

Register of oaths of homage and fealty owed to the Lord of Vence for the fiefdom of Vence (Provence)

In Latin, manuscript on paper

Southern France, likely Vence, c. 1330-1340

44 folios (foliated 145 to 187 in Roman numerals), on paper (watermark close to Briquet, "Arbalète," no. 703, Italy, 1330-1340s; no. 705, Avignon/Provence, 1340s-1350s), written in a chancery cursive (highly abridged) by at least two hands, unbound (some waterstains, paper frayed). Dimensions: 230 x 305 mm.

Although a fragment, this register is precious, gathering the oaths and homages owed to members of the Villeneuve family (Barons de Vence) by inhabitants of Vence (just north east of Nice) and surrounding localities (Saint-Paul de Vence, Villeneuve-Loubet). Such registers were central to the medieval social network, confirming the local lord's power. Homage in the Middle Ages was the ceremony in which a feudal tenant or vassal pledged reverence and submission to his feudal lord, receiving in exchange the symbolic title to his new position (investiture). It was a symbolic acknowledgment to the lord that the vassal was, literally, his man (*homme*). The oath known as "fealty" implied lesser obligations than did "homage." One could swear "fealty" to many different overlords with respect to various land holdings, but "homage" could only be performed to a single "liege lord." This register contains a plethora of topographical and social information for the medieval town of Vence and also a number of earlier oaths (with dates in the thirteenth century), here renewed.

The register contains two references (perhaps more, once studied) to oaths pledged by members of the Jewish community in fourteenth-century Vence. The first passage begins: "Eodem die comparuit Leonetus judeus de Sancto Paulo...": Leonetus, a jew from SaintPaul (de Vence), pledges his oath in the name of Creyssantus, another jew from Villanova (f. 184v). Their oath is taken with their hands clasped, knees flexed, and "scriptas ebraycas osculando" (kissing Hebraic letters or texts), a form of oath that belongs to the "more judaico" (Jewish custom), proof that members of the local Jewish communities partook in social interaction with members of the Christian community. The Jewish community in Southern France has been well-studied, particularly in and around the Papal States of Avignon and Comtat Venaissin.

LITERATURE

Boyer J.-P. and T. Pécout, *La Provence et Fréjus sous la première maison d'Anjou (1246-1382)*, 2010
Iancu, D. *Être juif en Provence au temps du roi René*, Paris, 1998.

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