Authoring : *Moutafov Emmanuel*
Translation : *Βελέντζας Γεώργιος*
For citation : *Moutafov Emmanuel , "Anonymus, Gesta Francorum et Aliorum Hierosolimitanorum", Encyclopaedia of the Hellenic World, Asia Minor*
URL: <http://www.ehw.gr/l.aspx?id=11901>

Summary :

The anonymous history of the First Crusade (1096-1098) was written by a knight soon after the capture of Jerusalem. Since the knight himself participated in the campaign of Bohemond, the text is considered to be one of the most important sources concerning these events. The writer provides exact dates and presents the viewpoint of the simple participant in the first attempt towards liberating the Holy Sepulchre from the Seljuks.

Date

after 1098

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1. Introduction

The anonymous history *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum* is one of the major sources for the First Crusade (1096-1098). It was written by a knight who participated in the first Frankish campaign to the East. All attempts of modern research to discover the writer's name have proved fruitless. All we know is that the writer was a simple knight from southern Italy, serving in the army of the Norman prince Bohemond, and as such he participated in the operation.

The account narrates the march and conquests of Bohemond's army. The text starts with the homily of Pope Urban II during the Synod of Clermont (November 27, 1095) and finishes with the events of August 1099 and the capture of Jerusalem.

2. Gesta Francorum. Account and content

The writer provides essential information and, due to his active participation in the events he describes, expresses his feelings and sometimes shows subjectivity. He respects and praises Bohemond, but it is only natural that he is negative towards the Byzantines and Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118),[1] while he often fails to distinguish the Byzantines from other neighbouring peoples, such as the Bulgarians, and goes on impassively describing the looting and barbarity of the Crusaders in the Balkans in every detail. Regardless of the aforementioned, the writer provides valuable information about the provisioning of the crusaders, the finance of the cities the Latins marched through, their markets, commerce, etc. He also describes a settlement of heretics (probably Bogomils) in Pelagonia. From the second paragraph onwards the writer is expressed through the first-person narrative mode in order to underline that he too played a role in the heroic march that led to the liberation of the Holy Land from the pagans (*gentem paganorum*).[2] His narration is extremely valuable because it presents the attitude of simple knights towards the events of the First Crusade, who sometimes disagreed with their leaders mainly on the agreements with the Byzantines. The text is the only source reporting the oath Alexios I took in front of the crusaders.

The work must have been written based on the memories and probably on the notes of the writer after the capture of Jerusalem (July 15) and certainly after August 1099.

Some copies of the original text survived and were in use for centuries, however, most of them are now lost. In the early 17th century, the first editor of the work, H. Bongars, used sources not available today.[3] This account is of great interest since it depicts the history of Asia Minor, as well as the history of the Balkans and the West, during the Crusades.

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1. *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolymitanorum*, Brehier L. (ed.), *Histoire anonyme de la Premiere croisade* (Paris 1924) § 2, 5.

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2. *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolymitanorum*, Brehier L. (ed.), *Histoire anonyme de la Premiere croisade* (Paris 1924) § 2, 4.

3. Bongars H. (ed.), *Gesta Dei per Francos* (Hanoviae 1612).

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Glossary :

- Bogomilism

The heresy of Bogomilism appeared in the wider region of Thrace, in the mid-10th century. It combined neo-manichean beliefs with the views of Paulician migrants from Asia Minor and of local Slavonic ascetic mouvements. It proposed a dogmatic interpretation but also suggested an essential reformation of the ecclesiastical practice and of everyday life. The Bogomils survived up until the 15th c., despite the persecutions and repeated condamnation of their beliefs by the Church.

Sources

Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolymitanorum, Brehier L. (ed.), *Histoire anonyme de la Premiere croisade* (Paris 1924) § 2, 6.

Quotations

The anonymous writer reports the oath Alexios I gave to the Crusaders

Imperator quoque omnibus nostris fidem et securitatem dedit; iuravit etiam quia veniret nobiscum partier cum exercitu per terram et per mare et nobis mercatum terra marique fideliter daret ac omnia nostra perdita diligenter restauraret, insuper et neminem nostrorum pergrinorum conturbari vel contristari in via Sancti Sepulcri, valet aut permitteret.

Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolymitanorum, Brehier L. (ed.), *Histoire anonyme de la Premiere croisade* (Paris 1924) § 2, 6.