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Blé, vigne, olivier : transformations des pratiques et des représentations d'une triade méditerranéenne

Wheat, vines, and olive trees: transformations in the practice and representations of a Mediterranean triad

From the Fruits of Tenant Labour: Agricultural Rents and Cistercian Leasing in the Region of Narbonne (Twelfth Century)

Des fruits du travail des locataires : loyers agricoles et baux cisterciens dans le Narbonnais (xii^e siècle)

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Introduction

- 1 All along the coastal plain of Languedoc, in Southern France, the vine dominates rural spaces despite the reduction of its land area and the resurgence of olive cultures (Angles and Garlatti 2014, p. 21-25). If “viticulture was easy there”, and the olive was omnipresent as it was “without contest, the tree of Mediterranean civilisations”, vineyards and olive groves in this region were far less specialized cultures in the twelfth century than during the modern period (Bourin-Derruau 1987, v. 1, p. 12; Angles, Grésillon and Minvielle 2017, p. 26). In all but the

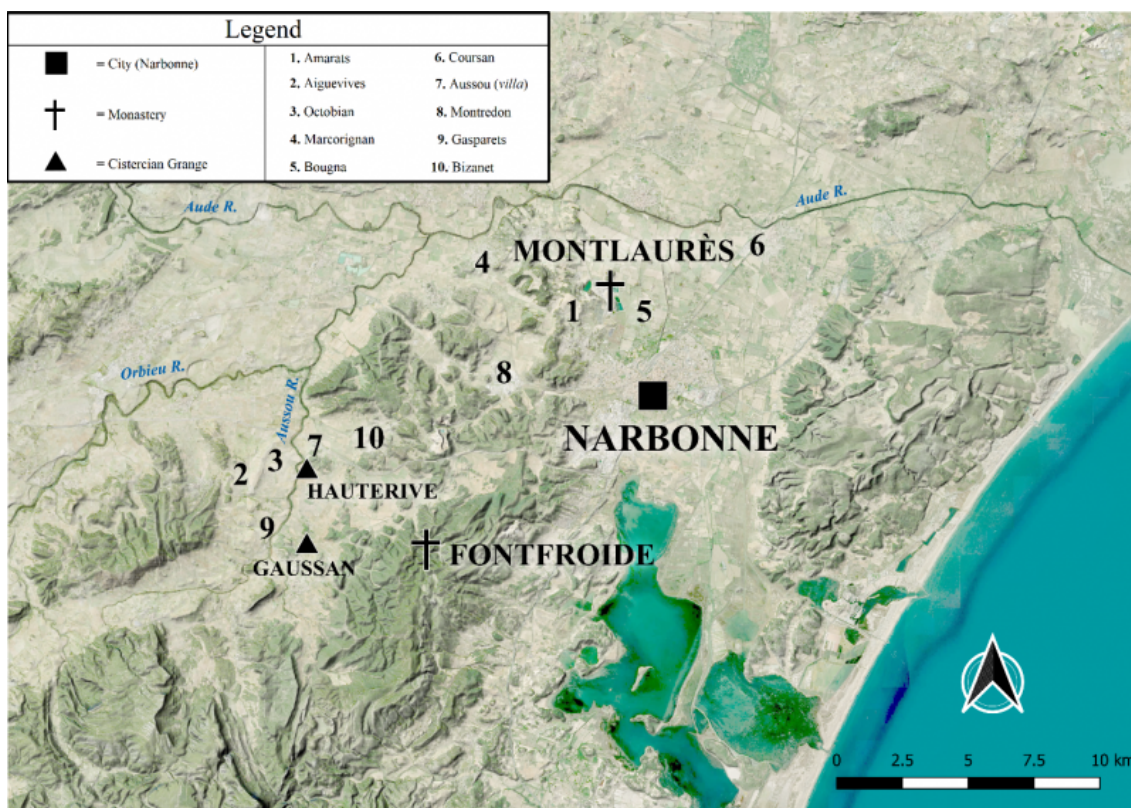
region of Béziers, throughout Lower Languedoc, olives, grapes, and grains were grown together in the same gardens (Durand 1998, p. 337). Trellised vines and olive trees were typical even on peasant plots (Durand 1998, p. 336-346). Notwithstanding peasant cultivation, both olive oil and wine were far from frequent on rustic tables. Archaeological excavations report rare instances of the consumption of the fruits themselves, evidenced from seeds uncovered in waste pits (Mane *et al.* 2005, p. 200). Speculative market interests have attracted historians to investigate their cultivation in the early modern period. For the region of Narbonne itself, this was shown by Gilbert Larguier to have been influenced by aristocratic activity during the fifteenth century concerning the olive specifically: plots became larger and more specialized, suggesting the wealth and position of their owners (1996, p. 219-221). These findings were highlighted by studies of an earlier period, which uncovered precocious signs of similar activity from the fourteenth century, near the abbey of Gellone (Abbé and Challet 2007, p. 527).

- 2 This aristocratic (or elite) interest in the olive, combined with the oft-referenced focus on cereal cultivation, point toward an underemphasized—though necessarily present—aspect of the economic logic of the period, as recently discussed by Chris Wickham. While seigneurial interests might direct market forces, such as through surplus extraction (e.g. rents, taxes, and services), lords themselves had little bearing on local and even interregional economies as a whole. In other words, peasant labourers were key actors in the basic production processes while lords simply were not (Wickham 2023, p. 679). Investigating changing rural structures and agricultural interests by emphasizing elite directives naturally can obscure the lived realities of the peasant majority. A general aim of this article is to reverse that attention. Jean-Loup Abbé found that before the fifteenth century the olive was detectable in a variety of plots across all social backgrounds, but that the commuted price of oil-based rents appeared proportional to the size of the plot itself (Abbé 2009, p. 29). As agricultural rents were not commuted into cash payments to the same degree in the region and period investigated here, the aim of this article is nevertheless to track the proportional and fixed rents owed by tenants from their rural plots in a similar manner. In doing so, the relative values of the individual crops will be compared.

- 3 Unlike Abbé, whose attention on rural spaces has often turned toward fourteenth-century *compoix* (a meridional cadastre), this investigation relies on diplomatic evidence from both the canonical and abbatial inventories of Fontfroide Abbey, as edited and published by Véronique de Becdelièvre (2009)¹. First summarized and translated from Latin in the seventeenth century, these inventories raise some methodological challenges. Comprised of over 1800 individual acts, they are all that remains of the abbey's original archives. Though in truncated form owing to the work of their copyists (who sought to summarize their contents), these records—called charters—detail property transactions, both real and abstract. They document the private dealings of twelfth- and thirteenth-century people from a variety of social backgrounds. By targeting the humblest among them, this article brings long-buried aspects of their lives into focus, while specifically investigating the socio-economic ties that their yearly rents in kind (grain, olives, grapes) belie. For as a defining characteristic of their tenancy, these labourers did not fully own all the land they worked.
- 4 The definition of a tenurial relationship between labourer and landlord, referred to as feudal or manorial in the literature, is subject to wide debate (Haack, Grabowsky, and Patzold 2025, forthcoming). Such social, economic, and legal ties, however, offer a unique opportunity to study land use and its appropriation within the Cistercian Order. Central to the analysis of the paper is the timeframe: it is widely accepted that land maintained by the Cistercians (often called granges, or rural farmsteads) was cultivated directly by the religious community—either by the monks themselves, their lay brothers, or hired-labourers—until such plots were gradually leased to tenants in the thirteenth century. While twelfth-century tenants have been discussed by other historians, their appearance in such diplomatic evidence is often considered minimal (Mousnier 2006, p. 234, p. 249, p 270 ; Alfonso 1991, p. 14-15, p. 25). Naturally, such a position can obfuscate more coercive practices within the temporal domains of Cistercian abbeys, which cloud our understanding of the Order's seigneurial function in local society (Alfonso 1991, p. 29-30).
- 5 This paper centres on three regions near the city of Narbonne which had a relative abundance of olive groves among the worked lands: the territories of Hauterive and Gaussan (granges of Fontfroide), as well

as those near the Benedictine priory of Montlaurès. Fontfroide Abbey itself, likely founded in 1098 (though the original document is lost), was initially a Benedictine house. By 1144, however, it had reformed under Cistercian customs in filiation with Clairvaux via Grandselve Abbey. By the end of the thirteenth century, Fontfroide boasted some twenty-four granges, from Roussillon to the Minervois (Grèzes-Rueff 1977, p. 274). Its grange of Hauterive was specifically consolidated on the former grounds of the *villa* Octobian, straddling the Aussou stream, largely during the 1170s (Bonnet 1994, p. 104). The morphology of its parcels is suggestive of intensive cereal cultivation, and Abbé (1997, p. 29-30) argued that their orientation respective to other neighbouring lands indicated new agricultural pursuits under Cistercian directives. Additionally, cereal grains are commonplace cultures in the plains and meadows surrounding Gaussan, another Cistercian grange consolidated during this same period (Mouynès 1877, p. 467-474). As for the priory of Montlaurès, throughout much of the eleventh and twelfth centuries it was affiliated with Saint Michael's Abbey in Piedmont. Closely linked to the vice-comital family of Narbonne, the priory operated under its own temporal concerns until its purchase in 1211 by the Cistercians of Fontfroide (Chalon 1973, p. 173-182).

Figure 1. Map of the region of Narbonne



Benson Derek 2024, QGIS

- 6 With this context in mind, the first part of this article explores the specifics of the local economy by comparing the proportional and fixed rents of grain, grapes, and olives that local labourers paid to their lords. As a consequence, it also inherently focuses on the productivity and wealth of the tenants themselves. Building upon the specifics of the local economy, the second part analyses the temporal concerns of the Cistercians of Fontfroide in order to include the Order in the discussion of seigneurial coercion within the region. Their maintenance of tenancies and other dependent labourers there is evident, even if few documented rents were collected by the monks from these communities. Contrary to the conclusions of Mireille Mousnier and Constance Berman (among many others), this article argues that the economic logic and social reality of the early granges was not as fundamentally altered from the contemporary seigneurial context, as recently investigated by Chris Wickham—an argument which is often repeated in the historiography.

Rent as agricultural surplus of production

- 7 A variety of crops were sown across the fields, vineyards, and gardens scattered over the low-lying hills south and west of the ancient course of the Aude River near Montlaurès, or those framed by the patchwork of streams and canals along the plains west of Fontfroide between Hauterive and Gausan. When differentiation is possible, a general tendency of planting vines along gentle slopes is discernible. At Amarats near the slope (*costa*) of Montlaurès, the monks had a vested interest in sustaining viticulture; and on the hill (*puech*) of Tenarel around Aiguesvives west of Octobian, the water emanating from the spring was a clear benefit long before the Cistercians arrived (Bonnet 1994, p. 111). While olive groves are often found in dry locations, they number among the crops grown along the wet plains on either side of the Aussou, a stream which feeds the Orbieu River that in turn empties into the Aude. Olive production was indeed a versatile practice. Trees could be grown on parcels alongside other crops, as was so often the case in the gardens of this region in which cabbage, onions, and leeks are also cited (Abbé 2009, p. 29). Germain Mouynès noted in his inventory of the archives of Narbonne that a region near Gausan known as “Olivier-Pagès” appeared to indicate that the tree grew wild there (Mouynès 1877, p. 467). No other reference to olive cultivation near Gausan survives, though its presence was clearly apparent. As for cereal cultivation, namely wheat and barley, their presence was as ubiquitous as in other humid river basins of Languedoc, for which a high number of mills were chief concerns of both monasteries of Montlaurès and Fontfroide. Given nominal access to these lands by a variety of local lords, the labourers who farmed there often paid their yearly rents in kind, either as a proportional rent of the total harvest or in a fixed quantity. By comparing these figures, a fuller image of the local economy emerges.

Proportional rents

- 8 Beside investigating the earliest signs of speculative, seigneurial interests regarding olive cultivation, the study published by Jean-

Loup Abbé and Vincent Challet in 2007 has led to important observations about the relative values of the Mediterranean triad in the local economy. Compared to wheat and wine, oil was found to be commensurate with the size of the plot itself, suggesting that the olive was a notable fiscal resource (Abbé 2009, p. 29-31). Olive cultivation in medieval sources is first discernible in Languedoc during the tenth and eleventh centuries (Marinval 2010, p. 39-52), though archaeological evidence indicates that its appearance was far older, dating to at least the Bronze Age (Terral *et al.* 2004, p. 74-75). For Abbé, the *compoix* from the fourteenth-century Hérault (a neighbouring region) provided useful details on the measure and quantity of individual plots for comparing the olive with other crops. From charters of an earlier period, this detail is unfortunately rare. Varying entrance fees, or *acapta*—the relative cash payments for reception of vacant land (Berthe 2002, p. 237)—potentially give an indication of the size of a given plot when available, but other factors such as location could equally have affected costs.

- 9 Already in the mid-eleventh century, the collection of the *quartum* (1/4th of the harvest) of wheat is discernible by Viscount Aymeri I of Narbonne from land intended to be used to build a mill (no. 9, p. 15). While rents derived from milling activity generally became more extractive during the following century, the *quartum* remained the most cited annual rent in the regions considered here. In total, 86 separate acts dating between 1116 and 1220 were consulted. From over three-quarters of these acts, the *quartum* was owed by the tenant; in the majority of which, the rent was derived from the unspecified “fruits” of the land or trees. The rents owed from the remainder, some 23%, relate largely to the *tasca* (1/11th of the harvest), though a rare few owed the high rent of half the produce, such as from the trees at a mill in the territory of Montlaurès (no. 89, p. 50).
- 10 Though not exhaustive, this trend is slightly more exaggerated when the rents derived from a specific crop are considered separately. Some 88% of these tenancies were subject to the *quartum*, with the *tasca* listed in merely two of the total 26 rents (approximately 8%). The sole remaining figure, half of the wheat, flour, money, and fish was collected by a woman named Guillemette in 1183: Raymond Ferrand and his brothers owed this annually from the land and waters

of a farmstead in Bougna precisely for the mills that they were to build there. That this property had a high potential profitability is also clear from the entrance fee of 70 *solidi* of Melgueil (“sol. Melg.”),² not to mention the fee (*lods*) of 20 sol. paid explicitly to Viscountess Ermengarde of Narbonne for the alienation of the property (no. 552, p. 253). Considering a mule could cost 30 sol., this was not an insignificant sum (no. 591, p. 269-270). Taken from the view of the specific kind of culture grown, however, 14 of the total 26 proportional rents (or 52%) relate to the grapevine, while the olive (six, or 22%) and grains (seven for wheat and barley together at 26%) account for the remainder (table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of proportional rents by crop (region of Narbonne, twelfth century)

Crop		Half	Quartum	Tasca
Olives	22%	0%	83%	17%
Grapes	52%	0%	100%	0%
Grains	26%	14%	72%	14%
Total (from 26 rents)		4%	88%	8%

- 11 Considering each specific rent separately, these figures have more to tell. All tenancies of vineyards in which a specific rent is mentioned carried the *quartum* of the total annual harvest. As just over half of all definitive proportional rents concern the vine, this consistency is quite telling. The regularity is also remarkable for the growing period, some five years to reach maturity (Bourin-Derruau 1987, vol. 1, 98). Leases of young vines (*maillol*) were set against the same proportions as fully mature vineyards, and they were sold at similar rates regardless of the (admittedly temporary) expected lesser yield. One *maillol* was valued at 60 sol. in 1212, while a single vineyard was sold the previous year at an equal measure (nos. 1 144, p. 526 and 1 136, p. 524). This difference in price, as mentioned above, could be a factor of relative location as well as the size of the individual plot, neither of which are certain. Other vineyards were sold at cheaper rates, such as the 50 sol. for vines at Marcoringan in 1211—though the *quartum* was constant (no. 1 140, p. 525). This consistency in the value of individual vineyards, regardless of age, may belie a lesser market value,

especially when considering a specific instance of a combined tenancy. In 1174, Étienne de Coyran and his wife Adalysse leased to Bernard du Portal a single farmstead (*manse*) near the gate to the district of Coyran—a borough of Narbonne which already was rudimentarily fortified (no. 322, p. 165; Caille 1998, p. 56). The appurtenant properties included fields and vineyards, though the gardens and olive groves were explicitly excluded. Bernard was to pay one *sétier* (a unit of dry measure) of wheat annually to Étienne for these combined lands, as well as 6 d. and one *émine* (half of one *sétier*) of barley to another landlord named Pierre de Laredorte. No wine or grapes were mentioned. Anecdotal as this one case may be, the grape appears as an undervalued commodity in comparison to the other cultures considered, especially when accounting for the consistent proportional rent.

- 12 Rents in olives largely follow the same pattern, though slightly less constant as five of a total of six proportional rents pertain to the *quartum* of the harvest. Only in this last case do we find the *tasca*, itself a more favourable proportion for the tenant than the *quartum*. Does this suggest a lower relative value than the grape? Alternatively, considering the even longer growing period—10-15 years—perhaps this slight favourability reflects these challenges. That being said, the growing period for the olive tree is roughly halved when the soil is well irrigated, which, considering the area studied here, may well have benefited cultivation (Marnival 2010, p. 39-52). As they were components of cultivated land, not the sole feature of any plot, olive trees themselves might be relatively cheap by comparison to a whole field. For example, the monks of Fontfroide paid to Aldiarde 5 sol. Narb. for one tree on a garden in 1194 near Coursan that they had acquired from her brother (no. 766, p. 348). Grains similarly favoured the *quartum* (72%), though at a more diversified rate. Of the seven rents analysed, one carried the *tasca* and the other, half. The high rent, as noted above, came from the mill in Bougna and is quite typical regarding the degree of seigneurial extraction in milling leases. The only other rent of such a high proportion came from one piece of land belonging to the “trellis of the mill” near the priory of Montlaurès, specifically related to the fruits of the trees—from the land itself, the *quartum* was due (no. 89, p. 50). Undescriptive language makes this impossible to discern which trees were refer-

enced. As they were grown on the “trellis” of the mill, a term often referring to olive cultivation, an olive grove in the vicinity may be inferred. Nevertheless, rents derived from mills often dictate a similarly high proportion of wood collected from non-fruit-bearing trees grown along riverbanks (Durand 1998, p. 252-253).

Fixed rents

- 13 In the interest of targeting marketable value for these crops, an analysis of fixed rents, based on volume, can provide additional results (table 2). Jean-Loup Abbé noted that twelfth- and thirteenth-century charters from the region document that olive oil was occasionally collected as a fixed rent (Abbé 2010, p. 61-77). The collection of oil as a rent necessitates the presence of a mill or press, though none were recorded in the inventories. Perhaps the presses in the region belonged to other lords. Charters detailing the location of presses owned by Fontfroide also may not have been copied into the inventories and are otherwise lost. In this case, neither is a certainty. Considering the fruit itself was more commonly consumed, oil may more likely have been used in lamps rather than for food (Marnival 2010, p. 39-52). Only in one case was oil owed from the region considered here; a single *migère* (unit of capacity) stemmed from a trellis near Bougna with its trees (no. 1 063, p. 486). Expanding our area of focus somewhat to the *villa* of Coursan just north of Narbonne, we find more evidence of oil as a rent. In 1197, Fontfroide Abbey directly leased to a man named Gauchier and his son Bernard a total of 14 different lands around Coursan, half of which were gardens, to be used only during their lifetimes. The pair owed 14 *sétiers* of oil annually for the privilege (no. 867, p. 381). It is certainly possible that some of these lands supported olive groves, especially the gardens, though it was not mentioned. Logically, this could indicate a commensurate quantity of oil per unit of land, though this is far from certain. In fact, not all oil rents were analogous. From a similar life annuity in 1218, exactly one *sétier* was due for a total of 14 whole and partial plots collected by the Cistercians from a tenant in Coursan—three of these lands (gardens) were specifically equated to trellises and indeed could have supported olive cultivation (no. 1 241, p. 575-576).

Table 2. Percentage of fixed rents by crop (region of Narbonne, twelfth century)

Crop (volume)		Migère	Sétier	Émine
Oil	4%	100%	0%	0%
Wine	0%	0%	0%	0%
Grains	96%	0%	84%	16%
Total (from 26 rents)	4%	81%	15%	

14 Compared to the *sétiers* collected from grain fields, no such pattern is discernible. This is especially true for barley, the crop with the greatest quantity of fixed-based rents. For example, twelve *sétiers* of barley were due annually to Montlaurès from one *manse* leased to Pierre Gaubert, Porcel Monédier and his children in 1147 (no. 101, p. 54). Details with which to make strong conclusions are sadly missing from this material, but it is interesting that while wheat and barley were collected at similar proportional rates, as fixed rents barley was due at a far higher degree. Of the total 26 fixed rents, five *sétiers* of wheat were collected compared to 16 *sétiers* and 5 *émines* of barley. Further, no such rent by volume was owed for wine. As was true in neighbouring Roussillon and Catalonia, however, labourers could expect to bring their harvested grapes to their lord's press (called a *tinal*) to produce their wares (Ros and Vaschalde 2021, par. 28). This was the case for Guilhem Gairaud who, in 1141, owed the *quartum* from his vineyard in Amarats to Montlaurès—though it is unclear how much wine this would have produced (no. 91, p. 50). With these vague figures, we might conclude that those crops with fixed rents had a higher market demand. Seigneurial interest in cereal grains of the period might well confirm this notion, considering the more standard and favourable proportional rent was not due. For those rents in oil from Coursan, it is also notable that the established tenancy was not perpetual, as was typical for *acaptum* contracts (Berthe 2002, p. 238). These were less advantageous for the tenant and may well indicate a greater interest on the part of the lord (the Cistercians in this case) in stemming the general trend of weakening seigneurial extractions (Bourin-Derruau 1987, vol. 1, p. 225-226). Overall market value remains unfortunately obscure.

- 15 Of all the proportional and fixed rents discussed above, most of these records originate from transactions with the priory of Montlaurès and from other local lay lords. The monks of Fontfroide had a vested interest in copying all earlier transactions pertaining to these lands because these properties were later subsumed into the Cistercian temporal domains. The socio-economic relationship between labourer and lord documented by such annual exactions is fundamentally tied to exploitative structures within their society, of which the abbot and monks of Fontfroide certainly played a part. The meagre figures concerning rents collected directly by Fontfroide from within this region—only in two of the 86 acts excluding those from outside the subject area (Coursan)—at first glance might support general notions about the Cistercian “Grange Economy” in that abbatial lands were cultivated by the monks and lay brothers themselves. A closer reading of the source material, however, reveals a far more complicated picture.

The problem of leasing in the twelfth-century cistercian economy

- 16 While it is generally understood that manorial income from land rents and banal fees was tolerated in the mid-thirteenth-century Cistercian Order, earlier iterations of such forbidden economic practices are often viewed as aberrant. When considering the appropriation of land by the Order and its effect upon local societies, these practices must not be cast aside in order to understand better the internal economy of an individual abbey and its domains but also the social relations maintained with those beyond its cloister. Attempts to justify twelfth-century Cistercian leasing due to compound reasons which plagued the periphery of the fast-growing movement (Burton and Kerr 2011, p. 161) obfuscate seigneurial exploitation regarding the control of land and its use. Coercive hierarchies revealed within monasteries themselves (France 2012, p. 321-322) mirror the understanding that, as temporal lords, the Order could be counted among the most extractive concerning their dependent peasants (Lucas 2016, p. 310-311). Acceptance of mixed economic systems on granges (Rösener 1983, p. 152; Bouchard 1991, p. 187), not always explicable by a lack of lay brothers (Mousnier 2006, p. 253),

further directs questioning when confronted with archaeological evidence of a less-than-uniform use of the land (Bezant 2014, p. 67-68). Reticence from the sources about the extent of property consolidation reasonably leads toward assumptions when an individual plot was said to be bounded by abbatial lands during its acquisition (Grèzes-Rueff 1977, p. 264; Mousnier 2006, p. 234). Belief in the consolidating prerogatives of Cistercian abbeys also persuades many to accept strictures of the idealized vision of the Cistercian mythos, often based on little more than the assumed totality of local purchasing campaigns or on papal recognitions. At the same time, many other aspects of the supposed ideal have been questioned when brought under increasing scrutiny, such as the “Frontier Thesis” (Berman 1986, p. 9-10), or the avoidance of urban property (Grélois 2009, p. 182).

- 17 Challenges to the underlying assumptions regarding the Cistercian economy have been made in the past. Over thirty years ago, Isabel Alfonso strove to indicate, among many other aspects, the lengths to which the Cistercian lay brother functioned as a labouring peasant only by another name (1991, p. 24, p. 29; Cross 2024, p. 594-595). Constance Berman categorically rejected such notions. She found that lay brothers (or *conversi*) did not always derive from the peasantry and had much more in common with the earlier monastic “convert” or adult entrant as opposed to child oblates until the 1170s (2006, p. 267), especially regarding monastic houses within Southern France. The social background of a single lay brother cannot always be assumed to stem from the peasant stratum, though later attempts by the administrative body of the Cistercian General Chapter—itsself a conception that Berman argued did not exist in its fullest form until the late twelfth century (Berman 2000, 151-160)—suggest attempts were made to separate noblemen and peasants from their respective spheres within the monastery (Waddell 2002, p. 151). Be that as it may, other points raised by Alfonso were not adequately addressed, such as twelfth-century leasing.

Consolidating the grange

- 18 Whether by direct cultivation or through tenancy, we must first consider the lengths of the Cistercian consolidating program to understand better their approach to land use during the twelfth

century. The granges of Fontfroide, as with many Cistercian houses, certainly support such claims. François Grèzes-Rueff effectively argued these points in tracing the general tendencies of major purchases following key donations (1977, p. 263-264), and Jean-Louis Bonnet indicated the degree to which large properties had been coalesced by the monks in Hauterive by the end of the 1170s (1994, p. 104). The monks there showed particular attention to amassing complete control over the pond in the south. While these wetlands had economic value regarding their adjacent meadows and irrigating potential, the monks embarked on a drainage campaign. Its previous function had been fundamentally altered in favour of cereal cultivation, a seigneurial process that became quite commonplace throughout Languedoc in a later period (Abbé 2006, p. 84-100).

19 Already in 1166, Cistercian tithe exemption status on lands cultivated by their own hands was recognized by the archbishop of Narbonne over the surrounding parishes, though they were not then called granges (no. 222, p. 111-113). Similarly, in 1175, the parish of Saint-Étienne in Octobian was added to this list (no. 339, p. 170). Land transactions in Octobian and in the *villa* of Aussou generally show the slow progression of the monastery's lands as neighbouring property, indicating (as others have argued) Fontfroide's aims in consolidating their domains (no. 264, p. 134; Bonnet 1994, p. 105-106). Hauterive and Gaussan were first called granges in a charter of recognition by Archbishop Pons in 1172, and a letter by Pope Celestine III in 1195 respectively (nos. 282, p. 142 and 789, p. 354-355). Seigneurial and ecclesiastical rights over these lands, such as the collection of the *tasca* or tithes (*decima*), were generally acquired throughout this same period from local lay and clerical lords. By the end of the century, Fontfroide claimed substantial access to large swathes of these parishes.

20 Yet, not all lands and rights within these regions were consolidated into the granges during this same period. In addition to sharing such rights with other lords, smaller plots were still donated well after the year 1200. Pierre Sicre, a well-proprietyed man along the Aussou, sold some ten of his parcels in 1179 alone for 300 sol., including portions of his "great field" along the river (no. 458, p. 217-218). After his death sometime before April 1201, his widow Sabresse confirmed another sale of property he had made to Fontfroide near the vineyards of Hauterive, within the parish of Saint-Vincent of Aussou (no. 927,

p. 407). Evidently, he had not parted with all of his patrimony in the region, including lands adjoining the grange itself. While these lands may be disregarded as merely neighbouring plots, it is worth noting that seigneurial rights within and around Hauterive were still contested at the start of the thirteenth century, indicating the continued interest of other parties (no. 963, p. 431). The granges of Hauterive and Gausan during the twelfth century must be separated from any later notion of total consolidation.

A complicated reality

- 21 A fundamental aspect of this inhomogeneity in the early granges is the repeated reference to lands held from the Cistercians, either directly stated in the alienation or referred to in neighbouring plots. In 1176, Raymond Pignol and his family sold to Fontfroide a property that they held in Octobian from the monks for 16 sol. at a place called *La Condamine* (no. 356, p. 176). Exactly one day later (May 4), for an additional 10 sol., Raymond sold portions of the garden and olive groves that he also held in Octobian from the monks (no. 357, p. 177). A man by the name of Pierre Mancip was often recorded as holding lands from the monastery; but in a sale from 1177, he and another man were said to have directly leased a neighbouring *honor* in Octobian from the abbey itself (no. 379, p. 187). Considering that the myths of land reclamation and settlement of wilderness have been shown in large part to be wholly unfit for Languedoc (Berman 1986, p. 30), it is very likely that such arrangements were inherited upon acquisition by the Order as leasing in itself was shown to predate the eventual acquiescence by the General Chapter in 1208 to rent unprofitable lands (Toepfer 1983, p. 60-62; Canivez 2024, no. 72, art. 5). Examples abound, but these transfers were not always straightforward.
- 22 When Pons Boyer and his family sold their leasehold in Hauterive to the Cistercians in 1173, approval to finalize the transaction was needed from their former lords, Autier del Pech and his wife Bernarde de Luc (no. 296, p. 149). Other tenants of the pair had similarly required consent to sell their lands in Hauterive to the abbey in the summer of 1167 (no. 237, p. 121). The trouble was, Bernarde already had donated all that she held within the territory to Fontfroide in October 1166 (no. 227, p. 116). By right, the lordship of these tenancies had belonged to the abbey, a fact which the tenants appear not to have

known in both cases. Such confusion might be understood on the latter occasion: the sale followed Bernarde's donation approximately by nine months, and it was a whole five years after the tenancy was first acquired (no. 183, p. 94). In the former, however, the consent of the lords was written rather as a confirmation of the earlier donation, some seven years after it was given. Are we to understand that for the better part of a decade Pons Boyer and his family continued to pay their rent to their former lords? Had Autier and Bernarde been reluctant to concede all of their donated rights? In any event, considering that Hauterive had at that time already been designated a grange of Fontfroide, this uncertainty speaks to the reality of the local setting. How much had life changed for those working in the grange?

- 23 Despite other suggestive examples of lands sold or donated to the Order from those who in fact held them from the abbey, we must be careful not to assume these always pertain to tenancies. The children of Pierre Raymond d'Argens held land from Fontfroide in 1176 (no. 361, p. 178). From Pierre's will three years earlier, the Cistercians had acquired a portion of the tithe collected from their lands in Hauterive, not to mention that he left his arms and horse to the brothers of the hospital of Saint-Rome (no. 305, p. 153). Other processes indicate, nevertheless, that the monks did exert seigneurial controls over dependents, including over serfs. One servile donation from Octobian was made by Arnaud Foulque and his sons Guilhem and Bernard in 1175, releasing themselves as well as their *honor* to the monks (no. 332, p. 168). They were all immediately manumitted, even acquiring a pair of oxen, cows, a donkey, and a chicken in addition to 100 sol. From another manumission, we gain a fuller understanding of the complexities of these processes.
- 24 In 1197, Guilhem Gontier of Montredon and his sister Mainpleine gave to Fontfroide both the empty and worked fields of their *honor* in Boucocers—a hill between Montredon and Narbonne (Sabarthès 1912, p. 40)—land they held from Arnaud de Maillac through homage (no. 859, p. 378-379). In so doing, they agreed to renounce all lingering claims that derived from their lord's donation, manumitting them to Fontfroide's control as they became the "people" (*homines*) of the monastery. Thus, we see that manumission could occasionally suggest not freedom but rather the transfer of overlordship from one

individual to another. Furthermore, not all self-donations were explicitly liberated. Guilhem Laurent gave himself and all his properties in and around Octobian to the Cistercians in 1177 (no. 383, p. 190). In similar donations, such as that of Raymond Pons in 1163 which included himself, his sons, and his field near the pond separating Gasparets from Octobian, the donors renounced the world to become lay brothers (no. 202, p. 102). To what extent can we infer that these individuals became *conversi*, as in the case just considered? Or, to what extent did the abbey maintain its own dependent serfs?

Seigneurial authority and coercion

- 25 As a process of consolidation, the Cistercians went to great lengths to solidify their hold over abstract rights as well, such as the ability to collect tithes. Jean-Louis Bonnet claimed that the purchase of tithe rights on the grange of Hauterive was specifically “to increase the value of the *terroir*” (1994, p. 107). For the Order itself, how exactly did this improve their grange?
- 26 The collection of tithe rights specifically is interesting, not only due to the supposed prohibitions against such activity, but also to the exempt status enjoyed by the Cistercians during this period over lands they worked themselves. Controversial as it had been, this hallmark of the early Order was outright abolished in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 (France 2012, p. 300). A cynical approach to the issue of weighing exempt status against tithe collection might be simply that individual abbeys sought income in defiance of the statutes, either from lands on controlled parishes outside their granges or to negate their own fees if their exemption was uncertain or not guaranteed. But what of income loss from lands on granges worked by others, or even leased to tenants?
- 27 In 1180, the abbey released several vineyards and olive groves within the parish of Saint-Pierre of Bizanet so that the tithes and first fruits (*premicia*) could be claimed by the Cistercians. The monks collected these fees from the vineyards of Pons d’Aussou and Pons Bérenger with his brothers; but they were all held from the church of Bizanet in Aussou (no. 470, p. 221). Two years before, Pons Bérenger, along with his wife and brother, sold two vineyards in this same

region (no. 436, p. 209). The lands bordering either property are informative: not only were some of the properties owned by these same men (each held from the parish church), other neighbouring lands belonged directly to Fontfroide. This was evidently a region within the Cistercian sphere of influence though its lordship had not been fully acquired. A possible motivation for collecting these tithes, congruent with the Order's prohibitions, is difficult to ascertain considering the tithe exemption of 1172 (no. 282, p. 142). In a contemporary tenancy contract with the priory of Montlaurès, Raymond Borte and his wife were obligated to carry the tithe from their leased vineyard and olive groves to the monastery's press (no. 265, p. 135). Perhaps, in a region where the Cistercians had come to enjoy such privileges, they sought to extract as much surplus as possible, even from their neighbours. Could this also be an indication of the Order's objectives in acquiring a degree of authority over local tenants?

- 28 Such an intent is apparent regarding one particular family. In 1181, a woman named Serène sold for a mere 2 sol. Melg. the rights of the *tasca*, the yearly fixed rent called the *usaticum* (often in coin), and lordship that she held over one field in Aiguesvives. The field belonged to Pierre de Crispian and his brothers Bérenger and Bernard. Also included were two parts of the *quartum* she collected from a vineyard in the same place owned by Pierre and Bernard as well (no. 505, p. 235). Additional sales made by these men and their family were often neighbouring plots of other vague proprietors. In another example from Octobian, the children of Pons Hélie, Guilhem and his sister Ponse, sold to Arnaud Montanier their portions of three gardens from which the Cistercians collected the *quartum* from the trees and the *tasca* from everything else (no. 544, p. 251). These were the tenants and labourers who had occupied the land on the granges before the Cistercians arrived. The historiography of the Order would suggest that these people were eventually encouraged (or harassed) to leave (Berman 1986, p. 53-56), but we do not always find evidence of their eviction.
- 29 In acquiring their lands and rights, the monks were often the subject of local disputes. Indication of such disquiet is also perceptible among these erstwhile supporters. From the family of Pons Baron the Old, there is ample evidence of their willingness to conduct business with the monks. Pons Baron the Young, together with his brothers

and mother, sold for 110 sol. their brother Pierre Bernard's inheritance of eleven pieces of land in 1184 to the abbey as he had become a *conversus*. All but four were returned to them (nos. 588-589, p. 267-268). They occupied an elevated position within their community, undoubtedly. Pons Baron the Old was asked by Abbot Bernard, alongside other local notables, to reconfirm the boundaries of their domain in Gausan that their own predecessors had made—an act commonly done by leaders of the peasant communities in Languedoc (no. 611, p. 280-283; Bourin-Derruau 1987, vol. 1, p. 260). Either he or his nephew of the same name had acquired the "second tithe" (*retrodecima*) on all the *tasca* collected in the *honor* of the parish Saint-Laurent of Gausan from Prior Gilbert, given to the Cistercians in 1198. The usufruct was retained for his wife (no. 881, p. 386). Pons the Old and his wife Amielle had owed, nevertheless, the *censum* (synonymous with *usaticum*) of one *émine* to the Cistercians which was returned to them in 1187 upon their donation of land in Gausan first acquired from the canons of Saint Paul of Narbonne (no. 626, p. 289).

- 30 Despite this deep bond, Pons Baron the Old had refused to sell his half of a road to the Cistercians in 1187, for which Pons the Young had compensated the monks with his own land (no. 627, p. 289). This defiance stemming from one so amenable to the abbey is quite stunning. What is most interesting, however, is that in April 1180, Pons the Old had donated himself along with fifteen separate lands across Gausan to the monastery (no. 466, p. 220). Over the following fifteen years, he and his wife continued to donate and sell their properties, a trend continued by his nephews as largely outlined above. If his self-donation had been to become a lay brother, evidently, he had not ceased contact with his family, let alone his wife. This leads to yet another point raised by Isabel Alfonso: the continued personal ties between *conversi* and their communities as a key component to understand Cistercian social relations to production (1991, 28). Alternatively, if this donation had another meaning, in which he had become property of Fontfroide, the ramifications are made all the more compelling.

Conclusion

- 31 Though often underrepresented in the historiography, olive cultivation in Languedoc during the Middle Ages was as present and ubiquitous as it was during the Early Modern and Modern periods, even if under varying degrees of intensity. Their growth, like the grapevine and cereal grains, fell within the purview of the peasantry, for which these labourers often paid their yearly rent to their lords as a portion of the total harvest or as a fixed quantity. Unlike what Jean-Loup Abbé found in the Hérault during a later period, there is no notion of commensurability between the commuted prices of these crops compared to the total size of their fields around twelfth-century Narbonne, as these details are missing from the records of the Cistercians of Fontfroide (Abbé 2009, p. 29). That said, a degree of specialization regarding the olive grove is detectable in the use of “trellis” to define the plot itself; though, this term was also used synonymously with gardens in certain contexts and may well simply point toward the common method of their cultivation as opposed to a specified land. Lords in this region had a more documented interest in the collection of olive oil than wine as a fixed rent, more akin to wheat and barley, which may belie a higher relative market value—although, there is a notable interest in controlling the use of wine presses, and far more grains were collected by volume than oil. That the olive tree was found to be an appurtenance of rural property indicates the varying potential and dynamism of the crop itself.
- 32 The Cistercians of Fontfroide, like other contemporary ecclesiastical and lay lords, sought to extract surplus from the men and women working fields in and along their granges. For the average rural labourer who occupied and worked these lands, the level of authority and power exercised by their lords would have been inaccessible—even for the richest among them.
- 33 Some privileged commoners could know a degree of seigneurial authority, leasing lands and collecting dues of their own; but we must not believe that all labourers, beyond these lucky few, were forced into a grinding life of subsistence under the weight of seigneurial extraction. This would greatly underestimate their agency, let alone their total impact on the local economy (Wickham 2023, p. 676-677).

As in the case of Pons Baron the Old from Gausan, Cistercian dependents might defy their lords, who were otherwise intent upon exercising their coercive authority. Though specific rents are few, the fact that tenancies were maintained by Fontfroide during the twelfth century confirms that the Cistercian domain was not operating under a “pre-capitalist” economy purely based upon their own labour, as is sometimes supported (Mousnier 2006, p. 343). Rather, it had strong parallels to models of traditional lordship. Conceivably, many such leaseholds were inherited by Fontfroide; and despite what is often cited concerning attempts to evict previous occupants (Berman 1986, p. 53-56), this was not always immediate. In some cases, those subject to Cistercian lordship can hardly seem to have noticed any fundamental change. In the direct tenancies that were established, a trend toward lifelong leases as opposed to perpetual contracts is noted near the turn of the thirteenth century. These cases may indicate hesitancy regarding infractions against manorial income, limiting the length of the standard *acaptum* contract. Conversely, less favourable conditions for the tenant allowed for greater control over the property as an exploitative tactic to maximize effect. Life on early granges thus was not as thoroughly altered from the economic logic of the period. How far these findings can be extended across the Cistercian Order necessarily awaits further study.

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NOTES

1 All subsequent in-text citations of individual acts within the second volume of the edition will indicate the act and page number, such as: no. 192, p. 97.

2 As coinage of account, the *solidus* had the value of 12 *denarii* ("d.") which were minted at various locations throughout Languedoc. The most referenced coinages here were from Melgueil (*Mauguio*) or Narbonne itself. For more on the contemporary coinage, see Casting-Sicard (1961, p. 25-36 and p. 42-46).

RÉSUMÉS

English

This article investigates seigneurial coercion in the region of Narbonne during the twelfth century by examining peasant surplus and activity. Specifically, it focuses on proportional and fixed tenant rents collected from olive groves, vineyards, and grain fields. The relative value of these exactions is compared through their differing rates. Concerning the control of property, the temporal lordship of the Abbey of Fontfroide will be investigated thanks to the *Chartrier de l'abbaye de Fontfroide*. Though forbidden from collecting manorial revenues from landed property by the early Cistercian Order, the monastery profited throughout this period from its growing authority acquired in the consolidation of new lands. Typically viewed as outside the economic realities of the period, life in early granges will be argued not to have been entirely altered. Indeed, lands held from the monks themselves, including tenancies, attest to a degree of continuity in the rural environment.

Français

Cet article examine la coercition seigneuriale dans le Narbonnais au cours du XII^e siècle en se concentrant sur le surplus et l'activité des paysans. Les loyers proportionnels et fixes, perçus sur les oliveraies, les vignobles et les champs de céréales, sont au centre de l'étude. L'analyse de ces loyers permet d'évaluer la valeur relative de ces produits les uns par rapport aux autres en fonction de leurs taux différents. En ce qui concerne le contrôle des biens, la seigneurie temporelle de l'abbaye de Fontfroide sera étudiée grâce au *Chartrier de l'abbaye de Fontfroide*. Bien qu'il lui soit interdit de percevoir des revenus seigneuriaux sur les propriétés foncières par l'ordre

cistercien primitif, le monastère profite tout au long de cette période de l'autorité grandissante qu'il avait acquise en consolidant de nouvelles terres. Généralement considérée comme étrangère aux réalités économiques de l'époque, la vie dans les premières granges ne semble pas avoir été totalement modifiée, car les terres détenues par les moines, y compris les locations, attestent d'un certain degré de continuité dans l'environnement rural.

INDEX

Mots-clés

location, loyers, grange, abbaye de Fontfroide, cisterciens

Keywords

tenancy, rents, grange, Fontfroide Abbey, Cistercians

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