

THE *PETIT THALAMUS* OF MONTPELLIER. MOVING MIRROR OF AN URBAN POLITICAL IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

The *Petit Thalamus* of Montpellier contains the oldest urban chronicle ever written in a vernacular language in Western Europe and this chronicle, whose oldest versions are dating from the beginning of the 13th century, is the conscious work of a consulate that accomplishes a flashback on its origins. Then, it does not simply record the history of Montpellier: by forging a common memory, it creates the town as a *universitas* and plays a decisive role in the emergence of an urban consciousness. In addition to the common walls, which realised the physical unity of Montpellier, the *Petit Thalamus*, by contributing to the mental unity of the citizens, has been one of the most important pieces in the creation of the town, whose importance is equal to the great seal of the consulate. Thus, it is a keystone in the construction of this fragile balance that represents a medieval town.¹

KEYWORDS

Montpellier, Middle Ages, Urban chronicle, Consulate, Memory.

CAPITALIA VERBA

Montispessulanum, Medium Aevum, Chronica urbis, Consulatus, Memoria.

1. Introduction

*L'an MLXXXVII los crestians prezeron Barsalona.*² It is by these words that the notary of Montpellier's consulate opens his list of 'antiquities and events' located just before the annals of the town, formally beginning only in 1204. Even if the date is incorrect, it keeps the memory of the capture and the sack of Barcelona by the Muslim leader Al-Mansûr in 985. This event is the oldest one contained in such a list and, therefore, the oldest traumatic event inscribed in the memory of Montpellier, which is an evident witness of the long lasting relations established between the town and the dynasty of the counts of Barcelona who later became kings of Aragon and, finally, by the wedding of Pierre of Aragon with Marie de Montpellier, heir of the Guilhem's dynasty, in 1204, lords of Montpellier.³ Surprisingly, nobody had ever noticed that the real—not the incorrect one that figures in the *Petit Thalamus*— date of the sack of Barcelona, 985, is exactly the moment when Montpellier first appears in an historical charter: indeed, on the 25th of November 985, Bernard, count of Melgueil, gives to somebody called Guilhem a land which is located *in terminium villa Montepestelario*.⁴ This cannot really be a simple coincidence. Thus, the date of 985 is linked both to the birth of the town and to the beginning of its history, even if, in the last case, the real date is a hidden one because it only appears under the year of 1088: at Montpellier, as elsewhere, history emerges at the same time than the town itself. But it works as if the consulate deliberately chose to conceal the first appearance's date of its own town by masking it under a wrong date for the taking of Barcelona in a sort of a conscious shadow game which uses the mask of Barcelona to hide the foundation of the town and the key role played by the Guilhem's dynasty in its growth. Of course, such a complicated game could only

1. This article has its origins into the scientific project *Thalamus* (2010-JCJC 2003 01), coordinated by Vincent Challet and funded by the National Research Agency of the Government of France (about this project, see: Challet, Vincent. "Le Petit Thalamus: un monument-document de l'histoire montpelliéraine". *Bulletin Historique de la Ville de Montpellier*, 34 (2009): 24-37). It takes place in the project *¿El poder de la comunidad?: Lenguaje y practicas politicas populares a fines de la Edad Media* (HAR 2011-30035), funded by Ministry of Science and Innovation of the Government of Spain. The text is based on a paper presented at the congress entitled *En formato de identidad. Identidades Politicas Urbanas en la Edad Media* held in Madrid on the 27th-28th of September, 2012. I would like to thank Professor Yolanda Guerrero Navarrete for her kind invitation to attend this conference and Julie for having been on my side on this occasion. Used abbreviations: AMM, Archives Municipales de Montpellier; ANF, Archives Nationales de France; BIUM, Bibliothèque interuniversitaire de Montpellier; BMN, Bibliothèque Municipale de Nîmes; BNF, Bibliothèque Nationale de France; BRB, Bibliothèque Royale de Bruxelles.

2. "In the year 1087 the Christians took Barcelona". AMM. AA 9, f. 70v. A new complete electronic edition and presentation of the *Thalamus de Montpellier* is now available on: Le Projet Thalamus. "Édition critique numérique du manuscrit AA 9 des Archives municipales de Montpellier dit Le Petit Thalamus". *Le Petit Thalamus de Montpellier*. 18 August 2015, Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3. 18 August 2015 <<http://thalamus.huma-num.fr>>.

3. Vidal, Henri. "L'Aragon et la révolution montpelliéraine de 1204", *Montpellier, la Couronne d'Aragon et les pays de Langue d'Oc (1204-1349)*. *Actes du 12^e Congrès d'histoire de la Couronne d'Aragon (Montpellier, 26-29 septembre 1985)*. Montpellier: Société Archéologique de Montpellier, 1987: 43-60.

4. Vidal, Henri. "Aux origines de Montpellier : la donation de 985". *Bulletin Historique de la Ville de Montpellier*, 5 (1985): 11-37.



be understood by a few readers and supposes that the initial charter's memory was well kept. Indeed, if the original document of 985 is lost, a copy of this act was inscribed at the beginning of the 13th century in the *Liber Instrumentorum Memorialis*, a manuscript which is also known under the name of the *Cartulaire des Guilhem* as it mainly contains copies of acts concerning the lordship of the Guilhem's family.⁵ Then, this allusion to Barcelona's capture must be seen as one of these 'phantoms of remembrance' analyzed by Patrick Geary.⁶

2. The making of urban memory: the *Petit Thalamus* as a keystone of civic identity

From many points of view, the AA 9 manuscript, known under the name of the *Petit Thalamus* is an invaluable source for the story of Montpellier and, at the same time, a masterpiece of the huge enterprise of memorial rebuilding realized under the control of the consuls from the years 1240-1260. It belongs to this type of manuscripts that Jacques Le Goff described as a 'monument-document', meaning by this expression a real value as a source of knowledge, both for medieval people and for nowadays historians, and a memorial dimension always present in the mind of urban magistrates concerned about the fact of putting in written words the main events of their town. The *Petit Thalamus* is a quite composite manuscript as it contains the most fundamental juridical texts of the town—including the customs of 1204,⁷ the oaths of the main officers and the urban laws—in the Italian tradition of the *Libri iurium*⁸ but also, from 1204 and for each year, the list of the consuls and the main officers (*bayles* and judges) which developed itself firstly into annals and then into a real urban chronicle. But this chronicle has itself a double origin which has been revealed by the study of the AA 9 manuscript written from 1334 onwards and which is, in fact, the most recent one of all the copies of the *Petit Thalamus*: in the oldest ones, the list of 'antiquities and events' is written separately from the list of the consuls which is presented year by year; on the contrary, in the AA 9 manuscript, these events—not all of them, but only a selection—are reported

5. It has been published by Alexandre Germain and Camille Chabaneau: *Liber Instrumentorum Memorialium, cartulaire des Guilhems de Montpellier*, ed. Alexandre Germain, Camille Chabaneau. Montpellier: J. Martel Aîné, 1884-1886: 284-285. On this document, see also: Chastang, Pierre. "La préface du 'Liber instrumentorum memorialis' des Guilhem de Montpellier ou les enjeux de la rédaction d'un cartulaire laïque méridional", *Les cartulaires méridionaux*, Daniel Le Blévec, dir. Paris: École des Chartes, 2006: 91-123. Pierre Chastang dates the first phase of the compilation from 1202.

6. Geary, Patrick. *Phantoms of Remembrance. Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millenium*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

7. Gouron, André. "'Libertas Hominum Montispessulani'. Rédaction et diffusion des coutumes de Montpellier". *Annales du Midi*, 90 (1978): 289-318.

8. For a general presentation, see: Rovere, Antonella. "Tipologia documentale nei 'Libri iurium' dell'Italia comunale", *La diplomatie urbaine en Europe au Moyen Âge*, Walter Prevenier, Thérèse de Hemptine eds. Leuven: Garain, 2000: 417-436.



in the margins of the main text. Nevertheless, some historical contents began to appear following directly the names of the twelve consuls of Montpellier: the first one took place in 1218 and is the taking of the castle of Madières. The sentence contained in the AA 9 manuscript is very laconic and does not really reveal the role played by Montpellier in this capture as it only says: *E fon pres adoncs lo castel de Madieryras*.⁹ Thus, to fully understand why it has to be kept in the urban memory, we must look to an older version probably composed between 1270 and 1280: *Et en aquel an, prezeron li homes de Montpellier Madieryras que son en Larzac, e deroqueron lo castel, e cremeron los vals, car lo senhor del castel raubava los camins*.¹⁰ This more complete relation of the events allows us to realise that such an expedition was taken in charge by the militias of Montpellier under the consulate's leadership itself in order to guarantee freedom of trade and of movement in the hinterland, first step to establish a 'contado'. It is then not surprising that this decision, symptomatic of the new power of the consulate twelve years only after having been officially recognized by the king of Aragon, Pierre II, broke up the general outline to slot into the lists of consuls at the beginning of the 13th century. In a slightly different way, the oldest thing recalled in the 'antiquities and events' about the town itself is connected with the Guilhems' lordship but in a very allusive way: it only says that, in 1141, *valian en Montpellier X favas I denier*.¹¹ Nevertheless, 1141 is an important date in the history of the town and other versions of this text put a clear light on what occurred. Thus, a manuscript composed in the middle of the 14th century tells us that *En l'an de M e C XLI giteron los homes de Montpellier en G. de Montpellier de la vila et s'en anet a Lates, e duret la batalha ii ans. El coms de Barsalona rendet li la vila, per assetge. Et adonc valian X favas I denier*.¹² This constitutes a brief summary of the emergence of the first consulate in Montpellier when, following a rebellion of the *burgenses*, Guilhem VI was expelled from the town and has to withdraw into Lattes for about two years. He only recovered its possession with the help of Raymond Bérenger IV, count of Barcelona, and after having besieged Montpellier, which explains the expensive cost of the beans at this time. If this episode remains obscure, we know that during the absence of Guilhem VI, the leaders of this rebellion did not hesitate to call themselves *consules* and to act as the very first consuls of the town.¹³ Thus, 1141 is the birth date of the consulate of Montpellier even if this first attempt of establishing an urban self-governing was erased by Guilhem VI in 1143 when he recovered the town. Then, the Guilhems seem to have imposed a

9. "And it was took the Madieryras' castle". AMM. AA 9, f. 72.

10. "And in this year the men of Montpellier took Madieryras, which is in Larzac, and demolished the castle and put fire on the moat because the castle's lord robbed on the way". BNF. Manuscrits français, Ms. 14507, f. 48. But the capture of Madières only appears in the list of 'antiquities and events'.

11. "10 broad beans cost one penny in Montpellier". AMM. AA 9, f. 70v.

12. "In the year 1141 the men of Montpellier expelled G. de Montpellier out of the town, and he came to Lates, and the battle persisted two years. The count of Barcelona took the town throughout a siege. And in the time 10 broad beans cost one penny". BIUM. Section de médecine, H 119, f. 82.

13. In a letter issued by Innocent II, the pope speaks about *qui ipsius loci consules appellantur* and excommunicate them; see: *Bullaire de l'Église de Maguelone*, ed. Jean Baptiste Rouquette, Augustin Villemagne. Montpellier: Valat, 1911: I, 54 (doc. No. 33).



damnatio memoriae explaining why the word itself of consuls disappeared from the charters until 1206. But the memory of this first rebellion did never vanish from the minds of Montpellier's citizens and reappears here like a phantom rediscovered, like an almost forgotten remembrance suddenly revealed under the price of the beans. Oblivion against remembrance, the equation of Montpellier's urban memory is much more complicated than one can first imagine.

Indeed, the *Petit Thalamus* does not impose a memory which would be fixed from the middle of the thirteenth century but rebuild it permanently according to the social and political developments which it is the reflection. Conscious and planned work of a consulate that accomplishes a flashback on its origins, one generation after its birth and once its own power firmly established on the city, the *Petit Thalamus* does not simply record the history of Montpellier: by forging, in a written way which may seem to us an artificial one, a common memory, it creates the town itself as a *universitas* and plays a decisive role in the emergence of an urban consciousness. In addition to the *Commune Clôture* —which refers both to the oldest collective high wall that surrounded the town from the 1180's and to the communal institution which is in charge of building it— which realised the physical and material unit of Montpellier,¹⁴ the *Petit Thalamus*, by contributing to the mental unity of the citizens, has been one of the most important pieces in the creation of the town itself, whose importance is equal to the great seal of the consulate. Thus, it is a keystone in the construction of this balance, fragile and always called into question, that represents a medieval town.

What allows us to plunge in depth in the making of Montpellier urban memory is that no less than nine manuscripts of the *Petit Thalamus* have been preserved, written between around 1240 and 1334.¹⁵ Contrary to many urban chronicles for which only one copy is preserved and pass down the official version of a civic memory controlled by the urban authorities, the *Petit Thalamus* presents a very peculiar perspective which allows us to study the memorial deformations accomplished by a consulate which considers itself as the essential foundation of the urban identity. This point immediately leads us to the question of the language used by the chronicle: if we still possess two versions written in Latin, both of them are very short and unfinished, containing mainly the names of the consuls, just as if it was a desperate attempt to establish the legitimacy of the consulate onto Roman and Latin basis. But, such an attempt did fail, even if the AA 9 manuscript kept some traces of it for the very first years in the way of giving the date. For instance, the first item fitting with 1204 begins by *Anno dominice Incarnationis millesimo ducentesimo*

14. Montpellier was originally composed from two distinctive areas which were Montpelliéret under the lordship of the bishop of Maguelone, and Montpellier itself ruled by the Guilhems. The *Commune Clôture* was built to circle these two parts. See: Fabre, Ghislaine; Lochar, Thierry. *Montpellier, la ville médiévale*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1992: 112-125.

15. AMM. AA 9 (1334-1423); AMM. AA 4 (separated folios in Latin inserted in the *Grand Thalamus*); BNF. Manuscrits français, Ms. 11795 (circa 1250); BNF. Nouvelles acquisitions françaises, Ms. 4337 (1261); BNF. Manuscrits français, Ms. 14507 (1270-1280); BRB. Manuscrits, Ms. 7082 (13th century); BMN. Manuscrits, Ms. 254 (end of the 13th century); BIUM. Section médecine, H 119 (middle of the 14th century); ANF. J 339 (doc. No. 23) (separated folios in Latin).



*quarto, foron cossols...*¹⁶ but it does not last for long as from 1207, the items begin by *En l'an de...* using hereafter the vernacular language as if the consulate realised that using Latin was a pathetic way of reinforcing its own power. This question of the language used in the *Petit Thalamus* is an essential one as it seems to be the oldest urban chronicle in Western Europe written in vernacular and not in Latin. From this point of view, the situation in Montpellier seems very different from Italian cities where the first chronicles—including *Annales Januenses* by Andrea Caffaro¹⁷—were deliberately written in Latin and where the use of the vernacular language does not intervene before the very end of the 13th century or the beginning of the 14th, about one century later than in Montpellier. Of course, it may be explained by the different status of the vernacular language in Southern France and in Italy: whereas Occitan has been used as a literary language by the troubadours in the course of the 12th century, it is not before the beginning of the 14th century that Tuscan won its spurs with Dante Alighieri and was then considered noble enough to record the story of the city. But, in the case of Montpellier, one may evoke a more fundamental reason: in Northern Italy, as recently emphasized by Carrie E. Beneš,¹⁸ writing the story of the city is also, and maybe mainly, a way of rediscovering the Roman past of the town; choosing to write in Latin is thus evident. But in this new town of Montpellier, deprived of any Roman origin, such a matter does not exist at all: when the urban chronicle begins, it does not talk about the past simply because Montpellier did not exist in the past. So the question of the origins is not as fundamental for Montpellier as for Genes, Milan or Sienna. As a consequence, the consuls did not have to apply an antique model and were completely free to invent their own way of writing, not the legendary story of the town, but the present one and they did it by choosing vernacular language to forge a civic identity which was based much more on the civic recent fights than on a Roman myth. Only in a town without any Roman past, could this model be created and it is in fact because of the youth of Montpellier that the consuls feel free to invent this new approach of the urban history.

3. From a seigniorial to an urban memory

The oldest historical memory of Montpellier is clearly a seigniorial one linked to the lordship of the Guilhems, and some important events which concerned this dynasty are carefully recorded in the lists of 'antiquities and events' but disappeared in the AA 9 manuscript. For instance, in 1184, the birth of Raymond Gaucelm (IV),

16. AMM. AA 9, f. 71.

17. The best general study of this work is: Balbi, Giovanna Petti. *Caffaro e la cronachistica Genovese*. Genoa: Tilgher, 1970.

18. Beneš, Carrie E. *Urban Legends. Civic Identity and the Classical Past in Northern Italy (1250-1350)*. Pennsylvania University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2011.



son of Sybille and Raymond Gaucelm III, lord of Lunel, appeared in these lists¹⁹ because Sybille was the elder daughter of Guilhem VII. Yet, at this moment, the lord of Montpellier, Guilhem VIII, has only one child and heir, Marie, born in 1182, and the newborn Raymond Gaucelm represents the only grandson of Guilhem VII and thus a possible heir in the case the young Marie would die. But such a birth, whose mention can be understood in the context of the succession of the Guilhems, does not have any importance once this succession solved in favour of the kings of Aragon and is not recorded in the AA 9 manuscript, being erased from the urban memory. The complex question of how Pierre II of Aragon became lord of Montpellier precisely led to some memorial reconstructions that the different manuscripts allow us to follow. Guilhem VIII had contracted in 1174 a wedding with Eudoxie Comnène, a little niece of the Byzantine Emperor, from which was only born one girl, named Marie. But, lately, he repudiated his first wife and married in 1187 Agnès of Castille who gave him eight children including the future Guilhem IX. This union, so important for the future of the dynasty, is fully inscribed in the ancient versions: as an example, we can quote the copy kept in Bruxelles which writes that *en mai pres en G. de Montpeslier sa moller na Unes a Barsalona*²⁰ whereas the wedding with Eudoxie Comnène is not even cited. Nevertheless, in spite of his requests to the pope, Guilhem VIII failed to obtain from the Church the recognition of his marriage with Agnès de Castille and any legitimation of their children.²¹ This decision allowed Marie to claim herself as the only heir of Montpellier and, when she married with Pierre II of Aragon in July 1204, it opened the path to the annexation of the town to the lands of the crown of Aragon. After such an event, the mention of a second wedding between Guilhem VIII and Agnès of Castille was not only unnecessary but clearly awkward as it ran the risk to reveal that the choice of Guilhem VIII has been negated and that the transmission of the lordship has been put in question. As a natural consequence, the mention of this wedding has not been selected in the AA 9 manuscript and, thus, not retained in the civic memory. Nevertheless, the consuls simply forgot to cancel another union, the one of Raymond Roger Trencavel, viscount of Béziers, with Agnès, daughter of Guilhem VIII and Agnès de Castille.²² Another example of this ‘phantoms of remembrance’ which appeared in this text.

19. *En l’an de M et C LXXXIII fon natz en R. Gaucelm, fil de la filla d’en G. de Montpeslier*. BNF. Manuscrits français, Ms. 7082, f. 13v. On the wedding between Raymond Gaucelm and Sybille, see: Vidal, Henri. “Les mariages dans la famille des Guilhems, seigneurs de Montpellier”. *Revue d’Histoire du Droit*, 62 (1984): 231-244.

20. “In May, 6. de Montpellier took his wife, Agnes in Barcelona”. BNF. Manuscrits français, Ms. 7082, f. 13v-14.

21. It is by the bull *Per venerabilem*, issued in 1202, that Innocent III refused this legitimation. See: Vidal, Henri. “Aspects montpelliérains de la bulle ‘Per Venerabilem’”, *Montpellier et les Guilhems*, ed. Jean-Mari Carbosse. Montpellier: Presses de la Faculté de Droit et Science Politique de Montpellier, 2012: 165-186; Vidal, Henri. “Aspects montpelliérains de la bulle ‘Per Venerabilem’”. *Recueil de mémoires et travaux publiés par la Société d’histoire de droit et des institutions des anciens pays de droit écrit*, 15 (1991): 49-65.

22. *L’an MCCIII en setembre mori m° G. de Monspelier et lo vescomte de Bezes pres sa filha per molher l’an meteyt*. AMM. AA 9, f. 70v.



Yet, the official and most recent version imposed by the consulate was supposed to be clear and shows a conscious wish to base an urban identity on the unity of the town by concealing the divisions which occurred during the brief interlude between the death of Guilhem VIII and the seizure of power realised by Pierre II of Aragon. For the *Petit Thalamus*, Guilhem VIII's union with Agnès of Castille did never take place, nor the fact that his elder son, Guilhem IX, ruled Montpellier between 1202 and 1204. And the AA 9 manuscript gives no place to what has been sometimes called 'the revolution of 1204'.²³ Even if the word 'revolution' may be called into question, what happened in 1204 was everything but a quiet succession from one dynasty to another and the urban elites did play an important role in this movement, as prove many elements totally hidden by the latest copy: indeed, the only reference included in the AA 9 version is that the king of Aragon married Marie de Montpellier in July 1204,²⁴ imposing the idea of a logical and natural succession and forgetting the existence of Guilhem IX. But, older versions had kept a different memory of the events and of the internal breaches of the urban elites. The Bruxelles's manuscript, after having recalled the wedding of Marie de Montpellier, adds: *Et en aquel an fon barrejatz l'alberc d'en B. Lambert, e [de] maistre Gui et d'en Uc de Tornamira*.²⁵ It clearly reveals that the king of Aragon could rely on some families belonging to the urban elites who took the opportunity of putting an end to the Guilhems' lordship. Indeed, Bérenger Lambert has been the main officer of Guilhem VIII, acting as his *bayle*, and master Gui Francesc was a very well-known jurist whose presence on the side of Guilhem VIII is testified.²⁶ These three men also happened to be members of the regency council instituted by Guilhem VIII to guarantee the transmission of power to his son and were forced to exile in June 1204.²⁷ The final victory of Pierre II of Aragon then appears to be the consequence of an internal opposition to the Guilhems and their councillors whose houses were seized and, in a classical phenomenon of *damnatio memoriae* commonly observed in Italian cities in such circumstances,²⁸ intended to be destroyed. In fact, it seems

23. Vidal, Henri. "L'Aragon et la révolution..." : 43-60.

24. *L'an MCCIII lo rey d'Aragon pres per molher madona Maria de Montpellier en julh*. AMM. AA 9, f. 70v.

25. "And in this year B, Lambert's, Master Gui and Uc de Tornamira's houses were destroyed". BNF. Manuscrits français, Ms. 7082, f. 14-14v.

26. On master Gui Francesc, see: Gouron, André. "Autour de Placentin à Montpellier: Maître Gui et Pierre de Cardona". *Studia Gratiana*, 19 (1976): 337-354.

27. All of them are quoted in an act delivered by Pierre II of Aragon on the 15th of June 1204 by which he swears to respect their banishment. Bérenger Lambert was not the sole member of his family to be forced in exile as the same act contains also the names of Bernard Lambert and his son, of Raymond Lambert, son of deceased Pons Lambert and Guillaume Lambert, brother of Bérenger. Thus, the whole Lamberts clan had to flee from the town on this occasion. This charter is published by: Germain, Alexandre. *Histoire de la commune de Montpellier*. Montpellier: J. Martel Ainé, 1851: I, 317-319.

28. See for instance the case of Bologna studied by Jacques Heers: Heers, Jacques. *Espaces publics, espaces privés dans la ville. 'Le Liber terminorum' de Bologne (1294)*. Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1984; and, for a more general approach, see: Heers, Jacques. "En Italie centrale: les paysages construits, reflets d'une politique urbaine", *D'une ville à l'autre. Structures matérielles et organisation de l'espace dans les villes européennes (XIII^e-XVI^e siècles)*, Jean Claude Maire Vigueur, ed. Rome: École Française de Rome, 1989: 279-322.



to have been nothing more than a symbolic destruction as the buildings where in fact reused in a way that imposed oblivion on the names of these families but emphasized at the same time both the king of Aragon and the consulate. The house of the Lamberts was the nucleus of the first consular house,²⁹ becoming then the symbol of the triumph of the new consulate over banished families who were involved in seigniorial power, whereas the house of the Touremires served as a royal residence: the birth of Jacques, son of Marie de Montpellier and Pierre of Aragon, in this place may be seen as emblematic of the substitution of the Guilhems by the kings of Aragon. By sharing the spoils of the Lamberts and the Tournemires, two preeminent families linked to the Guilhems, the king of Aragon and the consulate erased not only the memory of these two specific families but also the remembrance of Guilhem IX's brief interlude. But such a process of *damnatio memoriae* which was so essential in the 13th century and has, in an apparent paradox which seems similar to the reference of Amaleq in the Old Testament,³⁰ to be claimed by the consulate, has, on the contrary, to be forgotten in the 14th century when the urban identity pretended to conceal the internal divisions that led to the consulate. The consuls, then, forged the myth of a pacific emergence of this institution granted by the king of Aragon and definitely condemned to oblivion the names of the Lamberts and the Tournemires. More deeply, the *Petit Thalamus* imposes the false idea that both the charter of customs and the consulate were delivered in 1204 by Pierre II and Marie de Montpellier to reward the urban elites. All the manuscripts, including the most ancient ones, began in 1204 by these words, written with a red ink: *Ayso es lo comessamen del cossolat* ("this is the beginning of the Consulate"), immediately followed by the names of twelve people presented as the first consuls of the town. But, in fact, these men never really bore this title: amongst these twelve so-called consuls, seven are the *probi homines* elected in June 1204 to correct the customs of Montpellier³¹ and the additional charter of the customs, issued in June 1205 only speaks of *duodecim probi et legales viri Montispessulani electi ad consulendam communitatem Montispessulani*.³² And it is only in July 1206 that the representatives of the community are described as consuls.³³ Nor the *probi homines* of 1204, nor the ones of 1205 were really consuls and it is only by a conscious forgery that they bear this title in the *Petit Thalamus* in order to support the myth of consulate's peaceful origins. By claiming, precisely through this text, that its birth date is 1204, it links its emergence both to the official proclamation of the customs and to the change of rulers which is so decisive in the reorientation of the civic memory.

29. Fabre, Ghislaine; Lochard, Thierry. *Montpellier, la ville médiévale...*:126-127.

30. Which says to erase the remembrance of Amaleq but concludes that it should not be forgotten and inscribes the name itself of Amaleq in the Bible while claiming that this name must disappear; quoted by: Le Goff, Jacques. *Histoire et mémoire*. Paris: Gallimard, 1986: 132.

31. Charter of Pierre II of Aragon and Marie de Montpellier issued on the 15th of June 1204; published by: Germain, Alexandre. *Histoire de la commune de Montpellier...*: I, 317-319.

32. *Thalamus parvus: le Petit Thalamus de Montpellier*, ed. Société Archéologique de Montpellier. Montpellier: J. Martel Ainé, 1840: 64 (article IX).

33. Germain, Alexandre. *Histoire de la commune de Montpellier...*: I, 319-320.



4. A town for two kingdoms: Montpellier between Aragon and France

That Pierre II of Aragon became in 1204 lord of Montpellier is a capital event in the history of the town, whose chronicle is partly the reflection. Indeed, the most ancient versions demonstrate that, under the Guilhems' rule, Montpellier was deeply inserted into a Languedocian space by paying a great attention to the different episodes of the 'great southerner war' that opposed for over a century the counts of Toulouse to the ones of Barcelona and their allies, including the Trencavels and the Guilhems.³⁴ For instance, the list of 'antiquities and events' included in the H 119 manuscript records for 1181 the capture of Bernard Aton VI, viscount of Agde and Nîmes by Raymond Gaucelm, lord of Lunel, and the fact that he has to sell his rights on Nîmes to Raymond V, count of Toulouse, in order to pay his ransom³⁵ or the death of Ermengarde, viscountess of Narbonne, which occurred in 1194.³⁶ But, such informations which can be easily understood in the context of the 12th century, especially if we remember that Guilhem VIII was a member of the alliance created in 1181 by Raymond Bérenger IV, count of Provence, against the count of Toulouse, became totally meaningless after the disappearance of the Guilhems' dynasty, and disappeared from the AA 9 manuscript written in the 1330s in a moment where the relationships between the town and its new lords—the kings of Majorque—were far more important than the remembrance of a seigniorial past. In fact, around 1330, a drastic selection of the events was made by the notary of the consulate in charge of this chronicle who mainly chose to retain those who had a direct link with the Catalan lands or the Aragonese crown. Apart from the initial date of the seizure of Barcelona already analysed, the AA 9 manuscript carefully keeps the memory of military expeditions led by the counts of Barcelona against the Muslims during the 12th century: it concerns the Ibiza's first conquest made under the leadership of Raymond Bérenger III in 1114-1115³⁷ as well as the takeover of Almeria in October 1147 and of Tortosa in 1149 made by Raymond Bérenger IV, count of Barcelona and Provence.³⁸ Nevertheless, such events have been only recorded due to the involvement of the Guilhems in the struggle against Muslims: Guilhem V was present during the raid against Ibiza and Guilhem VI took a decisive part in the seizure of Tortosa. For this latter case, even before the victory, Guilhem VI had

34. For a synthetic view of this war, see: Macé, Laurent. *Les comtes de Toulouse et leur entourage XII^e-XIII^e siècles*. Toulouse: Privat, 2000: 23-33.

35. *En l'an de M e C Lxxxi, pres en R. Gaucelm lo vescomte de Nemze, e tenc lo pres ii ans. Et a cap de ii ans, comptet lo coms R. Nemze p[er] sa rezmo[n]tj*. BIUM. Section de médecine, H 119, f. 82.

36. *Et en aquel an mori la dona N'Esmergartz de Narbona*. BIUM. Section de médecine, H 119, f. 82v. About Ermengarde, see: Cheyette, Frédéric Laurence. *Ermengarde de Narbonne et le monde des troubadours*. Paris: Perrin, 2006.

37. *L'an MCXIII lo rey d'Aragon en Jacme pres Malhorca*. AMM. AA 9, f. 70v. There is an obvious confusion between this expedition and the later one led by Jacques of Aragon against Majorque in 1229 which is yet correctly recorded in this manuscript under this year. The other manuscripts did not make this confusion, simply attributing this attack to Christians without any other precision.

38. *L'an MCXLVIII, lo comte de Prohensa pres Almaria*. [...] *L'an MCXLIX, lo dich comte pres Tortosa de Sarrazis*. AMM. AA 9, f.70v.



received in 1136 in fiefdom from the count of Barcelona the third part of the town to be conquered³⁹ and, in his final will, he left it to his second son who took the name of Guilhem of Tortosa. In the 1330s, the remembrance of these victories was kept, not because it highlighted the Guilhem's glorious past but because they were part of the reconquest led by the ancestors of the Aragon kings. The record of these events was unmodified but their significance, from a memorial point of view, completely changed to celebrate the Catalan dynasty. In another case—the birth of Jacques of Aragon—the reorientation of the chronicle is more subtle: whereas the H 119 writes *lo primier dia de fevrier e fon a divenres nasquet en Jacme rei d' Aragon lo fill de la regina dona de Montpellier*,⁴⁰ the AA 9 manuscript prefers to say that *et aquel an a I e fevrier nasquet m° Jacme filh de m° Peire rey d' Aragon*.⁴¹ If, in the first version, the essential thing was to indicate the filiation between Jacques of Aragon and the last heiress of the Guilhems, Marie of Montpellier, pointing out his legitimacy to rule the town, the most recent one draws attention on the fact that Jacques was the son and heir of the Aragon king. A symbolic detail of a substantial reorientation of the civic memory from the lands of the Guilhems towards the crown of Aragon. Indeed, from 1204, the chronicle pays a greater attention to various events which occurred in the Spanish kingdoms, and not only in Aragon, in connection with the reconquest over Muslims. Oddly, the AA 9 manuscript neglected to recall for 1212 the famous battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in which Pierre II of Aragon was involved and only retained the takeover of Calatrava and Baeza, maybe also because French crusaders were present under the spiritual leadership of Arnaud Amaury, archbishop of Narbonne.⁴² It is quite surprising as the mention of this battle is present in the others manuscripts under the date of 1212:⁴³ why Las Navas de Tolosa has finally not be retained remains, for the moment, a complete mystery all the more that, on the contrary, the chronicle keeps a complete record of the conquests realised by his son Jacques of Aragon. Of course, the fact that Jacques was born in Montpellier and that he made several stays in his home town may explain the attention paid by the *Petit Thalamus* to this sovereign who conquered Majorque and the kingdom of Valence.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the relationships between the king and Montpellier were far from being unworried, even if the final version of the text presents a very

39. Published by Alexandre Germain and Camille Chabaneau in: *Liber Instrumentorum Memorialium, cartulaire des Guilhems...* : 284-285 (fasc. 2).

40. "The first day of February, which it was Friday, James of Aragon, son of the Queen Dame of Montpelier, was born". BIUM. Section de médecine, H 119, f. 119.

41. "And in this year, the first February, James, son of the Lord Peter King of Aragon, born". AMM. AA 9, f. 71.

42. *En aquest an, lo primier jorn de jullh, fo preza Calatrava et Beda*. AMM. AA 9, f. 71v. There is an obvious mistake as Calatrava and Baeza were not taken on the same day. The size of Calatrava took place before the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa and the one of Baeza after.

43. *En l'an de M et CC XII, fon preza Calatrava lo primier jorn de jull. Et apres tres setmanas fon facha la batalha d' Espanha e fes la lo rei d' Aragon, el rei de Castella, el rei de Navarra e lur hostz*. BNF. Manuscrit français, Ms. 11795, f. 67v.

44. *Lo II jorn de genoyer m° Jacme, rey d' Aragon, pres Malhorca*. AMM. AA 9, f. 73v. ; *Aquest an, en setembre, lo XXVIII jorn, m° Jacme, rey d' Aragon, pres Valencia*. AMM. AA 9 f. 74v.



peaceful image of these relations. For instance, under the year 1243, the AA 9 manuscript simply notes the birth in Montpellier of Jacques, son of Jacques of Aragon and future king of Majorque⁴⁵ but completely forget to explain why the king and the queen, Yolande of Hungary, were present at Montpellier at that time. In fact, the arrival of the royal couple was not at all a fortuitous one: in 1243, the alleged heir of the kingdom was Alphonse, the elder son of the king. But, in order to preserve the interests of his second son, Pierre, Jacques planned in 1241 a first sharing of his territories, reserving the Balears, the counties of Roussillon and Cerdagne and the lordship of Montpellier to Pierre. Pierre, a three years old child at this time, was present in Montpellier and the coming of the royal family was intended to prepare such a succession. There is not any real doubt about the significance of this arrival as a complete account of the ceremony has been included in the two Latin versions of the *Petit Thalamus*:⁴⁶ on Saint Paul and Peter's feast day, the consuls and the whole people of Montpellier swore a loyalty oath not only to Jacques of Aragon but, in prevision of his death, to the queen and eventually to their son, Pierre, that they recognised as their future lord.⁴⁷ Such an oath has obviously to be carefully preserved in the second half of the 13th century even if Pierre finally became king of Aragon and Jacques, born in 1243, lord of Montpellier. But, during the 14th century, not only did this oath became ineffective but also embarrassing as it reminded to the consuls their obvious submission to the king in a time where the balance of power between the town and his sovereign has been modified in favour of the consulate. Of course, the fact that the consuls had to swear a loyalty oath remains unquestioned but such an oath had normally only to be sworn once when the new lord came to take possession of the town and the consuls were quite jealous of their prerogatives. In February 1277, after Jacques of Aragon's death, his son Jacques went to Montpellier to receive this oath: he swore to respect the customs and privileges of the town, and the consuls and the people swore to be faithful to him.⁴⁸ But, this was made on their knees (*flexis genibus*) which immediately provoked a rumour amongst the people of Montpellier and forced the king to deliver a charter pointing out that this does not imply an allegiance or a subjection link but

45. *Aquest an, la vigilia de Pantacosta, nasquet a Montpellier M^o Jacme, lo bon rey*. AMM. AA 9, f. 75.

46. ANF. J 339 (doc. No. 23); AMM. AA 4.

47. The exact text of this oath is preserved in AMM. AA 4, f. 86: *Ego, homo, juro vobis, domino Jacobo, Dei gracia Regi Aragonum et regnis Majoricie et Valentie, comiti Barchinonensis et Urgelli et domino Montispessulani, quod ego salvabo et custodiam vitam vestram et membra vestra et dominacionem vestram, et semper ero fidelis vobis in tota vita vestra, et post vos, domine regine Yoles, uxori vestre, quamdiu vixerit et viduitatem legitime observabit et non ingreditur domum religiosam, et post attendam ad Petrum filium vestrum. Habebo ipsum in dominium meum et Montispessulani vel alium filium et dicte domine regine, de quo vos hoc in mandaveritis verbo vel testamento, nec admittam vel recipiam alium in dominium Montispessulani in hoc facerem, de voluntate vestra vel filii vestri et dicte domine regine Yoles qui esset dominus Montispessulani et cui teneri obedire de voluntate vestra ut dictum est, salvis consuetudinibus et libertatibus Montispessulani a vobis laudatis.*

48. *E en aquel an, juret lo pobol de Monpeylier a mosenhor en Jacme son filh, rey de Malhorgas, e el juret las costumaz*. AMM. AA 9, f. 79.



nothing more than a simple loyalty oath.⁴⁹ A more serious matter opposed Montpellier to Jacques of Aragon between 1252 and 1258. In 1252, the king tried to confiscate to his own benefit a duty called the ‘obols of Lattes’ which was, at this time, withdrawn by the consuls on the goods disembarked at the harbour of Lattes. But the consuls opposed vigorously to this measure, elected without the king’s consent two *bayles* and, summoned to present themselves to the king’s court at Barcelona, simply refused. To put an end to this conflict, Jacques of Aragon had to come to Montpellier in December 1258 and, in front of the entire people of the town gathered before the Franciscan’s convent, to deliver a grace letter for all the acts committed against his authority. This was followed by a new exchange of oaths between the sovereign and the inhabitants of the town.⁵⁰ From this succession of events, the AA 9 manuscript only records a simple sentence: *Et adoncs la composition entre l rey en Jacme e la vila*.⁵¹ But the older versions are less allusive: while the Latin text clearly speaks of a peace concluded between the king and the *universitas* and of the respective oaths sworn on this occasion,⁵² the Bruxelles’ manuscript evokes the beginning of the conflict and the fact that the consulate’s bell called the men of the town to arms.⁵³ Such a decision which could only have occurred under the control of the consuls was nothing less but a rebellion against royal power: once again, it became in the 14th century too embarrassing to be officially recalled as it constituted an offense to royal majesty. It was then erased from the civic memory and hidden behind the pacified vision of a simple arrangement between the king and the town. This seems to be quite a regular topic of this memorial reconstruction: concealing the urban traumas in favour of a peaceful and united history of the town.

But, from year to year, the chronicle is also the reflection of the growing influence of the French king over the southern lands. While the Capétiens had been completely ignored during the 12th century —not even to talk of the 11th century— they made their appearance with Philippe Auguste whose death, in 1223, constitutes the very first mention of a king of France in the *Petit Thalamus*.⁵⁴ Still, it remains a shy one as nothing is told about his life, not even about the conquest of Normandy which is doubtlessly the highlight of this reign. It is the evident proof of the absence of real influence of the French king in this area before the 1220s and of their inability to compensate the king of Aragon’s power. But from then on, the chronicle carefully records each death of a king of France, the name of his immediate successor and,

49. Published by Alexandre Germain: Germain, Alexandre. *Histoire de la commune de Montpellier...*: II, 348-349.

50. Germain, Alexandre. *Histoire de la commune de Montpellier...*: II, 331-341.

51. “The composition between the King James and the town”. AMM. AA 9, f. 76v.

52. *Et eodem anno fecit pacem dominus Jacobus Rex Aragonum cum consulibus et tota universitate Montipessulani et idem dominus rex laudavit sigillatim consuetudines et libertates Montispessulani et fecit fieri juramentum fidelitatis ab universis habitatoribus Montispessulani qui erant etatis legitime ad jurandum sibi, et post dies suos, domino Jacobo filio suo*. AMM. AA 4, f. 87.

53. *En l’an de M et CC LII demanda lo rei Jacme rei d’Aragon las mezallas de Latas e lendeman de l’Apareccion apres cobreron lus li home de Monpeslier la cloca dels armatz*. BNF. Manuscrits français, Ms. 7082, f. 17v.

54. *Aquest an, a XVII de julh, mori M^o Ph., rey de Fransa*. AMM. AA 9, f. 73.



on some occasions, the birth of the elder son of the king. Not only are the deaths of the French sovereigns written down but also their main actions, especially if they are related to Languedoc. In a sense, the first real event led by a king of France which appears in the *Petit Thalamus* is the siege of Avignon by Louis VIII in 1226: the chronicle retains in a single sentence the siege itself, its major consequences -the capture of the town and the symbolic destruction of its walls- and the death of the king on his way back to Paris.⁵⁵ But such a sentence contains nothing less than the annexation of Languedoc to the French Crown. The *Petit Thalamus* is also the reflection of the Mediterranean tropism of Louis IX and his obvious interest for the Mediterranean shores of his kingdom. As an evidence, an event as important as the arrival of the king at Aigues-Mortes in 1249 in order to embark for Egypt could not be unnoticed⁵⁶ but the Latin version is more explicit by explaining that the consuls sent to Louis IX an embassy at Aigues-Mortes and that these delegates managed to obtain from the king some privileges which protected Montpellier's trade from the new concurrency of Aigues-Mortes.⁵⁷ The king of France had then become a major player in Languedoc policies whose influence could not be ignored any more, neither in the facts nor in the way to write the urban history. From this moment on, the reorientation of the civic identity from an Aragonese horizon to a French one becomes clear, especially when the only figure able to overshadow the one of Louis IX, Jacques of Aragon, disappeared in 1276.⁵⁸ Long before the final acquisition of the town by Philippe VI in 1349, the *Petit Thalamus* has already recorded the fact that Montpellier was looking more toward Paris than toward Barcelona.

5. Conclusions

One of the main interests of this chronicle is to have been preserved in different manuscripts written between the 12th and the 14th century, each one presenting its own version. It offers a unique occasion to analyse the phenomena of memorial reconstruction led by the official history of the town in accordance to political requirements, phenomena which unveil a certain doubt in the definition of the urban community and some difficulties to create a civic identity. A town deprived of any Roman past—which offers in fact to Montpellier a great freedom in the way to tell its own history and to choose vernacular language rather than Latin—, also freed from any figure of a count or a bishop, Montpellier does not really build its identity on the Guilhems' memory which is little by little put into oblivion. Of

55. *Aquest an, en junh, M^o Loys, rey de Fransa, mes lo cety davant Avinhon et lo pres et derroquet los murs et pueys en setembre mori a Montpansier*. AMM. AA 9, f. 73. On this episode, see: Zerner, Monique. "Le siège d'Avignon par Louis VIII (10 juin-10 septembre 1226)", *Avignon au Moyen Âge. Textes et documents*, Hervé Aliquot, Bernard Guillemain, eds. Avignon: Aubanel, 1988: 43-52.

56. *E aquel an passet d'Aygas Mortas otra mar Lodoic rey de Fransa*. AMM. AA 9, f. 75v.

57. AMM. AA 4, f. 85v.

58. *La vigilia de Sant Jacme mori a Valencia en abit del Cistel M^o Jacme, rey d'Aragon*. AMM. AA 9, f. 77v.



course, some glorious kings of Aragon can offer replacement characters, especially the one of Jacques of Aragon born in Montpellier, but such a memory was fragile and awkward once the king of France became the master of Languedoc and was eventually unable to create an appropriate civic identity. And finally, these constant writings and rewritings of a same material reveals that the only foundation of the civic identity is the consulate itself which used to materialise its identity the *ecclesia matrix* of Notre-Dame-des-Tables, the great seal of the consulate and, from the beginning of the 13th century, a memorial reconstruction and manipulation whose keystone is precisely the rewriting of its origins.

