

The Origins in XIV century

The origins

Without going up until Iberians which occupied our areas, after having crossed the Pyrenees about year 500 before Jesus-Christ and gave their name to Aquitaine, let us arrive at Jules César, Roman emperor, who charged one of his lieutenants named Crassus, to conquer our area and he succeeds there partially; certain tribes at the borders of the conquered territories, preserved their autonomy by refusing to submit themselves to the Roman invaders.

In 51 before J.C, Cesar decided to make a round of inspection through his territories and the history says to us that he happily subjected the rebel tribes , making this part of Gaul, a Roman province.

The Roman domination in Aquitaine lasted five centuries, and our area still has, among other things, the vestiges of an oppidum at Asson from where one could communicate by fires, some say, with the inhabitants of Lassun where some lived near the famous “tumulus” (stone or earthen burial mounds).

Pline, the ancient, Roman historian, died in the eruption of Vesuvius with Pompeï in 79 after Jesus-Christ, made an inventory of the tribes which populated Aquitaine, cites, among other things, that of the *Lassuni* on the subject of which, the historian Laborde thinks that they could reside in area of Asson.

One is indeed struck by the toponymic resemblances of the place names ending in the suffix *ssun, zun, ssen* etc. like Lassun, Ossun, Azun... what would corroborate the thesis of their establishment as a place of settlement former to the first millenium.

During several other centuries, Aquitaine knew the cruel invasions: Vandals, Alains, Suèves, Visigoths. It is only in 507 that Clovis and his Franks gained Veuille in battle against the latter.¹

A period of anarchy followed this victory profiting the Vascons, established in the south of the Pyrenees to devastate Novempopulanie.

In 720 the Arabs crossed our mountains, occupied the regions and were stopped in their march towards Paris only in Poitiers by Charles Martel in 732.

Until the arrival of the dukes of Gascogne, our area would still know, the consequence of the incursions of its owners, the Carolingians, a Norman invasion, the famous Vikings which, one says, went up the Gave on their long ships and ruined our cities and our country.

About the middle of the IX century a duchy was created of Gascogne formed by a great area ranging between the Pyrenees, the Ocean and the Garonne, as a prelude to a period of peace and political stability.

As one of the very first historians of Béarn tells, a chapel, probably of Romance style, was built during the *X century, under the patronage of Saint Hilaire, bishop of Poitiers, on the first site of the place of Lassun settlement*. It was surrounded by a village which, according to Marca, contained fifty houses. Certain historians claim that part of this primitive hamlet, built at the edge of the Gave, would have been carried by a flood. In the XVII century Bonnacaze adds: "*it has there in this district only 4 or 5 houses*"!

Lime and stones formed the framework of this chapel, which would make standard the use of lime fabrication, in our village, for nearly one millenium.

The miracle of Saint Hilaire

He attracted, as specifies by Pierre de Marca in his *History of Béarn*,⁴ the faithful ones by the fame of his virtues, known as miraculous. Thus Sanche Guillaumes, Count of Gascogne, *infected of a bad disease*, went to visit the place in the neighbourhood of 1010 and recovered health. His cure is moreover formally attested by the "Cartulaire de Lescar"⁶.

*It was at a place located, says Marca, deep in the Pyrenees Mounts, in a parish named, at the time, Saint Hilaire de Lassun which belonged to Centulle, Vicomte of Béarn. This opened to Sanche the grounds necessary for the construction of a monastery*⁷ the grounds then the property of Raymond Guillaume de Bénac and Arnaud Raymond de Bas.

These lines extracted from the work of the bishop of Lescar, show us clearly the will of Sanche of Gascogne to build a Benedictine abbey on the territory of the community of Lassun which then included, Saint Pée de Générés, located on the border of Béarn and Bigorre, in recognition of his recovered health, and required of the monks of Saint Sever de Rustan⁸. who had already built a monastery a few decades before, to deal with this construction.

Lassun, included in the donation of Sanche

The village of Lassun, was included in this transfer, (transfer intended to provide incomes to this foundation) with its memberships

and its chapel, became the prerogative of the abbey of Pée Saint, providing the episcopal rights.

In 1080, Centulles, leaving his legitimate wife, mother of Gaston (of Foix) stripped this possession (the abbey of Saint Pée and its memberships) with violence, Bernard, archbishop of Lescar, with the help of Pounce, bishop of Bigorre allowed him remarry.

A long quarrel between the bishop of Lescar and his successors followed from there, on the one hand, Centulle, on the other. The complaints of the first were carried forth by the pope Urbain II with the Council of Plaisance held in the year 1095, then in front of the Pope Pascal II that of Lateran (always in the presence of the bishop of Bigorre) which was held in 1110, then at the Council of Toulouse in 1124.

The bishop of Lescar addressed then Pope Honore II, then Innocent II which, both, ordered the handing-over of the possession with his profit.

In 1131, the Council of Rheims was held during which, this last (bishop of Lescar) provides witnesses intended to support his statements in the presence of Bernard, bishop of Bigorre. He wanted to prove that the place of Lassun was included within the limits of Diocese of Lescar and the country of Béarn and not a part of Bigorre.

In the presence of the bishops and Counts of Gascogne and of Bigorre, are visited the limits of the one and the other country. Marca, announces on this subject, a characteristic extremely curious relating to the sixteen witnesses produced by the bishop of Lescar. He points out that the delimitation created with the help of the count of Gascogne and the count of Bigorre had taken place at the latest in 1032, the year the count de Gascogne died. The deposition of the sixteen witnesses had taken place subsequently to the council of Toulouse in 1124.

It concludes: *“Presupposing that the witnesses had the legitimate age of 14 or 15 years, at the time of which they deposit, they would be 108 years old..., when they were presented! 16 men, all 108 years old living at the same time or the surroundings, it is a phenomenon which deserves to be announced!”*¹⁰

Among them was the chaplain of the church Saint Hilaire de Lassun, priest, monk and recommended for his virginity, named Arnaud. “

It seems that thereafter, the affair was given up by the two partys. Nevertheless until the Revolution, the abbots of Saint Pée will be regarded as Co-lords of Montaut and, for this reason, will perceive one dîme.

Some historical precise details

The Viscounts of Béarn, after having tried to play a political role between France and Aragon, were folded up themselves on Béarn after the war of the Albigensians.

Gaston VI of Moncade (death in 1290), carried out the union of Foix and Béarn, by marrying with its heiress, Marguerite, in 1257, the count de Foix, Roger Bernard III., who recognized the rule of the king of England on the country of Béarn on May 11, 1290.

He dies in 1302 and Marguerite, his widow, is in charge of the administration of Béarn and the supervision of her son, Gaston I of Foix.

Threatened on various sides of his state, he was brought to create a series of fortified villages, or bastides (Villefranche in 1292, Garlin in 1302, Montaut and Nay in 1308 etc...), which answered three objectives: clearing the uncultivated lands by the settlements, defense of the limits of its territory, and revenues from taxes.

NOTES

- 1 J.B.Laborde *Précis d'Histoire de Béam*.
- 2 Pierre de Marca *Histoire du Béam*.
- 3 Abbé Bonnecaze *Manuscrit du XVIII siècle* BMP
- 4 Marca *Op.cit. Chapitre XV page 245*.
- 5 Il s'agit de Sanche VI Guillaume duc de Gascogne de 1009 à 1032.
- 7 Marca *Op.cit.*
- 8 Saint Sever de Rustan se trouve sur le D14 entre Chelle-Debat et Villecomtal sur Arros.
- 9 Il s'agit de Centulle IV, vicomte de Béam
- 10 Marca *Op.cit.*

Chronique de Montaut

