

# Prisoners of War in the Albigensian Crusade, 1209-1229

MARTÍN ALVIRA\*

Universidad Complutense de Madrid

## Abstract

The Albigensian Crusade is generally considered a brutal war because of the manner in which both sides treated the enemy, especially the prisoners. This article analyzes the causes of this apparent absence of war conventions. From the examples taken from the narrative sources, we also describe the different destinies (captivity, execution, liberation, exchange, rescue ...) that the prisoners of this war faced.

## Key Words

Prisoners of war, Albigensian Crusade, medieval warfare.

## Resumen

La Cruzada Albigense es considerada una guerra especialmente brutal debido a la dureza con la que ambos bandos trataron al enemigo, sobre todo a los prisioneros. En este artículo se analizan las causas de esta aparente ausencia de convenciones de guerra. A partir de ejemplos tomados de las fuentes narrativas,

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\* Doctor en Historia. Profesor Titular de Universidad. Departamento de Historia Medieval, Facultad de Geografía e Historia, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, C/ Profesor Aranguren, s/n, Edificio B, Ciudad Universitaria, 28040 Madrid. Correo electrónico: malvira@ghis.ucm.es

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se describen también los diferentes destinos (cautiverio, ejecución, liberación, intercambio, rescate...) a los que se enfrentaron los prisioneros de esta guerra.

### Palabras clave

Prisioneros de guerra, Cruzada Albigense, guerra medieval.

The Albigensian Crusade is generally considered as a brutal and merciless war because of the manner in which the enemy was treated, especially the prisoners of war<sup>1</sup>. The rich narrative sources describe the cruel treatment of the captured enemy and the breach of the conventions, customs and unwritten laws of medieval warfare<sup>2</sup>. However, this impression of brutality must be qualified through a closer reading these sources<sup>3</sup>. The more unobtrusive authors discussing the treatment of prisoners are the Navarrese cleric Guilhem de Tudela, author of the first

- 1 "Small honour can be awarded either side for their conduct in the war. (...) Combat erodes pity; this war was more ruthless than most", Walter L. WAKEFIELD, *Heresy, Crusade and Inquisition in Southern France, 1100-1250*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1974, p. 100; "one of the most brutal conflicts in Western Europe in the entire Middle Ages, and perhaps the most brutal of all", Sean McGLYNN, *Kill them All. Cathars and Carnage in the Albigensian Crusade*, The History Press, Stroud, 2015, p. 13. Also Mark G. PEGG, *A Most Holy War. The Albigensian Crusade and the Battle for Christendom*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2008, p. 5; Robert I. MOORE, *The War on Heresy: Faith and Power in Medieval Europe*, Profile Books, London, 2012, p. 250.
- 2 See Laurent MACÉ, "Le visage de l'infamie : mutilations et sévices infligés aux prisonniers au cours de la croisade contre les Albigeois (début du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)", *Les prisonniers de guerre dans l'Histoire. Contacts entre peuples et cultures*, Sylvie Caucanas, Rémy Cazals and Pascal Payen (dir.), Privat, Toulouse, 2003, pp. 95-105; Martín ALVIRA, "Rebeldes y herejes vencidos en las fuentes hispanas (siglos XI-XIII)", *El cuerpo derrotado. Cómo trataban musulmanes y cristianos a los enemigos vencidos en la Península Ibérica, siglos VIII-XIII*, Maribel Fierro and Francisco García Fitz (coord.), CSIC, Madrid, 2008, pp. 209-256, at 239-249; Laurence W. MARVIN, *The Occitan War. A Military and Political History of the Albigensian Crusade, 1209-1218*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2008, pp. 21-22, 73-74, 151, 153; Sean McGLYNN, *Kill them All...*, p. 11-15, 90-91, 155, 228-229, 239-240.
- 3 Discussion in Laurent MACÉ, "Le visage de l'infamie...", p. 96; Laurence W. MARVIN, *The Occitan War...*, pp. 20-22; Martín ALVIRA, "Aspects militaires de la Croisade albigeoise", *Au temps de la Croisade. Société et pouvoirs en Languedoc au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Archives Départementales de l'Aude, Carcassonne, 2010, pp. 59-72, at 70; Robert I. MOORE, *The War on Heresy...*, p. 250. On the sources, see Martin AURELL, "Les sources de la croisade albigeoise: bilan et problématiques", *La Croisade albigeoise. Colloque du Centre d'Études Cathares (Carcassonne, octobre 2002)*, Michel Roquebert (dir.), Centre d'Études Cathares, Balma, 2004, pp. 21-38; Kay WAGNER, "Les sources de l'historiographie occidentale de la croisade albigeoise entre 1209 et 1328", *ibid.*, pp. 39-54. Also *The Cathars and the Albigensian Crusade: A Sourcebook*, trans. Catherine Léglu, Rebecca Rist and Claire Taylor, Routledge, London, 2014.

part of the *Canso de la Crozada* (c. 1210-1213), who was an opponent of the heresy but nevertheless generally held the Occitan nobility in high regard<sup>4</sup>; and the Toulousain cleric Guilhem de Puèglaurenç, who wrote a *Chronica* half a century after the end of the Crusade<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, the most abundant and striking descriptions correspond to the French Cistercian Pierre des Vaux-de-Cernay (c. 1213-1218), a panegyrist of Simon de Montfort<sup>6</sup>; and the anonymous poet who wrote the continuation of the *Canso* (c. 1219/1228), a strong supporter of the Count of Toulouse<sup>7</sup>. Both wrote works that sought to mobilize support for their respective sides, and thus paid much attention to the violation of war conventions rather than to their fulfilment<sup>8</sup>.

Several factors may explain the appearance of merciless war in the Albigensian Crusade<sup>9</sup>. The first is the religious nature of this anti-

4 GUILHEM DE TUDELA, *La Chanson de la Croisade albigeoise*, 3 vols., ed. and Fr. trans. Eugène Martin-Chabot, vol. 1, Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1930; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1960; the Eng. trans. is *The Song of the Cathar Wars: A History of the Albigensian Crusade*, trans. Janet Shirley, Ashgate, Aldershot, 1996, pp. 11-65 [hereafter WT].

5 GUILHEM DE PUÈGLAURENÇ (Fr. Guillaume de Puylaurens), *Chronica*, ed. and Fr. trans. Jean Duvernoy, Périgrinateur, Paris, 1996; trans. into Eng. as *The Chronicle of William of Puylaurens. The Albigensian Crusade and its Aftermath*, trans. W. A. Sibly and M. D. Sibly, Boydell, Woodbridge, 2003 [hereafter WP]. We name the characters in the modern language of their origin (Occitans in Occitan, French in French). Toponymns are named in French.

6 PIERRE DES VAUX-DE-CERNAY, *Hystoria Albigensis*, ed. Pascal Guébin and Ernest Lyon, Honoré Champion, Paris, 1926-1939; the Eng. trans. is *The History of the Albigensian Crusade: Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay's "Historia Albigensis"*, trans. W. A. and M. D. Sibly, Boydell, Woodbridge, 1998 [hereafter PVC].

7 *La Chanson de la Croisade albigeoise*, 3 vols., ed. and Fr. trans. Eugène Martin-Chabot, vol. 2-3, Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1957, 1961; trans. into Eng. as *The Song of the Cathar Wars: A History of the Albigensian Crusade*, trans. Janet Shirley, Ashgate, Aldershot, 1996, pp. 66-194 [hereafter *Canso*].

8 On Pierre des Vaux-de-Cernay, see Christopher KURPIEWSKI, "Writing Beneath the Shadow of Heresy: The *Historia Albigensis* of Brother Pierre des Vaux-de-Cernay", *Journal of Medieval History* 31 (2005), pp. 1-27; Megan CASSIDY-WELCH, "Images of Blood in the *Historia Albigensis* of Pierre des Vaux-de-Cernay", *Journal of Religious History* 35/4 (December 2011), pp. 478-491. On the *Canso*, see Marjolaine RAGUIN, *Lorsque la poésie fait le souverain, étude sur la Chanson de la Croisade albigeoise*, Honoré Champion, Paris, 2015.

9 To compare with the Anglo-Norman and French contexts, see Matthew STRICKLAND, *War and Chivalry. The Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy, 1066-1217*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 303-304; Matthew STRICKLAND, "Killing or Clemency? Ransom, Chivalry and Changing Attitudes to Defeated Opponents in Britain and Northern France, 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries", *Krieg im Mittelalter*, Hans-Henning Kortüm (ed.), Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 2001, pp. 93-122; and Matthew STRICKLAND, "Rules of War or War Without Rules?", *Transcultural Wars from the Middle Ages to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Hans-Henning Kortüm (ed.), Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 2006, 107-140. For

heretical holy war. The Occitans who fought the crusaders were seen as heretics or fautors of heresy, that is, diabolic internal enemies of Christendom who were “*worse than the Saracens*”<sup>10</sup>. Their destiny was to be destroyed, and for that the crusader sources speak of heretics burned at the stake “*cum ingenti gaudio*” and of Occitan knights executed “*avidissime*” by pilgrims arriving from northern France<sup>11</sup>. There was no less hostility on the Occitan side. One of the great southern lords, Raimon Roger, Count of Foix, was proud to have maimed all those crusaders who had arrived to ruin him. He used to say that he considered it a service to God to kill all the crusaders with his own hands<sup>12</sup>. So the Albigensian Crusade should rather be compared with other religious wars against external enemies of Christianity, like the Eastern or Baltic crusades, or even Iberian *Reconquista*<sup>13</sup>.

The second component is the “cultural-territorial” one, which gained weight as the conflict evolved from an antiheretical war into a war of conquest. Many Occitans considered the crusaders as foreign invaders (“*la gent estranha*”<sup>14</sup>) who sought to take away their land or subjugate them. In this sense, the Albigensian Crusade was always a war between the occupiers and the occupied, a type of conflict that often leads rapidly to a spiral of violent action and retaliation, as we know from more recent experiences. But it cannot be forgotten that the Albigensian Crusade was also a civil war. Occitan society was always divided between supporters and enemies of the Crusade<sup>15</sup>. And since the conflict was long

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the Iberian Peninsula, see *El cuerpo derrotado* (2008); José Manuel CALDERÓN ORTEGA and Francisco Javier DÍAZ GONZÁLEZ, “*Vae Victis*”. *Cautivos y prisioneros en la Edad Media Hispánica*, Universidad de Alcalá, Alcalá de Henares, 2012.

- 10 “*sectatores ipsius eo quam Sarracenos securius, quo peiores sunt illis*”, Pope Innocent III’s letter to King of France Philip Augustus (March c. 10, 1208), *Die Register Innocenz’ III. 11. Pontifikatsjahr, 1208/1209*, Othmar Hageneder, Andrea Sommerlechner, Christoph Egger, Rainer Murauer, Reinhard Selinger and Herwig Weigl (ed.), Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna, 2010, n° 26 (28). Also WT, *laisse 47*, v. 17-18 (“*E tozt lo mons lor cor e-ls porta felonía. / Plus qu’a gent sarrazina*”).
- 11 PVC, §§ 154, 227, 233, 513; WP, chap. XVII. Also Robert I. MOORE, *The War on Heresy...*, p. 251.
- 12 PVC, §§ 207, 219; *Canso*, *laisse 145*, v. 16-32, 49-59 and *laisse 192*, v. 15.
- 13 See also Daniel BARAZ, *Medieval Cruelty: Changing Perceptions, Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2003, pp. 85-89; Sean McGLYNN, *Kill them All...*, p. 239.
- 14 *Canso*, *laisse 211*, v. 125.
- 15 In our opinion, it is a simplification to describe the Albigensian Crusade as “*a national war*” for the “*national survival of the southerners against the northerners*”, Sean McGLYNN, *Kill them All...*, p. 13-14, 90-91.

and fortunes fluctuated, there were numerous changes of side, which multiplied the chances of retaliation or simple vendetta by both sides<sup>16</sup>.

In this context, the feudal component contributed decisively to the increasingly harsh treatment of prisoners. The Occitan lords sympathetic to heresy were dispossessed by the Church and replaced by Simon de Montfort and other crusaders<sup>17</sup>. Those opposed to the new situation were treated as rebels and traitors. They suffered the penalties of feudal law and the customary physical punishments applied in the suppression of rebellions –mutilation of fingers, hands and feet, eye-gouging, and summary execution<sup>18</sup>. At the same time, those who agreed to serve the new lords were treated as felons by their own people. This “feudal logic” led to many massacres, numerous mutilations and frequent hangings, including those of high-born prisoners. Aimeric, Lord of Montréal, was hanged at the hands of the crusaders; Guilhem des Baux, Prince of Orange, and Baudouin de France, Count Raimon VI’s brother, at the hands of the Occitans<sup>19</sup>.

Behaviour towards the prisoners is also explained by military necessity. The crusading army fought in an increasingly hostile territory and until 1224 depended on the flow of pilgrims arriving in the south. Those fighters returned north after completing their forty-days service, so they

16 The debate over the fate of the defenders of the city of Marmande, taken by the crusaders in 1219, provides a good example of the complexity of this war, *Canso*, laisse 212, v. 50-90; Laurent MACÉ, “Le visage de l’infamie...”, p. 102. Also Laurence W. MARVIN, “The White and Black Confraternities of Toulouse and the Albigensian Crusade, 1210-1211”, *Viator* 40/1 (2009), pp. 133-150; José Manuel CALDERÓN ORTEGA and Francisco Javier DÍAZ GONZÁLEZ, “*Vae Victis*”..., pp. 96-99.

17 Christine KECK, “L’entourage de Simon de Montfort pendant la croisade albigeoise et l’établissement territorial des *crucesignati*”, *La Croisade albigeoise. Colloque du Centre d’Études Cathares (Carcassonne, octobre 2002)*, Michel Roquebert (dir.), Centre d’Études Cathares, Balma, 2004, pp. 235-243; Jean-Louis BIGET, “La dépossession des seigneurs méridionaux : modalités, limites, portée”, *ibid.*, pp. 261-299.

18 Laurent MACÉ, “Le visage de l’infamie...”, pp. 96-97; *Canso*, laisse 169, v. 1-3; WT, laisse 71, v. 10. Also Matthew STRICKLAND, *War and Chivalry...*, pp. 202, 222-224, 232, 240-247, 320-323; José Manuel CALDERÓN ORTEGA and Francisco Javier DÍAZ GONZÁLEZ, “*Vae Victis*”..., pp. 81-88.

19 PVC, §§ 135, 136, 141, 218, 227, 250, 291, 316, 326, 337, 500, 527, 569, 594, 620; WT, laisse 68, v. 1-25, 31-36, laisse 71, v. 5-15, laisse 110, v. 18-19, laisse 116, v. 4-6; *Canso*, laisse 161, v. 85-88, laisse 169, v. 1-3, laisse 180, v. 29-32, laisse 211, v. 180; WP, chap. XVI, XXII, XXXI; Laurence W. MARVIN, *The Occitan War...*, pp. 104-105; *Canso*, p. 99 n. 4. Also Laurent MACÉ, “De Bruniquel à Lolmie : la singulière fortune de Baudouin de France et de Guillem de Tudèle au début de la croisade albigeoise”, *Bulletin de la Société Archéologique et Historique de Tarn-et-Garonne*, 126 (2001), pp. 13-23, at 16-17.

were frequently outnumbered by their Occitans rivals<sup>20</sup>. This military context favoured the application of strategies of terror to captured enemies –humiliating cuts to the eyes, nose and lips, brutal executions, mutilation of corpses. The crusaders used these to paralyze and subdue the Occitans, and they in turn used the same methods to force the withdrawal of the “*peregrini*” or discourage their recruitment<sup>21</sup>. In terms of the operations, fighting in the field provided some of the prisoners, as at the battles of Muret (1213) and Baziège (1219)<sup>22</sup>. The more customary sieges provided more captives<sup>23</sup>. To counter the military superiority of the crusaders, the Occitan troops from the outset practiced guerrilla warfare (ambushes, surprise attacks, capture through treachery) which proved a constant source of prisoners<sup>24</sup>.

- 20 See Laurence W. MARVIN, “Thirty-Nine Days and Wake-up: The Impact of the Indulgence and Forty Days Service on the Albigensian Crusade, 1209-1218”, *The Historian* 65/1 (2002), pp. 75-94; Laurence W. MARVIN, *The Occitan War...*, p. 85. On military reasons for violence, see also Sean McGLYNN, *Kill them All...*, p. 13-14, 69-72.
- 21 *Canso*, laisse 145, v. 16-32, 49-59; Laurent MACÉ, “Le visage de l’infamie”..., 96-97, 104-105. For an example of a mutilated crusader (“*ceco, manuum altera in partibus Albigensium mutilato*”), see Daniel POWER, “Who Went on the Albigensian Crusade?”, *English Historical Review* 128/534 (2013), pp. 1.047-1.085, at 1.068. Also José Manuel CALDERÓN ORTEGA and Francisco Javier DÍAZ GONZÁLEZ, “*Vae Victis*”..., pp. 93-96.
- 22 PVC, § 189; *Canso*, laisse 205, v. 161; Martín ALVIRA, *El Jueves de Muret. 12 de Septiembre de 1213*, Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona, 2002, at 322-381; Martín ALVIRA, *Muret 1213. La batalla decisiva de la Cruzada contra los Cátaros*, Ariel, Barcelona, 2008, at 164-201; Michel ROQUEBERT, *L’Épopée cathare*, 2<sup>nd</sup> éd., 2 vols., Perrin-Privat, Paris-Toulouse, 2001, vol. 1, pp. 1.135-1.140; Charles PEYTAUVIE, “La bataille oubliée. La bataille de Baziège (printemps 1219)”, *Les grandes batailles méridionales (1209-1271)*, Laurent Albaret and Nicolas Gouzy (ed.), Privat, Toulouse, 2005, pp. 125-136; Laurence W. MARVIN, *The Occitan War...*, pp. 299-300; Martín ALVIRA, “Aspects militaires...”, pp. 65-66.
- 23 Jean-Claude HÉLAS, “Attaque et défense des châteaux et des villes fortifiées à partir des trois principales sources de la croisade des Albigeois”, *Warfare in the Middle Ages. Actes du VI<sup>e</sup> Colloque international d’histoire des armes et de l’armement (Malbork, 5-7 novembre 1998)*. *Acta Archaeologica Lodziensia* 47 (2001), pp. 51-60; Laurence W. MARVIN, “War in the South: A First Look at Siege Warfare in the Albigensian Crusade, 1209-1218”, *War in History* 8 (2001), pp. 373-395; Francesco ZAMBON, “Descrizioni di assedi nella *Canzone della crociata albigese* di Guilhem de Tudela”, *Medioevo Romanzo* 30/1 (2006), pp. 24-37; Laurence W. MARVIN, *The Occitan War...*, pp. 78, 86, 146; Martín ALVIRA, “Aspects militaires...”, pp. 66-68; Josep SUNÉ ARCE, “Técnicas de asedio y defensa de los asedios del siglo XIII: ámbito catalano-aragonés y occitano”, *Gladius* 33 (2013), pp. 113-130; Martín ALVIRA, “Le Siège de Beaucaire et les grands sièges de la croisade contre les Albigeois”, *Le Siège de Beaucaire, 1216. Pouvoir, société et culture dans le Midi rhodanien*, Monique Bourin (dir), Privat, Toulouse (forthcoming).
- 24 WT, laisse 32, laisse 33, v. 1-4, laisse 38, v. 15-23, laisse 40, 12-25, laisse 41, v. 23-37, laisse 114, v. 2-3; WP, chap. XIV, XXI, XXII, XXIX, XXXI, XXXVIII; *Canso*, laisse 211, v. 180; PVC, §§ 124, 296, 304, 361, 390, 432, 495-497. Also Laurence W. MARVIN, *The Occitan War...*, pp. 12-13; Martín ALVIRA, “Aspects militaires...”, p. 69.



A final component of the brutality was sociological. Different socio-military groups participated and their behaviour varied. There were lords and knights who knew the “laws of arms” of chivalry, but also an increasing number of stipendiary troops. Both sides used “*routiers*” (Oc. “*roters*”), that is, mercenaries who did not respect the use of chivalric warfare and whom the Church equated with heretics<sup>25</sup>. Because of this they were systematically executed after they fell prisoner. There were also a very large number of troops who were considered by the knights to be inferior and contemptible (footsoldiers, archers, crossbowmen) and “civilian” combatants (poor pilgrims, burghers, militias). This favoured excesses and hindered the implementation of measures to limit violence against prisoners, even on those occasions when it had been agreed by the barons and knights (siege of Le Pujol, 1213; siege of Marmande, 1219)<sup>26</sup>.

Overall, the narrative sources of the Albigensian Crusade offer an impression of great cruelty in the treatment of the captured enemy. There is talk of the mass mutilation of prisoners, knights taken by surprise, killed and quartered, or dragged by the tails of horses and hanged; also prisoners stoned or thrown into the Garonne with mill wheels around their necks, or thrown from the wall below<sup>27</sup>. In late 1211, many Occitans believed the rumour that Simon de Montfort, after being taken prisoner, had been flayed and hanged, which proves the expected level of violence that could be applied to prisoners of war, even among members of the highest social and military rank<sup>28</sup>.

Nevertheless, the same sources allow us to know that war conventions existed and were used. The crusaders Lambert de Thury and Wal-

25 Linda M. PATERSON, *The World of Troubadours. Medieval Occitan Society, c. 1100-1300*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 42-44, 57-61; Laurence W. MARVIN, *The Occitan War...*, p. 18-19; Martín ALVIRA, “Aspects militaires...”, p. 61. Also Matthew STRICKLAND, *War and Chivalry...*, pp. 291-329.

26 PVC, §§ 434-435; WP, chap. XIX; *Canso*, laisse 136, v. 13-14, laisse 212, v. 90-104. See Linda M. PATERSON, *The World of Troubadours...*, pp. 48-57; Jean-Louis BIGET, “La croisade albigeoise et les villes”, *La guerre et la ville à travers les âges. Cycle de conférences du Centre d’études d’histoire et de la défense, CEHD*, Paris, 1999, pp. 90-96, at 78-79. Also Matthew STRICKLAND, *War and Chivalry...*, pp. 176-182. On the peasantry, see Laurent MACÉ, “*Homes senes armas : les paysans face à la guerre*”, *La Croisade albigeoise. Colloque du Centre d’Études Cathares (Carcassonne, octobre 2002)*, Michel Roquebert (dir.), Centre d’Études Cathares, Balma, 2004, pp. 245-257.

27 WT, laisse 19, v. 3-5, laisse 121, v. 27-28; PVC, §§ 216, 282, 343, 349, 434-435, 582, 606 C; *Canso*, laisse 184, v. 68-69, laisse 190, v. 80-83; WP, chap. XXXI.

28 PVC, § 278.

ter Langton told the monk-chronicler Pierre des Vaux-de-Cernay how they surrendered to a cousin of the Count of Foix in mid-1211. They demanded that their captor would fulfil five conditions: he should not kill or mutilate them; he should keep them in a decent prison; he should not separate them; he should ask a reasonable ransom for them; and he should not entrust them to another. And to seal the deal, they shook hands<sup>29</sup>. In the end, however, these crusaders were delivered to the Count of Foix, who treated them harshly<sup>30</sup>. The promise under oath and asylum in a church were other customs openly violated by the Occitans, according to Pierre des Vaux-de-Cernay<sup>31</sup>. Thus, conventions existed, but were often broken, possibly because a heretical and rebellious enemy, or indeed a foreign invader and usurper, was undeserving of respect<sup>32</sup>.

Sources close to the crusaders also report cases of men who preferred to die rather than surrender, as the French Geoffroy de Neauphle, in 1211, who shouted at those who urged him to surrender: *"I have given myself to Christ. Far be it from me to give myself to His enemies"*<sup>33</sup>. Cases like this reveal the attitude of a knight faced with captivity; his fear of dishonour and his panic of physical harm<sup>34</sup>. The Occitan knighthood shared the same values and the same fears: "Better an honest death than be taken prisoner" is an idea that is repeated several times in the continuation of the *Canso*<sup>35</sup>.

29 PVC, § 248. Also WP, chap. XXVI, XXX; Michel ROQUEBERT, *L'Épopée cathare...*, vol. 1, pp. 424-425; John GILLINGHAM, "Surrender in Medieval Europe: An Indirect Approach", *How Fighting Ends. A History of Surrender*, Holger Afflerbach and Hew Strachan (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012, pp. 55-72, at 56-57.

30 PVC, § 248.

31 PVC, §§ 125, 127, 206, 248, 497, 499; *Canso*, laisse 209, v. 119-124, laisse 210, v. 5.

32 Laurent MACÉ, "Le visage de l'infamie...", p. 100, n. 20. Also Sean MCGLYNN, *Kill them All...*, p. 133-134.

33 "*Christo*", inquit, "*me reddidi. Absit ut Ejus me reddam inimicis*", PVC, §§ 284, 123; also WP, chap. XXXII.

34 Laurent MACÉ, "Le visage de l'infamie...", pp. 96-97.

35 *Canso*, laisse 166, v. 66-67 ("*Mais val muiram encemble al fer e al acier / Que no fai vida aonida ni siam preizonier!*"), 69 ("*Que mais val mortz ondrada qu'estar en caitivier*"); laisse 159, v. 42 ("*Perque-ns val mais la mortz no que-ns aia estiers*"), 53-54 ("*Que si-l coms nos pot pendre, datz es nostre loguers, / Car sel er plus astruc que sera mortz primers*"), laisse 172, v. 64 ("*Car mais val mort ondrada que remandre en preizo!*"), laisse 195, v. 64 ("*Que mais val mortz ondrada que aunida preizos!*"); also PVC, §§ 123, 284, 179, 248.



Fear of death and captivity usually meant that surrender was the result of negotiation<sup>36</sup>. In August 1209, Viscount Raimon Roger Trencavel was taken prisoner by the crusaders in exchange for the lives of the people of Carcassonne<sup>37</sup>. In the spring of 1211, the Toulousain garrison of Les Cassès surrendered after delivering the heretics who took refuge in the *castrum*<sup>38</sup>. In the summer of 1212, Simon de Montfort offered freedom to the defenders of Biron in exchange for the chief of the *routiers* Martin Algai, who had betrayed him at the battle of Saint-Martin-la-Lande. This famous Navarrese mercenary was dragged by the tail of a horse and hanged<sup>39</sup>. And in September of that same year, the burghers of Moissac agreed to surrender in return for handing over to Montfort 300 *routiers* and other Occitan fighters who had defended the place, who were then summarily executed<sup>40</sup>.

But death was not the only end for the prisoners of this war. The treatment of prisoners depended, in the first instance, on their potential usefulness. When the inhabitants of Castres rebelled and captured the crusader sergeants of the castle, they did not cause them harm, because Montfort was holding the principal burghers of the place as hostages<sup>41</sup>. And when Baudouin de France, Count Raimon VI's "French" brother, was taken prisoner, he was taken to Montcuq to order the surrender of the garrison, and then he was held without food or water so that he would free a *routier* who was a captive of the crusaders<sup>42</sup>. The narrative sources of this crusade, however, never talk about the mistreatment of prisoners in order to obtain information.

As for living conditions, the sources are not very detailed. They talk about the detention of prisoners in towers of urban fortresses (the viscomtal castle of Carcassonne, the *Castel Narbonès* of Toulouse), town houses and especially in prisons (Oc. "*carcere*", "*preizo*"), although there is little detailed description<sup>43</sup>. There are repeated mentions of prison-

36 Laurent MACÉ, "Le visage de l'infamie...", p. 96.

37 WT, laisse 32, laisse 33, v. 1-4, laisse 38, v. 15-23, laisse 40, v. 12-25; PVC, § 124; WP, chap. XIV.

38 PVC, § 233.

39 PVC, § 337.

40 PVC, § 353; WT, laisse 124, v. 1-5.

41 PVC, §§ 132, 316; WT, laisse 65.

42 PVC, §§ 498-499; Laurent MACÉ, "De Bruniquel à Lolmie...", pp. 21, 23.

43 See Matthew STRICKLAND, *War and Chivalry...*, pp. 196-203. For Medieval Iberia, José Manuel CALDERÓN ORTEGA and Francisco Javier DÍAZ GONZÁLEZ, "*Vae Victis*"..., pp. 127-136.

ers in irons (“fers”) or wearing chains (“cathenas”, “boias”)<sup>44</sup>. The poet Guilhem de Tudela allows us to know a little of the captivity of the French crusader Bouchard de Marly in the *castrum* of Cabaret. When his captor, the Occitan Lord Pèire Roger of Cabaret, decided to release him, he sent for a blacksmith to loose the irons that held him, ordered his hair to be cut and for him to be given and a bath, and he gave him some good clothes<sup>45</sup>. There is little data on the normal duration of captivity, though obviously this was highly variable<sup>46</sup>. Baudouin de France was imprisoned for a few days before his execution at Montauban<sup>47</sup>. Bouchard de Marly spent 16 months locked up in Cabaret. And the Occitan Lord Raimon de Termes died in a tower of Carcassonne three years after his capture<sup>48</sup>.

Although the attitude towards prisoners varied considerably, sources are more detailed in describing their abuse. Thus, although Guilhem de Tudela says the Viscount Raimon Roger Trencavel was well treated by Simon de Montfort during his imprisonment in Carcassonne, it was soon rumoured that he had been killed<sup>49</sup>. The immediate maltreatment on capture is described more in the case of the actions of townspeople (Saint-Antonin, Moissac) rather than combatants<sup>50</sup>. The second part of the *Canso* recounts in some detail the threats and humiliations (exposure to the elements, beatings, insults, chaining, separation from families) which the burghers of Toulouse suffered when taken hostage by Simon de Montfort in 1216<sup>51</sup>. These abuses were intended to accelerate compliance with the requirements of the crusaders, a reasoning that was customary when collecting ransom<sup>52</sup>. Perhaps for this reason the

44 PVC, §§ 133, 220, 248, 316, 361, 381 500, 585, 595; WT, laisse 63, v. 18, laisse 114, v. 2-3, *Canso*, laisse 172, v. 64, laisse 174, v. 66, laisse 177, v. 59, 72-73, laisse 179, v. 10; WP, chap. XIX, XXI, XXIX.

45 WT, laisse 63, v. 17-24, laisse 64, v. 1-5.

46 For the Iberian context, see José Manuel CALDERÓN ORTEGA and Francisco Javier DÍAZ GONZÁLEZ, “*Vae Victis*”..., pp. 144-156.

47 WP, chap. XXII.

48 PVC, §§ 123, 189, 220, 248, 284, 316; WP, chap. XXII.

49 WT, laisse 32, laisse 33, v. 1-4, laisse 38, v. 15-23, laisse 40, v. 12-25; PVC, § 124; WP, chap. XIV.

50 WT, laisse 113, v. 8-11, laisse 117, v. 33-34.

51 *Canso*, laisse 173, v. 51-56, laisse 177, v. 6-8, 69-78, laisse 178, v. 22-31, laisse 179, v. 7-13. Also Adam KOSTO, *Hostages in the Middle Ages*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2012, pp. 47, 79, 210.

52 Laurent MACÉ, “Le visage de l’infamie...”, p. 98; Matthew STRICKLAND, *War and Chivalry*..., p. 197; Jean FLORI, “Guerre et chevalerie au Moyen Age”, *Cahiers de*

Count of Foix held Lambert de Thury and Walter Langton in chains, casting them into such a narrow jail that they were unable to stand or lie down, and in which there was no light except a candle at the time of eating and a tiny hole where they received food<sup>53</sup>. The French crusader Foucaud of Berzy, as the chronicler Guilhem de Puèglaurenc knew from eyewitnesses, executed any prisoner of war (“*captus de guerra*”) who could not pay him 100 “*solidi*” and tortured them through hunger in an underground cave<sup>54</sup>. This economic element can also be observed during the great siege of Toulouse (1217-1218): when the defenders captured a crusader, they hung a bag around his neck and with him tied up they went through the streets of the city, inviting their neighbours to throw money in the bag so they could thus profit from his capture<sup>55</sup>.

The mutilation of prisoners, besides its feudal justification, also had practical goals: to humiliate the enemy, incapacitate him militarily, to terrorize him and test his moral<sup>56</sup>. The Occitan Lord Giraud de Pepius (Fr. Pépieux) disfigured two crusaders those whom he sent naked in the heart of winter to Carcassonne, the headquarters of the Crusade. In response, Simon de Montfort blinded and cut the noses off a hundred defenders of the *castrum* of Bram, leaving one of them one-eyed in order to guide the rest to the *castrum* of Cabaret, the main focus of Occitan resistance<sup>57</sup>. In 1210, while the crusaders were besieging Termes, the Occitans roamed the territory in order to capture them and sent them to Montfort’s army after having gouged out their eyes and cut off their noses or other members<sup>58</sup>. During the sieges of Moissac (1212) and Beaucaire (1216), the Occitans killed and mutilated several prisoners, firing body parts from catapults in order “*to terrify and outrage*” the crusaders<sup>59</sup>.

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*civilisation médiévale*, 41 (1998), pp. 353-363, at 358-359; José Manuel CALDERÓN ORTEGA and Francisco Javier DÍAZ GONZÁLEZ, “*Vae Victis*”..., pp. 117-118.

53 PVC, § 248; Matthew STRICKLAND, *War and Chivalry*..., pp. 198-201.

54 WP, chap. XXXI.

55 PVC, § 606 C.

56 Laurent MACÉ, “Le visage de l’infamie...”, pp. 101-102; Laurence W. MARVIN, *The Occitan War*..., pp. 21-22, 73-74, 151, 153; Martín ALVIRA, “*Matadlos a todos*... Terror y miedo en la Cruzada contra los Albigenses”, *Por política, terror social*, Flocel Sabaté (ed.), Pagès, Lleida, 2013, pp. 115-135; Sean McGLYNN, *Kill them All*..., pp. 95, 182, 205, 212-213, 228-229, 239.

57 PVC, §§ 127, 142. Pepius (Fr. Pépieux).

58 PVC, § 173.

59 PVC, §§ 343, 582 (“*ut ita terrerent et irritarent obsessos nostros*”); *Canso*, laisse 121, v. 27-28.

The long, hard siege of Toulouse by Simon de Montfort (1217-1218) saw systematic atrocities against the captured crusaders captured and their Toulousain “collaborators”<sup>60</sup>. Sometimes, the mutilation of the corpse was surrounded with rejoicing. In late 1219, Raimon the Younger, son of Count Raimon VI, captured the brothers Foucaud and Jean de Berzy, who were notorious for their cruelty, and entered Toulouse with their heads fixed on spears<sup>61</sup>. The practice of mutilating the enemy appears to have lasted until the end of the war. According the English chronicler Roger of Wendover, in May of 1228 Count Raymond VII of Toulouse captured 500 French knights and 2,000 sergeants at Castelsarrasin. Surely as an act of revenge for of the massacre at the *castrum* of Labécède, committed by the king’s officer, Humbert de Beaujeu, the French sergeants were stripped naked, their eyes gouged out, their noses and ears cut off and their hands and feet amputated; “*after thus shamefully mutilating them, he sent them to their homes, a deformed spectacle to their fellow Frenchmen*”<sup>62</sup>.

Other maltreatment of prisoners described by the sources does not always correspond to any practical motive. Foucaud de Berzy dragged his prisoners around half-dead and threw them on a dunghill, and once he hanged two prisoners, father and son, forcing the father to hang the son first<sup>63</sup>. And Pierre des Vaux-de-Cernay heard tell from one of the crusaders who was captured by the son of the Count of Foix, Roger Bernart, that he was accustomed to torture his captives daily, especially the priests and religious, tying ropes to their genitals and having them dragged around<sup>64</sup>.

On the treatment of women prisoners, sources say little. We know that the collective burning of heretics and massacres of populations always included women. The best known case is the chatelaine of Lavaur, *Na Girauda*, Lord Aimeric de Montréal’s sister, who was thrown into a

60 PVC, § 606 C.

61 WP, chap. XXXI.

62 “*et sic turpiter mutilatos ad propria remittens deforme spectaculum Francigenis exstiterunt*”, ROGER OF WENDOVER, *Chronica sive Flores historiarum*, ed. Henry O. Coxe, 5 vols., Sumptibus Societatis, London, 1841-1844, vol. 4, pp. 169-170; Sean McGLYNN, *A hierro y fuego. Las atrocidades de la guerra en la Edad Media*, Span. trans., Crítica, Barcelona, 2009, p. 228. See Roquebert, *L’Épopée cathare*, vol. 1, pp. 1.342, 1.344, 1.349-1.350, citing MATTHEW PARIS, *Chronica Majora*, ed. Henry R. Luard, Logman & Co., London, 1876, vol. 3, p. 156.

63 WP, chap. XXXI.

64 PVC, §§ 126, 361.

pit and covered with stones after the *castrum* was taken by Simon de Montfort in spring 1211. Guilhem de Tudela learned from a witness that a French knight then intervened to free other women<sup>65</sup>. Later in 1227, during the siege of the *castrum* of Labécède, the bishop of Toulouse also tried to save the women and children from dying at the hands of the troops of the seneschal of the King of France<sup>66</sup>.

The best result a prisoner of war could hope for was obviously redemption. The sources mention few cases of release by force of arms. According to Guilhem de Tudela, the French crusader Guillaume de Contres freed several prisoners near Montauban after defeating a great number of Occitan *routiers*<sup>67</sup>. In 1213, Amaury de Montfort, son of Simon, negotiated with the garrison of Roquefort for the release of 60 captives whom they had imprisoned<sup>68</sup>. Neither do we find examples of flight except in the case of the garrison of Castres, where a crusading knight and several sergeants, who were imprisoned by the burghers in a tower, escaped at night by making a rope with their own clothes and clambering down through a window<sup>69</sup>.

More surprising are the scarce references to ransoming, especially when one considers the length of the Albigensian war and the richness of its narrative sources. It is evident that the practice existed. Guilhem de Puèglaurenç knew that some of the prisoners captured at the battle of Muret redeemed themselves in this way<sup>70</sup>. The same author, writing about the treaties of Meaux-Paris that ended the Crusade, said that any one of the conditions imposed by the French King and accepted by Count Raimon VII of Toulouse in 1229 would have sufficed as a ransom if he might have fallen his prisoner in pitched battle<sup>71</sup>. But the specific cases mentioned by the sources are few and far between. Bertran de Tolosa, youngest son of Count Raimon VI, was released by the crusaders after the payment of a ransom of 1,000 “*solidi*” and all his military equipment<sup>72</sup>. The burghers of Moissac had to pay a ransom of more than 100 gold marks when the city

65 PVC, § 227; WT, laisse 68, v. 20-23, laisse 71, v. 11-15; WP, chap. XVI.

66 WP, chap. XXXV.

67 WT, laisse 127, v. 29-30.

68 PVC, § 443.

69 PVC, § 133. Also *Canso*, laisse 173, v. 51-56; PVC, § 235.

70 WP, chap. XXI.

71 WP, chap. XXXVII.

72 WT, laisse 78, v. 10-14.

surrendered to the crusaders<sup>73</sup>. And the oft-mentioned Lambert de Thury and Walter Langton were also released by the Count of Foix in exchange for a sizeable ransom (“*multa peccunia*”)<sup>74</sup>. This sparse number of sources concerning ransoming may have been related to the special conditions of the Albigensian Crusade<sup>75</sup>. The crusaders fought heretics and traitors, which made conventional ransoming practices difficult. From a political-military perspective, the goal was the repression of the rebels, so often they were not interested in ransoming their captured enemies<sup>76</sup>. To this could be added the apparent failure of either side to honour their commitments (we recall that ransom was accustomed to derive from a pact made at the time of capture)<sup>77</sup>. In the case of the Occitans, many of their prisoners were temporary crusaders, which surely made it difficult to obtain a ransom for them. In military terms, Occitans and Crusaders seem to have preferred the incapacitation or destruction of their enemies. And remember that many of the combatants on both sides (*routiers*, poor pilgrims, militias, footsoldiers, burghers) were outside the ransom system for religious or socio-economic reasons<sup>78</sup>. In this sense, the small presence of ransoming in the sources of this war could be related to the high levels of violence applied to prisoners, to the extent that its denial meant an increase in physical abuse, torture and death for captives<sup>79</sup>.

As is the case with ransoming, it cannot be coincidence that virtually no sources speak of persons or institutions responsible for releasing prisoners. Only Pierre des Vaux-de-Cernay says (once) that the bishops of Orléans and Auxerre, having joined the army of Simon de Montfort in 1213, gave blessings to the troops and redeemed captives (“*redimebant captivos*”). It is the only news of ransomers found in the three narrative sources of the Albigensian Crusade<sup>80</sup>.

73 WT, *laisse* 124, v. 5.

74 PVC, § 248.

75 Rescue practice was usually associated with the lack of booty, the desire for profit, and vassalic family obligations, and the desire for self-preservation of the chivalric group, Matthew STRICKLAND, *War and Chivalry...*, pp. 136, 183-187, 194; John GILLINGHAM, “Surrender...”, pp. 68-70; José Manuel CALDERÓN ORTEGA and Francisco Javier DÍAZ GONZÁLEZ, “*Vae Victis*”..., pp. 153-163, at 158-161.

76 Besides the Viscount Raimon Roger Trencavel, Raimon de Termes, a rebellious vassal captured by Simon de Montfort, died in prison.

77 Matthew STRICKLAND, *War and Chivalry...*, p. 187.

78 John GILLINGHAM, “Surrender...”, pp. 60, 69.

79 Matthew STRICKLAND, *War and Chivalry...*, pp. 199-201.

80 PVC, § 423. Also *Canso*, *laisse* 212, v. 88-89; WP, chap. XXI, XXXVII.



The exchange of prisoners, however, appears to have been a more common practice. In mid-1211, Simon de Montfort left alive three knights from a castle near Pamiers in order to exchange them with Lambert de Thury and Walter Langton<sup>81</sup>. The father of the terrifying Giraud de Pepius was captured in the *castrum* of Les Touelles and exchanged for the French crusader Dreux de Compans<sup>82</sup>. In 1218, the Occitan Espanels proposed to Bernart de Comminges the capture alive of the crusader Jori in order to liberate the Occitan Roger d'Aspels<sup>83</sup>. And in the battle of Baziège (1219), the Occitans captured Foucaud de Berzy, Jean de Berzy and Thibaud de Nonneville, who would later be exchanged for the Count of Astarac and other knights<sup>84</sup>.

The liberation of captives could also serve purely political reasons. In 1214, on the eve of the Aquitaine offensive of King John, Simon de Montfort freed the sergeants who had defended La Réole, surely in order not to alienate the English monarch<sup>85</sup>. In certain circumstances, the release a prisoner could become an act of calculated chivalric generosity. This is the case (discussed above) of the Occitan Lord Pèire Roger de Cabaret. When he learned that Simon de Montfort concentrated a large crusader army in Carcassonne in March 1211, he decided to voluntarily release Bouchard de Marly. After cleaning him up and setting him free, made him homage for his person and for his *castrum* on the promise that he would intercede for him before Montfort and that count would deliver other lands in exchange. The gesture of Pèire Roger, releasing his prisoner solely on his word, was praised by the crusaders as a “*gran proeza e granda cortezia*” (“noble deed... act of courtesy”). “*There’s not a baron in France (...) who could have done this*”, they said, and both Bouchard de Marly and Simon de Montfort met their commitments<sup>86</sup>.

Well, a final chivalrous gesture to sweeten this contribution, so that it cannot altogether be said that the Albigensian Crusade was a war “beyond the realms of chivalry”, as John Gillingham write of the wars in

81 PVC, § 250; Laurent MACÉ, “Le visage de l’infamie...”, p. 107.

82 PVC, § 291; also *Canso*, laisse 176, v. 6-8.

83 *Canso*, laisse 209, v. 49-50.

84 *Canso*, laisse 211, v. 172-173, laisse 212, v. 3, 50-90; WP, chap. XXIX, XXX.

85 PVC, § 518

86 “*No a baro en Fransa (...) / Que l’agues comenseia*”, WT, laisse 63-65, v. 20-22; PVC, § 214.

Ireland and Wales seen by the English and French observers of the 12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>87</sup>. But the question that Malcolm Barber asked some years ago –was the Albigensian Crusade a war like any other?<sup>88</sup>– has yet to receive a full response, also concerning prisoners of war.

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87 John GILLINGHAM, “The Treatment of the Defeated, c. 950-1350: Historiography and the State of Research”, *La conducción de la guerra en la Edad Media* (forthcoming), p. 17.

88 Malcolm BARBER, “The Albigensian Crusades: Wars Like Any Other?”, *Dei Gesta per Francos* : études sur les croisades dédiées à Jean Richard, Michel Balard, David Z. Kedar and John Riley-Smith (ed.), Ashgate, Aldershot, 2001, pp. 45-55.