

Olivier de Termes and the Occitan Nobility in the Thirteenth Century

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Olivier de Termes, a thirteenth century nobleman whose lands lay chiefly in that part of Languedoc bounded on the north and west by the River Aude, on the east by the Mediterranean and on the south by the Pyrenees, pursued a markedly varied career as a result of the political and religious transformation of Southern France which began during his lifetime. He altered his political allegiance, strengthened his commitment to orthodox religion and diverted his military skills from the rebellions of his homeland to the campaigns in the East, thereby earning fame and importance, unattainable under other circumstances, in Languedoc and further afield. Although Olivier was a man of exceptional talents, his case reflects - albeit in part - the experience of his peers. It is the purpose of this paper to examine the causes and consequences of Olivier's changing fortunes and to compare and contrast his career with the progress of the Occitan baronage.

Between the second and fifth decades of the thirteenth century, Olivier de Termes was gradually forced to acknowledge that his region would be absorbed into the kingdom of France - a process not complete until 1285, ten years after Olivier's death. Step by step, he yielded to the northern power, each stage marked by temporary personal submission - until the last - and the surrender of valuable or strategically important property. In between these acts of conciliation, Olivier vigorously upheld the cause of Occitan freedom on behalf of his lord, the Viscount of Béziers and Carcassonne, and his overlord, the Count of Toulouse. Only when their hopes were finally dashed did Olivier address himself, with similar energy, to the service of the victor, the King of France.

The first link in the chain of events which led to Olivier's crucial change of loyalty was the Albigensian Crusade of 1209-1229. Olivier's childhood passed in an area notorious as a breeding-ground for the dualist heresy, Catharism, which had spread rapidly throughout Languedoc since the mid-twelfth century. The papacy had condemned the Cathars through its councils and bulls and had sent preachers to undermine their appeal, but ultimately found force the only resort against the heretics

and their sympathizers, among whom were many Occitan magnates, including Raymond-Roger Trencavel, Viscount of Béziers and Carcassonne, and his vassal, Raymond de Termes, Olivier's father.

Raymond de Termes, a hardy southern patriot, had married a lady named Ermessende of the de Coursavine family and was in possession of the castle and lordship of Termes which lay to the south of Carcassonne. He may have owned more besides, for his son Olivier is known to have enjoyed numerous holdings in Languedoc, but the full extent of Raymond's estates remains obscure.

Before the crusade was many years old, Raymond-Roger Trencavel and Raymond de Termes had lost their possessions and their lives, Trencavel's titles going, in accordance with Pope Innocent III's theory of ecclesiastical forfeiture,¹ to Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, crusader and royal tenant-in-chief from the Ile de France, and Raymond's castle and lordship of Termes to Alain de Roucy, one of de Montfort's associates. Such confiscations marked the beginning of political change in Languedoc. De Montfort eventually acquired the lands of Raymond VI, Count of Toulouse, and, in 1216, did homage both for them and the Trencavel domains to Philippe II, whose influence over Languedoc at this time was purely theoretical, but it was not until after the deaths of de Montfort and Philippe in 1218 and 1223 that the Crown became directly involved.

Sixteen years after Raymond de Termes' surrender to the French, his sons Olivier and Bernard, now old enough to participate in the continuing conflict, yielded in their turn to a foreigner, not after a siege, but at the outset of a new campaign of a totally different character to the previous French incursions, and not to papal delegates, but to the deputy of the King of France, Marshal Gui de Lévis, whose family was typical of those northern dynasties which had displaced the southern nobility from certain fiefs. Louis VIII was ready, as his father Philippe II had not been, to intervene personally in Languedoc affairs. As overlord, at least in theory, it was for him to disentangle the rival claims of the new generation, de Montfort's son Amaury, the Count of Toulouse's son Raymond VII and the son of the late Raymond-Roger, Viscount of Béziers and Carcassonne, Raymond Trencavel. Louis was also aware that the problem of heresy in Occitania might not be satisfactorily solved unless he asserted his authority in the region, lending secular might to the struggling ecclesiastical powers. His claim to feudal suzerainty in the south confirmed by Pope Honorius III, the rights of Raymond VII and Raymond Trencavel dismissed and the de Montfort interest eliminated by Amaury's withdrawal, Louis assembled an impressive force - though not nearly so impressive as chroniclers later described - in the spring of 1226.

Apprehension seized Languedoc as he marched south: Louis on an earlier expedition of 1219 had had no scruples about ordering a horrific massacre at Marmande. Many *seigneurs*, the boldest resistance fighters and town consuls rushed to submit, their letters couched in the most obsequious terms. Even while the city of Avignon, besieged in June and not surrendering until 9 September, defied the royal troops and the Count of Toulouse's soldiers ploughed up pastures which might have nourished French warhorses, individuals, including Olivier and Bernard de Termes, flocked to make their peace with Louis. The brothers had evidently regained the confiscated family lands at Termes, perhaps after de Roucy's death in 1219, for '*eo tempore, quo dominus Ludovicus rex bone memorie venit apud Avinionem, et eandem terram recipimus in commenda a vobis G. de Levis mareschalco ex parte ipsius domini regis,*' as they stated in a later act of submission of 1228.²

Their submission was merely a ploy. Encouraged by Louis VIII's death on his northward journey in November 1226 the Occitan barons rallied once more behind the Counts of Toulouse and Foix and continued the reconquest of southern towns which had begun in 1216. Yet within two years many, including the de Termes brothers, were kneeling abjectly again before the royal commissioners. The soldiers of Humbert de Beaujeu, Constable of France, entrusted by Queen-Regent Blanche and Louis IX with the task of subduing Languedoc, had wrought such terrible destruction in the fields and vineyards around Toulouse in the summer of 1227 that the southern magnates feared for their property. On 21 November 1228 Olivier and Bernard handed over both the fortress and the lands at Termes to the Archbishop of Narbonne, the Bishop of Carcassonne and Marshal Gui de Lévis, swearing '*quod semper erimus fideles domino regi Franchorum et heredibus suis et adjuutores sui contra suos et Sancte Ecclesie inimicos*'³

Defections like these were among the factors which induced the Count of Toulouse, before Christmas 1228, to signify his willingness to do homage to Louis IX and to agree to the stringent conditions laid down in the Treaty of Meaux in the following year, which ended the crusade. By the terms of this agreement, the Crown gained sole title to the Trencavel lands and certain territories belonging to the Count of Toulouse as well as the possibility, as yet unforeseen, of acquiring the remainder of the count's properties through the marriage of Jeanne, his sole heiress, to one of Louis' brothers, Alphonse, Count of Poitiers. Henceforward, the Crown was committed to completing the conquest of the south.

Olivier de Termes' third and final step in the direction of permanent subjection to French rule was occasioned by the failure of Raymond Trencavel to recover his patrimony and the collapse of Raymond VII's

schemes and ambitions. In 1224, as part of their revenge against the French, the Counts of Toulouse and Foix had restored Raymond Trencavel to his father's domains. Two years later, the viscount was hustled unceremoniously out of Carcassonne by his own consuls and citizens before the arrival of Louis VIII. His lord's departure induced Olivier to offer his services to the Count of Toulouse, whom many regarded as the only saviour of Languedoc. According to Guillaume de Puylaurens the count placed him, his future seneschal, Pons de Villeneuve, and others in charge of Labécède in the Lauragais, a recently recaptured town: '*Ipsa quoque tempore turcatur castrum quod dicitur Beceta ... in quo comes Tholosanus posuerat munitionem viros strenuos Poncium de Villanova et Olivarius (sic!) de Terminis et alios bellatores.*' Humbert de Beaujeu retook Labécède in 1227 '*et militibus et peditibus nocte fugientibus non paucis.*'⁴

Olivier's next deed for the count was the kidnapping, with a gang of *faidits*, of the traitor Jordan de Cabaret, who died in Raymond VII's custody in 1228, and whose treachery consisted of protecting his family property by flinging himself on the mercy of Louis IX's deputies.⁵ Other *seigneurs*, including Olivier, as has already been noted, later followed Jordan's lead, their sheer numbers protecting them from the count's fury. In 1229, having appeased the sovereign lord fate had wished upon him, Olivier retreated to Quéribus, the southern mountain fastness he held jointly with the *faidit* Chabert de Barbair, which did not fall into royal hands until 1255. In this part of Languedoc he was still his own master and could once more adopt a defiant posture.

By way of compensation for the losses and humiliation of 1229, and with the encouragement of the emperor, Frederick II, the Count of Toulouse decided to seize the County of Provence and succeeded in acquiring the *ville-basse* or *vicomté* of Marseilles on 7 November 1230; Olivier de Termes was a signatory to the burgesses' donation.⁶ Despite agreeing to Louis IX's arbitration, Raymond VII besieged Arles in the summer of 1240 and laid waste all the Camargue until Pope Gregory IX intervened. Olivier was among the count's distinguished allies during this campaign,⁷ but left it to join Raymond Trencavel's ill-fated enterprise, presumably with Raymond VII's permission, although the count subsequently remained aloof.

After his flight from Carcassonne in 1226, Raymond Trencavel had taken refuge at the court of one of his feudal overlords, the King of Aragon, and had acquitted himself honourably during Jaime I's campaigns against the Moors but, not content with these exploits, in

1240 he mustered a band of Aragonese and Catalan mercenaries and returned to Languedoc to reclaim lands now owned by the French Crown. Guillaume de Puylaurens describes the initial success of the venture: *'Eodemque tempore Trencavallus filius quondam vicecomitis, adherentibus sibi magnatibus Olivario de Terminis et Bernardo de Ortalibus et Bernardo Hugonis de Serra-Longa et Bernardo de Villanova et Hugone de Romengos nepote eius et Jordano de Saxiaco, invasit terram domini regis in Narbonensi et Carcassonensi dyocesibus et multa castra conversa sunt ad eum, Mons Regalis, Mons Olivus, Saxiacum, Limosum, Asilianum, Lauranum, et quotquot voluit in illo impetu et tremore.*⁸ The writer correctly places Olivier at the head of the viscount's supporters; his control over the unsundered forts of the Corbières was of the utmost value to Trencavel. Heartened by their easy conquest of the Razès, Carcassès and Minervois - districts infamous for their support of Catharism and consequent aversion to royal rule - they besieged Carcassonne, but, on the appearance of the royal chamberlain, Jean de Beaumont, with a French army, were forced to flee to Montréal. After the intercession of the Counts of Toulouse and Foix, the rebels were allowed to go free with their horses and arms. Trencavel returned to Aragon. By the end of the year, the areas which had so eagerly succumbed to him had been recovered almost in entirety for the Crown. Important strategic footholds on the Roussillon border, to which region there was still a royal claim, were seized for Louis IX, including Olivier de Termes' fortress of Aguilar, which he yielded in May 1241 with an assurance of fidelity which he had no intention of keeping.

Meanwhile, despite a renewed oath of loyalty in 1241, the Count of Toulouse continued to conspire. Anxious for a male heir to prevent the Count and Countess of Poitiers from inheriting his reduced domains, Raymond VII's choice of a new wife eventually lit on the daughter of Hugues de Lusignan, Count of La Marche. Together with Henry III of England, Hugues was involved in a league against the King of France, a league which the Count of Toulouse joined at the urging of the Count of Foix and Raymond Trencavel, who at this time seems to have ventured once more from his Aragonese retreat. During the summer of 1242, even though Louis IX quelled the rebellious Poitevin barons and trounced the armies of the Count of La Marche and the King of England, the Count of Toulouse, aided by Olivier de Termes and his other Occitan allies, recovered the Razès, Termenès and Minervois with no more ado than Raymond Trencavel had in 1240, and received the city of Narbonne from its lord, Viscount Aimery. On 8 August 1242, re-

suming his old titles of Duke of Narbonne and Marquis of Provence, removed in 1229, Raymond VII conferred his protection on the citizens, appointing Olivier as one of the two guarantors of his peace.⁹

However, Louis IX's successes in the north and the capitulation in October 1242 of Raymond VII's staunchest ally, the Count of Foix, whose county became, after the Treaty of Lorris in January 1243, a direct dependency of the Crown, together with the return to Languedoc of Humbert de Beaujeu, brought the Count of Toulouse's adventure to a swift and ignominious conclusion. At Lorris, Raymond VII swore to observe the conditions of 1229, notably the provision that his vassals take an oath directly to the king. The count was a spent force; it seemed unlikely that a male heir would ever materialize and distinctly possible that his lands would pass to his daughter and son-in-law. Thus, it may be imagined, reasoned men like Olivier: Guillaume de Nangis, author of the *Gesta Ludovici IX*, wrote that henceforward the French barons quit conspiring against Louis because God was so manifestly on the king's side.¹⁰

In 1243, Louis obtained written pledges of good behaviour from Raymond Trencavel,¹¹ but the latter did not make his final peace with the king until 1247, when he renounced his titles, received a royal pension and consented to accompany Louis on the forthcoming crusade to the Holy Land, a project dear to the monarch who, after a severe illness, had made his crusading vow in 1244. Trencavel's vassal, Olivier, did not renew his submission of 1241 until 1246, but in that year his acceptance of Louis' sovereignty and all that it implied was final. The chief concomitant of surrender was the undertaking, for which sureties were required, to serve his earthly and heavenly sovereigns in the Holy Land. Louis' modest requirements, generous financial assistance and offer of a safe-conduct betray his anxiety to remove this proven troublemaker from the realm: 'Super iis que nobis significavistis, de Olivario de Terminis,' Louis wrote in February 1247 to the Seneschal of Carcassonne, 'quod paratus est pro servitio Dei et nostro crucem accipere et in Terre Sancte subsidium proficisci, scietis quod nos istud gratum gerimus et acceptum, vobis mandatis quatinus, receptis ab ipso securitatibus, prout vobis alias dedimus in mandatis, dicatis eidem quod assumpto vivifice crucis signo, preparet tali modo, quod se quintum militum possit illic venire et sibi provideat ad opus nostrum de XX balestariis bonis et bene paratis ad denarios nostros pro servitio predicto. Scietis quod hoc idem Oliverio per litteras nostras mandamus.'¹² The king wrote again, restricting the number of knights to four and smoothing Olivier's path to his side before embarkation: 'Et ut ipsius parcat labori, placet nobis, quod ad nos venire differat usque

prope terminum motus nostri, quando propius in ejus partibus nos poterat invenire. Si tamen citius ad nos venire voluerit, placet nobis. Unde vobis mandamus quatinus, si ipse citius venire voluerit, vos eidem salvum conductum prebeat. ¹³

As a lesser consequence of bowing to royal supremacy, Olivier was obliged to settle various outstanding matters. He granted permission to the nobles assigned revenues from his lands to enjoy them without hindrance, cleared up some unspecified business between himself and Raymond de Niort, who belonged to a rival aristocratic clan in the *pays de Sault*, and delivered to a former Seneschal of Carcassonne, in accordance with an old promise, goods stolen from merchants in St-Antonin by his knight Pons d'Airoux. ¹⁴ Having made amends for past misdemeanours, Olivier was able to sail to Cyprus in August 1248 with, in King Louis' view, a chance to prove himself a worthier and more Christian gentleman of France.

Olivier ended his career on good terms with the Roman Church: his background, however, was tainted with heresy and anti-clericalism and, before taking his crusading vow, he had offended the orthodox religious establishment in a number of ways. Indeed, on 21 July 1242, during the Count of Toulouse's revolt, he had been excommunicated by the Archbishop of Narbonne. ¹⁵

Thanks to the tolerance of petty aristocrats like Olivier's father, Raymond de Termes, described by Pierre des Vaux de Cernay in his *Historia Albigensium* as 'senex versus in reprobum et manifestus haereticus', ¹⁶ Catharism flourished in Languedoc. As elsewhere in the countryside, there was a vigorous community of heretics at Termes and, like other noble families, the de Termes had kinsfolk in the sect, notably Benoît de Termes, Cathar Bishop of the Razès, and the mother of Guillaume de Roquefort, another prominent Trencavel vassal. Although it was reported at the time of the Albigensian Crusade that Mass had not been said in the castle chapel for thirty years, spiritual matters were so far from being a cause of contention within the family that the wish of Raymond's kinswoman Rixende to become a Roman nun in 1208 was not denied. Temporal matters, though, were different. The de Termes' antipathy towards the Roman Church was one which only truly manifested itself in issues of territory and influence - hence, for example, their attack on the Benedictine Abbey of Lagrasse, a rival in the locality. ¹⁷

Despite des Vaux de Cernay's assertion, Raymond de Termes was no Cathar; he merely sympathized with the heretics or perhaps was indifferent to questions of belief. Olivier's attitude was doubtless similar; what passionately concerned him was the liberty of Languedoc, and when this was threatened by the persecution of the Cathars, he

naturally fought beside the more ardent defenders of Catharism. Consequently he was to be found sharing the command, during the winter of 1226–1227, of the garrison of Labécède, an infamous stronghold of heresy which was sheltering an important Cathar heresiarch: 'heretici vero Geraldus de Mota, dyaconus eorum, et alii eius socii flammis ignium sunt consumpti,' Guillaume de Puylaurens wrote of the aftermath of the French capture of the town.¹⁸ While in retreat at Quéribus in 1229, Olivier and Chabert de Barbaira welcomed to safety the Cathar Bishop of the Razès, Olivier's kinsman Benôit de Termes, in flight from the prospect of the repressive measures embodied in the Treaty of Meaux. When Viscount Raymond Trencavel and his supporters fell back on Montréal in 1240, they revealed the refuge of the Cathar Bishop of Carcassonne, Pierre Polhan, and his associates, who were led to freedom before the surrender to Jean de Beaumont by the *faidit* knight Pierre de Mazerolles, a follower of Raymond Trencavel and, later with Olivier, an ally of the discontented burgesses of Narbonne.¹⁹

Despite the promise Olivier made to Louis IX in 1228 to aid him against the enemies of Church and State, he continued to oppose both powers. Between 1234 and 1237, he was involved in civil unrest in Narbonne, which commenced between the *bourg* and the Archbishop of Narbonne over the conduct of Brother Ferrier, the latter's inquisitor, deepened with the archbishop's interdict and attempt to control the suburb at the expense of its consulate and focussed on the animosity which developed between the *cité* and the *bourg* when Ferrier's investigations were restricted to the latter. Ultimately it was the two communities' struggle to maintain their privileges which proved the chief issue, settled by the intervention of the royal seneschal. Olivier came to the *bourg's* assistance against the representatives of Church and State in 1234, in which year the archbishop proclaimed to the burgesses: 'Mandamus quod jurent, quod non habebunt amicitiam vel familiaritatem de cetero cum inimicis pacis et fidei, et specialiter demandent homines burgi incontinentiam et amicitiam sive treugas XX dierum, quas habent cum O. de Termino et fautoribus suis.'²⁰ He aided the burgesses again in the following year, when the Inquisition resumed in the *bourg* and bitter fighting broke out between it and the *cité*. He and his associates are named in a document relating to the extension of the truce between the two localities on 30 July 1236: 'omnes valitores nostros Olivarum videlicet de Terme, Geraldum de Aniorio, Guillelmum de Ruffeforti et Raimundum de Duroforti et Petrum de Mazerolles et Arnaldum Feda, cum omnibus sociis eorundem ...'²¹

'Famosi raptores impugnatores fidei et regni,' Archbishop Pierre Amiel dubbed these heroes in his letter of 31 July to Louis IX, sent, as he supposed, by the Count of Toulouse to wreck the *cit *.²² The count had stepped in at the *bourg's* request in June, when the religious and lay powers had decided to set their case before the Seneschal of Carcassone, and had established a bailiwick, which he had entrusted to Olivier and Geraud de Niort.²³ The office only had a brief existence; the conflict was brought to an end in 1237.

Olivier certainly countenanced, if he was not directly implicated in, the destruction of clerical lives and property before his 'conversion'. He may have been present when the burgesses set ablaze the Dominican Convent at Narbonne in 1235 and, five years later, was surely in the vicinity when, before abandoning the siege of Carcassonne, the followers of Raymond Trencavel set fire to 'pluribus locis Burgum', including the Convent of the Friars Minors and the domestic quarters of the canons of Notre Dame de l'Abbaye. Prior to this, according to Guillaume de Puylaurens: 'Multi autem clerici, qui erant in Burgo, ad ecclesiam confugerunt. Quibus cum de eundo versus Narbonam data esset licentia, et promissa securitas per suum principem sub sigilli sui testimonio, viri mente corrupti, reprobi circa fidem exeuntibus occurrerunt, et eos prodionaliter occiderunt XXXa et plures numero prope portum.'²⁴ The author means that the clerics were murdered despite the viscount's safe-conduct, but whether by persons in his employ or townspeople is not clear.

It was the final defeat of the Count of Toulouse, last hope of the southern patriots, which caused Olivier to alter his stance *vis- -vis* the Roman Church. He had no alternative, for just as the Cathar cause was identified with that of Languedoc, so the Catholic faith marched in step with King Louis. His name remained linked with heresy and insurrection; an important proviso was attached to the king's charter of restoration of the family lands in the Termen s to Olivier and his men in July 1250: 'quod si aliqui ipsorum de heresi habeantur suspecti vel aliquod enorme factum commiserint, nullum eis restitutionem fieri volumus de terris predictis.'²⁵

But Olivier stood by his renewed commitment and, in November 1257, made a will which provided for his interment in the Cistercian Abbey of Fontfroide, should he die there. His choice of executors and their advisers clearly indicates the extent of his rehabilitation - only one name, that of Raymond de Serre-Longue, whose kindred had been involved in the viscount's uprising, recalls the past. The others were the Archbishop of Narbonne, the Seneschal of Carcassonne, the Abbot

of Fontfroide and the Prior of the Dominican Convent of Narbonne, all former foes.²⁶ How aptly did the late Elie Griffe write of Olivier that 'Sa fidélité à l'Eglise a été éclatante dans la suite.'²⁷

Louis IX did not regret the effort made to secure the loyalty of the former rebel *seigneur*. In contrast to the dashing but foolhardy French nobles - typified by Robert of Artois, the king's brother, who had allowed himself and his men to be trapped and killed in the narrow streets of Mansourah in 1250 - Olivier proved to be a prudent and cunning commander, skilled in deceptive manoeuvres and ways of destroying enemy morale. He had learned these guerilla-style tricks of warfare during the Albigensian Crusade, the wars of Raymond Trencavel and the Count of Toulouse and the private quarrels of the southern aristocracy. His reputation as a hardy warrior dates back, as far as can be ascertained, to the defence of Labécède in 1226-1227. During the assault on the *cité* of Carcassonne in 1240, his cleverness frustrated the royalists. On 13 October, Seneschal Guillaume des Ormes wrote to Queen Blanche: 'Postea Oliverus de Terminis, B. Hugo de Serra-Longa, G. de Aniorio et qui cum ipsis erant logerunt se inter cornu civitatis et aquam; et ibi ipsa die, cum fossatis que ibi erant et viis quas fregerunt inter nos et ipsos, se clauserunt, ne ad ipsos venire possemus.'²⁸

Olivier was awarded some responsibility at Damietta in November 1249, as Matthew Paris relates in his *Chronica Majora*: 'Relinquebantur autem ad custodiam Damiatæ dux Burgundiae, qui praeerat militiae et populo ibidem derelicta et Oliverus de Termes, pugnator egregius et guerrator, qui praeerat balestariis et ruptoribus.'²⁹ In July 1250, after his arrival at Acre, Louis IX announced his decision to remain in the Holy Land and to take into his personal service all who would remain with him. Olivier was among those who stayed while the king's brothers and other magnates returned to France. This must have earned him Louis' esteem, for the king's commitment to the Holy Land and sense of obligation to the prisoners still in Muslim hands was deep. Louis' letters after the disastrous Egyptian campaign of 1249-1250 reveal his gratitude for the staunch support of Olivier and his Occitan company. The baron was given an important role in the daily administration of army affairs. In December 1252, Louis confirmed Olivier's settlement of a dispute, in which the latter had been arbitrator, between on the one hand, the Count of Poitiers' knights and, on the other, Brother Nicolas de Val-Dieu, a Hospitaller, and Robert de Giroles, a royal knight, over an arrangement for compensation for horses lost in battle, and Olivier's decision in a separate case concerning the repayment of a loan made by de Val-Dieu and de Giroles to the same knights and some of the Count of Poitiers' crossbowmen.³⁰

Olivier was always conscious of the importance of preserving, not only his own life,³¹ but those of the men campaigning with him, preferring a judicious retreat to glorious death in order to prolong his and their usefulness to the commander-in-chief. This was especially vital in the chronically undermanned Crusader States. Jean de Joinville, crusader-author of the *Histoire de St-Louis*, had cause to be grateful to Olivier for this instinct. In 1253, Louis launched a raid on Banyas in revenge for the sack of Sidon by the Damascene army. Joinville was caught on the hill he was defending between the city and Subeibah Castle. Olivier came to his aid. 'Je vous deliverai sanz perdre,' he promised Joinville. 'Je vous dirai, fit-il,' the historian wrote later, 'comment nous eschaperons; nous en iron, fit-il, tout ce pendant, ainsi comme nous devion aler vers Damas, et les Sarrazins qui la sont, cuideront que nous les veillons prenre par darieres, et quant nous serons en ces plainnes, nous ferons des esperons entour la cite, et avons passe le ru que il puissent venir vers nous, et si leur ferons grant dommage: car nous leur metrons le feu en ses formens batus qui sont enmi ces chans.' The French obeyed his instructions - 'et ainsi nous ramena Dieu a sauveté par le conseil Olivier de Termes.'³²

Olivier's prowess in the Holy Land resulted in repeated journeys there on behalf of the Crown. He went there a second time in September 1264, possibly taking part in the raids which reached as far as Baisan. During his third expedition, which commenced in 1267, he was made commander, after Seneschal Geoffroi de Sargines' death, of the French forces. His old caution and wiliness were seen to be in operation again in 1269. Olivier and the new seneschal, Robert de Creseques, were returning from a raid to Acre when they found Sultan Baybars' troops menacing the depleted city garrison. Olivier advised slipping unobserved through the orchards to its aid but the seneschal insisted on a confrontation. He led the French straight into an ambush. Olivier won through, but few others were so fortunate.³³

Learning in 1270 that Louis had set sail for Tunis, Olivier joined him there with good news, as Guillaume de Nangis relates: 'Die Martis subsequentis veniens Oliverus de Terminis ex partibus transmarinis, nunciavit regem Siciliae in portu paratas naves ascendisse. De quo multo gavisi Oliverum cum magno gaudio susceperunt.'³⁴ The attack on the Emir's forces was contingent upon the arrival of Louis' brother, King Charles of Sicily. The rejoicing, however, was curtailed when disease swept the royal camp and Louis died on 25 August. Charles quickly concluded a peace treaty and Louis' heir, Philippe III, returned to France, having agreed with the other leaders of the campaign - except Prince Edward of England - to postpone another crusade for three years.

Coincidentally or not, in April 1273 Philippe despatched Olivier with twenty-five knights and one hundred crossbowmen to the Holy Land again, where he remained until his death on 12 August 1275.

Olivier had returned home from his first voyage to Outremer at the end of 1255, delayed, as Joinville relates,³⁵ by his refusal to remain aboard the royal ship which had run aground off Cyprus in late April 1254. In his absence Quéribus, long a refuge for heretics, had been appropriated by the Crown. Olivier evidently accepted the situation, aware of his castle's military importance - it looked towards Aragon and of the king's determination to dislodge the Cathars from their last hiding-places. Louis still regarded Olivier with favour; in November 1254, four months after his return from the crusade, he instructed the Seneschal of Carcassonne to make good harm done to the property of Olivier's nephew, Guillaume de Canet, by Geraud de Niort and B. Servian, in whose custody Guillaume had been placed, and to confer his protection on both uncle and nephew. Thus it was with impunity that, on his homecoming, Olivier made war on a number of neighbouring barons and took some of them prisoner.³⁶

Between 1209 and 1255, Olivier's estates had apparently diminished little in size or value. The fortresses of Termes, Aguilar and Quéribus were no longer his, but in July 1250, at Acre, out of gratitude for Olivier's diligence and fidelity, King Louis had restored lands worth 250 *livres tournois* in the Termenès, excluding those already granted elsewhere, and the castle of Aguilar.³⁷ Olivier was fortunate in possessing a relatively unscathed patrimony but much troubled by debts and demands for compensation. In his will of 1257, he arranged for the settlement of liabilities incurred before 1247 and during - despite royal assistance - the crusade. All the revenues from his lands, except those reserved for his heir, were assigned for this purpose for twenty years after his death, and the king, to whom he had bequeathed Aguilar, was to pay 20,000-30,000 *sols tournois* to his executors to the same end. As it happened, Olivier enjoyed nearly two more decades of life after signing his will and evidently satisfied his creditors and victims by selling off portions of his estates, chiefly to the Crown, royal vassals and various ecclesiastical bodies. Unfortunately, the difficulties attendant upon the different currencies involved in these transactions and absence of information as to the precise extent of his debts and the exact value of the reserved returns renders judgement impossible as to how far the profits went towards covering the amount owed.

Motivated as much by self-interest as benevolence - for a tax was due to the Crown on property sales and there was a possibility of

securing Olivier's holdings at a favourable price - Louis granted Olivier permission to sell some of the castles, towns and villages which he held from the Crown not only to the latter, but also to nobles, knights, clerics and other religious. The king was interested in a group of places strung out between Carcassonne and the Roussillon frontier, including the fortress of Aguilar. Eventually he purchased Aguilar, Davejean, Termes (the town) and Vigneveille for 3,320 *livres tournois*, the sale being completed in March 1261. The remainder went chiefly to the Abbeys of Grave and Fontfroide, the Cathedral of Carcassonne and the Commandery of Peyriès, together with Brenac (Razès) and Pech-Sieuran (Lauragais) in 1260, for 50,000 *sols tournois* and 200,000 *sols melgoriens*. In 1252, the Abbey of Fontfroide had bought Olivier's village of Marcorignan and, in 1257, for 80,000 *sols melgoriens*, the castles of St-Nazaire and St-Valère in the Diocese of Narbonne. On 10 October 1260, Pierre de Voisins, a former comrade-in-arms of Simon de Montfort, who had been granted the village of Couffoulens for his part in the Albigensian Crusade, was allowed to consolidate his Occitan domain by purchasing Olivier's village of Lanet and various other properties in the neighbourhood of Durfort. Later in the same year, on 3 November, Pierre and his fellow-northerners, the de Limoux brothers, Philippe de Montfort, Gui de Mirepoix and others, were given the option of buying assets Olivier held from the Count of Poitiers, who, with his wife, had inherited the estates of the Count of Toulouse in 1249, as was the Abbot of Sorèze, who wished to buy Olivier's income from Villepinte. The abbot paid Olivier 500 *livres tournois* for the Villepinte revenues.³⁸

Despite these fluctuations in his financial position, Olivier's continuing importance as a local lord of standing can be seen in the way that the royal officials involved him in Louis' policy of *rapprochement* with Aragon. On 11 May 1258, Louis IX concluded the Treaty of Corbeil with Jaime I of Aragon. Jaime agreed to relinquish his claim to parts of Southern France, except the Lordship of Montpellier, and Louis renounced his interest in Roussillon, Catalonia and Urgel. Henceforward, the boundary between France and Aragon ran along the old Roussillon frontier, watched over by such forts as Aguilar, Cucugnan, Peyrepertuse and Quéribus, which Louis had been and was still at pains to secure for the Crown. A year prior to the signing of the treaty, the royal commissioners, the knight Thomas de Moncelart and the king's chaplain Brother Jean de Trinité, wrote to the Seneschal of Carcassonne instructing him to summon Olivier de Termes and three or four other local magnates to a consultation at

Béziers, Carcassonne or Narbonne on the subject of Brother Jean's forthcoming errand to the King of Aragon, 'occasione invasionis sibi (King Louis) facte ab infantibus regis Aragonum vel hominibus eorumdem.'³⁹ Franco-Aragonese relations were evidently at issue, perhaps the border too, and the discussion to which Olivier was considered able to contribute usefully may have had a bearing on the eventual settlement at Corbeil. Olivier can be linked directly with the treaty when, on 13 June 1262, he was a witness to the marriage contract of Pedro of Aragon and Constance of Sicily.⁴⁰ One of the conditions set down at Corbeil had been the marriages of Philippe, Louis' heir, to Isabelle of Aragon and Pedro, Jaime's heir, to Frederick II's granddaughter. Olivier's inclusion among the witnesses to this undertaking must give some measure of his importance on both sides of the Pyrenees.

During the thirteenth century, like Olivier de Termes, the southern French nobility changed its political and religious affiliations and fought for the Catholic faith in foreign lands. Few nobles, however, were as able, as adaptable or as lucky as he, and the story of their class as a whole encompasses social, economic and cultural decline and enforced conformity with Northern France.

Southern feudalism was originally a lax affair; each tier of the ruling hierarchy had very little control over the tier beneath, Occitan territory was largely allodial, such services as were owed were fewer and lighter than in the north and notions of homage and loyalty were commonly disregarded. The semi-independent landlord - or lords, for partible inheritance was regularly practised - in his almost impregnable fortress was the sole representative of authority for the majority of the southern population. Raymond de Termes, Olivier's father, had been just such a chieftain in his castle at Termes, poised, as Pierre des Vaux de Cernay observed, between heaven and hell: 'si quis vellet ad castrum accedere, oporteret eum praecipitare se in abyssum, itemque, ut ita dixerim, repere versus coelum.' Moreover: 'nec Deum timebat, nec homines verebatur, de fortitudine siquidem munitiae [munitiones] suae adeo praesumebat quod modo impugnabat Regem Aragonum, modo Comitem Tolosanum, modo dominum suum, videlicet Comitem Biterrensem.'⁴¹

The severe testing of the Albigensian Crusade revealed that the southern lords lacked, not courage, but cohesion. Despite repeated spirited rallies they always disintegrated, as much out of disunity among themselves as the superiority of the opposing forces. After the Crown became *de facto* ruler of Languedoc, the native princelings had been replaced or cowed into submission and a stricter feudalism had

been imposed, the Occitan aristocracy emerges as a more compact group.

Former rebels, including Olivier de Termes, allowed themselves to be coerced and cajoled into joining Louis IX's expedition to the Holy Land because they realised that the new dispensation in Languedoc could never be successfully challenged and they were also aware that service overseas had long been an honourable and profitable occupation for their class. Since the idea of the Crown as the aristocracy's natural employer had sprung from the crusades, by consenting to take the cross the Occitan barons were clearly acknowledging Louis as their true leader. Damage to their pride was mitigated by the intervention of Louis' *enquêteurs* who arranged restitutions of property wrongly seized for heresy. Many felt the force of the king's admirable personality. As a result of their acceptance of royal government, the nobles began to enter the Crown's service at home and abroad in great numbers.

Catharism, as has been noted, owed its initial success in Languedoc to the patronage and liberal attitude of the nobility. The role of the great ladies, who reared their children and grandchildren to respect and even embrace the Cathar Church was paramount in the heresy's spread. So crucial was aristocratic support that when it declined the sect too withered. The shock of the crusade, royal intervention, the pastoral work of the Roman Church, especially through the mendicant orders, the foundation of the University of Toulouse which taught a new and livelier theology and the methodical processes and spiritual exhortations of the Inquisition contributed to the decay of noble interest in heterodoxy. When the Roman Church was backed in Languedoc by the Crown and was able to provide a satisfactory alternative for the soul's yearnings, southern response was favourable and many joined the new orders or sought a career as secular clergy.

The surrender of the Occitan nobility to northern conquest and orthodox religion was facilitated by internal change as well as external pressures. Much of the dissident element had disappeared through death in battle, prison, exile or at the stake, or flight to Spain and Northern Italy. Some participated in the capture and settlement of the Balearic Islands. Impoverishment, resulting from confiscation and the ravages of war, affected not a few. Gaps in the ranks of the aristocracy were filled by French nobles who had been granted southern fiefs, had married Occitan heiresses or had been appointed to royal administrative posts in the region. The introduction of northerners to Languedoc not only had repercussions in political and religious spheres but also in the sphere of culture, particularly upon the southern poetic tradition which, with the loss of its former patrons and their courts, altered in character, singing

of sacred rather than profane love, with the consequence that many of its exponents were forced to seek more favourable audiences outside France.

Olivier de Termes weathered a stormy period which nearly wrecked his social group, emerging with it on a different course and in unfamiliar company. Olivier owed his personal success to the determination with which he applied his talents to the new task; the survival of his fellow-barons rested on their acquiescence in the triumph in Languedoc of Church and State.

Chronology of Olivier de Termes' Career

1226

Olivier and Bernard de Termes do homage for their lands at Termes to Louis VIII (in the person of Marshal Gui de Lévis.)

1226-1227

On the orders of the Count of Toulouse, Olivier shares command of the garrison at Labécède until the French recapture the town.

1228

Olivier arrests Jordan de Cabaret for the Count of Toulouse.

21 November 1228

Olivier and Bernard de Termes surrender their fortress and lands at Termes to Louis IX (represented by the Archbishop of Narbonne, the Bishop of Carcassonne and Marshal Gui de Lévis.)

1229

Olivier retreats to Quéribus.

7 November 1230

Olivier countersigns the burgesses' donation of the *ville-basse* or *vicomté* of Marseilles to the Count of Toulouse.

1234-1237

Olivier is involved in civil unrest in Narbonne.

June 1236

The Count of Toulouse appoints Olivier and Geraud de Niort his bailiffs at Narbonne.

1240

Olivier assists the Count of Toulouse at the siege of Arles but leaves to join Raymond Trencavel's rebellion. He participates in the siege of Carcassonne and the flight to Montréal and is set free with the other rebels after the intervention of the Counts of Toulouse and Foix.

May 1241

Olivier yields his castle of Aguilar to the Crown.

1242

Olivier aids the Count of Toulouse' reconquest of the Razès, Termenès and Minervoïs.

21 July 1242

Olivier is excommunicated by the Archbishop of Narbonne.

8 August 1242

The Count of Toulouse takes Narbonne into his protection, naming Olivier as one of two guarantors of his peace.

1246-1247

Olivier renews his submission of 1241 to Louis IX and signifies his willingness to go on crusade.

August 1248

Olivier embarks for Cyprus with Louis IX.

November 1249

Olivier is left in command of the crossbowmen and mercenaries at Damietta while the royal army advances on Cairo.

6 May 1250

Damietta is surrendered to the Egyptians but Olivier escapes the massacre and follows Louis IX to Acre.

Ann Peal

July 1250

Olivier decides to remain with the king in the Holy Land. Louis IX restores part of his possessions in the Termenès and the castle of Aguilar.

1252–1261

Olivier sells certain properties to repay debts and settle demands for compensation.

December 1252

At Joppa, Louis IX confirms Olivier's judgement in two military disputes.

1253

Olivier rescues Jean de Joinville at Banyas.

April 1254

Olivier leaves the royal ship at Cyprus.

1255

Olivier returns to Languedoc.

1257

Olivier is summoned to a conference about the mission of the royal chaplain, Jean de Trinité, to the court of Aragon.

November 1257

Olivier makes his will.

13 June 1262

Olivier witnesses the marriage contract of Pedro of Aragon and Constance of Sicily.

September 1264

Olivier goes back to the Holy Land.

1267

Olivier makes his third expedition to the Holy Land.

1269

Olivier is made commander of the French crusaders.

1270

Olivier joins Louis IX at Tunis.

April 1273

Philippe III sends Olivier to the Holy Land again.

12 August 1275

Olivier dies in service overseas.

Notes

1. See Innocent III's two relevant letters in J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, CCXV, 1246–1247 & 1354–1362. See also K.M. Setton, (ed.), *A History of the Crusades*, Pennsylvania 1955–1962, II, pp. 347–348, & H. Pissard, *La Guerre Sainte en Pays Chrétien*, Paris 1912, pp. 37–40.
2. C. Devis & J. Vaissète, (ed. A. Molinier), *Histoire Générale de Languedoc*, (HGDL), Toulouse 1872–1915, VIII, 877.
3. HGDL, VIII, 877.
4. *Guillaume de Puylaurens: Chronica*, (ed. & trans. J. Duvernoy), Paris 1976, pp. 124–126.
5. See E. Griffe, *Le Languedoc Cathare au Temps de la Croisade: 1209–1229*, Paris 1973, p. 209, M. Roquebert, *L'Épopée Cathare 1198–1212: L'Invasion*, Toulouse 1970, p. 314, & J. Duvernoy, *Le Catharisme: L'Histoire des Cathares*, Toulouse 1979, p. 267.
6. HGDL, VIII, 934–938.
7. Guillaume de Puylaurens, p. 155, note 4.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 154–157.
9. HGDL, VIII, 1092–1094.
10. *Guillaume de Nangis: Gesta Ludovici IX*, ed. M. Boquet et al., *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, (RHGF), Paris 1738–1876, XX, p. 550.
11. A. Teulet et al., (eds.), *Layettes du Trésor des Chartes*, Paris 1863–1909, III, no. 3616. HGDL, VIII, 1212–1214.
12. HGDL, VIII, 1221.
13. HGDL, VIII, 1222.
14. HGDL, VI, 786; VIII, 1193, 1227.
15. HGDL, VIII, 1090–1091.

16. Pierre des Vaux de Cernay, *Historia Albigensium*, RHGF, XIX, p. 35.
17. See J. Duvernoy, p. 269, Doat 23: 269v–270v, M. Roquebert, pp. 361–362 & M. Roquebert, 'Les Seigneurs de Montgey au XIIIe Siècle,' *Revue du Tarn*, 88, 1977, 520.
18. Guillaume de Puylaurens, pp. 126–127.
19. See J. Duvernoy, p. 269, M. Roquebert, *L'Epopée*, pp. 361–362 & Toulouse MS 609: 125r.
20. From *Statutes of the Archbishop of Narbonne against the Albigensian Heretics, 1 October 1234*, HGDL, VIII, 981–984.
21. *Archives Communales de Narbonne*, GG, 1499.
22. *Ibid.*, J, 307, no. 50.
23. A. Rocque, *Inventaire des Actes et Documents de L'Archevesché de Narbonne*, I, f.197v.
24. Guillaume de Puylaurens, pp. 158–159.
25. HGDL, VIII, 1277.
26. *Archives de L'Abbaye de Fontfroide*, Manuscrits de Colbert, no. 2275. See also HGDL, VI, p. 856.
27. E. Griffe, *Le Languedoc Cathare et l'Inquisition: 1229–1329*, Paris 1980, p. 73.
28. HGDL, VIII, 1043.
29. Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. H.R. Luard, Rolls Series, London 1872–1883, V, p. 159.
30. HGDL, VIII, 1314–1316.
31. For Olivier's too hasty disembarkation at Cyprus in 1254, see Jean de Joinville, *Histoire de St-Louis*, RHGF, XX, pp. 193, 284.
32. Jean de Joinville, pp. 277–78.
33. See *Les Gestes des Chiprois, Recueil des Historiens des Croisades*, Paris 1841–1906, Documents Arméniens, II, pp. 183–85, *Estoire d'Eracles, ibid.*, Historiens Occidentaux, II, pp. 457–58, & *Annales de Terre Sainte, ibid.*, Archives de L'Orient Latin, II, 454.
34. Guillaume de Nangis, p. 456.
35. Jean de Joinville, pp. 193, 284.
36. HGDL, VIII, 1357; VI, 856.

37. HGDL, VIII, 1276-77.
38. HGDL, VI, 857; VIII, 1473-77.
39. HGDL, VIII, 1411.
40. HGDL, VIII, 1501-02.
41. Pierre des Vaux de Cernay, p. 35.