

The Assassination of Godfrey the Hunchback

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As part of the project 'Counts in Vlaardingen', a series of publications about the archaeology and history of the town of Vlaardingen will appear from 2008 onwards. The 11th century will get special attention: in this period, there were several political and military developments in and around Vlaardingen, which would turn out to be of national significance. In addition to this series of publications, an edition is being prepared of all written sources about Vlaardingen in the 11th century, with an analysis of the most important events.

The present article can be considered a pre-publication. It discusses one of the most notorious events in the 11th century: the assassination of Godfrey 'the Hunchback'.

Godfrey was the duke of Lower Lorraine, an area roughly coinciding with the current Benelux. His death in the year 1076 gave a dramatic turn to the political developments in the 11th century: it cleared the way for Dirk V¹ to re-conquer the county of West-Frisia², and one of the key players in the Investiture Controversy disappeared.

According to some historians, the assault was made in Vlaardingen, but others claim that it happened in Antwerp.³ To find out whether or not the murder can be counted among Vlaardingen's feats of arms, I have studied all relevant sources.

Godfrey was born around 1040 as the eldest son of Duke Godfrey the Bearded and Duchess Doda.⁴ In 1069 the German king Henry IV⁵ appointed him duke of Lower Lorraine, the fifth member of the House of Verdun to hold this position. Godfrey junior was small in stature and had a hunchback, but in spite of his physical handicap, he became a respected leader. Lambert of Hersfeld described him as "*prestantis quidem animi adolescens, sed gibbosus*", a young man indeed with an excellent mind, but with a hump.⁶ Later, Alberic de Trois-Fontaines said: "*corpore exiguous tamen animo eximius*", a small (or weak) body but an excelling spirit.⁷

Godfrey the Hunchback achieved success as a duke, but in his personal life he knew little happiness. He lost his mother at an early age. In the year 1054 his father remarried to Beatrix, widow of the marquis of Tuscany. At the same time, his father arranged a marriage between his son and Matilda of Canossa, countess of Tuscany and daughter of the same Beatrix. The wedding was in December 1069, shortly

¹ In early-medieval Latin sources, his name was spelled '*Theodericus*'. The name 'Dirk' is the modern Dutch version.

² The name 'Holland' first appeared in 1101.

³ Golinello (1998) and Halbertsma (2000, p. 137) take Antwerp for the location of the assault. Dieckmann (1885, p. 82), Verlinden (1935, p. 97), Linssen (1981, p. 347), De Boer & Cordfunke (1995, p. 34), De Graaf (1996, p. 74) and Henderikx (1997, note 98) assume that it was Vlaardingen.

⁴ Genealogical data from Charles Cawley's website (2000 - 2006).

⁵ Henry IV was elected king in 1056 and would be crowned emperor in 1084.

⁶ Lambert of Hersfeld, MGH SS V, p. 177.

⁷ According to Linssen (1981, p. 347), it has been said that Godfrey the Hunchback acted with German determination. However, the Chronicle of Saint-Truiden, to which Linssen refers, does contain the words "*Theutonicorum disciplinato more*" (MGH SS X, p. 304), but not in relation to Godfrey.

before the death of Godfrey senior. A daughter, Beatrix, was born in 1071 but died within a few months.⁸

After two years of married life, Matilda returned to her homeland.⁹ The next year Godfrey followed her, but this could not improve their relationship. Matilda avoided Godfrey and refused to give him 'the matrimonial favours (*maritalem gratiam*)' and, in fact, paid more attention to the new pope, Gregory VII, who had been elected in 1073, than to her own Godfrey. The pope urged her not to have any more contact with her husband, claiming it would be a sin, due to their consanguinity.¹⁰ On the other hand, for political reasons, he dissuaded a formal divorce.

Within a year Godfrey was back in Lower Lorraine, while Matilda kept on nagging him from Tuscany. When the abbot of Saint-Hubert claimed some of Godfrey's properties, Matilda wrote a letter to the pope recommending him to support the abbot, and not her own husband. Matilda and the pope were so often seen in each other's company that rumours about an affair between the two were rife.¹¹

Thus, Godfrey and Matilda's marriage was far from harmonious. To make things worse, they were also political antagonists: in the Investiture Controversy, Godfrey actively supported the German king, while Matilda stood (and allegedly lay) at the pope's side.

Matilda was a colourful and important person. She owned many possessions in Italy and she played a major role in the Investiture Controversy. She supported the pope not only in bed but also on the battlefield, against king Henry IV. For this, she was regarded with admiration by some and with contempt by others. In the 17th century her body was moved to Saint-Peters church in Rome. To this day, her tomb is decorated by a Bernini statue. However, Bishop Benzo of Alba, King Henry's biographer, described her as an "*os vulvae*", which means something like 'cunt face'.¹²

That's enough about Matilda, let's get back to her husband. Despite his hunchback and his marriage, Godfrey gained several military victories. In 1070,¹³ together with his ally the bishop of Utrecht, he drove the young count Dirk V and his stepfather Robert 'the Frisian' out of the Meuse estuary. Shortly thereafter, he conquered Frisia at the other (eastern) side of the Vlie and, if we may believe the Egmond Necrology, he founded the town of Delft.¹⁴ Thanks to Godfrey's support, King Henry could subdue the Saxons in 1075. Opposed to these successes was the demise of the ducal authority in the eastern and southern parts of Lower Lorraine, where the bishop of Liege had taken control.¹⁵

After he had grown a few years older, Dirk V wanted his inheritance back. He could count on the support of Robert who, meanwhile, (by a combination of subtle political scheming and blunt military

⁸ Dieckmann (1885) assumes that the child was a boy, but Golinello (1998) argues that it must have been a girl, born in the summer of 1071.

⁹ Data about the relations between Godfrey, Matilda and pope Gregory are based on the studies by Dieckmann (1885) and Golinello (1998); they refer to Lambert of Hersfeld (MGH SS V) and the Chronicle of Saint -Hubert (MGH SS VIII). Golinello suggests that Matilda left her husband because she feared his anger, because she had not been able to give him a son.

¹⁰ From Cawley's website (2000 - 2006) it can be inferred that Godfrey and Matilda shared the same great-great-great-grandparents: Wicheric III and Cunigunde, in the early 10th century count and countess in the Bidgouw (Bitburg). Godfrey descended from this couple via the dukes of Lower Lorraine, and Matilda via her mother and the dukes of Upper Lorraine.

¹¹ This affair was insinuated in the letter of 24 January 1076, written by 26 German bishops at the Reichstag in Worms, in which they abducted pope Gregory VII. The text of the letter can be found in MGH Briefen V, number 20 and in the Utrecht Charter book, number 234. Lambert of Hersfeld (MGH SS V, p. 257) is much more explicit in his accusations. See Dieckmann (1885, p. 19 - 20) for several other sources on Matilda's love life. Only Matilda's biographer Dinozo (MGH SS XII) praised her chastity, but according to Dieckmann he is unreliable.

¹² Benzo of Alba, MGH SS XI, p. 608. However, see also MGH SS rer. Germ. 65, note 342.

¹³ The Annals of Egmond state this event in the year 1071. This is repeated in Beke's Chronographia. However, the encounter must have occurred after Godfrey succeeded his father as duke (24 December 1069) and before the battle of Cassel (22 February 1071). Thus, in 1070 or in any case not later than January 1071 (Koch (1970, p. 168), Henderikx (1997, note 96) Halbertsma (2000, p. 332, note 170)). The entry in the year 1074 in the Annals of Yburg probably refers to the same battle (Henderikx, 1997, note 97).

¹⁴ The Necrology was written in the 15th century. It mentions '*Delf opidum*': a small town or a military stronghold.

¹⁵ Mohr (1976) and Werner (1991).

violence) had become count in Flanders. The first step to be taken was to get the powerful Godfrey out of the way. This dirty job was performed by an assassin who surprised and wounded the duke in the night. Godfrey did not die immediately but was brought to Utrecht, where he passed away a few days later.

The attack on Godfrey's life has been described by many chroniclers: I have been able to find no less than 24 medieval sources. However, they do not always tell the same story. Below, I will discuss some of these sources.

One of the earliest reports comes from Lambert of Hersfeld. Around 1078, he wrote a rather extensive account of the assassination, with several details: the assault took place in the city of Antwerp, in the night, when the duke had retired "because of a natural need". The culprit was a '*spiculator*' (this can mean a guardsman, but also a spy or a soldier with a special assignment). He was posted near the house, and he acted on the orders of Count Robert the Frisian. The duke died seven days after the attack, on 26 February 1076, and was buried in Verdun, next to his father. Lambert informs us that the duke was an excellent person. Inaccurately, he uses the name Gozelo.¹⁶

The Annals of Liege were also written shortly after the assassination. They give a very brief message: "1076 - An assassin (*sicarius*) kills Duke Godfrey".¹⁷ The word '*sicarius*' returns in many subsequent sources.

The French monk Jocundus, who lived in Maastricht for some time, writes that Godfrey was murdered in Frisia 'in a deplorable manner'. 'Although he was physically inferior, through his great spirit and his excellent righteousness in every area he was superior to the nobility of the Empire'.¹⁸

These three sources were all written within a few years after the murder. Since they use completely different words and phrases, it seems that they originated, although at the same time, independently from one another.

The Chronicle of Saint-Hubert in the Ardennes was composed somewhat later: between 1098 and 1106. The author was probably a monk named Lambertus Parvus. Just like Lambert of Hersfeld, he tells us that the duke had withdrawn, meaning that he had gone to the lavatory, and that he was stabbed in his behind. He says that the culprits (plural!) were accomplices of Count Robert the Frisian, and that the assault took place near the castle of Vlaardingem (*apud castrum Flardengis*). Lambertus Parvus praises the duke's righteousness. Finally, he tells us about the funeral: Godfrey's body was initially transported to Liege, from where a procession along various towns was conducted.¹⁹

The Annals of Egmond are the first Dutch source in which the death of Godfrey is mentioned. They were written a few decades after the event, between 1112 and 1121. Again, we learn that the duke was attacked when he had 'withdrawn'. Furthermore, the annals provide information not available from the older sources. Apparently, Egmond Abbey had access to its own witnesses or notes. 'New' information is that the culprit was called Giselbert and that he was a servant of Dirk V, and that immediately after the attack the injured duke had himself transported by boat to Utrecht. There he died on 25 February 1075 (actually: 26 February 1076). The Annals of Egmond say nothing concerning the location of the assault. They do describe the attack as cruel and shameful, but they do not praise the victim.²⁰

¹⁶ Lambert of Hersfeld, MGH SS V, p. 243. The confusion over the names is caused by the fact that Godfrey the Hunchback had two predecessors called Gozelo: his grandfather, duke from 1023 to 1044, and his uncle, 1044 - 1046. The other two preceding dukes of Lower Lorraine were his father Godfrey the Bearded, 1065 - 1069, and his father's uncle Godfrey 'the Childless', 1012 - 1023.

¹⁷ Annals of Liege, MGH SS IV, p. 21.

¹⁸ Jocundus, MGH SS XII, p. 115.

¹⁹ Chronicle of Saint-Hubert, MGH SS VIII, p. 588.

²⁰ Annals of Egmond, edited by Oppermann (1933) and recently by Gumbert-Hepp, Gumbert & Burgers (2007). Much of the information in the Annals of Egmond was copied from Sigebert of Gemblours. However, the tale about Godfrey's death is much more elaborate than Sigebert's version. The Annals still use the Old Style (where the new year starts at Easter), and therefore place the murder in the year 1075, at the fifth Kalenda of March, which is 25 February. According to the New Style (with the

At the end of the 11th century, a few German and Italian annalists have described the attack briefly, without information about the location or the date, but with other interesting details. They all tell, in varying words, that Godfrey was stabbed in his behind while on the toilet.

From Berthold of Reichenau's chronicle we learn that a soldier (*milite*) committed the assault and that the victim died excommunicated.

According to Bernold of Constanz, the culprit was a cook (*coque*) and Godfrey died during the first half of the 40-day Lenten period, *i.e.* before 4 March 1076.

Bruno of Magdeburg says that the assault was committed with a cruel pointed weapon (*saeve mucrone*), and that the duke died without confession or Holy Communion.

In Arnulf of Milan's account the duke was stabbed with a sword (*gladio*).

Landulf has, in his Milanese History, a different story: Godfrey's wife Matilda would have been behind the murder, because she did not want to share her inheritance with her husband. She had the duke killed with the help of a faithful woman servant.²¹

The remaining fourteen sources date from about 1100 until 1350 (I have not considered any more recent writings). They are all based on one or more of the sources mentioned above, and do not provide any new information.²²

From the 'original' sources we will now attempt to reconstruct what actually happened. We can establish that Godfrey died on 26 February 1076.²³ The assault itself took place one week earlier.

For the assignment the names of Matilda, Robert the Frisian and Dirk V have been mentioned. To be brief about Matilda: Landulf of Milan proposed her as the instigator, but her role is not supported by any other source.²⁴ This leaves us with Robert and Dirk. It makes little difference from whom the assignment came, because they acted as accomplices. Together, they had been expelled by Duke Godfrey, and together they would conquer the county again. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that they devised the assault on Godfrey in mutual consultation.

The culprit, named Giselbert, was either a servant, or a soldier, or a cook. The latter, suggested by Bernold of Reichenau, is improbable. One would entrust an armed attack to a warrior but not usually to the kitchen staff. The word '*spiculator*' used by Lambert of Hersfeld can either indicate that Giselbert was a guardsman in the service of the duke, who was bribed by Robert and Dirk, or that he was a soldier in the service of Robert or Dirk who was sent to the house of the duke where he awaited his chance. Lambert's addition 'on the orders of Count Robert the Frisian' leaves both options open. Since the Annals of Egmond state so explicitly that Giselbert was a servant of Count Dirk, the latter scenario seems to be more likely.

new year starting at 1 January), Godfrey died in 1076. That was a leap year, in which the fifth Kalenda of March equals 26 February.

²¹ Berthold of Reichenau, MGH SS V, p. 283; Bernold of Constanz, MGH SS V, p. 433; Bruno of Magdeburg, MGH Dt MA II; p. 77 - 78; Arnulf of Milan, MGH SS VIII, p. 29; also: MGH SS rer Germ. 67, p. 222; Landulf of Milan the Elder, MGH SS VIII, p. 97 - 98.

²² The fourteen sources, in their presumed chronological order: Sigebert of Gemblours (short message based on the Annals of Liege and on Jocundus), Annals of Lobbes, Annals of Park, Chronicle of Verdun, Annalista Saxo (wordy copy from Lambert of Hersfeld and Bruno of Magdeburg), Annals of Saint-Jacob of Liege, Annals of Marchiennes (wordy copy from the Annals of Luik), Chronicle of Alberic de Trois-Fontaines, Chronicle of Baldwin of Ninove, Egmond Chronicle, Rijmkroniek van Holland, Beke's Chronographia, Bella Campestris, and the Necrology of Egmond (the latter five all based on the Annals of Egmond). Furthermore two sources which I did not read myself: the Necrologies of Verdun, quoted by Dieckmann (p. 82) and of Saint-Lambert in Liege, quoted by Cawley.

²³ The Necrology of Verdun, quoted by Dieckmann, also gives 26 February 1076. The Necrology of Saint-Lambert in Liege, quoted door Cawley, has 24 February 1076. Mohr (1976) and Linssen (1981, p. 347) mention 22 February 1076, but this date occurs in none of the contemporary sources. They are probably confused by the papal letter that was written on that day (MGH Epp. sel. II.1, p. 268) in reply to the letter of abduction from the bishops (see note 11).

²⁴ According to Golinello (1998), Landulf was a bitter opponent of Matilda. Landulf called the victim 'Duke Gigon of Normandy', which shows that he did not know the facts too well.

If all the information is taken together, it is even conceivable that Giselbert was a soldier in the service of Robert or Dirk, who was sent on a mission to infiltrate into the household of the duke. This way he could observe the duke's habits. One night he saw his opportunity, waited outside the house, made the assault and quickly ran away.

Berthold says that the victim died excommunicated. This cannot be correct. On 22 February 1076, pope Gregory VII did ban a number of dignitaries, namely the 26 bishops who had signed the letter of abduction at the Reichstag in Worms, and also their king Henry IV. Godfrey the Hunchback was also present in Worms, but he did not sign the letter.²⁵ Also, the fact that there was no discussion about Godfrey's ecclesiastical funeral (which was the case when Bishop William of Utrecht died two months later) indicates that he had not been excommunicated.

The detail mentioned by Bruno of Magdeburg, that the duke died without confession or Holy Communion, is also unlikely. Apparently Bruno was not aware of Godfrey's trip to Utrecht. There, he must undoubtedly have received the sacraments of the dying.

The one aspect that interests us most is the location of the assault. There are three options: Antwerp, Vlaardingen and Frisia. The latter two do not contradict each other: in the 11th century the name 'Frisia' applied to the whole Dutch coastal area, from Groningen to Zeeland. This included Vlaardingen. However, Antwerp was somewhere totally different.²⁶

There is something to be said both for Antwerp and for Vlaardingen/Frisia. Duke Godfrey the Hunchback, was, like his ancestors, also marquis of Antwerp, so he could have stayed there. However, the Vlaardingen region also fell within his authority from 1070; only after his death would the area be re-conquered by Robert the Frisian and Dirk V (on 8 June 1076). So it is equally plausible that he stayed in Vlaardingen at the time of the assault.

We do know a little bit more about the places where the duke stayed during the last year of his life. In 1075 he was one of the dukes taking part in the king's campaign against the Saxons.²⁷ He celebrated Christmas 1075 with Bishop William in Utrecht.²⁸ A month later he was present, with that same bishop, at the Reichstag in Worms. Here, on 24 January 1076, the famous decision to abduct the pope was taken.²⁹

Virtually no administrative documents from the Low Countries have been preserved from this period. The Charter book of Holland and Zeeland contains only one charter that mentions the duke, but not a location.³⁰ The charter books of Utrecht, Brabant and Belgium do not mention him at all. All in all, this information does not allow a definite conclusion about the whereabouts of the duke in February 1076: from Worms he could have travelled in three weeks, possibly via Utrecht, to Vlaardingen but also to Antwerp.

The locations Antwerp, Frisia and Vlaardingen have been mentioned by Lambert of Hersfeld, Jocundus and Lambertus Parvus (Chronicle of Saint-Hubert), respectively. They all wrote relatively closely (within 30 years) after Godfrey's death and could all have obtained their information first hand. Whom should we believe?

Although Lambert of Hersfeld wrote an impressive chronicle, he is not considered to be consistently objective and reliable.³¹ Jocundus could also be creative with the facts, and he was - especially in his biography of Saint Servatius. In the Book of Miracles, on the other hand, he presented events from his own time (such as Godfrey's death) and he probably did this in reliable way.³² I do not know of any studies that question the credibility of the Chronicle of Saint-Hubert.

²⁵ About the letter of abduction: see note 11. About the pope's reply: note 23. About Godfrey's attendance in Worms: Berthold (MGH SS V p. 283) and Bernold (MGH SS V, p. 433).

²⁶ In the 11th century, Antwerp did not belong the county of Flanders. It was situated on the eastern bank (the Lorraine side) of the river Scheldt.

²⁷ *Gesta Friderici*, MGH SS XX, p. 356 - 357.

²⁸ Chronicle of Saint-Hubert, MGH SS VIII p. 588. Furthermore, it can be inferred from Lambert of Hersfeld's annals that the duke, despite being invited, did not spend Christmas with the king in Goslar.

²⁹ See note 11; see also Lambert of Hersfeld (Anno 1076).

³⁰ OHZ number 87, dated between 1070 and 1076.

³¹ Schmidt (1992).

³² De la Haye (2006, specifically p. 22 - 23).

Both Maastricht and Saint-Hubert lay within the bishopric of Liege, not far from Verdun, the base of the dukes of Lower Lorraine. Lambert of Hersfeld lived and worked further away, in central Germany. Presumably, the local authors were better informed about their duke than Lambert of Hersfeld. This is illustrated by the fact that Lambert calls Godfrey the Hunchback by the name of 'Gozelo'.³³

Dieckmann argued that Vlaardingen is more plausible than Antwerp because the injured victim travelled by ship to Utrecht. From Antwerp such a journey would have been quite lengthy.³⁴ The duke could also have obtained proper medical care within Antwerp itself or in the immediate vicinity. Based on the arguments that a trip from Antwerp to Utrecht would not be logical, and that Lambert of Hersfeld was less well informed, I assume that the assault on Duke Godfrey did not take place in Antwerp.

Where exactly the attack did happen is difficult to determine. The words '*apud castrum Flardengis*' in the Chronicle of Saint-Hubert can be read as 'in the town of Vlaardingen, in the vicinity of the castle', or as 'in the vicinity of the fortified town of Vlaardingen'. In any case, Godfrey was not attacked within the castle itself. It has been assumed that this castle, which dates from the time of Count Dirk III, was built on the church hill in the centre of the town.³⁵ A possible location for the assault would be the comital court, later known as 'De Hoge Werf', a few hundred yards from the church hill. Other options are settlements in the region such as the castle of IJsselmonde constructed by Bishop William and the stronghold Delft, founded by Godfrey himself.³⁶ Surely, the duke must have frequented these places. However, if the assault had been in IJsselmonde or Delft, it is strange that the Chronicle of Saint-Hubert does not mention the place name. For this reason, IJsselmonde and Delft are less likely. However, other settlements in the area cannot be excluded.

We presume that the assault on Godfrey occurred in the Vlaardingen region, but we cannot be sure whether it was in the town itself, or just outside the town.

To be complete, we should also include the reading of Verlinden, Robert the Frisian's biographer. Verlinden proposed that Robert the Frisian and Dirk V did not lose all their territory to Duke Godfrey and Bishop William in 1070, but that they kept a small power base. The assault on the duke's life would have been made during a new military expedition in which Godfrey and William would have penetrated into Vlaardingen, the heart of Robert and Dirk's area.³⁷

In none of the contemporary sources such a power base has been mentioned. Robert was militarily and politically active in Flanders from 1071 onwards, and there is no indication that he also stayed in Vlaardingen in those years. Also, a new expedition to Vlaardingen is not mentioned anywhere. Still, Verlinden claims that this course of events can be inferred from the available sources. However, after closer inspection, his arguments cannot be sustained.

According to Verlinden, the continuing hostilities in Frisia after 1070 prove that Godfrey had not succeeded in expelling Robert and Dirk completely. However, the 1071 attack was aimed at the Frisians at the other side of the Vlie.³⁸ In that region, neither Dirk nor his predecessors nor Robert ever had any power. Furthermore, in the message about the invasion of Frisia in 1074, Robert is not mentioned.³⁹

Verlinden's argument that Robert's activities in Flanders, shortly after his defeat in 1070, prove that his army cannot have been beaten completely, does not stand up either. Although it is possible that the army was not completely destroyed by Godfrey, the total army may have been expelled from Frisia. The Annals of Egmond speak of dispelling (*expulit*) and not of destruction. It is even more likely that things occurred this way, because Robert could not have used one part of his mauled force to defend his Vlaardingen base against Godfrey's forces, and at the same time use another part to conquer Flanders. Presumably, Robert gave up Frisia in order to focus on Flanders.

³³ See note 16.

³⁴ Dieckmann (1885, p. 82). The same argument was suggested by Hendericks (1997, note 98).

³⁵ De Ridder (2006); Roest & van loon (2007).

³⁶ About IJsselmonde: Beke (cap. 47b) and *Bella Campestris* (de bello quarto). About Delft: see note 14. Van der Aa (1862, p. 70), who is not too reliable, mentions Delft and Antwerp as possible locations for the assault.

³⁷ Verlinden (1935, p. 97). An expedition by Godfrey in 1076 has also been suggested by Mohr (1976), De Boer & Cordfunke (1995, p. 34) and De Graaf (1996, p. 74).

³⁸ *Ulteriores Fresones*, Sigebert, MGH SS VI, p. 362.

³⁹ Annals of Yburg, MGH SS XVI, p. 436. See also note 13.

Furthermore, Verlinden claims that Vlaardingen must have remained the power base of the Counts Robert and Dirk without interruption, based on a report from 1078, which mentions delegates of the count of Vlaardingen.⁴⁰ In my opinion, there could have been an interruption from 1070 to 1076, after which the counts settled again in their old home.

Finally, Verlinden's hypothesis about the maintenance of a power base is invalidated by a charter from the years 1070 - 1076, which states explicitly that Robert has left the area.⁴¹

When we assume that the assault was made in Vlaardingen itself, it could be added that it is not likely that Godfrey went to sleep in a town where his enemies were in power. This argument would be weakened if the assault was committed just outside the town, but then there are still sufficient reasons to disagree with Verlinden.

The military operation by Godfrey and William of mid February 1076, suggested by Verlinden, is unlikely because the duke and the bishop were in Worms three weeks earlier. They would have had very little time for preparations.

The chroniclers agree that it was a shameful and vile action. Indeed, the circumstances were rather bizarre: when the duke had to visit the latrine during the night, the assassin made his move. He had been waiting outside the building and stuck the victim in his behind.

Halbertsma says about the event: "Supposedly, the assassin made sure which of the latrines, which were built and drained on the outer side of the wall, according to medieval building style, belonged to the duke's sleeping room, and took a position underneath".⁴²

Some sources say that a sword was used for the assassination; others mention a sharp iron weapon, which could have been a sword but also a spear or a dagger.⁴³ In the situation described above, a spear seems to be the most practical choice.

The expanded latrine must have been on the first floor, or higher, because Godfrey was stuck from underneath. This implies that in Vlaardingen in 1076 there were there already multiple-storied buildings, not just simple low huts. Whether those buildings were built from wood or (partly) in stone cannot be established from the available written sources. Future archaeological research may provide more clues about this.

The assault in Vlaardingen robbed Bishop William of Utrecht of his most powerful ally. Duke Godfrey had nominated his nephew Godfrey of Bouillon to succeed him. However, King Henry IV appointed his own son, who was only 2 years old in 1076, as the new duke of Lower Lorraine. Bishop William died only 2 months after Godfrey the Hunchback. The next bishop of Utrecht, Conrad of Swabia, was on his own against Dirk V and Robert the Frisian. Dirk and Robert took advantage of the situation and attacked the castle of IJsselmonde⁴⁴ on 8 June 1076. Bishop Conrad lost the battle and was sent back to Utrecht while Dirk V was reinstated as count of West-Frisia. Dirk would rule the county in peace until his death in 1091.

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⁴⁰ Berthold, MGH SS V, p. 311.

⁴¹ OHZ number 87.

⁴² Halbertsma (2000, p. 332, note 174).

⁴³ Lambert of Hersfeld: *ferro* (iron weapon); Bruno: *mucrone* (sword, rapier or dagger); Arnulf of Milan: *gladio* (sword); Landulf: *ense* (sword). Two sources from a much later date: Baldwin of Ninove: *cultro* (knife); Annals of Park: *cultello* (small knife).

⁴⁴ The castle of IJsselmonde had been built by Bishop William and had been reinforced by Conrad (Beke, cap. 47b and 48a).

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Illustrations



A map of Lower Lorraine in the 11th century, with the places mentioned in the text.
Red lines: modern national boundaries.



Left: Godfrey the Hunchback, as depicted in the 16th century by the copper engraver Philipp Galle in Michiel Vosmeer's book of princes. In this picture, Godfrey wears full plate armour, but it is unlikely that he ever actually wielded a sword himself.

Right: A miniature from the *Vita Mathildis*, written shortly after Matilda's death in 1115 by the monk Donizo of Canossa.

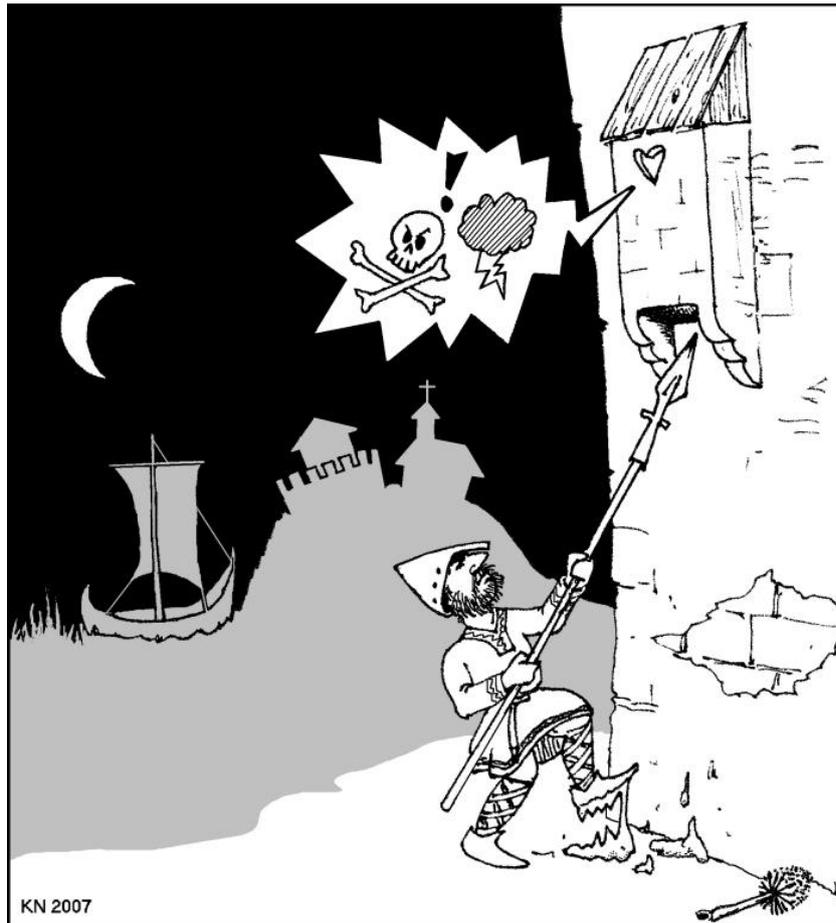
<http://libraryautomation.com/valerieeads/matilda.html>



Left: Count Dirk V as a toddler at the hand of his mother Gertrud of Saxony.

Right: Robert the Frisian, count of Flanders and stepfather of Dirk V.

Sixteenth century copper engravings by Philipp Galle in Michiel Vosmeer's book of princes.



An artist's impression of what might have happened on that fatal night in February 1076 in Vlaardingen. This version is based on Halbertsma's interpretation, which assumed that the lavatory was at a higher floor.



An alternative version of how Godfrey may have been killed. This cartoon did not appear in the original article in Terra Nigra, but has been added after suggestions from Henk 't Jong and Robert Low. The lavatory could have been at ground level, situated over a ditch. In this picture, the ditch is filled with water, but it could have been dry or, in February, frozen.