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## DESCRIBING THE ENEMY IN THE FIRST CRUSADE: THE RHETORIC OF INNUMERABLE HOSTS

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**Abstract:** This article explores the rhetorical and ideological function of the motif of ‘innumerable enemy hosts’ in Latin accounts of the First Crusade. Drawing on the earliest narratives such as the *Gesta Francorum*, Peter Tudebode’s *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere*, Raymond of Aguilers’ *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*, and Fulcher of Chartres’ *Historia Hierosolymitana*, the study demonstrates that descriptions of the enemy as overwhelmingly numerous were not factual reports but deliberate literary strategies. These hyperbolic portrayals served to frame the Crusaders’ military efforts as miraculous, divinely sanctioned triumphs of the few against the many. The article traces the biblical roots of this motif, focusing particularly on narratives such as the defeat of the Midianites by Gideon (Judges 7–8) and King Asa’s battle against Zerah the Ethiopian (2 Chronicles 14), and explores its development in medieval Christian exegesis, notably in the works of Gregory the Great and Hrabanus Maurus. The enemy’s multitude is further emphasized through ethnic catalogues, which function to reinforce perceptions of otherness and chaos in contrast to Christian unity and divine favour. The study argues that these narrative patterns reflect a shared *topos* that shaped medieval perceptions of the Crusades, while also contributing to the formation of a mythologized collective memory in Latin Christendom.

**Keywords:** First Crusade, biblical rhetorical framework, *Gesta Francorum*, Raymond of Aguilers, Peter Tudebode, Fulcher of Chartres

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In the vast corpus of crusading narratives, the enemy is rarely depicted with neutrality. Rather, he is described in vivid, often hyperbolic terms that serve both narrative and ideological purposes. Among the most striking and recurrent motifs in these sources is the portrayal of the enemy as numerically overwhelming – as a mass so large it defies calculation. Hence the Crusaders fought at Ascalon (1099) against an uncountable enemy: *cum innumerabili paganorum multitudine*.<sup>1</sup> This topos of the ‘innumerable hosts’ appears across a wide range of texts: *gesta* and *historia*-type literature, letters, sermons, and epic poetry, and functions on multiple levels – from heightening dramatic tension to justifying the Crusaders’ defeats or amplifying their victories.

This article examines this literary strategy in early narrative accounts of the First Crusade (*Gesta Francorum*, Peter Tudebode’s *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere*, Raymond of Aguilers’ *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*, and Fulcher of Chartres’ *Historia Hierosolymitana*<sup>2</sup>), focusing on the rhetorical and theological functions of the topos of the enemy’s huge or innumerable numbers, these texts form a cohesive – albeit diverse in terms of textual quality, provenance, and authorial motivation – group of first-generation historians and participants of the First Crusade, presenting the earliest visions of the events.<sup>3</sup> It argues that this trope is not a simple reflection of battlefield reality, but

<sup>1</sup> *Le ‘Liber’ de Raymond d’Aguilers* (henceforward quoted as: RA), ed. by J. H. Hill, L. L. Hill, Paris 1969, 155. In 2025, the latest critical edition of Raymond of Aguilers’ work was published, but the author has not been able to familiarize himself with it yet. See *The Book of Raymond of Aguilers: Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*, trans. by J. Currie, Abingdon – New York 2025.

<sup>2</sup> *Le gesta Dei per Franchi e degli altri pellegrini gerosolimitani* (henceforward quoted as: GF (Russo)), ed. and trans. by L. Russo, Alexandria 2003; cf. *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum* (henceforward quoted as: GF (Hagenmeyer)), ed. by H. Hagenmeyer, Heidelberg 1890; Peter Tudebode, *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere* (henceforward quoted as: PT), ed. by J. H. Hill, L. L. Hill, Paris 1977; Fulcherius Carnotensis, *Historia Hierosolymitana (1095–1127)* (henceforward quoted as: FC), ed. by H. Hagenmeyer, Heidelberg 1913. For Raymond of Aguilers’ *Historia Francorum*’s critical edition see note 1.

<sup>3</sup> It should be emphasized, however, that none of the indicated authors was an eyewitness to, or direct participant in, everything they reported. On the status of the source as the work of an eyewitness, see Y. N. Harari, ‘Eyewitnessing in Accounts of the First Crusade: The *Gesta Francorum* and Other Contemporary Narratives’, *Crusades*, 3.1 (2004), 77–99; E. Lapina, ‘*Nec signis nec testibus creditor*. The Problem of Eyewitnesses in the Chronicles of the First Crusade’, *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 38.1 (2007), 117–39; J. Flori, *Chroniqueurs et propagandistes. Introduction critique aux sources de la Première Croisade*, Geneva

a powerful literary and ideological construct rooted in biblical precedent, hagiographic convention, and classical historiography. By depicting the enemy as a countless horde, crusading authors not only emphasize the miraculous nature of Christian victories but also frame the conflict in eschatological and moral terms, casting the Crusaders as a divinely aided minority facing a heathen multitude.<sup>4</sup> The following argument will explore two major dimensions of this representation: first, the ways in which medieval authors use hyperbolic numerical imagery to describe the enemy; and second, the implications of such depictions for our understanding of crusading ideology, perceptions of “otherness”, and the construction of collective memory in the Latin Christian world.

At the beginning it should be said that the intertextual relationships among *Gesta Francorum*, Peter Tudebode’s *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere*, Raymond of Aguilers’ *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*, and Fulcher of Chartres’ *Historia Hierosolymitana* reveal a complex web of textual transmission and adaptation. Scholars such as Jay Rubenstein have posited the existence of ‘a lost source’ as a common source behind both the *Gesta Francorum* and Tudebode’s account, though the direction of dependence between these two remains debated.<sup>5</sup> Raymond of Agu-

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2010; M. G. Bull, *Eyewitness and Crusade Narrative. Perception and Narration in Accounts of the Second, Third and Fourth Crusades*, Woodbridge 2018.

<sup>4</sup> See T. M. Duggan, ‘Number as a Numerical Reminder, a Signifier, among Other Numerical Forms of Literary Expression – Employed in both Christian and Muslim Accounts of the First Crusade’, *MESOS: Disiplinlerarası Ortaçağ Çalışmaları Dergisi*, 2 (2020), 18–56, where the author examines the symbolic use of numbers in the Bible and invokes the crusading historiography. Duggan discusses how numerical figures were employed not for statistical accuracy but to evoke biblical associations, such as the victories of David, thereby reinforcing the perceived righteousness of the Crusaders’ cause.

<sup>5</sup> This article does not address the complexity of the intertextual relationships among the four works mentioned in great detail. It should be noted, however, that this issue has been widely discussed in the scholarly literature and is of considerable importance from a source-critical perspective. See J. France, ‘The Anonymous *Gesta Francorum* and the *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem* of Raymond of Aguilers and the *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere* of Peter Tudebode: An Analysis of the Textual Relationship between Primary Sources for the First Crusade’, in *The Crusades and Their Sources: Essays Presented to Bernard Hamilton*, ed. by J. France, W. G. Zajac, Aldershot 1998, 39–70; J. France, ‘The Use of the Anonymous *Gesta Francorum* in the Early Twelfth-Century Sources for the First Crusade’, in *From Clermont to Jerusalem: The Crusades and Crusader Societies, 1095–1500*, ed. by A. V. Murray, Turnhout 1998, 29–42; J. Rubenstein, ‘Putting History to Use: Three Crusade Chronicles in Context’, *Viator: Medieval and Re-*

ilers drew on the *Gesta Francorum*, reinterpreting the events through a more explicitly theological and eschatological perspective, and yet he maintained a significant degree of independence by reframing the events from a distinct Provençal perspective, shaped by his ideological commitments and regional affiliations.<sup>6</sup> Fulcher of Chartres, although writing his account independently and with a broader historical scope – because he composed his work over an extended period that went well beyond the immediate success of the First Crusade, documenting the establishment and early evolution of the Latin East and the foundation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem<sup>7</sup> – likely consulted earlier crusading narratives, including the *Gesta Francorum* and Raymond of Aguilers' *Historia Francorum*, to fill in events he did not witness first-hand. These interconnections illustrate not only shared source material but also evolving ideological and literary strategies in shaping the memory of the First Crusade, revealing a significant degree of independence in each of the works.

## Biblical rhetorical framework

To frame the discussion, illustrate its core themes, and properly contextualize the argument within a broader cultural and intellectual tradition, it is worthwhile to recall biblical paradigms – all authors of the First Crusade's accounts were clerics and reached for scriptural

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*naissance Studies*, 35 (2004), 131–68; J. Rubenstein, 'What is the *Gesta Francorum*, and who was Peter Tudebode?', *Revue Mabillon*, 16 (2005), 179–204; M. G. Bull, 'The Relationship Between the *Gesta Francorum* and Peter Tudebode's *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere*: The Evidence of a Hitherto Unexamined Manuscript (St. Catharine's College, Cambridge, 3)', *Crusades*, 11.1 (2012), 1–17; S. Niskanen, 'The Origins of the *Gesta Francorum* and Two Related Texts: Their Textual and Literary Character', *Sacris Erudiri*, 51.1 (2012), 287–316.

<sup>6</sup> T. Lecaque, 'Reading Raymond: The Bible of Le Puy, the Cathedral Library and the Literary Background of the *Liber* of Raymond d'Aguilers', in *The Uses of the Bible in Crusader Sources*, ed. by E. Lapina, N. Morton, Leiden – Boston 2017, 105–32; see also: B. Schuster, *Die Stimme des falschen 'pauper'. Der Kreuzzugsbericht des Raimund von Aguilers und die Armenfrage*, in *Armut im Mittelalter*, ed. by O. H. Oexle, Vorträge und Forschungen, 58, Ostfildern 2004, 79–126, which is a comprehensive study of the author himself and his work.

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed study of Fulcher of Chartres, see V. Epp, *Fulcher von Chartres: Studien zur Geschichtsschreibung des ersten Kreuzzuges*, Düsseldorf 1990.

patterns.<sup>8</sup> These paradigms not only offer a shared symbolic language familiar to medieval authors and audiences, but also function as interpretive templates through which historical experience was read and represented. The motif of the enemy's innumerable forces is a recurring rhetorical and narrative figure, often associated in the Bible with stories of miraculous victories won by weaker forces under divine protection. A kind of archetype of struggle and triumph over a countless foe can be found in Judges 7–8, where Gideon – judge and chosen instrument of God – defeats the armies of the Midianites, Amalekites, and other 'sons of the East' with only 300 men at his side. A key element of this account is the hyperbolic portrayal of the enemy's might, which serves to highlight the miraculous nature of the victory and Israel's absolute dependence on divine intervention. Especially striking is Judges 7:12: 'The Midianites, Amalekites, and all the people of the East lay along the valley like locusts in abundance, and their camels were without number, as the sand that is on the seashore in multitude'. This phrase contains a double numerical hyperbole: the comparison of the men to locusts – an image of plague, vastness, and chaos – and the assertion that their camels were 'without number, like the sand on the seashore' – a well-established biblical formula used to express an unimaginably large multitude.<sup>9</sup>

Such a depiction of the enemy not only builds narrative tension, but more importantly prepares the audience for a paradoxical and theologically meaningful resolution: it is not the numerical strength of Israel's army that ensures victory, but rather God's plan and His intervention. Gideon's force, initially numbering 32,000 men, is deliberately reduced to just 300 by divine command, as God declares: 'The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, "My own hand has saved me"'.<sup>10</sup> The victory is

<sup>8</sup> The importance of identifying biblical inspirations in Crusader sources – a seemingly self-evident matter that nonetheless reveals the intellectual formation and educational background of individual authors – is demonstrated in: *The Uses of the Bible in Crusader Sources*, ed. by E. Lapina, N. Morton, Leiden – Boston 2017 and K. A. Smith, *The Bible and Crusade Narrative in the Twelfth Century*, Woodbridge 2020 (esp. pp. 49–92); see also P. Alphanéry, 'Les citations bibliques chez les historiens de la Première Croisade', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 99 (1929), 139–57.

<sup>9</sup> See also Judith 2:19–20.

<sup>10</sup> Judges 7:2.

thus accomplished not through military power, but by means of surprise, symbolic acts, and the ensuing panic within the enemy ranks. This is not merely a war narrative, but a profoundly theological lesson: God supports his chosen ones even when they appear to be without hope – provided they place their trust not in their own strength, but in divine powers.

Another example of the enemy's overwhelming might is found in 1 Samuel 13:5: 'And the Philistines gathered to fight with Israel: thirty thousand chariots, six thousand horsemen, and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude'. In this description of the Philistine preparations for battle at Michmash against the Israelite forces led by King Saul, the enemy's numbers are portrayed as innumerable, employing the formula 'like the sand on the seashore' – one of the most frequent numerical hyperboles in the Bible, famously used in the divine promises of progeny to Abraham.<sup>11</sup> This hyperbole and simile serve to demonize the Philistines, casting them as a vast and terrifying threat. The fear and desertions within the Israelite ranks are thus narratively and emotionally legitimized – not as acts of cowardice, but as the reaction of "realists" faced with overwhelming odds.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, the text sets the stage for Saul's later condemnation for his impatient violation of sacrificial law, subtly indicating that the real source of crisis lies not in the numerical superiority of the enemy, but in the king's failure to trust in God.<sup>13</sup>

Another notable example is found in 2 Chronicles 14:9, where 'Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them [the forces of Asa, king of Judah] with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots, and advanced as far as Mareshah'. The author presents a direct threat posed by a powerful, black-skinned enemy from the south, a representative of foreign peoples within the framework of Isaian stereotypes regarding Cushites.<sup>14</sup> It is worth emphasizing that the reported army size, one million troops, belongs among the most extreme numerical hyperboles in the Bible. This precise hyperbole, namely, a million soldiers and 300 chariots, lends the description an almost surreal dimension

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 22:17; Genesis 32:13 [32:12]; Exodus 32:13.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Samuel 13:6–7.

<sup>13</sup> 1 Samuel 13:8–14.

<sup>14</sup> See K. Burrell, *Cushites in the Hebrew Bible: Negotiating Ethnic Identity in the Past and Present*, Biblical Interpretation Series, 181, Boston – Leiden 2020.

and highlights the contrast with the forces of Judah, whose numbers are not explicitly given but are implicitly small and inferior to their adversary. Asa's prayer becomes the theological pivot of the narrative: 'Lord, there is none like You to help between the mighty and the weak. Help us, O Lord our God!'.<sup>15</sup> The victory that follows is attributed solely to divine intervention, making this account a moralizing lesson in trust and obedience. Triumph over a powerful, black-skinned adversary became a rhetorical topos of 'the victory of the righteous', frequently cited in medieval homiletic literature as evidence that numbers do not determine the outcome of battle, but faith does.

A notable example is found in Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job*, where the story of Asa is employed as a paradigm of spiritual struggle: victory depends not on strength, but on grace and prayer.<sup>16</sup> Zerah, as 'king of Ethiopia', symbolises the darkness of sin or the demonic hosts. Similarly, Hrabanus Maurus, in *De universo*, his encyclopaedic compendium of biblical symbolism, presents King Asa as a figural representation of the Church engaged in combat against pagans and demons.<sup>17</sup> Zerah, consistent with other Carolingian writings, embodies the darkness of unbelief, while Asa models the faithful Christian who prevails not by military might, but through humility and divine grace.

The literary model outlined above, rooted in biblical narratives, directly resonates with crusading accounts, in which the enemy is frequently described as 'an innumerable multitude', and their defeat is attributed solely to divine grace. A small number of righteous combatants confront a mighty foe, and victory (or defeat) depends entirely on fidelity to God. The power of the enemy is further accentuated by their portrayal as "the other", inhabiting the *anecumene*, that is, lands perceived as marginal or uncivilized.<sup>18</sup> This notion is encapsulated in

<sup>15</sup> 2 Chronicles 14:11.

<sup>16</sup> Gregorius Magnus, *Moralium libri sive Expositio in librum B. Job*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina* (henceforward quoted as: PL), ed. by J. -P. Migne, LXXV-LXXVI, Paris 1849-1850, LXXVII, XXIII. 23, col. 112.

<sup>17</sup> Hrabanus Maurus, *De universo*, PL CXI, XX. 1, cols. 515-20.

<sup>18</sup> The perception of Muslim enemies by the crusading chroniclers as "others" has attracted considerable scholarly attention, resulting in a vast body of literature, see P. Sénac, *L'Occident médiéval face à l'Islam. L'image de l'autre*, Paris 2000; K. Skottki, *Christen, Muslime und der Erste Kreuzzug. Die Macht der Beschreibung in der mittelalterlichen und modernen Historiographie*, Münster - New York 2015; K. Skottki, 'Constructing Otherness in the Chronicles of the First Crusade', *Germans and Poles in the Middle Ages. The Perception of the 'Other' and the Presence*



expressions such as *omnesque barbarae nationes* ('and all the barbarous peoples'), used to describe the enemies of the Crusaders.<sup>19</sup> Given the connotations of the term *barbarus*, it must be emphasized that such passages underscore the enemy's "otherness" not only in religious terms, but also in the broader socio-cultural sphere.<sup>20</sup> The authors of crusading narratives clearly articulated a binary opposition between the Crusaders and the hostile nations of the Orient, constructing a rhetorical and theological contrast between the faithful Christian West and the other, and often demonized, East.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Gesta Francorum* and Peter Tudebode's *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere***

Beginning with the numbers, which emphasize the immeasurable might of the Crusaders' adversaries; in crusading sources, the power and threat posed by enemy forces is frequently underscored through references to their overwhelming numerical strength.<sup>22</sup> According to the *Gesta Francorum*, during the battle against Kilij Arslan, a Seljuk sultan of Rûm (1092–1107), at Nicaea, the size of the enemy army was presented as: 'There were Turks, Persians, Paulicians, Saracens, Angulans, and other pagans, numbering 360,000, not including the Arabs, whose number

of *Mutual Ethnic Stereotypes in Medieval Narrative Sources*, ed. by A. Pleszczyński, G. Vercamer, Boston – Leiden 2021, 17–40; T. Pelech, 'Death on the Altar: the Rhetoric of "Otherness" in Sources from the Early Period of the Crusades', *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association*, 17 (2021), 67–89.

<sup>19</sup> GF (Russo), III. 9, 58; cf. GF (Hagenmeyer), IX. 9, 203–04; PT, 54. See S. Luchitskaya, 'Barbarae nationes: les peuples musulmans dans les chroniques de la Première Croisade', in *Autour de la Première Croisade, Actes du Colloque de la Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East (Clermont-Ferrand, 22–25 juin 1995)*, ed. by M. Balard, Paris 1996, 99–107.

<sup>20</sup> A. Holt, 'Crusading against Barbarians: Muslim as Barbarians in Crusades Era Sources', in *East Meets West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World*, ed. by A. Classen, Berlin 2013, 443–56.

<sup>21</sup> See J. V. Tolan, *Saracens. Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*, New York 2002; Tolan, *Sons of Ishmael. Muslims through European Eyes in the Middle Ages*, Gainesville 2013.

<sup>22</sup> C. Sweetenham, 'Crusaders in a Hall of Mirrors: The Portrayal of Saracens in Robert the Monk's *Historia Iherosolimitana*', in *Languages of Love and Hate: Conflict, Communication, and Identity in the Medieval Mediterranean*, ed. by S. Lambert, H. Nicholson, Turnhout 2002, 55.



no man knows, but only God'.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, during the battle of Dorylaeum, Bohemond was attacked by what the author described as 'innumerable Turks' (*innumerabiles Turcos*).<sup>24</sup> This rhetorical strategy – emphasizing vast and uncountable enemy numbers – serves to heighten the sense of threat and to magnify the miraculous nature of the Christian victory, achieved not by strength of arms alone, but by divine favour.

The enumeration of enemy nations during the battle of Dorylaeum gained a prominent and recurring character in various sources of the First Crusade. Count Stephen of Blois, in his *Second Letter* to his wife dated 29 March 1098, besides mentioning the Turks, lists 'Saracens, Paulicians, Arabs, Turcopoles, Syrians, Armenians, and other diverse peoples'.<sup>25</sup> In the second generation of the First Crusade historiography, descriptions of the battle of Dorylaeum adopt a similar formulation. Guibert of Nogent, Baldric of Dol, and Orderic Vitalis describe the enemy forces as composed of Turks, Arabs, Saracens, and Persians, with all except Guibert including the Angulans.<sup>26</sup> The version found in the *Montecassino Chronicle* is nearly identical to the accounts in Peter Tubeode's *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere* and the *Gesta Francorum*.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> GF (Russo), III. 9, 58: *Erat autem numerus Turcorum, Persarum, Publicanorum, Saracenorum, Angulanorum aliorumque paganorum CCCLX milia extra Arabes, quorum numerum nemo scit nisi solus Deus*; cf. GF (Hagenmeyer), IX. 9, 203–04; PT, 54. For an English translation see *The Deeds of the Franks and Other Jerusalem-Bound Pilgrims. The Earliest Chronicle of the First Crusade* (henceforward quoted as: GF (Dass)), trans. by N. Dass, Lanham – Boulder – New York – Toronto – Plymouth 2011, 43.

<sup>24</sup> GF (Russo), III. 9, 54; cf. GF (Hagenmeyer), IX. 3–4, 197–99.

<sup>25</sup> *Epistula II Stephani comitis Carnotensis ad Adelam uxorem*, in *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe aus den Jahren 1088–1100. Eine Quellensammlung zur Geschichte des Ersten Kreuzzuges* (henceforward quoted as: *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe*), ed. by H. Hagenmeyer, Innsbruck 1901, No. X, 150: *Saracenis, Publicanis, Arabibus, Turcopolitanis, Syriis, Armenis aliisque gentibus diversis*.

<sup>26</sup> Guibert of Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos*, ed. by R. B. C. Huygens, Turnhout 1996, III. 10, 155; Baldric of Dol, *The Historia Hierosolymitana of Baldric of Bourgueil*, ed. by S. J. Biddlecombe, Woodbridge 2014, II, 32; Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. by M. Chibnall, Oxford 1975, V, IX. 8, 58–61. See also J. Rubenstein, 'Guibert of Nogent, Albert of Aachen and Fulcher of Chartres: Three Crusade Chronicles Intersect', in *Writing the Early Crusades: Text, Transmission and Memory*, ed. by M. G. Bull, D. Kempf, Woodbridge 2014, 24–37.

<sup>27</sup> 'Historia Peregrinorum euntium Jerusalem', in *Recueil des historiens des croisades. Historiens occidentaux*, ed. by P. Le Bas, Paris 1866, III, XXVII, 182–83; see L. Russo, 'The Monte Cassino Tradition of the First Crusade', in *Writing the Early Crusades*, 57–58.

A more extensive description appears in Robert the Monk's *Historia Hierosolymitana*, where the author enumerates Persians, Paulicians, Medes, Syrians, Candeï, Saracens, Agulans, Arabs, and Turks, thus demonstrating his erudition by invoking even more peoples than other crusading writers.<sup>28</sup>

An interesting and atypical example of the catalogue of peoples fighting against the Crusaders can be found in the *Historia Ierosolimitana* of Albert of Aachen.<sup>29</sup> The author, a canon of the cathedral chapter in Aachen, composed the first parts of his work, describing the success of the First Crusade, around 1102, relying primarily on oral reports rather than earlier written accounts such as the *Gesta Francorum*. As such, he occupies a distinctive place within Crusade historiography, representing a separate narrative tradition.<sup>30</sup> Albert of Aachen does indeed offer a catalogue of hostile forces opposing the Crusaders at Dorylaeum, but he does so in a markedly different manner. According to his account, Kilij Arslan 'had brought together assistance and forces from Antioch, Tarsus, Aleppo, and the other cities of Rum which were occupied here and there by Turks'.<sup>31</sup> In this case, the identifiers are toponyms; cities rather than ethnic designations, which sets his description apart from more conventional ethnic listings found in contemporary narratives.

According to the *Gesta Francorum* and Peter Tudebode's *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere*, at the battle of Heraclea a great number of Turks (*Turcorum nimia*) lay in ambush awaiting the Christian army,<sup>32</sup> and the strength of army of Kürboğa, atabeg of Mossoul (1096–1102), was emphasized by the support of 'innumerable pagan nations' (*innumeras gentes paganorum*).<sup>33</sup> Thus, the motif of a multitude of pagan peoples recurs in both accounts, but it was also reinforced by appearing in

<sup>28</sup> *The Historia Iherosolimitana of Robert the Monk*, ed. by D. Kempf, M. G. Bull, Woodbridge 2013, III, 27.

<sup>29</sup> Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana, History of the Journey to Jerusalem* (henceforward quoted as: AA), ed. by S. B. Edgington, Oxford 2007.

<sup>30</sup> For more about Albert of Aachen and his work see AA, xxi–xxxvi; S. B. Edgington, 'Albert of Aachen Reappraised', in *From Clermont to Jerusalem: The Crusades and Crusader Societies, 1095–1500*, ed. by A. V. Murray, Turnhout 1998, 55–67; S. B. Edgington, 'Albert of Aachen and the *Chansons de geste*', in *The Crusades and Their Sources*, 23–37.

<sup>31</sup> AA, II. 39, 130–31: *Auxilium et vires contraxit ab Antiochia, Tharsis, Halapia et ceteris civitatibus Romanie a Turcis sparsim possessis*.

<sup>32</sup> GF (Russo), IV. 10, 62; cf. GF (Hagenmeyer), X. 4, 214; PT, 57.

<sup>33</sup> GF (Russo), IX. 21, 92; cf. GF (Hagenmeyer), XXI. 1, 314–5; PT, 89.

the catalogues of hostile nations. Similarly, during the siege of Arqah, chroniclers report that the fortress was filled with innumerable pagan peoples – namely Turks, Saracens, Arabs, and Paulicians – who had admirably fortified the castle and defended themselves bravely.<sup>34</sup> The catalogue of enemies is further expanded in later descriptions of the struggle. In the account of the capture of Antioch, resulting from an agreement between Bohemond and a certain Pirrus, the authors mention that the Christians learned of a great army approaching, composed of Turks, Paulicians, Angulans, Azymites,<sup>35</sup> and many other pagan nations whom the authors confess they neither know how to name nor number.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, according to Peter Tudebode, after capturing Antioch, the Christian forces were besieged ‘by other pagans and enemies of God and Holy Christianity’<sup>37</sup>.

Similarly, the city of Ma’arat an-Numan was portrayed as a place inhabited by a great multitude of Saracens, Turks, Arabs, and other pagans,<sup>38</sup> and the Fatimid forces encountered at the Battle of Ascalon were described in parallel terms: ‘the multitude of pagans was innumerable, and no one knows their number except God alone’.<sup>39</sup> The emphasis lies not only on the sheer number of adversaries; the enumeration of distinct peoples also serves to convey the immense power and overwhelming mass of the enemy forces.

However, against this backdrop of overwhelming enemy strength, great heroic deeds could be accomplished. The rhetorical function

<sup>34</sup> GF (Russo), X. 34, 134: *Quod castrum plenum erat innumerabili gente paganorum, videlicet Turcorum, Saracenorum, Arabum, Publicanorum, qui mirabiliter munierant castrum illud et defendebant se fortiter*; cf. GF (Hagenmeyer), XXXIV. 11, 425; PT, 128.

<sup>35</sup> The word ‘Azymites’ is rather a technical term used to describe the enemy. Perhaps it derives from a Greek expression employed in 1053 by the Patriarch of Constantinople to refer to the Latins, who used unleavened bread in the Eucharist. In this sense, it could be understood as a reminiscence of the dispute between Latin and Orthodox believers. See GF (Dass), note 5, 136.

<sup>36</sup> GF (Hagenmeyer), XX. 3, 297: *Turcorum, Publicanorum, Angulanorum, Azimitarum et aliarum plurimarum nationum gentilium, quas numerare neque nominare nescio*; cf. GF (Russo), VIII. 20, 86; PT, 84.

<sup>37</sup> PT, 103: *Ab aliis paganis, inimicis Dei et sanctae Christianitatis*.

<sup>38</sup> GF (Russo), X. 33, 128: *In qua maxima multitudo Saracenorum et Turcorum et Arabum aliorumque paganorum est congregata*; cf. GF (Hagenmeyer), XXXIII. 1, 402; PT, 121.

<sup>39</sup> GF (Russo), X. 39, 152: *Paganorum multitudo erat innumerabilis, numerorumque eorum nemo scit nisi solus Deus*; cf. GF (Hagenmeyer), XXXIX. 14, 495–96; PT, 146.

of such descriptions is therefore evident: they are intended to evoke admiration for the bravery of the protagonists. During the prolonged siege of Antioch, the Franks were informed of *innumerabilem gentem Turcorum* – ‘an innumerable nation of Turks’ – advancing against the Crusaders.<sup>40</sup> According to the version preserved in Peter Tudebode’s account, the enemy forces were said to number 25,000 soldiers.<sup>41</sup> In the *Gesta Francorum*, the account of the battle against this Muslim relief force becomes an occasion for the glorification of Bohemond.<sup>42</sup> He is presented as the principal commander of the contingent prepared to meet the Turkish attack. The enemy troops were arrayed in two lines, while the Christians formed six units, five of which charged the Turks. Bohemond, with his own unit, remained in reserve. The writers describe the battle as so intense that the javelins darkened the sky.<sup>43</sup> When the Turks committed their second line to the fight and attacked the Crusaders ferociously (*acriter*) and the Franks began to fall back, Bohemond addressed Robert, son of Gerard, with stirring words: ‘Go forward as quickly as you can, like a brave man, and remember the wisdom of the ancients and the bravery of our forebears. Be fierce in aiding God and the Holy Sepulchre. And know truly that this battle is not of the flesh, but of the spirit. Therefore, be the strongest athlete of Christ. Go in peace, and may the Lord be with you always’.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup> GF (Russo), VI. 17, 76; cf. GF (Hagenmeyer), XVII. 1, 265–66; PT, 70.

<sup>41</sup> PT, 70.

<sup>42</sup> See the topic of the *Gesta Francorum* as Bohemond of Taranto’s propaganda, and the resulting source-critical implications: J. Rubenstein, ‘The Deeds of Bohemond: Reform, Propaganda, and the History of the First Crusade’, *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 47.2 (2016), 113–35. See also K. B. Wolf, ‘Crusade and Narrative: Bohemond and the *Gesta Francorum*’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 17.3 (1991), 207–16 and N. L. Paul, ‘A Warlord’s Wisdom: Literacy and Propaganda at the Time of the First Crusade’, *Speculum*, 85.3 (2010), 534–66.

<sup>43</sup> GF (Russo), VI. 17, 78; cf. GF (Hagenmeyer), XVII. 5, 271; PT, 72.

<sup>44</sup> GF (Russo), VI. 17, 78: *Vade quam citius potes ut vir fortis, et esto acer in adiutorium Dei Sanctique Sepulchri. Et revera scias quia hoc bellum carnale non est sed spirituale. Esto igitur fortissimus athleta Christi. Vade in pace; Dominus sit tecum ubique;* cf. GF (Hagenmeyer), XVII. 5, 271; for translation see GF (Dass), 59; cf. PT, 72; for translation, see Peter Tudebode, *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere*, trans. by J. H. Hill and L. L. Hill, Philadelphia 1974, 51–52: *Recordare prudentium antiquorum et nostrorum fortium parentum, quales fuerunt et qualia bella fecerunt*. *Ivit itaque ille, undique signo crucis armatus et fortissimus Christi athleta, et sicut sapiens et prudens invasit eos, deferens vexillum Boamundi.* (“Remember the wisdom of antiquity and our brave forefathers – what manner of men they were and what battles they fought”. And so he went forth, armed on all sides with the sign of

The speech placed by the writers in Bohemond's mouth reveals several key aspects of how the conflict with the Turks was perceived, as well as the ideological content intended for the audience of these sources.<sup>45</sup> In particular, the role of Robert was strongly emphasized. He was a close relative of Bohemond and served as his constable. He was the son of Count Gerard of Buonalbergo, who had given his sister Alberada in marriage to Robert Guiscard. After the First Crusade, Robert returned to southern Italy, where he died around 1119.<sup>46</sup> In this passage of the *Gesta Francorum*, he is presented as a heroic figure. He appears as the recipient and executor of Bohemond's will, entrusted with the decisive attack on the enemy. The narrative further strengthens his image: under his command, an army bearing the sign of the cross on their shields marched into battle. Robert's assault was so fierce that he was likened to a lion emerging from its cave, famished for three or four days and thirsting for the blood of cattle. This vivid metaphor casts the Turks as helpless prey: while the lion *ruit inter agmina gregum* ('falls upon the flocks with violence'), Robert *agebat inter agmina Turcorum* – he fell upon the ranks of the Turks with such ferocity that the banner he bore was seen flying above the heads of the enemy.<sup>47</sup>

The comparison to a lion evokes a powerful and unstoppable force and underscores Robert's valour as Bohemond's constable. This symbolism resonates with biblical imagery, where the lion often represents might and divine empowerment. In Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Psalms 22 and 104, the lion stands as a metaphor for overwhelming strength.<sup>48</sup> Judas Maccabeus, too, is described as a young lion roaring as he throws himself upon his prey – an image meant to glorify the hero.<sup>49</sup> In contrast, the Turks are metaphorically reduced to a flock of sheep, helpless and incapable of resistance against such a fierce leader. The sheep, as a symbol of meekness and vulnerability, is here employed as a rhetorical device to ridicule the enemy. It is noteworthy, however, that this specific metaphor – the lion and the sheep – appears only in the *Gesta*

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the cross and as the most valiant athlete of Christ; and, like a wise and prudent man, he launched his attack, bearing the standard of Bohemond').

<sup>45</sup> Cf. C. Morris, 'Propaganda for War: The Dissemination of the Crusading Ideal in the Twelfth Century', *Studies in Church History*, 20 (1983), 79–101.

<sup>46</sup> J. Riley-Smith, *The First Crusaders, 1095–1131*, London 1997, 101, 221.

<sup>47</sup> GF (Russo), VI. 17, 78; cf. GF (Hagenmeyer), XVII. 5, 271.

<sup>48</sup> Isaiah 31:4; Jeremiah 4:7; Psalms 22:13, 104:21.

<sup>49</sup> 1 Maccabees 3:4.

*Francorum*, suggesting a divergent rhetorical aim when compared to Peter Tudebode's account. In the *Gesta Francorum*, the focus on Robert, Bohemond's close kin, is markedly more pronounced, and the praise of his deeds is more explicit.

Returning to the substance of Bohemond's speech, he reminds his constable of their ancestors and their wisdom. This emphasis on *memoria* is crucial in (half-)oral societies. Epic narratives served to transmit stories of valiant forebears, who were held up as exemplars to be imitated, and commemorative practices sought to preserve the memory of their deeds. Such evocation reflects the collective consciousness of knightly lineages.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, Bohemond exhorts Robert to fight fiercely and invokes the image of God and the Holy Sepulchre. He commands him to be an *athleta Christi*, for the battle is not of the flesh, but of the spirit.<sup>51</sup> The dichotomy between *bellum carnale* and *bellum spirituale* draws on the Pauline antithesis from the Epistle to the Ephesians. It illustrates the writers' view that the war between Christians and Muslims was ultimately a spiritual struggle – one waged for salvation.<sup>52</sup>

According to the *Gesta Francorum*, Robert's attack proved decisive in securing victory over the Turks. When the other Crusaders saw Bohemond's banner, they immediately ceased their retreat. The entire Christian army then charged the enemy, causing the Turks to flee. The Crusaders pursued them as far as the Iron Bridge, killing many during the chase. The remaining Turks withdrew to their fortress, set it ablaze, and fled. In the aftermath of the battle, local Syrians and Armenians,

<sup>50</sup> See M. Borgolte, 'Memoria: Bilan intermédiaire d'un projet de recherche sur le Moyen Âge', in *Les tendances actuelles de l'histoire du Moyen Âge*, ed. by J.-C. Schmitt, O. G. Oexle, Paris 2002, 53–70; M. Lauwers, 'Memoria: À propos d'un objet d'histoire en Allemagne', in *Les tendances actuelles de l'histoire du Moyen Âge*, 105–26; N. L. Paul, *To Follow in Their Footsteps: The Crusades and Family Memory in the High Middle Ages*, London 2012, 10–55. See also S. John, 'Historical Truth and the Miraculous Past: The Use of Oral Evidence in Twelfth-Century Latin Historical Writing on the First Crusade', *English Historical Review*, 130 (2015), 263–301.

<sup>51</sup> See J. Gilchrist, 'The Papacy and War against the "Saracens"', *The International History Review*, 10.2 (1988), 174–97, where the author analyses the ideological foundations of the war against Muslims, including the use of the term *athleta Christi* in papal documents; and also J. Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, London – New York 2003, 91–119 and 135–52, who shows how historians of the First Crusade (including Raymond of Aguilers) depicted the participants as *athletae Christi*.

<sup>52</sup> Ephesians 6:10–20; see P. Buc, *Holy War, Martyrdom, and Terror: Christianity, Violence, and the West*, Pennsylvania 2015, 90.



aware of the Turkish defeat, captured and killed numerous fleeing soldiers. The historians conclude this episode by affirming that the victory was granted by the will of God. Furthermore, the Crusaders later brought one hundred severed heads of Turkish soldiers to the city gate of Antioch. This gruesome display was witnessed by the envoys of the ruler of Egypt, who were present in the Crusader camp, and undoubtedly served as a demonstration of Christian power.<sup>53</sup>

A further narrative of the enemy's overwhelming numerical superiority appears in epistolary sources. In the spurious letter ascribed to Patriarch Symeon of Jerusalem, and Bishop Adhémar of Le Puy,<sup>54</sup> the number of Crusaders is estimated at one hundred thousand knights and men-at-arms. However, the authors claim that even this formidable force was small in comparison to the enemy: 'for we are few in comparison with the pagans. But truly and verily God fights for us'.<sup>55</sup> Likewise, the *Epistola ad occidentales*, ascribed to Patriarch Symeon and other bishops around late January 1098, but in fact composed much later in the West,<sup>56</sup> employs a rhetorical device to emphasize the enemy's superiority: 'where we have a count, the enemy has forty kings; where we have a squadron, they have a legion; where we have a knight, they have a duke; where we have a foot-soldier, they have a count; where we have a fortress, they have a kingdom'.<sup>57</sup> The letter further states that 'we do not put our trust in numbers, nor in strength, nor in any arrogance', but in the faith in God, who watches over them.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>53</sup> GF (Russo), VI. 17, 78; cf. GF (Hagenmeyer), XVII. 6–7, 272–74; PT, 72–73.

<sup>54</sup> On the Western provenance of the letter and the fact that it was not written by actual witnesses of the events described see T. W. Smith, *Rewriting the First Crusade: Epistolary Culture in the Middle Ages*, Woodbridge 2024, 101–07.

<sup>55</sup> *Letters from the East: Crusaders, Pilgrims and Settlers in the 12th–13th Centuries*, trans. by M. Barber, K. Bate, Farnham – Burlington 2010, 18; *Epistula Simeonis patriarchae Hierosolymitani et Hademari de Podio S. Mariae episcopi ad fideles partium Septentrionis*, in *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe*, No. VI, 142: *Pauci enim sumus ad comparisonem paganorum. Verum et vere pro nobis pugnat Deus*.

<sup>56</sup> Smith, *Rewriting the First Crusade*, 108.

<sup>57</sup> *Letters from the East*, 21; *Epistula Patriarchae Hierosolymitani et aliorum episcoporum ad occidentales*, in *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe*, No. IX, 147: *Ubi nos habemus comitem, hostes XL reges, ubi nos turmam, hostes legionem, ubi nos militem, ipsi ducem, ubi nos peditem, ipsi comitem, ubi nos castrum, ipsi regnum*.

<sup>58</sup> *Epistula Patriarchae Hierosolymitani et aliorum episcoporum ad occidentales*, in *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe*, No. IX, 147: *Nos autem non confisi in multitudine nec viribus nec praesumptione aliqua*.



These examples indicate that the motif of the enemy's overwhelming numbers was firmly embedded in the intellectual and rhetorical framework of the First Crusade's historians and their audience. It is therefore unsurprising that nearly all military confrontations in both the *Gesta Francorum* and Peter Tudebode's account are framed in terms of the enemy's immense strength. The frequent use of descriptors such as *innumerabilis*, *nimia*, *multitudinis*, and *numerus* reveals the topos of an enemy whose power can only be overcome with divine aid, referring to the established biblical tradition. On the narrative level, the depiction of the Turks as almost never engaging without vast armies serves to underline the magnitude of the Crusaders' accomplishments. By triumphing over such numerically superior foes, the Crusaders were able to achieve not only victory but also exceptional military glory – an element of clear importance to the audience of these texts.

### Raymond of Aguilers' *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*

In examining whether other crusading authors employed similar rhetorical strategies, it is necessary to turn to writers more distant from the *Gesta Francorum* tradition than Peter Tudebode.<sup>59</sup> Notably, almost every depiction of the Frankish struggle against their adversaries in Raymond of Aguilers' *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem* includes an emphasis on the immense number of enemy forces. According to his account, during the battle of Dorylaeum the Crusaders were confronted by a Turkish army that Raymond of Aguilers estimated at 150,000 warriors.<sup>60</sup> While the number fifteen may resist immediate interpretation within a symbolic framework, particularly one linking it to the concept of harmony between the Old and New Testaments, it nonetheless recurs with striking frequency throughout Raymond's narrative.<sup>61</sup> Jean Flori has suggested that such numerical references

<sup>59</sup> See, e.g., J. Richard, 'Raymond d'Aguilers, historien de la Première Croisade [Le «Liber» de Raymond d'Aguilers, publié par John Hugh et Laurita L. Hill, introduction et notes traduites par Philippe Wolff]', *Journal des savants*, 3 (1971), 206–12.

<sup>60</sup> RA, 45.

<sup>61</sup> St Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, in *The Fathers of The Church*, trans. by T. P. Halton, Washington D.C. 2008, CXVII, 42–43.

might reflect a chronicler's intention to convey realism or factual reliability.<sup>62</sup> However, alternative interpretations merit consideration. The number fifteen appears repeatedly in *Historia Francorum*, not solely in reference to the Turkish army at Dorylaeum. For example, Isnard (or Isoard) is said to have led 150 men in an assault on enemy forces, while the number of Turkish casualties in the same engagement is likewise placed at 15,000.<sup>63</sup> Elsewhere, fifteen Frankish knights are reported to have perished in battle near Antioch.<sup>64</sup> During the deliberations preceding the siege of Jerusalem, the number of knights in the Crusader army was again estimated at 15,000.<sup>65</sup> Further instances support this pattern. Bohemond was chosen as the chief commander during the siege of Antioch for a period of fifteen days.<sup>66</sup> A youthful figure appearing in the vision of Peter Desiderius was described as being around fifteen years of age.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, the ruler of Tripoli is said to have offered, among other gifts, 15,000 gold coins as tribute to the Crusaders.<sup>68</sup>

This recurring motif suggests that the number fifteen, while not immediately transparent in symbolic meaning, may have held a rhetorical or mnemonic function within Raymond of Aguilers' narrative structure. Its frequency indicates more than incidental usage, implying a deeper narrative or ideological significance that warrants further investigation, suggesting that it may serve an organizing function within the narrative. It is also plausible, however, that its repeated use was intended to convey a more general message to Raymond's audience, namely, that fifteen, in most instances, simply connotes 'plenty' or 'adequately'.

Raymond of Aguilers' emphasis on the large size of enemy forces is also evident in other part of his oeuvre. At the outset of the siege of Antioch, he focuses on the formidable fortifications of the city, which was protected by numerous towers, robust walls, and breastworks, and benefitted from an advantageous natural setting that facilitated defence.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, Antioch possessed a well-prepared garrison,

<sup>62</sup> J. Flori, 'Des chroniques aux chansons de geste: l'usage des nombres comme élément de typologie', *Romania*, 117.467–8 (1999), 396–422, here at 403.

<sup>63</sup> RA, 61.

<sup>64</sup> RA, 51.

<sup>65</sup> RA, 136.

<sup>66</sup> RA, 77.

<sup>67</sup> RA, 133.

<sup>68</sup> RA, 111, 125.

<sup>69</sup> RA, 48.

consisting, according to Raymond, of 2,000 *optimi milites*, 4,000 to 5,000 *milites gregarii*, and more than 10,000 *pedites*.<sup>70</sup> In a certain sense, this classification adheres to the conventional dichotomy between *milites* (mounted warriors) and *pedites* (infantry).<sup>71</sup> Raymond's use of military terms reflects contemporary Western distinctions between elite and common mounted warriors, and infantrymen, shaped by Latin Christian socio-military concepts rather than accurately representing Islamic military organisation.<sup>72</sup>

Returning to the issue of the enemy's numerical strength, the translation of *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem* by J. H. and L. L. Hill introduces a misleading interpretation through the insertion of the word 'only', thereby implying that the enemy forces were relatively weak.<sup>73</sup> In fact, Raymond of Aguilers' original text describes the garrison, and the fortifications of Antioch, as formidable. He notes that more than 17,000 enemy soldiers were stationed within the city, including 2,000 elite knights and a total of 6,000 to 7,000 mounted warriors.<sup>74</sup> By contrast, Raymond claims that the Frankish forces numbered 100,000, suggesting a ratio of 100:17 between attackers and defenders. Nevertheless, given historians' frequent use of numbers with symbolic or rhetorical function, this information should be treated with caution. Whatever

<sup>70</sup> RA, 48.

<sup>71</sup> R. C. Smail, *Crusading Warfare 1097–1193*, New York 1956 [repr. 1995], 111; see also M. I. Pérez de Tudela, *Infanzones y caballeros. Su proyección en la esfera nobiliaria castellano-leonesa, s. IX–XIII*, Madrid 1979; C. Astarita, *Del feudalismo al capitalismo. Cambio social y político en Castilla y Europa occidental, 1250–1520*, Valencia 2005, 29–66.

<sup>72</sup> On the subject of the Islamic warfare see for example A. H. D. Bivar, 'Cavalry Equipment and Tactics on the Euphrates Frontier', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 26 (1972), 271–91; *Islamic Arms and Armour*, ed. by R. Elgood, London 1979; *The Armies of the Caliphs: Military and Society in the Early Islamic State*, ed. by H. Kennedy, London – New York 2001; A. Zouache, *Armées et combats en Syrie de 491/1098 à 569/1174. Analyse comparée des chroniques médiévales latines et arabes*, Damascus 2008.

<sup>73</sup> Raymond of Aguilers, *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*, trans. by J. H. Hill, L. L. Hill, Philadelphia 1968, 31: 'Despite the fact there were in the city only two thousand first-rate knights, four or five thousand ordinary knights, and ten thousand or more footmen, Antioch was safe from attack as long as the gates were guarded because a valley and marshes shielded the high walls'; an original Latin in: RA, 48: *Erant pretereā in civitate .ii. milia optimi milites, et .iiii vel v. milia militum gregariorum atque x. milia peditum et amplius. Muri vero ita eminentes et vallo et paludibus muniebantur, ut porte custodirentur, caetera secunda manerent.*

<sup>74</sup> RA, 48.

the precise figures were, the account emphasizes that the Crusaders stood against a force of considerable strength and endured a siege of exceptional difficulty.

In the account of the battle against the relief forces of Antioch led by Ridwan, emir of Aleppo (1095–1113), Raymond of Aguilers reports that deserters from the enemy's army claimed that the Franks had slain no fewer than 28,000 of their foes. This figure is juxtaposed with Raymond's portrayal of the Crusaders' small initial force.<sup>75</sup> According to *Historia Francorum*, God miraculously multiplied their number from 700 knights to more than 2,000 – an unmistakable sign of divine intervention on behalf of the Franks.<sup>76</sup> While the reported number of Turkish casualties does not appear to bear symbolic significance, it remains highly improbable as a literal count. Rather, it should be understood as part of the rhetorical strategy to highlight the miraculous nature of the Christian victory.

In his account of one of the battles against the Antiochene garrison, Raymond reports that the Turks had organized an ambush against the Frankish army. When Robert of Flanders and Bohemond returned from the port of St Symeon with a sizeable force, they were attacked by the enemy and defeated; nearly 300 men were killed, and fleeing Crusaders were massacred.<sup>77</sup> Witnessing this major success of his troops, Yağısyan, the ruler of Antioch (1086–1098), ordered a renewed assault on the Franks.<sup>78</sup> According to Raymond, the Turkish attack was fierce and nearly resulted in the annihilation of the Christians.<sup>79</sup> At this crucial moment, the writer reminds the audience that his narrative concerns the deeds of heroes. A Provençal knight named Isoard (or Isnard) of Ganges (*Hisnardus miles de Gagia*) called upon divine aid and rallied 150 infantrymen to strike back at the enemy.<sup>80</sup> He referred to this small

<sup>75</sup> RA, 57.

<sup>76</sup> RA, 56–57.

<sup>77</sup> RA, 59.

<sup>78</sup> RA, 60; T. Pelech, 'Cassianus, Gracianus, Aoxianus: The Portrayal of Yağısyan in the Latin Chronicles of the First Crusade (c. mid.-12th Century)', in *Haçlı Seferleri Avrupa'dan Latin Doğu'ya Tarih Yazımı, Tasvirler ve İlişkiler (The Crusades Historiography, Representations and Relations from Europe)*, ed. by S. G. Karaca, İstanbul 2023, 31–66.

<sup>79</sup> RA, 60; cf. RA (Hill & Hill), 42.

<sup>80</sup> RA, 60.

contingent as *milites Christi*, and they advanced against the Turks.<sup>81</sup> In Raymond's summary of the episode, the Turks were decisively routed, many perishing in the nearby river. The victory was complete, although due to nightfall, the number of Turkish casualties remained unknown.<sup>82</sup> Raymond continues by describing events of the following day. As the Franks were working on the construction of a castle near the bridge, they discovered a hill that had served as a burial site for fallen Saracens (*sepultura Saracenorum*).<sup>83</sup> The Turks had interred their dead there. However, the *pauperes*, stirred by the sight of potential spoils, desecrated and looted the enemy tombs.<sup>84</sup> Unlike the *Gesta Francorum* and Peter Tudebode, Raymond does not refer explicitly to the wealth supposedly buried with the Turkish dead, such as coins or armour, but his mention of the tombs being looted implies the presence of valuable items.<sup>85</sup>

Furthermore, the writer underscores the Christian success by estimating the number of enemy dead at fifteen thousand.<sup>86</sup> However, he notes that this number excludes those buried within Antioch and those who drowned in the river. This figure is highly improbable, even according to Raymond's own earlier statement that the Antiochene garrison numbered just over seventeen thousand.<sup>87</sup> It is therefore unlikely that such a battle could have resulted in the deaths of nearly the entire enemy force. Thus, this account must be interpreted primarily through the lens of literary representation. The reported number of enemy casualties serves a rhetorical function. It highlights the strength of the enemy – expressed paradoxically through the scale of their losses – and simultaneously exalts the heroism of Isoard (or Isnard), who led only 150 infantrymen. The ratio of fallen Turks to the small Christian force further enhances the image of miraculous Christian

<sup>81</sup> RA, 60.

<sup>82</sup> RA, 61.

<sup>83</sup> RA, 61.

<sup>84</sup> On the issue of *pauperes* on the First Crusade see C. Auffarth, "Ritter" und "Arme" auf dem Ersten Kreuzzug. Zum Problem Herrschaft und Religion ausgehend von Raymond von Aguilers', *Saeculum*, 40 (1989), 39–55; R. Rogers, 'Peter Bartholomew and the Role of the "Poor" in the First Crusade', in *Warriors and Churchmen in the High Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Karl Leyser*, ed. by T. Reuter, K. J. Leyser, London 1992, 109–22; C. Kostick, *The Social Structure of the First Crusade*, Leiden – Boston 2008, 95–157.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. GF (Russo), VII. 18, 82–84; cf. GF (Hagenmeyer), XVIII. 10, 287; PT, 77.

<sup>86</sup> RA, 61.

<sup>87</sup> RA, 62.

victory, made possible through divine aid and the courage of a few against overwhelming odds.

In a subsequent episode from the struggle for Antioch, Raymond of Aguilers recounts another victory over the Turks. In the newly constructed castle, sixty Crusaders defended themselves against an attacking force of 7,000 Turks.<sup>88</sup> The writer emphasizes the bravery of the knights who were cut off on a bridge and unable to retreat to the castle. Raymond clearly states that the Frankish knights found themselves in a critical situation, under relentless assault from the enemy. Nevertheless, the Crusaders managed to break into a house where they found temporary refuge. The sounds of the battle alerted nearby Frankish forces, who promptly moved to assist. Upon seeing reinforcements, the Turks panicked and began to flee, but their entire rear guard was destroyed during the retreat. In this depiction, Raymond once again frames the heroic deeds of Frankish knights against the backdrop of the overwhelming numbers of the enemy. He concludes the episode with a characteristic theological reflection: 'Thus it pleases me to note that, although we were fewer in numbers, God's grace made us much stronger than the enemy'.<sup>89</sup>

This interpretative pattern reappears in other episodes of *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*. For instance, Raymond recounts a relatively small-scale engagement between a group of 150 Turks and a contingent led by Godfrey of Bouillon, who commanded only twelve knights.<sup>90</sup> Godfrey and his men emerged victorious, killing thirty Turks, capturing another thirty, and driving the rest into the nearby swamps and rivers, where they perished. Upon returning to Antioch, Godfrey

<sup>88</sup> RA, 63.

<sup>89</sup> RA, 63–4: *Libet itaque attendere quanto pauciores numero fuimus tanto forciores nos Dei gratia fecit.*

<sup>90</sup> RA, 92–3; The companions of Godfrey, numbering twelve, are referred to in the *Historia Francorum* as apostles (*XII apostolorum*). From this perspective, the duke of Lorraine and his knights appear as imitators of Christ and the Apostles, which clearly echoes the idea of *imitatio Christi* advocated during the preaching of the expedition to Jerusalem. This was already observed by S. John in *Godfrey of Bouillon: Duke of Lower Lotharingia, Ruler of Latin Jerusalem, c. 1060–1100*, London – New York 2018, 152: 'There is a particular resonance in the description of Godfrey as "God's vicar", and the assertion that his knights numbered the same as the apostles'.

had the prisoners carry the severed heads of their fallen comrades – a symbolic act of humiliation and triumph.<sup>91</sup>

Raymond of Aguilers similarly highlights the overwhelming numerical strength of the enemy in visionary and narrative contexts. In a vision of Peter Bartholomew, the army of Kürboğa is described as a *multitudo paganorum*.<sup>92</sup> Likewise, the Fatimid army at the battle of Ascalon is portrayed as a ‘countless multitude of pagans’.<sup>93</sup> On the way to Jerusalem, the Crusaders encountered a strongly fortified site, identified with Hoşn al-Akrād (the location where the renowned Krak des Chevaliers would later rise), which they resolved to capture after the defenders refused to surrender.<sup>94</sup> According to Raymond, the garrison defending the castle numbered thirty thousand men.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, during the siege of Arqah, the writer reports that the Crusaders had heard of *gentes sine numero*, Turkish forces sent by the Caliph of Baghdad to oppose them.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, in the description of the campaign against Tripoli, Raymond emphasizes the confidence of the Tripolitans, which was based in *multitudine tumultus sui confisi* – ‘in the multitude and uproar of their forces’.<sup>97</sup>

In another episode from Raymond’s *Historia Francorum*, not far from ar-Ramla, Galdemar of Carpenel encountered an enemy force composed of four hundred Arabs and two hundred Turks. In Raymond’s account, these groups appear to represent the Fatimid army, with the Turks possibly acting as mercenaries.<sup>98</sup> Galdemar commanded only twenty knights and fifty infantrymen.<sup>99</sup> Despite the disparity in numbers, the Franks launched a successful attack. The enemy succeeded in killing four knights, including Achard of Montmerle – ‘a noble young man and renowned knight’ (*nobilis iuvenis et miles inclitus*) – as well as all the Crusader archers, but suffered heavy casualties in the process.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>91</sup> RA, 93.

<sup>92</sup> RA, 73: *Cum innumerabili paganorum multitudine*.

<sup>93</sup> RA, 155.

<sup>94</sup> See H. Kennedy, *Crusader Castles*, Cambridge 1994, 145–63; *Der Krak des Chevaliers: die Baugeschichte einer Ordensburg der Kreuzfahrerzeit*, ed. by T. Biller, Regensburg 2006.

<sup>95</sup> RA, 105–06.

<sup>96</sup> RA, 110–11.

<sup>97</sup> RA, 124.

<sup>98</sup> RA, 141.

<sup>99</sup> RA, 141.

<sup>100</sup> RA, 141; see Riley-Smith, *The First Crusaders*, 63, 67, 112, 117, 197.



As the writer remarks, the losses neither discouraged the Franks nor diminished their strength; on the contrary, they were exalted, described by Raymond as ‘the true knighthood of God’ (*immo Dei militum*).<sup>101</sup> As the fighting continued, some Crusaders noticed another Christian force approaching on the horizon. Raymond of Pilet, leading a contingent of fifty knights, charged with such vigour that the enemy believed his forces to be far greater in number.<sup>102</sup> The Muslim troops were routed; two hundred were killed, and the Crusaders seized considerable booty.<sup>103</sup>

Further in the narrative, Raymond describes the Fatimid garrison of Jerusalem as consisting of sixty thousand warriors, excluding women and children, concerning whom there was no number.<sup>104</sup> The writer explicitly states that his purpose is to contrast the immense size of the enemy’s forces with the much smaller Christian army, which, according to him, consisted of no more than 12,000 men – many of them poor or disabled – and no more than 1200 to 1300 knights.<sup>105</sup> This rhetorical device serves to reinforce the central theological message of the work: that endeavours undertaken in God’s name will succeed regardless of earthly odds.<sup>106</sup>

Raymond of Aguilers’ emphasis on the size of the enemy forces, consistently juxtaposed with the limited numbers of the Crusaders, reflects a literary topos found in other contemporary sources, such as the *Gesta Francorum*, Peter Tudebode’s *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere*, and various crusading letters.<sup>107</sup> In nearly every account of confrontations with the Turks, the Fatimids, or other opponents, the numerical

<sup>101</sup> RA, 141.

<sup>102</sup> RA, 142; Raymond Pilet, together with Galdemar and Achard of Montmerle, became heroes of later popular and vernacular tales about the First Crusade (such as the *Gran Conquista de Ultramar*); see *The ‘Chanson d’Antioche’: An Old French Account of the First Crusade*, trans. by S. B. Edgington, C. Sweetenham, Crusade Texts in Translation, 22, London – New York 2011, note 15, 3.

<sup>103</sup> RA, 142.

<sup>104</sup> RA, 147–48: *.lx. milia hominum belligeratorum erant infra civitatem, exceptis parvulis et mulieribus de quibus non erat numerus.*

<sup>105</sup> RA, 148.

<sup>106</sup> RA, 148.

<sup>107</sup> For studies on epistolary sources from the First Crusade, see the recent works of T. W. Smith, ‘Framing the Narrative of the First Crusade: The Letter Given at Laodicea in September 1099’, *Journal of Religious History, Literature and Culture*, 5.2 (2019), 17–34; T. W. Smith, ‘The First Crusade Letter at Laodicea in 1099: Two Previously Unpublished Versions from Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Clm 23390 and 28195’, *Crusades*, 15 (2016), 1–25.

superiority of the enemy is a key motif. These repeated references to enemy multitudes underscore Raymond's rhetorical strategy: the enemy's numerical superiority is a constant literary motif, one that both magnifies the difficulty of the Crusaders' task and highlights the miraculous nature of their victories through divine assistance. Moreover, it underscores the central idea that divine favour, rather than military might, is the decisive factor in the Crusaders' victories, which is to be understood as pertaining to the biblical tradition.

### Fulcher of Chartres' *Historia Hierosolymitana*

The latest chronologically among the first generation of First Crusade historians was Fulcher of Chartres – the author of the *Historia Hierosolymitana*. His status as an eyewitness ought to be considered in light of his presence in the entourage of Baldwin of Boulogne, because Fulcher of Chartres was not a direct witness to such key events as the Siege of Antioch and the Capture of Jerusalem. Consequently, in his account of the most crucial episodes of the First Crusade, from October 1097 to the battle of Ascalon on 12 August 1099, he had to rely on other sources. For instance, Fulcher summarized the fighting between the garrison of Antioch and the Crusaders, from October 1097 to June 1098, which other authors describe in great detail, in just a few words: 'Many times the Turks and the Franks launched attacks and fought each other: they won and were defeated; yet our men triumphed more often than they'.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, the claim is justified that the author confirms the tendencies already established in earlier crusading narratives.

In almost every battle description in Fulcher's account, the Turks appear in overwhelmingly large numbers.<sup>109</sup> For instance, the Turkish army at Dorylaeum is said to number 360,000 warriors – an implausible figure likely derived from the *Gesta Francorum*, where the same number

<sup>108</sup> FC, I. XVI, 8, 229: *Multotiens invasiones et proelia invicem Turci et Franci egerunt: vincebant et vincebantur; nostri tamen saepius quam illi triumphabant.*

<sup>109</sup> See S. Bennett, 'Fear and its Representation in the First Crusade', *Ex Historia*, 4 (2012), 29–54, where the author explores how chroniclers like Fulcher of Chartres depicted the enemy's overwhelming numbers to instil a sense of fear and to underscore the miraculous nature of the Crusaders' victories.

is given.<sup>110</sup> This example demonstrates how elements of narrative passed from one source to another, reflecting a shared literary objective: to highlight the immense scale of the enemy forces.

Following the capture of Antioch and the discovery of the Holy Lance, Fulcher briefly notes Kürboğa's failed three-week siege of Edessa, offering no further detail.<sup>111</sup> His account contributes little to the broader narrative of the siege of Antioch and contains no symbolic interpretation or suggestion of Edessa's strategic or providential role, leaving the reader with a sense of narrative insufficiency – which may be surprising given the writer's ties to Baldwin of Boulogne, his patron and the then count of Edessa (1097–1100). Nevertheless, according to Fulcher, Kürboğa's force constituted an 'immense multitude of Turks'.<sup>112</sup> He writes that out of this great host, 60,000 warriors entered Antioch, only to leave shortly thereafter to besiege the city from the outside.<sup>113</sup> Thus, another Crusade historian reports an extraordinarily large enemy force at Antioch. While the figure is evidently exaggerated and difficult to reconcile with logistical realities, it is nevertheless probable that the Turks significantly outnumbered the Frankish troops. Further, in his description of the battle of Ascalon, Fulcher again underscores the scale of the enemy by referring to them as an 'innumerable people'.<sup>114</sup> This theme is further strengthened by a striking comparison: the enemy army is likened to a stag extending its antlers in two directions.<sup>115</sup> The point of the simile lies not in the image of the deer itself, but in the antlers – branching out in a bifurcated wedge designed to envelop and trap the Crusaders. The metaphor visualizes the Muslim tactic of encirclement, which Fulcher then explains was countered by Godfrey

<sup>110</sup> Cf. GF (Russo), III. 9, 58; cf. GF (Hagenmeyer), IX. 9, 204; PT, 54.

<sup>111</sup> FC, I. XIX, 2, 242.

<sup>112</sup> FC, I. XIX, 1, 242: *Multitudo innumera Turcorum*.

<sup>113</sup> FC, I. XIX, 4, 243.

<sup>114</sup> FC, I. XXXI, 6, 314: *Populus innumerus*. It is worth noting that in his account of the Battle of Ascalon, Albert of Aachen lists Babylonians, Saracens, Arabs, and other pagans among the enemy forces (see AA, VI. 42, 458), thereby following the pattern established by all the previously cited authors. As *Historia Ierosolimitana* is a source largely independent of the accounts of the First Crusade's participants, it suggests that this rhetorical strategy had assumed the form of a widespread topos.

<sup>115</sup> FC, I. XXXI, 6, 314: *Tamquam cervus ramos cornuum praetendens, cuneo suo anteriori facto bifurco*.

of Bouillon, who turned back with his knights to support the Crusaders' rear line.<sup>116</sup>

Fulcher of Chartres also presents the enemy's vast numbers as a source of pride and overconfidence. According to his account, the Turks rejected the Christians' proposal for a trial by combat, placing their trust in their numerical superiority. The writer refers to the proposed duel – featuring five, ten, twenty, or even one hundred selected warriors from each side – as a possible method to resolve the dispute over Antioch.<sup>117</sup> Yet this narrative motif reaches its conclusion in Fulcher's text. In his version of the Battle of Antioch, which largely repeats Raymond of Aguilers' account, the advancing Christian army is spotted by a Turkish nobleman, Amirdalis (referred to as Mirdalim in Raymond of Aguilers's *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*<sup>118</sup>), who informs Kürboğa – at the time playing chess – of the Christians' preparations for battle. Kürboğa sends an embassy to propose a duel, but just as the Franks had previously rejected such a suggestion, his own offer is now declined. In this way, the enemy himself acknowledges his impending defeat. The act of desertion by Amirdalis, who abandons Kürboğa's army in anticipation of the Crusaders' victory, emphasizes the image of inevitable triumph on the pages of Fulcher's *Historia Hierosolymitana*.<sup>119</sup>

It is worth noting that the writer estimates the Kürboğa's army at three hundred thousand knights (*milites*) and infantrymen (*pedites*).<sup>120</sup> Notably, in the first version of his *Historia Hierosolymitana*, Fulcher cited a total of 666,000 troops.<sup>121</sup> In a subsequent version, he revised this figure – likely recognizing its exaggeration and the overt allusion

<sup>116</sup> FC, I. XXXI, 6, 314–15.

<sup>117</sup> FC, I. XX, 3, 248. See also T. Pelech, 'Pojedynek pięciu lub dziesięciu? Kształtowanie się przekazu o propozycji rozstrzygnięcia sporu o Antiochię w świetle źródeł do dziejów pierwszej krucjaty (do ok. poł. XII w.)', in *Mundus et litterae. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Wojciechowi Mrozowiczowi w sześćdziesiątą piątą rocznicę urodzin*, ed. by M. Goliński, S. Rosik, Wrocław 2023, 165–91.

<sup>118</sup> See T. Pelech, 'Ammiralius, Mirdalim, Amirdalis – kreacja muzułmańskich dowódców w czasie walk o Antiochię w źródłach doby pierwszych krucjat (do około połowy XII wieku)', *Gremium. Studia nad Historią, Kulturą i Polityką*, 14 (2020), 69–94.

<sup>119</sup> FC, I. XXII, 1–8, 251–54.

<sup>120</sup> FC, I. XXI, 3, 249.

<sup>121</sup> FC, note 8, 249.

to the apocalyptic symbolism of the number 666 from the Book of Revelation.<sup>122</sup>

The stereotypical portrayal of the enemy's overwhelming strength is further amplified by Fulcher of Chartres' inclusion of a catalogue of enemy commanders. In the later, more refined version of the text, this list includes the names of three principal leaders: Kürboğa, Maleducat (Duqaq of Damascus), and Amisoliman. However, in the first version of the *Historia Hierosolymitana*, Fulcher enumerated nearly thirty commanders, among them Amir Begibbe, Amir Maranie, Amir Mahummeth, Carajath, Coteloseniar, and Mergalscotelou.<sup>123</sup> Although scholars have attempted to identify some of these figures, their precise historical referents remain elusive.<sup>124</sup> For Fulcher's Frankish audience – particularly readers in the Latin West unfamiliar with the complex political structures of the Islamic world – the symbolic impact of this lengthy, exotic-sounding list was likely more important than its documentary accuracy.<sup>125</sup>

This literary strategy evokes a classical topos: the catalogue of enemies, which appears, for instance, in Virgil's *Aeneid*, a work Fulcher of Chartres likely knew, given his education and the many signs attesting to his classical erudition.<sup>126</sup> Similar catalogues recur in other eyewitness accounts of the First Crusade, consistently serving to emphasize the power and magnitude of the opposing force. Fulcher's deployment of this device in his narrative of the confrontation with Kürboğa thus

<sup>122</sup> FC, note 8, 249. See also *Gesta Francorum Iherusalem expugnantium*, in *Recueil des historiens des croisades*, XXI, 504.

<sup>123</sup> See FC, note d, 250; cf. *Gesta Francorum Iherusalem expugnantium*, XX, 504.

<sup>124</sup> Such as *Maleducat*, who is probably Al Malik Duqaq, Emir of Damascus (1095–1104), and the form of his name, with a clear reference to the *chansons de geste's* prefix 'Mal-', suggests that he is misled; see M. Bennett, 'First Crusaders' Images of Muslims: The Influence of Vernacular Poetry?', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 22.2 (1986), 101–22; here at 109.

<sup>125</sup> FC, note 12, 250.

<sup>126</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, in *P. Vergili Maronis Opera*, ed. R. A. B. Mynors, Oxford 1969, VII, v. 647–802; on the classical education and erudition of Fulcher of Chartres, see V. Epp, *Fulcher von Chartres*, 310–76; T. Pelech, 'Un réemploi de Flavius Josèphe par Foucher de Chartres : l'or arraché aux cadavres', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 259 (2022), 259–74; T. Pelech, 'Kształtowanie wizerunku Baldwina I, króla Jerozolimy. Fulcher z Chartres i partie wierszowane w opisach zdobycia nadmorskich miast Lewantu', in *Balkany – Bizancjum – Bliski Wschód. Studia z dziejów i kultury wieków średnich*, ed. A. Paroń, VI Kongres Mediewistów Polskich, 2, Wrocław 2022, 39–56.

serves a twofold purpose: first, to underscore the vast size of the Turkish army through exaggerated numerical estimates, and second, to reinforce its perceived might through a sweeping list of enemy leaders. This catalogue of enemy commanders is deliberately juxtaposed with a corresponding list of Frankish leaders.<sup>127</sup> The contrast establishes a clear binary opposition between the Christian and Muslim forces – a structural and ideological division central to Fulcher's representation of the conflict. The symmetry of the opposing lists not only dramatizes the scale of the confrontation but also strengthens the providential narrative in which a divinely supported but numerically inferior Christian army triumphs over an overwhelmingly powerful adversary.

The catalogue of enemy forces also appears in Fulcher's depiction of the Fatimid army during the siege of Jerusalem and the battle of Ascalon. In each instance, the writer emphasizes that the enemy army was composed of at least two distinct components. During the siege of Jerusalem, he notes that both Arabs and Ethiopians (*tam Arabes quam Aethiopes*) fled into the Tower of David after the city was lost.<sup>128</sup> Later, this same contingent is described as 'Turks, Arabs, and black Ethiopians',<sup>129</sup> which was repeated in the description of the Fatimid troops in the battle of Ascalon.<sup>130</sup> This likely reflects the actual ethnic composition of the Fatimid army, which included Turkish and Ethiopian mercenaries alongside forces of Arab origin.<sup>131</sup> However, at the same time, this catalogue serves to underscore the strength and diversity of the Fatimid army. It is also worth adding here, as a context, the catalogue of foreign nations that appears in Peter Tudebode's account of the battle of Ascalon. Tudebode describes the Fatimid army by stating that in the service of the ruler of Egypt were 'the Turks, Saracens, Arabs, Agulans, Kurds, Azoparts, Azymites, and other pagans'.<sup>132</sup> The people referred to as Azoparts, mentioned here for the first time, derive, according to E. C. Armstrong, from the Old French word *Azopart*, which was used

<sup>127</sup> FC, I. XXII, 1, 251.

<sup>128</sup> FC, I. XXVII, 12, 300.

<sup>129</sup> FC, I. XXX, 3, 308: *Turci et Arabes, nigri quoque Aethiopes*.

<sup>130</sup> FC, I. XXXI, 1, 311–12: *Turci et Arabes, nigri quoque Aethiopes*.

<sup>131</sup> Y. Lev, 'Army, Regime, and Society in Fatimid Egypt, 358–487/968–1094', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 19.3 (1987), 337–65.

<sup>132</sup> PT, 147: *Turcorum, Sarracenorum et Arabum, Agulanorum et Curtorum, Achupartorum, Azimitorum et aliorum paganorum*.

to denote an Ethiopian, and more broadly, people of black skin.<sup>133</sup> In medieval Christian thought, Ethiopians were believed to have black skin as a result of the sins of their souls, an interpretation found, for instance, in Pope Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job*.<sup>134</sup> In literary representations, the colour black served as a specific marker of "otherness", distinguishing the enemy as inherently sinful.

Thus, by invoking the image of the Ethiopians, Fulcher of Chartres also engages with the complex system of colour symbolism prevalent in medieval Christian thought – specifically the association of black with sin and evil, as was presented above on the biblical description of the conflict of King Asa against Zerah. Furthermore, in Christian theology, light is diametrically opposed to darkness; drawing on the exegesis of the Gospel of St John, light cannot be overcome by darkness.<sup>135</sup> Within this biblical framework, darkness embodies evil, while light symbolizes purity. Accordingly, the colour black retained this negative connotation, representing darkness and evil – the adversary of the Church.<sup>136</sup> Thus, Fulcher's portrayal of the enemy army, through the symbolic reference to black Ethiopians, may have been imbued with a broader cultural and theological meaning, evoking the collective imagery of Christian audiences.

## Conclusion

A close examination of the crusading sources presented here reveals not only a striking continuity but also a conscious choice in the use of hyperbolic formulas, stretching from biblical precedent to the Latin

<sup>133</sup> E. C. Armstrong, 'Old-French "Açopart, Ethiopian"', *Modern Philology*, 38.3 (1941), 243–50; E. C. Armstrong, 'Yet Again the Açoparts', *Modern Language Notes*, 57.6 (1942), 485–86.

<sup>134</sup> Gregorius Magnus, *Moralium libri sive Expositio in librum B. Job*, PL LXXV, X. 13, col. 1023–24; PL LXXVI, XVIII. 84, col. 88–89; XX. 77, col. 184–85.

<sup>135</sup> John 1:5.

<sup>136</sup> M. Pastoureau, *Black: The History of a Color*, Princeton – Oxford 2008, 40. See also J. B. Friedman, *Monstrous Race in Medieval Art and Thought*, New York 2000; T. G. Hahn, 'Race and Ethnicity in the Middle Ages', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 31.1 (2001), 1–37; J. J. Cohen, 'On Saracen Enjoyment: The Difference the Middle Ages Makes: Color and Race before the Modern World', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 31.1 (2001), 113–46.



historiography of the First Crusade. Numerical exaggerations, especially the motif of the enemy's overwhelmingly large and often uncountable forces, serve multiple purposes. They function theologically by affirming the action of divine Providence; narratively by heightening tension and anticipation of deliverance; ideologically by legitimizing the expedition to Jerusalem as righteous warfare; and mnemonically by helping to imprint the notion of an amorphous, threatening enemy mass in the collective imagination. These rhetorical strategies are not incidental embellishments, but rather integral to the construction of crusading discourse.

From early accounts such as the *Gesta Francorum*, Peter Tudebode's *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere*, and Raymond of Aguilers' *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem* to Fulcher of Chartres' *Historia Hierosolymitana*, writers consistently depict a radical numerical asymmetry between the modest Crusader forces and the vast multitudes of Turks, Arabs, Saracens, etc. The literary topos of the innumerable enemy, often coupled with catalogues of exotic names and ethnic markers, draws heavily on both scriptural tradition and classical epic models. It dramatizes the Christian struggle, underscores the miraculous nature of victory, and symbolically encodes the First Crusade as a sacred conflict between divine order and heathen chaos.

This motif of excessive enemy numbers must be read not as an attempt at historical precision, but as a deliberate ideological and literary device. By inflating the scale of opposition, writers such as Raymond of Aguilers and Fulcher of Chartres magnify both the danger faced by the Crusaders and the magnitude of their triumph. The repeated evocation of foreign-sounding names, multi-ethnic enemies, and dark symbolic imagery, especially the figure of the black Ethiopian, further reinforces a binary opposition between Christian unity and infidel disorder. These rhetorical patterns collectively serve to inscribe the First Crusade within a providential framework, constructing a mythic narrative in which Christian perseverance and divine favour overcome seemingly insurmountable odds. Thus, the persistence and intertextual transmission of this topos across the sources underscore its central role in shaping contemporary perceptions of the crusading enterprise and the construction of the enemy's image within early twelfth-century Latin Christendom, while also contributing to the formation of a durable framework of collective memory through which the First Crusade

was remembered, interpreted, and even mythologized in subsequent generations.

These findings lead to three principal conclusions. First, Crusader authors employed the biblical rhetorical framework not merely as ornamentation, but as a moral foundation for both participants and audiences. Second, an attentive understanding of each author's intention is essential for evaluating the reliability and function of their biblical intertexts. Third, the study of biblical rhetoric in Crusader narratives offers a valuable key to reconstructing medieval intellectual formation of each individual author and the ideological foundations of crusading identity.

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