

The Discovery of the True Cross in Jerusalem in 1099: Evidence and Reconsideration

Key words: Relic of the Cross, True Cross, Kingdom of Jerusalem, First Crusade

The discovery of the True Cross in Jerusalem just after the successful end of the First Crusade is probably one of the most baffling and neglected events in the history of the Kingdom of Jerusalem.¹ Contemporaries perceived this miraculous discovery as the crowning point of the expedition, as well as a tangible sign of God's favour, which is evident in the first letter sent by Pope Paschal II to the crusaders.² The centrality of the Cross in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem is confirmed in a letter that Warmund, the patriarch of Jerusalem, sent to the archbishop of Santiago Compostela, where he stated that "we are ready to die rather than desert the holy city of Jerusalem and the Lord's Cross and the most Holy Sepulchre of Christ."³ These words clearly show that the responsibility for the protection of the True Cross was a key element in the identity of the crusader monarchy.

The True Cross is alleged to have been discovered by Helena, mother of Constantine the Great. The legend of Helena's finding of the Cross must have originated in the second half of the fourth century, most likely in Jerusalem.⁴ Relics of the Cross had spread across the Roman Empire by the middle of the fourth century and quickly

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² *Kreuzzugsbriefe* 1901, p. 178.

³ *Letters from the East* 2013, p. 43; the original text is in HISTORIA COMPOSTELLANA, pp. 270–272.

⁴ A detailed examination of the evidence and the possible course of the events can be found in BERGEHAMMAR 1991; DRIJVERS 1992; BAERT 2004, pp. 15–53. On the relics of the Cross in Constantinople and Rome see KLEIN 2004a, pp. 19–103; FROLOW 1961, pp. 73–94, 180–181.

found their way into Rome and Constantinople.⁵ The relic venerated in the Holy City was taken by the Persians and restored in 630 to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre by Emperor Heraclius. Though at the beginning of the twelfth century, many churches across Europe and the Middle East were keeping fragments of the Holy Cross, the elites of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem believed in the exceptional significance of the relic found by the crusaders.⁶

The main aim of this paper is to examine in-depth the narratives about the discovery of the Cross in 1099 as well as to analyse the various descriptions of this event. The task is far from easy because of the considerable differences between chronicles arising from a variety of chroniclers' approaches to the discovered relic and the newly-established Latin monarchy in Jerusalem. Why does one group of sources mention this event only briefly or remain silent about it, whereas another group contains detailed accounts? Crucially, this first group of sources was written not in the Latin East but in France, but the latter came from a milieu closely connected to the court of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. The origins of each chronicle are explained and their far-reaching consequences demonstrated in shaping the narratives about the True Cross. Darius von Güttner-Sporzyński recently pointed out that First Crusade narratives and later sources should be treated as a contribution to the formation of crusader ideology, its theological justification, and to manufacturing the memory of crusades.⁷ This review of accounts on the discovery of the True Cross in 1099 is aimed at broadening our understanding of the identity as well as historical memory in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem.

Since the nineteenth century, this event has often been treated as a rather unconvincing tale of little importance. One group of scholars remarked upon the True Cross only in the context of the Battle of Ascalon, commenting that the relic was carried by Patriarch-elect Arnulf.⁸ Among those who mentioned the finding of the Cross, the majority wrote only a short explanation. According to many historians, Arnulf of Chocques, who was elected as patriarch of Jerusalem, was the key political actor in this event, which he used in seeking a way to legitimize a new ruling elite in Jerusalem.⁹ Another way of describing these events was to set an anonymous inhabitant of Jerusalem in the centre of the story — in this view, a member of the local Christian community revealed

⁵ See, in general, KAEGLI 2003, pp. 205–206. On literature, iconography, and ideology regarding Heraclius's war against Sasanian Empire see BAERT 2004, pp. 133–163; STOYANOV 2011.

⁶ On the relics, their transfer to the Latin West, and their impact on society see, in general, FROLOW 1961; KLEIN 2004a; KLEIN 2004b; BAERT 2004, pp. 164–454; MORRIS 2005; SCHEIN 2005, pp. 63–89. The relic found by the crusaders was described as unique because of its exceptional size, in a letter written in 1120 by Ansell, cantor of the Holy Sepulchre to Gerbert, bishop of Paris: PL 162, kol. 732; for an English translation see *Letters from the East* 2013, p. 41.

⁷ GÜTTNER-SPORZYŃSKI 2016, p. 95.

⁸ BARBER 2012, p. 71; RÖHRICHT 1901, p. 199.

⁹ ASBRIDGE 2005, p. 323; RUNCIMAN 1951, pp. 294–295; RUBENSTEIN 2011, pp. 305–306; RILEY-SMITH 1986, p. 98.

the place where the relic of the Holy Cross was hidden.¹⁰ As early as 1913, Heinrich Hagenmeyer, in his commentary to Fulcher of Chartres' *Historia Hierosolymitana*, mentioned the legend of Empress Helena in connection with the discovery of the True Cross by the crusaders.¹¹ Undeniably, the relic of the Cross has been the subject of many academic articles and monographs about the crusading movement, but they have not focussed on the very event of the discovery and its circumstances.¹² Some works not directly related to crusader studies have remarked on the subject. A. Frolov, in his broad survey on the relics of the Cross, examined all available evidence and pointed out the relationship between the discovery of the Cross by the crusaders and Helena's legend, linking it as well to the legend of Judas Cyriacus.¹³ H. Klein, basing his work closely on Fulcher of Chartres' account, briefly repeated his version and situated this event in a wider context: he stated that the relics of the Cross were an important factor of imperial ideology in Byzantium and in the Empire ruled by the Salian dynasty.¹⁴ S. Schein was the first scholar in modern historiography to demonstrate that descriptions of the finding of the Cross in crusader Jerusalem follow the pattern of Helena's legend.¹⁵ Recently, J. Rubenstein made a significant contribution by interpreting the discovery of the True Cross not only as a manoeuvre in the course of the conflict for rule over crusader Jerusalem, but also as the apparent fulfilment of the eschatological expectations employed to build up Godfrey's royal authority.¹⁶ J. Flori, in his extensive study on early crusade historiography, dwelt upon the various attitudes the chroniclers adopted towards the relics of both the True Cross and the Holy Lance — both found by the crusaders in similar circumstances, to some extent. Flori noted that Arnulf of Chocques had a strong influence on the struggle for power between the different parties among the crusaders. Because of his position, Arnulf had the primary role in the finding of the Cross and in legitimizing the discovered relic. Consequently, the patriarch-elect was the very person who deeply affected Fulcher's description of this event. This opinion is of great importance for this study because many narratives are based upon Fulcher's version of the crusaders' discovery of the True Cross.¹⁷

GESTA FRANCORUM AND HISTORIA DE HIEROSOLYMITANO ITINERE

Two strongly related First Crusade chronicles differ profoundly in their descriptions of the crusaders' discovery of the Cross: the anonymous *Gesta Francorum* and Peter

¹⁰ KOSTICK 2009, p. 145; SYBEL 1881, p. 420.

¹¹ FC 1913, pp. 309–310.

¹² LIGATO 1996, pp. 315–330; MURRAY 1998, pp. 217–238; GERISH 1996, pp. 138–155.

¹³ FROLOW 1961, pp. 287–288.

¹⁴ KLEIN 2004a, pp. 191–193.

¹⁵ SCHEIN 2005, p. 84.

¹⁶ RUBENSTEIN 2008, p. 69.

¹⁷ FLORI 2010, pp. 242–253.

Tudebode's *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere*.¹⁸ In Peter Tudebode's narrative, the final assault on the Holy City took place after a solemn procession, led by bishops and priests, from Mount Zion to the Mount of Olives. According to Peter, knights and other people took part in this gathering, to whom Arnulf (later chosen to be first Latin patriarch of Jerusalem) delivered a sermon. During this celebration, in which the priests carried crosses, Muslim defenders standing on the city walls desecrated and broke the Holy Cross.¹⁹ Then, when liturgical celebrations were completed, the First Crusade leaders decided to build siege towers and to prepare the Christian armies for a general assault that resulted in breaking the defence and taking control over the Holy City. Peter Tudebode does not mention the discovery of the relic after the conquest of Jerusalem but returns to the issue of the Cross in describing the Battle of Ascalon. According to Peter Tudebode, Patriarch Arnulf carried into battle the relic of the Cross that was discovered by the pilgrims in Jerusalem after its successful liberation.²⁰ This short passage from the description of the battle of Ascalon is the core of the tales about the discovery of the Cross in 1099. More important in the *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere* is the Latins' procession with crosses in the sequence of events that led to final success of the Crusade. The confrontation between humble pilgrims carrying crosses in solemn procession and the Muslims blaspheming the cross is an anticipation of the final battle. In this view, the struggle for Jerusalem becomes the fight for the Cross — for Peter Tudebode the Holy Cross is the main element in describing the climax of the crusade. Accordingly, the miraculous discovery of the Holy Cross seems to be a sign given from God as a confirmation of the victory.

Thus, it is striking that even though the author of *Gesta Francorum* usually follows the sequence of events from *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere*, the account of the final siege of Jerusalem omits the scenes with the Cross and is silent about the discovery of the relic.²¹ The anonymous author, for example, regarding the battle with Kerbogha during the siege of Antioch (28 June 1098), describes the same scenes of processions with crosses as Peter Tudebode placed in the description of the same battle.²² The narrative of the siege of Jerusalem in *Gesta Francorum* is more concise, and its anonymous author omits some important elements in comparison with Peter Tudebode's chronicle. Furthermore, his narrative is to some extent inconsistent because the author changes the place of the liturgical procession in the sequence

¹⁸ The relationship between *Gesta Francorum* and Peter Tudebode's chronicle is a matter of long discussion. For a revision to the traditional approach towards *Gesta Francorum* as the main narrative of the First Crusade see RUBENSTEIN 2005, pp. 179–204. For a full summary of the debate with a comparative analysis of both narratives see FLORI 2010, pp. 67–103. See also recently published studies: NISKANEN 2012, pp. 287–316; BULL 2012, pp. 1–18; KESKIAHO 2015, pp. 69–102.

¹⁹ PT 1977, p. 137.

²⁰ PT 1977, p. 145.

²¹ GF 1962, pp. 90, 94.

²² PT 1977, pp. 110–111; GF 1962, p. 68.

of events.²³ The Cross and its role in the last stages of the First Crusade seemed to be deliberately concealed by the anonymous author of *Gesta Francorum* despite the importance of the relic within the crusaders' common memory, as is evidenced by Peter Tudebode.

Though the *Gesta Francorum* and *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere* are two closely-related texts, they belong to two different crusader traditions. The vision of the crusade expressed in the *Gesta Francorum* was strongly influenced by the specific political circumstances. Prince Bohemond is the main hero of the whole narrative, and *Gesta Francorum* portrays the members of the Capetian milieu in a favorable light. It is important to note that Bohemond's recruitment campaign in France in 1106 was the political backdrop for the creation of the *Gesta Francorum*. Bohemond was supported by the Capetian royal court as well as by Pope Paschal II in preparing an anti-Byzantine crusade. French king Phillip I (reigned 1060–1108) and his advisors, along with papal legate Bruno of Segni, are key among those who influenced the *Gesta Francorum*.²⁴ That the *Gesta Francorum* is silent on the discovery of the Cross results from its representing the interests of the Capetian royal court, papal curia and Bohemond's milieu. Other First Crusade narratives from northern France — from Robert the Monk, Guibert of Nogent,²⁵ Baldric of Dol, and Gilles de Paris — as well as southern-Italian crusade chronicles, were written from a perspective to that of the *Gesta Francorum*. Consequently, they do not contain the description of the discovery of the Cross.²⁶ Because the relic of the Cross was one of the key elements in the Latin monarchy in Palestine, it was not in the Capetian or papal interest to strengthen the authority of the Kingdom of Jerusalem as ruled by mainly Lorraine-derived aristocratic elite.²⁷ *Historia de Hierosolymitano itinere*, written by a participant of the expedition and without the direct impact of external factors, seems to be earlier and closer to the first crusaders' common memory than *Gesta Francorum*. Unlike in the *Gesta Francorum* and other chronicles written in northern France and southern Italy, Peter Tudebode's chronicle records that pilgrims found

²³ According to Peter Tudebode, the solemn procession took place before a decision about constructing siege towers, whereas this procession was situated by the anonymous author on the night before the main assault, which is simply illogical: PT 1977, p. 137; GF 1962, p. 90.

²⁴ For an examination of the chronicle *Gesta Francorum* as written in dependence on interests of Capetian royal court see FLORI 2007, pp. 717–746; PAUL 2010, pp. 534–566; NAUS 2016, especially pp. 28–31.

²⁵ Guibert of Nogent does mention the discovery of the Cross in the context of the second battle of Ramla; thus, Guibert seems to be an exception among north-French chronicles. Nevertheless, he does not expand this topic nor pay attention to the significance of the discovery for the crusader kingdom, GN 1966, p. 345.

²⁶ RUBENSTEIN 2016, pp. 113–134; *Writing the Early Crusades* 2014; FLORI 2010, pp. 107–169.

²⁷ For a detailed analysis of the elite of the crusader monarchy in the first decades of the twelfth century see MURRAY 2000; RILEY-SMITH 1997. On crusade-based prestige as a threat to Capetian royal authority see NAUS 2016, pp. 31–34.

the relic of the True Cross in Jerusalem after the successful conquest. This mention from Tudebode's chronicle is the focal point within the memory of the discovery of the Cross among the ruling class in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem.

RAYMOND OF AGUILERS' *HISTORIA FRANCORUM* — A PROVENÇAL PERSPECTIVE

In examining Raymond of Aguilers' narrative, it is crucial to consider that the Provençal circles adopted a hostile approach to the newly-established Kingdom of Jerusalem. The author of the *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem* was not only a chaplain of Count Raymond of Saint-Gilles but also a canon of the Le Puy cathedral and, consequently, he was an associate of Bishop Ademar, who held the position of papal legate and spiritual leader in the First Crusade. The main reason Raymond wrote a narrative on the First Crusade was that the Holy Lance was found in Antioch; furthermore, it is noticeable that Raymond's entire account is determined by arguing in favour of the Holy Lance.²⁸ In narrating the discovery of the Cross in 1099, the Provençal chronicler made Patriarch-elect Arnulf a villain of the story. According to Raymond's chronicle, Arnulf started seeking the relic of the Cross among the Jerusalem inhabitants after his illegal elevation to the patriarchal seat, but he failed. Then, the local Christian community uncovered the relic of the Cross, after considering God's acceptance of the crusaders and their deeds. Raymond stresses that the relic was revealed not to Arnulf, but to the crusaders in general.²⁹ In this view, the relic of the True Cross was found in purely ordinary circumstances. In contrast, the Holy Lance was discovered among visions and miraculous events.³⁰ Thus, an evident difference between the discovery of the Cross and the discovery of the Holy Lance is communicated in Raymond's chronicle. A letter to the pope from Daimbert of Pisa and other crusade leaders, written by Raymond of Aguilers and sent from Laodicea in September 1099,³¹ expresses a similar approach to the First Crusade, even more strongly. The lack of any mention of the True Cross, as well as the use of the famous formula "advocatus sancti ecclesiae Sepulchri" regarding Duke Godfrey's rule in Jerusalem, indicates that an aim of the count of Toulouse was to diminish the prestige of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. There was a struggle for power between Count Raymond and Duke Godfrey during the siege of Jerusalem and in the first weeks after the conquest. The Count of Toulouse was forced to leave the Tower of David, which was the key point in Jerusalem from a military perspective. Subsequently, after the battle of Ascalon (12/08/ 1099), an opportunity to take over the city

²⁸ For the current state of research and full bibliography on Raymond and his chronicle see: LECAQUE 2017, pp. 112–113; LECAQUE 2015, pp. 245–249.

²⁹ RA 1969, p. 154.

³⁰ See ASBRIDGE 2007, pp. 3–36.

³¹ *Kreuzzugsbriefe* 1901, pp. 167–174. On Raymond's authorship see LECAQUE 2017, p. 108.

of Ascalon became a source of a conflict between the two leaders.³² Because of all this, Raymond of Aguilers aimed to create a hostile narrative towards the new ruler of Jerusalem and the patriarch-elect. Even though this approach strongly influenced Raymond's description of the discovery of the True Cross, the Provençal chronicler nonetheless provides important evidence for the possible circumstances of this event.

ALBERT OF AACHEN'S HISTORIA IEROSOLIMITANA

In Albert of Aachen's chronicle, the discovery of the True Cross is demonstrated as a significant point in the process of establishing the Latin rule in Jerusalem. The description of the event is placed in the sixth of twelve books. Significantly, the siege of Jerusalem and battle of Ascalon are narrated in the same book, in the thirty-eighth chapter, which follows the duke Godfrey's elevation to the rule and precedes the Arnulf's election as the head of the Jerusalemite church.³³ It is likely that the chronicler intended to connect the first ruler of Latin Jerusalem with the True Cross at the very origins of the Crusader Kingdom. According to Aachen's chronicle, a certain Christian inhabitant of Jerusalem had concealed the relic of the Cross to protect it from the Muslims during the siege; then he informed the crusaders about the place of their hiding. Similarly, in the narratives on the Empress Helena's discovery of the True Cross, the crucial role is played by a Jerusalem inhabitant, either Judas or Bishop Macarius, depending on the version.³⁴

There can be little doubt that both Raymond of Aguilers' and Albert of Aachen's accounts were, to some extent, influenced by the stories about Helena's discovery of the Cross. In contrast to the Raymond's sceptical approach, Albert depicts the solemn liturgical celebration the crusaders organized after the miraculous revelation of the Holy Cross. He narrates that the relic was carried in a festive procession from the place of the discovery to the Holy Sepulchre. Additionally, Albert explains that this event took place on a Friday, the commemoration day of the Passion of Christ, and by this remark, he links the discovery of the relic with both the liberation of Jerusalem, which also took place on Friday, and the liturgical celebration of Good Friday, which is focused on the Holy Cross.³⁵ Thus, in Albert's chronicle, the discovery of the True Cross marks the inauguration of a Latin liturgical cult that started with the *translatio* and *depositio* of the relic in the most important sanctuary for all Christians. In this way, the discovery of the True Cross becomes a significative step in establishing the crusader monarchy in Palestine. It is necessary to consider that

³² For examinations of various dimensions of the conflict see MURRAY 2000, pp. 63–71; BARBER 2012, p. 51; RUBENSTEIN 2008.

³³ AA 2007, pp. 450–452.

³⁴ On Empress Helena's discovery of the True Cross, see BORGEHAMMAR 1991.

³⁵ On various aspects related to Good Friday and to Friday in the crusading context, see KASKE 2010, pp. 128–133.

Albert of Aachen's account about this event was composed in the first few years after the First Crusade. As Jean Flori recently argued, though Albert focused on Duke Godfrey, he was not partisan to any of the crusade leaders.³⁶ Notwithstanding, examining the evidence suggests that this narrative was composed under the influence of Lorraine circles and that, to some extent, it reflects the views on the history and beginnings of the crusader kingdom that belonged to members of the *domus ducis Godefridi*.³⁷ In this light, Albert's chronicle should be treated as important evidence for helping us comprehend the significance of the discovery of the True Cross by the crusaders. It shows that for the ruling elite in the Latin Kingdom this event was an important element of their own identity as early as the first decade after 1099.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE JERUSALEM ROYAL COURT

The chronicler Fulcher of Chartres became a chaplain of Baldwin I, Duke Godfrey's successor and first king of Jerusalem from 1100 to his death in 1118. Because of his position, Fulcher offers an insight into the views of the ruling class in the crusader monarchy on its own origins and authority. In his description, as in Albert of Aachen's chronicle, a local inhabitant (whom Fulcher calls Syrus) informed the crusaders about where the relics of the True Cross were hidden.³⁸ According to Fulcher, the relic had been hidden, not shortly before the crusaders' arrival but in ancient times, which is a narrative element of high importance. It was likely intended to suggest that the relic found by the crusaders was directly related to Helena and Constantine, and hence to times when Christian emperors protected Jerusalem and dominated the whole world, as the same motive could be found in legends about Charlemagne's pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The crowning point of the *Descriptio qualiter Caroli Magni* is the discovery of the Crown of Thorns, which had remained hidden from the time of Empress Helena.³⁹ There is also a solemn procession in the Fulcher account — the relic was carried first to the Holy Sepulchre and then to the Temple. In the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, liturgical processions were led from the Sepulchre to the Temple during chief festivities — for example, the Liberation of Jerusalem.⁴⁰

³⁶ For a summary of the current state of research on Albert of Aachen's chronicle with valuable conclusions, see FLORI 2010, pp. 261–320. According to J. Flori, Albert's chronicle should be re-evaluated and treated as a primary source for the First Crusade.

³⁷ For an analysis of *Domus ducis Godefridi* based on the chronicle of Albert of Aachen, see MURRAY 2000, pp. 77–81.

³⁸ FC 1913, pp. 309–310.

³⁹ *Descriptio qualiter* 1890, pp. 110–114.

⁴⁰ On the liturgical celebrations performed in the festivity of the Liberation of Jerusalem see JOHN 2015, pp. 409–431; LINDER 1990, pp. 110–131. On the processions from the Holy Sepulchre to the Templum, see SCHEIN 1984, pp. 182–184.

From this perspective, the procession that followed the discovery of the True Cross set a pattern that was followed in the next few decades, which is why the event of the discovery should be perceived as the starting point of the crusader monarchy. Although Fulcher was not an eyewitness to the siege and conquest of Jerusalem, he moved to the Holy City in autumn 1100; and after Baldwin I's accession to the throne, Fulcher assumed a high position in the ecclesiastical hierarchy as royal chaplain, a canon of Holy Sepulchre, and probably as a custodian of the relic of the Cross, as well as close co-operator with Arnulf of Chocques.⁴¹ According to Fulcher, the relic of the Cross plays a crucial role in the history of the Crusader Kingdom as the "crown jewel" of the Latin monarchs, so it is easy to understand that the discovery of this relic should not be underestimated but rather perceived as a focal point of the identity of the ruling elite in Latin Jerusalem.⁴²

A wider collection of texts created in close connection with the crusader royal court is useful in investigating how the elite of Latin Jerusalem remembered the discovery of the Cross. The chronicle of Bartolf of Nangis is based on an earlier, but now lost, recension of the Fulcher of Chartres' *Historia Ierosolimitana*, as Susan Edgington has recently stated.⁴³ Presumably, Fulcher had finished the first recension in about 1106; then he was gradually adding chapters over the next two decades, together with changing and reworking the parts previously written. The content of Bartolf's chronicle can be presumed to be a source that broadened the knowledge of the collective memory in the crusader kingdom from the very beginnings of its shaping. In this chronicle is a short passage that describes the discovery of the True Cross, more concise than the longer account written by Fulcher.⁴⁴ Of significance is the same key element of a certain Syrus revealing the Cross that had been hidden "ab antiquo tempore"; hence, it is to be treated as a key point in the stories deriving directly from the Latin Kingdom and narrating the discovery of the Cross. Since Bartolf does not mention the liturgical procession, it is possible that there was no specially designed pattern for such celebrations in the first years after the conquest of Jerusalem, so we can assume that the shape of the liturgical order was in the development stage.

A similar description is contained in the chronicle called *Historia Nicaena vel Antiochena*, a narrative produced in the 1140s under Baldwin III's patronage.⁴⁵ Although *Historia Nicaena* is based mainly on the chronicle of Robert of Reims, it contains an account of the discovery of the Cross drawn from Fulcher's narrative, confirming that subsequent generations in Latin Jerusalem recounted the same story

⁴¹ On Fulcher see EPP 1990, pp. 24–44; DONDI 2004, pp. 59–60.

⁴² A similar view on Fulcher's attitude to the relic of the Cross in: FLORI 2010, pp. 241–258.

⁴³ EDGINGTON 2014, pp. 21–35. See also recently published research based on, among others, Bartolf of Nangis' chronicle: RUBENSTEIN 2017.

⁴⁴ *Gesta Francorum expugnantium Iherusalem* 1864, p. 516.

⁴⁵ GERISH 2015.

about how the relic of the Cross was revealed after the conquest in 1099. It also demonstrates that early on, this story became a basic ingredient in the identity of the ruling elite in the crusader kingdom.⁴⁶ The last, and probably best known, narrative on the history of the crusader monarchy in Palestine is *Chronicon*, written by William of Tyre in the 1170s and the 1180s. As chancellor of the kingdom and at the same time King Baldwin IV's tutor, William was an important figure at the Latin royal court.⁴⁷ Fulcher of Chartres' account of the discovery of the True Cross is retold almost exactly in William's chronicle.⁴⁸ One significant difference is the place where the event occurred: William narrates that a certain Syrus found the relics in an unspecified place in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Conspicuously, the last generation of the ruling elite in Latin Jerusalem linked the discovery with the main sanctuary of the kingdom and of all Christians. Furthermore, the liberation of the Holy Sepulchre was the aim of the First Crusade, and this holy site then became the centre of the crusader kingdom in terms of liturgy, royal ideology, and common identity. Taking all of this into consideration, the high importance of the discovery of the Cross for political theology and religious culture in the Latin Kingdom should be assumed as self-evident.

The key role of the discovery of the True Cross in the identity of the Crusader Kingdom is not only apparent in the descriptions analysed above but is also highlighted in some other texts. William of Tyre's chronicle offers a perspective from which the history of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem was perceived by its own elite. The old-French translation of William's work is entitled *Histoire d'Heraclès*, which actually reflects the understanding of the historical roots of the Latin monarchy in the Holy Land as recorded by William. The Archbishop of Tyre chose Emperor Heraclius' great triumph over the Persians — the liberation of Jerusalem and the recapture of the Holy Cross — as a starting point for his narration about the Holy City and the Christians in the Middle East at the time of the Muslim domination. William understands Heraclius' struggle for the cross with Khosrow II to be a perfect prototype of holy war for his contemporaries; in this view, the crusaders and Latin monarchs are the successors of Constantine the Great, Heraclius, and also Charlemagne, whose aid to the Holy City also attracted William's attention. This context helps us understand the description of Jerusalem's holy places contained in the Archbishop of Tyre's chronicle, which indicates three most holy sites: Golgotha, Christ's Sepulchre, and the place where the Holy Cross had been discovered.⁴⁹ Such an attitude to the *inventio crucis* harmonizes with a much older tradition possible to discern in sources like Adomnan's *De locis*

⁴⁶ *Historia Nicaena vel Antiochena* 1895, p. 176.

⁴⁷ On William, see EDBURY, ROWE 1988; HAMILTON 2000, pp. 6–7.

⁴⁸ WT 1986, p. 425.

⁴⁹ WT 1986, pp. 385–386.

sanctis.⁵⁰ Significantly, the chronicle of Bartolf of Nangis presents a similar perception of the most holy sites.⁵¹

CONCLUSION

The above examination has shown two different approaches by two different groups of writers among the crusade narratives towards the discovery of the True Cross in the newly-conquered Jerusalem. The first approach, which can be described as sceptical, was adopted by the chroniclers related to the Capetian royal court in the times of Phillip I and Louis VI, as well as by the authors from the Norman southern Italy: they had the common purpose of casting a positive light on Bohemond, who, in the decade that followed the First Crusade during a journey through France and Mezzogiorno, sought support for preparing an anti-Byzantine campaign. For this group of writers, the events that occurred after the crusader conquest of Jerusalem were of lesser significance, so the account about the relic of the True Cross discovered by the Latins was excluded from their First Crusade narratives. The second approach can be observed in the historical writings composed at the royal court of the crusader kingdom. The evidence, from Albert of Aachen and Fulcher of Chartres up to William of Tyre, clearly demonstrates that the elite of the Crusader Kingdom treasured the account about how the relic of the True Cross was discovered as one of the most significant elements of their identity. This account was shaped under the influence of the legends about Empress Helena and her finding of the True Cross, which suggests that the Latins in the Crusader Kingdom perceived themselves as the successors and continuers of the Christian Empire.

To comprehend fully the background and significance of the discovery of the True Cross and the role this event played in the political culture of the Crusader Kingdom, it is necessary to put the conclusions in a wider context. Giles Constable showed that there was no innovation in perceiving the Holy Cross as a central symbol during crusades and in Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. Long before the First Crusade the Cross played a role of a pilgrims' sign as well as a battle emblem.⁵² On the other hand, Mamuka Tsursumia argued that usage of the Cross as a symbol in the crusader monarchy was exceptional in comparing with Byzantine Empire and Latin Europe.⁵³ Importantly, as early as the beginning of the twelfth century, the Chapel of the Invention of the Cross was renovated by the crusaders and, after the construction of the new Church of the Holy Sepulchre, remained,

⁵⁰ Both stress that Constantine established a basilica in the place where the Cross had been found by Helena: Adomnan's description, ADOMNAN 1850, pp. 783–786. D. Pringle refers also to Seawulf's and Abbot Daniel's descriptions, which present a similar view; see PRINGLE 2007, pp. 13–15.

⁵¹ *Gesta Francorum expugnantium Iherusalem* 1864, p. 510.

⁵² CONSTABLE 2008.

⁵³ TSURSUMIA 2013, pp. 92–93.

together with the chapel dedicated to empress Helena, an important site in the holy topography of Jerusalem.⁵⁴ The tendency in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem to commemorate Constantine, Helena, and Heraclius in the holy places was also displayed by a mosaics in the new crusader basilica.⁵⁵ The descriptions of the holy sites written by Theodoric and John of Wurzburg are clear evidence that in the second half of the twelfth century, it was evident for the pilgrims that the Chapel of the Invention was the very place where Empress Helena discovered the True Cross, and that the fragment of the True Cross had been miraculously given to the Crusaders who were the defenders of the Holy Land as heirs to the victorious Christian emperors.⁵⁶ From this perspective, the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem was perceived as a restoration of the Christian golden age.⁵⁷ In addition, the account of the discovery of the True Cross by the crusaders after the conquest of the Holy City served as an introduction to a new era in Christendom.

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⁵⁴ For full evidence, see PRINGLE 2007, pp. 13–15.

⁵⁵ BAERT 2004, p. 164; Simon John recently pointed out the importance of Helena's and Heraclius' legacy for the royal ideology in the crusader kingdom: JOHN 2017, p. 496.

⁵⁶ *Peregrinationes tres* 1994, pp. 123, 153–154.

⁵⁷ On Constantine and Helena's period as the Christian golden age, see COWDREY 1997.

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Summary

The narratives about the discovery of the True Cross in Jerusalem after the crusader conquest differ considerably from one another. Chronicles written under the influence of the Capetian court, papal curia and Normans of the South do not narrate this event, whereas accounts created at the royal court in the Latin Kingdom dwell on the crusaders' miraculous finding of the relic. An examination of the relationship between these accounts and the legends about Empress Helena leads to the conclusion that the elite of the crusader monarchy wanted to be perceived as successors of the Christian emperors.

The purpose of this article is to analyse chronicle recordings about the finding of the True Cross by the crusaders after the conquest of Jerusalem. It has been shown that the chronicles offer strikingly different accounts. Writings created under the influence of the Capetian dynasty, the Papal curia, or the Normans in southern Italy excluded this event, whereas sources written in the royal court of Latin Jerusalem expanded on the subject of finding the Cross and placed it in the context of establishing the crusaders' monarchy. The article also analyses the links between these sources with legends about finding the Cross by St. Helen.

The research found that the creating of stories about finding the Cross by the knights in 1099 was meant to place them in the role of heirs of Christian emperors.