**First Crusade**

Why did it succeed in capturing Jerusalem? (broad summary)

1. Motivation – mixed motives, but most were v committed - for one reason or other! Some were ‘do or die’ “soldiers of God” – eg Raymond of Toulouse. Some were ruthlessly ambitious – eg Baldwin of Boulonge. Others were all of this plus some – eg Godfrey of Bouillon, & Adhemar of Le Puy. Many others (eg many knights, & most of the “lower orders”) prob had nothing to lose & a lot to gain – spiritual and/ or material!
2. Leadership & tactics – did have some excellent ldrs who, despite numerous squabbles, overcame many setbacks thro’ sheer will, cunning, & high ability (eg Bohemund; Adhemar). Crusader armoured knights, once they “got it together”, operating en masse, were v effective (“shock action”) against more lightly armoured Turkish cavalry; if/ when they could close with them on battlefield – “the mailed fist” shocked the Turks & other Muslims who experienced it (eg battles around Antioch, & at Ascalon).
3. Relatively good relats with Byzantines, who provided some experienced troops, & other support (eg supplies, money/ bribes, guides, mil advice – Gen Tatikios). Also, Italian naval and mercantile forces (eg Genoese at Sieges of Antioch, & Jerus) gave (at a price!) invaluable logistical and technical support.
4. Muslim disunity & distraction, and strategic & tactical errors. (eg Kilij Arslan’s initial complacency; lack of unity & mutual support at Antioch; Kerbogha caught with “his pants down” at Antioch!).
5. Luck – eg Muslim disunity; Baldwin’s fortuitous capture of Edessa (an entirely selfish act), but which subsequently proved a “life saver” in the crisis which developed at Antioch, and as a logistical base for the advance on Jerus.

Leaders of the 1st Crusade (possible motives?)

1. Robert, D of Normandy: son Will Conq; bro Will II K of Engl, who wanted his yngr bro out of the way, & helped fund (taxed England!) his crusading!
2. Stephen, Count of Blois: son-in-law of Will Conq. Educated/ refined/ deeply religious. Wanted to please wife, Adele (a “God Whacker”) but not much of a mil ldr.
3. Raymond, Count of Toulouse: old/ wealthy/ experienced. Close friend of Urban II. His commitment to crusade (1st ‘big hitter’ to ‘sign-up’) convinced many others to follow. Deeply religious – sold up lands to fund crusade/ took entire family with him! No intention of returning to Fra – wanted to die in Jerus.
4. Hugh, Count of Vermandois: bro Philip I of Fra (Phil “The Fat”) who’d recently fallen out with Pope Urban - adultery. Possibly, Hugh went crusading to help elder bro get back in papal “good books”/ demo loyalty etc.
5. Robert II, Count of Flanders: personal connections with Constantinople. Father, Rob I went on pilgrimage to Jerus, 1089; friend of Alexius I. 1090 – Rob I sent 500 knights to fight for Byzantines. After his father’s d 1093, Rob II contd his work – a duty to a friend/ fellow Christian, but also one that held out possibility of rich rewards!
6. Godfrey, D of Bouillon: land holder in German Empire; had supported Emperor V Papacy. But as a devout Christian & v able warrior (quintessential “Crusader”) prob felt bound to support Urban’s call to “Christendom”. Took a posse of monks with him as advisers. A fanatic? Another view = chance for self-reinvention; merging in his person warrior & “man of God”?
7. Bohemund, Prince of Taranto: relatively impecunious/ landless son of a Norman lord (Robert the Cunning) of S Italy, who in 1080s had invaded Byzantine territory in Balkans – without success. Excellent soldier – v experienced. Hungry for fame and land.
8. Adhemar, Bishop of Le Puy: friend & ally of Urban II. Devout Christian (by no means a given in a Medieval bishop!), & also a v skilled/ ferocious soldier, and – most crucially – a v capable “chair”/ organiser/ coordinator. Appointed Papal Legate – liaised between crusader ldrs/ coordinated strategy/ go-between for Rome. A v able man who often provided inspiring spiritual and practical ldrshp.

What forces did they lead?

*Estimates vary: certainly v large force – 50,000 min, poss up to 100,000, if non-combatants (eg families, servants, grooms, elderly pilgrims, camp followers, prostitutes, criminal elements) incl’d!…certainly far more than Alexius/ the Byzantines expected!*

Credible military forces included:

1. 8 “princes” – the Great Lords (”magnates”) named above, plus personal retinues.
2. 200 lesser lords (often, but not always, lieges of the above) – most held multiple castles, so “lesser” is a relative term.
3. 6,000 fully-fledged knights; some quite wealthy/ powerful in own right, others less so. Many made huge sacrifices/ took big financial risks in taking the cross.
4. 22,000 fully equipped/ trained foot soldiers; provided own weaponry. “Professionals”, often with specialist skills.
5. 22,000 poorer foot soldiers – not that well equipped/ trained. Depended on lords for weaponry. Essentially peasant levies. Often poorly disciplined – “tafurs”. Many vagabonds; some may have been the more able-bodied survivors of the “People’s Crusade”, Nov 1095-Oct 1096. (see below)

(**NB –** at least 20 languages, and 7 distinct currencies, were used by this very diverse “army”, which did not make organisation and coordination of the force easy once the different elements from all over Medieval Europe actually combined!)

Prelude to 1st Crusade: “The People’s Crusade”, Nov 1095-Oct 1096

1. “First Wave” (30,000 approx) Peasants…mainly, altho’ there were a few “lordless knights”, old soldiers etc
2. Ldr – Peter “The Hermit” – preacher – N France/ Ger (see also Walter “The Penniless”/ “Sans Avoir”, his deputy) winter 1095/6…rousing sermons/ demagogue for God
3. Poorly armed/ deluded masses…sure God was on their side/ wld protect them
4. April…May…June ‘96 grps left from E Fra & S Ger for Holy Land: in total defiance of Papal plans/ instructions. Zealotry abounded…
5. Rabble…often murderous – massacres of Jews in N Fra & Rhineland
6. No supplies/ logistics – scavenged for food – K of Hungary – outraged – thousands slaughtered by his forces, or by local rulers, & brigands, in Balkans…
7. Survivors reached Constantinople, Aug 1096 – Alexius dismayed/ disturbed…
8. Transported them to Kibotos (Asia Minor) to await Pope’s proper army.
9. Turks waited/ watched…Sept 1096 – some crusaders stupid enough to attack Seljuk city of Nicea: crushed by forces of Sultan Kilij Arslan – many enslaved/ forcibly converted to Islam (poetic justice, some might say!).
10. 21st Oct, 1096 – Seljuks attacked/ destroyed Christian encampment at Kibotos – massacred all, incl old, women, children. Not a great start to Urban’s project.

**NB -** Catastrophic “People’s Crusade” highlighted the importance of:

1. Sound ldrshp/ discipline/ coordination of forces – thinking/ planning/ proper mil discipline, command & control etc.
2. Logistical support/ supplies, incl water sources, fuel (firewood), animal fodder.
3. Cooperation with/ support from Byzantines – imperative.
4. Situational awareness, intelligence/ scouting, info re enemy, careful route planning.
5. Not allowing religious fervour to sideline/ negate any of the above!
6. Not underestimating the enemy, who could be formidably ruthless and fast moving.

The First Crusade proper – aka “The Princes’ Crusade”

* Initial prep & planning phase – Nov - Dec 1095 onwards…
* Who went? Most came from areas of strong support for Reforms of Pope Greg VII, from families with strong pilgrimage trads, & from areas of Fra visited by Urban II.
* Charters – evidence of arrangements lords/ knights made prior to going on crusade – eg mortgaging ppty, purchase of weaponry, horses, supplies, & troop musters…
* Trad view – yngr sons predominated (landless etc)
* Charter evidence indicates otherwise – only relatively wealthy cld afford it, and many elder sons participated.
* Huge debts incurred to go crusading, suggesting spiritual motives were often well to fore!
* We cannot be sure of real motives – charters were usually drafted by monks/ priests, serving Church interests, and more often than not the Church was the beneficiary in some way of loans/ mortgages etc made to crusaders. Charters tend to be formulaic – always open with statements of faith/ duty to God etc, reflecting the authorship! Tend to reflect Church’s official view, and possibly mask the range of real motives underpinning it all. Care needed!
* Most historians now accept, however, that in a complex mix of possible motives, deep religious commitment was very real.
* We can know v little re the lower orders, but times were hard (eg poor harvests – “ergotism”- in 1090s), and simple faith plus desire for adventure/ escape in the East that promised eternal salvation and a chance of loot, was probably a big “driver”!
* The main crusader forces did not depart until Aug – Oct, 1096. Urban instructed them to gather in Constantinople to join the Byzantines under Alexius.
* Alexius arranged supplies, guides etc to help crusaders thro’ his Balkan territories – did not want repeat of P’s Crusade!
* First contingents arr Constant, Oct 1096…Byzants nervous.

Byzantine perspective:

* “Franks” formidable warriors, but far more had arrived than expected!
* Issue of control/ accountability…?
* Alexius believed their main motive was personal gain – he was used to employing Frankish mercenaries.
* Alexius met each crusade ldr personally – size them up/ build rapport, but also to express thanks for their support, & try to develop protocols for command/ control…
* Gold coin/ gifts etc distributed thro’ crusader encampments…
* Insisted ldrs swore personal oaths of loyalty to himself, plus promise to return any former Byzant land recaptured from Turks to his control - some Crusader ldrs were reluctant (eg Raymond of Toulouse, who “fudged” it), but ultimately most complied. Clear what Alexius wanted:
* Protect/ preserve Constantinople, + regain territory lost since 1071.
* *Not* in business of “Holy War” (an alien concept to Orthodoxy) - to Alex the Franks were simply a large mercenary force; one not under his *direct* command, and worryingly large and “enthusiastic”!
* Alexius concerned that his own domestic rivals might “turn” some of these foreigners against him to threaten his rule.
* Alexius tried to “work” Frankish ldrs (eg implied to Bohemund that immense wealth *might* be his, as long as…!), and made certain each contingent was moved v rapidly to Kibotos, over the Straights/ away from Constantinople.
* Crusaders “mustered” at Kibotos; stayed there until May, 1097. Order eventually came to move S into Muslim held territory.

Muslim situation:

* 1097 – Muslim world a complicated patchwork of diff/ often conflicting interests.
* Technically, all Muslims owed loyalty to the Caliph in Baghdad.
* Since CE750 Caliph had been from Abbasid dynasty, but by 1090s Muslim world was fragmented, & Caliph had relatively ltd central control.
* Seljuks had captured Abbasid lands – late C11th.
* Real power now with the Seljuk “Sultan” – the Caliph was a nominal figure tolerated by Seljuks as an Islamic figurehead.
* 1072 – Malik Shah became Sultan.
* 1092 – Malik Shah & his “Vizier” (chief of govt) died – power struggle within Malik’s family – who shld rule which of his lands?
* Territory incl’d Sultanate of Rum, Syria, Palestine – ie areas thro’ which crusaders wld pass en route to Jerus.
* Malik’s family squabbled – local warlords asserted themselves – Muslim world in chaos, 1097.
* Religious divisions compounded this disunity: Seluks & Abbasids were Sunni, but the Fatimids who ran Egypt were Shi’ah. Fatimids trying to extend their power into Seljuk lands.
* Many poorer Muslims in Seljuk areas were Shi’ah, & wld prefer Fatimid rule.
* Also, many in recently conquered Seljuk territory (esp Anatolia) were Christian or Jewish, and generally preferred Arab to Turkish rulers.
* There was no single unifying ldr in the Muslim M East: “Jihad” was dormant in Muslim thinking, just as “Holy War” was firing up Christendom.

***KEY STAGES OF 1st CRUSADE***

**Passage across Anatolia (“Sultanate of Rum”)**

* Kilij Arslan – complacent/ failed to halt crusaders as they moved off…underestimated the threat because he’d dealt so easily with the shambolic “People’s Crusade”.
* Siege & capture Nicea (May-June 1097)
* Turkish forces seen off/ Nicea restored to Byzants
* Subsequent crossing of Anatolia, however, was v hard – took 2 yrs!
* Alex appt General Tatikios (Grk/ Arab eunuch – golden nose!?) as his rep on crusader council, & returned to Constantinople because feared his rivals there might plot/ rebel if he was away for long.
* Differences soon emerged b/ween crusader ldrs – some went ahead – 1st July, 1097 nrly met with disaster at Dorylaeum when Kilij Arslan launched a surprise attack – ferocious battle – Bohemund saved the day by brilliant ldrshp – against odds, crusaders won!
* Kilij Arslan’s credibility shot – many Seljuk held cities in W Anatolia started surrendering to crusaders. Crusaders honoured their earlier promises to Alexius, and these were returned to Byzantine control. Alexius paid cash rewards to crusaders.
* Climate/ terrain, however, a big prob as crusaders advanced – often only able to cover 5-7 miles a day…lost many to the heat or starvation, or harrying attacks by Turks (mobile, missile armed, light cavalry).
* Forces split in S Anatolia (“sweeping-up” ops) prior to advancing into Syria.
* 2 yngr lords – Baldwin of Boulogne (yngr bro Godfrey of Bouillon) & Tancred (nephew of Bohemund of Taranto) engaged in bitter rivalry – each wanted fame/ status/ land. Their forces were v hostile to each other, which detracted from overall effectiveness of crusader forces – until Baldwin went East, and Adhemar banged heads together!
* Baldwin went East (possibly he’d ‘cut a deal’ with Alexius?) with 80 ambitious knights: took control of wealthy county of Edessa establishing a personal fiefdom there, which later proved strategically vital to the rest of the 1st Crusade. (Luck – Baldwin’s overarching personal ambition paid strategic dividends in the long-run, but it wasn’t planned that way!)
* Rest of crusader army (much depleted) reached Antioch, 21st Oct 1097.

**Siege of Antioch, Oct 1097 – July 1098**

* Antioch – massive walls/ well defended. Fortunately for crusaders (luck again) Muslim internal rivalries meant Seljuk rulers of Damascus & Aleppo refused to assist their fellow Muslims at Antioch.
* Siege – brutally tough – stalemate…until Adhemar galvanised the operation restoring order/ focus in besieging crusader forces.
* Adhemar’s restoration of focus (esp moral/ religious) suffused the crusade with renewed spiritual zeal, which ultimately carried it on to Jerus – lucky that such a man was present, as spirits were flagging; his personal ldrshp was crucial at this time.
* Crusade ldrs made public reiteration of their vows/ commitment.
* Genoese Fleet arrived with supplies and some English & Danish reinforcements – great morale boost, altho’, of course, the Italians were only looking for business opportunities. Nevertheless, this “amphibious”/ mercantile support was helpful at a key point in the 1st Crusade.
* Feb 1098 – TatikIos & Byzantine forces left siege/ returned to Alexius to ask for reinforcements. Never returned – setback.
* Later in Feb, however, crusaders fought off a belated Muslim relief force sent by Turks of Aleppo. Great boost – altho’ outnumbered, crusader heavy cavalry made mincemeat of the lightly armoured Seljuk forces.
* April – a bigger Muslim force led by Kerbogha of Mosul approaching. Kerbogha was taking advantage of the situ to extend his infl into Seljuk Syrian territory. Crusaders risked being crushed against Antioch’s walls – significant desertions occurred! Crisis!

**Bohemund triumphs – Antioch taken**

* Crisis meeting – B argued Alex had betrayed them, and therefore all deals were off – crusaders free of obligations to Byzants.
* B asserted he cld take Antioch, but the price of any success shld be that he got control of the city. Much debate – Raymond unhappy… Stephen of Blois not convinced by Bohemund’s claims.
* Stephen & his forces deserted (2nd June) – 2 weeks later, Stephen met Alexius who *was*, after all, en route back to Antioch with new forces!
* Stephen told Alex all was lost – Alexius turned back! Nr disaster, but unknown to them, on night of 2nd June (just after Stephen’s desertion) Bohemund *had* initiated his plan (he’d cultivated Christian ‘contacts’ inside the besieged city, and bribed a Christian tower commander to betray his Muslim masters. B thereby demo’d cunning, boldness, and good “intelligence & special ops” capabilities), and taken Antioch! (Hurrah – God wills it!)
* Brutal massacre of Muslim population followed. Only the Citadel held out. By 4th June, 1098 the whole city (excpt the Citadel) was in crusader hands, and B vindicated & triumphant!
* Kerbogha’s army then arrived – besieged the crusaders now holding Antioch! Stalemate – again.

**However…**

* Crucially, K’s forces had been delayed by Baldwin in Edessa – without this they’d have arrived sooner and crushed the crusaders, as anticipated (luck!).
* Crusaders trapped in Antioch – many non-combatants (pilgrims & other “hangers-on”) deserted the city – often via latrine chutes, or by clambering down the walls after dark! Arguably, a blessing in disguise, altho’ not great for morale.
* Crusader forces now down to 25,000 max.
* Peter Bartholomew (a poor crusader of lowly rank) “discovered” ‘The Holy Lance’ under floor of Antioch Cathedral (14th June): a fortuitous morale and spiritual boost. Some were dubious about the lance’s provenance, but Raymond of Toulouse endorsed this “sign from God”…
* 28th June – crusaders sallied forth from Antioch led by a “Holy Lance” wielding Adhemar, and a fired-up Bohemund, and assaulted the somewhat surprised/ very unprepared Muslim army which crumbled before their onslaught; Kerbogha fled; the Citadel’s defenders yielded.
* Crusader ldrs may, in truth, have hoodwinked Kerbogha via secret negotiations (in which they’d suggested they’d yield Antioch in return for quarter/ safe passage home to Europe), and only launched their surprise attack in desperation when he’d rejected their initial overtures. Whatever the truth, Antioch was a remarkable victory, which probably owed a lot to the ldrshp & cunning psychology of Adhemar, and the sheer drive and tactical acumen of Bohemund.

**Antioch to Jerusalem, Aug 1098 – Aug 1099**

* The victory was not followed thro’ immediately because the crusading ldrs contd squabbling: B claimed Antioch for himself; Raymond wanted it returned to Alexius. B cut a deal with the Genoese, who were eager to trade, whilst some pushy knights went over to Baldwin in Edessa (nice “career move”!), whilst others went on a “land grab” against the weakened Seljuks in N Syria! Adhemar died, 1st Aug 1098 – a great blow.
* Hugh of Vermandois sent to negotiate with Alexius in Constantinople - hoping to convince him to return & lead the Crusade. Alex still felt vulnerable in Constantinople, and refused to leave the capital.
* Key turning point: Crusaders felt betrayed by Alex, and thereafter believed any land they took shld be theirs to rule as they saw fit. Invited Pope Urban to lead them on to Jerus – he declined.
* Bohemund & Raymond contd feuding – situ got v bad, esp when Raymond took city of Ma’arrat as a personal base, and started bribing knights to leave B and join him – offered v nice “transfer fees & terms”! Ultimately, a rebellion of ordinary crusaders (desperate – hungry/ frustrated),Jan 1099, convinced Raymond of the imperative of his duty to God! Raymond promised to lead his 7,000 troops to Jerusalem. Some semblance of unity restored.
* Early 1099 a diminished crusader force (14,000) under Raymond, Bohemund, Godfrey & Rob of Flanders finally moved S thro’ Syria and into Palestine.
* Many Syrian cities yielded or were passive, allowing crusaders to by-pass them unchallenged. Many Shi’ite Syrians disliked the Sunni Seljuks, and were probably happy to avoid the ferocious “Franji” and let them do their worst to their unpopular Turkish overlords (Muslim disunity, & luck again!).
* Feb 1099 – the advance stalled (logistical probs etc): Raymond compounded delay by trying to take Arqa for himself (a new personal base?), and his continuing support of Peter Bartholomew (by this time regarded as either a nutter or deluded chancer, or both, by most crusaders! PB died April 1099 - of burns sustained in a mad “fire walking” display to demo the power of his faith/ God’s blessing!) further eroded his credibility.
* Godfrey emerged as the most credible ldr.: focus on Jerus maintained, and his bro Baldwin’s base in Edessa enabled him to maintain a far better logistic train than any other ldr. (again – fortuitous unintended benefit of Baldwin’s land grab in Edessa).
* July 1098 – Fatimids of Egypt had taken Jerusalem from Seljuk rivals. Sent for Egyptian reinforcements, which meant Godfrey pressed hard for a rapid advance on the Holy City before these new Muslim forces arrived. Strategic imperative to take Jerus before the Fatimids cld build up their forces there.
* Despite the obvious logic of Godfrey, Tancred & Raymond contd squabbling – over who shld become “Lord of Bethlehem”!
* 7th June – Crusader arrived outside Jerusalem. Some walked final miles as barefoot pilgrims – indicating that faith still was a big driver for many.
* Internal divisions still, however, evident: Raymond set up camp to S of Jerus, whilst Godfrey’s force went N. 4 wks of prep for siege followed – aided by Genoese naval forces who brought in timber from Jaffa, and provided carpenters & engineers to construct siege towers. Defenders watched/ waited.
* Early July – public prayer & fasting. Ldrs buried their differences having (8th July) led a procession around city walls. Unity of purpose restored for the final push.
* 14th July – assault began. Godfrey of Bouillon played a key role: deception plan implemented – a siege tower was cunningly relocated (under cover of night) to a point where scouts had noted a weakness in the city walls. Godfrey led an assault party over the walls, and forced open main gates. Jerusalem was taken – a terrible massacre ensued.
* 15th July – Jerusalem in Christian hands for first time since CE638.
* 2 weeks later – Rome – Urban II died. He never knew of the Crusaders’ triumph.
* 22nd July – “Kingdom of Jerusalem” estab’d: Raymond of Toulouse offered crown, which he (surprisingly) declined; only Jesus shld, he said, be so called. Reality more likely that Raymond had bigger ambitions. Thus the crown went to Godfrey of Bouillon, who also stated he wld not be called “king”, but then quietly/ efficiently took control.
* 10th Aug 1099 – Godfrey’s force of 10,000 intercepted the Fatimid relief force at Ascalon, and destroyed it totally.
* Thereafter, the bulk of ord crusaders started to return home to Europe, often carrying palm fronds – trad “badge” of pilgrims returning from Jerusalem. Much pillaging of “holy relics” took place, many of which found their way back to Europe – eg Genoese merchants took “The Bones of John the Baptist” to Italy. Motives – prob a mixture of greed and piety. Relics wld attract a “good price”, but many probably did genuinely feel awe/ wonder about such things. NB – *All surviving* crusaders *did* receive good cash rewards for their participation in the final attack on Jerus, so many poor men & knights did “do well” financially. That said, to the Medieval mind such wealth acquisition was also a sign of “God’s blessing”, so it shld not be assumed that material gain negated/ undermined real spiritual commitment. The two probably went hand-in-hand for most.

**What became of the leaders of the First Crusade?**

1. Adhemar – buried Aug 1098 at the site of the “Holy Lance”, Antioch Cathedral.
2. Rob of Normandy – went home/ challenged bro for throne of England; defeated, & spent rest of life (20 yrs) as a prisoner.
3. Rob of Flanders – went home – enjoyed great fame as “Robert of Jerusalem”. Took a relic (“The Arm of St George”); used it to found a monastery. Contd warmongering in Europe!
4. Godfrey of Bouillon – estab/ enlarged The Kingdom of Jerusalem. Died July 1100. Buried – Church of The Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem.
5. Baldwin of Edessa – contd rule as “Count of Edessa”. Crowned King of Jerusalem after his bro Godfrey’s death, 1100.
6. Raymond of Toulouse – eventually got a lot of land – took port of Lattakiah from his rival Bohemund, and then extended his fiefdom along the coast. He died 1105 having established the “County of Tripoli”.
7. Bohemund of Taranto – contd as ruler of Antioch, & tried to extend territory. Allied with his nephew, Tancred, we even tried to extend into Byzantine lands – failed. Died 1111.
8. Hugh of Vermandois – having been sent to plead with Alexius for more troops in 1098, Hugh contd home to France. Later joined a “3rd Wave” of crusaders who tried/ failed to capture more Muslim land in East. KIA 1101.
9. Stephen of Blois – after Antioch desertion he went home. Wife unimpressed – she forced him back East – KIA fighting Muslims, 1102.

**NB** As indicated above, war V Muslims contd after capture of Jerus. Other factors aside (greed/ personal ambition etc), it was necessary to consolidate Frankish territories in “Outremer”. Bohemund’s campaigns V Alexius alienated the Byzants, who never again fully trusted or cooperated with European crusaders – v significant re subsequent crusades.

The exact nature/ character of the “Latin Kingdoms” established in what French speakers came to call “Outremer” has been extensively researched/ debated/ contested by modern historians, and is on-going.

CRH, 2017.