

## Chapter 11

# THE DUKE OF AQUITAINE, 1273-94

For all that he bore an English name, Edward I was much more than an English king. His royal ancestors were by tradition buried in the Angevin abbey of Fontevrault. His mother was of Savoyard descent, and his queen was of the Castilian royal house. There was a strongly cosmopolitan character to his entourage, typified by such men as Otto de Grandson, Geoffrey de Geneville, Count Amadeus of Savoy and John of Brittany. Edward was, as his title proclaimed, duke of Aquitaine and lord of Ireland, as well as king of England. Ireland was never particularly important to Edward, who, like so many kings, never went there. Gascony, the land that was his by right of his title of duke of Aquitaine, was a very different matter.<sup>1</sup> The duchy had been very important to him in his early career. Not only had he been there in 1254-5, but he returned in the winter of 1260-1, and was there again in the following autumn. He may well have visited it again in 1262.<sup>2</sup> It was in Gascony that Edward had his first taste of political power, and it was to Gascony that Edward first directed his attention on his return from crusade in 1273, coming back to England only in 1274. He went there again from 1286 to 1289. Edward's rule in Gascony provides interesting parallels and contrasts to his policies in England, and helps to show what general principles of government may have been behind his style of rule.

Gascony was an immense contrast to England. For all that the duchy had been in English hands since the marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II, it had never experienced the same sort of centralized government that existed in England. Noble society was highly individualistic and competitive, as a result partly of a tradition of partible inheritance and of the fact that much land was not held under terms of feudal tenure. There were a few great lords, such as Gaston de Béarn or

<sup>1</sup> In the thirteenth century the terms Aquitaine, Guyenne and Gascony were effectively synonymous. The English had, by 1224, lost most of the northern part of the old duchy of Aquitaine, but the title of duke of Aquitaine was not given up. The term Gascony (*Vasconia*) was usually used to designate the territory held by the English in south-western France. See Trabut-Cussac, *L'administration anglaise en Gascogne*, xi.

<sup>2</sup> See the itinerary in J.R. Studd's thesis, 'A Catalogue of the Acts of the Lord Edward, 1254-1272'.