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**W. A. Sibly and M. D. Sibly, Eds.,** *The Chronicle of William of Puylaurens. The Albigensian Crusade and its Aftermath.* Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2003. xxxvi + 162 pp. Maps, figures, notes, appendices, bibliography and index. \$75.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 0-85115-925-7.

Review by Elaine Graham-Leigh, Independent Scholar.

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William of Puylaurens' chronicle, as the author says himself in his introduction, is an account of seventy years' struggle against heresy in Languedoc. It begins with the arrival of the papal legate Pierre de Castelnau in the area in 1203, encompasses the Albigensian crusade (1209–29) and its aftermath, and finally ends in 1275. While Languedoc in the twelfth century saw little production of narrative history, the Albigensian crusade produced a number of accounts, such as Peter of Les Vaux-de-Cernay's *Historia Albigensis* and William of Tudela's *Chanson de la Croisade Albigeoise*. William of Puylaurens, writing in the 1270s, was part of a new tradition of historical writing in Languedoc that included both pro-crusade accounts like his own and anti-crusade writing, such as the anonymous continuation of the *Chanson* [1] or the anonymous *History of the Albigensian Crusade*. [2] The authors of these accounts tended to be much more closely focused on the period of the crusade itself than was William, whose passages on such diverse subjects as the marital problems of the twelfth-century counts of Toulouse and the rebellion of Gerald, Count of Armagnac, and Roger Bernard, Count of Foix, against the French Crown in 1272 have made his work a valuable resource for scholars not only of heresy but of the political and social history of the area that became the south of France.

The definitive modern edition of William of Puylaurens' chronicle has hitherto been Jean Duvernoy's 1976 facing page edition in Latin and French, reissued in 1996. [3] Thus, Sibly and Sibly's edition is not only the first English translation of this important work, but also the first new edition for almost thirty years. Any English edition of William of Puylaurens' chronicle would have been welcome, but Sibly and Sibly have achieved an accurate, careful yet fluent translation in an impressively scholarly edition, replete with copious notes on the translation, text, and historical background.

One of the many advantages of an English translation of any medieval work is its availability to students. Sibly and Sibly's edition will provide an excellent introduction not only to William of Puylaurens but also to the Albigensian crusade in general. The three-page bibliographical note at the end of the introduction is a clear summary of the most important secondary works in English on the crusade, heresy, and Languedoc. The appendices, containing translations of letters from the papal legates to Pope Innocent III about the crusade, correspondence of Philip Augustus and Louis VIII, and excerpts from the Treaty of Paris (among others), will also be particularly useful for the undergraduate reader and provide the only English translation of much of this material. However, while the introduction offers an ideal starting place for students of the crusade, it has perhaps less to offer as an addition to the debates on William of Puylaurens. As Sibly and Sibly state, their summary of William's life is based on that given by Duvernoy and supplemented by Yves Dossat's earlier articles on his career. [4] This would not necessarily be problematic, but for the fact that William of Puylaurens is a shadowy figure whose portrayals by Duvernoy and Dossat are by no means entirely convincing.

The author of the chronicle is anonymous in the text, and the work is attributed to a William of Puylaurens on the basis of an incipit added to the earliest surviving manuscript. The problem for scholars has been in locating the correct William of Puylaurens. Both Duvernoy and Dossat agree that the author of the chronicle was the master William who was rector of the church of Puylaurens in the 1230s and 1240s, a notary to successive bishops of Toulouse who also worked with the Toulouse Inquisition. Sibly and Sibly follow this identification and agree with Duvernoy's argument that the same master William was also chaplain to Raymond VII, Count of Toulouse. Dossat, however, felt that the William of the Inquisition and the chronicle was too anti-crusade to be a credible chaplain for the son of the count of Toulouse, and argued instead that the chaplain was someone else with the same name.

A study of the sketchy details of the author's life contained in the chronicle indicates that there are considerable difficulties--unaddressed by Sibly and Sibly--with Duvernoy's and Dossat's identification of master William, rector of Puylaurens, as the chronicler. The chronicle was probably composed in 1275/1276 when master William, born before 1200, would have been in his late seventies. While it is perfectly possible for master William to have lived to this age, it is an unlikely age for an apparently first-time author to have begun such an ambitious and complex work. References in the documentary record to master William, who was hitherto active in episcopal and Inquisition circles, cease in 1254, after which there is no mention of a William connected with Puylaurens for almost twenty years. In 1273, a master William of Puylaurens reappears as a witness for an Aimery de Rouaix in a case against royal authorities. It seems just as reasonable to argue that master William, rector of Puylaurens, died in the mid- to late 1250s, and that the author of the chronicle was the William of Puylaurens who appears active at Toulouse in the 1270s. There is no detail in the chronicle that indicates that the author was definitely born before c. 1215. The author refers to himself as having spoken personally to Bishop Fulk of Toulouse and having met Bishop William Peire of Albi, but does not state how old he was at the time. Bishop Fulk died in 1231 and William Peire in 1230, and it is entirely possible that the author encountered them while being attached to the bishop's household at a young age, perhaps receiving the "thorough and privileged education in Church circles" with which Sibly and Sibly credit him (p. xxi).

William of Puylaurens was an admirer of Peter of Les Vaux-de-Cernay's work on the Albigensian crusade. It is clear that he used Peter's passages as the source for many details in his own work, for example, the comment that the sack of Béziers by the crusaders in 1209 was divine vengeance for the murder of the Viscount Raymond Trencavel in the cathedral of Béziers some thirty years before.[5] Peter based the authority of his work on the statement that everything he described he had either seen with his own eyes or heard from reliable witnesses. William of Puylaurens prefaced his work with a similar statement that he would only relate "those things which I have either seen or heard of have heard from those close to the events or have gathered from other writings left for posterity," and was at pains to imply that he was more reliant on the former than the latter.[6] He did his best to suggest personal connections with the events he described, even when, as with St. Bernard's preaching in Toulouse in 1145 or Henry of Marcy's attack on Lavaur in 1178, this was outside the bounds of possibility.

In sympathy with William's aims, Sibly and Sibly also present his work as an essentially contemporary account of the crusade. In their preface, the editors characterise their edition of the chronicle as a companion volume to their 1998 edition of Peter of Les Vaux-de-Cernay's *Historia Albigensis* (also published by Boydell Press) [7] and as the completion of a general project on the sources for the Albigensian crusade, commenting that along with the translation of the *Chanson* by Janet Shirley (published in 1996), [8] "the three main narrative sources for the Albigensian crusade are now available in full in English versions" (p.vii). This assertion is based on the view that William of Puylaurens was born before 1200 and was therefore an adult witness to the beginning of the Albigensian crusade as well as to its later years, but it is the one fault of this otherwise excellent and timely edition that the editors did not take the opportunity to reconsider the debate around William's identity. William of Puylaurens's chronicle is often regarded as an also-ran, a second-rate account of the crusade compared to the more detailed works of Peter of Les Vaux-de-Cernay and William of Tudela. A reassessment of William's identity--far from denigrating his work further--would enable scholars to see the chronicle in a new light: as a unique and valuable eyewitness account of the crusade's aftermath.

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## NOTES

[1] Eugène Martin-Chabot, ed. and trans., *La Chanson de la Croisade Albigeoise: Le poème de l'auteur anonyme*, vols. 2-3 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1957-1961).

[2] Martin Bouquet, ed., *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, new edition by Léopold Deslisle and Michel-Jean-Joseph Brial, 19 vols. (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1869-80), vol.19, pp. 114-90.

[3] Guillaume de Puylaurens, *Chronique*, ed. and trans. Jean Duvernoy (Paris: CNRS, 1976); new edition (Toulouse: Pérégrinateur, 1996).

[4] Yves Dossat, "Le Chroniquer Guillaume de Puylaurens était-il chapelain de Raymond VII ou notaire de l'Inquisition toulousaine?" *Annales du Midi* 65 (1953):345-57; and "A propos du chroniqueur Guillaume de Puylaurens," in *Actes du XXIIe congrès de la Fédération des Sociétés académiques et savantes Languedoc-Pyrénées-Gascogne*, (1967), pp. 47-52.

[5] Duvernoy, p. 66.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 28; translation my own.

[7] Petrus Sarnensis, *The History of the Albigensian Crusade*, trans. W. A. and M. D. Sibly (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 1998).

[8] Guillaume de Tudèle, *The Song of the Cathar Wars: A History of the Albigensian Crusade*, trans. Janet Shirley (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1996).

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