

Siège de Montségur

Siège de Montségur		
<div></div> <div>le château de Montségur</div>		
Informations générales		
Date	mai 1243 au 16 mars 1244	
Lieu	château de Montségur	
Issue	reddition du château	
Belligérants		
Armée royale	Défenseurs du château	
Commandants		
Hugues des Arcis	Raymond de Péreille Pierre Roger de Mirepoix	
Forces en présence		
environ deux mille	une centaine	
Croisade des Albigeois (Interventions royales)		
Batailles		
Marmande, Toulouse, Avignon, Montségur		

Le château de Montségur a été assiégé à plusieurs reprises. Le siège le plus important est celui de 1243-1244, qui s'acheva par la prise du château et le bûcher de deux cents cathares.

Montségur

Montségur est un fief qui appartient au XII^e siècle à la famille de Pareille. Son château était probablement en ruine en 1200. Vers 1204, pour une raison inconnue, le diacre cathare de Mirepoix demande à son seigneur de rebâtir le château. Certains supposent que les "Parfaits" (nom que se donnaient les cathares), informé des projets d'Innocent III à leur encontre, auraient voulu disposer d'un refuge.

Avec l'occupation des vicomtés Trencavel, puis du comté de Toulouse par les troupes de Simon de Montfort, Montségur devient un centre cathare important. Bien que connaissant cette situation, Montfort ne se préoccupa pas de ce château, qui lui aurait fait perdre beaucoup de temps alors qu'il avait tant à faire pour contrôler ses conquêtes. Le château servait ainsi de refuge aux périodes les plus sombres de la lutte, pour se vider en période

de paix, les Parfaits repartant dans les plaines.

Vers 1230, peu avant l'institution de l'Inquisition, l'évêque cathare Guilhabert de Castres demande au seigneur Raymond de Péreille l'autorisation de faire de Montségur la capitale des cathares. Après une longue réflexion^[1], Raymond accepte. Le château devient alors un centre cathare important, hébergeant plusieurs centaines de Parfaits et étant l'objet de pèlerinage des cathares. L'église cathare, riche, aidait Raymond de Péreille à recruter des soldats pour défendre le château. Le seigneur avait également fait venir un chevalier faydit, Pierre Roger de Mirepoix, lui avait confié le commandement du château et lui avait donné la main de sa fille Philippe.

Le siège

En 1243, le concile catholique de Béziers décide d'intensifier la lutte contre les cathares et décide de la prise du château, comprenant qu'aucune autre action ne serait efficace sans la prise de Montségur. Il lui fallait également répondre au massacre des Inquisiteurs à Avignonet et châtier ses instigateurs. Le concile confia la lutte à Hugues des Arcis, sénéchal de Carcassonne. Inspectant les lieux, Hugues comprend que le château, construit sur une montagne bordée d'à-pic, ne peut être pris d'assaut, et met le siège autour au mois de mai 1243. Il établit un cordon de sécurité autour du château, cependant inefficace car il n'empêcha pas le seigneur de Péreille de communiquer avec l'extérieur. L'été et l'automne s'écoulaient sans que des actions importantes soient entreprises, Hugues des Arcis cherchant les points faibles de la forteresse et Raymond de Péreille attendant les secours du comte Raymond VII de Toulouse.

Le comte de Toulouse, toujours excommunié, cherche alors à rentrer en grâce auprès du pape et n'a de toute façon pas les moyens militaires de déloger l'assaillant. Hugues des Arcis, l'hiver venu, ne plie pas bagages, et, à force d'observations, a mis au point son plan. Le long de la crête, à environ un kilomètre, il y a le Roc de la Tour sur lequel est construit un petit fortin. Des hommes escaladèrent de nuit l'à-pic et tuèrent dans leur sommeil les soldats de la garnison. La prise de cette tour permet à une partie de l'armée de s'installer à la même hauteur que le château. En novembre 1243, Durand, évêque d'Albi, arrive avec un contingent de soldats. Ses connaissances techniques lui permettent d'installer une pierrière sur le Roc de la Tour et de bombarder une barbacane qui, située que la crête, défend l'accès au château.

En janvier 1244, Péreille et Mirepoix font venir, Bernard de la Vacalerie, un constructeur de machines de sièges, qui en construit plusieurs pour contrer le tir des français. En février, la barbacane, qui subit depuis trois mois les bombardements est prise par les français. Démoralisé, manquant de soldats, Raymond de Péreille, avec le consentement du chef cathare Pierre Marty décide de négocier la reddition du château. Les pourparlers commencent le 1^{er} mars. Hugues d'Arcis accepte les conditions demandées par Raymond de Péreille :

- reddition de la forteresse au bout de quinze jours,
 - pardon à tous les défenseurs, y compris ceux qui participèrent au massacre d'Avignonet, mais ils doivent passer devant l'Inquisition et subir éventuellement une peine légère,
 - vie sauve aux autres habitants du château qui abjurent leur foi cathare, ceux qui le refusent seront par contre brûlés.
-

Bilan

La forteresse est livrée le 16 mars. Certains des cathares, au nombre de deux cent quinze à deux cent vingt, refusent d'abjurer et sont livrés aux flammes. Le château est confié en 1245 à Guy II de Lévis seigneur de Mirepoix, qui le fait rebâtir peu après. Après le bûcher, l'église cathare est complètement désorganisée. Les dernières citadelles, Quéribus et Niort se rendent en 1255 et les Parfaits se réfugient en Lombardie.

Au cours du siège, vers Noël 1243, plusieurs cathares quittèrent le château et se glissèrent entre les lignes françaises, emportant le trésor des Cathares pour le cacher dans la grotte de Sabarthès. De même quatre Parfaits quittèrent secrètement le château au moment de la reddition. Ces faits, dont la finalité reste mystérieuse, ont donné lieu à une importante littérature à propos du trésor et des mystères cathares.



Monument commémorant les deux cents Parfaits brûlés à l'issue du siège

Annexes

Bibliographie

- Georges Bordonove, La Tragédie Cathare, Pygmalion - Gérard Watelet, coll. « Les Grandes Heures de l'Histoire de France », Paris, 1991, 462 p. (ISBN 2-85704-359-7), p. 417-430

Notes et références

- [1] Auparavant, le seigneur gardait la possibilité d'expulser les Parfaits en cas de siège. Accepter la demande de Guilhabert signifie se mettre aux ordres de l'église cathare et se faire les protecteurs des dignitaires.

Articles connexes

- Catharisme
- Chanson de la Croisade
- Chronique de la croisade des Albigeois
- Chronologie de la croisade des Albigeois

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Version 1.2, November 2002

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