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SIEGE WARFARE DURING THE CRUSADES

by

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IN

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PREFACE

Much material has been written on every facet of the crusades. In military history all of the major campaigns of the crusading period have been examined and discussed at great length. Yet there has been no real definitive study of siege warfare during the time when the Christians were present in the Levant. Siegecraft, armor, and the sieges themselves have been treated as only minor fractions in the totality of military history of the Middle Ages. Yet these aspects of siege warfare were discussed at some length by the chroniclers who accompanied the various crusading armies. It is from the accounts of the participants and observers that one gains some appreciation for the role of siege warfare in the crusades.

Siege warfare was not invented by the Christians and the Saracens as they confronted each other in the Levant. On the contrary, the Romans (200 B.C.-A.D. 400) were very familiar with siege strategy and tactics. Much of their siegecraft was very similar to that used by the crusaders in the Middle Ages.

However, the Roman knowledge of siege warfare was passed to the men of the Early Middle Ages (A.D. 400-1100) before it ever became the knowledge of the crusaders. During the early and late Middle Ages the siegecraft was constructed from wood instead of iron, which the Romans had used. The wooden construction was the probable cause for the inferiority of the crusaders' siegecraft.¹ Not only were the machines of the crusaders inferior in construction, that is, less durable, but the weapons were also inferior in power and range.

Despite the inferiority in siegecraft, the crusaders performed remarkably well. When the Christian army first journeyed to the Levant in 1096, the crusaders were relatively unfamiliar with siege warfare. In Western Europe battles were fought in an open field during the day. Consequently, the Christians were unprepared for months of assault against an enemy ensconced within the walls of a castle. In the beginning especially, the tactics were often haphazard and ineffective. At times the morale and food supply were so low that there was little difference between the defenders and the besiegers. There were several instances when the crusaders would have failed utterly, had it not been for the aid of the Italian

¹Charles Oman, A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages, I (New York: Burt Franklin, 1898), 131. Hereafter cited as Oman, Art of War, I.

city-states. The entire Fourth Crusade would have been impossible without the Venetians' help. Yet with the practice and the experience that the sieges provided, the crusaders became proficient in their siegecraft and in their tactics of siege warfare.

The purpose of this paper is to examine siege warfare during the first five crusades. The siegecraft and armor used will be discussed, and the composition of the armies examined. Next the role of the Italian city-states in siege warfare will be given some consideration. Finally five sieges, and the manner in which the crusaders conducted them, will be discussed in detail.

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CHAPTER I

SIEGECRAFT OF THE CRUSADES

When the crusaders first reached the East, they had much to learn about siege warfare. By the beginning of the fourteenth century both the Latins and the Saracens were familiar with the siege methods that would hasten the fall of a castle.

The besieger could capture a position either by assault or by battery. In assault the instruments included the scaling ladder and the wooden tower, both of which were employed by the Romans in their sieges. The ladder provided the most direct means of assault but was never used unless the attacking force was numerically superior and could afford heavy losses. The two types of ladders used were rope and wooden. Rope ladders were used at the surrender of Antioch when the Turks admitted twenty Franks¹

¹The term Franks is generally applied to all crusaders, but is occasionally used to designate the peoples of France.

into the city.² Firuz, a Christian sympathizer, devised a secret plan whereby Bohemond and his party were to enter Antioch by night. This was accomplished by scaling the walls with ladders which were tied at the top on the ramparts and at the bottom probably onto stakes driven into the ground.³

When the crusaders arrived at Jerusalem, the leaders of the Franks ordered that wooden ladders be erected at the walls.⁴ This type of ladder was secured by ropes on the battlements and on wooden stakes in the ground.⁵ However, by the seventh day, after heavy losses, the leaders changed their plans. The ladders had proven ineffective because they were few in number and dangerous to those who climbed them. Since the men were exposed on all sides there was no protection from the missiles (arrows and stones) of the

²Fulcher of Chartres, A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem 1095-1127, trans. by Francis Rita Ryan (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1969), p. 99. Hereafter cited as Fulcher of Chartres, Expedition to Jerusalem.

³William of Tyre, A History of Deeds Done beyond the Sea, trans. and annotated by Emily A. Babcock and August C. Krey, I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 256. Hereafter cited as William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I.

⁴Fulcher of Chartres, Expedition to Jerusalem, p. 109.

⁵Philip Warner, The Medieval Castle: Life in a Fortress in Peace and War (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1971), p. 51. Hereafter cited as Warner, Medieval Castle.

Turks.⁶ Both ropes and ladders were employed by the Genoese in Tripoli when they rioted and scaled the walls to attack any Turk they could find.⁷

The wooden tower was a more effective device because it provided greater protection and could hold more men. These towers were gigantic structures, sturdy enough to withstand the stones that were hurled at them. At the siege of Tyre in 1111 one of the towers was approximately sixty-five feet high while another stood eighty feet high.⁸ Both withstood the battery of missiles hurled against them.

The construction of these towers was rather simple but the process took, at the very least, several weeks to complete. Lumber was the principal ingredient. It was acquired in the countryside or in the case of the tower built in Caesarea, from the masts and oars of ships.⁹ Most of the towers were square-shaped and several stories high

⁶William of Malmesbury, The History of the Kings of England, Vol. III, Part I of The Church Historians of England, revised by the Reverend Joseph Stevenson (6 vols.; London: Seeleys, 1854), p. 315. Hereafter cited as William of Malmesbury, Kings of England.

⁷Fulcher of Chartres, Expedition to Jerusalem, pp. 195-196.

⁸Robin Fedden and John Thomson, Crusader Castles (London: John Murray Publishers, Ltd., 1950), p. 62.

⁹Fulcher of Chartres, Expedition to Jerusalem, p. 153.

(the ideal was to build the towers slightly higher than the castle walls). A drawbridge, built on the tower, was lowered on the battlements when the structure was close enough to the wall. Some towers were constructed at the walls of castles while others were erected and then moved to the site. At the siege of Jerusalem during the First Crusade, each piece of the structure was brought to the site, constructed, and then moved against the wall.¹⁰ The tower constructed by Raymond of Toulouse was equipped with four wheels for easy mobility.¹¹

Yet even with wheels, ground preparation had to be made before the tower could be transported to the wall. The land had to be leveled. If there were moats, as there were at Tyre, they had to be filled in with dirt or stones. Count Raymond had to fill a deep pit before he could move his four-wheeled tower. To accomplish this he announced that anyone who brought three stones would receive a penny. After three days and nights the pit was filled and the tower was moved to the wall.¹²

¹⁰William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 360.

¹¹Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum, ed. by Rosalind Hill (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1962), p. 78. Hereafter cited as Gesta Francorum.

¹²Gesta Francorum, p. 91.

The Franks specialized in the use of towers.¹³ Yet this specialization was preceded by a period of trial and error. During the siege of Arsuf¹⁴ the wooden tower, constructed from huge beams, collapsed because it could not bear the weight of the men. Nearly one hundred Franks fell and were seriously injured.¹⁵ By the time of the siege of Jerusalem during the First Crusade, the crusaders had overcome the problem of weight and support but had not solved the problem of height. The tower known as Berefreid was a moderate-sized structure only equal to the height of the wall. As a protective structure Berefreid was a failure. The Turks poured grease and burning oil down upon the tower and hurled stones on the soldiers.¹⁶

To solve this problem, various methods were employed. The Franks then built taller towers and draped them with vine branches, mats, and damp ox-hides as added protection against fire and missiles.¹⁷ Frequently vinegar was thrown on the structures to render the grease and oil

¹³Fedden and Thomson, Crusader Castles, p. 62.

¹⁴A maritime city near Jaffa, formerly called Antipatris.

¹⁵Fulcher of Chartres, Expedition to Jerusalem, p. 153.

¹⁶William of Malmesbury, Kings of England, p. 316.

¹⁷De Expugnatione Lyxbonensi, trans. and ed. by Charles W. David (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), p. 147.

ineffective. Richard the Lion Heart coated his towers with iron plates as protection against fire.

The Saracens had several types of defense against the ladders and towers. Greek fire, one of the most effective, could easily destroy both. It was probably invented by a Syrian architect, Callinicus of Helipolis, at the time of the siege of Constantinople by the Saracens in 673. His fire was a semi-liquid substance containing sulphur, pitch, dissolved nitre, and petroleum which burst into flames upon contact with the air. These ingredients were boiled together and mixed with "certain less important and more obscure substances."¹⁸ When Callinicus fled to the Byzantine capital, Constantinople, he gave his formula to the emperor. Constantine fitted his galleys with projecting tubes from which the liquid was squirted into the enemy's ships. When ejected, it set the woodwork on which it fell on fire. It could only be extinguished by pouring vinegar, wine or sand upon it.¹⁹

By the time of the crusades, the Greek fire was no longer a simple, semi-liquid substance. It was now a more complicated and more formidable liquid. At the siege of

¹⁸Charles Oman, A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages, II (New York: Burt Franklin, 1898), 46. Hereafter cited as Oman, Art of War, II.

¹⁹Oman, Art of War, II, 46-47.

Acre in 1190, a Damascene engineer flung jars of the liquid on the Christians' machines. Wherever the jars broke, a fire arose. The author of Itinerarium Regis Ricardi stated that it stank abominably and burned with a livid flame. Also, it did not go out "even if it fell on stone or iron, but continued to blaze up till it was consumed."²⁰ As with the earlier form of Greek fire this liquid could be extinguished only by vinegar or sand.

As another defensive measure, the Turks, from the top of the castle walls, shot arrows and hurled stones upon men climbing the ladders. The infidel also threw their missiles at the crusaders inside the towers. These stones were effective until a Lombard engineer constructed a machine that had a steep pitch in the roof and sides that sloped. Rocks would roll off and thus do less damage.²¹ "Much they marvelled at the ingenuity of the inventor and the strength of the machine for no tactic seemed to prevail against it."²²

The Turks also used beams as battering rams. These hung down from the walls by ropes and when drawn back could recoil and batter the tower to pieces.²³

²⁰Oman, Art of War, II, 48.

²¹William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 164.

²²William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 164.

²³William of Malmesbury, Kings of England, p. 316.

In addition to machines for assault there were also machines for battery: the ram, the bore, and the mine. The ram was the oldest of siege weapons²⁴ and was a great offensive weapon of the Dark Ages.²⁵ The battering ram was used in the siege of Jerusalem in 1099. Basically it was a huge tree, approximately one hundred feet long, tipped with an iron head, usually a crude representation of a ram's head, which weighed twenty pounds. It was slung on a frame between stout uprights or in the base of a wooden tower and was transported to the castle by a team of men often as many as sixty in number. Then the ram was rhythmically swung against the point of the wall that had been selected for breaching. The object was to breach the wall by cracking the surface. During the siege of Jerusalem in 1099 the Muslims lowered mattresses and caulks of timber to absorb the shock and to try to catch and pin the ram when it struck the wall.²⁶

For from the outer walls the citizens had hung sacks filled with straw and chaff, together with ropes and tapestries, huge beams and mattresses stuffed with silk. The soft and yielding character of these buffers

²⁴Edwin Tunis, Weapons: A Pictorial History (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1954), p. 31.

²⁵Oman, Art of War, I, 131.

²⁶Fedden and Thomson, Crusader Castles, pp. 62-63.

rendered the blows of the missiles ineffective and defeated all the efforts of the assailants.²⁷

Their efforts were successful until Duke Godfrey and his men shattered the outworks of the wall and set fire to the mattresses and timber.²⁸

The ram was also employed in the conquest of Lisbon. However, the attempts of the Flemings and the men of Cologne were unsuccessful. This machine was used in conjunction with the wooden tower and other weapons and the men barely succeeded in withdrawing the ram when the enemy set fire to the machines.²⁹

The bore, unlike the ram, disintegrated a wall by gnawing its way through. The bore was another great offensive weapon of the Dark Ages.³⁰ It was more manageable than a ram, but less effective. Like the ram, the bore was basically a large tree fitted with a steel head. Yet this was a spiked head which bit into the stonework. The bore was also operated by swinging it in a sling. In 1132 a bore enabled the Damascenes to breach the walls of Banyas. A special team of sappers fixed shields against a section

²⁷William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 362.

²⁸William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 368.

²⁹De Expugnatione Lyxbonensi, p. 135.

³⁰Oman, Art of War, I, 131.

of the wall. Under the protection of these, the bore pierced the wall.³¹

The third type of battery and by far the most intriguing was the mine. It was used quite often by the Romans.³² In this type of attack the castle was literally dug out from underneath. Those who did the attacking were called sappers. When Belek besieged King Baldwin, he ordered the rock on which the castle was situated to be undermined. Props were placed in the tunnel to support the structure above. Wood was then carried in and set on fire. When the props had burned, the excavation fell in, and the tower which was nearest to the fire collapsed.³³

In the siege of Jerusalem the sappers were protected by the sow, a machine constructed of slight timbers. The roof was covered with boards and wicker work and the sides were protected with undressed hides. Thus those men

³¹Fedden and Thomson, Crusader Castles, p. 63. Sappers worked above ground as well as below. While working on the surface protected by a covering, they would pick away at the wall being careful to weaken rather than breach it since there was the danger that the wall might fall on top of them. After picking at the wall, one blow from the bore could complete the task. See Warner, Medieval Castle, p. 53.

³²Tunis, Weapons: A Pictorial History, p. 31.

³³Fulcher of Chartres, Expedition to Jerusalem, p. 253.

who were in the sow were protected while they undermined the foundations of the wall.³⁴

In the conquest of Lisbon, the men of Cologne and the Flemings dug a mine beneath the castle walls. This mine had five entrances and was forty cubits³⁵ long. The amazing thing was that this structure was completed in one month.³⁶ When the inflammable material was introduced and lit, approximately thirty cubits of the wall crumbled.³⁷

In addition to the siegecraft for assault and battery there were weapons used in artillery. These were, of course, available to defenders and besiegers alike. The mangonel was really a corrupted form of the onager, the simplest of Roman siege machines. It was simple in that it had a single horizontal skein with one vertical beam inserted in it. It was mounted on a rectangular frame with the beam resting on a horizontal bar between two uprights. The skein was twisted tight at both ends by geared winches. When loading the onager, four or more men manned a

³⁴William of Malmesbury, Kings of England, p. 315.

³⁵A cubit is eighteen to twenty-two inches.

³⁶De Expugnatione Lyxbonensi, p. 143.

³⁷De Expugnatione Lyxbonensi, p. 145.

windlass³⁸ and pulled the beam back and down until it was almost horizontal. The stone was then placed in a sling, one side of which was attached to the beam, the other side being hung on a pin at the end of the beam. This slipped off when the beam was halfway up and the stone sailed free. The beam was restrained by a slip-hook that could be tripped by a pull on its lanyard.³⁹

In principle the mangonel worked like the onager; however, in practice it was never as efficient. The rectangular frame was the same but the skein really did not measure up to that of Roman times. Also for holding the stone, a scoop was used more often than a sling.⁴⁰ This decreased by one-third the distance that a projectile could be hurled.⁴¹ The medieval machines had a high trajectory but were difficult to aim and were of doubtful value when bombarding a specific point or target.⁴²

³⁸The windlass is an apparatus consisting of a cylinder upon which is wound the rope which is attached to the object to be lifted. It is operated by hand.

³⁹Tunis, Weapons: A Pictorial History, p. 32.

⁴⁰Tunis, Weapons: A Pictorial History, p. 55.

⁴¹Tunis, Weapons: A Pictorial History, p. 32.

⁴²Fedden and Thomson, Crusader Castles, p. 65.

However, the mangonel had one great advantage. Mounted on four wheels, this machine had great mobility.⁴³ The mangonel was used in many sieges such as those of Nicaea, Jerusalem, and Caesarea.

The tormentum, another piece of ancient siegecraft, was similar to the mangonel in that it also hurled huge stones and it was constructed in a similar manner. A quadrangular wooden frame was fitted at one end with a skein which was folded into parallel lines and passed through holes in the frame on either side. These ends were grasped by cogged winches which controlled the direction that the ropes turned. The arm was placed between the parallel parts of the skein which, when twisted, would force the arm to press against a horizontal bar supported by two uprights.

The arm of the tormentum differed from that of the mangonel. Instead of a sling, the arm contained a hollow area in the upper part which held the stone. For loading, the arm was drawn back with levers, pulleys, and ropes. The stone was released when the arm sprang back against the horizontal beam.⁴⁴

⁴³Tunis, Weapons: A Pictorial History, p. 55.

⁴⁴Charles H. Ashdown, British and Foreign Arms and Armour (London: T.C. and E.C. Jack, 1909), pp. 342-343.

A more accurate weapon was the ballista which also operated by tension. This was a gigantic crossbow bent by a windlass⁴⁵ "which shot iron bolts, 'feathered' with wood and four times the thickness of the ordinary arrow."⁴⁶ The trigger was a forked slip-hook.⁴⁷ The Franks were very proficient in the use of the ballista. In fact, Saladin's failure to capture Tortosa in 1188 was due to the effectiveness of these weapons which were mounted on the castle keep.⁴⁸

Another accurate type of artillery was the trebuchet, developed in the late Dark Ages.⁴⁹ This machine, like the mangonel, was designed to catapult heavy stones. However, the trebuchet operated by counterpoise.

A long pole was laid in a see-saw fashion across an upright, and its shorter, butt end, was heavily weighted. Its longer end, to which a missile was attached, was drawn back to the ground. When this end was released, the action of the counterpoise discharged the missile. Though the trajectory of the trebuchet was not unlike that of the mangon[el], the weapon had a big advantage, since by adjusting the position of the

⁴⁵Tunis, Weapons: A Pictorial History, p. 54.

⁴⁶Fedden and Thomson, Crusader Castles, p. 66.

⁴⁷Tunis, Weapons: A Pictorial History, p. 55.

⁴⁸Fedden and Thomson, Crusader Castles, p. 66.

⁴⁹The exact date is unknown but Oman does not mention the trebuchet until the twelfth century. See Oman, Art of War, I, 140.

weights on the pole relative to the pivotal point, far greater accuracy could be obtained.⁵⁰

According to Egidio Colonna there were four varieties of trebuchets. These were described in his treatise, De Regimine Principum, written in 1280 for Philip the Fair of France.⁵¹

The first variety had a fixed counterpoise composed of boxes filled with sand, earth, stone and iron.⁵² The second variety, the biffa, had a movable counterpoise which could be shifted closer to or farther from the butt of the pole.⁵³ This mobility enabled the engineer to lengthen or shorten the distance of the discharge of the missile. The third variety, the tripantum, had one fixed counterpoise at the butt and another movable one which slid up and down on the beam.⁵⁴ This gave the engineer a greater accuracy for aiming. In the fourth variety the counterpoise was replaced by ropes which were pulled down by the main force of the men's arms. This machine was inferior both in accuracy and force but was superior in mobility. This light machine could easily be transported from place to

⁵⁰Fedden and Thomson, Crusader Castles, p. 66.

⁵¹Oman, Art of War, II, 44.

⁵²Oman, Art of War, II, 44.

⁵³Oman, Art of War, II, 44.

⁵⁴Oman, Art of War, II, 44.

place along the wall before the enemy could erect a counter-trebuchet or strengthen the fortifications of the wall.⁵⁵

The trebuchet was used by the Franks during their siege of Acre in 1189. The steady battering eventually destroyed part of the city walls. This weapon was also used by the Saracens to hurl their Greek fire, which was so effective in destroying the wooden machines of the crusaders.

Before concluding this discussion of the siegecraft used in siege warfare, it is necessary to discuss the weapons used by the foot soldiers who made up the bulk of the fighting forces. Probably the most common weapon for both the Christians and the Turks was the bow and arrow. Both French and Turkish bows were known at this time. The former was of moderate size and small size. However, both were made from goat's horns.⁵⁶ The Turks, according to reports, were extremely skilled in shooting arrows; they were accurate from an "astonishing range."⁵⁷ However, their effectiveness was somewhat diminished when it rained

⁵⁵ Oman, Art of War, II, 44.

⁵⁶ Charles Boutell, Arms and Armour: In Antiquity and the Middle Ages (New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1871), p. 117. Hereafter cited as Boutell, Arms and Armour.

⁵⁷ Gesta Francorum, p. 19.

because the glue disintegrated.⁵⁸ Moreover, the rain also ruined their bows and shields; William of Malmesbury commented that they "were injured by excessive rains"⁵⁹

In addition to the arrows, there was also the crossbow. This weapon had been used by both Greeks and Romans but had been out of favor for many years. It was banned by the church at the Lateran Council of 1139 as being too inhuman to be used by Christians against their fellow Christians. However, by the eleventh century the crossbow was widely available.⁶⁰ In the twelfth century the bow was constructed from wood, but by the fifteenth century it was fashioned from steel and had a range of approximately five hundred yards.⁶¹

The crossbow was the "application of machinery to archery."⁶² When the string was drawn back by using a lever or by winding a crank on a ratchet it was called an arbalest. By using these mechanical devices, more tension could be achieved than could be gained by muscle power

⁵⁸Fulcher of Chartres, Expedition to Jerusalem, p. 134.

⁵⁹William of Malmesbury, Kings of England, p. 323.

⁶⁰Warner, Medieval Castle, p. 65.

⁶¹Warner, Medieval Castle, p. 65.

⁶²Warner, Medieval Castle, p. 65.

alone. Thus, the crossbow could be used by everyone from a small boy to an old man.

However, the weapon did have some drawbacks. Winding it was a slow process. Also, the price of quarrels (crossbow bolts) was high and the waste prodigious. Moreover, there was no protection from the rain as the Genoese discovered at Crecy.⁶³ When the bow strings were wet the arrows "would not fly with their proper force."⁶⁴

Accompanying the crossbow was the pavis, a wooden shield which was used by an archer as protection when he was rewinding his bow. Introduced in the fifteenth century, this shield was approximately five feet tall and three feet wide and was slung on the archer's back when not in use.⁶⁵

Yet, there was a way to dislodge the pavis of an opponent. The archer would tie a string to his bolt and fire it at his opponent's pavis. As soon as the bolt struck the pavis, the archer pulled on the string and the shield fell over. Then another archer would fire a bolt into the exposed target.⁶⁶

⁶³Warner, Medieval Castle, p. 65.

⁶⁴Boutell, Arms and Armour, p. 129.

⁶⁵Warner, Medieval Castle, p. 65.

⁶⁶Warner, Medieval Castle, p. 66.

Not all foot soldiers were armed with crossbows; they had several other weapons at their disposal. During the earlier crusades the foot soldier fought with a lance. It had a slender shaft, was equal in circumference throughout, and was of moderate length. One end of the shaft was equipped with a broad iron head that was sometimes barbed. This lance was thrown from the hand or was thrust at the enemy.⁶⁷ During the thirteenth century, the lance was somewhat modified. The new lance, the guisarme, had "a small axe fixed at the foot of its blade or lance-head on one side, and generally a spike projecting on the other side."⁶⁸

The foot soldier also carried a sword into battle. The sword shown in the Bayeux Tapestry⁶⁹ was rather large, long and straight. The blade was broad, was tapered from the hilt to the point, and was double-edged.⁷⁰ It was used for both striking blows and thrusting at an opponent. By the fifteenth century, the common soldier carried a sword

⁶⁷Boutell, Arms and Armour, p. 108.

⁶⁸Boutell, Arms and Armour, pp. 142, 145.

⁶⁹The Bayeux Tapestry, created in the eleventh century, over two hundred feet long and one and two-thirds feet wide, portrays the events of the Norman conquest of England.

⁷⁰Boutell, Arms and Armour, p. 108.

that was narrower than the long, slight, sharply pointed sword of the knight.⁷¹ This weapon, unlike its predecessor, was designed for delivering a thrust with the point.⁷²

Thus the crusaders had at their disposal not only weapons to be used in hand-to-hand combat, but also the siegecraft necessary to capture a castle. However, the army had to participate in several sieges before the men became proficient with their weapons and machines.

⁷¹Boutell, Arms and Armour, p. 117.

⁷²Boutell, Arms and Armour, p. 128.

CHAPTER II

ARMOR

In addition to being initially unprepared for the type of fighting encountered in siege warfare, the crusaders were equally unprepared with regard to their armor. While the heavy ring or chain-mail used in Western Europe before the crusades might have looked impressive, it certainly was very impractical. However, armor was an area where the crusaders quickly adapted their equipment to meet these new challenges. (After the first experience in Asia Minor, they tried to adapt their armor to meet the conditions that prevailed in the East.)

Prior to the twelfth century, it seems the armor consisted solely of ring-mail. These heavy iron ring-mail were impractical in the hot climates of Asia Minor since the fighters often exhausted their strength when wearing these suits. Moreover, the armor was inflexible, and thus limited the freedom of movement that was so essential in battle.¹

¹Aziz S. Atiya, Crusade, Commerce and Culture (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 159.

However, after 1100 some improvements were made. The ring-mail was replaced by a small chain-mail where each link was attached to the adjoining link. Not only was each individual link smaller, but the whole armor was more flexible. Mail pants became more common and the sleeves on the mail shirt were extended down to the wrist.²

By the year 1200, chain-mail had been improved to the extent that it hardly restricted the wearer's movements at all. A full suit of armor might weigh as little as thirty-one pounds.³ The shirt, which weighed fourteen pounds, accounted for almost one half of the total weight.⁴

Nevertheless, chain-mail did have one great defect; it was not resistant to shock although it was impenetrable. It could not prevent the wearer from receiving bruises or broken bones. This was indeed unfortunate since the crusaders fought using shock tactics of charging and striking heavy blows with their weapons and machines.

To remedy this situation, the armor was backed with a coat of leather or heavy padding, a gambeson or

²Oliver Lyman Spaulding, Hoffman Nickerson, and John Womack Wright, Warfare: A Study in Military Methods from the Earliest Times (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1937), p. 322. Hereafter cited as Spaulding, Nickerson, and Wright, Warfare.

³Spaulding, Nickerson, and Wright, Warfare, p. 322.

⁴Spaulding, Nickerson, and Wright, Warfare, p. 322.

hacqueton. These were so strongly made that even by themselves they could not be penetrated by the arrows of the short bow. These coats alone were sometimes worn by mounted men-at-arms "engaged in some mission requiring even more than the usual high mobility of the twelfth and thirteenth century cavalry."⁵ Usually a gambeson was the only armor of the foot soldier.⁶

Yet, even with this coat, no chain-mail could protect the wearer against the shock of blows in which the weight of the weapon was added to the force of the striker. A downward blow which missed the helmet often struck the shoulders. Frequently when infantry fought cavalry, the horsemen received cuts on the knees and thighs. To solve these problems, shoulder plates and then knee and thigh plates were introduced during the thirteenth century.⁷ These plates were worn over the chain-mail and added to the weight which had to be carried.⁸

Moreover, there were some changes made in helmets. The helmet illustrated in the Bayeux Tapestry had the

⁵Spaulding, Nickerson, and Wright, Warfare, p. 323.

⁶Spaulding, Nickerson, and Wright, Warfare, pp. 322-323.

⁷Spaulding, Nickerson, and Wright, Warfare, pp. 322-323.

⁸Spaulding, Nickerson, and Wright, Warfare, p. 323.

pyramidal form of a pointed cone. This headpiece was elongated by a straight piece of iron in front. The Nasal, a short bar of rectangular section descended over the forehead and nose and guarded them against horizontal blows. This helmet was probably constructed with a strong iron framework which was filled in with either a thin metal plate or some woven material.⁹

The new helmet of the twelfth century was the pot-helm which was equipped with slots which enabled the wearer to see and to breathe. However, although an improvement, there were still several problems. First of all, the total weight of the headpiece amounted to eighteen pounds.¹⁰ This caused fatigue and made it necessary to have a great roll of padding for support. Secondly, since this helmet did weigh so much, it could not be made to fit the head tightly. Consequently, if the headpiece were thrust violently back against the face, the wearer was in danger of breaking his nose.¹¹ By 1200, this second problem was solved by making the front part of the helmet pointed. After 1200 movable visors were added to the headpieces.

⁹Boutell, Arms and Armour, pp. 106-107.

¹⁰Spaulding, Nickerson, and Wright, Warfare, p. 322.

¹¹Spaulding, Nickerson, and Wright, Warfare, p. 322.

Needless to say, this greatly facilitated the vision of the wearer.¹²

However, the knight was the only soldier who wore the complete set of armor. He was protected by the helmet, gambeson, plates, and chain-mail. In addition, he was aided by his shield that, due to the improvement in chain-mail, had become smaller.¹³ It was flat at the top, pointed at the base, and curved on the sides. By the end of the twelfth century the small shields were either flat or nearly so. For carrying purposes when not in battle, the shield was either suspended from a guige, a shield-belt which passed over the right shoulder, or was fastened to the waist belt by a short strap or a clasp.¹⁴ The knight was also equipped with a lance and a two-edged sword. The lance, slender-shafted and equal in circumference throughout, was of moderate length. The broad iron head came with or without barbs.¹⁵ The sword was long, straight and large. The broad blade was tapered from the hilt to the point and was double-edged.¹⁶

¹²Spaulding, Nickerson, and Wright, Warfare, pp. 322-323.

¹³Spaulding, Nickerson, and Wright, Warfare, p. 302.

¹⁴Boutell, Arms and Armour, p. 115.

¹⁵Boutell, Arms and Armour, p. 108.

¹⁶Boutell, Arms and Armour, p. 108.

On the other hand, the foot soldier had very little armor. He was protected by the gambeson and the helmet. Into battle he carried the sword and the lance. Occasionally he was armed with a crossbow or a bow and arrows (see chapter on Siegecraft for details).

Thus by the end of the thirteenth century, the crusaders were better protected by their armor than they had been prior to the First Crusade. Not only were they afforded a greater amount of protection but also a greater amount of mobility so essential in siege warfare.

CHAPTER III

COMPOSITION OF THE ARMIES

One must not confuse the crusading armies with the armies of modern times, for the two are quite different. The armies which crossed Asia Minor to save Jerusalem from the infidel Turks were not well-disciplined, well-organized battallions that attacked on the orders of the commanding general. In fact there was no commanding officer; a council composed of the knights, barons, and clerics made all military decisions. Moreover, there were no battallions. Feudal bands under the leadership of independent knights combined to form the fighting forces. Each band was a self-contained unit. All matters within the band were solved by a common council. Frequently leaders used tactics of persuasion or coercion to maintain order within their bands. Offers of money and threats of punishment were resorted to in many instances.¹

¹August C. Krey, The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eye-Witnesses and Participants (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1921), pp. 20-21. Hereafter cited as Krey, The First Crusade.

This lack of leadership proved detrimental in siege warfare. Each leader established his own camp where he chose and assaulted the city when and how he thought best. Thus, often there were sections around a wall where there was no assault taking place. That is, the city was not completely blockaded. In another instance this lack of leadership proved almost fatal. During the siege of Antioch, the Christians were nearly overrun by the Persians when Raymond of Toulouse refused to comply with the decision to make Bohemond ruler of the city.²

The crusades were dual in purpose, being both religious pilgrimages and military expeditions. Often the people who provided the inspiration to the multitudes of simple-minded believers were not knights or barons, but religious leaders. Pope Urban II summoned the faithful for the First Crusade and Bernard of Clairvaux, the venerable abbot, inspired those for the Second Crusade. Pope Innocent III preached the Fifth Crusade at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.

The man who was chosen to accompany the crusade as the pope's representative had a great responsibility indeed. Bishop Adhemar Le Puy, papal legate in the First Crusade until his death on August 1, 1098, served in a variety of capacities. According to the account in the

²For details see Chapter V.

Gesta Francorum, the Bishop's death was a great loss to the First Crusade for he had been "a helper to the poor and a counsellor to the rich, and he used to keep the clergy in order" ³ In addition he served on the council that made all the military decisions.

The papal legate, although he had great authority and responsibilities, was only one part of the entire army. The remainder of the crusading army may be divided into two main sections: military and civilian, that is, noncombatant. The military section was composed of armored and mounted knights and barons, sergeants, and common foot soldiers. The noncombatant section included peasants, women, merchants, and clerics.

As the first crusading armies in 1096 began the journey toward Jerusalem, they were under the leadership of independent knights of noble birth whose highest allegiance was to themselves. Every member of the crusades made a vow to his parish priest after confession and went on an independent basis; thus no one was subordinate. The knights were not subordinate to the king nor were the common peasants subordinate to the knights. In fact the peasants did leave when the conditions became unbearable. When the Christians were besieged by the infidel at Antioch they were forced to endure the siege and famine.

³Gesta Francorum, p. 74.

"Forgetful of their professions and the many vows which they had taken upon themselves many deserted their comrades, and surreptitiously descending from the walls by means of baskets or ropes, fled to the coast."⁴ Under the knights were the sergeants who usually accompanied the knight or king and protected him.⁵ In addition to participating in battles, the sergeants acted as bodyguards. Under the sergeants were the common foot soldiers, the largest group of combatants.

These were the categories of men who formed the feudal army under the leadership of knights whose personal goals took precedence over the goals of the crusade. For example, Emicho, count of the Rhine country, according to Otto of Freising, "undertook the same warfare, falsely pretending to do so in the name of religion."⁶ This self-appointed leader gathered about twelve thousand men and devoted himself to destroying Jews wherever he found them or else attempted to unite them with the church.⁷

⁴William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 267.

⁵Odo of Deuil, De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem, trans. and ed. by Virginia G. Berry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), p. 117. Hereafter cited as Odo of Deuil, Ludovici VII.

⁶Otto, Bishop of Freising, The Two Cities: A Chronicle of Universal History to the Year 1146 A.D., trans. by Charles C. Mierow (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), p. 406. Hereafter cited as Otto, Two Cities.

⁷Otto, Two Cities, p. 406.

In addition to self-interest, there was also jealousy among groups of knights which greatly detracted from their forming a cohesive fighting unit. During the conquest of Lisbon, there was an incident which occurred when some Franks crossed the Tagus River to Almada because that shore was more suitable for fishing. While there, these men were attacked by a group of Moors residing in that province who killed a number of the men and took five Bretons captive. When the men at the camp heard the grim news they decided in the common council to send two hundred knights and five hundred foot soldiers to plunder Almada. However, when that hour arrived, the men of Cologne and the men of Flanders, due to jealousy or fear, withdrew their contingents. Yet the Normans and the English, although deprived of their comrades' support, sent Saher of Archelle with one hundred foot soldiers to carry out the mission. They succeeded in defeating the force of five hundred Moors of whom eighty were killed and two hundred were captured.⁸

This jealousy and self-interest were also manifested when lords deserted the main armies in favor of establishing feudal domains in the new territory through which they passed. Thus, Bohemond of Sicily established himself in

⁸De Expugnatione Lyxbonensi, p. 141.

Antioch⁹ and Baldwin of Boulogne overthrew the ruler of Edessa.¹⁰ By 1099 when the army reached Jerusalem they were comprised of probably not more than fifteen hundred knights and fifteen thousand foot soldiers. After the city had fallen, the crusaders returned to Europe. Godfrey of Bouillon, the new ruler, was left with approximately three hundred mounted knights, hardly enough men to maintain a kingdom.¹¹

The situation had not changed by the time of the Second Crusade. Odo of Deuil noted a distinct lack of discipline in the armies. Several reasons were cited for this. First of all, the lords acted individually rather than in subordination to the king.¹² Secondly, many of the bands of men were attached to their lords rather than to the king.¹³ Thirdly, many in the armies were noncombatants who had no idea of formal discipline.¹⁴

When disciplinary measures were enforced they were harsh but effective. Under the authority of Frederick

⁹William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, p. 297.

¹⁰William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, p. 194.

¹¹Fedden and Thomson, Crusader Castles, p. 17.

¹²See footnote #13 in Odo of Deuil, Ludovici VII, pp. 66-67.

¹³See footnote #13 in Odo of Deuil, Ludovici VII, pp. 66-67.

¹⁴See footnote #13 in Odo of Deuil, Ludovici VII, pp. 66-67.

Barbarossa, drunk German foot soldiers who lagged behind were killed and their bodies were not buried.¹⁵ King Louis ordered that any soldier caught looting should have his hands, feet, and ears cut off as just punishment.¹⁶ One Flemish man stole goods from the money changers and upset the entire market. When the king was informed he demanded that the criminal be hung on the spot, in full view of the city.¹⁷

However, the knights and their men who comprised the fighting forces were only a small portion of the entire host. The other parts were comprised of a wide variety of noncombatants: the peasants, the women, and the clergy. Many of these were simple-minded believers who expected to overcome the Saracens by Godly intervention rather than by earthly weapons.¹⁸ Pope Urban II who anticipated the problems that a large number of noncombatants could cause tried to limit their number and to supervise their selection. He decreed that all persons were to consult their

¹⁵Odo of Deuil, Ludovici VII, p. 47.

¹⁶Odo of Deuil, Ludovici VII, p. 67.

¹⁷Odo of Deuil, Ludovici VII, p. 75.

¹⁸Walter Porges, "The Clergy, the Poor and the Non-Combatants on the First Crusade," Speculum, XXI (January, 1949), 2. Hereafter cited as Porges, "Clergy, Poor and Non-Combatants."

local clergy before going on the crusade.¹⁹ He emphasized the need for fighting men and for men with sufficient means to bear the cost of the journey.²⁰ He attempted to discourage the participation of the sick and the aged.²¹ Yet these decrees seemed to be more idealistic than realistic. The money of the few wealthy men was quickly spent. Moreover, many more than the pope anticipated joined the crusading forces.

As a further example of his decrees, the pope did allow women, when properly supervised, to go on the crusade.²² By this decree women were allowed to accompany their husbands. This was done by Baldwin of Lorraine and Raymond of Toulouse. Yet, many of the women on the crusades were camp followers and harlots, and according to the chroniclers, were responsible for the immorality that plagued the crusades. However, there were several accounts illustrating the value of women to the crusades. At Dorylaeum they brought water to the men on the fighting front and gallantly encouraged them.²³ In Jerusalem many joined in the street fighting. Yet, their efforts were not

¹⁹Porges, "Clergy, Poor and Non-Combatants," p. 2.

²⁰Porges, "Clergy, Poor and Non-Combatants," p. 2.

²¹Porges, "Clergy, Poor and Non-Combatants," p. 2.

²²Porges, "Clergy, Poor and Non-Combatants," p. 2.

²³Gesta Francorum, p. 19.

without cost. Many died of heat and thirst in Asia Minor.²⁴ Before the host reached Antioch many died from Saracen arrows and the plague.²⁵ In spite of these examples, it was generally agreed upon by the chroniclers that women on the crusade were of more harm than good.

To complicate matters further, many more people than anticipated answered the crusading call. According to Ekkehard,²⁶ the West Franks could easily be persuaded to abandon their lands since they had suffered from civil war, famine, and excessive mortality. Moreover, "St. Anthony's fire," the epidemic that started at the church of St. Gertrude of Nivelles, had devastated the area by the beginning of the twelfth century.²⁷

Among those who were eager to join the crusade were the poor. They sought new opportunities in life which they

²⁴Porges, "Clergy, Poor and Non-Combatants," p. 14.

²⁵Porges, "Clergy, Poor and Non-Combatants," p. 14.

²⁶Ekkehard of Aura, who is still regarded as one of the greatest of the German historians of the Middle Ages, was a monk at Corvey when the First Crusade was preached. He accompanied a later group of crusaders in 1101; he traveled to Constantinople by land, and by sea from there to Jaffa. At Jerusalem he saw a copy of the Gesta, which he subsequently made a basis for his own history. He wrote this work for the Abbot of Corvey in 1112, after he himself had become Abbot of Aura. The work's chief value rests on his eye-witness account of the Crusade of 1101 and his brief items about the Peasant's Crusade, of which no direct chronicle is extant. See Krey, The First Crusade, p. 11.

²⁷Krey, The First Crusade, pp. 41-42, 286.

thought the crusade could give them. The pope invited them to come, not as religious pilgrims, but as potential fighters, to be equipped and maintained by the wealthier crusaders.²⁸ Yet before the midpoint in the journey, the poor had been reduced to the status of noncombatants. They were not maintained by the wealthy nor did they prove to be excellent fighters. Their numbers were swelled by a steady influx from the fighting ranks as they became wounded and by the end of the crusade these groups constituted a major burden upon the armies.²⁹

Another large noncombatant force was the clergy, both secular and regular. Their motives were sometimes other than religious in nature. Some clerics, burdened by the demands of the Cluniac reforms, sought the crusades as a means of escape. Odo, the rebellious bishop of Bayeux, answered the call because it seemed safer than staying at home. He had been previously driven out of England by William Rufus. Odo joined the forces of Robert Curthose but died at Palermo before reaching Jerusalem.³⁰ Still other clerics followed their lords. The Count of Toulouse

²⁸Porges, "Clergy, Poor and Non-Combatants," p. 2.

²⁹Porges, "Clergy, Poor and Non-Combatants," pp. 2, 4.

³⁰Porges, "Clergy, Poor and Non-Combatants," p. 7.

had several chaplains accompany him, the most noteworthy of whom is the chronicler, Raymond of Agiles.³¹

Not even the clergy regarded the papal legate as anything other than a leader in religious matters. Bishop Adhemar Le Puy, papal legate during the First Crusade, was obeyed with regard to preaching, fasting, processions, and caring for the poor. Yet, both higher and lower orders tended to support the leaders whom they had followed on the crusades. They espoused their lord's quarrels and looked to them for preferment.³²

Thus the host that journeyed to Jerusalem in 1096 was heterogeneous in nature. There were many small feudal armies each under the leadership of a knight whose vision of personal glory surpassed the objective of saving the Holy City from the infidel. Accompanying the knights were their own personal bands who rode with them in battle and sided with them in quarrels. Following these bands were a host of noncombatants: the families of the fighting men, women seeking adventure, pious pilgrims of all ages, and clerics, both secular and regular, who performed the sacraments of the church and espoused the quarrels of their masters. It may be said that in general this host hindered

³¹Porges, "Clergy, Poor and Non-Combatants," pp. 6-7.

³²Porges, "Clergy, Poor and Non-Combatants," p. 8.

rather than aided the efforts of the fighting force. The efforts of the fighting force were also hindered by not having a commander to issue the orders. Decision by council was both time consuming and catered to satisfying the whims of the feudal lords rather than working to defeat the infidel.

CHAPTER IV

HOW THE ITALIAN CITY-STATES AIDED THE ARMY IN SIEGE WARFARE

Without a doubt some of the successful sieges during the crusades would have been impossible without the aid of the Italian cities and their ships. Acre and Tyre could not have been captured without the help of the Venetians and the Genoese. Furthermore, the entire Fourth Crusade, the Conquest of Constantinople, was a joint effort of the Venetians and the crusaders, who needed the Italians' ships for transportation to the Levant and, in later crusades, for protection against the Egyptian fleet. The ships were also employed during the sieges. Siegecraft was built on the vessels which were anchored as close to the walls as was possible. Then the mariners were able to bombard the city walls from a closer distance.

Yet, the crusaders paid dearly for the help of the Italians who did not see the crusades as religious pilgrimages nor as military expeditions, but as opportunities for economic gains. In fact, they were horrified at the idea of war against the infidel until the possibilities of

fresh concessions and expanded trade were carefully considered.¹ However, for a price the Italians were willing to transport the pilgrims to the East. Their payment was in the form of money or influence. For transporting four thousand knights, their harness, and one hundred thousand foot soldiers to the East, the Venetians required eighty-seven thousand marks.² In addition, the crusaders agreed to help the doge conquer the city of Zara which was en route to the Byzantine city. The Venetians in return for their assistance in capturing Tyre, received one-third of the city and one-third of the neighboring country.³ The Genoese sent six naval expeditions to Syria between 1098 and 1110. For their aid to the crusading armies, Genoa was granted a series of colonial holdings along the Syrian coast.⁴ When Saladin's victories in Syria disrupted Genoese trade, they were very active in transporting the

¹Fedden and Thomson, Crusader Castles, p. 72.

²Robert of Clari, The Conquest of Constantinople, trans. by Edgar H. McNeal (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1969), p. 37.

³Fulcher of Chartres, Expedition to Jerusalem, p. 270.

⁴Eugene H. Byrne, Genoese Shipping in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries (Cambridge, Mass.: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1930), p. 141. Hereafter cited as Byrne, Genoese Shipping.

expedition of Philip Augustus and in rebuilding the Christian power in Syria.⁵

The Italians were not unfamiliar with the literal of the Mediterranean Sea. The merchants had had political ties and trading privileges with Constantinople and North Africa since the eighth and ninth centuries. They made their initial contact with the eastern trading system in Constantinople during the eighth century. The Venetians were the first to receive definite trading privileges in return for supplying various services and military assistance. The terms of the agreement were shown in the Chrysobull of 992.⁶ The agreement of 1082 gave the Venetians more extensive territorial concessions and served as a model for their relations with the various Crusader

⁵Byrne, Genoese Shipping, pp. 159-160.

⁶The Chrysobull or Golden Bull was an agreement whereby the emperors of Constantinople made gradually extending concessions to the seamen and merchants of their vassal states. The earliest Bull was in 992 and was extended to Petrus II Orseolo of Venice from the emperors Basil and Constantine. The main provisions of the Chrysobull were:

1. No Venetian merchant trading in his own ship, either from Venice or from other provinces shall pay, at the custom-house of Abydos, more than two solidi on entering and fifteen on clearing. That is, provided that his cargo is of bona fide Venetian goods and that he is not carrying the goods of Jews, Amalfitani, Lombards, and others, shipped at Bari, to the defrauding of the Imperial Customs.

2. No Venetian master is to be detained longer than three days after he has given notice that he is ready to sail.

3. Venetians trading in the Empire shall be under

states. Similar concessions were given to the merchants of Pisa in 1112 and to the merchants of Genoa in 1115.⁷

During the ninth century, Italian ships, especially those of Pisa and Genoa, began to frequent North Africa in the hope of increasing Muslim trade. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries these trips became more frequent as the volume of transporting crusaders to the Near East increased appreciably.⁸

Moreover, the role of the North Italian cities in maintaining Christian control in the Holy Land after the capture of Jerusalem was considerable. Baldwin I invited the Genoese to stay in the Holy Land to assist him in capturing Saracen cities. For this, the king was willing to grant them one-third of the money taken from the enemy and a section of the city which they would possess "by

the jurisdiction of the Logothete de domo, only as was the ancient custom.

4. The Venetians are bound to furnish transportation should the Emperor desire to send a force to southern Italy.

See Horatio F. Brown, "The Venetian Quarter in Constantinople to the Close of the Twelfth Century," Journal of Hellenic Studies, XL (1920), 69.

⁷ Alfred E. Lieber, "Eastern Business Practices and Medieval European Commerce," The Economic History Review, 2nd Series, XXI (August, 1968), 236-237. Hereafter cited as Lieber, "Eastern Business Practices."

⁸ Lieber, "Eastern Business Practices," p. 237.

perpetual and hereditary right" ⁹ Needless to say, the Genoese accepted the offer.

In 1109 they accompanied Bertrand, the son of Count Raymond of Toulouse, to Tripoli. This city was besieged by Bertrand because he sought to possess it by right of inheritance from his father. The port was besieged on land by the army and on sea by the seventy beaked ships of the Genoese. ¹⁰ Before long, the Saracens agreed to permit the Christians entry into the city. ¹¹

Like the Genoese, the Venetians were also active in maintaining and extending the territory of the crusaders. In 1123 they sailed with a great fleet to Syria "in order with the help of God to extend Jerusalem and the area adjacent all for the advantages and glory of Christendom." ¹² Their fleet was composed of 120 ships and some small boats and skiffs. Some of the ships were beaked, some were merchant vessels, and some were triremes. ¹³ All these were

⁹Fulcher of Chartres, Expedition to Jerusalem, pp. 151-152.

¹⁰Beaked ships had a metal covered ram projecting from the prow.

¹¹Fulcher of Chartres, Expedition to Jerusalem, pp. 193-195.

¹²Fulcher of Chartres, Expedition to Jerusalem, p. 238.

¹³A trireme was a warship with three banks of oars on each side.

painted in various colors which "delighted with their brightness those who beheld them from afar."¹⁴ These vessels were loaded with long timbers to be used by the carpenters in building siegecraft and in attacking the high city walls. In addition to the timber, fifteen thousand men, Venetians and pilgrims, and three hundred horses were transported.¹⁵ The fleet traveled slowly, landing daily for supplies and fresh water. They sailed only by day since, due to the fluctuations of the wind, they could easily become separated. Sailing by night would make regrouping extremely difficult.

However, the pace was hastened when the Venetians were informed by messengers of the Franks that the Babylonians (men from Cairo) had arrived at Ascalon with both an army and a navy. When the doge arrived at Acre he heard that the Babylonians had done a great deal of damage and departed. After a meeting with his mariners, the doge decided to pursue the enemy's fleet. According to his plan, he divided his fleet into two squadrons. Assuming command of one squadron, he sailed toward Jaffa. The other squadron of eighteen ships sailed for the high seas as a

¹⁴Fulcher of Chartres, Expedition to Jerusalem, p. 239.

¹⁵Fulcher of Chartres, Expedition to Jerusalem, p. 239.

decoy for the Saracens who would assume that it was transporting pilgrims to Jerusalem from the direction of Cyprus.

The plan was a success. When the enemy saw the approaching ships, the decoy, they prepared to engage them in battle. However, the Venetians neither retreated nor advanced but waited for the larger squadron to approach from the rear. When the Saracens saw this, the Venetians "rushed upon their enemies with indescribable fury and hemmed them in on all sides so that they could not find anywhere an avenue of escape."¹⁶ Then the mariners boarded the enemy ships, cut the men to pieces, cast them overboard, and captured the treasure.¹⁷

Having completed their mission, they sailed back past Ascalon, where they discovered ten Egyptian ships, laden with merchandise from the Orient, approaching them. These Babylonian vessels were captured along with much equipment, gold and silver coins, pepper, cumin, and aromatics. After burning those ships which had fled to shore, the Venetians returned to Acre with the remaining ships and booty.¹⁸

¹⁶Fulcher of Chartres, Expedition to Jerusalem, p. 244.

¹⁷Fulcher of Chartres, Expedition to Jerusalem, p. 244.

¹⁸Fulcher of Chartres, Expedition to Jerusalem, pp. 244-245.

After the episode at Jaffa, the doge was summoned to Jerusalem where he was invited to participate in the siege of Tyre. For his role, he and the Venetians would be handsomely compensated; they would receive one-third of the city and one-third of the neighboring countryside. In addition, liberal trading privileges would be granted. Moreover, any litigation between Venetians would be decided in a Venetian court. Finally, the king of Jerusalem was to pay the doge three hundred Saracen bezants yearly.¹⁹

This compensation was generous but was well earned by the end of the siege for Tyre was a well-fortified city. Not only were there towers and walls that protected the inhabitants, but also the sea surrounded the city on all sides except for a narrow strip of land "equal to the distance that an arrow could be shot."²⁰ Moreover, to enter Tyre by sea was dangerous due to hidden rocks of varying heights.

However, the skilled Venetians maneuvered through the stormy sea and sailed safely into the harbor which lay within the city walls. The mariners were able to enter the harbor because the army was already in possession of the

¹⁹William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 553-555.

²⁰William of Tyre, A History of Deeds Done beyond the Sea, trans. and annotated by Emily A. Babcock and August C. Krey, II (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 7. Hereafter cited as William of Tyre, History of Deeds, II.

orchards near Tyre and had established their camp around the city walls. This prevented the citizens from leaving the city proper to guard the harbor from the towers situated at the entrance. By being harbored within the city walls, the ships were completely sheltered from all winds except those from the north.²¹

Thus, in 1124, Tyre was besieged by the Christians. They drew their ships up on dry land near the harbor, except for one galley which was left in case of emergency, and dug a deep ditch from the sea inward²² that protected and enclosed the army.²³ The siegecraft was constructed by both the crusaders and the Venetians and placed in strategic positions. Constant bombardment by defenders and besiegers tested each other's mettle.

When it was learned that the Damascenes, allies of the Tyrians, were coming to relieve the siege, the host was divided into three sections. It was the Venetians' duty to guard the machines and movable towers while the mariners were to make sure that the men operating the siege engines

²¹William of Tyre, History of Deeds, II, 8-9.

²²William of Tyre is not clear on the necessity or reason for the ditch.

²³With the ships on dry land, the machines on the ships were closer to the city walls. Thus the stones hurled from the mangonels had a better chance to hit and destroy the walls.

did not slacken their efforts and the fighting in front of the gate was uninterrupted. The doge was to sail with his fleet, arranged in battle formation, to Alexandria, about six miles from Tyre. It was not until he reached his destination that he learned that the king of Damascus had returned to his home. The doge traveled back to Tyre to press the siege more vigorously than ever.²⁴

This was effective since not long afterward the city surrendered to the Christians. As they had been promised, the Venetians received their reward.

The men from Venice were also active in the Fourth Crusade. It would not have been possible without the aid of the Venetians who agreed to supply enough vessels to transport four thousand knights and their horses and one hundred thousand foot soldiers to Babylon (Cairo) or Alexandria for eighty-seven thousand marks.²⁵ In addition,

²⁴William of Tyre, History of Deeds, II, 15.

²⁵Robert of Clari, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 57. There is some disagreement concerning the actual amount of money. Geoffrey de Villehardouin stated the amount as 34,000 marks of silver. See Geoffrey de Villehardouin and Lord John de Joinville, "Chronicle of the Fourth Crusade and the Conquest of Constantinople," in Memoirs of the Crusades, trans. by Sir Frank Marzials (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1908), p. 16. Hereafter cited as Geoffrey de Villehardouin and Lord John de Joinville, "Chronicle of the Fourth Crusade." McNeal and Wolff gave the amount as 94,000 marks of silver. See Edgar H. McNeal and Robert L. Wolff, "The Fourth Crusade," Vol. II: The Later Crusades, in A History of the Crusades, ed. by Robert L. Wolff and Harry W. Hazard (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962), 162.

the doge and a group of his men would accompany the host and would add fifty galleys at their own expense.²⁶

In addition to supplying transportation and war vessels, the doge actively participated in making decisions. He was instrumental in persuading the crusaders to change their destination from Babylon or Alexandria to Constantinople.²⁷ Also the Venetian leader secured a promise from the crusading leaders to help him attack the city of Zara²⁸ which had been captured by the King of Hungary, Bela III, an old enemy of the doge.

However, perhaps the most important decision that the doge made was to transport the crusaders even though they could not gather enough money to pay for the trip. They were thirty-six thousand marks short of the eighty-seven thousand marks agreed upon.²⁹

The King of Hungary has taken from us Zara in Sclavonia, which is one of the strongest places in the world; and never shall we recover it with all the power that we possess, save with the help of these people. Let us therefore ask them to help us to reconquer it, and we will remit the payment of the debt of 34,000

²⁶Robert of Clari, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 37.

²⁷Robert of Clari, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 66.

²⁸Robert of Clari, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 42.

²⁹Robert of Clari, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 41.

marks of silver, until such time as it shall please God to allow us to gain the money by conquest, we and they together.³⁰

The reason for the money shortage, according to Geoffrey de Villehardouin, was that many men did not contribute their share and went to other ports. However, the primary cause was "the excessively high estimate made in the first place by Villehardouin himself and the other envoys as to the size of the army for which transportation would be needed. Even if all the defaulting contingents had come to Venice, they still would not have made up more than half the estimated number of 33,500 men."³¹

After wintering in Venice, the fleet eventually sailed in October, 1202.

Then they all got ready their gear and their navy and put to sea. And each of the high men had his own ship for himself and his people, and his transport to carry his horses and the doge had with him fifty galleys all at his own cost. The galley he was in was all vermilion and it had a canopy of vermilion samite spread over him, and there were four silver trumpets trumpeting before him and drums making a great noise. . . . And the pilgrims had all the priests and clerks mount on the high poops of the ships to chant the Veni creator spiritus When the fleet set out from the harbor of Venice . . . freighters and these rich ships and so many other vessels, that it was the finest thing to see that has ever been since the beginning of the world. For there were fully a hundred pairs of trumpets, of silver and of brass, all sounding at the departure, and so many drums and tabors and

³⁰ Geoffrey de Villehardouin and Lord John de Joinville, "Chronicle of the Fourth Crusade," p. 16.

³¹ McNeal and Wolff, "The Fourth Crusade," p. 167.

other instruments that it was a fair marvel. When they were on that sea that had spread their sails and had their banners set high on the poops of the ships and their ensigns, it seemed indeed as if the sea were all a tremble and all on fire with the ships they were sailing and the great joy they were making.³²

The navy was composed of three types of vessels: galleys, sailing ships, and horse transports. The galleys, the fighting convoys, were long narrow vessels, up to one hundred feet long propelled by oars and auxiliary sails. They each carried a large crew of over one hundred mariners and rowers.³³ The mariners were archers and crossbowmen.

The sailing ships, large merchant vessels, usually had two masts and two decks. They were broad in the beam and capable of transporting over one thousand passengers. The comfort of the passengers was increased by the construction of lofty decks over the bow and stern, which produced the crescent-shaped silhouette seen in the vessels of later epochs.³⁴ The upper deck was partially protected from attack by a sturdy wooden barricade which was forty-five to fifty-four inches high and extended from the bow to

³²Robert of Clari, The Conquest of Constantinople, pp. 42-43.

³³Robert of Clari, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 132.

³⁴Byrne, Genoese Shipping, p. 6.

the stern on both sides of the ship.³⁵ Of the two masts, the forward mast was taller and heavier. The smaller mast on the largest ships of the thirteenth century carried two sails; the forward mast carried three.³⁶ These sails were all triangular. They were made of cotton cloth except for one stronger sail that was made of thick canvas to withstand the stiffest winds.³⁷ These ships were steered with two heavy lateral rudders, one located on each side near the stern.³⁸

The horse transports resembled the galleys; they were long, narrow vessels, propelled by oars. There was enough space in the hold for approximately forty horses.³⁹

Yet, probably not all of the galleys and ships were that large (one hundred feet long). In the campaigns of St. Louis, the length of the largest galley was a little over eighty-three feet.⁴⁰ Perhaps only a few vessels were

³⁵Byrne, Genoese Shipping, p. 7.

³⁶Byrne, Genoese Shipping, p. 6.

³⁷Byrne, Genoese Shipping, pp. 6-7.

³⁸Byrne, Genoese Shipping, p. 7.

³⁹Robert of Clari, The Conquest of Constantinople, pp. 132-133.

⁴⁰Byrne, Genoese Shipping, p. 9.

one hundred feet long, and these were reserved for the leaders of the crusade.⁴¹

After capturing Zara, the doge persuaded the crusaders to help him seize Constantinople. When the host neared the Byzantine capital, the knights entered the transports where their horses were lodged and waited for the doge to clear the shore of Greeks who had come down to defend their land against the invaders. The doge himself led his ships, galleys, and transports. In front of him on barges were his crossbowmen and archers who were to dispell the Greeks.⁴² This was accomplished rather quickly as was the breaking of the great iron chain that protected the harbor. After the Venetian vessels were harbored safely, it was decided that the crusaders would attack by land and the Venetians by sea. The city was simultaneously bombarded by the mangonels of the army and by the Venetian mangonels which were mounted on the sturdy horse transports. During the battle, the Italians managed to work their ships closer to the city walls so that they could easily mount the walls with the ladders and bridges that

⁴¹Robert of Clari, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 132.

⁴²The barges were carried on the decks of the vessels rather than being towed behind the ships. See Byrne, Genoese Shipping, p. 9.

had been made on the vessels.⁴³ While men were scaling the walls, others on the ships continued to hurl missiles from the mangonels until they succeeded in setting a large portion of the city on fire. The army rode against the enemy, confronting the emperor in the field. However, the Greeks were so confused at seeing the entire crusader army advancing in their battle formations that they retreated to Constantinople. Later that evening, the emperor Murzuphlus fled with as many people as he could take with him.⁴⁴

However, the crusaders were unable to collect the spoils of war from the emperor, so again they prepared for battle.⁴⁵ The French made sows to mine the walls while the

⁴³A bridge was constructed from the spars that carried the sails of the ships. These spars were one hundred eighty feet long or more. They were fastened together to form planks. Strong ropes were stretched on either side of the planks to make hand rails. The bridge and the men inside were protected by coverings of hides and canvas. When completed, it was so wide that three knights in armor could walk side by side. The bridge extended so far out from the end of the ship that the height from the structure above to the ground was at least two hundred and forty feet. See Robert of Clari, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 70.

⁴⁴Robert of Clari, The Conquest of Constantinople, pp. 68-77.

⁴⁵Alexius Ducas was nicknamed Murzuphlus because of the heavy eyebrows that grew together over the bridge of his nose. He belonged to a prominent family in Constantinople that had provided two emperors: Constantine X, 1059-1067, and Michael VII, 1071-1078. Murzuphlus was made chief steward by Alexius, the disinherited Greek prince whom the crusaders had returned to Constantinople and made emperor. When Alexius was unable to persuade the French to leave Constantinople, Murzuphlus strangled him and had

Venetians constructed bridges on their vessels. In order to prevent the machines from crushing the ships, the mariners covered their vessels with strong house timbers for added support. Then they joined the boards together and covered them with grapevines for added protection.

On Friday, April 9, 1204, the crusaders were prepared to assault the city once more. The machines were loaded on barges and galleys, and the entire host sailed forth on ships lined up side by side. It was indeed an impressive sight since the navy "extended fully a good league along its front."⁴⁶

When the host landed on the shore they took strong cables and drew the vessels as close to the walls as they could. The crusaders set up their sows and the Venetians mounted their bridges in order to assail the walls.

However, this time the assault did not succeed. When the Greeks saw the army and machines, they hurled down huge blocks of stone which broke the machines to pieces and made it impossible for anyone to remain inside them.

himself declared emperor, Alexius V. He renewed the fighting with the crusaders, but unable to defeat them, he fled. Later captured by a citizen of Constantinople, he was sentenced to die by being thrown down from a three hundred foot column. See Robert of Clari, The Conquest of Constantinople, pp. 78, 85, 124.

⁴⁶Robert of Clari, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 93.

Moreover, the Venetians were never able to reach the walls or scale the towers which were extremely high. Unable to accomplish their mission, they withdrew.⁴⁷

Yet believing their cause to be a righteous one, the crusaders repaired their machines and bridges and prepared an attack for Monday, April 12, 1204. As in previous assaults, they got as close to the wall as they could and hurled stones and Greek fire at the towers. Yet they were so well-protected with hides that the fire did no damage.

However, where fire was ineffective, ships were not. Four or five ships were able to get close to the wooden towers that were built on top of stone towers. The ship of the bishop of Soissons struck the tower as the sea carried the vessel forward. When the ship struck a second time, a knight held onto the tower with his hands and feet and was able to get inside. With the aid of his sword, he captured the tower from the Greeks. He then admitted more soldiers and mariners and in a short period of time other towers were seized. This gave the crusaders access to the city which they eventually captured. The spoils were divided among the victors.⁴⁸

⁴⁷Robert of Clari, The Conquest of Constantinople, pp. 92-93.

⁴⁸Robert of Clari, The Conquest of Constantinople, pp. 95-96.

Thus, there is considerable evidence that the Italian cities were instrumental in helping the crusaders achieve victories over the Saracens and the Greeks. Not only did the Genoese and Venetians furnish transportation for men, animals, and siegecraft, but they also made their vessels available to be used in combat; that is, stones were catapulted from machines lodged on the ships. Also the ships were used as bases for bridges. However, the Italians did not contribute their ships and crews for anything less than economic gains. Their "crusading zeal" was demonstrated only when new commercial opportunities presented themselves.

CHAPTER V

THE SIEGES OF NICAEA, ANTIOCH, JERUSALEM, ACRE, AND DAMIETTA

At the time of the First Crusade, the Christian army was relatively unfamiliar with the tactics and weapons of siege warfare. Battles fought in open plains were more common in Western Europe. To be sure, the crusaders made costly mistakes in the beginning. Nicaea was a prime example. However, the Byzantines who were already familiar with siege and counter-siege tactics were able to help the pilgrims. Greek engineers were employed at Nicaea to help build siege engines and to plan strategy. Yet, the crusaders learned quickly and, before the Fifth Crusade, they had developed siege warfare to a fine art.

The siege and capture of Nicaea in 1097 revealed a definite lack of experience on the part of the Christians. After arriving at the city, they attacked immediately without having any battle formations or any camp established. In addition, the army had no navy; thus the citizens of Nicaea during the earlier part of the siege could safely travel to various parts of the city via the lake adjacent to the city walls. Following their initial attack, the

Christians besieged the city by laying out their camp in an unbroken circle around the city walls. Moreover, the crusader leaders were stationed in strategic positions along the wall so that "when disaster was assailing them from every direction, the citizens might more easily be forced to surrender."¹ Next the leaders determined that siege engines should be built as quickly as possible. Within seven weeks, the carpenters had built sows for undermining the walls and mangonels for hurling stones upon the city.²

However, the construction of the first sow proved to be disastrous. Although it was constructed with oak beams which were joined together and enclosed by stout walls, it was not sturdy enough to withstand the blows of huge rocks. Once the sow was positioned against the wall, it was attacked by defenders who hurled enormous stones down upon it. The joints gave way and all twenty men inside were crushed to death.³

The crusaders were, however, more successful with their blockade of the lake adjacent to the city. The action became necessary in order to prevent the citizens from bringing supplies of food and provisions into the city.

¹William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 157.

²William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 158.

³William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 159.

Since the army was without a navy, boats had to be dragged overland. The Byzantine emperor, Alexius, provided the boats but the crusaders furnished the transportation of them to the lake. Three or four wagons were joined together, depending on the length of the boat, and it was placed thereon.⁴ During the night, the people transported the vessels a distance of seven miles by pulling ropes which were placed on the shoulders and necks of men and horses. Among the ships were some that were capable of carrying fifty to one hundred fighters.⁵

With the lake under Christian control, the crusaders pressed the siege even harder. Some were occupied with sapping the walls while others were engaged in destroying sections of the fortress by constant bombardment with missiles.

Yet there were still problems. Raymond of Toulouse was able to crumble the exterior of a tower only to find that the interior had been fortified with stones and cement. The mangonels were accomplishing their purpose until the defenders threw down pitch, oil, lard, and lighted brands, all of which destroyed the engines.⁶ It

⁴William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 160.

⁵William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 160.

⁶William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 162.

was not until later sieges that the machines were protected from fire by vinegar and hides.

After much effort with little results, a man from Lombard offered his services for a price.⁷ Having nothing to lose, the crusaders accepted his offer to build a sow that would undermine a tower and breach a wall without the loss of a single man. This he accomplished by constructing a machine that had a steeply pitched roof and sloping sides. With these features, the rocks would roll off rather than land on the machine.⁸

Shortly after the wall was breached with the machine of the Lombard, the citizens of Nicaea surrendered and the emperor took possession of the city.⁹

Antioch was the city besieged after Nicaea. Again the crusaders made some costly mistakes. The first one was in not waiting until spring to besiege Antioch. Both animals and men could have benefited from the winter's rest. Instead, on October 18, 1097, the host advanced on the city. The reasoning was that a delay would only allow

⁷He required the necessary materials and a sufficient sum to defray the expenses. In addition, he would receive an allowance for his labors. See William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 164.

⁸William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 164.

⁹William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 167.

the Turks to strengthen their own defenses and to assemble the forces invited to their aid.¹⁰

Having learned at Nicaea not to attack at first, but to establish strategic positions, the leaders located themselves at various gates around the wall. After this blockade had been established, the soldiers erected a wooden bridge over the river in order to procure fodder for their animals and the necessary supplies for themselves. This structure was made by lashing boats together. Planks and other wooden materials were laid on top of the boats and were bound together with wicker fastenings. The bridge was wide enough so that several people could walk abreast.¹¹

Frequently when the host crossed the river via the bridge to look for supplies, the Christians spread out and became separated from each other. Hostile forces laid ambushes to trap them and those who could escape the city when not heavily guarded attacked them.¹² The result was that the Christians dared not venture too far beyond the bridge. Soon all the fodder for the animals and food for the people in the area was exhausted, and besiegers and the besieged alike were starving to death.¹³

¹⁰William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 206.

¹¹William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 209.

¹²William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 211-212.

¹³William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 213.

Furthermore, the cold winter was contributing to the death count. Both pilgrims and animals were freezing to death. The army had brought more than seventy thousand horses, and more than sixty-seven thousand perished that winter.¹⁴

To make matters worse, severe rains rotted the pavilions and tents and the crusaders had no protection from the cold. Also, food and garments molded due to the cold, wet conditions. "Floods of water fell in torrents, so that both food and garments moulded and there was not a dry place where the pilgrims might lay their heads or store their necessary effects."¹⁵

As a result of these circumstances, a pestilence broke out in the camp. It was so severe that there was hardly room to bury all of the dead. Some of the people who were still healthy fled to Lord Baldwin in Edessa.¹⁶ Those who remained at camp did find food by defeating the enemy on a foraging party.¹⁷

¹⁴This number given by William of Tyre seems ridiculously high. See William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 214.

¹⁵William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 214.

¹⁶William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 215.

¹⁷William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 217.

Thus it appeared that the Christians would have been wiser to have waited until the spring of 1098 to begin their siege. It is difficult to ascertain whether during the winter of 1097 it was the besiegers or the besieged who suffered the more.

The situation improved for the Christians with the new year (1098). The besieged citizens of Antioch sent letters to their allies to come to their aid. In response to the request, a large contingent of Syrians, with Ridwin of Aleppo in command, was assembled from Aleppo, Shayzar, Hama, Emesa, Hierapolis, and other neighboring cities.¹⁸ Their plan was to attack the crusaders while they assaulted the city.¹⁹ However, some Christians living in the vicinity of Antioch informed the crusader leaders who, with their cavalry, marched out to confront the enemy. The army hemmed in the Turks on three sides and the infidel had no choice but to flee. As they did, they were pursued by the cavalry. By nightfall, approximately two thousand of the enemy were dead.²⁰ For their victory the Christian army

¹⁸William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 225.

¹⁹William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 225.

²⁰William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 227.

obtained a great quantity of spoils, including one thousand strong horses.²¹

Greatly encouraged by this victory, the leaders built a fortress on a hill above Bohemond's camp. When completed, the stronghold was "put in charge of a vigilant garrison, and the position of the whole army was as safe as if it had been protected by the walls of a fortified city."²²

After the siege had been in progress for five months,²³ some Genoese ships carrying pilgrims and supplies arrived at the mouth of the river. As these pilgrims were being escorted back to the camp they were attacked by the Turks. By the end of the fighting about three hundred people had perished.²⁴

When the sad news reached the camp, an order for retaliation was given. The army was divided among the various leaders: Duke Godfrey, Robert of Normandy, the Lord of Flanders, Hugh the Great, and his brother Eustace. Each group was situated in a strategic position. Thus, when the Turks neared the city gates they were surrounded and unable to flee. After this bloody battle two thousand

²¹William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 227.

²²William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 228.

²³William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 229.

²⁴William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 230.

Turks were dead.²⁵ Among these were twelve of the principal Turkish satraps.²⁶

At this time, the Christians erected a redoubt, fortified with a solid wall and a deep ditch at the head of the bridge. Raymond of Toulouse was given the responsibility for garrisoning it. With this new fortress, the citizens of Antioch were more closed in than ever.²⁷

The Christians were aware of the conditions in Antioch through the messages of Firuz, a Christian sympathizer and a man of much influence in Antioch. He daily informed Bohemond, the crusader leader and a close friend of Firuz, as to the state of the city and to the plans of Yaghi Siyan, the Lord of Antioch.²⁸ A secret plan was contrived between Firuz and Bohemond. If the latter were willing to assume lordship over the city, the former would help him capture it. However, this plan would be abandoned if the other leaders would not concede the city to him.²⁹ The Count of Toulouse was against the plan and thus a long delay ensued which proved to be almost fatal.

²⁵William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 234.

²⁶A satrap was a governor of a province in ancient Persia. See William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 234.

²⁷William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 234-236.

²⁸William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 242.

²⁹William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 243.

The delay was ended when the Christians discovered that Karbuqa, the Persian general, and his forces were but seven days journey from Antioch. Realizing that their hopes of survival were slim if the Turks should attack, the Christian leaders agreed to grant the city to Bohemond if it surrendered.³⁰

Preparations were now quickly made for the Christian seizure. A few of the leaders and their chosen men were admitted by rope ladders to Antioch on the night of June 2, 1098. This small group began by capturing the towers and opening the gates.³¹

At dawn the small group "began to make a great din at the entrance to the city"³² in order to alert those forces still in the camp. They hurried to the city and captured the approaches and the gates. When the noncombatants who had been kept in ignorance about the plan saw the deserted camp, they too made their way to the city.

The citizens of Antioch were given no quarter. Those who perceived the situation fled to the hills. The remainder were slaughtered by victors who "maddened by the lust of killing and greed for gain . . . spared neither sex

³⁰William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 247-249.

³¹William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 256-257.

³²William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 257.

nor condition and paid not respect to age."³³ By the end of the day more than ten thousand citizens had been slain and the entire city had been plundered.³⁴

Yet the victory was short-lived. When Karbuga and his forces arrived, Antioch was again besieged, but this time by the infidel.

After three weeks of confinement under severe conditions, the crusaders prepared for battle. The situation they faced was either to starve to death or to try to defeat the infidel in battle.³⁵ Having chosen the latter, the army built a solid wall of cement and stone on a hill opposite the citadel which was still held by the Turks. This wall contained outworks on which were placed catapults. A force of two hundred men were left to guard this place.³⁶

The remainder of the army forced its way out of the city to face the enemy. The battle formation was such that the legions occupied the entire plain.

When our forces had occupied the entire plain in such a way that there was no danger of their being surrounded, the trumpets sounded the signal, and the troops, preceded by the standard-bearers, advanced gradually towards the ranks of the foe. When they were so close

³³William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 258.

³⁴William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 260.

³⁵William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 285.

³⁶An outwork was a lesser trench or fortification built out beyond the main defense.

that the infidels could discharge their arrows against them, our first three lines rushed forward simultaneously and attacked the foe at close quarters with swords and lances. Our foot soldiers, who were using bows and ballistae, preceded the cavalry squadrons, and in emulation of one another, hurled themselves forward in a furious charge. Close on the heels of the infantry came the cavalry, using every effort to protect the vanguard. While the first lines were exerting themselves to the utmost in the combat, those behind came up to their support with a charge not less vigorous, thus stimulating the vanguard to deeds even more courageous and daring. All the Christian forces except the rear ranks . . . had now come up to the enemy and were fighting valiantly. Many Turks had been slain, and their lines had become so disorganized that they were now in flight.³⁷

Thus, they could not be surrounded by the Turks. The army advanced slowly until they were close enough to attack with spears and lances. At this point, the pace quickened and the battle began in full force. The Turks realized that they were outnumbered and retreated under the cover of a smoke screen which was established by setting fire to the grass.³⁸

After briefly returning to Antioch to establish Bohemond as ruler, the crusaders pressed onward to Jerusalem. The group that arrived at the Holy City on June 7, 1099, consisted of forty thousand people.³⁹ Out of the total, only twenty thousand were foot soldiers and fifteen

³⁷William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 291-292.

³⁸William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 292.

³⁹William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 349.

hundred were knights. "The rest of the multitudes consisted of a helpless throng, sick and feeble."⁴⁰

In establishing this siege, the leaders showed some intelligence by asking those persons well-acquainted with the area what place might be most easily and most conveniently attacked. The leaders counseled together and decided to attack from the north since deep gorges prevented assault from the east and south.⁴¹

After planning their strategy, the leaders commenced to establish their camps in various strategic locations along the walls. Yet after the lines had been settled, only half of the city was enclosed by the siege. The southern section remained unblockaded.⁴²

A mistake was made when, on the fifth day of the siege, the army decided to attack. Since no siege machines had been constructed, the besiegers had only their shields and swords. With these they were able to force the defenders to retreat to the protection of the inner walls. "If the Christians had had scaling ladders or machines with which to seize the ramparts, they might without question have taken the city on this day when they attacked it with

⁴⁰William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 349.

⁴¹William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 349.

⁴²William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 350.

such enthusiasm."⁴³ Yet, they realized that without siege-craft they could not accomplish their objective.

So before proceeding further, workmen and carpenters traveled six miles from Jerusalem to a valley where tall trees were plentiful. Four weeks later, mangonels and sows and battering rams were ready for the attack.⁴⁴

In the meantime, however, the people were suffering terribly from thirst. So desperate were the people for water that when some was found, fighting erupted among them. Moreover, the animals were dying from the lack of fodder. When the pilgrims went on foraging expeditions, they were ambushed by the enemy.⁴⁵ Apparently no lessons with regard to storing food and water had been learned from the bad experience at Antioch.

However, after a sermon on the Mount of Olives, the people were encouraged and vowed either to liberate Jerusalem from the infidel and restore it to Christianity or to die in the attempt.

The night before the storming of the Holy City, the machines were assembled and moved into position along the walls. Duke Godfrey demonstrated some forethought in that

⁴³William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 350.

⁴⁴William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 354-358.

⁴⁵William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 352-353.

when he realized the section of the wall he was blockading was well defended by machines, weapons and enemy warriors, he moved his entire camp one half mile to a less fortified position. Before dawn the engines had been positioned around the city. With Godfrey's new position, the city was now blockaded.⁴⁶

At daybreak, the Christians, both the army and the noncombatants, stormed the city. All contributed to the total effort. Women armed with weapons fought "manfully beyond their strength."⁴⁷ Young and old alike tried to push the machines closer to the walls. All the while these engines were hurling missiles toward the walls. Other crusaders protected by their shields and wickerwork screens shot arrows at the enemy who responded with their arrows and stones thrown from their own machines.

Yet with all their valiant efforts, the Christians encountered problems that impeded their progress. A deep, wide ditch had to be filled before machines could be moved to the wall. This exercise took three days to accomplish.⁴⁸ Nor did the attempts to breach the walls render satisfactory results. The citizens had hung sacks filled with chaff and

⁴⁶William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 360-361.

⁴⁷William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 362.

⁴⁸William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 367.

straw, tapestries, huge beams and mattresses stuffed with silk, from the outer walls. These soft buffers made the blows of the battering rams ineffective.⁴⁹ Moreover, the infidel possessed more engines than did the crusaders and were constantly hurling stones to impede the work of the latter. In addition the Turks were hurling burning brands, darts with burning sulphur, pitch, and oil on the machines. At length though, these efforts were thwarted by pouring vast quantities of water on the machines.⁵⁰

The second day of the attack was similar to the first. Some people continued to try to push towers closer to the walls. Still others shot arrows and hurled stones at the defenders on the ramparts in order to drive them back so that they would be unable to hinder those pushing the machines to the walls. The citizens of Jerusalem responded by diligently meeting the crusaders' efforts, blow by blow. As a result, havoc reigned supreme and many fighters on both sides perished.

By the third day of the attack, the tide turned in favor of the crusaders. The Count of Toulouse and his forces had filled the pit on the southern side of the city with stones. At last they were able to move their tower to

⁴⁹William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 362.

⁵⁰William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 363.

the wall and bombard it.⁵¹ Duke Godfrey and his men and machines on the northern side of the city shattered the outworks of the wall. Then they set fire to the mattresses and tapestries. With the help of a northerly wind, the smoke proved so dense that the defenders had to abandon their positions.⁵² Next the duke ordered some beams, captured from the enemy, to be brought aloft so that one end rested on the tower and the other end rested on the wall. The movable side of the siege tower was lowered so that, supported by heavy beams that had been placed beneath it, a strong bridge was formed. As soon as the bridge was in place, the duke and some of the men crossed it and captured the wall.⁵³ After this was done, other knights scaled the wall with ladders. When these men were over the walls the men opened the north gate and the entire army rushed in with no semblance of order.⁵⁴

The next step for the duke and his men was to rid the city of the enemy and to open the southern section. Protected by shields and helmets, the crusaders swept through the town killing every infidel they encountered.⁵⁵

⁵¹William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 367.

⁵²William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 368.

⁵³William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 368.

⁵⁴William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 369.

⁵⁵William of Tyre, History of Deeds, I, 370-371.

During the Third Crusade, the Christians employed the tactics of siege warfare to capture Acre. Under the leadership of King Guy of Jerusalem and his brother, Geoffrey de Lusignan, the crusaders began their siege by establishing themselves on the summit of Toron. However, they were outnumbered four to one and were constantly attacked by the Turks.⁵⁶ The Christian cause would have been lost had it not been for reinforcements that arrived just in time to save the host from destruction at the hands of the Saracens.

As with the previous sieges, the first few months of the siege of Acre was characterized by skirmishes. The Turks attacked the Christians' positions on Toron and they fought back, driving the infidels back into Acre.

However, a new feature of the siege was the trench warfare engaged in by the crusaders. They dug a huge ditch, deep and wide, in which men and machines were placed. This trench served as a barricade and as a shelter against the attacks of the Saracens.

The entrenchment lasted throughout the winter. During this time the Christians were powerless to prevent the activities of the Saracens. The Babylonians had sent a fleet which blockaded the port. Thus, no men or supplies

⁵⁶ Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, trans. by Merton J. Hubert, notes by John L. LaMonte (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), p. 135.

could relieve the host. Moreover, the Turks built wooden towers, mangonels, sows, and shields, and fortified the city gates and towers.⁵⁷

In the spring, however, the hopes of the host were renewed when a fleet of Pisans and Genoese arrived and defeated the enemy fleet. By using arbalests and Greek fire the Italians were able to drive the Turks back toward Acre and to capture one of their galleys. With swords the Italian mariners slew the enemy and carried their heads back to the shore in triumph.⁵⁸

Yet, the loss of the galley so angered the Turks that those in Acre attacked the host by land. They stormed the trench but were repulsed by the victorious crusaders. Having been driven back into the city, the infidels were now blockaded by both land and sea since the Italians controlled the harbor and the Christians controlled the land around Acre.⁵⁹

However, the situation was reversed when the food supplies of three Turkish vessels were able to be salvaged by the besieged even though the ships were wrecked. The

⁵⁷Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, pp. 148-149.

⁵⁸Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, p. 152.

⁵⁹Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, p. 154.

enemy, revived by the fresh supplies, attacked vigorously and hemmed in the Christians from both front and rear.⁶⁰

However, in the summer of 1190 reinforcements for the host arrived under the leadership of Count Henry of Champagne, son of Henry the Liberal and Marie of France and the nephew of both Philip Augustus and Richard of England.⁶¹ Yet even with the additional troops, the siege continued in much the same manner; that is, there were minor skirmishes between the host and the Saracens.

There was an attack, however, by the Pisans on the Tower of Flies located out in the harbor at the end of the breakwater. The mariners constructed a tower and ladders on one of their galleys. To protect the machine, they covered it with hides. They assaulted the tower but were defeated by more than two thousand Saracens⁶² who came to the aid of their fellow men in the tower. They hurled huge beams upon the Christians and threw Greek fire upon the tower. The hides failed to protect it and the mariners were forced to retreat with burning ladders and a ruined tower.

⁶⁰Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, p. 156.

⁶¹Henry was selected King of Jerusalem in 1192 and ruled until his death in 1197. See Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, p. 158.

⁶²Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, p. 167.

The incident discouraged the host but did not prevent their building a ram to breach the walls. This machine was completely iron clad to prevent any damage from Turkish missiles. Underneath the ram was a sow to protect men who were to try to break the walls by delivering stout blows to it.⁶³ When the host brought the ram to the wall and began to breach it, the Saracens hurled stone, marble, and Greek fire. The iron protected the ram itself, but the fire burned the sow and the men were forced to flee.⁶⁴ The unattended ram was finally destroyed by crushing its iron and framework with stone and then by setting the rubble on fire.⁶⁵

The next major event of the siege was a naval battle that took place in the fall of 1190. A fleet from Alexandria had been sent to relieve the Turks in the city.⁶⁶ The Christian mariners did not attack but waited for the enemy to move. Their fleet, driven by a gale,

⁶³ Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, p. 169.

⁶⁴ Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, p. 169.

⁶⁵ Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, p. 170.

⁶⁶ Ambroise said the fleet consisted of fifteen vessels but Beha ed Din, the chief oriental source on the siege of Acre, said the fleet contained only three vessels. See Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, p. 171.

crashed on a rock. Two ships were lost and all of the enemy were stoned by the host. Many sailors were drowned and many others were killed by the crusaders. The Turks who waited inside the city for their relief were given the inept and weak men whom the host had not killed.⁶⁷

By the middle of November the food supplies had greatly decreased. So, the Christian leaders decided to meet the Turks in open battle. They drew up in their ranks and marched to the bridge Doc (a bridge over the Belus River). Saladin, unprepared for a battle, withdrew from the site.⁶⁸

The host then crossed the bridge to forage for food but were attacked when recrossing the Doc. They were harassed when returning from Caiphas where there was a great food store. However, when the host reached the Doc, they were ambushed by the Turks. Geoffrey de Lusignan assumed command, charged down upon the enemy, and after killing many of them, led the host safely back to Acre.⁶⁹

Yet, the hard-won battle for food only satisfied the host for a short while. During the winter there was a

⁶⁷ Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, p. 172.

⁶⁸ Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, pp. 173-174.

⁶⁹ Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, pp. 174-176.

great famine which was not relieved until the following spring, when food and supplies arrived by ship.⁷⁰

Also in the spring, Philip Augustus of France arrived with his troops. Richard of Devizes wrote that Philip Augustus and Richard the Lion Heart traveled to Acre because:

Wido, king of Jerusalem, sent word to Philip, king of the French, and Richard, king of the English, whilst wintering in Sicily, that the residue of the Christians who lay before Acre would, on account of their weakness and the violence of the pagans, either be obliged to depart or perish, unless very shortly sustained.⁷¹

According to Beha ed Din, the chief source for the siege of Acre, the date of Philip's arrival was April 20, 1191.

However, Richard the Lion Heart did not arrive until June 8, 1191. This delay was due to an illness that Richard suffered.⁷²

Since Richard did not arrive when Philip did, the French king was faced with the decision of waiting for the

⁷⁰ Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, p. 189.

⁷¹ Richard of Devizes, "Chronicle of Richard of Devizes, Concerning the Deeds of King Richard the First, King of England," in Chronicles of the Crusades being Contemporary Narratives of the Crusade of Richard Coeur de Lion by Richard of Devizes and Geoffrey de Vinsauf; and of the Crusade of Saint Louis by Lord John de Joinville, ed. by Henry G. Bohn (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848; reprint ed., 1969), p. 14.

⁷² Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, p. 196. From the symptoms given, the illness was either trench mouth or Vincent's infection, a malady caused by malnutrition and the absence of vitamin C.

Englishman or proceeding without him; Philip chose the latter. Augmenting the crusading forces, his men guarded the trench and assaulted the city walls with their machines. However, their efforts were to no avail and they retreated to the trench. The Saracens cheered their victory and burned the machines.⁷³

Disheartened but not completely discouraged, the Christians constructed new machines, mangonels, towers and rams, and again assaulted the walls of Acre. Once again, however, their efforts were repulsed by the Saracens. Although the machines were protected by hides, the enemy threw dry brushwood on all the machines and then threw jars of Greek fire on the brushwood.⁷⁴ All the Christians could do was to stand by and watch the destruction.

The following day, July 2, the Turks attacked the trench that was guarded by the army's finest soldiers.

The slaughter on both sides was great, and the Turks dismounting, advanced on foot with greater ease, and having joined battle, fought most obstinately with swords, hand to hand, and with poignards, and two-edged axes, and some of them used clubs bristling with very sharp teeth. Their strokes on the one hand, and cries on the other were terrific, and many were slain on

⁷³ Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, p. 198.

⁷⁴ Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, p. 204.

both sides. The Turks pressed on, and the Christians drove them back⁷⁵

After a fierce battle the infidel were repulsed.⁷⁶

While there were assaults and counter-assaults occurring above ground, there were also assaults underground. The French sappers were busy trying to undermine the towers of Acre, especially the tower called Maudite, a strong tower at the corner of the defense wall of Acre. However, the Christians had not counted on the countermine operation of the Turks, who were trying to dig a tunnel from the inside in order to meet the Christians' sappers and engage them in an underground battle.⁷⁷ When the Turks met the Christians, the Christian captives who were forced to dig the tunnel for the infidels broke away from their bondage and escaped. This so angered the Turks that they closed the tunnel through which their captives had escaped. Thus, the countermine was effective in that,

⁷⁵Geoffrey de Vinsauf, "Geoffrey de Vinsauf's Chronicle of Richard the First's Crusade," in Chronicles of the Crusades being Contemporary Narratives of the Crusade of Richard Coeur de Lion by Richard of Devizes and Geoffrey de Vinsauf; and of the Crusade of Saint Louis by Lord John de Joinville, ed. by Henry G. Bohn (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848; reprint ed., 1969), p. 207. Hereafter cited as Geoffrey de Vinsauf, "Richard the First's Crusade."

⁷⁶Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, pp. 204-205.

⁷⁷Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, pp. 206-207.

although the Turks lost their prisoners who were digging the tunnel, the enemy did succeed in preventing the crusading sappers from completing their mining operation.

Although ill, Richard had arrived in Acre and was directing the attack.

. . . he caused to be made a hurdle, commonly called a circleia, put together firmly with a complication of interweaving and made with the most subtle workmanship. This the king intended to be used for crossing over the trench outside the city. Under it he placed his most experienced arbalesters, and he caused himself to be carried thither on a silken bed, to honour the Saracens with his presence, and animate his men to fight, and from it, by using his arbalest, in which he was skilled, he slew many with darts and arrows.⁷⁸

Under his command the assault was pressed even harder but the Turks stoutly resisted.

Finally the tide turned in favor of the Christians. The outer walls were smashed and breached. In a last effort the Turks built a wall which divided the city in two. They tried to defend part of their city but to no avail. They sent a message to Saladin stating that if relief was not immediately forthcoming, they would make peace with the Christians.

The leader was unable to send relief so a peace treaty was concluded on July 12, 1191. By the terms of the surrender the Turks would yield the city, the Cross, two thousand noble prisoners and five hundred common prisoners,

⁷⁸ Geoffrey de Vinsauf, "Richard the First's Crusade," pp. 209-210.

and two hundred thousand bezants to Richard and Philip. As a guarantee of good faith, the Turks offered their best men of Acre as hostages.⁷⁹

After accepting the terms, Philip left the crusade to return to France. He entrusted his men to the Duke of Burgundy and swore to Richard to keep the peace in the West until the Englishman returned to his kingdom.⁸⁰

Richard remained in Acre while the Saracens procrastinated on their pledges. While waiting, Richard prepared for his voyage home. He loaded his ships and repaired and strengthened the city walls of Acre.

After waiting over two weeks⁸¹ for Saladin to honor his own terms, Richard realized he had been deceived. The hostages, as Saladin had planned, were condemned to die by Christian hands; that is, they were sacrifices for the Turkish cause. After counseling with his men, Richard ordered the Turkish prisoners to be shot with arbalests.⁸²

⁷⁹Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, p. 217.

⁸⁰Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, pp. 220-221.

⁸¹Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, p. 226.

⁸²According to Geoffrey de Vinsauf, the captives were hung. See Geoffrey de Vinsauf, "Richard the First's Crusade," p. 222.

Thus to avenge Christianity, twenty-seven hundred were executed.⁸³

The siege of Damietta during the Fifth Crusade, unlike the other sieges already discussed, was unsuccessful in that it ended in defeat for the Christians. They were driven out of Egypt not by bows and arrows, but by hunger and thirst.

This unfortunate siege began in March, 1218, when the crusaders under the leadership of John, King of Jerusalem, and the Duke of Austria sailed from Acre.⁸⁴ Three days later part of the host arrived at the harbor of Damietta. The remainder of the host who had been delayed at Acre arrived a month later. The advance on the shore was made on May 29, 1218, under the leadership of the Count of Saarbrücken, Simon II.⁸⁵

Damietta was a well-fortified city. It was protected by a triple wall and by many towers.

⁸³Ambroise, The Crusade of Richard Lion Heart, p. 228.

⁸⁴John of Brienne, King of Jerusalem, received his crown in 1210 when he married Marie de Montferrat. He lost his crown in 1225 when his daughter Isabelle married Frederick II. John became Emperor of Constantinople in 1228 and retained this title until 1237. The Duke of Austria was Leopold VI who was duke from 1198 to 1230.

⁸⁵Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," in Christian Society and the Crusades 1198-1229, trans. by Joseph J. Gavigan, ed. by Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), p. 62.

Fortified at different times in the past, its three walls were unequal heights, the first one low to protect the navigable ditch which encircled the city on the land sides, the second one higher and reinforced by twenty-eight towers, each with three tourelles, or protecting penthouses, and the third, or inner wall, much higher than the other two.⁸⁶

In the middle of the Nile River stood the chain tower so called because from it to the city walls were extended huge iron chains which served to control traffic in peace time and to prevent the passing of enemy vessels in wartime. The tower itself was seventy tiers high⁸⁷ and positioned in the river so that it could neither successfully be bombarded nor mined. Its capture was indeed a key to the siege of the city.⁸⁸

Encountering only a few Saracens the host established camp and prepared to build their siege weapons. The crusaders realized that a tower located in the middle of the Nile River had to be captured before they could advance any farther than the sea shore. The Duke of Austria and the Hospitallers of St. John built two ladders on two ships and the Germans and the Frisians fortified another ship with bulwarks, setting up a small fortress on the top of the mast. On June 24, the duke assaulted the tower with

⁸⁶McNeal and Wolff, "The Fourth Crusade," p. 398.

⁸⁷McNeal and Wolff, "The Fourth Crusade," p. 399.

⁸⁸McNeal and Wolff, "The Fourth Crusade," pp. 398-399.

the ladders. However, the Saracens who were manfully defending their stronghold, smashed the ladders. The Germans moved their ship into position between the city and the tower and cast anchor. They assaulted the tower and a bridge that linked the tower to the city with stones cast from trebuchets. However, the Saracens defended themselves by hurling Greek fire on the ship.

The mariners were able to extinguish the flames but they realized that was not the way to conquer the stronghold. Oliver of Paderborn, an architect, preacher, and author of "The Capture of Damietta," proposed another solution to the problem. Under his direction, two ships were bound together with beams and ropes. By this close connection the danger of drifting was eliminated. Four masts and sailyards were erected; a strong fortress joined with poles was established at the summit and protected with hides. A ladder suspended by strong ropes and stretching thirty cubits beyond the prow was made under the fortress.⁸⁹

However, before this machine could be tested the Nile overflowed and the ship was dragged against the torrent to the tower. The crusaders hurried to the tower to secure the ship with stronger anchors, but did not or could not move the vessel. The Turks extended their lances

⁸⁹ Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 65.

in order to smear the ladder with oil and threw Greek fire upon it. The men on the ship were able to extinguish the flames.⁹⁰

In the meantime, the Turks withdrew to the inner part of their tower, having set fire to the top portion of it. The Christians attacked the door at the base of the tower but were unable to gain admittance. However, the Saracens, although safe in their tower, realized they were trapped. In return for their lives, they surrendered the tower to the Duke of Austria.

Instead of conquering the city or remaining to maintain the siege, many Germans and Frisians left Damietta in August and September of 1218 to return to their homes. Those who remained in Egypt were harassed by the Saracens. On October 9, they, with their armed galleys, invaded one of the camps of the crusaders but were repulsed. King John of Jerusalem pursued the enemy to its galleys, many being killed or drowned.⁹¹ Again on October 26, the Turks invaded the Christian camp and were driven away.⁹²

⁹⁰Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 66.

⁹¹Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 70.

⁹²Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," pp. 70-71.

On November 29, the camp was again invaded; not by the Turks, but by a more formidable foe, the river. When the Nile overflowed its banks, the tents floated off, food was destroyed, and the ships upon which fortresses had been erected were carried off to the Saracens on the opposite shore and were burned.⁹³

After the flood came disease. Many of the army was afflicted with trench mouth or Vincent's infection. Many perished during the winter.⁹⁴

After the tempest, the Saracens as well as the Christians began to rebuild and fortify their positions. While the host was busy revamping what ships had survived, the enemy fortified the banks with ramparts and erected a clay-like substance with high wooden defenses. In addition, siegecraft was constructed and positioned on the defenses. All across the river they sank ships and fixed stakes in the eddies so that Christian ships would be unable to cross the Nile safely.⁹⁵

Yet with all of their fortifications, the Saracens suddenly abandoned their city on November 5, 1219.

⁹³Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 71.

⁹⁴Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 72.

⁹⁵Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 74.

According to Oliver the Lord was responsible for their flight. He "struck such terror to the Sultan of Babylon and his satraps that, abandoning the camp . . . they placed their hope in flight alone."⁹⁶

The crusaders were notified of this by a soldier of the Sultan who spoke the news in French. The men crossed the river to discover the truth for themselves. Thus Damietta was captured with no resistance from the enemy and with no bloodshed.⁹⁷

After the capture of Damietta, the army drifted into patterns that would eventually lead to their downfall. The crusaders became corrupt and lazy. The people "were contaminated with chamberings and drunkenness, fornications and adulteries"⁹⁸ The army remained idle for the remainder of 1220 until June, 1221, except for one expedition to Broil.⁹⁹ Returning with many spoils, horses, oxen,

⁹⁶ Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 74.

⁹⁷ Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 75.

⁹⁸ Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 106.

⁹⁹ It is west of Damietta and today is called Burlus.

camels, clothing, and household furniture, the army was content to remain militarily inactive.¹⁰⁰

In August, 1220, the Doge of Venice sent fourteen galleys equipped with pilgrims and supplies to help the Christians.¹⁰¹ However, the King of Babylon, armed with thirty-three galleys destroyed the vessels with Greek fire and took the pilgrims captive.¹⁰² The only ones to escape were a group of German nobles who were coming to supplement the forces at Damietta.¹⁰³

In November, 1220, Lord Frederick, son of Emperor Henry and Constance of Sicily, was crowned Emperor in Rome. He desired to take up the cause of the Cross and assist the Holy Land. The Duke of Bavaria, Ludwig of Wittelsback, was sent ahead and arrived in May, 1221.

The duke was immediately consulted on the desirability of war. The crusading army was idle and the Christian leaders knew that time to attack the Sultan's camp was before the Nile overflowed. Furthermore, Egypt

¹⁰⁰Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 106.

¹⁰¹Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 107.

¹⁰²Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 107.

¹⁰³The author does not say what became of these nobles. See Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 107.

could elect to join the Christians since their leaders were disagreeing with the Sultan.¹⁰⁴ The duke, the barons, and the knights decided to attack the Sultan and began to arrange their tents up the river beyond their camp on June 29.¹⁰⁵ On July 7, King John, who had gone to get fresh supplies and troops, returned to Damietta. By the seventeenth day of the same month, the Christian army, some fifty-two hundred strong, gathered at Fareskur, three miles south of Damietta.¹⁰⁶

For their part, the Egyptians had four thousand horsemen,¹⁰⁷ who encircled the Christians and attacked the outermost lines of foot soldiers with arrows. After three days of attacks they realized they had no hope of winning a quick victory and returned to their lord.

By July 24, the army had camped on a triangular head of an island where the Nile divided into two parts,

¹⁰⁴ Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," pp. 111-112.

¹⁰⁵ Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 111.

¹⁰⁶ Twelve hundred men were armed in military fashion and four thousand archers were present. In addition, they were supported by six hundred and thirty vessels. See Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 114.

¹⁰⁷ Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 115.

separating the Sultan's camp from the Christians' camp.¹⁰⁸ There each camp strengthened its position. The Christians built a deep ditch around their fort while their adversaries made a wall out of earth and constructed machines to be positioned on the wall.

Moreover, the infidel were encouraged by the plight of the crusaders. Some of them deserted the camp. Many of the ships that sailed to Damietta for food did not return. On August 18, four of the crusaders' galleys were either captured or sunk by the enemy.¹⁰⁹ Armed men guarded the river banks as far as Damietta so the Christians could neither send nor receive messages. In addition to all of these problems, the supply of food was dwindling daily.

To alleviate the situation, the leaders decided to abandon their camp at night. On August 26, the crusaders began leaving their camp, setting fire to their tents as an invitation to the Egyptians to follow. That same night the Nile overflowed and flooded the fields.

What the leaders had not counted on was the ineptitude of their own people, many of whom were greatly

¹⁰⁸The island was twelve miles in length. See Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 116.

¹⁰⁹Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 125.

intoxicated from the wine in the camp.¹¹⁰ Some were caught in the mire created by the overflow of the river. Others overloaded the ships that were there and were drowned. Moreover, the crusaders lost mules, camels, clothing, and their arrows for defense. Those who managed to leave the camp were lost in the darkness. Worst of all, the Egyptians were alerted by the fire and smoke, and promptly followed the Christians.¹¹¹

By the first hour of the following day, August 27, the Turks were harassing the crusaders from all sides. They fought back bravely; King John attacked the Turks who were opposite him while the Germans were battling the Turks at the rear. Yet their efforts were to no avail. On August 29, beset by a lack of food and fodder, the crusaders decided it was better to live and surrender than to die by starvation or by drowning in the flooded river.

On August 30, the army of the Lord surrendered to the Egyptians and the Assyrians. By the terms of the

¹¹⁰According to Oliver of Paderborn there was "such an abundance of wine that it could not be brought along; but being freely exposed it had overcome the unwary, who remained sound asleep in the camp or prostrate on the road." See Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 126.

¹¹¹Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," pp. 126-127.

agreement, the Christians would receive the True Cross¹¹² along with all captives taken at any time in the Kingdom of Babylon or any Christian held in the power of Coradin. When Damietta and all of its belongings had been received by the Saracens, the crusaders and all of their movable goods would be sent away. The truce was to be faithfully kept for eight years.¹¹³

The crusaders did indeed improve in their siege tactics. At Nicaea several mistakes were made. The army attacked immediately without having established any camp, any plan of attack, or any machines. If the enemy had been prepared they could have easily defeated the crusaders. After the besieging army had positioned itself around the city, they still had to take time to construct machines that failed in the end. Only when the engineer built machines with sloping sides were the crusaders successful in this aspect of siege warfare.

Knowing little or nothing of the geography of Nicaea and the surrounding area, the Christians were totally unprepared to blockade the lake. Perhaps if they had known about the lake and had ships with them, the

¹¹²The True Cross was a relic of the Cross that had been lost in the Battle of Hattin, July 4, 1187.

¹¹³Oliver of Paderborn, "The Capture of Damietta," p. 132.

blockade could have been put into effect more quickly and thus would have hastened the city's surrender.

The crusaders were still making mistakes at Antioch. Their biggest errors were their poor timing and their lack of knowledge concerning the climatic conditions of the area. Had they waited until spring to besiege the city, the army and the animals would have been spared the freezing temperatures, the disastrous rains, and the pestilence.

However, in some ways, they had made improvements since the siege of Nicaea. They established their positions before assaulting the city of Antioch. Also they engaged the infidel in open battle. When the Turks were confronted in the open field, they usually were surrounded shortly after the battle began. They did not perform well in open field warfare since their specialty was short harassing attacks on the opposing army's flanks. At Antioch when the Christians met the Turks in open battles, the latter lost. If the Christians had not confronted the Turks at Antioch when the crusaders were besieged, Jerusalem might not have been returned to Christianity.

At the Holy City, the crusaders did what they should have done at both Antioch and Nicaea; they asked the people who were well acquainted with the area which places might be easily and conveniently attacked. This

information undoubtedly saved them time and energy in their preparations for the siege. They learned that deep gorges would prevent assault from the east and south, so they concentrated their attack from the north.

However, time was wasted by attacking without siegecraft. Only after spending a full day trying to assault the walls without success, did they realize that machines were indeed essential for victory. Once these weapons were constructed, it took only three days of constant assault to shatter the walls and enter the city.

A different tactic of siege warfare was employed during the Third Crusade. The crusaders were protected by trenches. Their camps as well as their machines were established in these wide ditches. From their position they were able to assault the city and at the same time to defend their position.

The main problem in Acre was a lack of leadership. It was not until the arrival of Philip Augustus and Richard the Lion Heart that the siege shifted decisively in favor of the crusaders. Philip's troops augmented the fighting forces, but it was Richard's leadership that enabled the Christians to succeed.

The leadership during the Fifth Crusade was fair but the strategy was bad. After the siege of Damietta the army became lazy and idle. After one year of inactivity,

they marched toward Cairo only to be forced into a position where they had to fight or retreat. The retreat itself was a disaster. For all of their efforts, the crusaders of the Fifth Crusade were never able to conquer Cairo much less all of Egypt, and were forced to abandon Damietta and leave Egypt entirely.

The crusaders did improve on their grasp of the tactics of siege warfare. When they had effective leadership, had knowledge of the geography of the area under siege, and had sufficient and effective machines, their sieges were successful. However, without the aforementioned conditions, costly mistakes were made.

CONCLUSIONS

There were several results of siege warfare during the crusades. This type of warfare played an important enough role that it was brought back to Western Europe with the crusading armies. Siege warfare demonstrated the strength as well as the weakness of the Christian armies. The crusaders' strength was in the ability to adapt themselves to a kind of warfare with which they were relatively unfamiliar. Their weakness was shown in their lack of accomplishment when there was no leadership.

The crusaders, nevertheless, performed remarkably well in siege warfare. Unfamiliarity with siege tactics and a lack of common sense were a hindrance in the beginning. However, after the first experience with siege warfare at Nicaea, the crusaders began preparing and protecting their siegecraft. Sturdier machines, better able to withstand the blows of huge stones hurled from the enemy's machines, were constructed. The Christians began protecting their siegecraft with hides, vines, and occasionally with iron. The crusader armor was also changed to meet the requirements of the terrain and climate of the Levant. The heavy, oppressive armor used in Western Europe was

discarded for a lighter, more flexible armor that was better suited for the hot climate of the Near East.

However, the one area where the crusaders continually faltered was in leadership ability. Since there was no commanding officer, there was no one with the ultimate authority to make key decisions. In the siege of Antioch, this lack of command almost proved fatal. If Raymond of Toulouse had not been convinced by his fellow knights to allow Bohemond of Sicily to become ruler of Antioch, the Persians would have arrived at Antioch in time to destroy the Christian army.

In many of the successful sieges the success was due primarily to the efforts of one man who assumed the role of leader. Bohemond of Sicily led the crusaders over the walls of Antioch. Duke Godfrey turned the tide in favor of the Christians on the third day of fierce fighting at Jerusalem. By shattering the outworks on the northern end of the city and establishing a bridge between a tower and the wall, the Christian army was able to enter Jerusalem and overwhelm the inhabitants. During the Third Crusade, the siege of Acre was a stalemate until Richard the Lion Heart assumed command and personally directed the Christian attack. On the other hand, the Fifth Crusade failed because there was no decisive leadership. The man

responsible for the army's decision to attack the Sultan was the Duke of Bavaria, who had no knowledge of siege warfare or of the Egyptian terrain.

When the crusaders returned to Western Europe they brought with them a greater knowledge and appreciation of siege warfare. Some of the things associated with siege warfare were retained by the Christians. The lighter armor replaced the heavy armor in Western Europe. Some siege-craft, such as the mangonel, was retained by the crusaders and brought back to Western Europe.¹ Greek fire was also introduced to the western world by the Christians.² The siege technique of mining was employed in the West after the crusades.³

Thus siege warfare, although known to the Romans ✓ and to men of the Dark Ages, was not widely known in Western Europe in the Middle Ages. This type of warfare ✓ was used extensively during the crusades and made such an impression upon the Christians that when they returned to Europe they brought the knowledge and practical experience of siege warfare, and made this knowledge known to the western world.

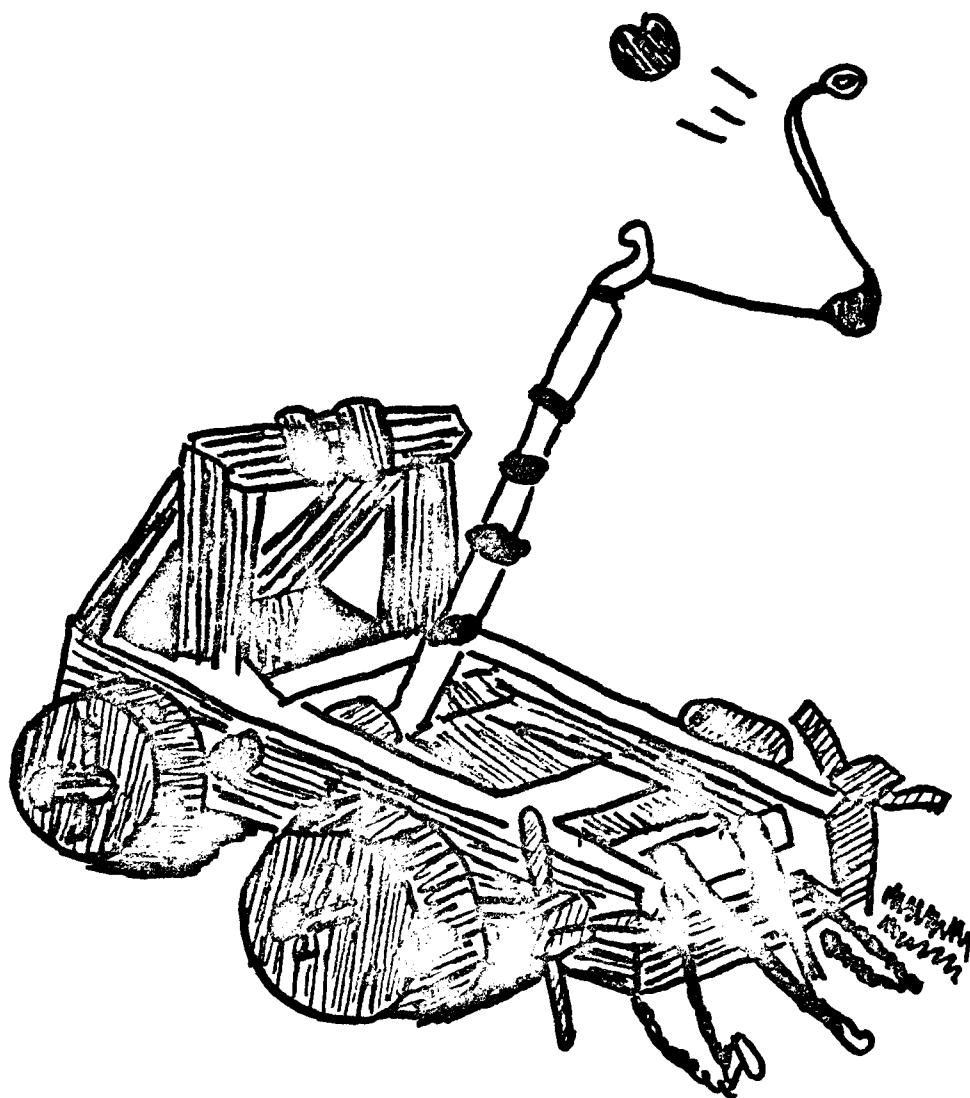
¹Atiya, Crusade, Commerce, and Culture, p. 125.

²Atiya, Crusade, Commerce, and Culture, p. 125.

³Atiya, Crusade, Commerce, and Culture, p. 125.

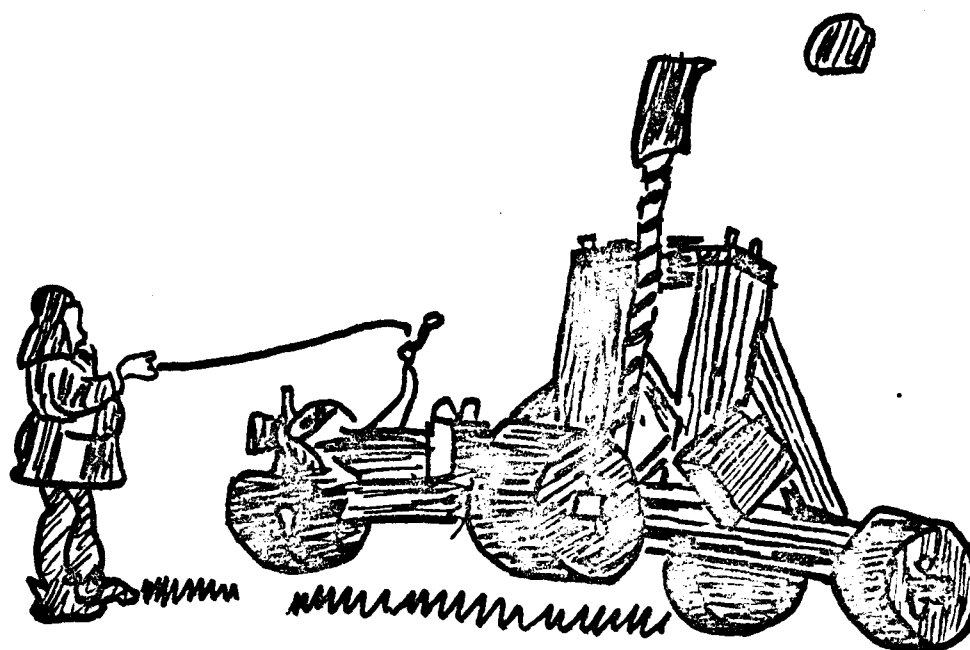
APPENDIX

PLATE I

ONAGER¹

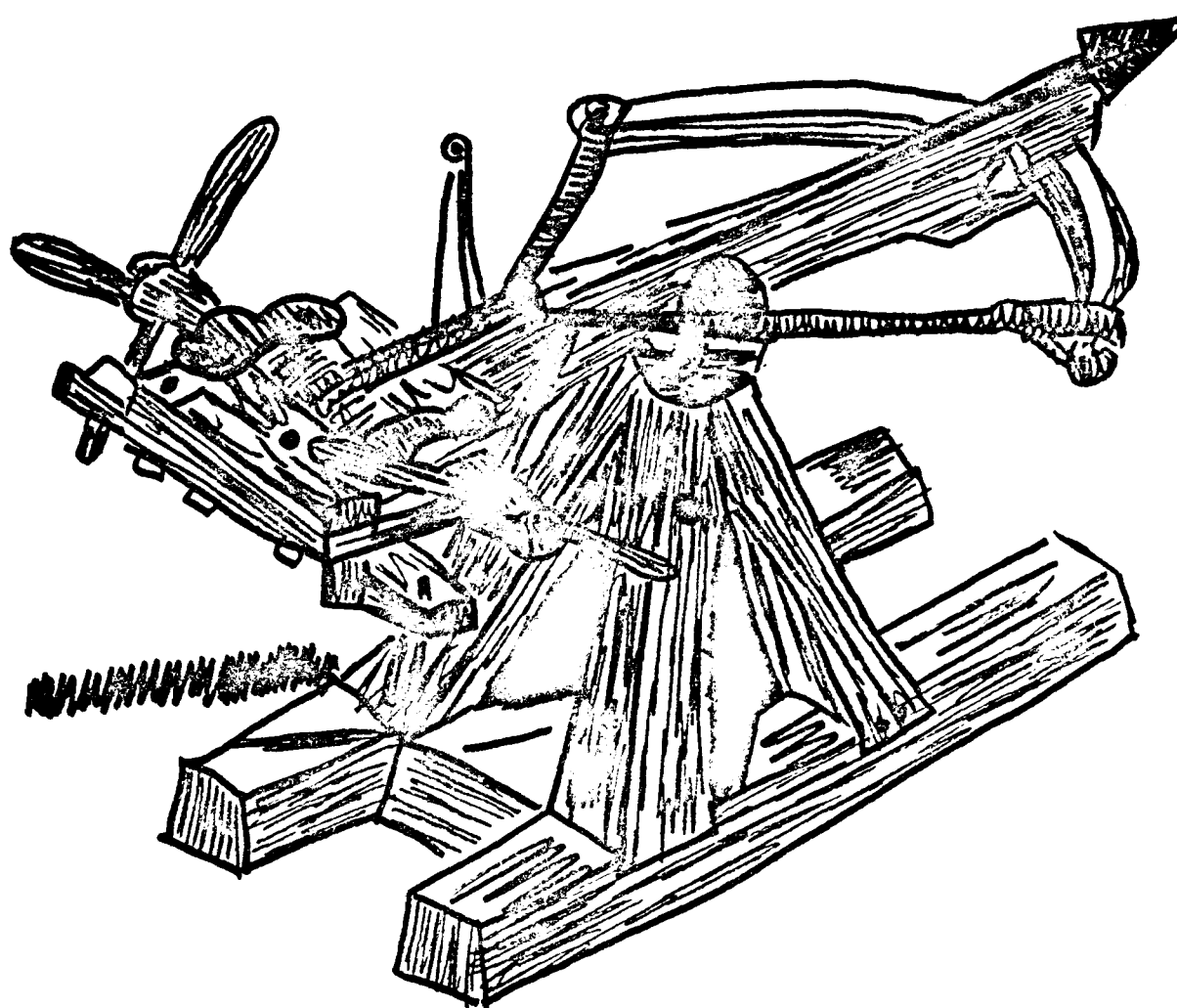
¹Tunis, Weapons: A Pictorial History, p. 32.

PLATE II

MANGONEL²

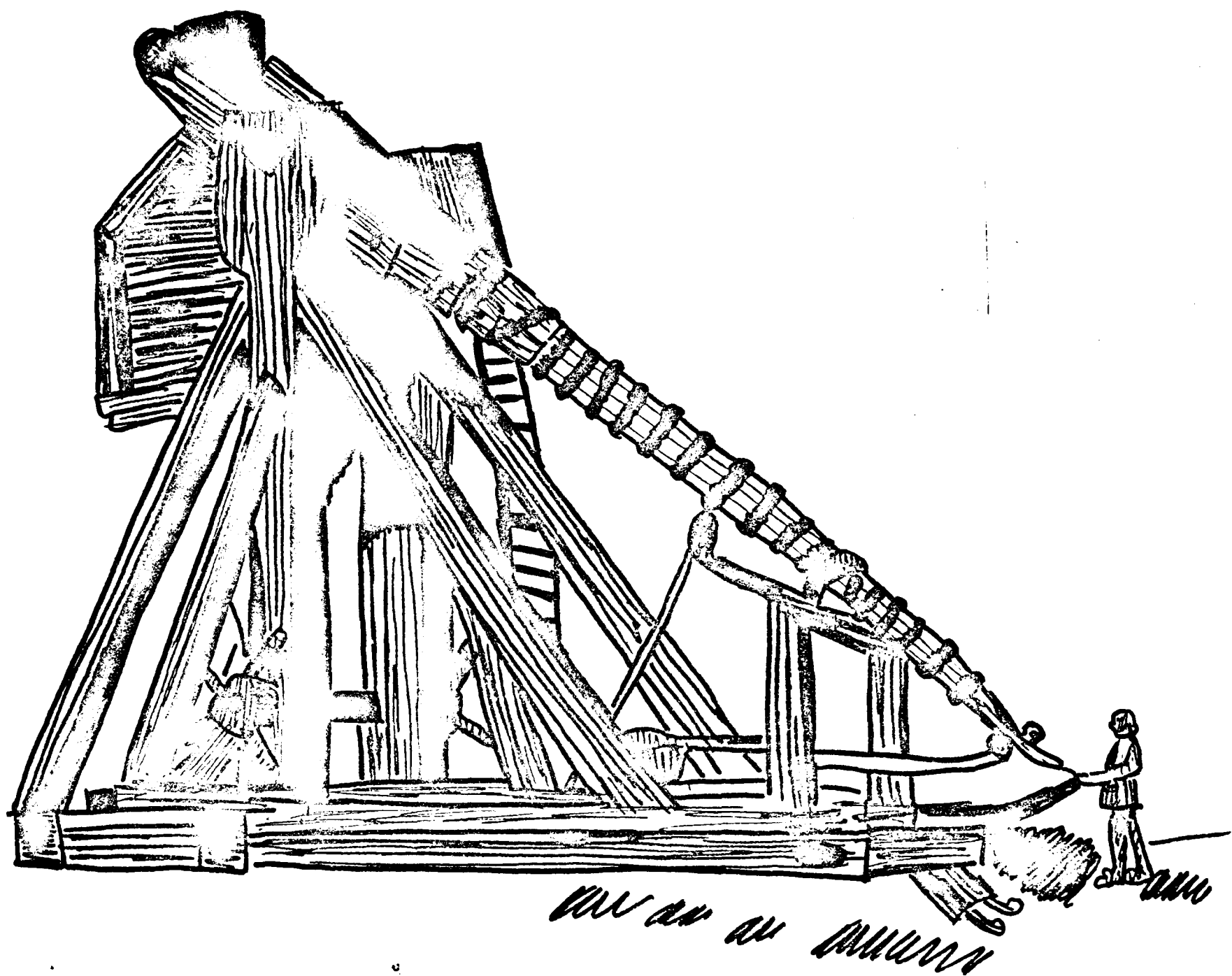
²Tunis, Weapons: A Pictorial History, p. 55.

PLATE III

BALLISTA³

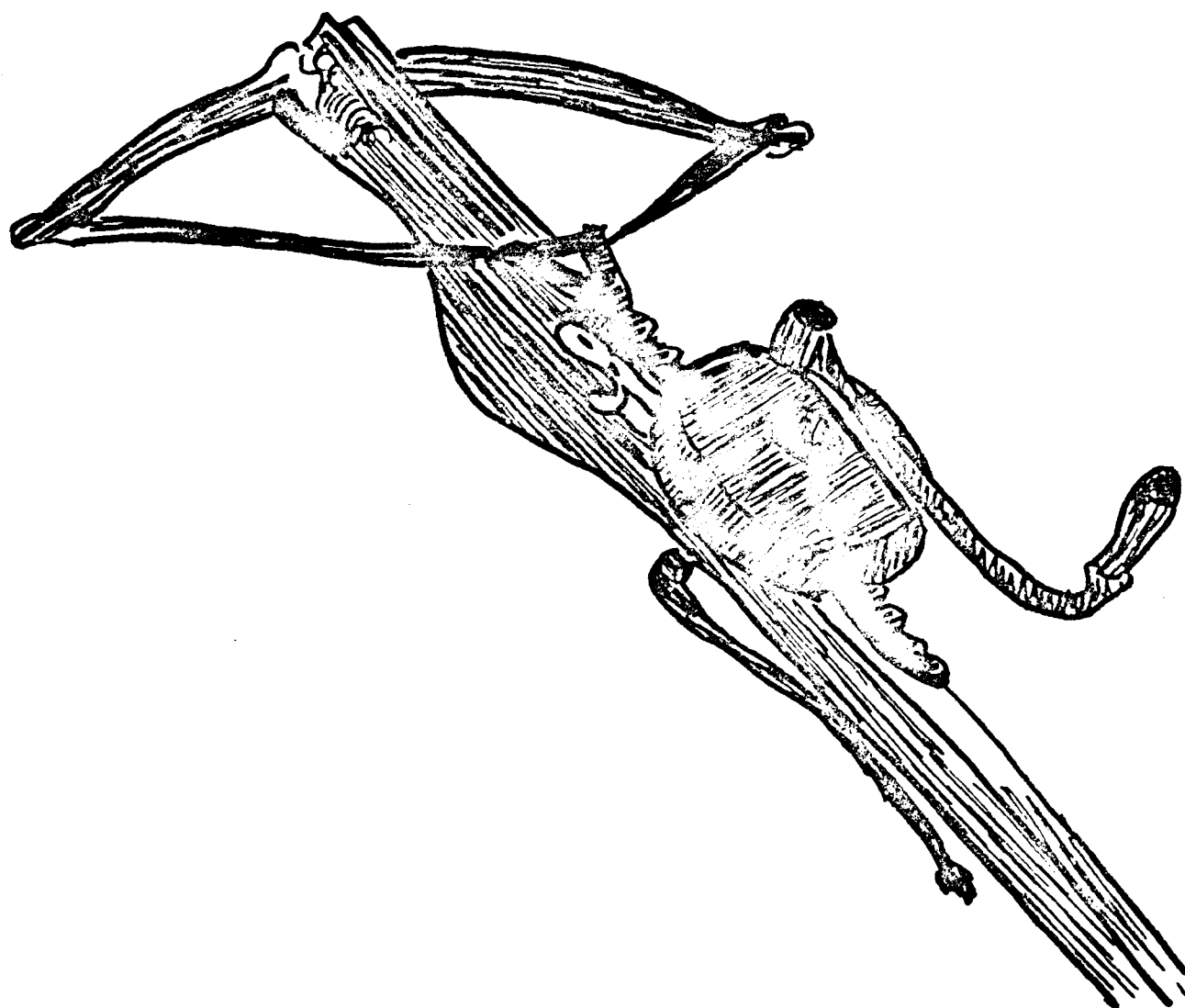
³Tunis, Weapons: A Pictorial History, p. 55.

PLATE IV

LARGE TREBUCHET⁴

⁴Tunis, Weapons: A Pictorial History, p. 56.

PLATE V

ARBALEST⁵

⁵Tunis, Weapons: A Pictorial History, p. 73.

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