Evolution of the account of Duke Godfrey’s deed of hewing the enemy through the middle with a single blow during the siege of Antioch by the First Crusade. A source study

Summary. The article contains research on the narratives describing the battle of the Bridge Gate (March 6, 1098), which took place during the siege of Antioch by the Crusaders. It focuses on the scene which is the climax of the above-mentioned tale, when the duke Godfrey of Bouillon hews the Turkish warrior through the middle with a single stroke of the sword in a duel on the bridge in front of the city.

The study is divided into three parts. The first one includes views of historians regarding the accounts of hewing the foe through the middle by Godfrey as well as an analysis of the earliest stage of shaping the literary tradition of the studied scene, which in the opinion of the author of the article consists of descriptions created by Crusade participants: Raymond of Aguilers, Peter Tudebode and that included in the chronicle of Albert of Aachen. The second part focuses on the modifications and transformations of the earliest accounts introduced by chroniclers from Capetian France in the first two decades of the 12th century. The last part is devoted to an analysis of the later versions of the scene and their connection with earlier accounts. Research showed that the most popular and vivid version of the tale was created by Robert the Monk, yet there are clear connections with the earlier versions of the account even in the case of authors writing at the end of 12th century and later.

Keywords: siege of Antioch, Crusade, Godfrey of Bouillon, chronicle.
Probably no other event in the history of Middle Ages triggered more abundant ‘literary output’ within the Latin civilization than the First Crusade. The course of the Crusade and its final success, which was re-conquest of Jerusalem on July 15, 1099, was a phenomenon having such a big impact on the societies of that time that it should be perceived in the category of a breakthrough also in relation to the European culture and literature\(^1\). Due to the extraordinary wealth of source materials describing struggles of the Crusaders in the Near East between 1097 and 1099\(^2\) it is possible to undertake studies on the process of shaping the memory of Crusade events which quickly became the fundamental element of knighthly culture which was being formed back then\(^3\). The siege of Antioch occupies a special place in the narratives of the events from the years 1097–1099. The Crusaders spent most of their pilgrimage under the walls of that city\(^4\) and it was precisely then that the first narratives came into being in order to commemorate the killed and perpetuate memorable deeds\(^5\).

\(^1\) It is worth pointing to the following works which have been published on the subject recently: J. Rubenstein, *Crusade and Apocalypse: History and the Last Days*, ‘Quaestiones Medii Aevi Novae’ 2016, vol. XXI, pp. 159–188 where the author shows that the Crusade contributed to reconceptualization of Middle Age historiographic literature; on the subject of uniqueness of the wave of works dealing with the Crusade: idem, *What is the Gesta Francorum, and who was Peter Tudebode?*, ‘Revue Mabillon’ 2005, vol. XVI, p. 201. See also: D. Kempf, *Towards a Textual Archaeology of the First Crusade*, [in:] *Writing the Early Crusades: Text, Transmission and Memory*, eds M. Bull, D. Kempf, Woodbridge 2014, p. 116, where the author perceived the heyday of historiography in the 12\(^{th}\) century as a result of the re-conquest of Jerusalem in 1099.

\(^2\) David S. Bachrach argues that sources concerning the First Crusade form the most extended source corpus focused on the same events which came into existence in Latin Middle Ages: D.S. Bachrach, *Lay Confession to Priests in Light of Wartime Practice (1097–1180)*, ‘Revue d’histoire ecclèsiastique’ 2007, vol. CII, p. 84.


One of the most important moments in the siege of Antioch was the battle of the Bridge Gate fought on March 6, 1098. In reconstructing the picture of the course of the battle, historians tend to rely on the narrative sources considered to have been written by the First Crusade participants, i.e. above all on the anonymous work entitled *Gesta Francorum* as well as in the chronicle *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem* by Raymond of Aguilers, *Historia Hierosolymitana itinere* by Peter Tudebode and *Historia Ierosolimitana* by Albert of Aachen even though its author was not a witness to the events. This collection should be complemented by the letters written under the walls of sieged Antioch which supplement chronicle narratives. Arab, Syrian and Armenian sources may be used to place the events in the Near East context.

The most mysterious element of the account on the battle of the Bridge Gate is the climax scene when the Duke Godfrey strikes the deadly blow to the Muslim opponent: he hews his adversary through the middle with one stroke of the sword, which wreaks fear in the ranks of the enemy and assures triumph of the Crusaders. Within the historiographic literature describing the First Crusade individual authors related Godfrey’s deed in a diversified way. Chroniclers supplemented and modified narrative details, extended or shortened the tale and paid attention to different elements of...
the account. This article presents research into narratives on hewing the enemy through the middle: an analysis of sources in this respect allows to draw conclusions on the mutual relations between individual chronicles and how the account of the battle of the Bridge Gate developed. This analysis corresponds to the stream of research of perceiving the anonymous work entitled *Gesta Francorum* not as the original and most important history of the Crusade, but as a text which represents a reformulation of the earlier account, written or oral.

Nineteenth century authors included the Godfrey’s legendary blow in their narratives about the siege of Antioch. For instance, Joseph-François Michaud paid a lot of attention to Godfrey in the description of the battle of the Bridge Gate, mentioning his grand deed15. Several dozen years later Heinrich von Sybel perceived the deadly and impressive Godfrey’s blow as decisive for the outcome of the battle16. Reinhold Röhricht went even further: apart from discussing the events, he made detailed references to source texts which mentioned Godfrey’s deed of hewing the enemy through the middle17. In his works published after World War II Steven Runciman showed the course of events concluding that Godfrey’s deed is a fictional element and is not suitable for analysis in a scientific text18. In his military history of the First Crusade published in 1994 John France stressed the leading role of Godfrey in the battle of the Bridge Gate, in which one important moment consisted in hewing the enemy through the middle by the future ruler of Latin Jerusalem19. Thomas Asbridge drew attention to the extraordinary density of religious rhetoric in chronicle descriptions of the battle

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19 J. France, *Victory in the East. Military History of the First Crusade*, Cambridge 1994, pp. 253, 254. The battle of the Bridge Gate was not discussed by Raymond C. Smail, the most important, beside John France, historian of crusading warfare
of the Bridge Gate which militarily did not represent any particular moment during the siege of Antioch yet it became turning point from the viewpoint of the morale of the fighting parties as then the spirit of the defenders was broken and the initiative was irreversibly taken over by the Crusaders, which, according to Asbridge, has not been noticed by Crusade researchers until now. In his extended reflection on the significance of the battle and contents of source materials the London historian did not include any description of Godfrey’s legendary blow. In his recently published monograph showing the First Crusade through the prism of apocalyptic threads present in the source material Jay Rubenstein included Godfrey’s legendary deed in the description of the events at Antioch, at the same time pointing out that the scene is present in all ‘Crusade’ chronicles based on *Gesta Francorum*, yet *Gesta Francorum* alone passes over in silence the role of Godfrey in the battle of the Bridge Gate.

The scene showing Godfrey hewing the enemy through the middle at Antioch is the topic of the article by Simon John in which he analysed ten versions of this scene so as to make comparisons with similar motifs present in works from the genre of *chanson de geste*. In his conclusion S. John pointed out that the process of extending the narrative on Godfrey’s legendary blow reached its climax in *Chanson d’Antioche*, and even the earliest authors writing accounts of the First Crusade constructed narratives correlated in his well-known work: R.C. Smail, *Crusading Warfare 1097–1193*, Cambridge 1956.


22 S. John, *Clariit Ibi Multum Dux Lotharingiae: The Development of the Epic Tradition of Godfrey of Bouillon and the Bisected Muslim*, [in:] *Literature of the Crusades*, eds S.T. Parsons, L.M. Paterson, London 2018, pp. 7–24. Simon John, a researcher from Swansea University, generously shared his research results sending the Author an unpublished text in autumn 2017, for which the Author wished to express his gratitude. The article expanded the research presented here which, not to repeat Simon John’s findings, focus on the earliest historiography of the First Crusade.
with the rich oral tradition revolving around the memory of the events between 1096 and 1099.  

So as to avoid too extensive and frequent quotations of the source text, the analysis is limited only to the scene in which Godfrey of Bouillon strikes the impressive blow. It is easier to see the authors’ invention and transformations which the scene underwent on this small section of the narrative. Presenting the research problem in this way also makes it possible to account for a larger number of works, which is more beneficial from the point of view of the adopted research aim which consists in analysing different versions of the description of Godfrey’s deed during the battle of the Bridge Gate and correlations between them. Consequently, there is a tendency to make references in the main text to the source material which is not directly related to the discussed scene rather than quote it.

**The earliest stage of shaping the account**

The first part of the analysis includes the source material created the earliest, either still during the Crusade or shortly after it. The accounts in the chronicles of Raymond of Aguilers and Peter Tudebode as well as Albert of Aachen are the most basic versions of the account on Godfrey’s deed during the battle of the Bridge Gate.

The sequence of events which led to the bloody battle between the Antioch garrison and the Crusaders was triggered by the arrival of a fleet of ships with supplies for the Crusaders to the St Simeon harbour at the beginning of March 1098. Assistance was needed as the forces of the sieging army were substantially weakened. The siege had lasted from October 20, 1097 and was filled with military activities which consisted in constant clashes with the raiding city garrison, exhausting expeditions for supplies to the nearby unknown territory and two major battles with armies coming to the rescue:

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the forces from Damascus were defeated on December 28, and the army of Ridwan of Aleppo on February 9\textsuperscript{25}. The fleet of English ships which reached St Simeon on March 4, was very important for the Crusade due to the transported cargo, namely materials enabling to construct fortifications which were to allow to block all the Antioch gates\textsuperscript{26}. A strong troop left the camp of the Crusade army and headed for the harbour. It was commanded by two main rivals for the position of the expedition leader, i.e. Bohemond of Taranto and Raymond of Toulouse. When the convoy with the cargo and part of the troops from the ships was coming back to the camp, it was attacked by a strong city garrison troop which had imperceptibly left the city walls in order to organise an ambush. The gambit was successful and the troop of Crusaders was split. Those who had managed to flee and reach the main camp alarmed the rest of the army, while at the same time the commander of the citadel army, seeing the success of his troops, decided to attack the Crusaders. Then new groups of defenders made an attack, leaving the city through the Bridge Gate. It was precisely in the foreground of the gate to which the bridge at the Orontes River led that the battle took place, later forming the framework for the account about the legendary deed of Godfrey of Bouillon\textsuperscript{27}.

Raymond of Aguilers wrote that the turning point of the battle was the counterattack of Christian infantry led by a noble knight of Provence called Hisnardus de Gagia\textsuperscript{28}. After the counterattack the enemy, seeking ways of escape, headed for the bridge preceding the Bridge Gate. An element which adds to the dramaturgy of the


\textsuperscript{26} The account from the perspective of the fleet from Lukka which then reached St Simeon together with English ships: \textit{Epistula cleri et populi Luccensis ad omnes fideles}, [in:] \textit{Die Kreuzzugsbriefe...}, pp. 165–167. It has been recently argued that the support, in fact, came from Byzantine as it was composed of English and perhaps Scandinavian mercenaries paid by Byzantine who were stationed in Laodicea: P. Frankopan, \textit{The First Crusade. The Call from East}, Cambridge Mass. 2012, p. 159.

\textsuperscript{27} The general vision of the course of the events is not a subject of controversy: J. France, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 253, 254; T. Asbridge, \textit{The First Crusade...}, pp. 189–191; J. Rubenstein, \textit{Armies of Heaven...}, pp. 177–179.

scene was the order of the intendant of Antioch to close the gate: sending his soldiers to fight outside the city walls, he ordered them to either win or perish. That was followed by complete destruction of the enemy’s forces in a trap between the attacking Crusaders and the narrow bridge over the fast-flowing river which led to the Bridge Gate opened in order to save survivors. The chronicler adds to this description that ‘audivi a multis qui ibi fuerunt quod viginti Turcos, et amplius, de ponte sumptis spondalibus in flumine obruissent. Claruit ibi multum dux Lotharingiae. Hic namque hostes ad pontem praevenit, atque ascenso gradu venientes per medium dividebant’. Therefore Godfrey distinguished himself as he was faster than the fleeing warriors and he blocked their way to the city or possibly, if different interpretation is adopted, divided the crowd of retreating enemies by his charge in such a way that part of them managed to escape whereas the rest stood in front of Godfrey blocking them.

Raymond did not provide any more details but his description leaves the reader with the feeling that Godfrey’s charge, by cutting off the way of evacuation, allowed to inflict heavier losses to the enemy, which led to depleting the forces of the besieged. The chronicler stressed that he had heard about that from many eyewitnesses, which suggests that the role of Godfrey in the battle became the topic of oral accounts already at the earliest stage.

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30 Ibidem.

31 Raymond d’Aguilers, op. cit., p. 43: in the translation the authors interpret the deed as dividing the enemy troops ‘into two ranks’. Simon John describes that Godfrey ‘forced the hostes to split into two’: S. John, Claruit ibi multum..., pp. 9, 10. Simon John confirms the lesson proposed by the authors of the latest edition: he explains that the word ‘dividebant’, or the verb in third person plural rather than singular, must have been a mistake by a scribe. In the older edition the verb in this place was in singular (‘dividebat’), which seems to make more sense with the general meaning of the utterance: Raimundi de Aguilers Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem, [in:] Recueil des historiens des croisades. Historiens occidentaux, vol. III, Paris 1866, p. 249.

32 It was not uncommon that chroniclers based their works on accounts of eyewitnesses but here it is important to draw attention to such a clear suggestion of the chronicler. On the topic of quoting eyewitness accounts historiographic accounts concerning the First Crusade: S. John, Historical Truth and the Miraculous Past...; E. Lapina, ‘Nec Signis Nec Testis Creditur...’: The Problem of Eyewitnesses in the Chronicles of the First Crusade, ‘Viator. Medieval and Renaissance Studies’ 2007,
Raymond of Aguilers created his narrative being the chaplain of Raymond, the count of Toulouse, hence it was certainly not his intention to glorify Godfrey of Bouillon. He was writing his chronicle probably still during the Crusade and finished it in autumn 1099. Raymond’s work should be therefore treated as containing traces of the earliest tales on the Crusade events which were composed as part of daily communication within groups taking part in the expedition and between them: at that stage oral accounts did not have one established version, which is why it seems pointless to look for the original.

The anonymous work entitled *Gesta Francorum* provides similar description elements of the battle of the Bridge Gate, not mentioning any of the chiefs: the Crusader charge caused the general retreat of the enemy whose troops crowded on the bridge leading to the gate were decimated and many defenders lost their life in the waters of the Orontes, falling off the crossing. A description which is almost identical with the version of *Gesta Francorum* may be found in the chronicle by Peter Tudebode, i.e. in its three out of four manuscripts known today. The Paris manuscript BN Paris MS Latin 4892 includes a passage of several sentences on the battle of the Bridge Gate which
has no counterpart of similar content in the remaining versions of that chronicle or in Gesta Francorum\textsuperscript{37}.

Thanks to the preserved manuscript containing a fragment which cannot be found anywhere else the historian has a unique insight into the process of forming the legend on Godfrey and his bravery in the battle of the Bridge Gate. As compared to the account of Raymond of Aguilers this narrative was much more developed. In the quoted passage Godfrey’s charge precedes the attack of all the Christian forces. Hence the deed in question was attached the importance of not only the opening but also decisive moment of the battle. Godfrey was given the role which in the Raymond’s narrative is played by Hisnardus de Gagia, i.e. the commander of the army who, leading the attack, turned the tide of the battle. An unequivocal account relates a story in which Godfrey hewed the fiercest warrior of the enemy ranks with a stroke of the sword and he did it with such a might that he cut the enemy vertically from his head to the saddle. The description stresses that the defeated warrior did not fall off the horse, which is to suggest that his body hewn through the middle was seen by many knights and spread panic among the Antioch garrison. Subsequently, Godfrey hewed another enemy through the middle and, as the author points out, not only eyewitnesses were petrified but also those who heard the news about Godfrey’s deeds. This is another reference which may be treated as an element of literary convention, but also as an indirect suggestion about how the account functioned in the oral tradition. Later it may be read that Godfrey cut off heads and threw enemies into the river and that other Crusade commanders...
performed similar feats. Interestingly, the author of the quoted description of Godfrey’s deadly blows used the words which play the main role in the narrative of Raymond of Aguilers containing both the phrase ‘per medium’ as well as the verb ‘dividere’. Although used in differently constructed narration, they give the impression of using the same elements and adding new layers of the account.

The third source which permits to analyse the earliest stage of the development of the narrative on Godfrey during the battle of the Bridge Gate is Historia Ierosolimitana attributed to Albert of Aachen. Importantly, Godfrey is the most important figure of the whole chronicle, and also during the description of the battle of the Bridge Gate his role is prominently highlighted by the author. It is the duke who inspires the ranks of Crusaders and leads them into battle. Albert of Aachen is considered to be an author independent from the remaining chroniclers, he did not participate in the Crusade and his narrative was written on the basis of the accounts of returning pilgrims. The first part of his work was written shortly after 1102 and includes books from I to VI which narrate the events of the First Crusade. For this reason the Aachen chronicle should be treated as an account which is not only autonomous and close to the oral tradition but also one of the earliest records of Godfrey’s deed.

In the account of the Aachen chronicle Godfrey struck the deadly blow to a Turk who represented a threat to the duke as he used the bow. The Aachen chronicler described the blow struck by Godfrey, using almost the same words as may be found in one of

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41 Albert of Aachen, op. cit., lib. III, cap. 65, p. 244: ‘Dux vero Godefridus, cuius manus bello doctissima erat, plurima capita licet galea tecta ibidem amputasse refertur, ex ore illorum qui presentes oculis perspexerunt. Dum sic plurimo belli labore desudaret, et mediis hostibus plurimam stragem exerceret, Turcum, mirabile dictu, sibi arcu inportunum acutissimo ense duas divisit in partes, lorica indutum. Cuius corporis medietas a pectore sursum sabulo cecidit, altera adhuc cruribus equum complexa in medium pontem ante urbis menia refertur ubi lapsa remansit’.
the manuscripts of Peter Tudebode’s history: the phrase ‘in duas partes dividere’ is repeated. It is difficult to presume that such a clear concurrence in the scope of vocabulary in the description of the same event was accidental. This proves that both authors had contact with the same oral tradition regarding the battle of the Bridge Gate. This tradition must have gained popularity in the first years after 1099. Perhaps the account in that shape had already been in circulation during the Crusade but it was not included in the quickly accomplished narrative Gesta Francorum or in the version of the chronicle by Peter Tudebode which was preserved in three manuscripts. It was likely that one of the scribes-editors of the chronicle Histora de Hierosolymitano itinere added an anecdote on Godfrey to the text which was perpetuated in the most initial version by Raymond of Aguilers.

Albert wrote that Godfrey killed many enemies, and then hewed an armoured Turk through the middle in the horizontal axis: the upper part of his body fell to the ground whereas the lower one together with his legs was carried by the horse to the middle of the bridge where it fell down and lay. Albert stressed that he had heard about that event from many eyewitnesses, which confirms the anecdotal character of the description. As far as the content is concerned Albert’s version is more scanty: the account on hewing the Turk through the middle by Godfrey does not dominate the description of the battle and does not play a decisive role in it.

North French interpretations

Both Peter Tudebode’s chronicle and the chronicle written by Raymond of Aguilers as well as Gesta Francorum were composed shortly after the First Crusade had ended, their authors participated in the expedition and worked on their accounts on the course of events while they still lasted. At the turn of the first and second decade of 12th century three Benedictine monks climbing the clerical career ladder in northern France began works on the First Crusade.

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on the basis of the tradition of the account included in *Gesta Francorum*44. Chronicles of Guibert of Nogent, Balderic of Dol and Robert the Monk represent a valuable source material for research into how the memory of the Crusade events was developing. The authors did not take part in the events of 1096–1099, hence in constructing the account they relied on written sources available to them, oral tradition and, most likely, their own invention. Until recently these three North French reinterpretations of the account on the First Crusade were underestimated by researchers due to their supposedly excessive reliance on *Gesta Francorum*. This vision was subject to criticism, and in-depth research showed complex connections also with other accounts on the Crusade events45.

The excerpt on hewing the enemy through the middle by Godfrey in *Dei gesta per Francos* confirms that Guibert of Nogent used other sources apart from *Gesta Francorum*. He wrote that Godfrey cut the enemy in such a way that his body fell off the horse to the ground and his legs were carried ahead, and this deed, as Guibert ascertains, is the topic of songs he heard46. The author repeated the most important elements of the legend, i.e. striking the blow which hewed the Turk through the middle and spectacular carrying off the mutilated body by the horse. The passage was placed, however, not in the course of the narrative on the battle of the Bridge Gate, but immediately after Godfrey’s election for the ruler of Jerusalem,


which shows that legends about that deed were communicated partly irrespective of the accounts on Crusade events. The narrative space following the description of elevating Godfrey to power in the Holy City was used by the chronicler to break the chronological sequence and characterise the new ruler by means of anecdotal accounts: the description of hewing the enemy through the middle is followed by a tale about Godfrey’s fight with a bear. The description alone of the battle of the Bridge Gate is similar to *Gesta Francorum* as far as the content is concerned although it is written in a far more sophisticated literary form.\(^{47}\)

Balderic of Dol mentioned that he had been given an account about the Godfrey’s impressive blow according to which the duke hew the enemy through the middle with one blow and the upper part of his body fell to the ground while the lower one was carried off by the horse back through the gate to the city.\(^{48}\) Balderic placed a one-sentence description after the account of the battle of the Bridge Gate, as it was in the case of Raymond of Aguilers. This relation does not represent a complementation of the narrative on the course of the battle which is based on *Gesta Francorum*. In Balderic’s version the lower part of the body of the cruelly slain opponent was carried on horseback towards the city walls, which is, on the one hand, an element enhancing its spectacularity, and it suggests, on the other, that the opponent was fleeing from the battlefield through the bridge to the city, and Godfrey blocked him the way out: this vision corresponds to the course of the battle sketched by all historiographers.

Among the three North French monks Robert of Reims is the author of the most extended narrative on the discussed Godfrey’s deed.\(^{49}\) This account of the battle of the Bridge Gate written at the

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\(^{49}\) The Historia Iherosolimitana of Robert the Monk, eds D. Kempf, M. Bull, Woodbridge 2013, pp. 44–45: ‘Dux itaque Godefridus, militie decus egregium, ut vidit quia illos nemo ferire poterat nisi post dorsum, equo celeri volitans anticipavit pontis introitum[...] Cumque unus ex eis audacior ceteris, et mole corporis prestantior, et viribus, ut alter Goliad, robustior, videret ducem sic supra suos
Evolution of the account of Duke Godfrey’s deed of hewing the enemy...

The turn of the first and second decade of the 12th century became one of the most widespread written versions of the account, which is why the narrative elements used by Robert are particularly noteworthy. The chronicler gives an unambiguous picture of the situation: Godfrey overtook fleeing foes and blocked them the way to the bridge in front of the gate, and then perpetrated the massacre by himself on the enemy troops evacuating to the city. The most important element of the account is the confrontation with the mightiest warrior from the enemy ranks: Robert compared him to Goliath. In this way the author constructed the tread of Godfrey confronting the dangerous opponent, which was used for the first time in the manuscript BN Paris MS Latin 4892 of Peter’s Tudebode’s chronicle where the duke of Lorraine faced the most savage pagan. Robert the Monk spoke about the duel in which Godfrey received a deadly blow, fended off due to the duke’s strength and the help of God. In response he hit Goliath with a sword in such a way that he hewed through his body at an angle so that the right part of his body together with his head fell into the river, and his left part together with legs galloped on horseback to the city. Robert’s narrative is particularly vivid, and at the same time expressed in quite simple language, which makes it clear and easy to understand.

There are over 80 medieval manuscripts of Robert’s chronicle: none of the early Crusade chronicles was preserved in more than a couple of manuscripts. Reflections on the reasons for the extraordinary popularity of the work by Robert the Monk: D. Kempf, op. cit., pp. 116–126: Otto Friesing and the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa as well as Cistercian scriptoria and channels of communication had the key impact on the widespread phenomenon of copying Robert’s chronicle. The context of the work origins was discussed by: J. Naus, The ‘Historia Iherosolimitana’ of Robert the Monk and the Coronation of Louis VI, [in:] Writing the Early Crusades..., pp. 105–115. See also: L. Russo, Ricerche sull’ ‘Historia Iherosolimitana’ di Roberto di Reims, ‘Studi Medievi’ 2002, vol. XLIII, pp. 651–691.

The authors of the latest edition see one of the reasons for the work’s popularity in the simple style of Robert’s prose: The Historia Iherosolimitana of Robert the Monk..., p. xi.
Analysing the account of the battle of the Bridge Gate in the chronicle of Robert the Monk, one may arrive at a conclusion that subsequent versions of the scene of hewing the enemy through the middle are created in the circumstances of certain rivalry, with a surge of invention on the part of the chronicler. The scene certainly underwent some modifications both at the stage of the oral account and during the chronicler’s work with a pen at the writing-desk. The elements which make the account of Robert the Monk exceptionally dramatic include fending off the enemy’s mighty blow and striking a cruel blow in response as well as a fragment of the body falling straight into the river while the rest of it with the legs returns on horseback to the city. In the following part of the story the author stressed the significance of Godfrey’s feat for the outcome of the battle as well as his significance and fame: in this way the chronicler provides the recipient with an unambiguously formulated interpretation concerning the dimension and significance of Godfrey’s blow. Such a strongly outlined evaluation of the event shows the important place of the account on the Godfrey’s deed in the narratives about the Crusade. Besides the shape of Robert’s narration and the chronicle’s extraordinary popularity had an impact on spreading the vision of the course of the battle of the Bridge Gate.

The description of Godfrey hewing the enemy through the middle by Gilo of Paris is similar to the account of Robert the Monk. This work in verse on the First Crusade entitled *Historia vie Hierosolimitane* also gives an account of the battle which the Duke

52 *Ibidem*, p. 45: ‘O predicabilis dextera duucis invicti et animosi pectoris robur excellens! Laudandus et ensis, qui in sua integritate perseverans vibranti dextere sui famulatus prestitit obsequium. Et cuius cor eructare, cuius lingua enarrare, cuius manus scribere, que pagina valet suscipere aliorum facta principum, qui illi compares fuerunt in omnibus victoriis preliorum? Victoria duccis pre ceteris enuit, quoniam pars dimidiati corporis que remansit testimonium laudis fuit’.

of Lorraine fought with the mighty Arab and after fending off his attack struck the deadly blow which hewed the enemy through the middle. Gilo described the wounds suffered by the defeated opponent in great detail\textsuperscript{54}. This work was written at the turn of the first and second decade of the 12\textsuperscript{th} century, so approximately at the same time as Robert the Monk’s chronicle, which is why it is impossible to definitely capture the relation between these two works\textsuperscript{55}. Gilo, like Robert, stated that during the battle Godfrey blocked the way of escape for the enemy troops and wreaked a massacre, slaying many city defenders. The direct correlation between the accounts of the battle of the Bridge Gate by Gilles and Robert is not certain, hence repeating the pattern of the discussed scene, albeit with the use of different vocabulary, may be a proof that both authors wrote their chronicles under the influence of orally transmitted accounts of Godfrey’s deed\textsuperscript{56}.

The vision of events included in Robert the Monk’s chronicle was so influential that its text was copied in the work entitled \textit{Historia Nicaena vel Antiochena}\textsuperscript{57} written in the forties of the 12\textsuperscript{th} century: it was composed on the orders of Baldwin III in the environment of the court of Latin rulers of Jerusalem. Therefore Robert the Monk’s chronicle must have reached Outremer as the anonymous author of \textit{Historia Nicaena}... based his work largely on quotations from the Monk of Reims\textsuperscript{58}. Its popularity even increased as years went by and the account of Robert the Monk about Godfrey’s blow hewing the enemy through the middle was used later by such writers so

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\textsuperscript{54} \textit{The Historia Vie Hierosolimitane of Gilo Paris}..., p. 122: ‘Moxque choruscantem gladium levat et ferit hostem:/ Os, caput illidit, vitalia tota cecidit,/ Spargit et arvinam, rupit cum pectore spinam;/ Sic homo prostratus cadit in duo dimidiatus/ Atque super scutum partes in mille minutum/ Pars cecidit, pars heret equo trahiturque supina,/ Estque sui moderator equi non iusta rapina./ Ictu sic uno fit magna nec una ruina’.

\textsuperscript{55} Historians agree that it is impossible to establish the precise datation: \textit{ibidem}, p. xxiv; \textit{The Historia Hierosolimitana of Robert the Monk}..., pp. xxxiv–xli. According to Marcus Bull Gilo of Paris used the text of Robert the Monk’s chronicle: M. Bull, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 131–133.

\textsuperscript{56} There are arguments which point to certain independence of Gilo from Robert the Monk: \textit{The Historia Vie Hierosolimitane of Gilo Paris}..., pp. lix–lx.


the so-called anonym of Rhine⁵⁹ and Benedetto Accolti⁶⁰. The latter, the chancellor of Florence and a humanist, moved the scene in question from the end of the account on the battle of the Bridge Gate to its beginning as it was in the manuscript by Peter Tudebode in the manuscript BN Paris MS Latin 4892.

**Later versions of the account**

In his work entitled *Historia Ecclesiastica* the Anglo-Norman chronicler Orderic Vitalis included an extensive account of the First Crusade with the battle of the Bridge Gate. At the end of the description of that battle he included a tale about Godfrey’s famous blow⁶¹. In his version the duke of Lorraine struck from behind in the back of the mightiest enemy clad in golden armour. Orderick repeated the motif which first appeared in Robert the Monk’s work, namely in the aftermath of the blow the upper part of the slain foe fell straight into the river whereas the horse galloped away to the city with the lower part still sitting in the saddle. Orderick stressed the impression which the scene made on the defenders who were observing everything from the height of the city walls. Interestingly, one may perceive echoes of earlier versions of the scene: the text contains both the repeated phrase ‘per medium’, which was used already by Raymond of Aguilers, as well as ‘lorica indutum’ which is present in the Aachen chronicle. In the case of Orderick it is impossible to exclude the possibility of direct contact either with the manuscripts describing the First Crusade or tales disseminated orally.

Godfrey’s blow hewing the enemy through the middle was also described by another twelfth-century Anglo-Norman writer, Henry

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⁶⁰ *Benedicti de Accoltis Aretini Historia Gotefridi*, [in:] *ibidem*, p. 578.

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of Huntingdon. He mentioned that the upper part of the body fell to the ground while the lower was carried by the horse towards the enemy ranks. Henry made an unprecedented shift: the scene of Godfrey’s deadly strike was interwoven into the battle of the Iron Bridge which took place a month before the battle of the Bridge Gate, on February 9, 1098. In most narratives on the siege of Antioch the events of March 4–6 are preceded by the description of the battle of February 9. Henry composed the tale of the battle of the Bridge Gate on the basis of Gesta Francorum and similar versions of Peter Tudebode’s chronicle. Hence it may be concluded that the narrative on hewing the enemy through the middle by Godfrey was so popular that it could have functioned parallely to the accounts of the battle of the Bridge Gate which did not account for it. This resulted in different positioning of the discussed scene in the whole narrative in the work by Henry of Huntingdon.

The chronicle composed by William of Tyre is a testimony of collective memory of the Latin elite of Jerusalem in the seventies and eighties of the 12th century. The chancellor of the Crusader Kingdom stressed that Godfrey’s deed had gained fame which immortalised him forever. He wrote that the Duke of Lorraine beheaded many armed warriors during the battle, and then he hewed an ironclad enemy through the middle. Interestingly, the archbishop of Tyre composed a description different from the anonymous Historia Nicaena vel Antiochena which was written three decades earlier at the royal court of Jerusalem. Hence it may

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be concluded that William of Tyre did not have any contact with the record initiated by Robert the Monk. He created a tale which displays different degrees of similarity to the versions of Albert of Aachen, Guibert of Nogent and Raymond of Aguilers. William’s description was copied virtually word for word by Mathew Paris in his chronicle.

**Conclusion**

Having analysed different versions of the account of Godfrey’s deed during the battle of the Bridge Gate one may conclude that the shape of relations between different sources describing the First Crusade cannot be accounted for by simple correlations between one chronicle and another. The presented analysis shows that the contents of the narrative, beside other written versions of events, may have been also affected by the chronicler’s contact with witnesses or orally disseminated tales and the author’s invention gave it the final form.

The earliest version of the account was written by Raymond of Aguilers, while Peter Tudebode and Albert of Aachen created independently two earliest extended narratives on hewing the enemy through the middle by Godfrey of Bouillon. The author of the most popular version is Robert the Monk, who composed it being largely inspired by his own imagination, outshining earlier accounts. Yet it was the chronicle by William of Tyre and its old-French renditions, very popular also in the decades and centuries to come, that clearly referred to the early stage of shaping the legend of Godfrey of Bouillon, who hewed the enemy through the middle with one blow of the sword during the battle of the Bridge Gate.

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STUDIES

Evolution of the account of Duke Godfrey’s deed of hewing the enemy...


Kształtowanie się przekazu o przecięciu jednym ciosem przeciwnika przez Gotfryda Lotaryńskiego w czasie oblężenia Antiochii przez pierwszą krucjatę. Studium źródłoznawcze

W artykule prezentuję badania nad opowieściami kronikarskimi o bitwie pod Bramą Mostową, która odbyła się 6 marca 1098 r., w czasie oblężenia Antiochii przez wojska pierwszej krucjaty. Skupiam się na kulminacyjnym momencie tych opowieści – scenie, w której książę Gotfryd Lotaryński w starciu na moście prowadzącym do Bramy Mostowej jednym ciosem przepołowił muzułmańskiego adwersarza. Swój wywód podzieliłem na trzy części – w pierwszej pokazuję, jakie stanowisko zajmują historycy wobec przepołowienia przeciwnika przez Gotfryda, a także analizuję najwcześniejszy etap kształtowania się przekazu, za który uważam opisy stworzone przez uczestników krucjaty: Rajmunda z Aguilers, Piotra Tudeboda oraz ten zamieszczony w kronice Alberta z Akwizgranu. W drugiej części analizuję modyfikacje i przekształcenia, jakim poddawali omawianą scenę kronikarze z północnej Francji tworzący w pierwszych dwóch dziesięcioleciach wieku XII. W ostatniej części zajmuję się późniejszymi wersjami tej samej sceny, wnioskując na temat ich związku z wcześniejszymi przekazami. W toku badań okazało się, że najpopularniejszą i najsilniej oddziałującą wersję stworzył kronikarz Robert Mnich, natomiast dostrzegalne są wyraźne związki z wcześniejszymi wersjami nawet u autorów piszących pod koniec XII w. i później.

Słowa kluczowe: oblężenie Antiochii, krucjata, Gotfryd Lotaryński, kronika.