RICHILDE, WIFE OF THIBAUD THE OLD, VISCOUNT OF TOURS: A MARRIAGE INTENDED TO INCREASE THIBAUDIAN POWER

***by Thierry le Hête*[1]**

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Thibaud the Old, Viscount of Tours and Blois around 940, is indisputably the progenitor of the house of Blois. Among his descendants in the male line were the Counts of Champagne (1019-1305), King Stephen of England (d.1154), the Counts of Aumale and the Lords of Holderness (extinct in 1214), the Counts of Sancerre (extinct in 1419), the Lords of Sully (the youngest branches dying out at the beginning of the 17th century), and the Lords of Pontailler-sur-Saône (extinct at the end of the 17th century).

The origin of Thibaud the Old puzzled several historians writing at the turn of the 20th century, for example Lot (1907) and Depoin (1908a). The problem was to distinguish between two Thibauds, because a Thibaud, Viscount of Tours, was mentioned during seven decades between 908 and 977, and died possibly as late as 983[2] – an impossibly long active life-span. Historians such as Lesueur (1963), after extensive study, concluded that there were two Thibauds: Thibaud the Old, who certainly died *c* 942/43, and Thibaud *le Tricheur* (maybe best translated as 'the devious') who died in 977[3]. However, the subject of this note is not Thibaud the Old, but his wife Richilde (or Richildis).

What were the origins of Richilde? For a long time, historians identified her as a daughter of Robert I, King of the Franks (b. *c* 860, ruled 922-923), the grandfather of Hugues Capet. More recently, with the help of onomastics, others have advanced a more attractive hypothesis: that Richilde was a daughter of Hugues II, Count of Bourges, by his wife Rothilde, herself daughter of Charles the Bald and Richilde (see, for instance, Bur 1977, pp.151-153, following Depoin, 1908b). This affiliation has, however, been effectively demolished by Settipani (1993, p.312, note 819).

The most recent and persuasive proposition, however, is advanced by Keats-Rohan (2000)[4]. She suggests (p.65) that Richilde was a daughter of Roger/Rodgar, Count of Maine (d.900) and of the Carolingian Rothilde, Abbess of Chelles in 920 (b. *c* 871, d.928/9)[5]. This proposed affiliation is very attractive and interesting and leads me to put forward an hypothesis concerning the rise to power of the Thibaudians. In marrying Richilde, Thibaud the Old became a brother-in-law of Hugues the Great, Duke of the Franks (923-956), see Fig 1. Hugues the Great was of course the father of Hugues Capet,

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1 Thierry le Hête is the author of: *La Dynastie Capétienne (764-1998): Généalogie et Histoire.* Condé-sur-Noireau (1998); *Les Comtes Palatins de Bourgogne et leur Descendence Agnatique. Histoire et Généalogie d'une Dynastie sur Huit Siécles.* Paris (1995). With Jean Gouget he is writing another genealogical study provisionally entitled *Les comtes de Champagne et leur descendance agnatique* (due to appear in 2003).

Contact details: c/o FMG (see inside cover of this newsletter)

2 The latter date is provided by Devailly (1973, p.131).

3 These dates are contested by, among others, Le Jan (1995, p.450) and Devailly (1973).

4 See also Keats-Rohan (1997) for her table 'Suggested relationships of the Hugonide counts of Maine', p.194.

5 For Rothilde, daughter of Charles the Bald, see Settipani and Kerrebrouck (1993, p.312, in particular note 819).

Duke of the Franks, then king (987-996). The first wife of Hugues the Great – we do not know her name – was also a daughter of Roger/Rodgar, Count of Maine. It is improbable, however, that the two men were brothers-in-law at the same time, or even within a short time: around 926 Hugues the Great married as his second wife Ealdhild, daughter of Edward, King of the West Saxons and *de facto* King of England (899-924). The family link to Hugues almost certainly allowed Thibaud the Old more readily to increase his powers in the territories near the Loire, around Tours and Blois and in the Berry[6].

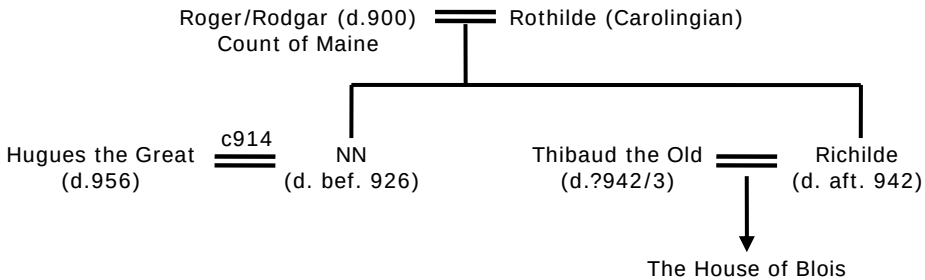


Fig 1. Family relationships of Richilde

Still unsolved is the ancestry of Thibaud the Old. We hope that other scholars will address this question in the future.

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[6] For the Berry, see in particular Devailly (1973, pp.131-133).