

G. E. M. Lippiatt, *Simon V of Montfort and Baronial Government, 1195–1218*, Oxford (Oxford University Press) 2017, XVIII–238 p., 6 fig., 8 maps (Oxford Historical Monographs), ISBN 978-0-19-880513-7, GBP 60,00.

rezensiert von | compte rendu rédigé par
Simon A. John, Swansea

Simon V of Montfort has long been familiar to historians whose interests lie in French history in the period around the turn of the 13th century. However, most know him only as the military leader of the Albigensian Crusade, the expedition that was called by the papacy in 1208 with the ostensible aim of eradicating Cathar heresy in Languedoc. Simon led the forces of the crusade, the majority of whom were from northern France, from 1209 until he was killed in the midst of an attack upon the city of Toulouse in 1218. Many observers – including some of Simon's own contemporaries as well as modern historians – have regarded him as a self-serving and acquisitive figure who subverted the Albigensian Crusade, by comportsing to answer the papal command to fight heretics only to embark on what amounted to a brutal land grab from the nobility of Languedoc. While Simon's leadership of the Albigensian Crusade has garnered a great deal of attention, though, there has until now been no sustained treatment of his career as a whole.

Over the course of this insightful and well-researched book, G. E. M. Lippiatt charts and analyses Simon's varied and colourful career. He was born to a mid-level northern French aristocratic family, inheriting from his father in 1185 the compact lordship of Montfort, which lay to the east of Paris. At the outset of the 13th century, Simon committed to participate in the expedition which became known as the Fourth Crusade. However, he departed that expedition at Zara in 1203 rather than continue to Constantinople as its leaders intended, and fought in the Holy Land before returning to France. He briefly succeeded his childless uncle, Robert, as earl of Leicester, although King John of England soon confiscated that honor from him. A few years later Simon responded to Pope Innocent's call to campaign against the heretics in the Languedoc, and, after his arrival in the region in 1209, quickly succeeded in securing new territory and titles for himself. He gained the viscounties of Béziers and Carcassonne in 1209, and gained effective control of the county of Toulouse by the end of 1212, a state of affairs which was recognised at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.

The book is structured into six chapters, each of which explores a different aspect or phase of Simon's career. The first three chapters are thematic in nature. The first analyses Simon's political relationships. Over the course of his career, he was variously subject to the lordship of a range of significant figures, including the kings of France, Aragon and England, and the pope. Lippiatt casts Simon as a man who often sought to play one overlord off against another, often encountering a considerable degree of success in doing so. The second chapter examines Simon's career as a crusader, both on the Fourth Crusade and on the expedition he led in the Languedoc. In one sense, Simon's crusading career presents an interesting counterpoint to those of many of his contemporaries.



Herausgegeben vom Deutschen
Historischen Institut Paris | publiée
par l'Institut historique allemand



Publiziert unter | publiée sous
[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

As Nicholas L. Paul has shown, by about 1200, a number of northern French aristocratic families had already established a tradition of crusade participation across several generations¹. In contrast, with his participation in the Fourth Crusade, Simon was the first member of his family to become a crusader. His example was subsequently followed by his brother and his two eldest sons, all of whom took the cross. One intriguing facet of this chapter is that Lippiatt is able to pinpoint a number of figures who were with Simon as he left the Fourth Crusade at Zara, and who then reappear alongside him on campaign in the Languedoc. This sheds light on the bonds that could be forged between figures on crusade, and the potential for those bonds to shape those men's future careers.

The third chapter seeks to place Simon in the wider spiritual and intellectual currents of his age. Specifically, it examines his possible exposure to the reforming ideas expounded by the Cistercian Order and the masters teaching at the schools in Paris. Over the course of the chapter, Lippiatt builds a case that Simon engaged with the ideas diffused by the Paris masters and the monks of Cîteaux, and therefore that his career represents a valuable opportunity to gauge the lay response to the reform movements which shaped Western European society at the turn of the 13th century.

The second trio of chapters take a different approach, focussing in turn on the different territories over which Simon, by various means, came to exercise lordship. Hence, chapter four focusses on the lordship of Montfort and the earldom of Leicester, chapter five is devoted to the viscounties of Béziers and Carcassone, and the sixth and final chapter investigates the duchy of Narbonne and the county of Toulouse. In each of these three chapters, Lippiatt explores how Simon constructed his image(s) of rule (focussing in particular of the form and symbolism of his seals, and on the title clauses of documents issued in his name), his patronage of ecclesiastical houses, his methods for raising funds (and the ways in which he disbursed them), and how he operated his household and administration. Chapters five and six also feature complementary examinations of how Simon sought to combat heresy and implement reform in the two spheres of the Languedoc which came into his ambit. This analytical structure permits Lippiatt to make meaningful observations about how Simon operated the mechanics of lordship in the different regions in which he wielded authority. Each territory was of course subject to different constraints and possibilities, and so it is revealing to see how the same approaches to lordship – Simon's use of a form of consultative government, for example – played out in different contexts, oftentimes with varying results.

The book draws from a commendably wide array of evidence, including a number of narrative accounts of the Albigensian Crusade such as that by Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay, a member of a Cistercian house in Simon's lordship of Montfort. More innovatively, Lippiatt makes use of a large quantity of documentary material (charters, diplomas and similar), including a significant quantity of unedited material which he has examined in repositories throughout France. This permits him to illuminate much fine detail about Simon's rule that hitherto has been unknown. A key aim of the book is to nuance the widely-held perception



Herausgegeben vom Deutschen
Historischen Institut Paris | publiée
par l'Institut historique allemand



Publiziert unter | publiée sous
[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

¹ Nicholas L. Paul, *To Follow in Their Footsteps. The Crusades and Family Memory in the High Middle Ages*, Ithaca, NY 2012.

of Simon a land-crazed brute, and to make it clear that categories such as »hero« and »villain« serve misleadingly to simplify a far more complex figure. Above all, Lippiatt seeks to detach Simon from the preoccupations which others – and especially his critics – have imposed onto him. The objective is to see Simon on his own terms and in line with the values of his own age. What emerges in the pages of this book, then, is a figure who, thanks to his formative experiences and exposure to reforming ideas, was stimulated by a genuine desire to institute reform and eradicate heresy in the Languedoc. This, in this scholar's view, culminated in November 1212, when a group of barons and bishops under Simon's leadership gathered in the small town of Pamiers to issue a set of laws by which he would exercise governance in the region. As Lippiatt shows, these laws – the statutes of Pamiers – are infused with reform-minded thinking.

This book will be of interest to a range of scholars with interests in late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century French history. It offers a new vantage point on some crucial dynamics which shaped that period, including the impact of the crusades on the mechanics of lordship, lay responses to and attitudes towards heresy, and relations between the French and English crowns. Perhaps most valuably, this study reveals a figure who operated below the level of royalty and the high aristocracy, but who nevertheless seems to have engaged with emerging theories of governance and administrative practice. Fully to understand this period, then, we should not look only to the king.



Herausgegeben vom Deutschen
Historischen Institut Paris | publiée
par l'Institut historique allemand



Publiziert unter | publiée sous
[CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)