

Un serventés, plait de deduit, de joie (RS 1729)

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Anonymous

Ι

Un serventés, plait de deduit, de joie, comencerai au Dieu comandement, qu'il nos enseint le chemin et la voie a li aler sanz nul encombrement.

Alun i tuit et tres isnelement avoec Celui qui nus apele et proie, amanevi a sun asenblement: en geridun paradis nos otroie a toz jorz mais por nostre salvement.

Ι

At God's command I shall begin a sirventes, a discourse of happiness and joy, so that he may teach us the way and the path to go to Him without impediment. Let us all go, and that most quickly, with the One who summons and exhorts us, responding swiftly to his convocation: as a reward He offers us paradise for evermore for our salvation.

II

III

[...]

Π

III

[...] when the king of Paris was in a desperate state, so that they thought his soul had left him; and when he returned to life, he requested the cross and the one who is witness to such a beautiful miracle gave it to him.

quant le roi de Paris fu esperdu,
qu'il cuidoient que l'arme en fut alee;
et quant il fu en vie revenu,
la croiz reqit et cil li a donee,
qui tesmoinz est de si bele vertuz.

.....

IV

Jerusalem, tant es desconfortee!
sur toi en est le domage venu!
Cretïentez t'a trop abandonee,
et le sepulcre et temple est perdu,
qui fu jadis en grant chierté tenu.
Bien fus antan servie et onoree,
Dieux fu en toi cloffichez et penduz,
or t'unt paien esillïe et gastee:
mal geredun lor en sera rendu.

V

France, [bien] doiz avoir grant seignorie, sur totes riens te doit en enorer!

Diex te requiert et secors et aïe

por sun païs de paiens delivrer:
por ceu a fait le roi resociter.

Pris a la croiz por amender sa vie,
si s'en ira, se Deu plet, outre mer.

Tuit si baron li feront compaignie;
li cuens d'Artois ira ses oz gier.

VI

Au riche roi qui France a en baillie va, serventois, tun message conter, qu'il n'oblit pas la terre de Sorie: ne puet pas si lungement demorer. Paris lu veut en bone foi loer qu'il maint ses oz par terre Romanie; legierement la pora conqester et baticer le sodant de Turquie; poi si porra tot se monde aquiter.

IV

Jerusalem, you are so forlorn! Misfortune has come upon you! Christendom has dreadfully abandoned you, and the sepulchre is lost, the temple which in the past was held so dear. Time was, you were much served and honoured, God was nailed and hanged in you; now pagans have ruined and destroyed you: they will be justly punished for it.

V

France, you should rightly have great prestige, you should be honoured above all things! God seeks from you aid and assistance to liberate His land from the pagans: this is why He raised the king from the dead. He took the cross to purify his life, and so, God willing, he will go overseas. All his barons will go with him; the count of Artois will lead his hosts.

VI

Go, *sirventes*, to relay your message to the noble king who rules France, so that he does not forget the Holy Land: he cannot delay here any longer. Paris wishes to exhort him openly to a send his army to the lands of the East; he will easily be able to conquer them and baptise the sultan of Turkey; then he will be able to liberate this whole world.

VII

L'emperaor face au pape acorder, puis passera la mer a grant navie; ne le porrunt li paien endurer; tot conquerra et [T]urquie et Persie, en Babilonie ira por coroner. VII

Let him reconcile the pope and the emperor, then he will cross the sea with a great navy; the pagans will not be able to resist him; he will conquer all of Turkey and Persia, and will go to be crowned in Cairo.

Notes

The use of the term *sirventes* (vv. 1 and 47) sets this composition within the framework of Occitan-type political and hortatory songs. It is in fact a somewhat traditional song of exhortation, which signals the return of a certain religious optimism concerning crusading to the Holy Land, after the period of disillusionment due to the failure of prior expeditions. Various elements suggest links between this late text and early songs of exhortation: the promise of paradise for those who take part in the crusade (v. 8), the lament over the situation of Jerusalem (vv. 28-29) though accompanied by the realistic emphasis on the scant interest on the part of western Christians in the situation of the Holy Land, the call to avoid delay addressed to the sovereign. To these traditional elements are added other newer ones, such as the exaltation of the "national" character of the crusade and the rôle of France and its king. The figure of Louis IX himself, whose miraculous cure is recorded by the author, constitutes the main source of optimism pervading the text, an optimism that goes so far as to prophesy the conversion of the Muslim rulers (v. 53) and dream of the conquest not only of the Holy Land but of the whole of the Muslim Orient, to the point of imagining the king being crowned king of Cairo (v. 59).

- For *voie* as synonymous with crusade and pilgrimage see RS 1738a, 4 and commentary.
- For paradise as reward see the note to RS 1738a, 65-70. See also RS 401, 19-20, which places *paraïs* and *gueredon* together.
- 23-27 References to the king's illness which induced him to take the cross, for which see RS 1738a.
- The demonstrative *cil* must refer to the bishop of Paris Guillaume d'Auvergne: see RS 1738a, 43 and commentary.
- The apostrophe to Jerusalem and its condition is fairly common in crusade songs. See for example the refrain of RS 886; Huon de Saint-Quentin RS 1576, 1-4 and *Complainte* 1-6.
- 30 The responsibility for failures in the Holy Land and for the loss of Jerusalem is no longer attributed to the sins of the Christians, as it was during the early crusades (according to the formula peccatis exigentibus hominum created by Bernard of Clairvaux to explain the failure of the Second Crusade; see a good example in RS 401, 29-32), but directly to their lack of interest and their neglect concerning the situation in Palestine (an allusion to this topic can be found in Maistre Renaut RS 886, 51-54 in RS 1020a=1022, 1-4, for example, but see also the texts cited in the note to v. 49). In this particular case the accusation seems to be more specific, and there may be a reference to criticism of the behaviour of pope Innocent IV, who because of his involvement in the conflict with the emperor Frederick II inevitably ended up neglecting the concerns of the Holy Land. An Occitan song probably contemporary with the present one contains a similar accusation; see BdT 242.77, 43-44: e-l papa so monimen / malamen abandona. The same rebuke to Christendom in general (cretientez), a unicum in French crusade songs, is common in the troubadour corpus. A powerful accusation of neglect on the part of the Christian princes and the clergy is also found in RS 1576 by Huon de Saint-Quentin and the anonymous RS 640, composed at the time of the Fifth Crusade (see their introductory notes).
- In the pair *sepulcre* et temple it is unclear to what the word temple should refer, though the author seems to assimilate it to the sepulchre itself (the church of the Holy Sepulchre?). The nouns temple and sepulcre are also found together in Maistre Renaut RS 886, 43-46 and for an interpretation of temple see the commentary to vv. 43-44 of that text. See also vv. 21-24 of the same song: Mout par est grans duels quant on pert / Lou vrai sepulcre ou Deus fut mis, / Et ke li saint leu sont desert / Ou Nostre Sire estoit servis.

- 33-34 These two lines are almost certainly corrupt in the manuscript: the repetition *fu en toi* is suspect and the reading *Dieux* of v. 33 does not agree with the feminine participles *servie* et *onoree*. I emend v. 33 introducing the adverb *antan* (which among other things is close to the ms. reading *en toi*), as the presence of *or* in v. 35 suggests the need for a temporal expression indicating the past. For the association of *antan* and *or* see for example Gace Brulé RS 719, 36-37: *Chantez, Renaut, qui antan amiiez; / Or m'est avis que vous en retraiez*.
- In this stanza the national character of the expedition assumes its clearest expression, and it will be recalled that the Seventh Crusade was in fact a French crusade. Various references to the personification of France, its prestige, its honour and its emotional involvement in the results of military operations are already present in the Barons' Crusade, on which see Philippe de Nanteuil RS 164, 7, 11 and 24 and RS 1133, 28 and 41. But it is with Louis IX that this concept becomes established definitively, to which the anonymous compositions RS 1738a and RS 1887 (especially v. 36), as well as the present piece, bear witness.
- The theme of assistance to God in the Holy Land is typical of hortatory songs; see for example Conon de Béthune RS 1125, 17-18; Huon de Saint-Quentin RS 1576, 3-4; Thibaut de Champagne RS 6, 20-21 and the refrain of RS 886.
- The use of the verb *resociter* confirms explicitly the interpretation of Louis IX's recovery as a miracle, already a theme of RS 1738a (see in particular the dating and introductory note).
- The verb *amender* helps to associate the king of France with the image of the pilgrim to the Holy Land: see the commentary to RS 1738a, 4. On the use of this verb in the context of crusade songs compare Hugues de Berzé RS 37a, 7 and Thibaut de Champagne RS 1152, 12.
- This text also explicitly mentions the count Robert of Artois, the king's brother, as did RS 1738a, 37.
- The song concludes with a direct exhortation to the king of France to put an end to delay. Between the first taking of the cross and the king's actual departure three and a half years passed during which political and financial difficulties put the expedition's organisation at risk several times.
- This line suggests that some time had already elapsed since the king first took the cross. For the verb *demorer* used negatively to blame those who do not intend to take part in the expeditions see especially Conon de Béthune RS 1125, 24; Thibaut de Champagne RS 6, 8, 18; RS 401, 29-32; RS 1020a=1022, 1-4.
- On the northern form *lu* for *lui* see for example *Chanson de Roland*, 368: *Mais Blancandrins ki* envers *lu s'atarget*; *Folie Tristan d'Oxford*, 161: *Prueisse ne lu pot valeir*. This line, along with v. 32, seems to indicate a Parisian origin of the author or in any case the text.
- On the extension of the term *Romanie* to cover the whole of the Latin Orient or any place of pilgrimage see the dating section of Raoul de Soissons RS 1204.
- The expression of missionary zeal is a novelty in crusade songs and is perhaps the outcome of the change in mentality underway in the 13th c. through the activity and reflections of the mendicant orders. One reason for Louis IX steering his second crusade to Tunisia was the news that the caliph Muhammad I al-Mustansir wished to convert to Christianity and have himself baptised (Delaruelle 1960, pp. 255-256; Mercuri 1996, p. 232). The noun *Turquie* must indicate here the Muslim world in general; for the generic use of *Turc* see Conon de Béthune RS 1125, 20; RS 401, 31; RS 1133, 47.

- I interpret *poi* as an italianism for *puis* and emend *li* to *si* in view of the scribe's tendency to confuse *s* and *l*. The phrase *puis si* is very common; for an example of its use with the future see Douin de Lavesne, *Trubert*, 2070-2071: *Vostre fille a fame demande*, / *puis si sera mout vostre amis*.
- The line may refer to the negotiations of Cluny during 28-30 November 1245, when Louis IX tried to reconcile Innocent IV and Frederick II; but the king's wish to mediate was protracted throughout the whole period from 1244 to 1248. There were other attempts in 1246 and the spring of 1247, and during the latter Louis was scandalised by the pope's intransigeance (Richard 1983, p. 189). The crusade, though initially encouraged, was not actively supported by pope Innocent IV; on the contrary, by unleashing an alternative crusade against the emperor during the council of Lyon in 1245, the pope ended up depriving Louis IX of the general support of Christian Europe.
- Babylon is the classical and medieval name for the old city of Cairo; see for example Raimbaut de Vaqueiras BdT 392.9a, 49-50: ben leu pot anar osteian / a Babiloni' e al Caire.

Text

Luca Barbieri 2016

Mss.

(1). H 220b (Moniez d'Arraz); for the attribution see the introduction to RS 640.

Versification and music

10a'ba'bba'ba'b (MW 909,2 = Frank 304); 6 *coblas doblas* (of which four are preserved in their entirety and one partially) with a 5-line *envoi* (babab); rhyme a: -oie , -ee , -ie ; rhyme b: -ent , -uz , -er ; paronymous and derivative rhymes vv. 25 and 29 (revenu-venu), 23 and 31 (?) (esperdu-perdu); caesura 6+4 vv. 23 and 37 (?); lyric caesura v. 24; feminine caesura with elision vv. 31 and 59.

Previous editions

Camus 1891, 241; Bédier-Aubry 1909, 247; Bertoni 1917, 363; Petersen Dyggve 1939, 139; Dijkstra 1995, 214.

Analysis of the manuscript tradition

For analysis of the manuscript see the corresponding rubric to the song RS 640. The text is transmitted in an incomplete and corrupt state, from the point of view of both structure and readings. As Bédier clearly shows, an analysis of the rhymes points to an original structure of *coblas doblas*, but in the way the text is set out in the manuscript it appears lacunary and disorderly. The rhymes of the first stanza are isolated, and Bédier rightly postulates the existence of a second, lost, stanza with the same rhymes (there is only one known case of a song with five stanzas having the structure 1+2+2: the anonymous pastourelle RS 2002). The rhymes of the second stanza in the manuscript (the third in Bédier's reconstruction, the fourth in ours) are picked up in five lines transposed by the scribe to the end of the text, but sense and syntax show that they must be the residual stump of an originally complete stanza which should be placed in an a position adjoining the fourth stanza of the reconstructed text; not only are the rhymes the same, but the reference in v. 41 to the king's recovery presupposes that the lines on his illness come first. The scribe is likely to have transposed these lines to the end precisely because of their fragmentary nature. The final part of the text has been correctly transcribed by the copyist, with

two other stanzas having the same rhymes and a five-line envoi echoing the rhyme-scheme and rhymesounds of the second part of the preceding stanzas. Unlike Bédier, I place the incomplete stanza in third position: the sense is no obstacle to this, and the result is a series of three stanzas all beginning with an apostrophe directed respectively at Jerusalem, France, and its king. In addition the gap in the text becomes continuous and can more easily be explained by imagining an already corrupt model. The text contains some Picard elements, especially the use of u after o (v. 5 alun, v. 6 nus, vv. 7 and 40 sun , vv. 8 and 36 geredun, v. 35 unt, v. 47 tun, v. 49 lungement, v. 57 porrunt) and the use of g alone to express the velar in front of a palatal vowel (vv. 8 and 36 geredun, v. 45 gier); there is also a case of reduction iee > ie in esillie (v. 35). There are also a few occitanisms or italianisms such as serventés (v. 1, but serventois in v. 47), emperaor (v. 55, a venetianism?) and in all likelihood poi (v. 54). There are very frequent infractions of the two-case system, which sometimes affect the rhyme (vv. 23, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 36). It should be noted that the reconstruction of the correct form would restore all regular rhymes in -uz, an element which suggests an original written in central France. Bédier proposes a normalised and correct text, whereas I prefer to remain faithful to the manuscript readings (see also the edition of Petersen Dyggve 1939), intervening only where the text is patently corrupt. The conjectural emendations are purely hypothetical and are given in italics. The conjectures in vv. 7, 31, 37, 39 and 48 are Bédier's; those of vv. 33-34 and 54 are mine.

Historical context and dating

According to contemporary sources, on 14 December 1244, recovering from an illness that had brought him near to death, Louis IX asked the bishop of Paris for the cross and made a vow to depart for the Holy Land (see the introduction to RS 1738a). The long preparations and complex political situation in Europe, in particular the continual exhausting conflict between pope Innocent IV and the emperor Frederick II, delayed departure for a few years. Finally, on 12 June 1248 Louis IX received the pilgrim's staff and scrip in the church of Saint-Denis, and left for Aigues-Mortes, where he embarked for Cyprus on 25 August. The composition of the song must therefore date from after the king's illness (to which vv. 23-27 refer) and precede the ceremony in Saint-Denis which constitutes the effective beginning of the crusade. There are no elements in the text which allow a more specific dating, but the hortatory emphasis of vv. 46-49 suggests that some time must have passed from the announcement and preaching of the crusade. In any case it is highly likely that the song was written after the assembly summoned by Louis IX on 9 October, in which the king confirmed his own vow and many French barons took the cross. The allusion to Louis IX's efforts to mediate between the pope and the emperor (v. 55) could point to the negotiations of Cluny on 28-30 November 1245, which were followed by other peacemaking attempts in 1246 and 1247. The composition of this song can therefore be placed between the autumn of 1245 and the spring of 1248