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M. Cecilia Gaposchkin and Sean L. Field, eds. *The Sanctity of Louis IX: Early Lives of Saint Louis by Geoffrey of Beaulieu and William of Chartres*, trans. Larry F. Field, Ithaca, N.Y., and London: Cornell University Press, 2013. xviii + 197 pp. Maps, figures, notes, appendix, bibliography, and index. \$69.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN 080145137X; \$18.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 0-8014-7818-9.

Review by Irit Ruth Kleiman, Boston University.

Few medieval persons inspire the fascination that the charismatic French king Louis IX (b. 1214) continues to exercise. Inheritor of the crown at age twelve, Louis IX reigned for nearly forty-five years, until his death near Tunis on 25 August 1270. *The Sanctity of Louis IX: Early Lives of Saint Louis by Geoffrey of Beaulieu and William of Chartres* highlights a dossier of translated texts spanning the almost twenty-seven years between Louis's death and the Bull that canonized him on 11 August 1297. The volume is principally directed at students, and includes accessible, detailed analysis of both the published texts and their contexts.

The volume is anchored by two newly translated narrative sources, *Lives* of Louis written during the years that followed his death by a pair of Dominican prelates close to the king. These are accompanied by three letters dating from the period immediately following Louis IX's death, and by the text of Boniface's Bull. The dossier is arranged in a straightforward chronological order that belies the more nuanced portrayal of advances, setbacks, and shifting actors conveyed in the introduction. Hence, *The Sanctity of Louis IX* must also be viewed as a study of influences, or even as a longitudinal political analysis, in so far as the book assesses the motivations, conflicts, and strategies that characterized three phases leading from the moments immediately following Louis's death up to his canonization. These successive textual layers make it possible to recognize both "individual interpretations of Louis' saintly characteristics and the development of increasingly honed arguments designed to push him through the canonization process" (p. 42).

Three principal thematic axes traverse the question of Louis's canonization, that is, of his sanctity: the relationship between kingship and sainthood, the politics of canonization/sainthood, and the relations, both institutional and individual, between Louis IX and the mendicant orders. Crusading occupies a significant position in all three.

Louis took the cross upon the first signs of recovery from a grave illness in 1244, much to the legendary sorrow of his mother, Blanche. Despite extensive planning, the crusade itself was disastrous. After landing on the shores of modern-day Egypt in early 1249, Louis's armies suffered terrible losses, especially at the notorious battle of Mansura. The king himself was taken captive and had to be ransomed. "It is hard to imagine that this was anything but the biggest personal, spiritual, and political crisis of his [Louis's] entire life" (p. 7). On release, the king headed to Acre, where he remained until news of his mother's death eventually led him to return to France in 1252. In 1267, Louis again took the Cross, despite widespread resistance within his kingdom. He set out on 1 July 1270, but was soon too weak to continue.

During the years in between these two crusades, Louis enacted a broad series of political and social reforms which reflected an increasingly ascetic and, arguably, repressive piety. "The king's rule in these years seems to have been animated by a sense of repentance, and a commitment to serve God, justice, and the obligations of Christian kingship. These obligations were essential to Louis' perspective on his own rule and his contemporaries' later perception of him as a saint, and in turn

reflect a long literary tradition of ideal kingship” (p. 10).

Gaposchkin and Field’s study presents an up-close look at what the editors join others in calling the “cult of kingship” (p. 4) that has long surrounded Louis IX. Focusing on the interplay between *ideals of kingship* and *ideals of sanctity*, the book is especially clear in its explanation of how these notions play out in the variety of arguments and rhetorical genres that surround the life of the king, and in its portrayal of the competing imperatives that animate those works.

The dossier begins with “Three Early Letters on the Sanctity of Louis IX.” The first of these is from Philip III, dated 12 September 1270, and sent from Tunis. At the time, more than a century had elapsed since any king had been sanctified. Philip’s letter sketched in many of the rhetorical elements that shaped the Capetian dynasty’s arguments during the years that followed. In it, the new king praises Louis’s reign and describes his death, “at the very hour in which the Lord Jesus Christ [. . .] breathed his last while dying on the cross” (p. 62). Louis’s subjects should pray for him, “though many believe [his soul] needs no outside intercession” (p. 63). This first letter is followed by another which is barely more than a personal note dated March 1272, this one sent by Pope Gregory X to Geoffrey de Beaulieu, author of the first of the two longer *vitae* translated here. Using a vocabulary of fragrance and sweetness, Gregory alludes to Louis’s “exceptional merits” and asks to know more of the king’s private comportment. He notes that his letter should be sent bearing “private seal,” “by a sure messenger” (p. 64).

In the final of these three early letters, Jean of Châtillon asks the Roman Cardinals formally to request the canonization of the “most merciful Louis, king of the Franks, of celebrated remembrance and illustrious memory” (p. 66). Once more, the rhetoric is awash in sweet fragrance as Châtillon introduces tropes of sun and illumination, also destined for a long posterity. Châtillon also makes the forceful but problematic argument that Louis wears “the martyr’s crown” (p. 66) since he died having taken the cross, even though no infidel slew him. This element will become part of the larger argument later made by the Dominicans that Louis “should be canonized because he had died as a martyr on crusade” (p. 36). The justification for Louis’s canonization becomes as charged as the question of whether or not he ought to be canonized.

Both of the two longer *vitae* that follow and which form the documentary heart of the volume were written by Dominicans belonging to the king’s inner circle. Geoffrey of Beaulieu was the king’s confessor, and was present when Louis IX learned of his mother’s death in 1252. William of Chartres was with him during the king’s captivity in the Seventh crusade. Both men were present at the king’s death, and both were among the small coterie trusted to bring Philip III’s September 1270 letter from Tunis to France.

In addition to the utility of the translated *vitae* themselves, *The Sanctity of Louis XI* provides a behind the scenes view of how, step by step, proof of that sanctity was gathered and established. “The period 1272-75 when Geoffrey’s and (we believe) William’s texts were composed witnessed wider efforts to jump-start Louis’s canonization” (p. 36). Geoffrey began writing his *vita*, which contains many of the best-known anecdotes about Saint Louis, upon receipt of the letter from Pope Gregory mentioned above, and he continued until the time of his death, probably in January 1274 or 1275. Geoffrey’s account shows greater attention to sainthood than kingship. Kingship is a “pervasive theme” but “is rarely understood [in Geoffrey’s text] in terms of the exercise of power ... [it] is instead represented [...] as personal piety, charity, and ensuring the public observance of the cult of the Lord” (p. 45). Geoffrey emphasizes Louis’s humility in acts of charity, his feeding of the poor and gifts of alms, his equal love for Franciscans and Dominicans, his devotion to the cross, his purchase of relics including the Crown of Thorns, his attempts to eradicate blasphemy, his pilgrimage to Nazareth, and his commission of manuscript copies of texts by the Church Fathers in order to increase the number of existing books. Many of the stories he recounts feature “confessors,” and the editors surmise that, at least part of the time, the author was invoking his own testimony (p. 20). The editors also offer an intriguing assessment of how Geoffrey’s experience in the king’s administration and his active preaching in Paris laid the groundwork for his *vita*.

Geoffrey's narrative was continued by William of Chartres, who had already been using his own preaching activities as a platform from which to collect information about miracles attributed to the departed king. In contrast with Geoffrey, William is generally more interested in kingship and justice than in crusading, and is likewise more concerned with issues of power and judicial authority, rather than personal sanctity. William concludes his *vita* with a list of seventeen miracles attributed to Louis's intercession. This reader found Gaposchkin and Field's discussion of how evidence of those miracles was gathered and codified particularly useful.

Although these narratives "diverge in important thematic and ideological ways," they "represent a concerted effort by the Dominicans of France to record their memories of the king"(18). One thus sees the shape of Louis's legacy take form in response to the exigencies of canonization. An ever more carefully defined sense of personality, complete with subtle indications of how the saintly king was experienced by those around him, begins to emerge from what had been an accumulation of anecdotes, perceived at different distances and from diverse perspectives.

The death of Gregory X brought a halt to the momentum of this early Dominican moment. Things remained stalled until the election of Pope Martin IV, whose energy resulted in a public inquest beginning in 1281 with the collection of many other oral depositions and texts, most of them now lost. Then, once again, a series of deaths arrested forward momentum, and another fifteen years elapsed before canonization came in August 1297.

The final document included in Gaposchkin and Field's dossier is Pope Boniface's Bull of 1297. Boniface portrays Louis's patient suffering, but sets aside the question of Louis's martyrdom. Instead, the pope's arguments "place Louis squarely within the scheme of lay piety and active charity which strongly defined late medieval sanctity" (p. 56). The abstract ideals of kingship displace the concrete details of Louis's deeds, so that "its core is the discussion of the crusade of 1248-54" (p. 55). In particular, the king's captivity and redemption come to serve as the "core of Louis' wondrous sainthood" (p. 56).

Boniface's Bull brought an end to the campaign to establish Louis's sanctity, but not to the production of narratives about that sanctity. The third and final phase outlined by the editors actually falls chronologically outside the boundaries of their volume, and concerns texts about Louis written *after* his canonization. The best known of these narratives was likely Jean de Joinville's, completed in 1309. (Joinville appears to have participated in the depositions of the 1280s, but that text is lost.) One element that the text of Joinville and others writing as far back as the 1280s had in common was their shared use of the narrative prepared by Geoffrey of Beaulieu, later absorbed into the *Vita* written by William of Pathus and also into the *Grandes Chroniques*. Thus Beaulieu (in particular) provided a common source for many later works, whether directly or indirectly.

The book's outstanding introduction is pitched at a level accessible to advanced undergraduates and complemented by three maps and five figures. The first pages sketch a broad view of the world into which Louis IX was born, pointing to a constellation of reference points, ranging from the Battle of Bouvines to the reign of Frederick II. The king's participation in and later representation of trends in thirteenth-century lay spirituality is associated with the rise of the Mendicant orders, carefully synthesized. Several key aspects could be highlighted further for curricular use. First, the Capetians wanted a saint as part of their portfolio of dynastic ambitions. Second, Louis IX (perhaps due to the education received from his mother, perhaps due to temperament, and perhaps due to larger institutional shifts) took to the breaking point a core ambiguity within French royal tradition, that of sacral kingship. "The model of Christian kingship Louis represented was at least part of what made him a potential saint" (p. 43). Finally, this history spotlights the diplomatic and institutional interactions between the French royal house, the papacy, and the Mendicant orders.

To conclude, the book is very likely to prove useful for scholars as well as students. In contrast to the Introduction's very accessible tone, its footnotes direct scholars to a detailed bibliography of specialized works in English, French, and German. Last but not least, an appendix contains a detailed manuscript and publication history of the translated *vitae*.

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