

FILM 1- SOCIETY IN ROMANESQUE PERIOD

FOCUS THE COUNTS OF POITOU

In the Romanesque era (11th and 12th century), the present-day region of Poitou-Charentes was divided into three main counties, whose borders often changed : Poitou, Angoumois and Saintonge. The Counts of Poitou, who were also the Dukes of Aquitaine, progressively came to rule over these territories. They constituted one of the greatest families of the Frankish kingdom.

Their power dates back to the Carolingian era, when Charlemagne created a new territorial administration to rule over his empire, organizing it into Counties and Duchies. He appointed Counts and Dukes to rule over these territories - like Abbon, in 778, for the county of Poitiers. He granted them full authority to ensure peace, render justice and collect taxes within their respective territories.

In the 9th and 10th century, Viking invasions and political troubles stemming from the division of the empire (in 843) led to the fall of the central power. Thus, the Counts, Dukes and other noble families conquered vast territories, which they often conceded to vassal lords. Starting in the 10th century, the Counts and Dukes began bestowing on their descendants rights which had previously been granted by the king or emperor.

In this way, the Guillaume family progressively took over the County of Poitou and the Duchy of Aquitaine, the counties of Limousin, Saintonge and Angoumois (despite fierce resistance from the Counts of Angoulême). And it reigned over these territories for more than two centuries. The last representative of this family is Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122 ? – 1204), who married the King of France and later the King of England. Among the other famous members of this dynasty are Guillaume V (995-1030), who met with the Emperor of Germany and the Kings of France, Italy and England. He was « admirable for his wisdom, full of a liberal generosity, a defender of the poor, a builder of sanctuaries » (Adémar de Chabannes). And William IX The Troubadour (1071-1126), who invented courtly poetry : « All the joy in the world is ours, lady, if we love each other ».



Illustration 3 : 19th century recumbent effigy of Guillaume VIII (1058 - 1086). Church of Saint-Jean de Montierneuf, Poitiers. © Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine, inventaire du patrimoine culturel / C. Rome, 2013.



Illustration 4 : The crypt of the church of Saint-Eutrope at Saintes, given by Guillaume VIII to the Abbey of Cluny in 1081. © Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine, inventaire du patrimoine culturel / C. Rome, 2012.



Illustration 5 : The great hall at the Palace of the Counts, at Poitiers. Built by Eleanor of Aquitaine.
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Illustration 6 : The recumbent effigies of Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II, at the Abbey of Fontevraud (Maine-et-Loire).



Illustration 7 : *Drawing of a counter-seal of Richard the Lionheart, Count of Poitou, Duke of Aquitaine through his mother, Eleanor.* In *Sigillographie du Poitou jusqu'en 1515* de F. Eygun, Poitiers, 1938.

