner also tries to explain the presence of the son of an Italian nobleman in the entourage of two successive Frankish emperors by supposing that Pippin was married to the daughter of a certain Count Theoderic, whose relatives held power between Paris, Chartres and Evreux. Indirect evidence supports this hypothesis, since the names *Theodericus*, *Theodebertus*, *Hericus* and *Heribertus* are linguistically related and since similar names also appear amongst the offspring of Heribert I.<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, there is again no direct evidence to connect Pippin to the daughter of a specific count. Pippin might have been married to a Frankish noblewoman, but the one thing of which we can be reasonably sure is that he was present in Francia from the second quarter of the ninth century onwards. Several sources suggest that Pippin's sons did not immediately hold the title of count either. In a passage of the *Annales Bertiniani* written by Archbishop Hincmar of Reims, these sons Pippin II and Heribert I are mentioned next to a certain *Goiramnus comes*.<sup>60</sup> However, the placing of the title of count immediately after *Goiramnus'* name creates the impression that it was a deliberate manoeuvre to avoid confusion with the brothers. Both the chronicler Regino of Prüm and the *Vita Hludowicis Imperatoris* mention a third brother called Bernard along with Pippin II and Heribert I, again with no reference to a specific title.<sup>61</sup> This also

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<sup>55</sup> See also: Philippe Depreux, *Prosopographie de l'entourage de Louis le Pieux: 781-840* (Sigmaringen, 1997).

<sup>56</sup> *Annales Bertiniani*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS1, 427-429; Nithard, *Histoire des fils de Louis le Pieux II*, Lauer ed., 44.

<sup>57</sup> Werner, "Untersuchungen," (1960), 93.

<sup>58</sup> Abbot Hilduin of St-Denis and Count Gerard of Paris (Nithard); and Bishop Rathold and Count Boniface (Annales of St-Bertin).

<sup>59</sup> Werner, "Untersuchungen," (1960), 100-106.

<sup>60</sup> *Annales Bertiniani*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS1, 503.

<sup>61</sup> *Reginonis Chronicon*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS1, 567; *Vita Hludowici Imperatoris*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS2, 633.

applies to a charter of King Odo (889) to the abbey of St-Hilaire in Poitiers, issued at the intercession of Heribert I. Heribert I is listed as one of the *proceres* - that is, as a nobleman, but not one with a specific title. The location where the charter was drawn up only shows that Heribert I was present in Chartres; it contains no further information about his property.<sup>62</sup> As in the case of Pippin I, the omission of the title suggests that Pippin II, Heribert I or Bernhard were at that time not known as counts.

It was not until the final decade of the ninth century that Heribert I is explicitly called a count, in a charter (898) of King Charles III the Simple to the abbey of St-Crépin issued at the request of *comite ... Heriberto*.<sup>63</sup> The *Annales Vedastini* offer a plausible explanation for the sudden emergence of the title. According to the annals, *Heribertus comes* allied with Charles III against King Odo in 893.<sup>64</sup> Three years later, however, he lent his support to the non-Carolingian King Odo during the sieges of Péronne and St-Quentin, two strongholds that until then were apparently controlled by a certain *Rodulfus comes*, brother of Baldwin II of Flanders. This Rodulf had expelled the son of the previously mentioned Count Theoderic, so it is unlikely that Heribert I had been the lord of these strongholds before the sieges. However, in 899 the Annals record a peace settlement between Heribert I and Count Baldwin II (of Flanders), after an invasion by the latter of the *castrum* of Péronne against Heribert I.<sup>65</sup> It is not recorded explicitly, but it is plausible that Heribert I gained control of Péronne shortly before that year. In other words, this particular stronghold was acquired by Heribert I at some point between 896 and 899, Odo's and Baldwin's siege respectively. Possibly, both the title of count and the strongholds constituted a royal reward for Heribert I's support of King Odo in 896.<sup>66</sup>

Karl Ferdinand Werner has tried to prove that Heribert I was count of Meaux and Soissons, while Helmut Schwager adds the counties of Omois, Vexin and Mézerais to the family patrimony. However, their argumentation is once more extremely speculative. For example, with regard to Soissons, Werner refers to the phrase *comite et abbate eiusdem loci Heriberto* in the royal charter to the abbey of St-Crépin. Since Heribert I is described as the 'count and abbot of this place', according to Werner he must have controlled the county of Soissons, where the abbey was situated. However, Altmar, the lay abbot of St-Médard in

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<sup>62</sup> RHGF 9, 450.

<sup>63</sup> *Recueil des Actes de Charles III*, ed. Philippe Lauer (Paris, 1949), 19-21.

<sup>64</sup> *Annales Vedastini*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS1, 528.

<sup>65</sup> *Annales Vedastini*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS1, 530. Theoderic's son surfaces in the *Sermo in tumulatione SS Quintini*, commissioning to wall the abbey of St-Quentin as *comes et abba* in 896: *Sermo in tumulatione SS Quintini*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS15, 271.

<sup>66</sup> The *Annales Vedastini* mention a 'count Heribert I' in 893, but the title only reflects the situation at the time of writing (after the year 900).

Soissons is also addressed as 'count and abbot', at approximately the same time. Moreover, in 899 Archbishop Fulk of Reims made a deal with Altmar to exchange the abbey of St-Vaast for the abbey of St-Médard.<sup>67</sup> Since another count and archbishop exercised similar authority in the same city, it seems more likely that Heribert I was just one out of many power-brokers who tried to establish themselves in the Soissons region.<sup>68</sup> In the case of the county of Meaux, Werner's only clue is the reference to one of Heribert I's grandsons as count of Meaux at the end of the tenth century. However, as Werner himself has convincingly demonstrated in the case of Troyes, spatial continuity between father and son was not necessarily a given. Heribert II could not have been count of Troyes, since his son Robert got a hold of this town only after the death of his father-in-law Count Gislebert in 956 who held it previously.<sup>69</sup> In other words, the possibility of inheritance through the maternal line counters the supposed one-to-one relationship between the property of fathers and sons.

Thus, the traditional identification of Heribert I as the count of Vermandois, Meaux, Soissons and Omois does not stand up to scrutiny. Instead of the manager of numerous territories, we must acknowledge that the evidence is insufficient to assess the true extent of Heribert I's social and territorial power: our knowledge is limited to the endowment of a comital title and the strongholds of Péronne and St-Quentin only after 896, most likely after the rapprochement with King Odo. Before that date it is impossible to pinpoint him to a specific place or social status.

### **Count Heribert II: consolidation and expansion?**

Karl Ferdinand Werner and Helmut Schwager argue that Heribert I's homonymous son added the the archdiocese of Reims, the counties of Laon and Vienne, and two counties north of the river Oise to a family patrimony already consisting of Vermandois, Soissons, Meaux and Omois. This hypothesis is mainly based on the assumption of spatial continuity, as if Heribert II evidently inherited all of his father's counties.<sup>70</sup> In this section, I will try to pinpoint the precise extent of Count Heribert II's social and territorial power.

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<sup>67</sup> *Annales Vedastini*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS1, 81.

<sup>68</sup> It is more likely that *eiusdem loci* only refers to the location of the abbey, not the title of count: *Recueil des Actes de Charles III*, ed. Lauer, 19-21; *Annales Ordinis S. Benedicti*, ed. Jean Mabillon, 687; Werner, "Untersuchungen," (1960), 94-98. For the county of Meaux see the section on Heribert II.

<sup>69</sup> See the section on Heribert II's children. Helmut Schwager comes to a similar conclusion in the case of Heribert II's control of Beauvais: Schwager, *Graf Herbert II*, 400.

<sup>70</sup> Werner, "Untersuchungen," (1958), 256-289; Schwager, *Graf Heribert II*, 22-31.

First of all, Heribert II is consistently named as *comes* in the *Annals* and the *Histories* of Flodoard and the *Histories* of Richer. Since it is not recorded how he obtained that title, we cannot determine with certainty whether or not he inherited it from his father. For example, after the death of Count Roger I of Laon in 926, his son was conceded the county of Laon by the king one year later rather than directly inheriting it from his father.<sup>71</sup> These records also provide a relatively detailed picture of his actions, enabling us to discover specific places under Heribert II's command. At first sight, the *pagus* of Vermandois, and more specifically St-Quentin and especially Péronne seem to have been his home base. After the defeat of Charles III and the coronation of his successor Radulf at Soissons in 923, according to Flodoard, Heribert II captured the deposed Charles III by a trick *in castello suo super Somnam apud Sanctum Quintinum* ('in his stronghold of St-Quentin next to the Somme').<sup>72</sup> Charles III was kept and eventually died in Péronne in 929, still in Heribert II's custody.<sup>73</sup> When Heribert II himself died in 943, his sons buried him in St-Quentin.<sup>74</sup> In 932 a coalition of King Radulf and Count Hugh the Great besieged Péronne, in an unsuccessful attempt to remove Heribert II.<sup>75</sup> Thus, several records confirm Count Heribert II's control over the fortifications of Péronne and St-Quentin.

However, even in the supposed heartlands of the Vermandois house, it turns out that Heribert II's authority was not uncontested. For example, in 931 Heribert II 'restored' the *castrum* of St-Quentin to Arnold of Douai, suggesting it originally belonged to the latter.<sup>76</sup> Two years later Heribert II took the stronghold back by force, but immediately afterwards his representative was chased away by Hugh the Great.<sup>77</sup> In 934 and 935 St-Quentin was still controlled by Hugh.<sup>78</sup> In the case of Péronne, it took until the year 924 until the stronghold was 'given to Heribert II by King Radulf', implying it did not yet belong to the count and thus casting doubt on the assumption that he received Péronne as part of his father's inheritance.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, Heribert II only gained control over the nearby *castrum* of Ham, situated 20km west of St-Quentin, in 932. The stronghold initially belonged to a local lord called Everard, the brother of Count Erluin of Montreuil and a competitor of Heribert II. King Radulf later besieged both Péronne and Ham, a siege terminated by the compromise that

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<sup>71</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 36-39, 47.

<sup>72</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 15.

<sup>73</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 21, 44.

<sup>74</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 215.

<sup>75</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 54.

<sup>76</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 47.

<sup>77</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 56.

<sup>78</sup> Prospect of a siege by Heribert II, eventually avoided after negotiations: *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 53, 56, 60.

<sup>79</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 20.

the count could keep the *castra* 'until October 1'.<sup>80</sup> Hence, the king claimed control over these strongholds as well. Finally, King Radulf also owned the *munitio* of Clastres, situated in between St-Quentin and Ham, until it was plundered and destroyed by the sons of Heribert II in 944.<sup>81</sup> These observations suggest that the *pagus* of Vermandois was at stake in a battle between a king, a duke and several counts, each targeting individual strongholds in an attempt to assert their own local authority.

Heribert II's influence in Reims is mainly attributed to the appointment of his son Hugh as archbishop in 925, an episode extensively related by the chronicler Flodoard. According to this author's *Annals*, Reims was 'committed to Count Heribert II', who 'managed' it for his then five-year-old and therefore underage son.<sup>82</sup> However, there are indications Heribert II had possessions in the diocese of Reims prior to his son's archiepiscopal appointment. It turns out that King Charles III did not spend most of his time as captive in St-Quentin, contradicting the picture popularized in eleventh-century chronicles.<sup>84</sup> As mentioned, in 923 the count had indeed captured the king in St-Quentin, yet until 927 Charles was held *in munitionem suam castellam Theoderici super Maternam fluvium* ('in his stronghold of Château-Thierry, close to the river Marne').<sup>85</sup> This stronghold was situated about 50km west of Reims. Charles' imprisonment in Château-Thierry is corroborated by an event in 924, when Count Isaac of Cambrai destroyed the tower of 'Heribert II's stronghold next to the Marne, where Charles III was kept in custody'.<sup>86</sup> Flodoard's account of the appointment of Heribert II's son as archbishop of Reims is revealing as well. The chronicler claims that Hugh was 'elected by the clergy and the people' of the archiepiscopal city for fear that *extraneas personas* ('outsiders') would get hold of the see.<sup>87</sup> In 929 King Radulf tried to convince *clerum et populum* to elect a new archbishop, but the citizens remained loyal to Hugh.<sup>88</sup> The explicit contrast between Hugh and 'outsiders' suggests that the inhabitants of Reims regarded Heribert II's son as a local candidate.

Nonetheless, like the *pagus* of Vermandois, Heribert II and his son Hugh did not rule Reims undisturbedly. Hugh had lost control over the archiepiscopal see temporarily between 931

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<sup>80</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 52, 59.

<sup>81</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 92.

<sup>82</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 32-33.

<sup>84</sup> *Gesta abbatum S. Bertini Sithiensium - Folcwinii Gesta*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS13, 628-9; *Vita Bertulfi*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS15, 633-641.

<sup>85</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 15.

<sup>86</sup> In the 930s, Château-Thierry was quarreled over between Heribert II, Hugh the Great and King Raoul: *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 15, 24, 56-59, 65. For a discussion, see: Fraser McNair, "After Soissons: the Last Years of Charles the Simple (923-929)," *Rivista Reti Medievali* (18 (2017), accessed 8 November 2017, DOI: 10.6092/1593-2214/5165.

<sup>87</sup> *Histoire de l'Eglise de Reims*, II, Guizot and Desgrugillers ed., 271.

<sup>88</sup> *Histoire de l'Eglise de Reims*, II, Guizot and Desgrugillers ed., 276.

and 940 and definitely after 946, when Hugh's opponent Artald was installed as Archbishop of Reims.<sup>89</sup> In 940, King Louis IV bestowed *omnem comitatum Remensem* ('the entire county of Reims') and *Remensis urbis monetam* ('coinage right of the city of Reims') on Archbishop Artald. Of course, this occurred in the context of a conflict about the see, but it nonetheless demonstrates that the count did not have a firm grip on secular and ecclesiastical authority in Reims. The stronghold of Mouzon - repeatedly labelled a domain of the church of Reims<sup>90</sup> - was controlled by King Radulf's brother Boso until the *castellani* summoned the help of Heribert II in 930.<sup>91</sup> After Heribert II's death in 943 Mouzon served as the main residence of his son Hugh, but Artald and his supporters repeatedly besieged the stronghold. In 948, after the council of Ingelheim had formally declared Artald the legitimate archbishop, these supporters finally managed to seize and destroy the *castrum* of Mouzon.<sup>92</sup> In the Reims area, then, the authority of Heribert II was temporary too.

Another observation calls Heribert II's unprecedented rise to power into question. On the one hand, he made several attempts to increase his influence in the north of the West Frankish kingdom, leading Werner to conclude that the count controlled the Vexin and Mézeris.<sup>93</sup> For example, in 923 King Radulf left Hugh the Great and Heribert II 'behind the Oise to protect the lands' against the Normans.<sup>94</sup> At this point, he supported the king in defending the area north of the river Oise, flowing from Paris to Valenciennes. One year later the king returned Péronne to him, possibly in return for his military support in the north. In 925 Heribert II interfered again in this area, after the Normans violated a peace agreement by attacking Beauvais and Amiens. The count took the *oppidum* of Eu and destroyed a neighbouring stronghold.<sup>95</sup> The next year he supported King Radulf again, both against the Normans in the *pagus* Arras and against Duke William of Aquitaine in Nevers.<sup>96</sup> Between 932 and 944, Heribert II's son Odo controlled the city of Amiens.<sup>97</sup> On the other hand, none of these interventions have led to some kind of permanent territorial control. Thus, Heribert II's military activities in the area north of the Oise do not give rise to assume that the count dominated the Vexin and Mézeris.

Heribert II's involvement in Laon was equally troubled. In 929, the count requested that King Radulf grant the *comitatus* of Laon to one of his sons, but the king refused and bestowed it

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<sup>89</sup> Hugh was deposed by King Radulf, after which a pro-royal candidate Artald was appointed.

<sup>90</sup> *Chronique ou livre de fondation du Monastère de Mouzon*, ed. Michel Bur (Paris, 1989), 161.

<sup>91</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 46.

<sup>92</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 104, 105, 107, 113, 206, 116, 186, 192, 196-197, 208.

<sup>93</sup> Werner, "Untersuchungen," (1960), 98.

<sup>94</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 17.

<sup>95</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 29-30.

<sup>96</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 33.

<sup>97</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 53-64, 91.

on the son of the previous count Roger.<sup>98</sup> Heribert II's subsequent attempt to gain possession of the *castellum* of Laon by force was prevented by Radulf's troops, but eventually the count succeeded and seized control of the city.<sup>99</sup> Two years later, however, when Hugh was deposed as Archbishop of Reims, King Radulf managed to recapture Laon.<sup>100</sup> After Hugh's return in 940 Heribert II had another shot at Laon, but he broke off the siege when he learned that an army led by King Radulf's successor Louis IV was heading to the city.<sup>101</sup> Apparently, Heribert II's alleged dominance over the county of Laon in fact only consisted of two years' worth of control of the local *castellum*. The same objections apply to the count's eastward expansion. After Radulf's refusal to grant Laon to Heribert II's son in 929, the West Frankish king had a meeting with King Hugh of Italy. Shortly afterwards, Heribert II received *provintiam Viennensem* ('the province of Vienne') from the king.<sup>102</sup> Flodoard does not explicitly draw a straight line between these events, but it seems plausible that Radulf tried to appease Heribert II with an alternative for the county of Laon. However, between 931 and 951 a certain Charles-Constantine still frequently surfaces in Flodoard's annals as count of Vienne.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, Heribert II was on the losing side in a quarrel from 929 to 931 with King Radulf's brother Boso over the *castellum* of Vitry-en-Perthois.<sup>104</sup> In this area as well, Heribert II's influence was ephemeral.

In sum, there is no doubt that Count Heribert II played a significant part in tenth-century politics in West Francia. He alternately collaborated, quarrelled or negotiated with other powerful magnates such as kings, dukes, counts and lords, leaving his mark on the course of events in the very centre of the kingdom. However, the territorial reflection of Heribert II's political influence was limited to a couple of strongholds surrounding the episcopal cities of Soissons and Reims: Péronne, St-Quentin and Château-Thierry. Admittedly, there is some overlap with the properties of his father Heribert I, yet even with regard to these strongholds, Péronne did not pass into Heribert II's hands until 924, while other magnates successfully challenged the count's authority displacing him from St-Quentin. Moreover, several of Heribert II's attempts to expand - commonly used to illustrate the extent of his increasing power, as in the cases of Reims, Laon and Vienne - in fact turned out to be of no avail. Of course, the imprisonment of King Charles III attests to the count's political strength

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<sup>98</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 37.

<sup>99</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 38. In the aftermath of the siege Heribert II also destroyed the *munitio* of Mortagne-du-Nord next to the river Scheldt, that belonged to the son of Count Roger of Laon. According to Richer, Heribert II built a citadel in Laon: Richer, *Histoires*, ed. Lake, 183.

<sup>100</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 51-54.

<sup>101</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 82.

<sup>102</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 102.

<sup>103</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 46.

<sup>104</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 44-46, 62.



(giving him considerable leverage to attend his affairs), but, in the end, in terms of territorial power, Heribert II was still very much a local lord.

### Count Heribert II's children

Karl Ferdinand Werner contrasts Heribert II's 'overwhelming power' with the limited impact of his children.<sup>105</sup> Besides Archbishop Hugh of Reims, Heribert II had at least six other children: Heribert III, Robert, Albert, Odo, Luitgard and Adele. The name of his wife remains unknown, but it is likely that she was related to Duke Hugh the Great. The frequent use of typical 'Capetian' names such as Robert, Hugh, Odo and Adela already hint at such a kinship tie, but more compellingly, Flodoard also refers to the sons as 'nephews' of Duke Hugh the Great, the successor of Robert of Neustria.<sup>106</sup> However, even though it is difficult to draw a balanced comparison with Heribert II, in this section I will cluster the few traces of the whereabouts and the activities of these children.

First of all, Albert is traditionally considered his father's successor as count of Vermandois. However, even though Flodoard keeps writing until 966 (23 years after Heribert II's death), Albert is recorded as count, but there is no evidence to corroborate his possession of specific strongholds such as Péronne or St-Quentin. Instead, he seems to have been mainly occupied with church affairs, especially the abbey of Mont-St-Quentin, but also those of Homblières, St-Prix and St-Quentin l'Isle.<sup>107</sup> A St-Médard charter (963) situates a terrain *in pago Vermandensi ... ex beneficio ... comitis Alberti* ('in the *pagus* Vermandois, from the property of Count Albert').<sup>108</sup> However, in this context the term *Vermandensi* is a means to localize a specific piece of land, implying first and foremost that Count Albert owned some lands in the *pagus* of Vermandois. Moreover, Albert was also involved in affairs outside of this *pagus*. An undated charter of Lothair confirms the establishment of a church at Loches close to Tours, at the request of Archbishop Adalbero of Reims, Hugh Capet and *Arberto*

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<sup>105</sup> Werner, "Untersuchungen," (1960), 106; Schwager, *Graf Heribert II*, 381-387.

<sup>106</sup> For example, *avunculus: Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 100.

<sup>107</sup> Chaffenet, "Imitation et Innovation"; Fraser McNair, "A saint, an abbot, his documents and her property: power, reform and landholding in the monastery of Homblières under Abbot Berner (949-982)," *Journal of Medieval History* 42 (2015), 163-168. Albert's son Liudolf was also referred to in charters as 'bishop of Noyon and Vermandois': *Recueil des Actes de Charles III le Simple*, ed. Lauer, nrs. 2 and 40; *Chartes et documents de l'abbaye de St-Pierre, au mont Bladin, à Gent*, ed. Auguste van Lokeren (Ghent, 1869), nr.15; *De re diplomatica*, VI, ed. Jean Mabillon, nr.134; *The cartulary and charters of Notre-Dame of Homblières*, ed. Theodore Evergates and Gilles Constable (Cambridge, 1990), nr.1; *Episcopalibus officii sollicitudo I. Les actes des évêques de Noyon-Tournai (VIIe siècle - 1146, 1148)*, ed. Jacques Pycke and Cyriel Vleeschouwers (Tournai, 2015), nrs. 1-16.

<sup>108</sup> *Recueil des Actes de Lothaire et de Louis V*, ed. Louis Halphen and Ferdinand Lot (Paris, 1908), 40.

*comite*.<sup>109</sup> Thus, Albert subscribed charters together with some of the most powerful men at the time. He was married to Gerberga, born from the marriage between Duke Gisbert of Lotharingia and Gerberga, daughter of the German king Henry I.<sup>110</sup> According to Flodoard, Albert also reconciled with Louis IV in 949, shortly after the deposition of his brother as Archbishop of Reims at the Council of Ingelheim.<sup>111</sup> Consequently, the count proved himself pragmatic in his political agenda, allying with King Louis IV despite his father's troubled relationship with the West Frankish monarchs.

A similar picture could be painted of the other siblings. Herbert II's two daughters were married to some of the most influential magnates in the kingdom: Adele to Count Arnulf of Flanders, Luitgard successively to Duke William I of Normandy and Count Theobald of Blois.<sup>112</sup> Three brothers are mentioned in Flodoard's narratives. Odo was granted Vienne in 929 by King Radulf, but this appears to have had little practical effect since after 931 the sources document another ruler acting as count of Vienne.<sup>113</sup> Nonetheless, his father's discord with King Louis IV did not prevent Odo from siding with the king in 938, yielding him the temporary command of the *castellum* of Laon.<sup>114</sup> Like his brother Albert, Odo did not see a problem in collaborating with his father's major enemy to improve his own position, in this case even while Heribert II was still alive. He also controlled the city of Amiens with the consent of Bishop Derold of Amiens, until he was driven away by royal troops in 944.<sup>115</sup> Despite Werner's assumption that Odo owed his power solely to his father, the evidence suggests that he had autonomously managed to gain the temporary command over specific places of power of which Herbert II himself had never been in charge, even acting counter to his father to achieve this.

In the case of Robert, as previously mentioned, Werner has convincingly demonstrated that Troyes was not inherited from his own father. Robert is recorded as *Trecassine urbis comite* in several sources, but he got a hold of this town only after the death of his father-in-law

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<sup>109</sup> A royal charter mentioned in a charter of Geoffrey Grisegonelle: Jacques Boussard, "La charte de fondation de Notre-Dame de Loches," *Mémoires de la société archéologique de Touraine* 9 (1975): 1-10.

<sup>110</sup> *Obituaires de Sens, I.2, Eglise cathédrale de Paris*, ed. Auguste Molinier (Paris, 1902), 1015.

<sup>111</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 120.

<sup>112</sup> Adele married Count Arnulf (of Flanders) in 934, at the same time as a peace treaty between Arnulf and Heribert II. Luitgard's first husband was Duke William of Normandy, with whom Heribert II concluded a peace in 928. Her second husband was Count Theobald of Blois, nicknamed 'the Trickster': Witger, *Genealogica Arnulfi comitis*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS9, 303; *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 102, 210; Raoul Glaber, *Historiarum libris V*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS7, 165.

<sup>113</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 46.

<sup>114</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 70.

<sup>115</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 53-64, 91.

Count Gislebert in 956.<sup>116</sup> The subscription of an earlier charter (940) by *Rodberti filium Heriberti comitis* suggests that Robert did not yet hold the title of count at that point.<sup>117</sup> Again, territorial continuity between father and son was not a given. In addition, it is assumed that Robert was succeeded by his brother Heribert III as count of Troyes. In a letter of Gerbert of Aurillac (983) he is referred to as *Heriberti Trecassini* ('Heribert of Troyes').<sup>118</sup> In other letters in Gerbert's collection, we see Heribert III negotiating and collaborating with Archbishop Adalbero of Reims, Bishop Gibuin of Châlons, the counts Godfrey and Eudes, and Hugh Capet on several occasions, thus being involved in the circles of the most significant political figures at the turn of the millennium.<sup>119</sup> A charter of the abbey of St-Médard (963) in Soissons furthermore describes him as *Heribertus comes et abbas*, but it is unclear how Heribert III acquired control within Soissons.<sup>120</sup> His grandfather Heribert I was lay abbot of St-Crépin in Soissons, but Flodoard recounts that Heribert II's sons donated it to King Louis IV 'shortly before' the year 944. Heribert III was thus lay abbot of a different abbey to that his ancestors had ruled.<sup>121</sup>

In contrast with Werner's view, moreover, these references do not prove that the three successive Heriberts were counts of Soissons, since each Heribert only exercised influence over one particular religious institution in the Soissons area, alongside several other magnates.<sup>122</sup> Control over the *urbs* of Soissons itself constantly shifted between Robert of Neustria and his son Duke Hugh on the one hand, the kings Radulf and Louis IV on the other during the first half of the tenth century.<sup>123</sup> Thus, Heribert III's interest in the abbey of St-Crépin is not sufficient evidence to regard him as 'count of Soissons'. Nonetheless, the count had a similar influence in a religious house to his two closest ancestors. In 952 Heribert III was also temporarily in command of the *castrum* of Vitry-en-Perthois, a stronghold besieged by his father 20 years earlier.<sup>124</sup> His occurrence as *comes palatii* in a royal charter for the

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<sup>116</sup> Werner, "Untersuchungen," (1960), 112-116. For example: Richer, *Histories*, ed. Lake, II, 12; *Spicilegium sive Collectio veterum aliquot Scriptorum*, III, ed. Luc d'Achery (Paris, 1723), 470; *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Aubin d'Angers*, ed. Bertrand de Broussillon (Angers, 1903), 4.

<sup>117</sup> *Recueil des Chartres de l'abbaye de Cluny*, ed. Auguste Bernard and Alexander Bruel (Paris, 1876), I, 496.

<sup>118</sup> *The Letters of Gerbert, with his papal privileges as Sylvester II*, ed. Henriett Pratt Lattin (New York, 1961), 63.

<sup>119</sup> *The Letters of Gerbert, with his papal privileges as Sylvester II*, ed. Henriett Pratt Lattin (New York, 1961), 63-64, 97, 106, 108-109, 130, 135, 143-144, 147, 164-165, 166-167.

<sup>120</sup> *Recueil des Actes de Lothaire et de Louis V*, ed. Halphen and Lot, 40.

<sup>121</sup> In the same year the sons pillaged lands of the abbey of St-Crépin, suggesting that at that point, they had no influence there anymore. Count Ragenold pillaged lands of the abbey of St-Médard in revenge: *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 93, 100, 105.

<sup>122</sup> Werner, "Untersuchungen," (1960), 99.

<sup>123</sup> McNair, "After Soissons".

<sup>124</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 134.

abbey of Montier-en-Der in 980, close to Vitry, substantiates both the count's interests in this specific area and his overall social status as a close royal ally.<sup>125</sup>

Finally, although it is impossible to gain in-depth knowledge in the ways Heribert II and his children operated as a family unit, a couple of records nonetheless hint at the relationship between the siblings. On the one hand, some suggest a collaboration. For example, Flodoard occasionally refers to the brothers as a *consortium*. In 953, Robert and Albert built the *munitio* of Montfélix together, about 50km south of Reims.<sup>126</sup> Flodoard also records several other instances where two or more of the siblings cooperated, for example defending Hugh's claims on the archiepiscopal see of Reims until he was definitely brushed aside at the Council of Ingelheim. The Saint-Médard charter (963) situates a terrain *in pago Vermandensi ... ex beneficio fratris nostri comitis Adalberti* ('in the *pagus* Vermandois, from the property of our brother count Albert).<sup>127</sup> In this case, Albert donated lands to the abbey where his brother Heribert III exercised the office of lay abbot. This might be interpreted as if, at this point, the brothers were on friendly terms, although Fraser argues that this need not necessarily have been due to a good relationship.<sup>128</sup> On the other hand, previous examples in this section demonstrate that Heribert II's children mostly acted independently. For instance, after Heribert II's death in 943, according to Flodoard, the sons were initially at odds about the division of the inheritance. It took until 946 to be reconciled, through mediation of Duke Hugh.<sup>129</sup> As mentioned, both Albert and Odo acted in concert with Heribert II's main opponent King Louis IV at least once, in the case of the latter even when his father was still alive. In spite of the few contemporary examples of family awareness, it seems that Heribert II's offspring followed their individual agenda instead of loyally serving a family unit. In other words, cooperation was plausible, but never structural.

In sum, it is difficult to maintain the claim that the extent of the territorial power and the social status of Count Heribert II's children completely diminished after his death. Taking into account the imbalance caused by the lack of narrative sources for the final decades of tenth-century West Francia, the picture of Heribert II's sons and daughters more or less dovetails with that of their father and grandfather: all of them were noblemen with Carolingian blood; Albert, Robert and eventually Heribert III held the title of count; and they tried - although not always successfully - to control specific places such as Amiens, Laon,

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<sup>125</sup> *Recueil des Actes de Lothaire et de Louis V*, ed. Halphen and Lot, 110.

<sup>126</sup> In the following years this fortification was frequently attacked by Ragenald of Roucy: *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 134, 139-140.

<sup>127</sup> *Recueil des Actes de Lothaire et de Louis V*, ed. Halphen and Lot, 40.

<sup>128</sup> Fraser McNair, "A saint, an abbot, his documents and her property: power, reform and landholding in the monastery of Homblières under Abbot Berner (949-982)," *Journal of Medieval History* 42 (2015), 164.

<sup>129</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 100.

Vitry-en-Perthois, Montfélix and Troyes. However, most of these titles and properties were not inherited from their father. Both Heribert II's sons and daughters paved their own way, keeping in touch with other local magnates in order to foster their own interests, irrespective of previous alliances of their relatives and ancestors. Even if we assume that Albert was the first family member to consolidate himself in the Vermandois area as the lay abbot of St-Quentin and passed it on to his ancestors, there is no evidence that this office nor other properties were inherited from his father. Hence, family continuity between Heribert II and his offspring was minimal.

### **The counts of... Vermandois?**

Following Karl Ferdinand Werner's review article about the house of Vermandois, in recent historiography the members of this family are unambiguously referred to as 'counts of Vermandois'. Helmut Schwager nuances the significance of the title, arguing that 'the county of Vermandois was only one of the clan's possessions, and in the long run not even the most important one'. Instead, he advocates the use of 'Heribertians' as an alternative alias.<sup>130</sup> Indeed, Heribert I, Heribert II and his offspring are mentioned dozens of times in contemporary sources, but the title of *comes* is never linked to the toponym 'Vermandois'.<sup>131</sup>

One could argue that, despite the absence of the title 'count of Vermandois' in tenth-century sources, control over the territory in practice is plenty of proof that Heribert I and his offspring were the *de facto* rulers of the *pagus* of Vermandois. However, in the previous sections I have demonstrated that none of the Heribertians exercised authority over the entire *pagus*. On the one hand, the West Frankish kings and Duke Hugh Great have regularly appropriated the strongholds of Péronne and St-Quentin. On the other hand, strongholds such as Ham and Clastres were situated in the *pagus* Vermandois, but were nonetheless outside the influence of Heribert I and his offspring. Other secular magnates such as Odo, Robert, Duke Hugh the Great and the West Frankish kings Charles III, Radulf and Louis IV had a similar say in the area as well.

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<sup>130</sup> Schwager, *Graf Heribert II*, 22.

<sup>131</sup> Also the majority of eleventh- and twelfth-century chroniclers do not localize these rulers in the 'county of Vermandois': Widukind, *Res Gestae Saxonicae*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS3, 451; *Annalista Saxo*, a. 741-1139, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS6, 606; Sigebert of Gembloux, *Chronica cum continuationibus*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS6, 349; Ekkehard, *Chronicon Imperatorum ab origine Francorum ad a. 1114*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS6, 187; Regino of Prüm, *History and Politics in Late Carolingian and Ottonian Europe*, ed. Simon Maclean (Manchester, 2009), 249; Hugh of Fleury, *Liber qui modernorum regum francorum continet actus a. 1108*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS9, 382; *Annales Remenses*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS13, 81-82; Albéric de Trois-Fontaines, *Chronicon*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS23, 759-763; *Annales Parchenses*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS16, 599; *Continuator Reginonis Trevirensis*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS1, 616.

Furthermore, Flodoard even hints at the possibility that, if anyone, Duke Hugh the Great instead of Heribert II was the key figure in the *pagus* of Vermandois in the first half of the tenth century. Of course, Heribert II 'gathering the harvest of the *pagus* Vermandois and collecting it in Péronne' in 934 could be interpreted as if his influence extended over the whole *pagus*, but the chronicler adds that the gathering was limited to 'those who had left their lands that Duke Hugh gave them'.<sup>132</sup> Similarly, Flodoard's report that in 935 the *pagus* Vermandois was pillaged by an army of Normans, is terminated by the subsequent event of Duke Hugh 'leading the Normans who had crossed his borders to an enormous slaughter'.<sup>133</sup> In this story a part of the *pagus* of Vermandois is referred to as Hugh's territory instead of Heribert II's. Still, no magnate ever claimed the title of 'count of Vermandois' nor managed to control the entire territory in practice.

Then why are the Heribertians systematically referred to as counts of Vermandois in historiography? The oldest reference to the toponym 'Vermandois' in relation to the counts is preserved on the reverse of a charter of King Lothar from 966: *Adela, filia Hereberti comitis Virmandorum* ('Adele, daughter of count Heribert of Vermandois').<sup>134</sup> However, we are dealing here with a forged diploma, presumably drawn up in the first half of the eleventh century. Also the handwriting of the passage on the reverse suggests it was written down somewhere in the beginning of the eleventh century.<sup>135</sup> In other words, the reference is not contemporary. The *Gesta Episcoporum Cameracensium*, a history of the bishops of Cambrai composed around 1025, also records *Ottonem, Alberti Vermandensium comitis filium* ('Otto, son of Count Albert of Vermandois') and *Alberto Vermandensi comiti* ('Count Albert II of Vermandois').<sup>136</sup> Next, Otto's son Heribert IV is the first member of the lineage who is explicitly entitled as *Vermandensis* ('of Vermandois') in diplomatic sources. A charter to the abbey of St-Fursey (1010) was forged, but another one to the abbey of Homblières (1021-1043) was not.<sup>137</sup> Similarly, Otto's nephew Albert, son of Heribert IV, and Heribert VI were both labelled as *comes Viromanduorum*, during the restoration of the abbey of St-Quentin and in a charter to the abbey of St-Prix (1076) respectively.<sup>138</sup> It therefore seems safe to assume that the title of 'count of Vermandois' was an eleventh-century innovation.

The tradition of linking the toponym 'Vermandois' to the tenth-century counts goes back to the Central Middle Ages. According to the twelfth-century continuator of the chronicle of

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<sup>132</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 59.

<sup>133</sup> *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. Lauer, 96-97.

<sup>134</sup> *Recueil des Actes de Lothaire et de Louis V*, ed. Lauer, 58.

<sup>135</sup> Werner, "Untersuchungen," (1960), 92.

<sup>136</sup> *Gesta Episcoporum Cameracensium*, MGH, *Scriptores*, 557, 439.

<sup>137</sup> *Catalogue des actes de Robert II, roi de France*, ed. William Mendel Newman (Paris, 1937), 73.

<sup>138</sup> *Chartes de Coutume en Picardie: XIe-XIIIe siècle*, ed. Robert Fossier (Paris, 1974), 131-133.

Ado of Vienne, Heribert II was *Veromanduorum comite*.<sup>139</sup> About half a century later, Alberic de Trois-Fontaines described Heribert II as *de Peroni, Campanie et Veromandie* ('of Péronne, Compiègne and Vermandois').<sup>140</sup> Evidently, these chroniclers jumped Count Heribert II together with his eleventh-century descendants. Next, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century genealogists divided the lineage in two. The offspring of Albert of Vermandois and Robert of Troyes were labelled as the 'old' and the 'new' line respectively. Since Albert eventually held the title of 'count of Vermandois', this designation was subsequently applied to his ancestors as well, as if it had descended from father to son ever since the ninth century.<sup>141</sup> Heribert I's and Heribert II's control of St-Quentin and Péronne seems to reinforce this argument, as these strongholds were situated in the *pagus* of Vermandois.<sup>142</sup> Nonetheless, it is abundantly clear that this is a historiographical construct not found in contemporary sources, introduced in eleventh-century sources, popularized in narrative sources from the twelfth century onwards, and copied in historiography ever since the seventeenth century.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the territorial power of successive 'Herbertians' in the ninth and tenth century substantiates previous scholarship. No magnate managed to subjugate the entire territory of the *pagus* of Vermandois or even claimed such dominance, neither Heribert I and his offspring, nor Duke Hugh the Great, nor the successive West Frankish kings. Instead, a number of political forces tried to foster their power by taking control over individual cities and strongholds while gaining influence in religious houses. Frequently poaching on each other's preserve, these power-brokers alternately collaborated, quarrelled or negotiated with each other, trying to safeguard, consolidate and increase their local entrenchment. In addition, the title 'count of Vermandois' does not yet surface in contemporary documents. It turns out that the traditional representation of the Herbertians as a 'house', a patrilinear lineage controlling the county of Vermandois as their heartlands, is indebted to modern genealogists confused by post-tenth-century sources.

To this the Vermandois case can add that, contrary to deeply-roted assumptions, there is only rare proof of large-scale continuity between different generations of the lineage. Certainly, ever since Heribert I at least one of his descendants had held the title of count. Although no evidence explicitly pins this title down to an acquisition by inheritance, such a

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<sup>139</sup> Archbishop Ado of Vienne, *Chronicon*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS2, 325.

<sup>140</sup> The chronicler is notorious for his many inaccuracies: Albéric de Trois-Fontaines, *Chronicon*, MGH, *Scriptores*, SS23, 756, 774.

<sup>141</sup> Werner, "Untersuchungen," (1960), 87-119.

<sup>142</sup> Werner, "Untersuchungen," (1960), 91.

conjunction is not unlikely. In territorial terms, however, the picture is much more fluid. At first sight, there might have been some overlap between Heribert I, Heribert II and Albert as for Péronne and St-Quentin, but even here it cannot be taken for granted that these strongholds passed down directly from father to son. For example, Heribert II only received Péronne from the king about two decades after his father's death, while none of Heribert II's sons are ever associated with these castles (only Albert with adjacent religious houses). Also the acquisition of Troyes by Robert only after the death of his father-in-law (instead of his own father) clearly evidences the need for a cautious approach of inheritance practices. Moreover, none of the Heribertians had permanent control over the counties or the cities of Meaux, Beauvais, Soissons, Senlis, Omois, Reims and Laon, calling into question the extent of their supposedly overwhelming territorial power. Comital influence in these areas was emphatically unstable, temporary and circumstantial, with no evident link between different generations of the family.

More generally, in line with the critical remarks of anthropologist David Schneider, it should strike us how rarely the 'family' or 'lineage' surfaces in contemporary source material as a decisive constituent of the ties between ancestors and offspring, especially compared to the amount of clout it had according to historical research. The issue in the Vermandois case is not that there was no continuity between fathers and sons at all; there was, to varying degrees of quantity and weight. In the end, however, the individual family members were left to travel under their own steam. The paternal inheritance provided at best a beneficial starting position, yet it was not a guarantee for geo-political success in what has been considered the Herbertians' power base (Péronne and St-Quentin), let alone in other regions. Just like Heribert II's failed attempts to gain a foothold in Reims, Laon and north of the Oise, his children tried their luck to take control over new properties by marriage, military force or negotiation.

Lastly, there is no corroboratory evidence to assume that the accumulation of wealth into the hands of the family was the chief purpose of the actions of individual 'Herbertians'. Heribert II, for instance, seems to have used his sons first and foremost as pawns in his own game, as is particularly lucid in the case of Archbishop Hugh of Reims: the underage Hugh formally held the title of archbishop, yet in practice the count governed the Church himself. It was not until the count died in 943 that Hugh shook off the yoke of his father's supervision. Similarly, after the death of Heribert II, it took years before his sons managed to arrange the division of the inheritance, while two of them did not even shrink to cut a deal with their father's principal opponents when such a move suited their personal interests.



These examples refute the idea of generation-transcending solidarity within aristocratic families, the successive counts on the contrary manifesting a pragmatic attitude towards their ancestors and offspring: what is in it for me?

In sum, I am not suggesting that the illustrious 'house' of Vermandois was in fact nothing but a ruinous shack, but I believe that it is necessary to take a more realistic view of the *longue durée*-implications of belonging to a lineage. Tending a common 'family patrimony' was not a goal per se, outweighing all other possible motives behind an individual's actions, nor was hereditary continuity within lineages self-evident: the authority and respect concomitant to a comital title had to be enforced again and again; while control over strongholds, religious houses and lands, even those that were in fact inherited, was easily lost. One might wonder whether a similar approach, when applied to other prominent early medieval 'families', 'lineages' or 'dynasties' would lead to similar doubts about the continuity of their territorial power and social status.