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Résumé

This paper deals with the problems faced by rulers who wanted to provide for their families, supporters, and friends at a time when principles regulating such gifts were still unfixed ; when no clear distinctions had been established between the private and public persons and fortunes of the ruler ; when the amount of control the individual ruler could exercise over the property he acquired at his accession had not been determined ; when the belief in the ruler's obligation not to alienate the patrimony of the kingdom was gaining in popularity but had yet to be defined as principle ; when royal donations and grants were suffering revocation and cancellation at the hands of later rulers. Focusing on early fourteenth-century France, this paper discusses the experiences of Philip V (1316-1322) and particularly the strategies he devised in attempting to insure that grants of property he made to his wife would endure after his death. These strategies were diverse, and included gaining the approval of relatives for the acts and, most remarkably, using elaborate and unusual formulae of validation to warrant the acts. Philip used them for a number of reasons : he and his predecessor Louis X had demonstrated the fragility of the royal will by modifying and revoking a number of royal acts ; to increase the kingdom's wealth and elevate his own reputation, Philip had enunciated and enforced principles restricting the king's right and undermining his ability to alienate property ; and finally, after early 1317, lacking a male heir, he found himself obliged to provide for a wife and daughters who, after his death, would lack dedicated and enthusiastic support at court. In discussing the fate of Philip V's donations, the article demonstrates the ultimate futility of the king's strategies in the face of his successor's sovereign control of the kingdom's resources, including his ability to use against Philip's heirs the same principles of inalienability Philip had used against others. It argues that as long as the ruler lacked a fixed body of resources to provide for his private needs, as long as these needs lacked clear definition, and as long as he possessed the power to dispense with law and custom, strict principles of inalienability could not be expected to be enacted or enforced in France, however great the kingdom's desire for such principles.

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