CHAPTER 15

Dating the Translation

There is no direct evidence that points to a specific date for the translation of William of Tyre’s *Historia*. None of the surviving manuscripts can be claimed as the ‘original’. Of the oldest surviving manuscripts, Folda has dated F05 and F38 to 1240–50, while F03 and F04 also are likely to have been produced before 1250.1 The translation certainly was made in France, since the majority of additions made by the translator relate to France, the Île de France in particular. Even allowing a few years after 1184 for William’s *Historia* to make its journey to the West, we are left with a lengthy period of time within which the translation could have been made.

Franz Ost argued that the translation was made shortly after 1190.2 In this he followed Paris, who had argued that, assuming that the translator was Bernard the Treasurer, he would have made the translation before composing his continuation.3 This attribution to Bernard as the translator and as the author of the continuations had developed in the eighteenth century and was widely believed.4 However, the identification of Bernard the Treasurer as the author of the Continuation is questionable, and that the translator and continuator were one and the same person can be discounted, as the translation was in circulation and a manuscript tradition had developed prior to the Continuation being added. The opinion that the translation was made shortly after 1190 seems no more than speculation. A date after 1190 is suggested in Book 14.1, where William notes, regarding Philip of Flanders, ‘qui hodie Flandrensi procurat comitatum’5 [who currently governs the county of Flanders], suggesting that Philip was governing the county of Flanders at the time William was writing. However, Philip died on 1 June 1191 at the siege of Acre during the Third Crusade.6 This is reflected in the translation by William’s

2 Ost, p. 27.
5 wt, 14.1 lines 76–77.
statement being given in the past tense, ‘qui mout tint bien et vigueresement la conté de Flandres puis fu morz outré mer, quant li rois Phelippes i ala’7 [who governed well and vigorously the county of Flanders (and) then died beyond the sea, when King Philip went over there]. Though this shows that the translation was made after 1191, it does not mean that it was made immediately after that date. While there are no other additions to the translation that refer to datable events, there are further indications that the translation was made significantly later than 1191.

The currently accepted consensus, as given by John Pryor, is that the translation was made after the Fourth Crusade at a date sometime between 1204 and 1234, with a more likely terminus date of 1223 or a few years after. Pryor suggests that a terminus post quem of the Fourth Crusade’s sack of Constantinople in 1204 is likely, because of a change of emphasis introduced by the translator concerning the military might of the Byzantine Empire. He points out that during the discussion of an agreement between the Kingdom of Jerusalem and the Byzantine Empire to invade Egypt in 1177, those in the Latin East were hesitant to break negotiations with the emperor, as they feared the military power of the empire. William described them as ‘timentes idignationem eius, que nobis poterat esse nimis periculosa’8 [fearing his indignation, for he could be very dangerous to us]. Pryor noted that this phrase is lacking in the Eracles text.9 While the French text does not specifically state that those in the Kingdom of Jerusalem feared the Byzantine emperor, Manuel I Komnenos, it does say that the barons:

orent conseil entre'eus devant le Roi et penserent que grief chose seroit et domageuse de refuser cele grant aide l'Empereur, qui estoit toute preste et apareillie. Por ce fu de touz acordé que il atorneroient leur aferes et movroient por aler en Egypte, si com il avoient, grant piece avant, promis et afermé par les messages a l'Empereur.10

[they took counsel amongst themselves in the presence of the king and felt that it would be dangerous to refuse the aid of the emperor, since he was nearby and prepared for war. Because of this they all agreed that they would alter their plans and prepare to go into Egypt, just as they had a long time before promised and agreed to through messages with the emperor.]

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8 wt, 21.16 (17) lines 10–11.
9 Pryor, p. 289.