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The Loyalty of the Lords of Albret: An Investigation of the Gascon Rolls at the Outset of the Hundred Years War

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THE LOYALTY OF THE LORDS OF ALBRET:
AN INVESTIGATION OF THE GASCON ROLLS AT
THE OUTSET OF THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR

by

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B.A. University of Central Florida, 2015

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of History
in the College of Arts and Humanities
at the University of Central Florida
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This thesis will examine the juxtaposition of the duchy of Gascony’s importance to the Plantagenet Crown with the difficulties administering the region and protecting it from French interference during the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries, resulting in the necessity of securing the loyalty of Gascon nobles for assistance. The lords of Albret were powerful allies under Edward I (1272-1307), and their defection to the French under his son, Edward II (1307-1327), put Plantagenet Gascony in a vulnerable position when the Hundred Years War began in 1337. Resecuring the loyalty of Albret – and other powerful Gascon lords – was crucial for the English to return Gascony to its pre-war boundaries. It also proved difficult as Gascon nobles had to navigate the complicated feudal relationship wherein they owed fealty to the duke of Aquitaine – a title held by the king of England – who in turn owed fealty to the king of France. These nobles frequently decided their loyalty based on self-interest; the lords of Albret were no exception. Gascony was important to the Plantagenet kings for its wine trade, strategic location, and as the last of their continental hereditary lands. Having a loyal base of noblemen was imperative for military success in Gascony, especially given the scope of the war and the dearth of available troops to send to the duchy. The lord of Albret provided strength and men to the English cause and was well compensated in return. Through the lens of the Gascon rolls, this work will examine the methods used by the Plantagenet kings to obtain and secure Gascon loyalty and why the Gascon noblemen provided this allegiance.
For Darcy, in memory of Scotty
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INTRODUCTION

Ever since the Norman invasion in 1066, English kings had always controlled some region of France. The period of their vastest control began in 1152 when Henry II of England notionally controlled more land in France than did the French king. Henry’s marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1152 secured the duchy of Aquitaine, doubling the size of his possessions that already included Normandy, Anjou, and Maine. The subsequent two centuries saw the decline of this so-called ‘Angevin Empire’; mismanagement by the English kings coupled with ambition on the part of the French kings resulted in the majority of this land switching hands to the French monarch. Much of this land was lost under King John, younger son of Henry II, and his successor, Henry III. The Treaty of Paris in 1259 confirmed the loss of many of the French lands formerly under the control of the Plantagenet kings, including Normandy, Anjou, and Poitou. The English king was confirmed in his role as duke of Aquitaine and peer of France, but as a condition of the treaty was required to pay liege homage to the French king for the lands that he held. The English king was a vassal of the French king; this would have an enduring effect on the relationship between the two royal governments.

The complicated relationship of the king of England serving as a vassal to the king of France was further amplified by the physical distance between England and Gascony. The strength of the ducal government was limited by this distance, as well as by the royal government’s preoccupation with wars in Scotland and the Low Countries. The English government tried using the resources and influence of Gascon nobles to secure its holdings in Gascony during the early fourteenth century, but the distinct political structure and bellicose
nature of the Gascon nobility made it difficult for either the English or French monarchy to achieve complete hegemony in Aquitaine.

This thesis will show how the juxtaposition of Gascony’s importance to the Crown with the difficulties administering the region and protecting it from French interference resulted in the necessity of securing the loyalty of Gascon nobles for assistance, namely the lords of Albret. The lord of Albret was outside the sphere of the English government for over two decades from his defection in 1314 until 1338, during which time the English administration attempted to regain the clan’s loyalty until his son once again became a vassal of the Plantagenet king; security of the duchy in the early years of the Hundred Years War depended on the success of this venture. The Gascon lords were forced to weigh their allegiance to their immediate lord, the duke of Aquitaine – who was also the king of England – against that to their own king, the king of France; their loyalty was typically decided by their own self-interest and the lords of Albret were no exception. This study will demonstrate Gascony’s importance to the Crown, how the royal administration used the local noblemen to defend and secure their lands, and how the lords of Albret abided while simultaneously expanding their wealth and power.

**Historiography**

Overlapping historiographies must be examined for the purpose of this study. Scholarship produced on the Hundred Years War as a whole is robust and encompasses many lines of study. Older studies tended to focus on concepts of warfare, as well as the political and economic motivations that drove the major players. As the field progressed, social and cultural histories

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1 I have chosen to relegate discussion of the broader Hundred Years War to the footnotes because, while important, the trends of this scholarship are less important than those of Gascony itself. This list is by no means exhaustive, but
began to emerge, bolstering the diversity of the historiography. Narrative, political histories continued to be produced and maintain their importance, but it was these new histories that broadened the scope of the field.

One of the most important narrative histories of the war was Jonathan Sumption’s *The Hundred Years War I: Trial by Battle.* This highly detailed account covers the first stage of the war, including the causes and the setting leading up to it. Sumption devotes an entire chapter to Gascony, delving into the complicated relationship between the French king, the English duke-king, and the Gascons. Most scholarship up to this point – unless it was a study specifically about Gascony – relegated discussion of the duchy to its place in the grander scheme of the war. While Sumption’s work is guilty of this to an extent, it still provides a significant amount of context and detail.

One of the principle focuses of this study is the relationship between the English government and the administration in Gascony. Therefore, the bulk of the secondary sources

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3 Jonathan Sumption, *The Hundred Years War I: Trial by Battle* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990). This publication was the first in the series of four volumes by Sumption: *The Hundred Years War II: Trial by Fire* (1999), *The Hundred Years War III: Divided Houses* (2009), and *The Hundred Years War IV: Cursed Kings* (2015). Only the first two of these works is within the scope of this study, but the four volumes are an exhaustive history spanning the entirety of the Anglo-French conflict.
utilized will be centered on the duchy and its association with the Crown. Eleanor Lodge published the first significant work – published in the English language – on Gascony in 1926 entitled *Gascony Under English Rule.*\(^4\) The first half of the book is a narrative history starting with the marriage of Henry Plantagenet to Eleanor, Duchess of Aquitaine in 1152 and ending with the fall of Bordeaux to the French in 1453. The second half addresses the administration, bastides and towns, and the demographics of the Gascon people.

Margaret Wade Labarge’s *Gascony, England’s First Colony, 1204-1453* is the next significant work to focus primarily on the relationship between England and Gascony.\(^5\) Like Lodge, Labarge is interested in writing a political history, albeit with a more nuanced argument and updated scholarship to draw upon. Economic factors are discussed in relation to their effect on the administration in Gascony and not explored in much further detail. Examination of the Gascon nobility follows a similar vein. The perspective of her book is from the English side of the administration, so the Gascon nobility are relegated to being a mere factor in England’s ‘colony’. Despite not being at the forefront of the discussion, the Albret family is still featured prevalently for their disputes with other nobility and the ways in which they impacted – both positively and negatively – the administration in Gascony. The titular claim of Labarge’s book, that Gascony was England’s first colony, is disputable, although that particular historiographical debate is outside the scope of this thesis.

Published a decade after Labarge’s book, M. A. Vale’s *The Angevin Legacy and the Hundred Years War, 1250-1340* is a comprehensive and crucial study of Gascony during the late

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thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{6} Central to his thesis is the impact Anglo-French tensions had on the people of Gascony. Whereas previous scholars had focused on the lofty relationships of the political elite, Vale assigns more importance to the Gascon nobility’s dual allegiance to the Plantagenet king-duke and the French monarchy and the complications that were borne from that problematic arrangement. The interplay between these factions shows how, “[t]his book…tried to see the so-called Hundred Years War as one phase in a longer, intermittent conflict between England and France, in which the exercise of authority over the duchy of Aquitaine was a fundamental issue.”\textsuperscript{7} Although this thesis has a narrower scope than Vale’s work, these questions of authority and allegiance are very much at the forefront.

Vale reissued his work six years later with the title \textit{The Origins of the Hundred Years War: The Angevin Legacy, 1250-1340}.\textsuperscript{8} The new edition featured only minor edits, and the thesis remained unchanged. It begins with a foreword in which Vale discusses the additions to the historiography since the original publication, responds to criticism, and reiterates the thesis and themes of his original work. One key historiographical argument to which he responds is that the later Middle Ages played host to an emergence of national identity – or even nationalism. This shifts the scope of the Hundred Years War from a dynastic or feudal conflict to a broader ‘England versus France’ conflict reminiscent of the succeeding centuries. Vale’s work, “on the contrary, attempts to stress the cosmopolitanism and internationalism of court society, dynastic

\textsuperscript{6} M. G. A. Vale, \textit{The Angevin legacy and the Hundred Years War, 1250-1340} (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990). Vale’s contribution to the Gascon historiography is unparalleled. He has written numerous books and articles – many of which are used in this study – and was one of the founding members and driving forces behind the Gascon Rolls Project.

\textsuperscript{7} Vale, \textit{Angevin Legacy}, 266.

politics, and the world of the higher aristocracy.” Any form of ‘national sentiment’, he argues, came from the xenophobia of the lower classes, oft times exploited by the government to galvanize its base. Viewing the war as a nationalist battle is anachronistic and denies the nuances of the Gascon problem.

The Bordeaux wine trade was one of the primary reasons England wanted to maintain control of Aquitaine. Margery James’ *Studies in the Medieval Wine Trade* is the premiere work on the Anglo-Gascon wine trade. The plentiful quantitative evidence that has survived on the production and export of Gascon wines in the fourteenth century indicates the vast importance of the Anglo-Gascon wine trade. James’ work shows “the short-term fluctuations and the long-term trends”, highlighting in particular the effect the Hundred Years War had on the trade. Understanding the shifts that occurred during the early fourteenth century reveals much about English aspirations in Gascony.

No significant new scholarship on trade was produced since James’ work until Robert Blackmore’s *Government and Merchant Finance in Anglo-Gascon Trade, 1300–1500* in 2020, the most recent scholarship used in this thesis. Blackmore’s work has a broader scope than that of James, focusing on all aspects of the Anglo-Gascon trade while still recognizing wine as the most substantial component. He highlights the symbiosis of Gascon merchants bringing wine to England and returning to Aquitaine with English goods, such as wool and non-precious metals. He goes further than James in showing how the wine trade expanded to reach the markets of

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11 James, *Medieval Wine Trade*, xii.
France and the Low Countries which hitherto had been difficult to trade with due to political reasons. While he does not contest James’ quantitative data, he does counter some of her conclusions, namely the extent to which the fighting at the outset of the war was detrimental to the wine trade.\(^\text{13}\)

The Albrets were proud lords in Gascony even before the region became integrated into the kingdom of England. Jean-Bernard Marquette’s *Les Albret: L’ascension d’un lignage Gascon, Xle siècle-1360* is an expansive work that details the illustrious lineage of this noble family.\(^\text{14}\) Marquette’s work covers generations of the Albret family – their lands, their marriages, their feuds with other clans. The dates and familial relationships that he meticulously lays out were immensely helpful for this thesis.

A key player of the opening campaigns of the Hundred Years War was Henry of Lancaster (c. 1310-1351).\(^\text{15}\) A study of Gascony during this period would be remiss without his inclusion, and he has been no stranger to the historiography. Kenneth Fowler’s *The King’s Lieutenant: Henry of Grosmont, First Duke of Lancaster, 1310-1361* is an important work that biographizes the nobleman. While much of the book is not pertinent to this study – as it spans the entirety of the duke’s life – the chapters on his first expedition to Aquitaine are highly important. During this first expedition, Lancaster regained much of the land in Gascony that had reverted to French control over the previous decades. This thesis will build upon Fowler’s work, claiming

\(^{13}\) Blackmore, *Government and Merchant Finance*, 63.


that Lancaster’s success was due to a loyal Gascon base, without which the lieutenant could not have been as aggressive in his campaign.\textsuperscript{16}

This thesis focuses on Gascony from the English perspective and therefore relies heavily on the English historiography. The French tradition is robust and its absence from this thesis should be recognized. Most notable among these works are Jean Favier’s \textit{La Guerre de Cent Ans} – a definitive history of the war from the French perspective by one of France’s premier medieval historians – and Guilhem Pépin’s “Genèse et évolution du peuple gascon du haut Moyen âge au XVIIe siècle” which is an important work on Gascon identity that spans from the High Middle Ages into the 17\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{17} The omission of these works is not to diminish their value; rather, this thesis is borne out of the English tradition and is therefore primarily reliant on its scholarship.

\textbf{Gascon Rolls}

Secondary material is essential for framing research into a historiographical context, but it is primary sources upon which this thesis is most heavily reliant. The Gascon rolls contained official government acts issued by the English government to their holdings in France. Some notable entries include letters of attorney or protection, trade records, treaties, grants of privileges, liberties, or compensation, and many others, encompassing both local and high-level matters. Originally entitled “registered Acts of the English King’s Court of Chancery concerning Aquitaine,” the change in nomenclature reflected the shrinking size of the Angevin empire from

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{16} Fowler, \textit{King’s Lieutenant}, 53-58.
a large region called Guyenne until it was reduced to little more than the corridor between Bordeaux and Bayonne. Despite the name, the scope of the rolls encompasses all the English ruled areas of Aquitaine. M. Francisque Michel – who published the first volume of the Gascon Rolls, encompassing the first six rolls of Henry III – stated, “The Gascon Rolls possess an unrivaled variety and importance. They are a rich and inexhaustible store of materials for the general history of the two countries and the biography of the persons they notice. Not even the humblest class of the society of the times fails to find a place.” While the modern historian might balk at the claim that the ‘humblest class of the society’ found representation within these documents, they are nonetheless an invaluable resource.

Burrows laments the peripheral view in which Gascony had been regarded by many historians and heralds the publication of the Gascon Rolls as a turning point in the historiography. His piece – published in 1892 – is heavily imbued with a nationalistic pride. The Rolls, he claims, will shed much greater light “upon the English Rule in Gascony,” and that it will “illuminate a far larger area than might be expected from such a series of documents. It is clearly no petty or unimportant publication, but an effort of the largest kind to construct and correct history.” The historiographical void that the Gascon Rolls help fill, he argues, is the important role that the English rule in Aquitaine played in the broader trends of English history. He believed that after considering the contents of these documents, the legacy of the Angevin empire will become integral to the constitutional and political history of the nation.

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Although a roll documenting certain aspects of the Gascon administration first appeared during Henry III’s reign, it was not until 1273 under Edward I that a continuous series of rolls would appear and endure until 1467. A calendar roll existed for every year; the number of membranes per roll varied anywhere from three to sixty-five – the latter occurring right after the outset of the war in 1337-38. With the exception of 1339-40 – which only contained three membranes – the first eight rolls of the war are some of the longest and most involved of the entire series. The entries of these longer rolls were similar to those issued pre-1337, although it is clear that the emerging and ongoing war was influential.

The historical importance of the Gascon rolls cannot be understated due to the immense array of material they cover. Letters of protection were issued to an array of peoples: Gascon merchants selling wine in England, inhabitants of parishes like Tabanac who feared reprisal from the French, and Englishmen such as Thomas de Saint Maur and John de Roos of Helmsley who were sent to Gascony “in the king’s service.” These letters – as the name suggests – were intended to protect the recipient through their issuance directly from the royal administration. In the years leading up to and following the outbreak of hostilities, the rolls hold detailed examples of the economic, political, and military measures taken by the Crown in preparation for war. In 1337, “a commission to arrest twenty ships, and to prepare, arm and crew them for service in

21 https://gasconrolls.org/. The calendars from 1273 to 1317 were not translated and digitized as a part of the Gascon Rolls Project. The Gascon Rolls Project was an immense undertaking, without which this thesis would not have been possible. The project began in 2007 and completed in 2019 thanks to the efforts of numerous universities, grants, and professors: Dr. Paul Booth, Dr. Frédéric Boutouille, Dr. Anne Curry, Dr. Simon Harris, Dr. Françoise Lainé, Dr. Jonathan Mackman, Dr. Philip Morgan, Dr. Guilhem Pépin, Paul Spence, and Dr. Malcolm Vale. Since the scope of this thesis is primarily after 1317, secondary scholarship will be relied upon for any discussion preceding that year.

22 C61/51. While one possible reason for the shortness of this roll is Edward III’s presence in the Low Countries, the original of the roll was lost at the UK National Archives, preventing a complete contemporary analysis.

23 C61/48 entry 40, 42; C61/49 entry 22, 126. All four of these letters of protection were issued from different locations – Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Westminster, and Stamford.
Gascony” was issued, although the ships were not ultimately sent to Aquitaine that year.\textsuperscript{24}

Recruiting allies was key in the first years of the war; the king sent letters of intendancy to the Low Countries, and appealed to friends in Genoa, Sicily, and Castille.\textsuperscript{25}

In addition to showing the relationship between the Crown and the duchy, the rolls also reveal the relationships amongst the Gascons themselves. The peoples of Gascony were often embroiled in disputes and the Crown’s adjudications were documented in the rolls. In some cases the seneschal was asked to step in and pacify the case, such as in 1345 when “the dissension between the mayor, etc… of Bayonne…and the men of Labourd” called for the seneschal Nicholas de la Beche to prevent “great damage and loss…be suffered by the king and his people.”\textsuperscript{26} In 1328, the seneschal John de Haustede was involved in a dispute between the people of Bayonne and fishermen of nearby Labenne, Capbreton, and le Bouret, wherein a lengthy legal document dating from 1256 was produced regulating the catching and selling of fish. The aforementioned fishermen had become lax with these regulations so the mayor and jurats of Bayonne asked the seneschal to confirm the sealed letter from 1256.\textsuperscript{27}

Sifting through the Gascon rolls, one can find a wide variety of subjects covered, the only true commonality being that they were all issued by the king – or on the king’s behalf – and they are all concerning Gascony in some manner. Not even their place of issuance was consistent; rather, it depended on where the king was holding court on the day the order was made.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{24} C61/49 entry 1.
\textsuperscript{25} C61/49 entry 139, 155, 156, 465, 466, 476.
\textsuperscript{26} C61/56 entry 135.
\textsuperscript{27} C61/41 entry 5.
\textsuperscript{28} Over the course of my research, I documented forty-five unique places of issuance in the rolls.
Methodology

The primary methodology that this thesis will utilize is a thorough examination of the Gascon rolls, comparing entries against one another to show changes over time, discrepancies, or differences in the way the Crown treated different subject matters. One focus of this thesis is the way the Crown tried to entice the Albret family into loyalty – and in later years reward them – so entries regarding enticement or compensation towards other noble families will be compared to those directed at the Albret clan. Comparative analysis will also be used on calendars of different years to show how the Crown’s approach to Gascony and its nobility shifted over time. Most quantitative data regarding trade and the duchy’s benefit to the Crown will be taken from the exhaustive secondary material that exists on the subject. The purpose of this thesis is not to question this research, but to focus it into a narrower thesis on royal relations with the Gascon nobility. This is primarily a case study of the Crowns relation to the lords of Albret through the lens of the Gascon rolls.

Historical Background

This thesis will examine the legacy of the Angevin Empire, the complicated relationship between the Plantagenet king-dukes and the French monarchy, and why the Plantagenet’s were so dedicated to maintaining control of their continental possessions. The flourishing wine trade out of Bordeaux was a major factor, as was the duchy’s strategic location adjacent to French territory. The fact that the duchy was the last remnant of the Plantagenet’s continental hereditary lands added another layer of allure. Despite ruling as kings of England, they still took pride in their French lineage and would not part with those lands so easily.
By the start of the fourteenth century Gascony had in place a defined administrative structure. Distance from the Crown, monetary woes, and a lack of meaningful recourse to the actions of the bellicose Gascon lords limited the effectiveness of the ducal government. These lords acted in their own best interests with virtual impunity – some were even outwardly loyal to the French monarchy. The Treaty of Paris in 1259 further undermined Plantagenet authority in Aquitaine by allowing the Parisian courts to supersede in matters of appeals. The Gascon lords were keen to exploit these legal discrepancies and did so frequently to circumvent ducal laws.

Amanieu VII, lord of Albret, (c.1263-1326)\(^29\) was extremely powerful and influential among the Gascon clans and was one such lord who took full advantage of the process of appeals. An ally of Edward I (1239-1307)\(^30\), he became disgruntled with the English under Edward II (1284-1327)\(^31\), ultimately defecting to the French during the War of Saint Sardos.\(^32\) The loss of Albret was a serious blow to the administration in Gascony, for he took with him not only his entire clan – save for his younger son Bérart who remained loyal – but also all of the allies and lesser clans who looked to him for favor and protection. While plenty of the Gascon lords remained loyal to the English, none of them had the clout or influence of the lord of Albret.\(^33\)

When Amanieu d’Albret died in 1326, he was succeeded by his son, Bernard d’Albret (c.1298-1359)\(^34\) who proved to be more amenable than his father. After a concerted effort by

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\(^{29}\) Marquette, *Les Albret*, 77.
\(^{32}\) Vale, *Angevin Legacy*, 98.
\(^{34}\) Marquette, *Les Albret*, 79.
Edward III (1312-1377)\textsuperscript{35} – with assistance from Albret’s brother, Bérart d’Albret (c. 1309-1346)\textsuperscript{36} – Bernard eventually rejoined the English cause in 1338. As with his father, his influence amongst his fellow Gascons was great and his conversion helped to significantly bolster the administration’s strength. Albret was appointed king’s lieutenant and attempted, with the help of his followers, to keep the peace in the troubled, war-stricken region.\textsuperscript{37} When Henry of Lancaster launched his first expedition to Gascony in 1345, the lord of Albret led his considerably-sized retinue in support. He and his brother were entrusted with the defense of Bergerac after it was retaken by Lancaster’s forces, thus denying the French any reprisal while Lancaster continued his campaign.\textsuperscript{38}

Lancaster’s campaign was immensely successful and by spring 1346 much of what had been lost to the French over the last half century had been regained. For the first time in a long while, the situation in Gascony appeared to display some semblance of stability. These victories set the stage for years of continued success, culminating in the Principality of Aquitaine under Edward III’s eldest son, the Black Prince. These lands would ultimately revert back to the French by the Hundred Years War – and Bernard’s son would abandon the English cause in 1368 – but these outcomes are outside the scope of this thesis. More immediately, the success in Gascony – in addition to victories at Crécy and Calais – helped to give the English an edge in the hostilities and bring about a truce in 1347.

\textsuperscript{35} Morgan, Oxford, 204-6.
\textsuperscript{36} Marquette, Les Albret, 80.
\textsuperscript{37} Marquette, Les Albret, 259-261.
\textsuperscript{38} Fowler, King’s Lieutenant, 53-8.
Albret’s shift to the English side – and his subsequent lieutenancy – did not fix all the issues facing the duchy. It did, however, pave the way for Lancaster’s lieutenancy which resulted in significant territorial gains and an elevated position for the duchy as the English entered into their truce with the French. Lancaster’s successes would not have been possible without the help of the Gascon nobles, and Albret was crucial in garnering that support.

Chapter Organization

This thesis will largely follow this chronology, beginning in the late thirteenth century and ending with Lancaster’s campaign in 1347. Chapter One will discuss the importance of Aquitaine to the Plantagenet kings and how the duchy was politically organized. The expansion of trade throughout Europe in the 13th century was a catalyst for the growth of the Gascon wine trade, and the region was geographically well situated to strengthen England’s trade routes – both land and sea. Aquitaine was important strategically – both for its continental location and for the use of Gascons as fighters in England’s wars. The administrative structure of the duchy saw England send men to fill the highest positions – such as seneschal and chief financial officer – while the lower ranking positions were typically held by locals. An outline of the administrative history of Gascony from 1326-1347 will highlight struggles faced by the ducal administration.

Chapter Two will show the influence of the Gascon lords and how they wielded their power in the wake of the Treaty of Paris of 1259. Long-standing feuds between these nobles played out in the courts as often as through arms, and the administration in Aquitaine was often toothless in its ability to enact punishment. The lord of Albret was chief amongst the Gascon
nobles and while his clout and retinue were often a difficult trade for his insubordination, his ultimate defection in 1314 was detrimental to the English cause. This chapter will show how the royal administration made a concerted effort to secure Gascon allies in the lead up to 1337, with the Albret clan the key target of this cause. On 8 May 1338, Bernard d’Albret signed a treaty pledging fealty to Edward III – with considerable reward obviously bestowed upon the Gascon.\(^3\)

Chapter Three will show the advantage of Albret’s loyalty to the English during the first decade of the Hundred Years War by keeping the peace and bringing his subjects to the English cause. It will also show how Albret benefited from this arrangement and his disputes with the other Gascon lords. Albret’s actions should be viewed as opportunistic rather than altruistic, although the Plantagenet position in Gascony was definitively more secure with him as an ally. The stability offered by his strength and loyalty afforded Henry of Lancaster the occasion to reclaim much of Aquitaine’s formerly held land by 1347.

The Plantagenets assigned great importance to their continental holdings in the fourteenth century, but they did not have the resources or capability to effectively administrate from the seat of the royal government. The strong centralized government of England struggled to maintain control over these peripheral lands, necessitating a localized administration that could rule on its behalf. The profitable wine trade provided a degree of economic autonomy for the region, but the ducal administration still required the power, influence, and resources of the Gascon nobles to ensure success in the region. The efforts of the royal administration to secure the loyalty of the Gascony lords will be shown through a case study of the Albret family. Examining this family

\(^3\) C61/50 entry 139.
will also show the complexities of the ducal-noble relationship and how an alliance borne out of self-interest can still be mutually beneficial.
CHAPTER ONE: THE IMPORTANCE OF GASCONY

An appreciation of why Gascony was so important to the Plantagenet kings is crucial to understanding the measures they took to maintain its possession. The Anglo-Norman Plantagenets were descended from French nobility so the ties to their hereditary lands in France were strong. In fact, a Gallocentric perspective would view England after its conquest in 1066 as a Norman colony. The longevity of the English kingdom, however, makes this thesis untenable. By the time Edward I took the throne only the Duchy of Aquitaine remained of the house’s once substantial continental lands. Most of the losses occurred under John and Henry III, although it was the latter who formally renounced his claims to Normandy, Anjou, Touraine, Maine, and Poitou by signing the Treaty of Paris of 1259. The French were already occupying these lands but the treaty officialized the forfeiture.

The treaty granted that the duchy of Aquitaine remain a hereditary fief of Henry III on the condition he take an oath of fealty and liege homage to the king of France, Louis IX. This condition complicated Anglo-French relations for the next century. Henry III – and his successors – were kings, divinely chosen to rule England; why then should they be required to pay liege homage to someone they considered their equal? The simple answer is that the king of France was sovereign over all French lands and the Plantagenets were merely lords of Aquitaine. The reality was more complicated and did not make the suzerain relationship any less humiliating for Henry’s heirs; it would be a catalyst for future conflicts between the two crowns.

41 Vale, Angevin Legacy, 53.
Perhaps most demeaning for the Plantagenet kings was that the treaty required the liege homage be paid in person. In the aftermath of the conflict from 1294-1298 – wherein the English lost, then regained control of Gascony – Edward I was asked to renew his homage to Philip IV. Edward resisted until his death, at which point Edward II succeeded him and paid homage to the French king on December 31, 1308. Unfortunately for Edward II, Philip died in 1314 and Edward was again called upon to pay homage; none of the four succeeding kings to Philip would reign longer than six years. Louis X also demanded that Edward perform military service and sit as judge in the court of peers, tasks that would have been commonplace amongst typical lords but were shameful for a king to perform. Thankfully Louis X died before Edward was forced to come to France. Homage was performed to Philip V in 1320, though it lacked the oath of fealty. When Edward was again called to execute his duty to Charles IV in 1323, he refused.42

Edward II was deposed in 1327 before he could be subjected to another homage request. His son, Edward III, paid homage to Philip VI in 1329. It was a simple homage, however, which meant that Edward acknowledged Philip as his landlord but not as his sovereign. Additionally, he paid homage for disputed lands currently under French control as a result of the War of Saint Sardos. This homage was done while Edward was still under the regency of his mother, Isabella, and her lover, Roger Mortimer. A coup d’état in 1330 made Edward III sole ruler of England, and he began writing letters to Phillip promising that he would pay him the liege homage he was owed.43 The reconciliation briefly mended Anglo-French relations, but the reluctance of all three kings to pay homage indicates their aversion to the suzerainty they found themselves subjected.

42 Sumption, Trial by Battle, 85-6.
43 Sumption, Trial by Battle, 109-118.
The nature of the relationship meant that the ducal administration continued to largely operate autonomously on internal matters. Judicially, however, Paris still had the final say which proved to be especially problematic when Gascon subjects appealed ducal rulings. This happened quite frequently, as the precocious Gascon lords were often embroiled in feuds with one another. Once elevated to the French court, the government in Bordeaux – the largest city in Aquitaine and the seat of the administration – had little recourse when faced with overturned rulings.

Despite the complications continued involvement in Gascony entailed, the royal administration wanted to maintain control over its continental holdings. Gascon merchants experienced economic supremacy in the early fourteenth century, and the wine trade was highly profitable for both the ducal and royal administrations. In addition to the monetary value of the wine, the Anglo-Gascon allowed for greater movement of goods throughout the region and helped England gain maritime supremacy. This economic benefit coupled with the strategic and military importance of Gascony necessitated England’s efforts to maintain control over the duchy. These efforts were channeled through the ducal administration in Bordeaux, a government consisting primarily of Englishmen. It lacked the organization of the royal government and initially struggled to keep up with the demands of war.

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44 Chapter two will cover the appeals to the court of Paris in further detail.
Gascony’s Strategic and Military Benefit

Abandoning Aquitaine to the French would have been foolish for several reasons. It would have strengthened France while simultaneously weakening the English. When the duchy was embroiled in war, the cost to defend was high both in money and manpower, but in times of relative peace the Crown did not maintain a large military presence in the duchy and could utilize Gascony as a resource. During the war against Wales in 1282-83, Gascony provided a contingent of forty knights, one hundred twenty cavalry, and 1,300 infantrymen whose weapon of choice was the crossbow. Material assistance was also provided in the form of “2,000 quarters of wheat, 1,000 of oats, 300 of beans and peas, 500 tuns of wine, 20 tuns of honey, and 1,000 bacon pigs.”

Aquitaine was strategic location for forts and bases that could serve a twofold purpose: provide a buffer against invasion into England and serve as a launching point for campaigns and assaults against either France or the Iberian Peninsula. Even the mere presence of English – or at the very least English-sympathetic – troops could prove to be a deterrent against potential invasion. Diplomatically, the location also made communications with other continental powers more efficient. Gascon couriers were used in the 1280s and 1290s for Edward I’s correspondences with the king of Aragorn, Alfonso.

The maritime cities of Bordeaux and Bayonne – located within the duchy – were primely situated for trade with the continent, particularly south-west France. Bordeaux’s placement on the Garonne River, near its convergence with the Dordogne, provided easy access to the Haut

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Bayonne was located at the confluence of the Adour and Nive rivers and provided access to the southernmost parts of the duchy. The two cities were also the only part of Aquitaine not reliant on the English for defense as they were “both rich cities with stout walls, large populations and enough money to hire professional troops to man them.” At the duchy’s lowest point, in the wake of the disastrous War of Saint Sardos, Plantagenet control was restricted to little more than the corridor between these two cities. Plantagenet control over these cities was militarily and economically beneficial for the royal administration. As mentioned, Aquitaine was used as a starting point for English military campaigns. Holding Bordeaux in particular was crucial for the success of these operations. It was the ideal port to have access to the rest of the duchy; when Henry of Lancaster embarked on his noteworthy campaign in 1345, he did so starting from Bordeaux.

Wine: Gascony’s Chief Export

Chief among Gascony’s value to the Crown was the wine trade. The plentiful quantitative evidence that has survived on the production and export of Gascon wines in the fourteenth century indicates the vast importance of the Anglo-Gascon wine trade. For much of the early fourteenth century, Bordeaux and the neighboring ports exported ninety to a hundred thousand tons of wine annually. The Bordeaux wine trade served much of north-west Europe, but it was

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48 The Haut Pays is defined by James as the high country that lay east of St. Macaire along the Garonne River and beyond. Much of the wine that went through Bordeaux originated in this region. James, Medieval Wine Trade, 1-3.
49 Sumpson, Edward III, 36.
50 Fowler, 54.
51 James, Medieval Wine Trade, 9. Despite a number of other ports (Libourne, Blaye, Bourg, etc.) participating in the export of Bordelais wine, Bordeaux was the largest and most important. Specific mention of these other ports is uncommon, and ‘Bordeaux’ is treated as an umbrella term to encompass the trade of the entire region. Regions outside of Plantagenet control – such as the Haut Pays – are included as all trade went through Bordeaux.
England that was the primary recipient of this trade with the royal household being its chief consumer. For the most part, the trade was able to weather the conflict in the region. The War of Saint Sardos cut English imports in half in 1324-5, but the numbers returned to their pre-war levels within two years.\textsuperscript{52}

The Romans introduced viticulture in France due to the region’s geology: “limestone, clay, glacial gravel – and a warm climate tempered by the Atlantic winds.”\textsuperscript{53} English demand for wine and what Raymond de Roover described as a ‘commercial revolution’ spurred the growth of the wine trade in the late thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{54} Production in the Haut Pays grew the most, leading to what Michael Postan described as “the largest region of specialized viticulture ever known in European history.”\textsuperscript{55} The specialization of the wine produced in Gascony increased its demand throughout Europe, finding its way into markets in France and the Low Countries that hitherto had been difficult to trade with due to political reasons. “Such profound specialisation created a strong demand for goods that were not produced domestically in sufficient quantities, and in meeting those needs, England gained reliable access to wider European markets unhindered by the political constraints often found trading through France and the Low Countries. With this commercial expansion, the financial value of the union to the English Crown rose exponentially.”\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{52} James, \textit{Medieval Wine Trade}, 13-4.


\textsuperscript{56} Blackmore, \textit{Government and Merchant Finance}, 2.
Gascon merchant experienced supremacy in the early fourteenth century. Their legal and economic status was asburgesses of Bordeaux; this exclusively enabled them to trade from the harvest – August or September – until November 11, at which point the market was opened to all others. The charters of 1302 and 1303 afforded them protections that regulated trade, such as “freedom to ship wine into England, to sell it anywhere, and the right of residency with their goods,” and ensured Gascon dominance through the mid-fourteenth century.

The outbreak of extended war in 1337 had a negative impact on the Anglo-Gascon wine trade. The Crown issued letters of protection for Gascon wine merchants in the years leading up to the war, on 8 July 1335 and 14 June 1336. These protections were for the “safe and secure conduct” to England of several named Gascon wine merchants so that “no-one is to damage or harm them, their wines, goods and merchandise, take anything from them against their will, nor presume to disturb them in their liberties contrary to the tenor of their charter.” The charter – issued in 1302 by Edward I – afforded the merchant vintners of Aquitaine certain rights and assurances. They were extended the right to trade, travel, and lodge throughout the kingdom of England; “every contract entered upon by the same vintners with any persons…be valid and stable.” In addition to particulars relating to the specific trade of the wine, “all bailiffs and ministers…do speedy justice to the vintners aforesaid who complain before them of wrongs, molestations done to them, debts and any other pleas…[and] that for any liberty soever which we

57 Blackmore, Government and Merchant Finance, 22.
59 James, Medieval Wine Trade, 16; C 61/47, entry 66; C 61/48, entry 40.
or our heirs shall grant hereafter, the aforesaid merchant vintners shall not lose the above written liberties or any of them.”

For one, the existence of the charter is a testament to the importance of the Gascon wine trade. Although quantitative data for the late thirteenth century is not as abundant, it is clear from this charter’s issuance at the turn of the century and the data from the succeeding years that the Crown held the wine trade in high regard and wanted to make a serious effort to ensure its sustained success. The letters of protection issued in the years preceding the war indicate that Edward III desired for the trade to continue uninhibited. These letters offered the Crown’s protection for these merchants as they attempted to traverse the pirate-laden sea. These protections by themselves were not enough; the English fleet was mobilized – after being assembled through the seizure of less important ships – to ensure the safe passage of the merchant ships. It was unsuccessful and in 1337 the sea-borne trade was all but halted. It resumed in 1338 with the convoy system, wherein naval ships would accompany merchant ships to deter piracy. This was not feasible year-round so trade was mostly restricted to late spring until early autumn, leading to “periodic shortage during which prices became very high, only to drop suddenly with the arrival of the convoy.” The convoy system led to an increase in price; the prewar cost of £3 per ton rose to over £5 per ton in 1338-9. The truce in 1340 dropped the price again back to £3-4 per ton.

Since the Haut Pays was the primary producer of wine in Aquitaine, when the war broke out the decline in supply inevitably led to a decline in the market as a whole and a 90% decrease

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60 A. E. Bland, *English Economic History: Select Documents* (London: Bell, 1914), 210-11. This was found in “The Custom on Wine (Charter Roll, 30 Edward I, m. 2), 1302.
in exports between 1335-36 and 1336-37. Although the Haut Pays could refer to any lands east of the Bordelais, most of the wine production occurred in the Agenais along the Garonne and its tributaries. Despite much of the Agenais falling to the French during the War of Saint Sardos, the towns’ reliance on the Bordeaux wine trade kept them sympathetic to the English. In the opening year of the war, the French captured La Réole and stretches of the Garonne, effectively crippling the wine trade on the river. French withdrawal and Gascon uprisings in the subsequent years ensured passage along the river until Henry of Lancaster ultimately recaptured La Réole and wine-producing areas of Poitou, Saintonge, Périgord, and the Agenais in 1345-46. According to James, the destruction of fertile land in these and other regions meant that the shift in wine production as a result of these victories was negligible. Blackmore counters the assertion that the fighting in the Haut Pays had a long-term detrimental effect on the wine industry. While he acknowledges the clear negative effect on certain towns – such as Castelmoron and Nérac – he conjectures that the Bordeaux trade remained strong until the Black Death.

The dedication of so much Gascon land to the production of wine meant that the duchy had to rely on England for its food supply. The Crown had no issue with such a relationship because of how important Gascon wine was to the kingdom. Gascon wine made up the vast majority of wine consumed in England; Rhenish wine imports were the closest competition and they rarely exceeded 500 tons annually. Merchants from the Rhine typically supplemented their general goods with wine, rather than having whole ships devoted to exporting Rhenish wine.

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66 James, *Medieval Wine Trade*, 70-1.
to England; it was apparent Gascon wine held the monopoly in England. Merchants from Bordeaux and the Bordelais were the most prominent of the Gascon merchants and those that contributed the most to making the Anglo-Gascon trade strong.\textsuperscript{67} The merchants of Bordeaux and the Bordelais were involved in importing as well. The most common good they took out of England was cloth. In the 1350s, Gascony imported half of all England’s cloth exports, and the majority of this cloth trade made its way through Bordeaux.\textsuperscript{68}

Although Gascony was known almost exclusively for its wine production, it was not until 1337 when it began to be so dependent on England for food. Prior, Gascony even shipped wheat to England during the Great Famine.\textsuperscript{69} Honey production was well suited for the climate and was used both medicinally and as sweetener. In years when wine production was down, honey proved to be an important supplemental source of income.\textsuperscript{70} The English were by no means holding on to Gascony because of its honey trade, but it does show that the region was not exclusively reliant on viticulture.

Gascony was economically beneficial to England and the Plantagenets were loath to part with it. Leading up to the Hundred Years War, the Gascon wine trade ensured the duchy’s self-sufficiency. The heightened costs due to war forced the royal administration to devote more money to the region, but the wine trade alleviated these costs and showed the sensibility of holding onto the duchy. While the Gascon merchants were the economic drivers of the duchy, nominal power still resided in the hands of the ducal administration.

\textsuperscript{67} James, \textit{Medieval Wine Trade}, 80.
\textsuperscript{68} James, \textit{Medieval Wine Trade}, 168.
\textsuperscript{69} Blackmore, \textit{Government and Merchant Finance}, 75-6.
\textsuperscript{70} Blackmore, \textit{Government and Merchant Finance}, 81.
The Political Organization of Aquitaine

Late medieval England was an incredibly well-organized bureaucracy: “the early development of a local royal administration and a centralized royal bureaucracy, the extraordinary uniformity of judicial and fiscal structures…make this one of the very few later medieval kingdoms that genuinely deserve to be called ‘states’. ”71 The same cannot be said about the government of Aquitaine. At the head of the local government were two chief officials: the seneschal and the constable of Bordeaux. The former was the chief military and administrative officer in the region. He served as a direct representative of the king. The latter, typically a clergyman, was the chief financial officer of Aquitaine, a direct subordinate of the exchequer in London. A third official, the king’s lieutenant, was irregularly appointed to visit Gascony, often during times of war or conflict. These officeholders were traditionally – though not always – Englishmen, while the vast majority of their subordinates were native Gascons.72 This bureaucracy was small and was simultaneously reliant on and ignored by the English government. The structure was undeniably English in nature and changed little during the period from 1289 to the permanent turnover of the region to France in 1453.73

The presence of a king’s lieutenant was necessitated by fighting and civil unrest; they were typically only appointed during wartime. For example, Edmund of Woodstock, earl of Kent

71 W. M. Ormrod, Political Life in Medieval England, 1300-1450 (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 1. Ormrod’s work does an excellent job describing English political life and governmental structures during the Hundred Years War, but does little to extend the analysis to the ducal government in Gascony. Further discussion of medieval European state-making can be found in John Watts, The Making of Polities: Europe, 1300-1500 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

72 Sumption, Hundred Years War, 71. While the main officials of Gascony – seneschal, lieutenant, and constable of Bordeaux – were typically Englishmen, the same does not hold true of the lesser officials in the region. These lesser bureaucrats were appointed at a local level, and were typically native Gascons. These lesser officials escape significant mention in many of the primary sources and are therefore beyond the scope of this project.

– brother of Edward II was appointed at the outset of the War of Saint Sardos in 1324 and did not serve in that position past 1328. Another lieutenant was not appointed until a year into the Hundred Years War. The king’s lieutenants were given extensive power to govern and defend the duchy. It was a prestigious position that was frequently awarded to the highest noblemen; in 1355, heir apparent Edward of Woodstock, prince of Wales – commonly known as the Black Prince – was appointed king’s lieutenant.

Though the lieutenancy may have been sporadic, Gascony never found itself without a seneschal. The seneschal, appointed by the king of England, was the chief official of Gascony and almost always an Englishman. The term of a seneschal was entirely dependent on the London government – the king and his advisors – for it was they who had the power to appoint a new seneschal or recall an existing one. The primary task set before the seneschal was to keep order in his appointed region. This was oft times difficult given the factionalism between Aquitaine towns and the belligerency of Gascon nobles towards each other. The position of chief officer was necessary given the distance from the central English government, but it was this same remoteness that required a strong leader in said position. The seneschal was charged with overseeing day-to-day operations in Gascony with little assistance from the Crown.

Another facet of the seneschal’s duties was the result of the region’s proximity to French territory; more specifically, the fact that for all intents and purposes the colony was located in

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74 C61/36 entry 15; C61/40 entry 24.
75 C61/67 entry 148.
76 Sumption, Trial by Battle, 71. While the main officials of Gascony – seneschal, lieutenant, and constable of Bordeaux – were typically Englishmen, the same does not hold true of the lesser officials in the region. These lesser bureaucrats were appointed at a local level, and therefore were much more likely to be native Gascons. These lesser officials escape significant mention in many of the primary sources and are therefore beyond the scope of this project.
77 Labarge, Gascony, 51-2.
what should be French territory – or at least Spanish. Prior to the breakdown of relations between Edward III and Philip VI and the opening of hostilities, maintaining cordial relations with France was a key task of the seneschal. These duties included interacting with French officials along the border of English territory, dealing with issues in disputed territories, and submitting to – or resisting – royal ordinances implemented by the French king, namely those requiring homage or taxes. Since Aquitaine was still a vassalage of France, the region was still subject to a level of French jurisdiction. It was the duty of the seneschal to resist such ordinances when they clashed with the English law of the land. This proved to be a difficult task, and seneschals often had to delay French officials to the best of their abilities until assistance arrived from England. This proved especially troublesome given the distance from Westminster and the political reality that Gascony was not always a key concern of the central English government.

The constable of Bordeaux served as the ducal exchequer and “was the most anglicized institutions found in Aquitaine in the period” The constable responded directly to the exchequer in London and had the difficult task of managing the duchy’s finances, a task that was especially challenging once war broke out. Large sums of money were owed to Gascon lords for their troops and services at a time when ducal revenue was negatively impacted by the hostilities. The hope for Gascony to fund the war in its region internally was unrealistic and London was forced to assist with finances.

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78 Labarge, *Gascony*, 52.
80 Fowler, *King’s Lieutenant*, 44.
An Administrative History of Aquitaine: 1334-1345

The outbreak of the Hundred Years War brought new responsibilities and challenges to the seneschal of Gascony, and it is these opening years of the war that this study shall first address. After failed negotiations between the two royal administrations – marked by a significant lack of effort by either side to reach a common ground – Philip VI ordered the confiscation of Gascony and the submission of its subjects to French authority. Edward III responded by refusing to forfeit his lands in southwest France; he went a step further by claiming inheritance to the throne of France itself. This impasse had begun with Gascony, and the duchy would not be immune to the subsequent bloodshed and unrest. Although Philip had ordered the confiscation of the duchy, the English king was not inclined to give up this profitable province. In the opening years of this conflict, the seneschal – and his deputies – would be invaluable in maintaining English influence over the duchy. It is to these men one must look to decipher the shape of the Gascon administration.

Oliver de Ingham was seneschal of Gascony at the commencement of the Hundred Years War. This was Ingham’s second stint as seneschal, as he had previously filled the position in the years 1326-1327. A knight from Norfolk, his second tenure in Gascony began in June 1331. Although he served as seneschal until 1343, he became ill in 1338 and was unable to wholly continue his charge. In 1338, John de Norwich rose to governorship of the duchy to assist Ingham while he was ill. This transition of power is subject to skepticism, as there are two conflicting rolls written on the same day, March 15. The first appoints Norwich to the position of

81 Labarge, Gascony, 120-1.
82 C61/38 entry 54.
lieutenant. The roll goes on to state, “Ingham being detained by sickness is unable to attend to his office, and Norwich is to govern the duchy, keeping it safe and secure, and repelling the king’s enemies, just as is for the king’s honour and profit.”\textsuperscript{83} The second – recorded on the same day – acknowledges the “Appointment during pleasure of John de Norwich to the office and governance of the seneschalcy of the duchy, with all that pertains to that office.”\textsuperscript{84} Another roll produced months later on June 1, however, names Ingham as joint lieutenant with Bernard d’Albret.\textsuperscript{85} This confusion in the record books can possibly be assigned to the turbulence the region was undergoing as it prepared for French invasion. The distance from England to Gascony was also likely a factor, and the appointment was potentially made when Ingham was sick, yet he recovered by the time Norwich arrived. It is clear that Norwich was appointed to office as a response to Ingham’s illness, but it is unclear from the sources how long he served and in what capacity. Norwich did bring men-at-arms and archers with him, resulting in the duchy owing him 600 pounds for their wages.\textsuperscript{86} Ingham was clearly the head official in Gascony for as much as his condition allowed.

Ingham had various needs resulting from the conflict the duchy was embroiled in. Fighting in the region was not constant – in fact much of the early campaigns of the war were carried out farther north – but it was nevertheless important to maintain military readiness. When a truce between the kings of England and France was revoked, Ingham was ordered to “resist the malice and wickedness of the king’s cousin of France and his subjects both by land and by sea,

\textsuperscript{83} C61/50 entry 50.
\textsuperscript{84} C61/50 entry 56.
\textsuperscript{85} C61/50 entry 141. More on Albret’s appointment to lieutenant in chapter two.
\textsuperscript{86} C61/50 entry 71.
attacking and destroying them, and inflicting similar pain on them as they have been inflicting on
the king and his subjects." The threat of battle always seemed imminent, so it was imperative
that military contingents were constantly ready. This proved to be expensive and was a task not
only for the seneschal but for the chief financial officer as well. Niccolo Usodimare, a Genoese
merchant, served as constable of Bordeaux from 1334-1343, although it was his brother Antonio
– serving as Niccolo’s lieutenant – that executed most of the work during his tenure. The task
of finding funds to defend Gascony was not an easy one. Paying for a standing army was
expensive enough, but to add to that there was the issue of rebellious lords. Despite the steep cost
attached to compensating Gascon barons for supporting the English, this route seemed more
tenable than the alternative of having a hostile native population. Money had to be found even
for Englishmen serving in the duchy. All these expenses added up, however, and by 1339 the
duchy’s revenue totaled less than sixty percent of its total expenses.

Usodimare’s successor resumed the trend of an Englishman occupying the position.
Master John Wawayn, king’s clerk was appointed in September 1343. Although his tenure as
constable was officially five years, he became ill in 1347 and was forced to return to England,
where he died the following year. Walter de Weston was appointed as his acting lieutenant
before Wawayn left Gascony. Wawayn’s return to England reinforces the idea that many of
these officials were English first and foremost. Their loyalty to Gascony extended only as far as
it was a political appointment for them; they had no special ties to the land.

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87 C61/50 entry 111.
88 C61/46 entry 91.
89 Labarge, Gascony, 122-3.
90 C61/54 entry 3.
91 C61/59 entry 18.
The succeeding seneschal to Ingham befell a similar fate. Nicholas de la Beche was appointed to the seneschal in July 1343. Less than a year and a half later, however, Nicholas fell ill and his brother was forced to assume control of the region. In January 1345, “[A] letter of intendancy in favour of Edmund de la Beche, king’s clerk, whom the king has appointed, during pleasure, as lieutenant of the seneschal of Gascony…[h]e is to be obeyed and answered in all matters that pertain to his office.”92 The lieutenant here is granted exceptional powers, and in many ways is filling the role of acting seneschal. No details are given as to what would occur if the appointed seneschal was to regain functionality, but from the example if Ingham it appears they would have resumed their duties. No such example is given by the Beche brothers as a new seneschal was appointed the following month.

Nicholas de la Beche was succeeded in his office by Ralph de Stafford, who served from February 1345 to March 1347.93 Despite Edmund de la Beche being ordered to relinquish the seneschalcy to Stafford on February 25, Stafford’s letters of protection were not issued until April 20 of the same year, indicating that he did not assume his office until months after his official appointment.94 Other evidence suggests that Stafford did not desire his new position, although it is unclear if he held these sentiments from the outset or if they developed after spending time in Gascony. In any case, a roll from March 1346 indicated Henry of Lancaster – the current lieutenant of Gascony – was given permission to treat with Stafford on the subject of his discharge from the seneschalcy, as per Stafford’s request, and “if he will not continue, to

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92 C61/56 entry 127.
93 C61/57 entry 4.
94 C61/57 entry 51.
discharge him from the same, and replace him with someone else who is suitable, during
pleasure, and the king will confirm whatever the earl does.”

Henry of Lancaster served as king’s lieutenant intermittently from 1344 until at least
1349. He was first appointed jointly with Richard Fitz Alan, earl of Arundel on March 24, 1344.
This appointment assigned broad powers to the two men, a response to the loss of land in the
duchy to French or rebellious Aquitaine troops. The powers assigned included “the reform of the
state and governance of the duchy of Aquitaine, and the king’s other neighbouring lands and
places, and the recovery of the king’s lands and rights which are occupied by his rebels.” The
decree goes on to state “they are generally to do all things that are necessary for the defence and
recovery, and the good governance of the king’s rights and lands, and of the king’s subjects of
the duchy and those parts.”

The following year Henry was given a sole appointment as lieutenant of Gascony. The
powers assigned to him in May 1345 were even greater than those of the previous year. He was
given “full power for the reform of the state and governance of the same, and other neighbouring
lands and places, and…he is to have complete and share jurisdiction, high and low justice, and
whatever jurisdiction the king has there.” While the ambiguity of that last line alludes to the
volatility of the king’s position in the duchy – necessitating the need for a strong lieutenant –
what is made apparent by this appointment is that when a king’s lieutenant was present in the
colony, his rule of law was greater than that of the seneschal. This reinforced Gascony’s position
as a subsidiary of England. The Crown was satisfied to leave Gascony to its own devices as long

95 C61/58 entry 12.
96 C61/56 entry 40.
97 C61/57 entry 34.
as it was profitable and functional, but when this status quo was disturbed – as was the case during the turmoil of the Hundred Years War – the royal government in England tried to assume hegemony over the province.

Edward's decision to appoint Henry to the lieutenancy proved fruitful when the lieutenant – along with the help of the seneschal, Ralph de Stafford, and the constable, Wawayn – was able to extend and fortify the frontier of Gascony against the French forces. After ensuring that the province was secure – and developing a cheaper, more efficient model for the Gascon standing army – Henry returned to England on February 1, 1347.98 He was reappointed in 1349, though his tenure as lieutenant was shorter than a year.99 Gascony was stronger than before Henry’s first appointment; the region had nearly doubled in size and was better equipped to handle the next phase of the war.

The administrative history shows the relative weakness of the ducal government, particularly in the years leading up to and immediately following the outbreak of war in 1337. The turnover of men occupying these administrative positions was frequent, and the logistical difficulties of news from Gascony reaching England created further turbulence as we see some entries in the Gascon rolls overlap. The economic decline in 1337 hurt the duchy, and although the wine trade resumed profitability, the expenses of war meant the duchy had to rely more on royal funds. Some of these expenses included compensating Gascon nobles for their service and loyalty. The next chapters will discuss these expenses in greater detail and show how the royal

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99 C61/61 entry 3.
administration – through the ducal administration laid out in this chapter – secured and used this loyalty to protect its interests in Gascony.
CHAPTER TWO: LOSING AND SECURING ALBRET LOYALTY

The great distance between Westminster – or wherever the English royal court was stationed – and Bordeaux was a hindrance on Plantagenet efforts to rule in the duchy. This separation between the central government and the peripheral duchy meant that the Plantagenets relied on the seneschal and his team to carry out English will in the region. Given the lack of resources and men afforded to the duchy, the only way to effectively administer in Aquitaine was with the assistance of the Gascon noblemen. As English control over their continental territories dwindled, so did the support of some of these nobles.

The lords of Albret were one of the most prominent Gascon families during the late medieval period. The lord of Albret held large swathes of land and held influence over many lesser lords, including his extended family. Although he supported Edward I during his reign, the lord’s own interests were his chief concern. The royal administration tolerated Amanieu d’Albret’s feuds with the other Gascons and his appeals to the French court even when they undermined the interests of the duchy because Albret was necessary. The duchy suffered when Albret, along with many of his followers, defected to the French king in 1324. The English royal administration made concerted efforts to regain the loyalty of the lord of Albret because he was key to regaining the territory lost to the French.

The Gascon Nobles

The peoples of Gascony were set apart from the rest of their countrymen in France, partially due to the location of their land being in the far southwest of France, bordering modern-day Spain. Contemporary sources – both English and French – often depicted them in a less than
favorable connotation; they were described as “verbose, cynical, lecherous, drunkards, and badly dressed” by Aymery Picaud, a twelfth-century French priest, and “a very captious and unreliable people” by Edward I. They were largely self-interested, as many European noblemen at the time were, having greater concern for their own lands than the power play between England and France. Pope Boniface VIII once remarked that while English rule would be preferable to French rule for the Gascons, what they truly wanted was to have “a multitude of lords so that they may never be touched by any of them.” Conflict between Gascon nobles was commonplace and they often used the complicated political situation to gain advantage over their fellow lords. One outcome of the Treaty of Paris of 1259 was that it gave the French monarchy the final decision in all appeals from the duchy. Gascon nobles took advantage of this lengthy process to circumvent the law by appealing a decision given by the seneschal and resuming their activities while the matter was awaiting arbitration in Paris.

Disputes between the two royal administrations greatly affected the Gascon nobles, however, particularly those with lands on the frontiers. The treaty of 1259, rather than resolving the territorial issues of south-western France, was in many ways the root of future problems between England and France. War broke out in 1294 when the French king, Philip the Fair, declared Edward I a defaulter for not paying him homage and seized many of the key towns in Aquitaine, including Bordeaux. Edward managed to regain control of his principal city and some other holdings by 1303 when the two kings made peace, but much of what he had lost was never fully recovered. Some of what was lost was to French officials, while some was to opportunistic

100 Labarge, Gascony, 8-9; Sumption, Hundred Years War, 70.
101 Sumption, Hundred Years War, 77.
Gascon nobles, the most notable being the counts of Foix and Armagnac and the lord of Albret.\textsuperscript{102}

Two of the most prominent nobles in Gascony, the counts of Foix and Armagnac were consistently warring with one another. The war that Philip the Fair had started allowed them to seek out personal interests as Edward I’s control over the region diminished. These interests overlapped and the two families waged war against one another over contested lands. This proved to be just another installment in a feud that had its origins in the mid-thirteenth century and would continue throughout the fourteenth and into the fifteenth. When the Hundred Years War began in 1337, both families were firmly on the side of the French, supplying a large number of troops for the French king’s invasion of Gascony during the first year of the war. The animosity remained, however, and the two would continue warring even in the midst of the Hundred Years War.\textsuperscript{103}

Amanieu d’Albret

While the counts of Foix and Armagnac wielded considerable influence, it was the lord of Albret who held preeminent power in the region. Albret controlled much of the Landes, a region located just south of Bordeaux, but his influence extended throughout the duchy. While the counts of Foix and Armagnac were squabbling over land in the aftermath of the 1294 conflict, Amanieu d’Albret was consolidating power and strengthening himself against the ducal government. A correspondent of Edward I wrote to the king in 1305, remarking of Albret,

\textsuperscript{102} Sumption, \textit{Hundred Years War}, 79-84.  
\textsuperscript{103} Sumption, \textit{Hundred Years War}, 329-30.
“There is no king in Gascony but he.”\textsuperscript{104} He filed a number of appeals between 1310 and 1324, against both rival families and the seneschals of Gascony alike. The purpose of the latter was to loosen English jurisdiction against his family. In 1312 Edward II – who had succeeded his father in 1307 – paid Albret a large sum of money to settle one such appeal.\textsuperscript{105} In 1318 Albret and some other nobles, including the lord of Lesparre, were assisting the sons of Pey Béguey in bringing a suit against the city of Bordeaux, the matter being the execution of their father by the court of Gascony. Edward II sent an order to Amanieu d’Albret “that he can trust in his counsel…and that he use all means necessary to induce the sons to end their suit.”\textsuperscript{106}

Whether Albret followed the king’s request is unclear but two conclusions can be drawn from this episode. The first is that the king recognized Albret’s influence and importance in Gascony. A similar order had been sent to the king’s proctors who were defending the case, as well as requests to the king of France and his chancellor. It speaks to Albret’s importance – and the English administration’s recognition of this importance – that he was included in this matter. Around the same time the king ordered that Amanieu d’Albret be issued the valuable toll of Saint-Macaire “for his good service to Edward I, late king of England…to be taken each year from 30 November 1307 for life.”\textsuperscript{107} An apology was also issued to Albret regarding damages done to him by the seneschal of Gascony. The king requested “that he will not be moved to anger against the king’s officers” and ordered the seneschal “to make amends and do immediate justice.”\textsuperscript{108} It is likely that the toll of Saint-Macaire was given to Albret at least in part to make

\textsuperscript{104} Sumption, Hundred Years War, 84.
\textsuperscript{105} Sumption, Hundred Years War, 88-9.
\textsuperscript{106} C61/32 entry 159.
\textsuperscript{107} C61/32 entry 171.
\textsuperscript{108} C61/32 entry 410-1. It is unclear to which seneschal this roll is referring. At the time of issue, 1 March 1319, William de Montague was serving as seneschal, although he had been appointed only three months prior. His
amends for the actions of the seneschal, but the rationale is clearly deeper than that. Edward II’s administration recognized the value of securing the loyalty of the powerful lord of Albret, especially at a time when English control over the duchy was tenuous. They needed allies to assist the Gascon administration in defending against French incursions.

The second conclusion drawn from Albret’s frequent association with the appeals process is that he was becoming more engaged with the French, and that perhaps his loyalty to the English was not as steadfast as Edward II might have hoped. Some of his appeals were carried out with the primary purpose of thwarting ducal authority, and going to Paris would have brought him within close proximity of the French regnal government. Further evidence of Albret pulling away from the English comes from two entries in 1322. The first is an order to the seneschal, Fulk Lestrange, concerning several matters, one of which was disputes concerning the lord of Albret. The exact details are not clear, but what is apparent is that there was warring “in the duchy between Albret and his adherents on the one part, and certain nobles of the duchy, and their adherents, on the other…[and] these nobles…imputed the crime of treason to Albret.” Albret was summoned to court but excused himself and did not appear. The king sent Lestrange “so that [he] can proceed…transcripts of the letters written to Albret [by the king] concerning excuses he made for his failure to answer when summoned.” 109 From this entry it appears that Albret is continuing to serve his own self-interests by engaging in conflicts with other Gascon nobles and disregarding the authority of the seneschal. Another entry issued on the same date

predecessor, Antonio Pessagno of Genoa, had been dismissed for negligence, fraudulence, and alienating the citizens of Bayonne. It would seem within his character to have also alienated Amanieu d’Albret. See also C61/32 entry 323, 400.
109 C61/35 entry 122.
paints a more nuanced picture of Albret’s relationship with the seneschal and his fellow countrymen.

The entry begins with a request to the “lord of Albret, that he be mindful of his former efforts on the king’s behalf, and…to obey and show due respect to the seneschal of Gascony so that the king does not have to apply any further remedy.” This request was in response to a letter of credence brought to the king by Albret’s clerk, Hélias Bascle. The letter, which is recounted in the same entry, offers explanations for Albret’s actions. He posits that from his “youth upwards he has supported the king’s father, and wished to serve the king too” and that what the king had heard were “nefarious suggestions…that he had seized land to the king’s prejudice” as well as causing damage to Fulk Lestrange. Bascle pleaded Albret’s ignorance about both the land seizure and the “injury to the seneschal…after a dispute had started about which Albret knew nothing, on which Albret is prepared to swear on oath.” The entry finishes with the king recalling Albret’s service to both him and his father “and could not easily believe the charges against Albret in violation of the king’s love, had they not been brought by the king’s officers in those parts, who alleged further that one of the seneschal’s men had been murdered.”

Despite Albret’s plea of innocence, the evidence against him in both entries is damning. It is Albret’s word against that of the king’s officers. They may have exaggerated but it is unlikely that the Gascon lord did not deserve at least a portion of the blame. His importance to the royal administration is once again highlighted by the king’s leniency. Albret received little more than a warning for his actions and was even offered some degree of protection from the king with the statement, “If any of the king’s subjects or ministers have committed any wrong

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110 C61/35 entry 124.
against Albret and his people, to stop the dissension it is the king’s wish that the seneschal sees that speedy justice is applied.” The tone of the request implies that Albret was just as important as the seneschal, if not more so. This is likely true, as Gascony had up to that point gone through over ten seneschals during Edward II’s fifteen-year reign. The seneschal held a degree of power, but it was negligible compared to that which the lord of Albret wielded over his lands and countrymen.

The War of Saint Sardos and Defection

The lord of Albret’s disaffection with the Plantagenet and ducal administrations was given an outlet when Charles of Valois, uncle of the French king, invaded Aquitaine in August 1324. The government in Gascony was wholly unprepared to respond to this aggression, most of the king’s officials shutting themselves in at the fortress of La Rèole, 30 miles from Bordeaux. Reinforcements from England never came, and the fortress was surrendered after only a month of siege. The results of the War of Saint Sardos were devastating for the English. They lost much of their land in Aquitaine, only holding onto the cities of Bordeaux and Bayonne, the coastal strip between the two cities, and a few castles, including Saintes, further inland that managed to avoid capture. The weakness of the English administration resulted in several prominent noblemen abandoning the English cause and taking up with Charles of Valois; the most notable were the Count of Foix and the lord of Albret. The defection of the Count of Foix was not shocking, and indeed the family’s loyalty to the French would never again waver. Amanieu

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111 Ibid.
112 Sumption, Hundred Years War, 95-6.
d’Albret’s abandonment of the English cause was a serious blow; Edward II subsequently labeled him “the king’s enemy and rebel” and ordered a forfeiture of “all [his] lands and tenements with appurtenances in Bordeaux.” The English administration in Gascony was now wholly isolated without any prominent allies to rely on.

After participating against the English in the short-lived War of Saint Sardos, Amanieu d’Albret continued being a thorn in the side of the Gascon administration. It was reported in April 1326 that Albret “has built a new castle near Lesperon, by the road which runs from Bordeaux to Bayonne…Albret’s men, who live in the castle, repeatedly ambush and attack the king’s subjects travelling by that road, to their damage, and refuse to stop doing so.” Oliver de Ingham, the newly appointed seneschal, was ordered to “provide a remedy as he considers best for the preservation of the rights of the king and his son.” In a separate incident, several Gascon noblemen, at the behest of the seneschal, rode to Albret’s castle in Clermont “to demand that those who were there refrain from invading the king’s lands near the castle, as well as from the homicides and other crimes that they were maliciously perpetrating.” Three of the king’s men lost horses in the conflict, for which they requested compensation.

The English royal administration overlooked these incidents of aggression, and in June 1326 Amanieu d’Albret was granted a pardon “for all the actions and complaints which the king has against him, by reason of injuries, trespasses and crimes, both capital and otherwise, which he committed against the king or his ministers, and also for his liability for prosecution on account of rebellion against the king and adherence to the French and others who had invaded

113 C61/36 entry 134.
114 C61/38 entry 81.
115 C61/38 entry 120.
the duchy. The king does not want him to be disturbed or harmed on account of these
goers.”116 The desperation of the English government is apparent. Less than two years after
his defection, during which time he continued to act with aggression towards the English in
Gascony, Albret was granted a full pardon. There is no indication that he ever requested this
pardon; rather, it seems that Edward’s administration granted it hoping to lure him back to their
side without any punishment. Oliver de Ingham was also given a commission to treat with
Amanieu d’Albret “concerning the reconciliation of him and his sons…[as] certain faithful
magnates have requested that the king admit Albret, his sons, household, supporters and
adherents to his grace, they having opposed the king in the last Gascon war.”117 These “faithful
magnates” understood that the difficulties facing the duchy were magnified by having the Albret
family as an enemy. The task of administrating Gascony was in part dependent on the assistance
of the Gascon lords.

Amanieu d’Albret’s reaction to this pardon is not made apparent in this source base, and
in some ways made irrelevant by two major developments that occurred during the following
year. The first was the deposition of Edward II by his wife Isabella and her consort, Roger
Mortimer, and the ascension of Edward III to the throne. Edward III proved to be a much more
capable ruler than his father, although his reign did not begin in earnest until 1330; Mortimer and
Isabella served as regents until that time. It has been noted that Amanieu d’Albret had a good

116 C61/38 entry 115.
117 C61/38 entry 105-6. In this entry we see the emergence of a clerical error regarding Amanieu d’Albret’s sons. The chancery clerks frequently mixed up the forenames ‘Berardus’ and ‘Bernardus’. This proves especially challenging as Albret’s eldest living son was Bernard d’Albret while his younger son was called Béart d’Albret. Those responsible for translating and digitizing the Gascon rolls have done their best to rectify these errors and mark their changes accordingly in the footnotes. The entry also lists Aymeric d’Albret as one of Amanieu d’Albret’s sons, but no such son seems to have existed. It is likely that this reference was in meant to be Guitard d’Albret, vicomte of Tartas. For a complete study of the Albret family lineage, see Marquette, Les Albret, 618-9.
relationship with Edward I; it was not until Edward II’s reign that he defected from the English faction. Edward III’s rule seemed more like his grandfather’s than his father’s; he was a successful war leader, showed political savviness, and was charismatic enough to often have the support of his subjects. ¹¹⁸ During his reign, an active effort was made to reingratiate the Albret family to the English Crown. These efforts were aided by the second development that happened concurrently to Edward II’s deposition.

**Bernard d’Albret and Reconciliation**

Sometime between June 1326 and April 1327 Amanieu d’Albret died and was succeeded by his eldest son, Bernard d’Albret. ¹¹⁹ Letters of retainder were issued for Bernard d’Albret “retaining him in the king’s council, and requesting that he help the king’s minsters in negotiations concerning both war and peace currently being conducted by the king’s ministers…and the king will be indebted to him.” The entry goes on to recall that his father “had faithfully served Edward I…and had been well rewarded by him.” ¹²⁰ This retainer sought to recognize that service. Since the king was not officially serving in his full capacity, this retainer cannot be credited to him. It was a standard issue, both because the monarchy had shifted hands and because there was a new lord of Albret. A similar letter was issued to Bernard’s brother, Guitart d’Albret. ¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Bernard’s true name appears to be Bernat-Etz V. Nearly all of the secondary literature refers to him as Bernard d’Albret so I will do so as well, in keeping with the scholarship.
¹²⁰ C61/39 entry 56.
¹²¹ C61/39 entry 57.
While the English government was attempting to secure the loyalty of the new lord of Albret, his younger brother, Bérart d’Albret, had remained loyal to the Crown. He was given a grant “for his good service to the king and Edward II, the king’s father, and for his future service, of 100 l.st. each year to be taken from the revenues of the duchy of Aquitaine…until Albret recovers his lands in the duchy or until the king orders otherwise.”\(^{122}\) He was also issued “letters of protection and safe-conduct…[for] his men and servants and their goods, in going to and returning from Gascony, since the king has ordered him to go to the duchy, in his service.”\(^{123}\) The importance Bérart d’Albret’s loyalty to England should not be overlooked. While he did not have the same influence or lands as his older brother, he was lord of Vayres and Rions, a member of the most prominent family in Gascony, and a vital asset to the English. One Englishman said of him, “We have always found him more enthusiastic than anyone else in these parts about the service of the King our master, and he has drawn more French allies to our side than any other man.”\(^{124}\) The Crown utilized Bérart’s influence to compel him “to speak and deal swiftly and with all the possible secrecy with all the nobles, communes and others who are outside the king’s obedience to attract their hearts and their will towards the king in order they help the king when it will be the time to recover his rights and inheritance.”\(^{125}\) Without the support of the Gascon nobles, the English had little chance of recovering what they had lost in 1294 and 1324. Though not explicitly stated, it is clear that Bernard is one of the nobles to whom Bérart was directed to speak.

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\(^{122}\) C61/39 entry 6.
\(^{123}\) C61/39 entry 18.
\(^{124}\) Sumption, Hundred Years War, 201.
\(^{125}\) C61/40 entry 62.
Later that year, in 1328, the English government promised to compensate Bernard d’Albret “his present and future castles, lands, towns, cities or his possessions…within a period of five years or as soon as possible” if the nobleman “supports with ardour and loyalty the recovering of the king’s hereditary rights in the kingdom of France and in the duchy of Aquitaine.” The king also promises “to fully include the count, his servants and adherents in the truce or peace the king will do with the French keeping them immune.” 126 The entry goes on to discuss conditions if possessions were not recovered within five years, wherein he would receive compensation by the constable of Bordeaux or the king’s exchequer. Similar letters were sent to Bernard’s brothers, Guitart d’Albret (c.1307-1338), 127 vicomte of Tartas, and Bérart d’Albret, lord of Vayres and Rions, and their sister Matha d’Albret (c.1307-1338), 128 lady of Castelmoron and Gensac, as well as to the counts of Armagnac and Foix. 129 Even during times of relative peace, the English government was jockeying for influence in Aquitaine. Offering compensation to the three greatest families in the duchy was shrewd, but it would not be enough to tear them away from the king of France, whose influence was more immediately felt due to his closer proximity. The counts of Armagnac and Foix dismissed the offer, while the Albret family was divided. Bérart and Matha were staunch supporters of the English, while Bernard and Guitart appeared more equivocal. 130

After this initial flurry of attempts to gain the favor of the lord of Albret, contact with the nobleman ceased for nearly a decade. He was not an ardent supporter of the French government

126 C61/40 entry 145.
127 Marquette, Les Albret, 80.
128 Marquette, Les Albret, 80.
129 C61/40 entry 146.1-4, 149.1-3.
130 C61/40 entry 145.
like his counterparts the counts of Armagnac and Foix, preferring to remain aloof from either monarch. The peace that existed between England and France during this period was tenuous, and it was unclear what the future might hold or which party would have the advantage. The French appeared to be in the stronger tactical position following the War of Saint Sardos, but the ascension of Philip of Valois to the throne in 1328 had been preceded by a succession crisis. Philip only became king because Charles IV did not have any male heirs upon his death, and his ascension was a cause of concern for the French nobles. “He had not been brought up to be king.” Bernard d’Albret showed political acumen by staying in his own lands and out of the fray.

Meanwhile, the English administration continued to rely on Bernard’s siblings for influence in the duchy, while they in turn enjoyed the benefits of a government beholden to their service. In 1329, Matha d’Albret received a grant “of 100 l.st. per annum…because she behaved faithfully towards Edward II and the current king, [losing] her castles, lands possessions and all her goods during the wars led against Edward II and the current king.” The following year Bérart d’Albret received “grant for life…for his good service toward the king…of the keepership of the castle and castellany of Puynormand and the bastide of Villefranche-de-Lonchat.” Many times, especially after the outbreak of hostilities in 1337, nobles would receive similar grants for castles the English did not yet have control over. Because it was peacetime, it appears that the castle of Puynormand was given to the authority of Bérart d’Albret. He also received a grant “for his good service toward the king and in compensation of the damage and harm he suffered at the

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131 Sumption, *Hundred Years War*, 103-8.
132 C61/41 entry 105.
133 C61/42 entry 94.
occasion of the wars in the duchy, of 500 l.st. to be received per annum.” The finances of the duchy being in disarray, however, payment was not always issued in a timely fashion. Bérart would petition the Crown over the subsequent years for these payments, including in 1333 when he “complained to the king that he owed him this sum for his wages and those of his mounted men-at-arms and foot serjeants…but despite the king’s previous order, this sum has not been paid to Albret to the great amazement of the king.” Even though payments were intermittent, the promise of these payments seems to have been enough for Bérart to maintain his loyalty. It is likely a better deal than he would have gotten from the French king, who was likewise having financial difficulties.

By 1334 it was clear that Guitard d’Albret had also been in the service of the king, albeit in a secret fashion. He had at an earlier time “made an agreement…that he would adhere to the king and his people in the duchy, and that many promises were made that still remain unfulfilled, however because of that the castle and issues…have been occupied by the French and detained from him, and now the French, attempt to attract the vicomte to their side.” The seneschal and constable were ordered to treat with Guitard “with the upmost caution and secrecy and consider the sum of money promised to the vicomte from the issues of the duchy in such a manner that he does not depart from the king’s allegiance, and the king will make due allowance in the constable’s account for the sum.” Once again, the English king realized the importance of keeping the Albret family under his yoke. In 1337 his retention was confirmed by Oliver de Ingham. The seneschal and constable were also ordered that he “be assigned payment for his fee

134 C61/42 entry 95.
135 C61/45 entry 90.
136 C61/46 entry 99.
of retainder” and all of the king’s officials were ordered to assist Albret “and defend his lands as the king has learnt that the king of France has ordered certain of his subjects and ministers to harass and inflict damage on Albret, his men, lands and possessions because he has remained loyal to the king.”\(^{137}\)

In January 1338, Oliver de Ingham and Guitart d’Albret were authorized “to treat and agree with the lord of Albret upon his entering into friendship and alliance with the king, for their mutual aid against all men.”\(^{138}\) War had begun in earnest in 1337 and one of the initial campaigns by the French was a foray into Aquitaine. They were relatively unsuccessful, but this was due more to failure on the part of the French than it was the strength of the English.\(^{139}\) It became apparent that Gascony would require the help of more than just its lesser noblemen. At the same time, letters were sent to the lord of Albret “recalling the solid friendship and goodwill that existed between the royal household and of Albret’s progenitors, and asking that he will treat with his brother the vicomte of Tartas and the seneschal of Gascony for an alliance.”\(^{140}\) In April of the same year a request and order was sent to Bernard d’Albret “that he should withdraw from assisting Philip of Valois” and request that he assist “the king around the defence and recovery of his rights under pain of forfeiture of all that he holds from the king, for which fidelity the king will by God’s grace handsomely reward him.”\(^{141}\) Perhaps it was the threat of forfeiture of his lands, but less than a month later the lord of Albret signed a treaty with the king of England.

\(^{137}\) C61/49 entry 6-8.
\(^{138}\) C61/49 entry 462.
\(^{139}\) For more detail on the broader events of the campaign in Gascony, see Sumption, Hundred Years War, 185-238.
\(^{140}\) C61/49 entry 475.
\(^{141}\) C61/50 entry 115.
The treaty signed between Bernard d’Albret and Edward III on 8 May 1338 contained twelve clauses. First and foremost, “Albret will become the vassal of the king and duke and will do homage and swear an oath of fealty at the king’s request as his predecessors were accustomed to do to the king.” The second, “the king will be bound to protect Albret and his, and all those that come with him to the king’s service and obedience from damage.” Recognizing that Albret would suffer considerable losses through his formal abandonment of Philip of Valois, “the king promises to give and assign him the castle, castellanes and places of Saint-Macaire, Dax and Bourg with the rents, homages and jurisdictions…in recompense in part of the losses that Albret will incur in the king’s service.” The remainder of the treaty deals with a variety of issues, including offering protections and fulfillment of payments for Albret’s men and for Bérart and Matha d’Albret.

As a sign of respect for his new vassal, Edward appointed Bernard d’Albret as joint lieutenant of the king with Oliver de Ingham, granting them full powers in the duchy. The English government had achieved its long sought after goal of returning the lord of Albret to ducal authority. His influence – both financial and political – in the duchy would prove invaluable in the coming years of the war. He brought with him “a formidable network of alliances [and] a personal retinue of some two or three hundred vassals who would produce an armed force of at least ten times that number.” Equally important was that the king – and by extension the Gascon administration – finally had a prominent member of the Gascon nobility

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142 C61/50 entry 139-40.
143 Guitard d’Albret died sometime in 1338 prior to the signing of this treaty, as he is referred to as Albret’s ‘late brother’. Bernard assumed the title of vicomte of Tartas upon his death.
144 C61/50 entry 115.
145 Sumption, *Hundred Years War*, 332.
whom they could trust. When Henry of Lancaster arrived in Aquitaine in 1345 and embarked on his remarkable campaign to regain much of Gascony, it was Bernard and Bérart d’Albret whom he appointed captains of the town of Bergerac to protect his rear against the French.\textsuperscript{146}

The lords of Albret had long been a prominent noble family in Gascony. The loss of their loyalty under Edward II proved detrimental to the ducal administration. Returning them to the side of the English was crucial for their success against the French in the Gascon theatre of the Hundred Years War. Even though the lord of Albret, Bernard, resisted committing to either the French or English side, Edward III’s government made it a priority to maintain strong ties with his siblings. This close relationship eventually led, in part, to Bernard d’Albret returning as a vassal of the English king.

\textsuperscript{146} Fowler, \textit{King’s Lieutenant}, 57.
CHAPTER THREE: SUCCESS IN GASCONY WITH A LOYAL ALBRET

In May 1338, the English administration achieved its goal, at least on paper, of securing the loyalty of Bernard d’Albret. The first clause of the indenture between king and Albret confirmed Albret as a vassal required to do homage. The second promised the king’s protection while Albret was in his service. The remainder of the document consists primarily of incentives for Albret and considerations for land lost as a result of the family’s service to the English king. In July of the same year Albret was appointed king’s lieutenant jointly with Oliver de Ingham. Whether the king trusted Albret is not only difficult to determine, it is a largely irrelevant question. The lord of Albret allied himself with the English because it suited his own interests. He saw the benefit to himself of supporting Edward III in this war. The royal administration’s concerted efforts to secure Albret’s loyalty showed its desperation; this was a partnership wedded out of necessity. The English had little chance of achieving wartime success in Gascony without local assistance. The treaty with Albret made this possible and appointing him lieutenant in Gascony awarded him considerable powers, powers that Westminster hoped would be used to keep the other Gascon lords in line and rally them to the English cause.

Albret’s Importance to Aquitaine

After the Albret family returned to English loyalty, it became the policy of the administration to keep the relationship intact. Within two years of the indenture the royal administration was making attempts to further solidify the relationship between the two parties. Albret’s importance to the Crown is signified by an attempt to wed the future lord of Albret with one of the king’s close relatives. In April 1340, Oliver de Ingham and Antonio Usodimare,
brother and lieutenant of the constable of Bordeaux, Niccolò Usodimare, were sent “to treat and agree” with the lord of Albret “upon the betrothal and marriage of Amaniu, his first born son and Margaret, daughter of… the king’s uncle, and upon the settling of the dower marriage portion and gift on account of the marriage and for strengthening the security for the same.”¹⁴⁷ The betrothal did not come to fruition but its suggestion is telling for the direction the king wished this relationship to go.

The lord of Albret’s importance in Gascony was due in large part to his influence as one of the region’s most powerful noblemen. The duchy could not be effectively ruled without the cooperation of the local lords. The king heard “disturbing accounts from a variety of sources, that because of these disputes, lawsuits and controversies between his nobles and others in the duchy, the expedition of certain of the king’s business has been delayed, affecting the king, his nobles and others, and the state of the duchy.” Now that Albret’s cooperation had been secured, as lieutenant of the king he was tasked, along with Hugues de Genève, lord of Varey and Anthon – his new co-lieutenant – and Oliver de Ingham, to “pacify the disputes, lawsuits and controversies for at least as long as the war lasts, and induce and compel the nobles and others involved to accept what they consider is best to be done for the advantage of the king and his subjects.”¹⁴⁸ Albret’s ability to wield his influence and bring the other lords into line was why his loyalty was so crucial for the duchy.

Many Gascons did not join Albret in his support of the English and instead stayed on the side of the French king. Others were granted lands by the English in a hopeful yet futile attempt

¹⁴⁷ C61/52 entry 12.
¹⁴⁸ C61/52 entry 226.
to woo them to the English cause. Albret and his associates were tasked with finding and retaking these holdings for the king so that he may redistribute them as he saw fit. They were given the order that “they should resume into the king’s hands all those castles, manors, lands, tenements, rents and other places that were given and granted unwisely…and are occupied by men who do not deserve so much and so often, and the king wishes to be better informed about this.”\(^{149}\)

The royal administration conveyed optimism that lands lost would be retaken by the English through its orders to reallocate these lands from their rebellious owners and gift them to faithful lords. Gaucem d’Ignac was granted the office of executor of Condom and the holdings that accompany it. The office was currently held by a rebellious Frenchman so the assumption in this roll is that it would soon be won back. A daily wage of 12 pence was to accompany this office. Ignac was being rewarded for his loyal service both in England and France. Interestingly, this service was not only enough to earn him this office, but also a pardon for the death of Pey de Ferradre. He had been indicted for this crime and banished from the duchy, but the pardon overrode his punishment, and he was instead rewarded for his loyalty with an office.\(^{150}\) The office of executor of Agen was also in the hands of a disloyal Frenchman and Pons du Foussat was subsequently appointed “with all that pertains to that office for the term of his life from the time that it returns to the king’s hand, providing that the grant is not to the injury of other faithful subjects of the king.”\(^{151}\) A similar entry grants the castle of Saint-Puy in Agenais “with the

\(^{149}\) C61/52 entry 181.
\(^{150}\) C61/52 entry 89, 100, 109.
\(^{151}\) C61/52 entry 83.
customary wages and fees and all other things pertaining to it” to Bertran Moulinier upon its return to the king’s hand.\textsuperscript{152}

Gascony was severely financially strained by 1341 and the king had difficulty paying his debts to loyal Gascons to whom he owed money and lands. Albret assisted the Crown by offering partial compensation to Ramon de Cassagne to show him favor on behalf of the king. The incident highlights Albret’s value to the Crown as a wealthy nobleman, willing to make good the Crown’s debts even while being owed substantial arrears and lands himself. Cassagne, burgess of Agen “requested by his petition exhibited before the king that, whereas he has lost his lands and tenements to the value of 1,200 \textit{l.t. per annum} because he has adhered to the king in the present war in the duchy of Aquitaine, and Bernat-Etz [V], lord of Albret, lieutenant of the king in the duchy from his own lands and rents assigned to him 640 \textit{l.t.} in part compensation of the 1,200 \textit{l.t.}” and that “the king will wish to assign to [Cassagne] the residual 560 \textit{l.t.} upon the lands of the king’s enemies and rebels in the Bazadais and Agenais.”\textsuperscript{153} Albret paid the Crown’s payment to the burgess of Agen, ensuring his loyalty while the Crown raised the funds for the remainder of the sum.

This level of support from within the duchy was sorely missed during the years immediately following 1337. Aquitaine may have been one of the key contentious issues that sparked the latest stage of Anglo-French hostility, but it was not subsequently the primary theatre of war. It was one of four fronts, the others being the coasts of England which were harried by French ships, Scotland, and the Low Countries. It was the last of these that received the bulk of

\textsuperscript{152} C61/52 entry 82.
\textsuperscript{153} C61/53 entry 55.
Edward’s attention and resources. While Edward was preparing for and leading a campaign in
the Low Countries, Gascony was left largely to fend for itself, a task which was all the more
difficult given the negative economic impact of the war. English control had been reduced to
coastal regions which had a severe effect on grain production. A drought in 1337 exacerbated
this crop shortage and proved detrimental to wine production in the region. Gascon ports saw an
eighty percent decrease in wine traffic during the opening years of the war. The region became
increasingly dependent on grain imports from England, a risky operation due to the superiority of
the French fleet. ¹⁵⁴

In addition to the economic crisis facing Gascony, the Crown was unable to pay much of
the wages owed to the soldiers in the region. John of Norwich and his men did not receive
payment for nearly eighteen months after arriving in Gascony. The result of this negligence was
riotting and abandonment of their posts. The revolt of troops was an obvious detriment to the war
effort, but is minor compared to the potential defection of a nobleman. An effort needed to be
made to ensure the loyalty of the Gascon elite who were faced with the constant pull of Philip
VI’s influence. The lord of Albre’s loyalty showed the strength of the English side to other
Gascons. He was also able – and willing – to use his resources to prevent possible defections and
ensure the happiness of other nobles, as in the case of the burgess of Agen. ¹⁵⁵

A similar instance was recorded in 1345 with an order to the lieutenant and seneschal to
determine if Albre “gave his castle of Gensac, with its rents and appurtenances” to the lord of
Mussidan “then it should be restored to Albre.” Meanwhile, if they find that the lord of

¹⁵⁴ Sumption, *Hundred Years War*, 233.
¹⁵⁵ Sumption, *Hundred Years War*, 234.
Mussidan “has conducted himself well towards the king, [he] should have compensation for it elsewhere in the duchy, holding the same until he is able to recover his lands lost in the king’s service.”\textsuperscript{156} Simon J. Harris and Nicholas A. Gribit, in their summary of that year’s roll, state that this entry signifies the great importance of Albret to the English as well as the great personal sacrifices being made by Albret. Part of Albret’s duty was to convince his fellow noblemen to join the English cause. One method for this was Albret reallocating his own resources – in this instance a castle – in order to strengthen the English cause. He was ultimately promised to be well compensated for his sacrifices, but it was still a gamble dependent on English success.

Albret’s importance to the Crown is apparent by the inclusion of a detailed record of his homage to Edward in the rolls. “Notification that Bernat-Etz [V], lord of Albret, has done homage to the king as duke of Aquitaine on 7th September 1342 in the way his predecessors have done and following the uses, customs and statutes of the duchy.[…] The king wishes the homage that Albret provided be valid for the king and his successors…the king will give him free help and favour, as a special vassal in perpetuity.”\textsuperscript{157} The recording of this homage is unique and highlights the importance placed on Albret. The only other record of a vassal performing homage in the rolls was by the lord of Albret’s brother, Bérart d’Albret, in an almost identical entry.\textsuperscript{158}

\textsuperscript{156} C61/57 entry 56.
\textsuperscript{157} C61/53 entry 314.
\textsuperscript{158} C61/53 entry 321.
Profit During Wartime

Defection to the French was common for Gascon lords in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, not necessarily out of any impassioned ties to the French cause but rather out of self-interest. All three of the major lords in the region – Albret, Foix, and Armagnac – sided with the French during the War of Saint Sardos because it suited their interests. Despite Edward III offering compensation in 1328 for them to assist him recovering his “rights and inheritances in the kingdom of France and duchy of Aquitaine,” none of them did so until Albret a decade later. Jean I of Armagnac allied with the English in June 1340 in part due to his indebtedness to Albret. While this is an example of the lord of Albret using his influence for the benefit of the Crown, he was also working out of self-interest. Armagnac owed him 17,000 livres tournois for money Albret had loaned him and for the dowry of Armagnac’s sister, Mathe d’Armagnac, whom Albret had recently married. The two Gascons allied themselves against Gaston II, count of Foix, in March 1341. Meanwhile, the house of Foix-Béarn – a branch of the house of Foix – became increasingly discontented with the administration in Aquitaine in the decades leading up to the war due to what they perceived to be an increase in ducal authority and an impingement of their local power although many of their vassals remained loyal to the English.

The count of Foix was not the only Gascon noble with whom Albret had conflict. A land dispute over the Labourd between Arnaut de Durfort and the supporters of the lord of Albret.

159 Vale, Angevin Legacy, 253. C 61/42, entry 145, 149.
160 Vale, Angevin Legacy, 254.
161 Vale, Angevin Legacy, 263.
162 Vale, Angevin Legacy, 87-8.
The land was to be delivered to Durfort thanks to his service to the Crown, but some of Albret’s vassals took the land for themselves. The English administration issued that the land should be taken back into the king’s hands and distributed to Durfort.\textsuperscript{163} Despite Albret’s importance to the Crown, he was denied total impunity. Albret’s strength was massive, but the royal administration still had to keep the other lords happy if he were to be successful in Gascony.

Albret sacrificed lands in order to strengthen the English cause in Gascony, but he also gained much through his alliance with the king. His sister, Matha d’Albret, widow of the lord of Bergerac, remained loyal to the English when most of her family defected. Before his death in 1325, the lord of Bergerac, “wishing to provide for Matha d’Albret, his wife, granted the castle of Gensac, Catelmoron, and Miremont” to her so that she may have some provisions as a widow. He was not able to grant these lands directly to her, instead granting them to “his kinsman, who in turn sold them to Bérart d’Albret…[who] in the name of a gift, transferred the castles to Matha d’Albret.”\textsuperscript{164} She subsequently made an agreement with the seneschal granting the king all the lands of Bergerac, the town of Montignac, and the aforementioned castles she had received from her late husband. In return, she and her heirs retained Montendre, Blaye (and its corn tax), Condat, and “the prévôté of Born, Mimizan, Labouheyre and of Brassanx with its appurtenances.”\textsuperscript{165} After Bernard d’Albret joined the English cause, she made him her heir. Upon her death – c.1341 – he received all of her holdings, as well as “the places, baylies and lands of Pontonx, Auribat, Gosse and Seignanx.”\textsuperscript{166} A major reason for joining the English cause was to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[163] C61/52 entry 3, 4, 214.
\item[164] C61/38 entry 35.
\item[165] C61/52 entry 207.
\item[166] C61/52 entry 207, 249.
\end{footnotes}
expand his own lands in Aquitaine. In doing so, he curried favor with his sister who remained sympathetic to the Plantagenets throughout the rest of her family’s defection.

Although Albret gained lands after 1338 due to his association with the Crown, he was also punished by the French king for his defection. The French confiscated Gensac, Bazadais, Sore, Labrit, Mixe, Ostabert, and Rodez; loss of land not only meant territorial loss, it also meant that rent could not be collected on those lands. In order to compensate Albret for this loss of rent, the ducal government in 1341 was ordered to pay Albret the sum of 645 pounds and 6 shillings: 800 gold dials for the loss of “annual and perpetual rent” in Gensac, 125 ½ gold rials for Bazadais, 950 gold rials for Sore and Labrit, 500 gold rials for Mixe and Ostabert in the kingdom of Navarre, and 851 gold rials for Rodez.¹⁶⁷ He was additionally granted “the toll of Saint-Macaire with all its issues and emoluments, and also the land of Blanquefort with high and low justice with both full and shared jurisdiction and all other issues, emoluments and profits pertaining to that land.”¹⁶⁸ The toll of Saint-Macaire was intended to supplement the annual 645 pounds and 6 shillings Albret was to receive from the constable of Bordeaux. Albret did not regain this land for at least a decade; entries in 1351 and 1352 asked the seneschal and constable of Bordeaux to ensure that Albret received his annual rent of 645 pounds and 6 shillings “to be taken each year until Albret will have recovered his lands, rents and places that he has lost,” and to issue the sum to him if not already paid.¹⁶⁹ These payments frequently came late and required Albret appealing to the English government and Edward III issuing orders to pay him, but he was nevertheless recouping on his losses.

¹⁶⁷ C61/53 entry 186. Each gold rial is worth 4 s.st.
¹⁶⁸ C61/53 entry 326.
¹⁶⁹ C61/63 entry 54, C61/64 entry 28.
The royal administration additionally compensated Albret in other ways such as giving him profits from the minting of money and granting him customs. Albret believed he was still owed money even surpassing what he earned from the minting of money. The king sent an order to the constable that “Albret has accounted before the treasurer and barons of the Exchequer concerning sums owed to him by the king, and also regarding wool and money received by him in England in part-payment of those sums, and according to that account he is owed 6,127 l. 17 d.st.”

The tax offered to him by the king was to repair his castles “for a period of ten years from the day of these letters,” and that Albret “may take a custom of 8 d.t. per pound, according to their value, from all saleable goods and merchandise coming to his castles and places or their districts, or travelling through for trade.” The king granted him such to assist in the “aid of repairs to the defences and fortifications of his castles and places of Nérac, Casteljaloux, Meilhan, Sore and Tartas, situated on the frontier with the king’s enemies, as well as the protection and defence of the inhabitants there and those travelling through.” Albret’s loyalty came at a price, and while the tax to repair his castle was portrayed as in the interest of the duchy’s protection, it was helping Albret strengthen his own defenses. This was beneficial to the duchy, but it also helped Albret secure his borders against rival Gascon lords. Feuds among the Gascon clans had a deep history and gaining this security was of greater interest to Albret than ensuring Plantagenet Gascony was safe against French intrusion.

Albret used to his advantage that the royal administration had to rely on the seneschal in Bordeaux on all matters in the duchy. The confusion inherent in this peripheral system worked in

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170 C61/54 entry 11.
171 C61/54 entry 83.
Albret’s favor. Conflicting orders were often made, as in the case of the granting of the land of Blanquefort to him and another lord. In 1341, the seneschal was ordered that “if the land of Blanquefort granted to Galhart de Saint-Symphorien, lord of Landiras by Oliver de Ingham, seneschal of Gascony and confirmed to him by the king is the same place which the king granted to Bernat-Etz [V], lord of Albret, then the king wishes that that land should be delivered to Albret.”  

Albret assumed control over this land per the king’s order. In 1344, however, the king became suspicious that “Albret actually holds certain of the lands, rents and places that he claimed to have lost, and that those lands that he has with the tolls of Saint-Macaire are valued at 645 l. 6 s.st., and the king wishes to look to his own indemnity.” If determined to be true, the seneschal was ordered to “resume the land of Blanquefort…into the king’s hands,” and Albret ordered to pay back any excess tolls or compensations that exceed 645 pounds and 6 shillings.  

It is unclear the exact amount Albret had to pay back to the king but he did lose Blanquefort and the tolls of Saint-Macaire. They were issued to Arnaut III de Durfort in 1345 and subsequently granted for life to Lord Nigel Loring “because of his good service to the king in England and Scotland, as well the good service he did to the earl in the present war of Gascony.” Perhaps making Durfort the recipient of the tolls was intended to irk Albret, due to their previous feud, but no such mention is made in the rolls. This incident demonstrates that Albret was always working in his own self-interest and benefit himself over the other Gascon lords. This was not a

172 C61/53 entry 358.
173 C61/56 entry 73
174 C61/57 entry 83, C61/60 entry 61. Despite the inpxemimus of letters patent implying that Loring began receiving this toll in 1346, the Calendar of the Patent Rolls show that this compensation was granted 6 November 1352.
serious impediment to his relationship with the Crown, but it was something the royal administration was cognizant of when dealing with the Gascon nobles.

Albret as a Leader

Albret demonstrated his acumen as leader in more ways than just his influence over other nobles. In 1341, he was given a commission to treat “in the king's name” with any people or towns “in the obedience of Philip of Valois within the duchy of Aquitaine and elsewhere within the kingdom of France who wish to come into the kings fealty.” Any who joined were promised “that the king will not in any way enter into a truce or peace with Philip of Valois unless their security is provided for” and the king would “confirm Albret's acts and promises.”\textsuperscript{175} Treating with the French would not have been an unusual responsibility for the king’s lieutenant, but that position was almost always filled by an Englishman. For Albret to be given this responsibility as a Gascon is a significant assignment and shows the value the English placed on him.

An example of Albret successfully treating is evidenced in the surrender of Bazas. He and John Wawayn, constable of Bordeaux promised “[t]he jurats and consuls of the city of Bazas…on the surrender of their city to the king's obedience…that they will be exempted forever of the payment at Bordeaux of the great custom on the wines.”\textsuperscript{176} This entry was dated May 1348, but Bazas surrendered to the English on 3 January 1347. Albret and Wawayn would have been in negotiations with the jurats, consuls, and community in 1346 or earlier. While Albret

\textsuperscript{175} C61/53 entry 325.
\textsuperscript{176} C61/60 entry 125.
showed his ability to lure his countrymen over to the English cause, although the promise of an exemption from wine customs was no doubt a significant factor.

Bernard d’Albret, Albret, Hugues de Gèneve, and Oliver de Ingham successfully led a siege against Mézin ending on July 23, 1340. In an entry in the rolls from June 1, 1342, we read the order “that they should maintain the inhabitants and community of the town of Mézin in the liberties, freedoms and privileges previously granted and confirmed to them, permitting them to enjoy them and not molesting or oppressing them in any way.” Letters patent were then issued for the “granting [of] the following privileges in the king’s name to the consuls and whole community of Mézin, who have made and offered their due obedience to them in the name of the king and duke.” The list of twelve privileges that followed included significant protections for the town against outside enemies, including “30 mounted men-at-arms and 300 sergeants from the said town should be present there for the duration of the present war, receiving the king’s wages.” The purpose of the privileges was to ingratiate the town into the duchy. The English used a simple yet effective strategy when it came to securing Gascon loyalty: offer them something of value, whether it be money, protection, or lands.

Bordeaux was the key economic and administrative city in Gascony and so it was vital for the English to make sure it was secure in order to make sure their war efforts could continue unmolested. These threats could come from anywhere, so Albret was assigned “to protect and defend the community and merchants and others going to the city of Bordeaux from injustice, violence, injury and oppression just as he considers appropriate, and punishing those who oppose

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177 C61/54 entry 314.
178 C61/54 entry 267.
179 C61/54 entry 267.
him in this, and requesting that he attend to the matter.”

Albret was in a unique position to enforce this assignment given his influence over his fellow Gascons.

In 1343 Albret was granted permission by the king that “he, by his merchants or servants, may buy 1,400 quarters of wheat or other grain within the kingdom of England, in whichever places he thinks best, and ship them to the duchy of Aquitaine, in order to provision his castles and other lands there, and to assist in the provisioning of the king’s faithful people of those parts.” Receiving grain of this amount was beneficial to a region that was experiencing food shortages. The exact details of how Albret distributed the grain are unclear but there is nothing to suggest misallocation of these resources. The goods were to be unloaded in Bordeaux as it was the most important port in the duchy. The mayor and jurats were ordered by the king to allow for this unloading and subsequent shipping to Albret’s lands.

Requests of this nature were conventional, although not always on such a large scale. A similar entry of the same year requested protection for John Godfrey, servant of John de Shoreditch, as he brings cargo from England to Gascony. Godfrey was sent “to purchase grain and other victuals for himself and his household...[he] has loaded 60 quarters of wheat, 60 quarters of oats, 40 sides of bacon and seven carcasses of beef.” As stated, these supplies were intended for Shoreditch’s household only and were considerably less than the 1,400 quarters of grain brought over by Albret. Albret’s position at the highest tier of the Gascon nobility awarded him both unique privileges and responsibilities. The king allowed him to import such a

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180 C61/53 entry 334.
181 C61/55 entry 129.
182 C61/55 entry 166.
substantial amount of grain because he knew Albret would properly distribute it and contribute beneficially to the war effort.

The following year the crown granted permission to Albret “to take victuals from Bordeaux to his castles and places, for the garrisoning and security of the same, for himself and his people, as often as it pleases them, without impediment. Albret, by certain of his servants, bought various victuals in England, and has the king's licence, to take them to Bordeaux, and from there to his castles and places.” \(^{183}\) This is clearly a continuation of the previous years’ order allowing him to purchase grain. Having gained permission to purchase the victuals he was now given permission to unload them in Bordeaux. The former order was directed to the seneschal and constable of Bordeaux, while a follow up order in June 1344 was directed to “the mayor and jurats of Bordeaux…so that Albret has no need to complain to the king again, and so that he is able to continue to serve the king.” Despite the king’s orders that Albret be permitted to retrieve his supplies, the mayor and jurats “impeded him, to his great damage and the king’s great surprise, especially since this impediment could cause the loss of castles and places.” \(^{184}\)

It is clear from multiple entries that Albret was experiencing difficulties retrieving his supplies from Bordeaux. Another related order was issued in July with more forceful language. The seneschal, Nicholas de la Beche, was given the order that if the constable, mayor, and jurats of Bordeaux continued to prevent Albret and his men “from taking his victuals and other property which he has in the city to his castles and other places for their provisioning and fortification, then he is to cause them to cease their resistance and permit the men to take the

\(^{183}\) C61/56 entry 63.
\(^{184}\) C61/56 entry 79.
victuals and property, and maintain and defend them, so that Albret has no need to complain to
the king again.” The language is similar to the previous entry except that it makes explicit
mention of the Bordelais preventing Albreț’s gathering of victuals. The continued efforts by the
Crown to ensure that Albreț received his supplies is a credit to the importance of the Gascon.
Despite his influence, Albreț still relied on the king’s authority when dealing with the Bordelais.
The lack of further mention of the incident in the rolls indicates he was finally permitted to
transport his provisions out of the city. The letters of retainder of the lord of Albreț, originally
signed by Oliver de Ingham, were posted again under the current seneschal, Nicholas de la
Beche, for “99 men-at-arms and 200 foot soldiers, who are to garrison and keep safe the king’s
borders for as long as the king wishes.” This shows the continuation of Albreț’s importance
under a new seneschal.

Henry of Lancaster’s Campaign

At the time of Henry of Lancaster’s arrival in 1345, the duchy had been reduced to the
westernmost strip of land. The town of Bergerac was located further east in a strategic position;
situated along an important roadway, it allowed for almost complete control of the Dordogne
valley to whomever controlled it. On 24 August 1345, a mere fifteen days after his arrival in
Gascony, Henry of Lancaster captured the town. It proved a vital base for his campaigning. He
stayed in Bergerac for just over two weeks before departing for Périgueux on 10 September. He
put governance of the town in the hands of Bernard and Béart d’Albreț until his return.

185 C61/56 entry 85.
186 C61/56 entry 88.
The Albret brothers were given an indenture to govern Bergerac until 9 October 1345. The indenture included several conditions the brothers had to uphold while protecting the town. A garrison of 1,200 infantry and at least 250 cavalry was to be maintained; these troops were to be inspected every eight days by one of Lancaster’s deputies. The brothers were given bows, crossbows, and siege engines to ensure the proper defense of Bergerac. In addition to defending, the troops were expected to repair damages and fortify the defenses of the town. With the assistance of the constable of Bordeaux, John Wawyn, the brother began inviting the residents of Bergerac back into their town, granting pardons when necessary. They were authorized to treat with any who wished to enter the king’s obedience. Fowler says, “These provisions indicate the importance which the earl attached to Bergerac.”

Conversely, these provisions also indicate the regard in which Bernard and Bérart d’Albret were held. Maintaining a stronghold in Bergerac was crucial for Lancaster’s first campaign in Aquitaine. From Bergerac, the towns of La Mongie, Lalinde, Laforce, Lunas, Beaumont, Montagrier, Pellegrue, and Montségur were all easily accessible, and Lancaster forced the capitulation of each one during his campaign. The support of the Gascon lords proved invaluable in this success. Lancaster brought only 2,000 men with him to Gascony, too few to sustain an extended campaign while also ensuring newly won holdings were secured. The Gascon lords – with the Albret brothers at the forefront – assisted by leading the defense of these areas. Their regional knowledge also proved to be beneficial in treating with the local peoples.

The earl of Lancaster’s first campaign was a prodigious success, amplified by the lack of progress that had been made in the duchy the previous eight years. He built upon his initial

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187 Fowler, King’s Lieutenant, 57-8.
victory by capturing La Réole a month after departing Bergerac in what “was certainly the
greatest single achievement of Lancaster’s entire military career.”\textsuperscript{188} Froissart’s assertion that a
long siege preceded the surrender was erroneous; the inhabitants of La Réole consensually
turned their town over to the English.

The burgesses and inhabitants of La Réole “who were anciently of the king’s obedience,
and have come back to it spontaneously, and wish to serve the king, and remain in his
obedience” were greatly rewarded for their submission. They were granted an exemption from
the “payment of customs due at Bordeaux from their wines produced from their…vineyards
within the honour and district of La Réole.”\textsuperscript{189} Other rewards included money to repair
fortifications in the town, dues from various taxes, and a charter for safe conduct through English
lands.\textsuperscript{190} By spring 1346 he had brought the entire Agenais and much of the Périgord back under
English control. The Albret brothers, along with Alexander de Caumont and other Gascon lords,
were entrusted with one of Lancaster’s three contingents in August 1346. Lancaster commanded
one himself and the other was commanded by lords of the Agenais, while the Albrets’ contingent
operated in the Bazadais.\textsuperscript{191} As the first stage of the war drew to a close, the situation in
Aquitaine had greatly improved from its state a decade earlier. The English had succeeded in
using the loyalty of the Gascon lords to their advantage. Without their help, the campaigns of
1345–46 would not have been possible.

\textsuperscript{188} Fowler, \textit{King’s Lieutenant}, 58.  
\textsuperscript{189} C61/59 entry 27.  
\textsuperscript{190} C61/59 entry 29, 32, 39.  
\textsuperscript{191} Fowler, \textit{King’s Lieutenant}, 67.
The royal administration was determined to regain the lands they lost in Gascony, and to achieve that they needed the support of the lord of Albret. Albret was determined to use this broader conflict between England and France to his advantage, and he believed that siding with the English would help him realize this task. They were able to work together symbiotically to accomplish these goals. Albret’s loyalty to the English did not extend past his own self-interest, but that was of little concern to the Plantagenets as long as he was able to wield his authority as king’s lieutenant and keep order in the duchy. He was a strong presence and convinced other Gascons to abandon the French. Henry of Lancaster’s ease in reconquering Aquitaine for the English king was a direct result of the framework set by the lords of Albret.
CONCLUSION

By the end of Lancaster’s lieutenancy in 1347, the borders of Gascony had grown to resemble England’s pre-Saint Sardos holdings. The role of the Gascon nobles in achieving this feat was crucial; it seemed that all the money and effort on the part of the English and ducal governments had paid off. Many of the Plantagenet hereditary lands in Aquitaine had been restored, and the English found themselves in a strong position going into the next phase of the war. Their control over Aquitaine would continue fluctuate, reaching its zenith as a principality under the Black Prince in 1360. By the end of the war a century later, Aquitaine would be firmly in the grasp of the French king. The English held on the best they could before reluctantly relinquishing control of their continental holdings.

Amid this vast conflict between kings were the Gascon nobles. Although they would eventually become fully ingratiated into the French kingdom, in the early fourteenth century they were forced to decide their loyalty between English and French. This choice was often based on self-interest, as was the case with the lords of Albret. As Andrea Ruddick wrote, “The Albret connection with the English Crown, therefore, was in the end a relatively shallow one, based on continued mutual benefit. The lords of Albret were always, first and foremost, powerful local lords in Gascony, who had little desire or incentive to become enmeshed in the social and political world of the British Isles.”192 Amanieu d’Albret defected to the French when it was savvy for him to do so, abandoning Edward II at the outset of the War of Saint Sardos. His son, Bernard, rejoined the English at the outset of the Hundred Years War. The ducal administration

\[192\] Ruddick, 81.
was struggling without the support of the powerful Gascon lords, and Albret knew that if he were able to provide that support he would be well rewarded. He was correct; he was given lands, money, and authority, and through the course of his life he was on the ‘winning’ side of the war.

It is perhaps fitting that Bernard d’Albret’s son, Arnaud Amanieu d’Albret, defected back to the French. This was again done out of opportunity; the declining health of the duke of Aquitaine, Edmund of Woodstock, resulted in a significant collapse of the ducal government. Albret saw the financial strains of the duchy and in 1368 made a secret treaty with Charles V of France giving the king his allegiance. The loyalty of the lords of Albret was fickle; above all they were Gascons, and they knew how to bargain their value as the preeminent lords in Aquitaine.

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