



**Jörg Feuchter.** *Ketzer, Konsuln und Büßer: Die städtischen Eliten von Montauban vor dem Inquisitor Petrus Cellani (1236/1241).* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007. XIV, 607 S. ISBN 978-3-16-149285-3.

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## J. Feuchter: *Ketzer, Konsuln und Büßer*

In the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries the Dominicans of Toulouse and Carcassonne had depots that could be called "inquisition archives", containing large numbers of volumes, some of them organized into numbered series. But by the seventeenth century the holdings had been eroded: A Dominican historian visiting Toulouse a bit before 1691 had found only a remnant, a dozen old inquisition registers. These and a perhaps similar remnant at Carcassonne had been available to a team of scribes who were at work in the 1660s, under the direction of Jean de Doat. The aim was to copy documents for two purposes, for their relevance to royal titles and "to serve history". Doat's commission copied some of the inquisition texts at Toulouse and Carcassonne. The resulting volumes are now in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and several of them – especially Collection Doat Mss 21-26 – constitute a high proportion of all the inquisition records that survive from medieval Languedoc. Feuchter's book is devoted to part of one of these volumes: Doat 21. Before turning to assess Feuchter's work, I think it would be useful to reflect on some points about modern scholarship on the Doat volumes, and on heresy and inquisition in Languedoc.

The earliest study of heresy and inquisition that I know in which the bibliography contains a brief description of the Doat volumes was Charles Schmidt's *Histoire et doctrine des cathares ou albigeois* (vol. 1, Paris and Geneva, 1848, pp. 382-3). So, they have been known and used for a long time. However, it was not until 2001 that there has been any substantial edition, Jean

Duvernoy's *L'inquisition en Quercy: Le registre des pénitences de Pierre Cellan 1241-1242*. Why did this not happen much earlier? The most obvious conjecture is that generations of scholars thought their accessibility made editions unnecessary. They were on an upper gallery in the Salle des Manuscrits in the old Bibliothèque nationale in the rue Richelieu, and their script is almost as easy to read as typescript. Perhaps. Certainly, they came to be used by the American Henry Charles Lea in the late nineteenth century, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century French historians of inquisition, such as Célestin Douais and Jean Guiraud, by the Americans Walter Wakefield and John H. Mundy in the second half of the twentieth century – and by a steadily expanding stream of other scholars. For many, they have been daily bread: apparently easy sources. Despite the fact that there was as early as 1916 an excellent account of the Doat commission and an edition of sources relating to it by Henri Omont, most scholars have used the Doat volumes without critically appraising them. No exception is posed by Duvernoy's recent edition, which has a very sketchy apparatus and is little more than a plain transcription and translation – an edition whose scholarly significance is that its existence and recentness probably block the production of a proper scholarly edition of all the penances by Feuchter. Age-old familiarity with the Doat volumes has been accompanied, I am suggesting, by a certain scholarly laziness in their use and study.

Talking with me when I was choosing an area for postgraduate research in 1966, R.W. Southern advised me

to steer clear of heresy and inquisition in France, reasoning from the general to the particular: French medieval scholarship was so good that it would have dealt with everything, and done it at a very high level. For once the great man was wrong. There was, of course, one magisterial and massive contribution to the history of inquisition in Languedoc by a French historian from Bordeaux, Yves Dossat, in his *Les crises de l'inquisition Toulousaine au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (1233-1273)*, and there have been exceptionally fine studies of heresy and towns around 1300 by Jean-Louis Biget. But these are isolated achievements, and it is striking how far the elite medievalists of France and Paris have left the study of Languedocian heresy and inquisition to non-French historians (Americans, English and Germans) and to French amateurs, such as Jean Duvernoy, a jurist and autodidact historian, and Michel Roquebert, a former schoolteacher and journalist. Whatever the explanation, the field of scholarship on heresy and inquisition in Languedoc is odd, and in some ways barren. Currently, in the French language, there is a deluge of popular printed books arising from pre-occupation with the myths of medieval Occitania and Catharism which always stresses the culture and religion of the Occitan nobility. In the foreground is an academically excellent series of annual volumes dedicated to the religious life of Languedoc, whose publication in Toulouse started in 1966: the *Cahiers de Fanjeaux*. But one must state the obvious: substantial work cannot appear in this format, which is of volumes containing short papers. And from Anglophone scholars? Currently, the loudest voice is that of Mark Gregory Pegg, whose *The Corruption of Angels: The Great Inquisition of 1245-1246* (Princeton 2001), attempts to deconstruct both heretical sects and inquisitors' knowledge about them. Its ultra-scepticism is helped by a simple scholarly method: concentrate on one inquisition source and avoid cross-reference to other inquisition sources.

Let us turn back to Feuchter. The earliest of the Doat inquisition volumes is 21, an anthology which contains on folios 185r-212v the penances of brother Peter Cellani. These contain 653 penances to be imposed on people convicted of heresy from places in Quercy: Montauban, Gourdon, Moissac, Montcuq, Almont, Montpezat, Beaucaire and Sauveterre. The largest number – 256 – were from Montauban, and it is these to whom Feuchter's book is dedicated. After a general introduction, Feuchter surveys the sources (chapter 2), studies the foundation and development of the town of Montauban (chapter 3), anatomises the Cathar and Waldensian sects in Montauban (chapter 4), provides an account of the in-

quisitor Peter Cellani, his inquisition (chapter 5) and his penances (chapter 6), and ends with a history of post-inquisition Montauban up to 1317. The ten appendixes include an edition of the penances for Montauban (pp. 453-89).

Most significant of the sources surveyed in chapter 2 are the Doat copy and the *Livre Rouge*. If Doat 21 reflects selection and re-arrangement, were these features already present in the old medieval volume that was copied, or did the Doat scribes select and re-arrange in 1669? It is impossible to know. Feuchter establishes the genre of inquisition text at issue. From one inquisition text (i) the record of question and answer in an interrogation the next stage was an extraction from this, (ii) a list of guilty acts drawn up with a view to assessing the appropriate penance to be imposed. It is deliberately brief, and very frustrating to a modern historian (Feuchter calls it *painful*, p. 67) because it omits dates and many other details. A typical penance simply gives the person's name, says that she or he heard a heretic (Cathar) or Waldensian, lists one or two other such contacts, and then specifies a penance, which is going on pilgrimage to two or three established pilgrimage sites. Feuchter succeeds in tethering the penances firmly to the no longer extant previous text (i) containing records of confessions by finding two cross-references to it in the penances (pp. 63 and 67 note 142). As he says, the removal of details from the penances makes it frustratingly difficult to locate them in time and place. But he has looked at several *other* extant inquisition registers, where witnesses have testified about people and events that overlap with the contents of the Montauban penances. People and actions are confirmed and put within a solid frame of time and place. This is in itself a stunning – a brilliant – piece of detective work. At the same time these pages represent more broadly the achievement of the section as a whole, which calmly removes unreasonable doubt about Doat and locates the penances with complete precision and sureness. Feuchter turns from Doat to urban archives. He surveys three cartularies containing transcripts of original acts from thirteenth-century Montauban, most important among them being the *Livre Rouge* – its contents are given in appendix 5 – and a good half relates to Montauban's consuls.

The next brilliant achievement of this book, contained in chapters 3-4, rests on Feuchter's bringing together of two sources. On the one hand there are the penances and one simple fact about them: that they are so large in number. A sub-part of the statistic is that they relate to a large number of supporters of the Waldensians as well as

supporters of the Cathars. There are only tiny numbers of Waldensian supporters in all other extant collections of inquisition evidence from Languedoc, apart from the sentences of Bernard Gui. Feuchter has, therefore, a rare opportunity to do a comparison based on larger numbers. The other source is urban archives, in particular the *âLivre Rougeâ*. Feuchter has found these sources and had the idea of using them to enquire into the political and socio-economic profile of supporters of Cathars and Waldensians. The reader has been provided with this sort of precise profiling of heretics in the *later* middle ages â by, for example, Kathrin Utz Tremp for Fribourg in the early fifteenth century, in her *âQuellen zur Geschichte der Waldenser von Freiburg im Achtland (1399-1439)â* (Hannover 2000). But this is from a period when urban archives have often become abundant. The 1230s are another matter. It is quite amazing to find this kind of work being done in Languedoc in the early decades of the thirteenth century.

There follows, then, an account of the two sects in Montauban. Let us pick out two points to exemplify what Feuchter does. Feuchter describes the modes of operation of Cathar and Waldensian preachers in Montauban separately for each sect but also with comparison (pp. 206-7, 218). Summarised here but based on numerous instances are the greater privacy of the Cathars and Waldensiansâ preference for a public setting and the open air. An illustration of the hold of the Cathars in the highest elites and the absence from these of the Waldensians is the involvement with the Cathars of the families of ten consuls from the period 1221-41, and of none of these consular families with the Waldensians. Here, one religious and one socio-political example illustrate Feuchterâs utterly remarkable joint exploitation of inquisition and urban archives, providing description and analysis whose precision, depth and statistical basis are unparalleled in any study of a period as early as this.

Feuchter always writes clearly, deftly and lightly. His prose is the opposite of the old English personâs stereotype of heavy Germanic scholarship. But there is sometimes more to say about the experience of reading him. Every now and again Feuchter is pulling a very remarkable rabbit out of the bag, doing brilliant detective work, and at these points the adrenalin really flows. Chapter 5 provides, it goes without saying, what will now be the standard account of Peter Cellani, and within these pages I would direct the reader to the section which begins on page 297. By this stage of the book Feuchter has established the broader chronological context. There was a long gap between Peter Cellaniâs interrogations

and the penances, which were being drawn up for pronouncement as part of the resumption of inquisition in spring 1241, after a long enforced suspension of inquisitorial activities. When were the original interrogations? In most of Quercy, in summer 1235, but Peter Cellani did not start in Montauban until the beginning of April 1236. How did this come about? Feuchter never forces a case, and here, lacking absolute proof, he presents his answer as a conjecture. He has, as it were, a quite large number of pieces from a jig-saw puzzle, but not all, and he arranges them in plausible relationship to each other. The pieces include (1) that the count of Toulouseâs number two, the most powerful figure in Quercy, Pons Grimoardi, seneschal of Quercy, has just confessed, (ii) that all the penances in Montauban are light, and that (3) the sequence of penances start with the highest figure from Montauban, the countâs *viguier* (vicar), B. Capel, and continue with more powerful figures. All combine to point to Grimoardiâs confession opening the breach, and some sort of collective bargaining with Peter Cellani, universal confession in exchange for leniency. Moments like this are extraordinary. On the one hand there is original and brilliant history. On the other hand, the writing is as compelling as a thriller.

It is impossible within the short space of a review to convey more than a tiny fraction of the substance or quality of this book. Simultaneously a socio-political and a religious study of the elites of Montauban, their relations with two heresies, and their inquisition and penances, it is a work of absolute thoroughness, precision and steadiness of judgement. It contains several great coups. Most notable is the juxtaposition of urban and inquisitorial archives. It is studded with brilliant feats of detective work. Despite its length and exhaustiveness, it is a compelling book to read, a monograph of real intellectual excitement. The last reflections in my mind come from two aspects of my experience as an historian of inquisition and heresy. The first is that I live in an Anglophone world of heresy scholarship, some whose exponents have spent the last few decades trying to destabilize inquisition evidence and the past reality of organised sects. It is such a relief to turn from this to Feuchter, to the steady probing of texts, equipped with all that good scholarship can bring to bear and happily free of the extremes of either naïveté or ultra-scepticism. The second comes from my memory of the first time I looked at Doat 21. The officials in the *Bibliothèque nationale* no longer allow one to use the volume itself. But this was long ago, summer 1976, and it was open on a lectern at my desk, a very tall volume, in which the cursive writing of 1669 was so

large that each leaf contained not much more than 100 words. Here were these penances, each a few brief words, lacking in detail or explanation: puzzling and mysterious words. Holding now Feuchter's book in my hands, I can only think of the sheer size of his achievement, producing from these words such a brilliant re-creation of Montauban. His book is a masterpiece.

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