

ROBERT THE MONK'S
HISTORY OF THE
FIRST CRUSADE

CAROL SWEETENHAM

CRUSADE TEXTS IN TRANSLATION

About the volume:

This is the first English translation of Robert the Monk's *Historia Iherosolimitana*, a Latin prose chronicle describing the First Crusade. In addition to providing new and unique information on the Crusade (Robert claims to have been an eyewitness of the Council of Clermont in 1095), its particular interest lies in the great popularity it enjoyed in the Middle Ages.

The text has close links with the vernacular literary tradition and is written in a racy style which would not disgrace a modern tabloid journalist. Its reflection of contemporary legends and anecdotes gives us insights into perceptions of the Crusade at that time and opens up interesting perspectives onto the relationship of history and fiction in the twelfth century. The introduction discusses what we know about Robert, his importance as a historical source and his place in the literary tradition of the First Crusade.

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Robert the Monk's History of the First Crusade

Historia Iherosolimitana

Translated by

CAROL SWEETENHAM

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Preface

The success of the First Crusade at the end of the eleventh century had enormous repercussions. It led directly to the creation of the kingdom of Outremer, which was to last until the battle of Hattin in 1187 and whose remnants were to cling on until the fifteenth century.¹ It created a theological framework of holy war which took its origins in existing concepts of pilgrimage and just war but welded them into a new set of concepts.² It created a mythology of its own in the shape of the Old French Crusade Cycle and the fantastic legends around the first Advocate of the Holy Sepulchre, Godfrey of Bouillon;³ the *chanson de geste* became an instrument not only for describing the past achievements of the Carolingians but for reflecting the glory of those still alive.⁴ And it created a wave of historiography, with eyewitness accounts rippling out into later versions, compilations and adaptations: arguably the largest number of accounts dedicated to one single event.⁵

Amongst these accounts, that of Robert the Monk was far and away the most popular. It survives in some one hundred manuscripts, ten times more than any other work. It was one of the earliest chronicles to be translated into the vernacular. It was adapted numerous times and used as a source in compilations.⁶ When Graindor de Douai produced the vernacular poem known as the *Chanson d'Antioche* for a late twelfth-century audience it was to Robert's chronicle that he

¹ S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades* (Cambridge, 1951–4), 3 vols.: vol.III 468; henceforth Runciman. *History*.

² J. Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (London, 1986); henceforth *Idea*.

³ The *Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. S. Duparc-Quioç, *La Chanson d'Antioche* (Paris, 1976–8), 2 vols: henceforth *Edition* (vol.I) and *Etude* (vol.II); the *Chanson de Jérusalem*, ed. N. Thorp, *La Chanson de Jérusalem in The Old French Crusade Cycle*, ed. J. A. Nelson and E. J. Mickel, 10 vols (Alabama, 1977–96), vol.VI (1992); and the *Chanson des Chétifs*, ed. G. M. Myers, *The Old French Crusade Cycle*, vol. V (1981) form the core of the cycle, although only the *Antioche* has any real historical value. Amongst the abundant literature see S. Duparc-Quioç, *Le Cycle de la Croisade* (Paris, 1955) (henceforth *Cycle*) for discussion of these three texts, and A. Hatem, *Les poèmes épiques des croisades: genèse – historicité – localisation* (Paris, 1932); for description of the full extent of the thirteenth and fourteenth century, increasingly fantastic, ramifications of the cycle see R. F. Cook and L. S. Crist, *Le deuxième cycle de la Croisade* (Geneva, 1972).

⁴ See K.-H. Bender, 'Des chansons de geste à la première épopée de croisade. La présence de l'histoire contemporaine dans la littérature française du douzième siècle', *VIe Congrès International de la Société Rencesvals* (Aix-en-Provence, 1974) 485–500.

⁵ For a modern overview see S. Edgington, 'The First Crusade: reviewing the evidence', in *The First Crusade: Origins and Impact*, ed. J. Phillips (Manchester, 1997) 55–77; N. Iorga, *Les narrateurs de la première Croisade* (Paris, 1928) is of some limited value.

⁶ See Chapter One for discussion and references.

turned for historical authenticity.⁷ So Robert's work shaped much of the perception of the Crusade in the Middle Ages.

However, modern scholarship has devoted little attention to Robert. The most recent edition remains that of the *Recueil*, done by Philippe le Bas and published in 1866.⁸ The last translation of the work was Guizot's French version in 1825.⁹ The only work solely dedicated to Robert is Marquardt's thesis for the University of Königsberg in 1895.¹⁰ Kraft looked briefly at his work in his examination of the German translation by Heinrich Steinhöwels in 1905;¹¹ Haupt similarly examined him in the context of the fifteenth-century translation of the text, *Die Uzurungung dez herezaugen Gotfrides von Bullion*.¹² Duparc-Quioc has identified the links between his text and the extant version of the *Antioche*,¹³ and Knoch identified borrowings from his text in the 1108 *Magdeburger Aufruf*.¹⁴ Riley-Smith has examined his theology in the context of the ideology of the Crusade.¹⁵ Marcus Bull has examined his work in the context of the French court and the idealisation of Hugh of Vermandois.¹⁶ But there is no complete study of his work.

The intention of this work is to make access to Robert's work easier for a modern audience and offer some starting points for an assessment of his position within the historiography of the First Crusade. I have aimed to translate into clear modern English to make his work more accessible both to historians and to students of literary history. The Introduction has five chapters. Chapter One provides an overview of the history of the text and its influence on later works. Chapter Two discusses its relationship with its main source, the anonymous *Gesta Francorum*.¹⁷ Chapter Three contains an analysis of its links with other sources for the Crusade and discussion of its value as a historical source. Chapter Four assesses Robert's authorship as theologian, as historiographer and as literary stylist. Chapter Five sets out the principles followed in the translation. Explanatory

⁷ Duparc-Quioc, *Etude*, 108–10, 119; borrowings flagged up in notes to the *Edition*.

⁸ *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades: historiens occidentaux*, Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres (Paris, 1841–1906), 16 volumes (henceforth *RHC Occ.* or *Recueil*) III.717–882.

⁹ F. P. G. Guizot, *Collection des mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de la France* (Paris, 1823–31), 30 vols: vol. XXIII (1825), 295–476.

¹⁰ G. Marquardt, *Die 'Historia Hierosolymitana' des Robertus Monachus. Ein quellenkritischer Beitrag zur Geschichte des ersten Kreuzzugs* (Königsberg, 1892).

¹¹ F. Kraft, *Heinrich Steinhöwels Verdeutschung der 'Historia Hierosolimitana' des Robertus Monachus. Eine literarhistorische Untersuchung* (Strasbourg, 1905).

¹² B. Haupt, *Historia Hierosolimitana von Robertus Monachus in deutscher Übersetzung* (Wiesbaden, 1972).

¹³ See note 7.

¹⁴ P. Knoch, 'Kreuzzug und Siedlung. Studien zum Aufruf der Magdeburger Kirche von 1108', *JGMOD*, 23 (1974), 1–33.

¹⁵ *Idea* 135–52.

¹⁶ M. J. Bull, 'The Capetian Monarchy and the Early Crusade movement: Hugh of Vermandois and Louis VII', *NMS*, 40 (1996), 25–46.

¹⁷ *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, ed. R. Hill (London, 1962); see also L. Bréhier's edition, *Histoire anonyme de la première Croisade* (Paris, 1924).

notes throughout the text give details of names, places and dates, biblical and literary allusions and other points of interest: these are intended to aid understanding for the reader and are not designed to be a full set of notes. To attempt any kind of edition is well beyond the scope of what I have set out to do and I have worked from the *Recueil* text as the only modern text currently available: the hundred-odd manuscripts extant await the attention of some future devoted editor.

I have added in an appendix translations of two letters which accompany Robert's work in around a third of the extant manuscripts: the apocryphal letter of Alexius to Robert of Flanders, and the letter from the Patriarch of Jerusalem to the Western Churches.¹⁸

¹⁸ These are translated from the versions given by Hagenmeyer in *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe aus den Jahren 1088–1100*, ed. H. Hagenmeyer (Innsbruck, 1901); hereafter *Kreuzzugsbriefe*.

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INTRODUCTION



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Chapter 1

The textual history of the *Historia Iherosolimitana*

This chapter gives an overview of the textual history of the *Historia Iherosolimitana*. It starts by discussing the (sketchy) evidence on the author himself, and the probable circumstances surrounding the dating and commissioning of the work. It then briefly describes the manuscript tradition of the *Historia* and its later history in translation and in print.

i) Who was Robert?

We know little for certain about Robert. There is a certain amount of evidence in his text. An Abbot Robert of the Benedictine abbey of St-Rémi at Reims is well attested at around the same time. But there is no definitive evidence for identifying that abbot with our Robert.

Internal evidence

In the *Apologeticus Sermo* at the head of the text Robert tells us several things about the circumstances in which he composed his history and hence about himself. There is no obvious reason to disbelieve him.

His name was Robert; there are no significant variants in the *Recueil* text. The work was composed in ‘claustrum cuiusdam cellae Sancti Remigii’,¹ in the episcopate of Reims. The Benedictine abbey of St-Rémi was large and prestigious, dominating the centre of Reims.² Two manuscripts, one thirteenth- and one fourteenth- century, specify that the relics of St Oriculus were kept where Robert wrote,³ and if we accept this then that suggests the text was written at the priory of Sénuc in the diocese of Reims where these relics were housed. But that would be to place a lot of weight on two later manuscripts.

Robert was a monk. He was compelled to write ‘per obedientiam’,⁴ in other words as part of his monastic vow. He was asked to write by his abbot, of whom he

¹ ‘a cloister of a certain monastery of St-Rémi’.

² Bull, ‘Capetian Monarchy’, 40.

³ *Recueil*, 722, n. 6. The manuscripts in question are D and E by the *Recueil*'s classification, respectively a fourteenth-century manuscript from St-Victor and a thirteenth-century one from Compiègne.

⁴ *Sermo Apologeticus* (‘by my vow of obedience’).

speaks highly: 'litterarum scientia et morum probitate praeditus'.⁵ Two manuscripts, both twelfth-century (Vatican 1795 and Turonensis) give the abbot's name as Bernardus, at least six others as Benedictus, others again simply as B or N.⁶ Such commissioning was standard procedure: Orderic Vitalis was asked by his abbot to write about the restoration of the monastery of St Evroul; Henry of Huntingdon was commissioned to write by Bishop Alexander of Lincoln.⁷

Robert tells us that he was an eyewitness at the Council of Clermont, which was why the abbot picked him out to write the history: 'praecepit igitur mihi ut, qui Clari Montis concilio interfui, acephalae materiei caput praeponerem et lecturis eam accuratiori stilo componerem'.⁸ His account of the Council is long and descriptive; given the importance placed on eyewitness testimony generally⁹ and the emphasis Robert places on his presence as his justification for writing at all, there is no reason to think he was lying. However, there is no evidence in the rest of the text that he was a participant on Crusade.¹⁰

Robert emphasises that he wrote alone, without clerical help: 'notarium non habui alium nisi me, et dictavi et scripsi'.¹¹ This contrasts with what Guénée describes as standard practice for a monastic historian, supported by a team of note-takers and scribes,¹² and it is interesting that Robert is so emphatic about the circumstances under which he wrote. Given that he goes on to comment about the deliberate simplicity of his style, this may be nothing more than the standard modesty topos of the medieval historian. To detect a shadow of hurt pride would be sheer speculation.

⁵ *Sermo Apologeticus* ('distinguished by his knowledge of literature and his upright behaviour').

⁶ Bull, 'Capetian Monarchy', 39, suggests this may refer to Baudry of Bourgueil, of whom more later.

⁷ *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. M. Chibnall, 6 vols (Oxford, 1969–75); vol. I.130–131; henceforth OV. Henry, *Archdeacon of Huntingdon: Historia Anglorum: the History of the English people*, ed. and transl. D. Greenway (Oxford, 1996); henceforth HH.

⁸ *Sermo Apologeticus*: 'so he instructed me, since I had been present at the Council of Clermont, to add the beginning which was missing and to improve its style for future readers.'

⁹ See B. Guénée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris, 1980), 78–84. William of Malmesbury (*Gesta Regum et Anglorum*, ed. and transl. R. A. B. Mynors, completed R. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, (Oxford, 1998), 2 vols., henceforth WM), for example, clearly states the importance of eyewitness testimony: 'quicquid vero de recentioribus aetatibus apposui, uel ipse vidi uel a viris fide dignis audivi' ('whatsoever I have added out of recent history, I have either seen myself or heard from men who can be trusted', Mynors' translation), 16–17.

¹⁰ See discussion below in Chapter Three.

¹¹ *Sermo Apologeticus*: 'I dictated and wrote it unaided all myself, being my own scribe.'

¹² Guénée, 49–51.

External evidence

At the end of the eleventh century a Robert was briefly Abbot of St-Rémi. It is tempting to identify our Robert with this abbot. The link was already being made in the thirteenth century: at least three manuscripts, two thirteenth-century and one fourteenth-century, add the words 'quondam abbas Sancti Remigii', and two of these specify that Robert wrote his work in the priory at Sénuc.¹³

The historical Abbot Robert had a chequered career. He began as a novice at the abbey of St-Rémi before moving to the house of Marmoutier-lez-Tours. In 1096 he became Abbot of Saint-Rémi, to the discomfiture of Abbot Bernard of Marmoutier, who seems to have tried to ensure that Robert remained subject to him. In 1097 Robert was excommunicated at Reims. Over the next few years arguments as to his innocence went back and forth, with support from Baudry of Bourgueil, Bishop of Dol, well-known writer of Latin lyric who produced his own chronicle of the First Crusade; and from Bishop Lambert of Arras.¹⁴ Although the excommunication was overturned by the Pope, Robert was obliged to retire to the priory of Sénuc as prior. He was eventually exonerated at Poitiers in 1100. Trouble continued to dog his footsteps. In 1122 he was formally destituted by Calixtus II on the grounds of maladministration and died in the same year.¹⁵

The case for identifying this Robert with our author is tempting and has been generally accepted.¹⁶ Abbot Robert lived at exactly the same time as Robert the Monk produced his chronicle. Both lived in the area of Reims. Baudry of Bourgueil, who also produced a chronicle on the First Crusade,¹⁷ supported Robert. If we accept the manuscript reading of 'Bernardus' there is a further link: on the assumption that Robert was in fact subject to Bernardus the work could well have been commissioned 'per obedientiam'.

However, there is no actual proof. Robert gives no indication other than that of being a monk. His description of writing 'per obedientiam' and receiving a clear command from his abbot as to what he should write and why further suggest that he is unlikely to have been an abbot (unless one argues that he is being deliberately disingenuous): he is quite clear on this. Kraft points out that one abbot, even a disgraced one, cannot be subject to another; and Robert fought hard to retain his position, taking his case all the way to Rome.¹⁸ Neither does the link with Bernard seem convincing. Robert goes out of his way to praise Bernard in the *Sermo* in a way which does not sit well with the difficult relationship we may assume to have existed between the two; and it is as hard to imagine Bernard asking his defeated

¹³ *Recueil*, 722, n.6. See note 2 above. Ottoboni 8, a thirteenth-century manuscript designated R by the *Recueil*, has the reference to Robert as abbot but not the reference to Sénuc.

¹⁴ *Baudri de Bourgueil: Oeuvres Poétiques*, ed. P. Abrahams, (Paris, 1926), 329–32 poem CCXXXII; see especially 83–100.

¹⁵ For fuller discussion and references see the discussion in the *Recueil*, III. xli–iii.

¹⁶ See e.g. M. Manitius, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (Munich, 1931), 3 vols, vol.III 425–6; Riley-Smith, *Idea*, 135–6; Bull, 'Capetian Monarchy', 39–40.

¹⁷ *Historia Jerosolymitana, RHC Occ.* IV, 1–111.

¹⁸ Kraft, 12–13.

opponent to undertake the work as it is to imagine ex-Abbot Robert being willing to do it in this terms. As pointed out above, only two manuscripts give the name Bernardus.¹⁹

Conclusion

So in sum the text points either to a deeply disingenuous ex-abbot deliberately underlining his credentials as a humble monk or, more simply, to a monk. And the connection with Bernard is not supported by solid evidence. More generally Robert's style is more simple than that adopted by the chronicles of the Crusade produced by Baudry of Bourgueil and in particular Guibert of Nogent;²⁰ one might speculate whether the ex-abbot of such a large and prestigious abbey as St-Rémi would have deliberately set out to write a relatively unsophisticated account as he claims.²¹

In the end all we can safely conclude is exactly what Robert tells us: that he was a monk, that his abbot asked him to write a history as was so often the case, that he had sufficient skills to do the job and that he was additionally qualified by virtue of having attended the Council of Clermont. All else is speculation.

ii) The dating, purpose and commissioning of the *Historia Iherosolimitana*

In the immediate aftermath of the First Crusade the anonymous, intriguing and most probably eyewitness text known as the *Gesta Francorum* appeared. The author seems to have been a follower of Bohemond, who switched allegiance to Raymond IV once Bohemond established himself in Antioch.²² Whilst forming a source of prime importance for the events of the Crusade and one which was heavily drawn on almost immediately, the *GF* was criticised by contemporaries on a number of grounds. Its style was seen as crude and unsophisticated: 'libellum super hac re nimis rusticanum' according to Baudry and 'verbis contexta plus equo simplicibus'²³ for Guibert. It did not describe the start of the Crusade. And its author was anonymous: 'nescio quis compiler, nomine suppresso'.²⁴

In the first decade or so of the twelfth century the *GF* was extended and improved by a number of authors. Peter Tudebode, a Poitevin priest of whom we

¹⁹ Vatican 1795 and Turonensis, both twelfth-century; not the same as the manuscripts which refer to Sénuc.

²⁰ *Gesta Dei per Francos*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens (Turnhout, 1996); transl. *The Deeds of God through the Franks. A translation of Guibert de Nogent's Gesta Dei per Francos*, R. Levine (Woodbridge, 1997).

²¹ See Kraft, 13–14, for another tradition according to which Robert would have been the Abbot Robert of Mont St-Michel who died in 1186. As Kraft says, there is no evidence to support this.

²² Hill, xi–xiii.

²³ BB 10: 'a little book on this matter which was excessively unsophisticated'; GN 79, 'pieced together in words more simple than was appropriate'.

²⁴ BB 10, 'some compiler who did not give his name'.

have no other record, followed it very closely, diverging only in the addition of some almost certainly eyewitness material and what is probably some material from oral tradition.²⁵ Guibert of Nogent, Abbot of Nogent-sous-Coucy and author of (amongst other things) an autobiography, a treatise on preaching and some now lost salacious verse, used it as the basis for his *Gesta Dei per Francos*, adding little historical detail but setting the Crusade firmly in a wider theological context and following its aftermath until 1107–8.²⁶ Baudry of Bourgueil, Archbishop of Dol and prolific humanist poet, produced another account.²⁷ Gilo of Paris drew on it for a poem in Latin hexameters.²⁸ The Occitan text known as the *Canso d'Antioca* was probably commissioned by Bishop Eustorge of Limoges at much the same time.²⁹

Robert's account should be placed firmly in this context. Like the other texts it was produced using the *GF* as its primary source and in a clerical context; his description of his source as lacking a beginning and 'litteralium compositio dictionum inculta'³⁰ fits both the text of the *GF* and the comments of his contemporaries on it. As an eyewitness of the Council of Clermont, Robert brought particular credibility to the task.

It has been argued that this wave of texts takes its origin in Bohemond's trip to France in 1105–6.³¹ Bohemond had recently been released from three years' captivity. He came to France in late 1105 and undertook an extensive tour from Poitou to the court of Philip I, to Flanders and back via the South of France. During the trip he married the daughter of Philip I, Constance, at the French court at Easter. Orderic Vitalis suggests that he missed no opportunity for propaganda about his own exploits on Crusade as a basis for raising enthusiasm for his projected new expedition: 'ubique tam a clero quam a plebe venerabiliter susceptus referebat varios eventus quibus ipse interfuit'.³² Krey has built on this to suggest that the *GF* was re-edited for Bohemond's trip, emphasising his role and changing the description of the oath sworn to the Emperor to underline the legitimacy of

²⁵ *Petrus Tudebodus: Historia de Hierosolimitano Itinere*, ed. J. H. and L. L. Hill (Paris, 1977); transl. *Peter Tudebode: Historia de Hierosolimitano Itinere*, J. H. and L. L. Hill (Philadelphia, 1974).

²⁶ *Op. cit.*

²⁷ *Op. cit.*

²⁸ *The Historia Vie Hierosolimitanae of Gilo of Paris*, ed. and transl. C. W. Grocock and J. E. Siberry (Oxford, 1997).

²⁹ *The Canso d'Antioca: an Occitan Epic Chronicle of the First Crusade*, ed. L. M. Paterson and C. E. Sweetenham (Aldershot, 2003).

³⁰ *Sermo Apologeticus*: 'the composition was uncertain and unsophisticated in its style and expression'.

³¹ For background see A. Poncelet, 'Boémond et St Léonard', *AB*, 31 (1912), 24–44; for discussion of how the *GF* might have been adapted as propaganda for such a trip see A. C. Krey, 'A neglected passage in the *Gesta* and its bearing on the literature of the First Crusade', in *The Crusades and other historical essays presented to D. C. Munro by his former students*, ed. L. J. Paetow (New York, 1928), 57–78. On Bohemond's problems at the time see *Byzantium and the Crusader States 1096–1204*, R. J. Lilie transl. J. C. Morris and J. E. Ridings (Oxford, 1993), 72–5.

³² 'Everywhere he was honourably received by both clergy and people, and related the various adventures in which he had played a part': OV VI.68–71 (Chibnall's translation).

Bohemond's claim to Antioch.³³ The *GF* would thus have left a wake of texts behind it, inspired by the events it recounts and based on its account to greater or lesser degree. Two of these were in Poitou and the Limousin: the chronicle of Tudebode and the Occitan poem by Gregory Bechada.³⁴ The other four were in the orbit of the French court: the works by Gilo, Baudry, Guibert and Robert. All (with the exception of the Occitan poem, which survives only in a much later fragment) are heavily based on the account of the *GF*, Gilo somewhat less than the others. All place Bohemond centre stage, albeit with some ambivalence in some accounts. Events at Antioch, Bohemond's principality, dominate all the texts: Bohemond's main aim in his recruiting trip was to reinforce his position in Antioch and state the legitimacy of his claim to it despite the claims of the Byzantines, and it is hardly surprising to find his heroism stated explicitly, and the importance of Antioch to the Crusade implicitly.

If we accept that Robert's work, in common with that of his contemporaries, takes its origin in propaganda for a new Crusade linked to Bohemond's trip to France, the purpose of the work is clear: it would have been commissioned by his abbot to raise enthusiasm for a new expedition to the Holy Land. There is no evidence that the commission came from the French court, but Reims was the royal city where French monarchs were crowned and St-Rémi was the dominant abbey: there is a certain logic in commissioning a work about the husband of a French princess in the city intimately linked with the French court.

Several features of Robert's work support this hypothesis. In common with Baudry and Guibert he sets the First Crusade in a strong theological framework – stronger than its participants might have recognised – which explicitly casts it as the will of God and underlines the special role of the Franks in general and the French in particular.³⁵ The First Crusade is thus justified, glorified, and presented as a platform for future action. His comments about wanting to make his story clear ('probabilius est abscondita rusticando elucidare quam aperta philosophando obnubilare'³⁶) suggest similarly a desire to spread the news of the Crusade as widely as possible.

This is backed up the presence of two letters serving as *excitatoria* to Crusade which accompany Robert's text in around a third of the extant manuscripts: the apocryphal letter of Alexius to the West, and part of the letter from the Patriarch of Jerusalem and bishops of the Eastern Church to the West.³⁷ Both encourage Christians in strong terms to come to the East, and the association further strengthens the case for Robert's text as encouragement for a new Crusade.

³³ Krey, *op. cit.* .

³⁴ *Canso*, Introduction 5–9.

³⁵ Riley-Smith, *Idea*, 135–52; for more detailed analysis see Chapter Four.

³⁶ *Sermo Apologeticus*: 'I thought it more appropriate to clarify obscure things by simplifying than to cloud over obvious things by philosophising'.

³⁷ Both edited in *Kreuzzugsbriefe*. See below for translation in Appendix. The Patriarch's letter is found in 34 manuscripts and the apocryphal letter of Alexius in at least 36.

A further pointer in this direction comes from the attitude to Byzantium. Robert constantly vilifies the Byzantines. The Emperor is described as cowardly and stupid and the worst possible interpretation placed on his actions.³⁸ Allied to this is the close association between the apocryphal letter of Alexius and Robert's text.³⁹ Whether or not the letter is original (it is hard to believe that Alexius would have drafted something quite so clumsy, let alone invited the Christians in effect to plunder Byzantium), it makes very good propaganda for a Crusade in general and hostility towards Byzantium in particular. The Byzantines regarded Bohemond's position in Antioch as being in direct breach of his oath to the Emperor: conversely Bohemond's main aim was to shore up his claim to the principality.⁴⁰ So a letter portraying the Greeks as weak and desperate for help from the West was ideally suited to his purposes.⁴¹ I discuss the letter in more detail in the Appendix.

In sum, Robert's work is much more than propaganda for a new Crusade. But it should be seen as having been commissioned in that context and with the clear purpose of shaping the story of the First Crusade as a basis for future action.

There is no internal evidence on dating. However, other texts in the *GF* tradition all date from roughly the first decade of the twelfth century. Huygens dates Guibert to 1109.⁴² Baudry can probably be dated to c. 1107.⁴³ Gilo's editors suggest the first decade of the twelfth century.⁴⁴ The *Canso d'Antiocha* was commissioned no earlier than 1106.⁴⁵ If we accept that Robert wrote as part of the wider wave of interest in the *GF* and that this was sparked by Bohemond's recruiting trip, we can similarly date his work to the first decade of the twelfth century. This is supported by the German text of 1108, the *Magdeburger Aufruf*, which is a call to crusade against the Saxons and which contains a few parallels with Robert's text.⁴⁶ If we accept that the *Aufruf* is not a forgery and that the textual parallels are both more than coincidence and do not derive from a common source, this suggests that Robert's text must have made its way to Germany no later than 1108 and must therefore have been written sufficiently before then to make the journey. This is consistent with the slight blurring of some of the detail in the account: Hugh of Vermandois is not only dead but has probably been dead for some time given the mistake Robert makes about the circumstances; Godfrey is already idealised as the hero-advocate of the Holy Sepulchre; Stephen of Blois is rehabilitated in a way which may suggest knowledge of his death in the Holy Land in 1102.⁴⁷ None of this is definitive evidence, but there is a strong circumstantial case for dating Robert's text to 1106–7.

³⁸ See e.g. I.13, where Alexius is shown rejoicing over Peter the Hermit's defeat.

³⁹ Most notably in the accusation that the Turks defiled altars with the blood from circumcisions: Robert I.1, letter 131.

⁴⁰ Runciman, *History*, vol.II, 46–7.

⁴¹ See translation and further comments in the Appendix.

⁴² Introduction, 51–6.

⁴³ *Recueil* IV, vi. n. 5.

⁴⁴ Introduction, xxiv.

⁴⁵ *Canso*, Introduction, 8–9.

⁴⁶ Knoch, *Aufruf*, 6–21.

⁴⁷ VII.20; IX.10; VI.15.

iii) The manuscript tradition of the *Historia Iherosolimitana*

There is no modern edition of Robert, and it is not the purpose of this work to provide one. What follows is based on the variants and description of the *Recueil* and Kraft's later list of manuscripts.⁴⁸ The *Recueil* itself uses B.N. lat. 5129, a twelfth-century manuscript from Reims which also contains Gilo's work.⁴⁹ There is no detailed analysis of the relationship between the manuscripts and not all are complete. I will confine myself to noting that the variants listed in the *Recueil* (which come from around a quarter of the extant manuscripts) show little variation.

Robert's work is consistently found alongside a number of related texts. As well as the *Sermo Apologeticus* and *Prologus*, it is accompanied in at least 36 manuscripts by the apparent letter from Alexius to Robert, Count of Flanders, before the Crusade; and in 34 by the letter from the Patriarch of Jerusalem reporting on the events of the Crusade: this is particularly the case in the twelfth-century manuscripts. Some manuscripts also include Gilo. Not all the texts are found in all manuscripts, and the order shifts.⁵⁰

One thing is immediately striking about the manuscript tradition of Robert's work. It survives in the best part of one hundred manuscripts, more by several orders of magnitude than any other First Crusade source: Guibert survives in 8,⁵¹ the *GF* in 7,⁵² Baudry in 7,⁵³ the *Chanson d'Antioche* in 9 manuscripts,⁵⁴ Ralph of Caen in 1.⁵⁵ William of Tyre survives in 9 and a fragment, but around 60 of the French translation.⁵⁶ The *Recueil* lists 26 manuscripts, airily commenting in a footnote that there are many others.⁵⁷ Kraft gives a very detailed and helpful list comprising 94 manuscripts;⁵⁸ a list apparently compiled by Riant could not be found.⁵⁹ This is powerful evidence of Robert's popularity compared to any other source for the Crusade.

The extant manuscripts display a large chronological spread: 37 are wholly or largely twelfth-century, the remainder span the period from the thirteenth to the

⁴⁸ Kraft, 16–20. See also 'Il cronista medievale e il suo pubblico: alcune osservazioni in margine alla storiografia delle crociate', R. Hiestand, *Annali della Facoltà di lettere e filosofia dell'Università di Napoli* 27 (1984–5) 207–27.

⁴⁹ *Recueil*, vol. III.xlvii.

⁵⁰ Kraft, 16–20.

⁵¹ Introduction, 24.

⁵² *GF* Introduction, xxxviii.

⁵³ *Recueil*, vol.IV xii.

⁵⁴ Duparc-Quioc, *Etude*, 43–80, for detailed analysis of manuscripts.

⁵⁵ *Gesta Tancredi*, Ralph of Caen, *RHC.Occ.* III, 587–716.

⁵⁶ *Willelmi Tyrensis Archiepiscopi Chronicon*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, *Corpus Christianorum* 63 and 63a (1986); P. W. Edbury and J. G. Rowe, *William of Tyre: Historian of the Latin East* (Cambridge, 1988), 3–4; R. B. C. Huygens, 'La tradition manuscrite de Guillaume de Tyr', *SM* 5 (1964), 281–373.

⁵⁷ *Recueil*, III, xlvii–l, li n.2.

⁵⁸ Kraft, 153–164, Beilage 1.

⁵⁹ Kraft, 153.

seventeenth century. The two oldest printed versions probably date from around 1470 and 1530.⁶⁰

The geographical spread is also striking. They are preserved in libraries all over Europe, ranging from Vienna to Uppsala, London, Paris, Rome and St Petersburg. We do not know the origins of many for certain. But again the evidence suggests that copies were widely made: for example Hamburg Stadtbibliothek Gm 31b was probably copied in the Netherlands in the fifteenth century;⁶¹ Paris Bibl. Nat. Nouv acq.310 is from twelfth-century Germany;⁶² Vatican 2001 was written before 1190 for Frederick Barbarossa in Germany.⁶³ Some fifty of the manuscripts are connected with Germany, suggesting a particular interest there in Robert.⁶⁴

iv) The later history of the *Historia Iherosolimitana*

Adaptations

Robert's work was used as the basis for a number of adaptations. It was drawn on by the *Historia et Gesta Ducis Gotefridi*, a fifteenth-century compilation made in the Rhineland⁶⁵ and by the *Historia Nicaena et Antiochena* of 1146–7 under Baldwin III.⁶⁶ It was anonymously translated into 4000 leonine hexameters.⁶⁷ Graindor de Douai drew heavily on it in his reworking of the Old French *Chanson d'Antioche*.⁶⁸ The Alsatian monk Gunther of Pairis versified it in his *Solymarius*, a poem in hexameters on the First Crusade written between 1180–86, 232 lines of which survive.⁶⁹ Joseph of Exeter used it for his now lost *Antiochi Bella*.⁷⁰

Translations

Robert's work is the only source for the Crusade to have been translated into the vernacular in the Middle Ages other than William of Tyre.⁷¹ It seems to have been particularly popular in Germany; the nearness of Reims to the German border may be a factor. By the end of the sixteenth century the *Historia Iherosolimitana*

⁶⁰ Kraft, 165–71.

⁶¹ Kraft no.15.

⁶² Kraft no.38.

⁶³ Kraft no.51.

⁶⁴ Kraft 22.

⁶⁵ Discussed in *RHC Occ.V*, cxxviii–ix.

⁶⁶ See discussion in *RHC Occ V*, xxxi.

⁶⁷ Manitius, 426–7; Haupt, 222; codex 267, Stiftsbibliothek Admunt.

⁶⁸ Duparc-Quioc, *Etude*, 108–10.

⁶⁹ Fr.A.28, Gymnasialbibliothek Cologne; ed. W.Wattenbach, 'Le *Solymarius* de Gunther de Pairis', *AOL* I.551–61 (Paris, 1881); see F. R. Swietek, 'Gunther of Pairis and the *Historia Constantinopolitana*', *S* 53 (1978), 49–79.

⁷⁰ Kraft, 5–6, n.4.

⁷¹ Translated into Old French in the thirteenth century: *Estoire d'Eracles empereur et la conquete de la terre d'Outremer*, *RHC Occ.*, I–II.

had been translated independently no fewer than five times into German. Kraft suggests that this reflects the very late arrival there of the legends of Godfrey as the Chevalier au Cygne, meaning a larger market for Robert's work;⁷² Haupt argues that this reflects the rise of towns and the influence of the preaching orders;⁷³ it may also reflect an interest going back to Frederick Barbarossa, who was given a copy of the text. The following are extant:⁷⁴

- a. *Die Uzrustunge dez herezaugen Gotfrides von Bullion*: this is extant in one fifteenth-century manuscript, Universitätsbibliothek Würzburg M.ch.f.38;⁷⁵
- b. a mid-fifteenth-century translation extant in two fifteenth-century manuscripts, one at the Stiftsbibliothek St Gallen (ms 658) and the other at the Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek, Munich (cgm 224);
- c. a translation of 1466 by Peter Eschenloer, originally from Nuremberg and the Stadtschreiber of Breslau, now in Wrocław;
- d. the *Reyssbuch des heyligen Lands* of 1584 in Sigmund Feyerabend's compilation of crusading texts;
- e. two manuscripts and a fragment of a translation which may be by Heinrich Steinhöwels, early Renaissance translator and scholar; versions were printed in Augsburg in 1482 and 1502.⁷⁶

Haupt argues that these versions match manuscripts U and V, which may suggest a version in a compilation which was subsequently translated.⁷⁷

A Dutch translation also appeared in the fifteenth century.⁷⁸ Three translations into Italian also appeared.⁷⁹ Guizot translated the text into elegant if occasionally inaccurate French in 1825.⁸⁰

Editions

The Latin text was printed a number of times. It was one of the earliest texts of the First Crusade to be printed, appearing first at Cologne in 1472 and again at Basle in 1533. It was printed by Reuber in 1584, and again in 1619 and 1726. It was edited

⁷² Kraft, 8.

⁷³ Haupt, 225.

⁷⁴ Kraft, 22–41.

⁷⁵ See ed. by Haupt, op. cit.

⁷⁶ Kraft, 150–51 for summary of arguments on Steinhöwels' authorship. By this stage the text was ascribed to a mysterious 'Doctor Guido'.

⁷⁷ Haupt, 234–42.

⁷⁸ *Scoenre historie hertoghe godeuarts van boloen* (Gouda, 1486).

⁷⁹ *Historia di Roberto Monaco della Guerra fatta da principi christiani contra Saracini per l'acquisto di terra Santa*, M. F. Baldelli (Florence, 1552); *La guerra per li principi cristiani guerreggiata contra i Saracini corrente A.D.1095. Traslata in volgare per uno da Pistoia*, S. Ciampi (Florence, 1825); *La prima crociata ... di Roberto monaco, tradotta ... con nota e schiarimenti*, G. B. Cereseto (Nice, 1854).

⁸⁰ See Chapter Five for examples of one or two inaccuracies in a good translation.

by Bongars in 1611. Migne printed it in 1844. The most recent version remains the *Recueil* edition of 1866.⁸¹

Success

Guénée defines and discusses several criteria for assessing the success of a history: number of extant manuscripts, number of adaptations, geographical spread and historical period over which they were copied.⁸² Judged by all of these, Robert's work was an outstanding success. His hundred-odd manuscripts stand comparison with Vincent of Beauvais (100 manuscripts) and defeat Gregory of Tours (50), although Valerius Maximus at 419 beats him by some distance.⁸³ He was copied and adapted repeatedly until the sixteenth century throughout Europe.

After the Renaissance interest in his text fell away. Modern authors have been less than complimentary, judging him purely from the standpoint of a primary source for the Crusade. Iorga comments: 'dans l'ensemble rien qui puisse se rapprocher le moins du monde de l'authenticité'. Runciman, slightly dismissively, describes him as 'popular and somewhat romantic'.⁸⁴ This ignores the wider interest of Robert's work as contributing to the creation of Crusade ideology and as a work of literature in its own right, and its consequent influence through adaptations and translations of our view of the Crusade.

v) Conclusion

We know nothing about Robert other than what he tells us: he was a monk from Reims asked to write by his abbot. Whilst it is tempting to identify him with the turbulent Abbot Robert of St-Rémi, the evidence is not really there. His work should be dated to 1106–7 as part of a wave of texts telling the story of the First Crusade to whip up enthusiasm for a new expedition. He wrote within the orbit of the French court.

What is clear is that his work was by some distance the most successful of the histories of the First Crusade. Since then he has fallen out of favour. But arguably his version of events has been one of the most persuasive in shaping our perceptions of the Crusade today.

⁸¹ Cologne, possibly printed by Arnold Therhoeren; H. Petri, (Basle, 1533); *Veterum scriptorum, qui caesarum et imperatorum Germanicorum res per aliquot saecula gestas, litteris mandarunt*, Reuber, 217–71 (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1584), reprinted 1619 (Hanover) and again in 1726 (Frankfurt-am-Main), 303–98; I. Bongars, *Gesta Dei per Francos* (Hanover, 1611), 30–81; J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series latina* (Paris, 1844), vol. CLV, 669–758.

⁸² Guénée, 48–74.

⁸³ Guénée, 250–252: interestingly he omits Robert from his list despite his popularity.

⁸⁴ Iorga, 84; Runciman, *History*, vol. I, 330.