



Montségur and Carcassonne

Are probably the two most popular Cathar locations the relative authenticity of which remains preserved, albeit in case of Montségur it may only be in form of its ruins.

Montségur



is famous as the last stronghold of the Cathars after the Crusade against them inspired by the Pope and the King of France. It is also the location of the Holy Grail according to early versions of the Grail legend.

A building on this site sheltered a community of Cathar women at the end of the twelfth century. Early in the thirteenth, Raymond de Pereille the co-siegnieur and Chatelain, was asked to make it defensible, anticipating the problems to come.

Following arrangement between Raymond de Pereille and the Cathar bishops Tendo of Agen and Guillabert de Castres, it became from 1232 the headquarters of the Cathar community in the Languedoc, and a refugee centre for "faidits" - outlaws who had been stripped of their lands and goods by the Roman Church. These faidits continued to wage a guerilla war against the invaders. Raymond de Pereille himself sought shelter at Montségur, when he fled from Toulouse, in 1237 with his wife Corba and infant daughter Esclarmonde.

After the failure of the uprising against the French invaders, the defeat of Henry III of England by Louis IX of France, the events at Avignonet, and the capitulation of Ramon VII, all in 1243, the Council of Beziers decided to destroy the last vestiges of Catharism. The Cathar sympathisers responsible for killing the Inquisitors at Avignonet were known to have come from Montségur. The Council therefore decided to "cut off the head of the dragon" by which they meant to taking of the château there, the last remaining major centre of Cathar belief. The château, perched on top of a majestic hill (called a pog), had already been reinforced.

The castle was besieged later in 1443 by Hughes des Arcis, Seneschal of Carcassonne for the King of France. For months the siege was unsuccessful but shortly before Christmas a group of Basque mercenaries scaled a seemingly impossible sheer cliff face, and overran a forward position. From here, under the direction of a Catholic bishop specialising in war machines, the French were able to construct catapults. This spelled the end of all hope. The garrison surrendered on 2 March 1244 having negotiated a truce of two weeks, after which the Parfaits would have to abjure their faith or burn alive.



The story of the siege of Montségur is one of the most moving of all the tragedies associated with the war against the Cathars. Even the most hostile writers were struck by the significance of events at Montségur, when against expectation the ranks of the doomed Parfaits increased during the two weeks' truce. For the Cathar account of this event click:

http://www.dhaxem.com/data/handt/The_Return_of_the_Cathars.pdf

Around 40 caves intertwine within the rocks underneath the fortress, they shelter the tombs of Montségur's dead. Till this date God had not allowed their desecration by "archeologists" and other adventurers alike. Montségur is a revered Cathar Holy Site.

Carcassonne



is the Capital city of the Aude. It is the largest city in Europe with its medieval city walls still intact. It was once a Visigothic city, sister city to Rennes-le-Château, and later a Cathar stronghold. Today it is a World Heritage Site.

Located between the Black Mountains and the Pyrénées, Carcassonne lies on important routes connecting the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea, and Spain to France and Italy. Signs of Pre-Roman (Iberian) habitation in this area date from the 5th century BC. In 122 BC the Romans invaded the areas that we now know as Provence and Languedoc, and built a central fortification. This Roman settlement they called Carcaso. They occupied the region until the mid 5th century AD when it, along with Spain, fell to the Visigoths, invaders from the banks of the Danube. Carcassonne remained under Visigoth rule from 460 to 725.

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A Visigothic walled city was built in the 5th century by Euric I, King of the Visigoths. In 508 it withstood attack by Frankish king, Clovis I, but fell to the Moors (Saracens) in 725. The Moorish walled city was renamed Carchachouna. A generation or so later, in 752, the Moors gave way to the Carolingian king, Pépin the Short, who did manage to take Carcassonne, making it a Frankish City.

For over a century the Medieval city of **Carcassona** enjoyed tremendous influence under the Trencavel family. This was brought to an end during the disastrous wars against the Cathars of the Languedoc. One of the important events in the first stages of the war was the siege of Carcassonne. At the end of the wars the Languedoc was annexed by the French crown. Carcassona became a French city called Carcassonne. After centuries of neglect it was heavily restored, and it is this restored city that makes such an impact today.

Within the city walls is a castle, once the home of Raymond-Roger Trencavel. Although the outer curtain wall of the city is French, and the whole site has been substantially restored, this building has a strong claim to be called a "Cathar Castle". It was besieged from 1st to 15th of August 1209. The city and its castle were taken by deceit, when Roger-Raymond came out to talk terms with Arnaud Amery during the siege. It is at this stage that Simon de Montfort was appointed to hold Raymond-Roger's territories. Soon afterwards, on the 10th November, Roger-Raymond died in his own prison, aged 24.



The Cité's outer ramparts, complete with turrets, towers, and crenellations, were built during the reign of Louis IX. His son, Philip III, continued the work. He also added a main gate, called the Porte Narbonnaise, to the inner walls. It is guarded by two flanking towers and a double barbican.

With the Part on Montségur edited, text extracted from:

<http://www.languedocmysteries.info>

