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VICTORIA DUCIS PRE CETERIS ENITUIT.
**A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE ON THE SCENE
WHEREIN GODFREY OF LORRAINE HEWS IN HALF
HIS OPPONENT IN THE BRIDGE GATE OF ANTIOCH²**

**Victoria ducis pre ceteris enituit. Scena przepołowienia wroga przez Gotfryda
Lotaryńskiego przy bramie mostowej w Antiochii w perspektywie porównawczej**
Abstrakt

Celem artykułu jest odkrycie znaczeń i sensów związanych z poszczególnymi elementami narracyjnymi opowiadań o chwalebny czynie Gotfryda w bitwie pod Bramą Mostową (6 marca 1098 r.). Poprzez wykorzystanie metody komparatystycznej staram się głębiej zrozumieć rozbudowane opowieści kronikarskie na temat Gotfryda, który jednym ciosem przepołowił ogromnego przeciwnika na moście pod obleganą Antiochią. Bogactwo opisów czynu Gotfryda w bitwie pod Bramą Mostową wskazuje, że kronikarze dążyli do nadania temu starciu szczególnego wymiaru i pokazania go jako momentu przełomowego. Był to również kluczowy element charakterystyki Gotfryda, który po zdobyciu Jerozolimy został pierwszym władcą krucjatowego królestwa.

Słowa kluczowe: Gotfryd de Bouillon, *Gesta Francorum*, pierwsza krucjata, oblężenie Antiochii, bitwa pod Bramą Mostową

Abstract

This article explores the meanings attached to individual narrative elements of the tales that portray the laudable deed of Godfrey in the Bridge Gate battle (March 6, 1098). The comparative method offers deeper insight into the elaborate stories that chroniclers have told about Godfrey, who hewed in half his formidable opponent with a single blow on the bridge near beleaguered Antioch. Judging by the diversity of narratives concerning

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Godfrey's deed in the Bridge Gate battle, the chroniclers sought to place this confrontation in a special dimension and to portray it as a breakthrough moment. This exaltation was also pivotal to characterizing Godfrey, who became the first ruler of the Crusaders' kingdom after the conquest of Jerusalem.

Keywords: Godfrey de Bouillon, *Gesta Francorum*, First Crusade, siege of Antioch, Bridge Gate battle

Introduction

“In fact, the real significance of the Bridge Gate battle lay in its impact upon morale”.³

The Bridge Gate battle was fought on March 6, 1098, at the feet of the walls of Antioch when beleaguered by the Crusaders.⁴ As Thomas Asbridge noted in the foregoing quote, historians have underestimated the significance of this episode in the First Crusade. From a military point of view, the Bridge Gate battle did not stand out either in the size of the forces involved or in losses suffered or inflicted, and nothing was conquered to reward the effort. Also, the other battles fought during the siege of Antioch were no different in terms of the dramaturgy of events.⁵ Hence, the purpose of this study is to explore the historiographic tradition built on the Bridge Gate battle. In the center of this tradition is a scene where Godfrey of Lorraine, one of the crusade leaders, hewed in half his armored Turkish opponent with a blow of his sword in an encounter on the bridge facing the Bridge Gate.⁶ The subject of the research is not the hypothetical course of events near Antioch but rather the means used by various storytellers to depict the deed of Godfrey by means of heroic convention. The primary goal of the exploratory process is to show how heroic legends were construed within the historiographic literature depicting the First Crusade: what means the authors used and what elements they employed in their narratives. Relying on the comparative method, I wish to explore the meaning, sense, and ingredients of the tales of Godfrey's heroic deed. I will use the body of chronicles of the First Crusade, which contain a few versions of the tale of the Bridge Gate battle as the source material. These chronicles often draw one from another in a complex way, and relations between individual narratives of the First Crusade have always been a subject of lively interest among historians.⁷ For purposes

³ T. Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History*, Oxford 2005, p. 192.

⁴ H. Hagenmeyer, *Chronologie de la première croisade 1094-1100*, Hildesheim 1973, pp. 134-137; T. Venning, *A Chronology of the Crusades*, Routledge 2015, p. 36. T. Asbridge dates the battle on March 7 (T. Asbridge, *The First Crusade*, p. 190).

⁵ On military activities during the siege of Antioch: J. France, *Victory in the East. Military History of the First Crusade*, Cambridge 1994, pp. 197-296; critical notes on the foregoing work: B.S. Bachrach, *The Siege of Antioch: A Study in Military Demography*, “War in History”, 6/1999, pp. 127-146; cf. the two recent biographies of Bohemond: L. Russo, *Boemondo. Figlio del Guiscardo e principe di Antiochia*, Avellino 2009, pp. 89-132; J. Flori, *Bohemond d'Antioche. Chevalier d'aventure*, Paris 2007, pp. 133-196.

⁶ The scene from a bibliographic perspective: J. Rubenstein, *What is the 'Gesta Francorum', and who was Peter Tudebode?*, “Revue Mabillon”, 16/2005, p. 189; S. John, *Claruit 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; B. Dźwigala, *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*, “Review of Historical Sciences”, 17/2018, pp. 5-28.

⁷ The distinctiveness and uniqueness of the collection of sources describing the First Crusade was recently noted by D.S. Bachrach, *Lay Confession to Priests in Light of Wartime Practice (1097-1180)*, “Revue d'histoire ecclé-

of this comparative analysis, I will also look at selected historiographic works unrelated to the Middle Eastern crusades. Passages from the chronicles of Raymond of Aguilers⁸ and Peter Tudebode,⁹ the two earliest accounts presenting Godfrey at the time of the Bridge Gate battle, will serve as a starting point to the analysis. First, a comprehensive discussion of these tales will identify the essential building material of the legend about Godfrey's heroic deed. Then, selected elements of the narratives will be analyzed comparatively. Finally, I will take look at the setting of the scene and how it is portrayed in the whole body of tales about the crusade before I reflect on how the authors of the tales perceived Godfrey's demeanor on the Bridge of Antioch.

Chroniclers' message

The Bridge Gate battle is discussed by most monographs on the story of the First Crusade, so the literature on the subject is abundant.¹⁰ The course of events arouses no major controversies. Historians agree that when the fleet with supplies for the besiegers¹¹ arrived at the nearest seaport, St. Simeon, in early March of 1098, a unit headed by Raymond of Toulouse and Bohemond of Taranto marched out from the Crusaders' army camp to collect and transport the load. While the unit was on its way back to the camp, it was attacked and defeated by a band of Saracen skirmishers who had left the city walls unnoticed and ambushed the Crusaders. The fleeing Crusaders alarmed the camp, and the Christian forces decided to give battle to the retreating warriors of the city garrison. Further, Muslim units left Antioch through the Bridge Gate to attack the besiegers. This incident, the trigger of the strongest

siastique", 102/2007, p. 84. A comprehensive look at sources relating to the characteristics of the body of sources and the First Crusade: J. Flori, *Chroniqueurs et propagandistes: introduction critique aux sources de la Première Croisade*, Geneva 2010. Vide etiam: *Writing the Early Crusades. Text, Transmission and Memory*, eds. M. Bull and D. Kempf, Woodbridge 2014; S. Edgington, *The First Crusade: Reviewing the Evidence*, in: *The First Crusade: Origins and Impact*, ed. J. Phillips, Manchester 1997, pp. 57-77; L. Russo, *Le fonti della Prima Crociata*, in: *Mediterraneo medievale. Cristiani, musulmani ed eretici tra Europa e oltremare (secoli IX-XIII)*, ed. M. Meschini, Milano 2001, pp. 51-65; C. Kostick, *Social Structure of the First Crusade*, Leiden 2008, pp. 9-95; N.L. Paul, *A Warlord's Wisdom: Literacy and Propaganda at the Time of the First Crusade*, "Speculum", 85/2010, pp. 534-566; D. Kempf, M. Bull, *L'histoire toute crue: la Première Croisade au miroir de son Histoire*, "Medievales. Langues, Textes, Histoire", 58/2010, pp. 151-160. Similarities between the source material on the First Crusade and the chronicle of Gallus Anonymus: D. von Güttnner-Sporzyński, *Historical Writing (or the Manufacture of Memory)*, in: *Remembering the Crusades and Crusading*, ed. M. Cassidy-Welch, Routledge 2017, pp. 95-114.

⁸ Raimundi de Aguilers, *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*, in: *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades. Historiens Occidentaux*, vol. III, Paris 1866, pp. 231-310.

⁹ Petrus Tudebodus, *Historia de Hierosolymitano Itinere*, eds. J.H. Hill, L.L. Hill, Paris 1977.

¹⁰ J.-F. Michaud, *L'histoire de la Première Croisade*, in: *Des Croisades*, vol. 1, Paris 1825, pp. 295-296; H. von Sybel, *Geschichte des Ersten Kreuzzug*, Leipzig 1881, pp. 333-335; R. Rohricht, *Geschichte des Ersten Kreuzzuges*, Innsbruck 1901, p. 124 and footnote 4.; F. Chalandon, *Histoire de la première croisade jusqu'à l'élection de Godefroi de Bouillon*, Paris 1925, pp. 197-198; R. Grousset, *L'anarchie musulmane et la monarchie franque*, in: *Histoire des croisades et du royaume franc de Jerusalem*, vol. 1, Paris 1934, pp. 89-90; S. Runciman, *A history of the Crusades*, vol. 1: *The First Crusade and the Foundation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Cambridge 1951, pp. 226-227; idem, *The First Crusade: Antioch to Ascalon*, in: *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 1: *The First Hundred Years*, ed. K. Setton, Wisconsin 1969, pp. 308-343; J. Flori, *La Première Croisade. L'occident chrétien contre l'Islam*, Brussels 1992, pp. 87-88; idem, *Bohémond d'Antioche*, pp. 149-150; J. France, *Victory in the East*, pp. 253-254; T. Asbridge, *The First Crusade*, pp. 189-193; idem, *The Crusades. The War for the Holy Land*, Oxford 2010, pp. 69-70; J. Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven. The First Crusade and the Quest for Apocalypse*, New York 2011, p. 179, n. 16.

¹¹ For a more extensive statement on the fleet that arrived at St. Simeon and indicating a Byzantine inspiration: P. Frankopan, *The First Crusade. The Call from the East*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2012, p. 159.

direct clash between the Crusaders and the defenders of the city during the whole siege, was fought on the forefield of the bridge on the Orontes River, leading to the Bridge Gate. The Crusaders won, inflicting on the enemy damage so serious that the garrison was no longer able to take any offensive action against the besiegers. According to Raymond of Aguilers, the chaplain of Raymond Count of Toulouse,¹² the Christian attack led by a certain Hisnardus (En.: Isoard), a knight of Provence, was the turning point of the battle. Hisnardus inspired the rest of the knights to launch an effective charge that routed the enemy and turned their retreat into a disaster. According to Raymond, the Bridge Gate was opened too late, so the fleers could not save themselves, and many met their death by falling off the bridge into the Orontes River.¹³ Further in the narrative, the chronicler describes three scenes to illustrate the defeat of the Muslim army. Raymond claims that from many witnesses he heard an account of how the Crusaders bulldozed into the river more than twenty Turks, together with the bridge railings to which the fleers were attempting to hold on.¹⁴ Then, the author notes that Duke Godfrey made his mark on this battle: he overtook the enemies, got in their way at the entry to the bridge and killed them, fighting among the human mass heading for the Bridge Gate.¹⁵ He also mentions that a certain Turkish horseman, trying to escape death, rode into the river where he was thrown off his horse by other Turks, and they all drowned together.¹⁶ The narrative of Godfrey doing a massacre in the middle of the fleeing crowd and the unusual

¹² The hitherto more extensive monograph of the chronicle of Raymond of Aguilers: C. Klein, *Raimund von Aguilers: Quellenstudie zur Geschichte des ersten Kreuzzuges*, Berlin 1892. Vide etiam: J. Richard, *Raymond d'Aguilers, historien de la premiere croisade. Les relations entre l'Orient et l'Occident au Moyen Age*, London 1977; Ch. Auffarth, 'Ritter' und 'Arme' auf dem Ersten Kreuzzug. *Zum Problem Herrschaft und Religion ausgehend von Raymond von Aguilers*, "Saeculum", 40/1989, pp. 39-50.

¹³ Raimundus de Aguilers, *Historia Francorum Qui Ceperunt Iherusalem*, in: *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades. Historiens Occidentaux*, vol. 3, Paris 1866, cap. VIII, 249: *Hostium itaque superbia turbatur; porta clausa est, et pons strictus, fluvius vero maximus. Quid igitur? Hostes turbati prosternuntur et caeduntur, ac saxis in flumine obruuntur; fuga autem nulla patet. Quod nisi Gracianus pontis portam aperuisset, illa die de Antiochia pacem habuissemus*. Raymond d'Aguilers, *Historia Francorum Qui Ceperunt Iherusalem*, transl. J.H. Hill, L.L. Hill, Philadelphia 1968, p. 43: "The haughtiness of the enemy was shattered. The gate was closed, the bridge was strait, but the river was very broad. What then? The panicky Turks were either smashed to the ground and slaughtered or crushed with stones in the river, for flight lay open to no one. Peace would have come to Antioch on this day had not Yaghi Siyan swung open the gate".

¹⁴ Raimundus de Aguilers, *Historia Francorum Qui Ceperunt Iherusalem*, loc. cit.: "Audivi a multis qui ibi fuerunt quod viginti Turcos, et amplius, de ponte sumptis spondalibus in flumine obruissent". It is difficult to translate accurately the words "sumptis spondalibus", so I follow the translation by J.H. Hill and L.L. Hill, Raymond d'Aguilers, *Historia Francorum Qui Ceperunt Iherusalem*, loc. cit.: "I myself heard from many participants that they knocked twenty or more Turks into the river with bridge railings".

¹⁵ Raimundus de Aguilers, *Historia Francorum Qui Ceperunt Iherusalem*, loc. cit.: "Claruit ibi multum dux Lotharingiae. Hic namque hostes ad pontem praevenit, atque ascenso gradu venientes per medium dividebat". ("The duke of Lorraine won great fame there. He forestalled his enemies on the way to the bridge and hewed the incomers in half"). I consider the translation by J.H. Hill and L.L. Hill to be incorrect, as it suggests that Godfrey split the flow of fleers into two streams. The words "per medium" reoccur in the body of sources on the First Crusade and, in almost all instances, they mean inflicting of a deadly blow to the opponent. Some examples: *The 'Historia Iherosolimitana' of Robert the Monk*, eds. D. Kempf, M. Bull, Woodbridge 2013, lib. VIII, p. 75; Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana. History of the Journey to Jerusalem*, ed. and transl. S. Edgington, Oxford 2007, p. 584; and, out of the body of these sources: *Die Chronik von Karl dem Grossen und Roland. Der lateinische Pseudo-Turpin in den Handschriften aus Aachen und Andernach*, ed. H.-W. Klein, Munich 1986, p. 50 and 98.

¹⁶ Raimundus de Aguilers, *Historia Francorum Qui Ceperunt Iherusalem*, loc. cit.

circumstances of the deaths in the river complete Raymond's account of the battle. Peter Tudebode¹⁷ elaborates the tale and places Godfrey and his battle deeds in the limelight:¹⁸

Tunc dux Godofredus Christi miles potentissimus irruens in eos evaginato ense, percussit quendam gentilem ferocissimum tam viriliter ut in duas partes ipsum divideret a vertice videlicet usque in sellam equi. Actumque est ex Dei providentia ut quamvis in duo discissus minime ex toto de equo dilaberetur. Post hunc aggressus alium ex oblico secuit eum per medium. Ex hinc maximus timor et horror omnes inimicos Christianitatis perculet, non solum qui presentes aderant sed omnes qui hoc utcumque audire potuerunt. Deinde dux per omnia memorandus illos in fugam versos persequens, nunc hos nunc illos ut leo fortissimus invadens detruncabat et in amnem precipitabat. Simili autem modo Hugo Magnus et comes Sanctii Egidii et Boamundus et Flandrensis comes alii proceres ipsos trucidabant et in annem precipitabant. Locus vero fugiendi non erat, nisi solummodo per pontem qui tunc illis preangustus erat ipsique semetipsos prepedientes in flumine demergebantur. Milites igitur veri Dei, undique signo Crucis protecti, irruerunt nimis acriter super illos et fortiter invaserunt illos. Illi autem arripuerunt celerem fugam per medium angusti pontis ad illorum introitum. Illi qui vivi non potuerunt transire pontem pre nimia multitudine gentium et caballorum ibi receperunt sempiternum interitum, et reddiderunt infelices animas diabolo et Sathanae ministris. Nos itaque superantes ac impellentes in flumine cum nostris mortiferis lanceis. Unda quoque rapidi fluminis ubique videbatur fluere rubea Turcorum sanguine. Et si forte aliquis eorum voluisset reptare super pontis columpnas, aut natando vulneratus ad terram moliretur exire, nos undique stantes super fluminis ripam impellebamus et necantes eum in impetu rapidi fluminis.¹⁹

¹⁷ The chronicle of Peter Tudebode was typically studied in connection with the *Gesta Francorum* chronicle. The recent publication on this subject comes from J. Rubenstein, *What is the 'Gesta Francorum', and who was Peter Tudebode?*, pp. 179-204; J. Keskiäho, *On the transmission of Peter Tudebode's 'De Hierosolymitano itinere' and related chronicles. With a critical edition of 'Descriptio sanctorum locorum Hierusalem'*, "Revue d'Histoire des Textes", 10/2015, pp. 69-102; S. Niskanen, *The origins of the 'Gesta Francorum' and two related texts: their textual and literary character*, "Sacris Erudiri. A Journal on the Inheritance of Late Antique and Medieval Christianity", 51/2012, pp. 287-316.

¹⁸ This is my transcription from a manuscript BNF MS Latin 4892, 221 r, which is only one version of Peter Tudebode's chronicle in which the scene of Godfrey cutting the enemy in two is contained. The authors of the Tudebode chronicle edition, J.H. Hill and L.L. Hill, have not included this passage in the text body but placed it in the critical apparatus: Petrus Tudebodus, *Historia de Hierosolymitano Itinere*, p. 75. In the English translation by the same authors, published three years before the edition, the passage was not included.

¹⁹ "Duke Godfrey, the bravest knight of Christ, drew his sword and fell on them, and then hit the grimmest pagan so strongly that he was slashed into halves from the top of the head down to the saddle. On the Gods' disposition, it happened that the pagan, although bisected, did not fall off his horse. Next, Godfrey attacked another opponent from his side and hewed him transversely through the middle. Then, all enemies of Christianity became horrified – not only those present but everybody who heard about the slaughter. Then, the duke, worthy of the remembrance of posterity, chased the fleeing enemies and attacked them as the mightiest lion, beheaded and bulldozed to the river. Similarly, Hugh the Great, the count of St. Gilles, Bohemond, count of Flanders and other mighty lords beheaded them and threw them into the river. There was no escape but through the bridge, too narrow, so the enemies, crowding on it, pushed one another off the deck into the river. The knights of Christ, armed with the Sign of the Cross, assaulted the opponents very fierce and bravely. Those bolted through the bridge, running towards the city gate. They could not get through the bridge because of the overcrowding of people and horses, and there they passed the Gates of Hell, surrendering their miserable souls to the Devil and his servants. Then we, having defeated them, threw them off to the river with our deadly spears. The violent stream of the river looked red for the blood of the Turks. And when, by chance, any of them tried to grab a column of the bridge or swim to the bank, we, standing on the sides of the river, murdered them and pushed them into the raging waves."

This passage demonstrates the central role of Godfrey of Lorraine in Peter Tudebode's narrative. His spectacular and victorious confrontation with the "most awesome pagan" is the highlight of the account of the battle. Godfrey does not charge at enemies that have been already made to fly, as described by Raymond of Aguilers, but assaults at the culminating moment of combat. In his duel with the opponent, who stands out as champion of the enemy army, Godfrey delivers a remarkable blow, killing his adversary in a way that arouses mass horror. The defeat of the foe is complete, as testified by the myriad of victims swallowed by the watery grave of the Orontes. Peter Tudebode built his story on the following crucial ingredients: a) the placement of the deed of Godfrey in the course of the battle, b) the depiction of the Muslim adversary, c) how Godfrey delivered the final blow and its consequences, and d) the demise of the enemy army in the current of the Orontes. I will examine each of these narration elements comparatively in the following parts of the text.

The venue of the confrontation

Peter Tudebode places Godfrey and his war deeds at the center of the tale of the Bridge Gate battle without specifying exactly where the duke fought his opponent. The chronicler writes that Godfrey "detruncabat et in amnem precipitabat" his successive opponents, which is the first mention that locates the whole scene in the direct vicinity to the river. We learn about the crowd fleeing across the bridge from later passages in the account. Note that Raymond of Aguilers is more specific about the site of the action: in his narrative, Godfrey forestalls the enemy units and takes up a position at the entry to the Bridge Gate leading to Antioch. According to the elaborate account of the Bridge Gate battle from Albert of Aachen,²⁰ combat took place on the forefield of the bridge. The place of Godfrey's confrontation with his opponent is not clear, but the chronicler mentions that after the blow had been struck, the cut-off upper half of the body of the Turkish adversary fell down on the sand while the lower half was carried on by the horse, falling to the ground only in the middle of the bridge.²¹ As Albert wrote, taking the bridge forefield and cutting the enemy off from the city were not the Crusaders' original goals. However, Albert's portrayal illustrates the effectiveness of blocking the avenue of escape, thus enabling the destruction of the Muslim forces. Godfrey's deed is similarly situated in the chronicles of Robert the Monk²² and Balderic of Dol²³ while Gilles of Paris explains, both poetically and accurately, that the duke blocked the entry to the gate and cut off the way of escape.²⁴ According to William of Tyre, Godfrey

²⁰ The tale of the chronicle of Albert of Aachen is very valuable for the present deliberations because it is the most comprehensive account of the Bridge Gate battle and one of the earliest. On the chronicle of Albert, see Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, XXI-LX; S. Edgington, *Albert of Aachen Reappraised*, in: *From Clermont to Jerusalem. The Crusades and Crusader Societies 1095-1500*, ed. A.V. Murray, Turnhout 1998, pp. 55-67; P. Knoch, *Studien zu Albert von Aachen. Der erste Kreuzzug in der deutschen Chronistik*, Stuttgart 1966, p. 223; J. Flori, *Chroniqueurs et propagandistes*, pp. 259-311.

²¹ Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, p. 244.

²² *The 'Historia Iherosolimitana' of Robert the Monk*, p. 45 (and the work based on the chronicle: *Anonymus Rhe-nensis 'Historia et Gesta Ducis Gotfridi'*, in: *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades. Historiens Occidentaux*, vol. 5, Paris 1895, p. 469).

²³ *Baldrici episcopi Dolensis 'Historia Ierosolimitana'*, in: *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades. Historiens Occidentaux.*, vol. 4., I, Paris 1879, pp. 50-51.

²⁴ *The 'Historia Vie Hierosolimitane' of Gilo of Paris and a second, anonymous author*, eds. and transl. C.W. Grocock, J.E. Siberry, Oxford 1997, p. 120: "Calcans dux Bullicus hostem, occupat ingressum pontis prohibetque

and his knights took positions on the top of the hill facing the mouth to the bridge.²⁵ Matthew of Paris, drawing from William's account, alters Godfrey's placement to on the bridge rather than in front of it.²⁶ Similarly, a brief mention by Guibert of Nogent situates Godfrey's bisecting blow on the bridge.²⁷ The two later accounts, by Matthew of Paris and Guibert of Nogent, demonstrate a trend to perceive Godfrey's deed as having been accomplished on the bridge leading to the Bridge Gate, irrespective of the detailed circumstances described by these chroniclers. The location of the scene on the bridge is also corroborated by a mention from Robert the Monk in his account of the final escalade of the Crusaders on Jerusalem: in this culminating point of the crusade narrative, he mentions Godfrey's great combat proficiency and recollects the bisection of the opponent on the bridge during the siege of Antioch.²⁸ Albert of Aachen, in a passage following far after the account of the siege of Antioch, connects the single-blow bisection episode with a fight in the middle, not on the forefield, of the bridge.²⁹ This means that the chroniclers did not think it important to distinguish between the forefield, the forefield's hill, and the bridge in terms of the role that the scene's site may have played in the narrative. Wipon, the eleventh-century chronicler, places the scene of combat on the bridge. In writing about the fight of the imperial garrison against the townspeople of Ravenna, he mentions the deed of Eberhard, the duke of Bavaria. The tale of the fierce clash ends with a scene where Eberhard, leaving the city with a banner in his hand, assaults the defending crew on the bridge and defeats them all.³⁰ The heroism

regressum". ("The duke of Bouillon trampled down the enemy, took possession of the approach to the bridge, and stopped their retreat").

²⁵ *Willelmi tyrensis archiepiscopi chronicon*, in: *Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens, vol. 63, Turnhout 1986, p. 277: "Lotharingiae dux illustris; et locum, qui ante pontem eorum erat aliquantulum eminentior, cum suis occupat; et eos quos venerabiles principes gladiis insectabantur, ad pontem volentes effugere, aut gladiis obruncat, aut in agonem unde fugerant violenter redire compellit perituros"; *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea by William, Archbishop of Tyre*, transl. E.A. Babcock, New York 1943, p. 232: "The duke of Lorraine [...] had already seized a position before the bridge where there was a slight elevation. Hence, as the Turks fled before the pursuit of our revered leaders, they were either cut down as they attempted to escape to the bridge or were forced to return to certain death into the fray whence they had just fled".

²⁶ Matthaei Parisiensis, *Monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica Maiora*, vol. II: *1067-1216*, ed. H.R. Luard, London 1874, p. 73: "Dux Lotharingiae Godefridus cum suis pontem occupans, aut intrare volentes gladiis obruncat". ("Godfrey, the duke of Lorraine, together with his retinue, took the bridge and beheaded everybody who tried to pass").

²⁷ *Guiberti abbati Novigentis Dei gesta per Francos*, in: *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens, Turnhout 1996, vol. 127A, p. 284. Guibert placed the scene of Godfrey's blow on the bridge not in the tale about the Bridge Gate battle, but in the characteristics of Godfrey following his election as the ruler of Jerusalem.

²⁸ *The 'Historia Iherosolimitana' of Robert the Monk*, p. 99: "Dux vero Godefridus non arcem, non aulam, non aurum, non argentum, non quelibet spolia ambiebat, sed cum Francigenis suis sanguinem servorum Dei, qui in circuitu Ierusalem effusus fuerat, ab eis vindicare satagebat, et irrisiones et contumelias quas peregrinis intulerant ulcisci cupiebat. In nullo autem bello talem habuit interficiendi facultatem, nec super pontem Antiochie, cum giganteum dimidiavit gentilem"; *Robert the Monk's History of the First Crusade: Historia Iherosolimitana (Crusade Texts in Translation)*, ed. and transl. C. Sweetenham, Ashgate 2005, p. 200: "Meanwhile, Duke Godfrey had no desire for the citadel, the palace, gold, or silver or any kind of spoils. Instead at the head of his Franks he was desperate to make the enemy pay for the blood of the servants of God which had been spilt around Jerusalem, and wanted revenge for the insults they had heaped on the pilgrims. In no battle had he ever found so many opportunities to kill, not even on the bridge at Antioch where he had cut in half the Turkish giant".

²⁹ Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, pp. 584-585.

³⁰ *Die Werke Wipons*, in: *Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum in usum Scholarum*, ed. H. Bresslau, Hannover 1915, p. 34: "Quidam comes nomine Eppo, optimus miles de Baioria, cum fanone civitatem exiens eos, qui pontem superstabant, subiugavit, et plurimi eorum per illum solum de ponte praecipitati in aqua necati sunt" ("A certain count,

of Eberhard highlights the bravery and fighting spirit of the Germans, who courageously overcame the treacherous rebellion of the Ravennians. Wipon, considering this combat fought on the bridge particularly laudable and glorious, uses the motif to prove the merits of the imperial army. Boleslaus the Wry-mouthed, a prince of Poland, also committed a laudable deed on a bridge. This event was described by Gallus Anonymous in his tale about the war of the Poles against the Pomeranians. The latter built a gord in front of the Santok fort to keep this stronghold checkmated, as it was important for the Polish Piast dynasty. Boleslaus and, independently, Zbigniew, who led Polish army units from Greater Poland, headed out to Santok. Zbigniew did not take any offensive action on site, but his younger brother, Boleslaus, struck the enemy gord: “he assaulted the bridge, took it over from the defending crew and, after a pursuit, put his sword to the gate of the gord”.³¹ Commenting on the deed, the chronicler explains that the attack on the bridge leading to the gord gate is testimony to the outstanding military abilities and fighting spirit of Boleslaus: the Pomeranians were so horrified that they pulled down the brand new gord by their own hands and retreated.³² It is important for interpreting this episode to observe that the account of the Santok clash is preceded directly by a recounting of the ceremonious knighting of Boleslaus by Vladislav Herman in Płock. Ergo, the heroic deed on the bridge leading to the gates of the assaulted gord crowns the juvenile years of Boleslaus and ultimately seals his maturity as a knight.³³ To summarize our reflections on the scene of the action, Godfrey’s hewing in half of his opponent with a single blow is set in a specific narrative space and represented in medieval chronicles by a bridge leading to the gate of a beleaguered fortress. In this space, battle deeds gain a dimension of heroic acts of immense impact: they are remembered and recalled as arousing horror among foes.

The opponent

Who was Godfrey’s adversary? How has he been imagined, and what traits are attributed to him? The chroniclers describe him, in the first instance, as a man of enormous size. According to Gilles of Paris, he was so powerful that he aroused fear among the Crusaders.³⁴ This body

Eberhard, brave knight of Bavaria, defeated the whole crew defending the bridge while he was leaving the city, holding a banner. All those he pushed off the bridge drowned”).

³¹ *Galli Anonymi Cronicae et gesta ducum sive principum Polonorum*, in: *Monumenta Poloniae Historica, Nova Series*, vol. 2, ed. K. Maleczyński, Kraków 1952, p. 85: “Nam et pontem invadendo castellanis abstulit, et in portam persequendo suos enses intulit”.

³² Ibidem: “Hoc initium militie Boleszlavi magnum future probitatis indicium extitit christianis, magnumque signum sue destructionis, magnum terrorem intulit ipsis etiam Pomoranis” (“This is how the outset of the knight’s vocation of Boleslaus became, for Christians, a promise of his future virtues and, for the Pomeranians, a sure omen of their defeat”). In the following sentences the chronicler emphatically explains the significance of the deed of Boleslaus by picturing the reaction of the Pomeranians: “[Pomorani] Boleszlavum vero cum paucis postea venientem, et audacter suos hostes usque ad portas invadentem, lupi filium appellabant” (“The Pomeranians called Boleslaus, who came later on with small forces but courageously chased his enemies until the gates of the gord, the ‘son of wolf’”).

³³ See: P. Żmudzki, *Władca i wojownicy. Narracje o wodzach, drużynie i wojnach w najdawniejszej historiografii Polski i Rusi*, Wrocław 2009, pp. 93-94.

³⁴ *The ‘Historia Vie Hierosolimitane’ of Gilo of Paris*, p. 121: “Mole sua terrens proceres multoque paratu” (“terrifying the nobles with his massive bulk and his sumptuous equipage”); *The ‘Historia Iherosolimitana’ of Robert the Monk*, p. 45: “unus ex eis audacior ceteris, et mole corporis prestantior, et viribus, ut alter Goliath, robustior”; *Robert the Monk’s History of the First Crusade*, p. 133: “One of them, bolder than the rest, unusually heavily built and of greater strength rather than another Goliath”; *The Ecclesiastical History of ‘Orderic Vitalis’*, ed. and transl.

build is certainly the prevailing motif among the other traits of Godfrey's opponent, such as courage, swiftness, or savagery. We can find a similar concept of portraying an opponent who is about to fight a duel with the narrative's hero in the Latin tale of the deeds of Charles the Great in Spain. While fighting amidst a crowd of Muslim forces in the Roncevaux gorge, Roland strikes the physically largest opponent, whose killing makes the enemy units flee.³⁵ So described, the opponent becomes an avatar of the whole enemy army, a champion who goes head-to-head in a duel on behalf of one of the parties.³⁶ Elsewhere in the aforementioned chronicle of Pseudo-Turpin, the motif of the hero's encounter with a formidable opponent is exploited even more broadly. In chapter seventeen we have Roland's duel with a giant, the stakes being the ruling of Nagera, a Spanish city. The giant came from Syria with a Turkish corps of twenty thousand sent by the emir of Babylon to conquer Charles the Great in Spain. He is described as follows:

Gygas quidem nomine Ferracutus de genere Goliad [...] Erat enim statura eius quasi cubitis viginti, et facies eius longa quasi unius cubiti, et nasus unius palme mensuratum, et brachia eius et crura quatuor cubitis erant, et digiti tribus palmis.³⁷

This description corresponds to the biblical account of Goliath (1 Sam 17: 4-7):

Et egressus est vir spurius de castris Philistinorum nomine Goliath de Geth, altitudinis sex cubitorum et palmi. Et cassis aerea super caput eius, et lorica squamata induebatur; porro pondus loricae eius quinque milia siclorum aeris erat. Et ocreas aereas habebat in cruribus; et clypeus aereus tegebat humeros eius. Hastile autem hastae eius erat quasi liciatorium textentium; ipsum autem ferrum hastae eius sexcentos siclos habebat ferri; et armiger eius antecedeat eum.³⁸

The cited depictions are similarly construed, being a paratactic recitation of individual traits. Both Goliath in 1 Samuel and the "giant of the line of Goliath" in the chronicle of Pseudo-Turpin are measured by the authors in cubits and spans. Roland, likewise, uses

M. Chibnall, Oxford 1975, p. 84-85: "Insignis dux Godefredus quendam maximum bellatorum aurea lorica indutum in tergo ense percussit" ("The valiant Duke Godfrey struck one huge warrior wearing a golden hauberk from behind with his sword"); *Anonymus Rhenensis 'Historia et Gesta Ducis Gotfridi'*, p. 469: "unus ex Sarracenis, audacior caeteris et mole corporis praestantior et viribus" ("one of the Saracens – braver, stronger and mightier than the others"); *Benedictus Accoltis 'Historia Gotfridi'*, in: *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades. Historiens Occidentaux*, vol. 5, Paris 1895, p. 578: "Barbarus quidam, ingens corpore" ("a gigantic barbarian").

³⁵ *Die Chronik von Karl dem Grossen und Roland*, p. 98: "Et vidit quendam inter alios, qui erat statura maior aliis, et uno ictu amputavit illum" ("He saw among them a Saracen, who was larger than the others, and hewed him through with a single blow").

³⁶ On the role of the champion: V.M. Udwin, *Between Two Armies. The Place of the Duel in Epic Culture*, Brill 1999, pp. 109-135.

³⁷ *Die Chronik von Karl dem Grossen und Roland*, p. 72: "A giant named Ferracutus, of the line of Goliath [...] was twenty cubits high, his face was long, as if of one cubit, the nose measured one span, the arms four cubits and the fingers three spans".

³⁸ *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Clementinam*, Rome 1947, p. 275; *The First Book of Samuel*, ed. and comm. P.R. Ackroyd, Cambridge 1971, p. 137: "A champion came out from the Philistine camp, a man named Goliath, from Gath; he was over nine feet (lit. six cubits and a span) in height. He had a bronze helmet on his head, and he wore plate-armour of bronze, weighing five thousand shekels. On his legs were bronze greaves, and one of his weapons was a dagger of bronze. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and its head, which was of iron, weighed six hundred shekels; and his shield-bearer marched ahead of him".

a stick, as does David, in the culminating moment of the duel.³⁹ Thus, we might ask if the biblical Goliath served as a model for the authors drawing the picture of Godfrey's opponent at Antioch. We learn from 1 Samuel that an important attribute that distinguishes Goliath, apart from his formidable size, is his baggage: the unusually heavy armor and the impressive spear.⁴⁰ Godfrey's adversary as well, in the deliberated scene, is presented in the accounts of the First Crusade as both huge and heavily armored.⁴¹ If we look at all the portrayals of Godfrey's opponent, we see that various authors describe him slightly differently, but the main characteristics can be reduced to two main attributes: a far above average body size and heavy armor. This description coincides with the image of the biblical Goliath. Robert the Monk writes explicitly in the account of the scene that the opponent of Godfrey resembled Goliath and, recalling the heroic deed of Godfrey on the bridge of Antioch elsewhere in his chronicle, he mentions that the defeated pagan was as huge as a giant.⁴² The anonymous author of the *Historia Nicaena vel Antiochena* chronicle⁴³ followed the popular portrayal of Robert.⁴⁴ If we consider the characteristics of Godfrey's opponent and connect them to the biblical depiction of Goliath and to Pseudo-Turpin's figures of the giant and of the huge opponent from Roncevaux, we gain deeper insight into the messages of the crusade chronicles that address the Bridge Gate battle. The opponent of Godfrey embodies the whole Turkish army, and the confrontation decides the fate of both armies and the siege of Antioch. This confrontation involving such high stakes – which, *nota bene*, is played in the specific narrative space of the bridge leading to the gate of the beleaguered city – has an unusual dramaturgy. The chroniclers' narratives feature the motif of the deadly blow inflicted by the hero of the tale on his opponent. Albert of Aachen completes the depiction of Godfrey's opponent by explaining that he could kill or injure the duke by hitting him with an arrow.⁴⁵ Gilles of Paris writes that the Arab attacked Godfrey and dealt a blow to his head, but the duke managed to fend it off. Robert the Monk, the anonymous author of the *Historia*

³⁹ *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Clementinam*, p. 276: “et tulit baculum suum, quem semper habebat in minibus”; *The First Book of Samuel*, p. 142: “then he picked up his stick”; *Die Chronik von Karl dem Grossen und Roland*, p. 80: “Tunc Ferracutus, eiecit spata sua ictum super Rotolandum, sed ipse Rotolandus saltavit ad levam et accepit ictum spate eius in baculo suo”. (“Then Ferracutus dealt Roland a blow with his sword, but Roland jumped left and fended off the blow with his stick”).

⁴⁰ For patterns of describing warrior equipment and armor in European literature, see C.M. Bowra, *Heroic poetry*, London 1952, pp. 394-395.

⁴¹ Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, p. 244: “Turcum [...] lorica indutum”; *Guiberti abbati Novigentis Dei gesta per Francos*, p. 284: “Turcum eum illorictaum”. The words “licet lorica indutum” were in the following works: *The Ecclesiastical History of ‘Orderic Vitalis’*, loc. cit.; *Willelmi tyrensis archiepiscopi chronicon*, p. 279; Matthaei Parisiensis, *Monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica Maiora*, p. 73.

⁴² *The ‘Historia Iherosolimitana’ of Robert the Monk*, p. 45: “ut alter Goliath”; *ibidem*, p. 99: “In nullo autem bello talem habuit interficiendi facultatem, nec super pontem Antiochie, cum giganteum dimidiavit gentilem”; *Robert the Monk’s History of the First Crusade*, p. 200: “In no battle had he ever found so many opportunities to kill, not even on the bridge at Antioch where he had cut in half the Turkish giant”.

⁴³ *Historia nicaena vel Antiochena*, in: *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades. Historiens Occidentaux*, vol. 5, Paris 1895, p. 156.

⁴⁴ Today, we know of more than eighty manuscripts: *The ‘Historia Iherosolimitana’ of Robert the Monk*, XLII-XLVII. For a discussion of reasons for the unusual popularity, given the poor reception of the work at the Capetian court, see: D. Kempf, *Towards a Textual Archaeology of the First Crusade*, in: *Writing the Early Crusades*, eds. M. Bull, D. Kempf, Woodbridge 2014, pp. 116-126.

⁴⁵ Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, loc. cit.: “Turcum, mirabile dictu, sibi arcu importunum” (“Turk who was threatening him with his bow”).

Nicaena vel Antiochena chronicle, and later authors, the so-called Rhenish Anonymous and Benedictus Accoltis, draw similar scenes.⁴⁶ The course of the duel between Roland and the giant was similarly dramatic.⁴⁷ This motif was also exploited by William of Tyre in creating the image of Godfrey of Lorraine.⁴⁸ The blow threatening Godfrey's life defines the image of his opponent as a mighty and demanding adversary, which electrifies the tale and assures the reader that it is a mortal combat. This is an important element of the narrative meant to depict the Bridge Gate battle as a breakthrough event that reversed the fortunes of the whole long struggle for Antioch.

The decisive blow

The blow Godfrey deals with his sword on his Muslim adversary is the culminating moment of the tale of the Bridge Gate battle. At this point, the narratives offer elaborate exploitation of the motif of the destructive blow. In the chronicle of Peter Tudebode, cited above, the duke bisects his opponent in the saggital plane, cutting him through from the head to the saddle. Godfrey's extraordinary battle deed reaches its grand finale at the spectacular end of the scene: although the body of the pagan has been bisected, it does not fall to the ground but is carried on by the horse.⁴⁹ In the chronicle of Pseudo-Turpin as well, this is how Roland bisects the largest warrior from among the ranks of Muslims and, in doing so, makes the watching enemy army flee the battlefield.⁵⁰ Peter Tudebode stresses, too, that the horrific view of the massacred warrior scared the Muslims away.

Keeping to the chronicle of Pseudo-Turpin, let us return to the aforementioned confrontation between Roland and the giant. Roland is another in a succession of knights sent by Charles the Great to fight the formidable opponent, as the giant has captured and enslaved Roland's predecessors. Initially, Roland manages to deal a few blows, but the giant is not susceptible, and he takes Roland prisoner. During his captivity Roland talks with the giant, laying out to him the principles of the Catholic faith, but also learning from the giant that he can be

⁴⁶ *The 'Historia Vie Hierosolimitane' of Gilo of Paris*, loc. cit.: "Constitit ante ducem, putat hanc extinguere lucem. Et super invictum caput erigit altius ictum". ("He halted before the duke, thinking he would extinguish this light, and raised his sword high over that unvanquished head to strike"); *Anonymus Rhenensis 'Historia et Gesta Ducis Gotfridi'*, loc. cit.: "videret ducem Gotfridum sic supra suos crudeliter saevientem, mox sanguineis calcaribus et plantis urget equum adversus illum, et, mucrone in altum sublato, ita austere super verticem ducis transverberat, ut, nisi dux ictui umbonem expandisset, et se in alteram partem reclinasset, mortis periculum utique subegisset". ("he saw Godfrey, who was so cruel to them, and immediately spurred his horse towards the duke. He raised his sword high and dealt a blow so hard to the head of the duke that, unless the duke had not fended the blow off with his buckler and not leaned to the other side, he would have found himself in lethal danger"); *Benedictus Accoltis 'Historia Gotfridi'*, loc. cit.: "in ipsum ducem equum concitat, nec vitare ictum valentem hasta infesta in ilibus percutit; arma vero vulnus prohibuerunt" ("he turned his horse towards the duke who could not evade the blow from the enemy spear directed into his body, but the armor saved him from injury"); *Historia nicaena vel Antiochena*, loc. cit.

⁴⁷ *Die Chronik von Karl dem Grossen und Roland*, loc. cit.: At the culminating moment of the story, Roland was hit by the giant and thrown down to the ground, after which the knight inflicted an unexpected deadly blow to the adversary.

⁴⁸ See: *Willelmi tyrensis archiepiscopi chronicon*, pp. 428-430: On the occasion of the presentation of Godfrey as the first ruler of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, the chronicler mentions two episodes, each involving duels and impressive victories won in them by the duke of Lorraine.

⁴⁹ Petrus Tudebodus, *Historia de Hierosolymitano Itinere*, p. 75.

⁵⁰ *Die Chronik von Karl dem Grossen und Roland*, p. 98: "Quod ut alii Sarraceni viderunt, ilico Marsirium cum paucis in campo dimittentes fugere huc illucque ceperunt". ("When the Saracens saw that, and when they noticed Marsil walking away with a small retinue, they bolted").

killed only by a hit in the navel.⁵¹ When the final confrontation comes, it is not only Nagera at stake, but also the comparative truth of the combatants' religions. In the culminating moment, after the giant turns on Ronald, the knight of Charles the Great strikes his adversary with the sword, slashing him mortally through the navel ("per eius umbilicum") for Roland's triumph.

According to most chroniclers of the First Crusade, Godfrey struck his opponent with the same move. William of Tyre and Matthew of Paris write that the Muslim opponent of the duke of Lorraine was bisected in the transverse plane so that the upper part of the body, from the navel up, was separated from the lower one.⁵² If we interpret "umbilicus" generally as the "middle of the body" rather than precisely the navel in a purely anatomical sense, the similarity to the message of Pseudo-Turpin's chronicle is evident. The essence of the historiographic tradition of this scene is that Godfrey's blow bisected the enemy. Apart from the account of Peter Tudebode, it is about separating the upper body part from the lower one.⁵³ Thus, Godfrey's blow merges the idea of both scenes from the combat of Roland. The duke of Lorraine struck his opponent in the middle of the body and hewed him in half. The blow massacred the mighty adversary and made the terrified enemy army flee at the sight of the horror.

In the *History of Roger* by Alexander of Telese there is an account of a battle in which a powerful sword strike is the leitmotif. A royal company (King Roger does not take part in the confrontation) makes the forces of Count Rainulf retreat. However, Rainulf does not surrender and decides to lead a counterattack. After losing his spear, he reaches for a dagger and deals a blow to the head of an oncoming horseman. The rider falls from the horse onto

⁵¹ Ibidem, p. 74: "Per nullum, inquit gygas, vulnerari possum nisi per umbilicum" ("It is not possible", said the giant, "to injure me otherwise than by striking the navel").

⁵² *Willelmi tyrensis archiepiscopi chronicon*, loc. cit.: "per medium divisit, ita ut pars ab umbilico superior, ad terram decideret"; *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea by William, Archbishop of Tyre*, p. 234: "he boldly pursued another knight [...] and clove him through the middle. The upper part of the body above the waist fell to the ground"; Matthaei Parisiensis, *Monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica Maiora*, p. 74.

⁵³ *The 'Historia Iherosolimitana' of Robert the Monk*, p. 45: "Ensem elevat, eumque a sinistra parte scapularum tanta virtute intorsit, quod pectus medium disiunxit, spinam et vitalia interrupit, et sic lubricus ensis super crus dextrum integer exivit; sicque caput integrum cum dextra parte corporis immersit gurgiti, partemque que equo presidebat remisit civitati"; *Robert the Monk's History of the First Crusade*, p. 133: "He raised the sword and plunged it into the left side of his shoulder-blades with such force that it split the chest down the middle, slashed through the spine and vital organs and, slippery with blood, came out unbroken above the right leg. As a result, the whole of the head and the right side slipped down into the water, whilst the part remaining on the horse was carried back into the city"; Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, loc. cit.: "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 moenia refertur, ubi lapsa remansit". ("he cut [...] into two parts with his very sharp sword. The half of the body from the chest upwards fell to the sand, the other half still grasped the horse with its legs and was carried onto the middle of the bridge in front of the city ramparts where it slid off and remained."); *The 'Historia Vie Hierosolimitane' of Gilo of 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". ("Raised his gleaming sword and struck his enemy; he smashed his mouth and head, cut right through his vitals, strewed his fat about, and shattered his spine and chest; thus was the man laid low, and he fell in two parts, sliced in half, and half of him stuck to his horse and was borne off lying flat on its back; the rider was his horse's unjust plunder. Thus, with one blow came about massive defeat, and not a single one").

his back, and the whole army of Roger is dashed.⁵⁴ In the *Gesta Guillelmi* by William of Poitiers, it is William the Conqueror, the hero of the tale, who deals a hefty blow. When the duke of Normandy sets off for Anjou, he is attacked from the back by prevailing enemy forces. He decides to accept the battle, which started from a confrontation of William with the bravest knight of the enemy army, who assaulted the duke first. William deals the adversary a blow so mighty that he falls off his horse, after which the entire enemy army flees, and the battle is settled thus.⁵⁵ The deed unexpectedly turns back the course of a confrontation in which the opponent initially prevailed and was almost certain to win. This is the meaning of Godfrey's blow: it changed the balance of powers under Antioch, constituting a breakthrough that enabled the Christians to take initiative and prevail.

The destruction of the body of Godfrey's opponent reflects the severity of the Muslims' defeat. Gilles of Paris and Robert the Monk describe in meticulous anatomical detail the damage that the duke of Lorraine's blow did to the body of his enemy.⁵⁶ The motif of gruesome death is also connected with Arius, an individual whose death was acutely disgraceful.⁵⁷ The disembowelment connects Arius with Godfrey's opponent, though the two deaths happened in quite different circumstances. The bisection of the Muslim on the Antioch bridge, causing the disembowelment, conveys the idea of God's wrath falling on enemies of Christianity. In the subject scene, Godfrey, as a leader of Crusaders, is an executor of God's justice who administers a well-deserved punishment to pagans. Some chroniclers make an additional note of the disgrace in the death of the opponent and in the defeat of the foe by including the motif of the demise in the river. Robert the Monk and Orderic Vitalis claim that the upper part of the Muslim's body fell from the bridge straight into the river while the lower part, including legs, was carried on by the horse to the city.⁵⁸ Maxentius, an adversary of Constantine, also suffered a disgraceful death, falling off a bridge to the Tiber River.⁵⁹ This drowning of Maxentius was held to prove the righteousness of Constantine's case: in the aftermath of the Milvian Bridge battle he conquered Rome to the triumph of Christianity.⁶⁰ Thus, the disgraceful death of the Muslim champion and the sinking of the upper part of his

⁵⁴ *Alexandri Telesini abbatis Ystoria Rogerii regis Sicilie, Calabrie atque Apulie*, ed. L. de Nava, Rome 1991, p. 36.

⁵⁵ *The 'Gesta Guillelmi' of William of Poitiers*, eds. and transl. R.H.C. Davis, M. Chibnall, Oxford 1998, pp. 24-25.

⁵⁶ *The 'Historia Vie Hierosolimitane' of Gilo of Paris*, p. 122; *The 'Historia Iherosolimitana' of Robert the Monk*, p. 45.

⁵⁷ *Eusebius Werke*, ed. T. Mommsen, Leipzig 1908, p. 979. See: A. Leroy-Molinghen, *La mort d'Arius*, "Byzantion", 38/1968, pp. 105-111; Ch.M. Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, Routledge 2004, p. 234.

⁵⁸ *The 'Historia Iherosolimitana' of Robert the Monk*, loc. cit., vide supra; *The Ecclesiastical History of 'Orderic Vitalis'*, loc. cit.: "Caput cum humeris et superiori parte corporis a cingulo in flumen cecidit; inferiorque pars super uelocissimum cornipedem remansit. Equus autem rectore carens aspere calcaribus urgebatur; et laxatis habenis fugientes preueniens urbem ingressus est". ("The head and shoulders with all the body above the belt fell into the river, the lower part remained seated on the galloping horse. The riderless horse was pricked onwards by the sharp spurs and galloped into the city ahead of the fugitives, with the reins hanging slack"). The same imagery was used by the authors of *Anonymus Rhenensis 'Historia et gesta ducis Gotfridi'*", loc. cit., and *Historia nicaena vel Antiochena*, loc. cit.

⁵⁹ *Lucii Ceacilii Firmiani Lactantii De mortibus persecutorum liber*, ed. I. Pesenti, Turin 1922, p. 44; *XII Panegyrici Latini*, ed. A. Baehrens, Leipzig 1874, pp. 205-206.

⁶⁰ Ch.M. Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire*, pp. 84-105; R. Van Dam, *Remembering Constantine at the Milvian Bridge*, Cambridge 2011, pp. 224-252.

body in the Orontes River foretold the conquest of Antioch and testified to the legitimacy of the holy war fought by Crusaders.

The demise in the river

The motif of the demise in a river found in the works of apologists of the First Crusade is not unique to the Godfrey story. Rather, it is part of the universal vision of the defeat of an enemy army. In the tale of Peter Tudebode, Godfrey, after bisecting the most savage pagan, turned on the fleeing crowd, slashed his enemies, and threw them off the bridge into the river. Other crusade leaders did this as well. The description of the escaping warriors, crowded on the bridge and, because of that, falling into the Orontes on their flight to a refuge, completes the picture of the pagans. The account of this event closes all the crusade chroniclers' narratives on the Bridge Gate battle.⁶¹ Raymond of Aguilers mentions the Turks falling into the river together with bridge railings and the horseman who jumped off from the bridge as he was, without dismounting.⁶² According to Robert the Monk, Christians threw the Muslims clinging to bridge pillars off into the water without mercy.⁶³ Balderic of Dol tells about the deed of knight Guicherus who, seeing Muslims holding on to the bridge pillars, jumped into the water and cut their arms off to commit them to the current of the river.⁶⁴

In the aforementioned narrative of the battle by Alexander of Telese, the army of King Roger first made the enemy flee, and some of Rainulf's warriors drowned in the river while trying to escape.⁶⁵ The same happened to the enemies of William the Conqueror in the battle of Val-es-Dunes, many of whom fell into the river because of the crowding.⁶⁶ The visualization of drowning enemies concludes also the account of the struggle of the army of Conrad II in Ravenna.⁶⁷ The same motif underlies the central scenes of the Milvian Bridge battle: the sight of a human mass crowded on the bridge and the demise of a great number of enemies in the Tiber signal a complete victory for Constantine and the total defeat of Maxentius' army. The retreating forces are devastated, not by combat, but by their inability to find a way

⁶¹ Including the *Gesta Francorum* chronicle and the chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres that do not contain this scene. *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, ed. and transl. R. Hill, London 1962, pp. 41-42: "Nos itaque illos superavimus, impellentes in flumen et deicientes. Unda vero rapidi fluminis undique videbatur fluere rubea Turcorum sanguine". ("We came after them, driving them into the river or throwing them down, so that the waters of that swift stream appeared to be running all red with blood of Turks"); *Fulcheri Carnotensis Historia Hierosolymitana (1095-1127)*, ed. H. Hagenmeyer, Heidelberg 1913, p. 229: "semel contigit plerosque de Turcis in flumen Fernum fugiendo cadere et in eo mersos infeliciter interire"; *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1095-1127*, transl. F.R. Ryan, Tennessee 1969, p. 97: "Once it happened that many Turks in fleeing fell into the Fernus River and miserably drowned"; Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, loc. cit: "Ubi prae nimia pressura, quam pons sustinere nequiverat, quia tot fugientibus sua latitudo non suffecerat, plurimi e ponte cadentes undis Fernae involvuntur". ("Where, because the pressure was more than the bridge could sustain and because its width was not sufficient for so many fleeing people, very many fell from the bridge and were covered by the waters of the Orontes"). Also in *Willelmi tyrensis archiepiscopi chronicon*, loc. cit.

⁶² Raimundus de Aguilers, *Historia Francorum Qui Ceperunt Iherusalem*, cap. VIII, p. 249.

⁶³ *The 'Historia Iherosolimitana' of Robert the Monk*, loc. cit.

⁶⁴ *Baldrici episcopi Dolensis 'Historia Ierosolimitana'*, loc. cit. This scene was placed by the editor in the critical apparatus, accompanied by a note that it could be found in manuscript "G".

⁶⁵ *Alexandri Telesini abbatis Ystoria Rogerii regis Sicilie, Calabrie atque Apulie*, loc. cit.

⁶⁶ *The 'Gesta Guillelmi' of William of Poitiers*, p. 10; *The 'Gesta Normannorum Ducum' of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis and Robert of Torigni*, ed. and transl. E.M.C. Van Houts, Oxford 1995, pp. 120-122.

⁶⁷ *Die Werke Wipos*, p. 34.

to refuge. They not only lose the battle, but also suffer a well-deserved penalty from the hand of the Lord. The authors stress that the overcrowding of the fleers contributed to their deaths, so the cowardice of the retreating army was the cause of their ordeal. The river red from blood or full of dead bodies is also a part of this picture. Gallus Anonymous uses this narrative element as well.⁶⁸

The place in the narrative

Finally, let us analyze the position of the Bridge Gate battle tale within the whole body of narration about the First Crusade. The siege of Antioch occupies the most space there: the struggle continued from October 1097 to June 1098, and three major battles and countless clashes were fought during that time. Considering the structure of the chronicles, particularly those of the *Gesta Francorum* family,⁶⁹ it might seem that it was Antioch that decided the fortunes of the crusade; and the final success, the conquest of Jerusalem, followed the victory on the Orontes. The tale of the siege of Antioch consists of two disparate parts: the accounts of the battles to capture the city and of the events following the Crusaders' entry to the fortress, including a final confrontation with Kerbog's army. In each version of the narrative about the crusade, the Bridge Gate battle is the last significant event before the entry of the Crusaders to the city after the betrayal of one of the defenders' commanders, so it ends the story about the struggle under the walls of the city. Because Antioch was actually won through the betrayal of Firuz, the chroniclers wished to show that it was the laudable triumph in the Bridge Gate battle that determined the Crusaders' success. Losses on the Muslim side were emphasized as the origin of the tradition: twelve emirs were supposed to have fallen in the battle, of whom William of Tyre wrote that their death was a "dampnum inreparabile" for the city.⁷⁰ According to the anonymous author of *Gesta Francorum*, the battle was a breakthrough, and Peter Tudebode added that the opponents had lost their fighting spirit on that day.⁷¹

Conclusion

It is very likely that the liturgical readings for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross were an important inspiration to medieval chroniclers, particularly those who described the First Crusade.⁷² The story of Emperor Heraclius and his victory over the Persians was

⁶⁸ *Galli Anonymi Cronicae et gesta ducum sive principum Polonorum*, pp. 25 and 72.

⁶⁹ S. Edgington, *The First Crusade: Reviewing the Evidence*, pp. 57-77.

⁷⁰ *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, loc. cit.; *Willelmi tyrensis archiepiscopi chronicon*, p. 279: "irrecoverable loss".

⁷¹ *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, loc. cit.: "Sic superati sunt inimici nostri virtute Dei et Sancti Sepulchri, et ulterius non valuerunt talem virtutem habere, neque in voce, neque in opere sicuti prius. Nos itaque vade fuimus refecti in illa die multis rebus quae satis erant nobis necessariae, et de equis". ("Thus, our enemies were defeated by the power of God and the Holy Sepulchre, so that henceforth they had less courage than before, both in words and works. On that day we recouped ourselves very well, with many things of which we were badly in need, as well as horses"). Similarly, *inter alia*: Petrus Tudebodus, *Historia de Hierosolymitano Itinere*, p. 77; Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, pp. 246 and 247.

⁷² On origins of this Feast see S. Borgehammar, *Heraclius Learns Humility: Two Early Latin Accounts Composed for the Celebration of Exaltatio Crucis*, "Millenium. Jahrbuch zu Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausends n.Chr." 6/2019, pp. 145-201.

certainly read in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in all the churches of Latin Europe in the Liturgy of the Hours. These texts tell a story of the duel fought on the bridge between Heraclius and the son of Chosroes. One of the variants of the legend mentions details of the confrontation crucial for the fortunes of the war, in which the emperor supposedly hews his adversary in half and throws his body into the river. For Catholics, the duel between the two leaders was a symbol of the decisive moment in settling the future of the holy war fought to recover the Relic of the Cross and the Holy City.

In conclusion, the Bridge Gate battle, although apparently insignificant in military terms, was perceived by chroniclers as an exceptional event in the history of the First Crusade. Robert the Monk recalls Godfrey's bisection of his opponent on the bridge while recounting the story of the final invasion of Jerusalem,⁷³ and Guibert of Nogent refers to this scene directly after his account of the election of Godfrey as the first ruler of the Crusaders' kingdom.⁷⁴ No other event is treated this way by the chroniclers. The bridge leading to the gate of beleaguered Antioch was a suitable narrative space for an episode that was meant to be perceived as a turning point. The gigantic opponent of Godfrey acts as the "front man" of the enemy army. The duke's blow is the culmination of the story: the extraordinary viciousness of this strike and the mutilation of the enemy's body reflect the magnitude of the Christian victory that reversed the odds in the fight for Antioch. The overcrowding of the fleeing enemy on the bridge and their demise in the Orontes represent the scale of loss and defeat on the part of the adversary.

The tales of the Bridge Gate battle reviewed in this article are a remarkable example of accumulating narrative motifs and elements used to draw a picture of the breakthrough victory that marked the turning point in the fortunes of the crusade. It was, according to Robert the Monk, a victory to outshine any other.⁷⁵

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⁷³ *The 'Historia Iherosolimitana' of Robert the Monk*, p. 99.

⁷⁴ *Guiberti abbati Novigentis Dei gesta per Francos*, p. 284.

⁷⁵ *The 'Historia Iherosolimitana' of Robert the Monk*, p. 45: "Victoria ducis pre ceteris enituit".

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