

**THE PRACTICES OF SUCCESSIONAL
SHARING BETWEEN BROTHERS AND
SISTERS IN THE ARISTOCRATIC FAMILIES
IN THE ROUERGUE FROM XIII^e TO XIV^e
CENTURY**

I - If male primogeniture is a successional principle known in the princely family, the legitimate juniors are excluded neither from the succession nor of the power and the daughters are abundantly endowed:

- In the family of the counts of Rodez and Armagnac, the principal share of the paternal and maternal heritages is transmitted to the elder son surviving
- The married sisters receive an important dowry and a legacy in compensation of their renunciation of the paternal and maternal heritages
- The legitimate younger brothers obtain a minor share of the succession but can hope to be associated with the power, even may obtain it, if the elder son dies without male children

II - The high nobility of Rouergue duplicates the rules of princely succession by privileging an universal heir, by preparing the juniors towards the ecclesiastical career and by seeking regional alliances for the daughters :

- In the families of barons of Rouergue and Gevaudan, the designation of a male universal heir is systematic
- Many younger brothers make successful ecclesiastical careers in the proximity of the French popes of Avignon, in particular thanks to their university formation or to their family alliances with the pontifical House
- the other juniors can be an alternative for succeeding to the barony if the elder son dies without children
- the dowries of the sisters can consist of considerable feudal estates

III - In spite of primogeniture primacy, the successional practices of lower and middle nobility of Rouergue attest of a greater sharing preoccupation:

- In the lower and middle aristocracy of Rouergue, the sharing of the heritage between brothers is more common
- According to the Roman law, the junior sons can claim a legal share in the succession.
- The joint possession may exist but :
 - One of the brothers is often designated as head of household
 - It seems only one stage before the effective sharing of the parental heritage

IV - In the class of the rich nonnobles, the successional custom of the sharing or the joint possession between brothers and sisters is recognized as a standard:

- The nonnoble feudal lords usually respect the equal sharing between brothers and sisters or lead to a system of *frèreche*
- The joint possession between brothers is practised by the enriched merchants but it can cover the greatest achievement of one of brothers
- The sisters are married in a way to maintain an equal treatment between themselves