

‘Normans’ on the First Crusade: Actions and Agendas of Two Crusaders: Robert Curthose and Bohemond of Taranto

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There can be no doubt that Normans made significant contributions to the crusades. Historians have posited, moreover, whether there was something like a general Norman impact on the crusades that went beyond that of individual Normans.¹ Normans who came to the Kingdom of Jerusalem can be identified as such by their names, lineage and self-identification as Normans.² Yet, since they are not usually identified as part of a group, their efforts are usually considered on an individual basis. While questions of Norman identity in other contexts have been the focus of study, the role of Normans as a collective with a distinct identity in the crusading movement has yet to be investigated.³ We might ask, then, whether this contribution by individual Normans while in the East was linked to the specifically Norman identifiers chroniclers used for them in their European conquests and activities. Chroniclers who often celebrated Norman achievement, seemingly so distinct in a European context, might also be expected to make note of them once joined to the crusading effort. Did ‘Normannitas’ carry over into their participation in the First Crusade abroad? In order to investigate this further, the following essay compares Bohemond of Taranto, a Norman from Southern Italy, and Robert Curthose, William the

¹ J. France, ‘The Normans and Crusading’, in *The Normans and their Adversaries at War: Essays in Memory of C. Warren Hollister*, ed. R. Abels and B.S. Bachrach (Woodbridge, 2001), 87–101.

² A.V. Murray, ‘Norman Settlement in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, 1099–1131’, *Archivio Normanno-Svevo* 1 (2009), 276–308.

³ Recent studies include M. Hagger, *Norman Rule in Normandy, 911–1144* (Woodbridge, 2017) and N. Webber, *The Evolution of Norman Identity, 911–1154* (Woodbridge, 2005). On Norman identity and ‘Normannitas’, see R.H.C. Davis, *The Normans and Their Myth* (London, 1976), although his interpretation of the Norman identity has been challenged and revised, in particular by G.A. Loud, ‘The Gens Normannorum – myth or reality?’, *ANS* 4 (1982), 104–16. For Norman and English identity see H.M. Thomas, *The English and the Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation, and Identity 1066–c. 1220* (Oxford, 2003), for the Normans in Southern Italy see A. Plassmann, ‘Homini boreales – Normannische Identität in Süditalien und Sizilien’, in *Siziliens Geschichte. Insel zwischen den Welten*, ed. W. Gruber (Vienna, 2013), 112–26.

Conqueror's son and duke of Normandy, in order to decide if they could be considered as examples of a distinctly Norman experience of the crusades. Because the Normans played a significant role in the First Crusade, and were regularly featured as heroes by contemporary chroniclers, it is worth exploring these sources to ascertain whether there is evidence for an exclusively Norman crusade encounter. Alternatively, should they, rather, be considered as two noblemen whose contribution and experience were comparable to more general crusading involvement?⁴

Considering Robert Curthose and Bohemond of Taranto as 'Normans' on the First Crusade does seem anachronistic when one looks at crusading narratives.⁵ It has long been noted that contemporary crusading chronicles did not identify a specific 'Norman' group within the crusaders, even though, within the context of the scope of people who joined the crusade, the participation of Normans from Normandy and Italy was noted in the West.⁶ 'Normannitas' as an ethnic description is problematic in any case, because the ethnicity of the Normans – as in Normans from the different realms like Normandy, Southern Italy and England – can hardly be pinned down, and, while a sense of identity is to be noted, it is very vague and has different interactions with other identities.⁷ Chronicles of the First Crusade, indeed, do not demonstrate an understanding of an ethnic group of 'Normans', and 'Normannitas' as a common element does not occur in them.⁸ The crusaders are usually called 'Franci'.⁹ This does not necessarily mean that Normans from the South of Italy, like Bohemond and Normans from the duchy, did not feel any kind of association, but it does mean that the contemporary writers did not use 'Normannitas' as a concept

4 L. Kjær, 'Conquests, Family Traditions and the First Crusade', *JMH* 45 (2019), 553–79 at 563, highlights the striking similarities between Bohemond and Robert: both the eldest sons of conquerors with succession issues.

5 Although Robert was identified as a Norman, Bohemond is rarely identified as such, cf. France, 'Normans and Crusading', 93–96.

6 See Frutolf, *Chronicle*, ed. F.-J. Schmale and I. Schmale-Ott (Darmstadt 1972), 110 mentions Sicilians, Greek, Danes, Normans and other transmarine *gentes*, which seems to point towards Normans being the Anglo-Normans here. See also Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana* (1095–1127), ed. H. Hagenmeyer (Heidelberg, 1913), 156 on Bohemond as a Norman and at 159 on Robert and his Normans; also see William of Malmesbury, *GR*, i, 606–9 on the overwhelming reaction to Urban's sermon and 608 on Bohemond, whom he calls *gente Normannus*, and 612 on Robert Curthose and his associates Robert of Flanders and Stephen of Blois. It is in this context that William speaks of *Angli* and *Normanni* joining the crusade.

7 Davis, *Normans and Their Myth*; Loud, 'The Gens Normannorum'; H.M. Thomas, *English and the Normans*; Plassmann, 'Homini boreales', 112–26; Emily Albu, *The Normans in Their Histories: Propaganda, Myth and Subversion* (Woodbridge, 2001).

8 L. Ni Chleirigh, 'Gesta Normannorum? Normans in the Latin Chronicles of the First Crusade', in *Norman Expansion: Connections, Continuities and Contrasts*, ed. K.J. Stringer and A. Jotischky (Farnham, 2013), 207–26.

9 M. Balard, 'Gesta Dei per Francos: L'usage du mot "Francs" dans les chroniques de la première Croisade', in *Clovis. Histoire et mémoire*, ed. M. Rouche (Paris, 1997), 473–83. Cf. for example OV iii, 104–9, where even he, an author who was very conscious of the Normans, uses 'Franci' as the generic term for the crusaders.

for explaining their actions and agendas. It is telling that only Ralph of Caen, writing about twenty years later, incorporated a Norman identity into his tale of the triumph of his hero Tancred and the conquest of Antioch.¹⁰ The concept of 'Normannitas' in Ralph, however, might have derived from his use of Dudo of Saint-Quentin, a writer who had a very distinct concept of 'Normannitas'.¹¹ But, while Ralph denotes a distinct identity separate from that of general crusaders, it is most notable for the principality of Antioch, and 'Antiocheneans' is the prominent defining term.¹² Otherwise, only the crusaders' general identity as Christian 'Franci' is emphasized.¹³

If the descriptor 'Normannitas' did not come into play in the narratives of the period, how might one find evidence of a distinct Norman identity within them? It is possible that characteristics usually connected to Normans were alluded to when the contemporaries discussed Robert and Bohemond. There are three specific traits connected with 'Normans' in the South of Italy: courage, trickery, and ambition.¹⁴ Furthermore, these attributes were connected with 'Normans' in other areas where they had carved out and conquered land for themselves.¹⁵ Historians have argued that these qualities do not need to be explicitly called Norman for them to assert a touch of Normanness to the people who were ascribed with these character traits. Hodgson argues for a widespread awareness that courage, trickery, and ambition were 'Norman' attributes – enough so that calling someone ambitious would give an individual a Norman flavour.¹⁶

There are problems, however, with using these Norman traits to assess behavior specifically in a crusading context. If we take courage, for example, this trait

¹⁰ T. Kirschberger, *Erster Kreuzzug und Ethnogenese. In novam formam commutatus – Ethnogene-tische Prozesse im Fürstentum Antiochia und im Königreich Jerusalem* (Göttingen, 2015), at 184–234. Ni Chleirigh, 'Gesta Normannorum'. On Ralph cf. also N. Hodgson, 'Reinventing Normans as Crusaders? Ralph of Caen's Gesta Tancredi', *ANS* 30 (2008), 117–32 at 124–27.

¹¹ Hodgson, 'Reinventing Normans as Crusaders', 127. On Dudo, see A. Plassmann, *Origo gentis. Identitäts- und Legitimitätsstiftung in früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Herkunftserzählungen* (Berlin, 2006), 243–64 and B. Pohl, *Dudo of Saint-Quentin's Historia Normannorum* (York, 2015), especially the chapter on innovation, at 156–223.

¹² Alan V. Murray, 'How Norman was the Principality of Antioch? Prolegomena to a Study of the Origins of the Nobility of a Crusader State', in *Family Trees and the Roots of Politics: The Prosopography of Britain and France from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century*, ed. K. Keats-Rohan (Woodbridge, 1997), 349–59, where it is stated that there can be no doubt that the principality had a sufficient number of Normans to be called Norman.

¹³ Hodgson, 'Reinventing Crusaders', 119 and 121, alerts us to the fact that the *Gesta Francorum* explicitly labelled Bohemond and Tancred as *Franci*.

¹⁴ A. Plassmann, *Die Normannen. Erobern – Herrschen – Integrieren* (Stuttgart, 2008), 98–101.

¹⁵ J. France, 'The Fall of Antioch during the First Crusade', in *Dei gesta per Francos. Études sur les croisades dédiées à Jean Richard – Crusade Studies in Honour of Jean Richard*, ed. M. Balard (Aldershot, 2001), 13–20; N. Hodgson, 'Reinventing Normans as Crusaders', 120; N. Hodgson, 'Normans and Competing Masculinities on Crusade', in *Crusading and Pilgrimage in the Norman World*, ed. K. Hurlock and P. Oldfield (Woodbridge, 2015), 195–213, who concentrates on the connection between 'Normannitas' and expectations on masculinity. On the Norman characteristics see also Loud, 'The Gens Normannorum', at 111; Thomas, *English and the Normans*, 37–45.

¹⁶ Hodgson, 'Reinventing Normans as Crusaders', 119.

was never exclusively 'Norman'. Courage is a positive characteristic ascribed to many: to whole peoples, knights, martyrs, saints, kings, and others depending on the circumstances. In addition, in the context of the crusade, courage would be expected from every knight who took the cross and there is ample evidence that crusaders were subsumed generally under the category of 'courageous knight'.¹⁷ It is, of course, also considered a manly attribute. Courage, especially seen in military prowess, is nevertheless the one characteristic that is alluded to as a Norman trait in Ralph of Caen's description of Tancred.¹⁸

Trickery was also a characteristic often associated with Normans. Apparently, Robert Guiscard, Bohemond's father, earned his nickname because of this trickery.¹⁹ But, although trickery is often associated with Normans and uncommon enough in other contexts for us to be able to define it as an exclusive 'Norman' trait, this does not pertain in the context of the crusade. It was crucial that the newly acquired conduct of courtly behavior was to be used in a Christian context. The crusaders had no qualms about tricking the enemies they saw as heathens, and, indeed, although trickery is a trait especially connected to Bohemond, it occurs in other contexts as well.²⁰ Fulk of Anjou purportedly tricked Saracens when they demanded he commit sacrilege. Saracen guards, it was said, ordered all visitors to urinate on the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem to show their disdain. Fulk hid a bottle of white wine in his trousers to circumvent the blasphemy.²¹ Trickery was allowed in interactions with 'heathens', especially in order to avoid evil. Thus, at least on crusade, trickery was not a specific 'Norman' trait even though it might be considered so in a non-crusading European context.²²

As for ambition, while it was sometimes considered undesirable, it is a trait specifically found in the context of 'Normannitas'. Ambition fit well into the narrative pattern that was used in the tales of armed conquest and political advancement that were told throughout the Norman-influenced areas in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Ambition was not exclusively negative when

¹⁷ For example, on Tancred in Ralph of Caen's history, see Hodgson, 'Reinventing Normans as Crusaders'. On the shifting paradigm for the judgement on violence committed by knights and the ensuing appraisal of courage, see H.-H. Körtüm, *Kriege und Krieger* (Stuttgart, 2010), 103–13.

¹⁸ Kirschberger, *Erster Kreuzzug*, 219.

¹⁹ William of Apulia, *Gesta Roberti Wiscardi*, ed. Marguerite Mathieu (Palermo, 1961), 138.

²⁰ On Bohemond's ruse see E. Albu, 'Bohemond and the Rooster, Byzantines, Normans, and the Artful Ruse', in *Komnene and her times* (Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, 2201), ed. T. Gouma-Peterson (New York, NY, 2000), 157–68.

²¹ *Chroniques des comtes d'Anjou et des seigneurs d'Amboise*, ed. L. Halphen and R. Poupardin, Collection de textes pour servir à l'étude et à l'enseignement de l'histoire 48 (Paris, 1913), 50. On the ambiguous opinion on trickery see Th. Zotz, 'Odysseus im Mittelalter? Zum Stellenwert von List und Listigkeit in der Kultur des Adels', in *Die List*, ed. H. von Senger (Frankfurt am Main, 1999), 212–40.

²² On trickery as Norman trait see L. Böhm, 'Nomen gentis Normannorum. Der Aufstieg der Normannen im Spiegel der normannischen Historiographie', in *I Normanni e la loro espansione in Europa nell'alto medioevo* (Spoleto, 1969), 623–704 at 677; Loud, 'The *Gens Normannorum*', at III.

connected to 'Normannitas'.²³ Therefore, we might consider whether ambition was ascribed to some of the Normans when on crusade. The conquest of the Holy Land was not aimed at personal gain but was intended to benefit the whole of Christendom. The 'miles Christianus' was to act altruistically for the good of his fellow believers.²⁴ As a result, the sort of vigorous determination written into narrative patterns of tales about conquest of England and of Southern Italy made no sense in crusader histories. Self-aggrandizement was eyed with suspicion. The *Gesta Tancredi*, for instance, is an example of this attitude towards ambition. While Tancred of Taranto, Bohemond's nephew, was painted as an ambitious warrior, greedy for plunder and spoils at the beginning of the tale, he evolved into a model Christian knight.²⁵ As a result, he explicitly stopped striving only for his own good. While ambition was mentioned in early descriptions of Tancred, the specific positive allusions of ambition were not. Ambition as a positive force was dropped within the context of crusade histories.

The evidence suggests that we cannot look for 'Normannitas' – or even character traits that were explicitly or implicitly 'Norman' – in crusade narratives. The conditions of crusade storytelling, moreover, were different to those in Normandy, England, and Italy. While both Robert and Bohemond were described as courageous, the attribute cannot be considered distinctly 'Norman' in the sources. That does not mean, however, that the situation of Robert and Bohemond was not influenced by their Norman environment in their respective countries. Perhaps one can uncover something of a Norman identity by examining more closely their motives for joining the crusade and the behavior the two noblemen exhibited while involved in the movement.

It is well known that Bohemond was not among the first to take the cross, but nevertheless he was convinced easily and there are several reasons we can identify, some mentioned in the sources, others we can guess at. Bohemond was the eldest son of Robert Guiscard from the house Hauteville.²⁶ He had gained military experience in his father's war against Byzantium,²⁷ but nevertheless was not legitimized and had to step aside for his younger legitimate brother Roger Borsa.²⁸ When Guiscard died, Bohemond was compensated with the lordship of Taranto. As the Hautevilles had already taken part in the war against

²³ Plassmann, *Die Normannen*, 100.

²⁴ On crusaders' motivations see H.E. Mayer, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge* (Stuttgart, 2005), 32.

²⁵ Hodgson, 'Reinventing Normans as Crusaders?', 117–32.

²⁶ On Bohemond's crusade see R. Hiestand, 'Boemondo I e la Prima Crociata', in *Il Mezzogiorno normanno-svevo e le Crociate. Atti delle quattordicesime giornate normanno-sveve*, ed. G. Mosca (Bari, 2002), 65–94; J. Flori, *Bohémond d'Antioche. Chevalier d'Aventure* (Paris 2007), especially at 63–78 on Bohemond's motives; L. Russo, *I normanni del Mezzogiorno e il movimento crociato*, Quaderni del Centro di studi normanno-svevi, Università degli studi di Bari 'Aldo Moro', 4 (Bari, 2014), 87–100.

²⁷ R. Bünemann, *Robert Guiskard 1015–1085. Ein Normanne erobert Süditalien* (Cologne, 1997), 105–34.

²⁸ P. Skinner, 'Halt! Be men!: Sikelgaita of Salerno, Gender and the Norman Conquest of Southern Italy', in *Gender and History* 12 (2000), 622–41.

the Saracens in Sicily,²⁹ waging war on behalf of the pope or on behalf of Christendom had become good family tradition.³⁰

Bohemond's motives for joining the crusade might have been related to following the family tradition of waging war on behalf of the pope: employing his military expertise won in the eastern campaigns, escaping the constricted situation in Taranto that was too small for his ambition, and hoping to win spoils, perhaps lands and prestige in the Latin East.³¹ Of course, we cannot rule out that his belief also came into play. We do find some of these motives in the sources. Geoffrey Malaterra places Bohemond's participation in the tradition of Guiscard's eastern expedition,³² while the *Gesta Francorum* emphasized the power of the Holy Spirit and stressed Bohemond's religious zeal.³³ It is feasible that this fits into the author's intent and might be exaggerated.³⁴ Anna Komnene tells us³⁵ that Bohemond tried to get the Byzantine emperor to name him as the general of the Christian armies.³⁶ Although it was rather the opposite – as John H. Pryor and Michael J. Jeffreys argued – and it was actually Emperor Alexios who wanted to revive a marcher lordship against his Turkish enemies in Anatolia and Syria,³⁷ Bohemond's acceptance of the offer would still fit into his ambition to rise.

At first sight, Robert's situation seems to have been much better than Bohemond's.³⁸ He was the eldest legitimate son of the duke of Normandy and, as such, he was designated heir from an early date. But his succession did not run as smoothly as might have been expected.³⁹ He fell out with his father, William, and at the time of the Conqueror's death he was in rebellion and lucky that he even inherited Normandy.⁴⁰ His younger brother William

²⁹ Mayer, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge*, 30; Plassmann, *Die Normannen*, 115.

³⁰ On conquests as a tradition see Kjær, 'Conquests', 573–75.

³¹ Russo, *I normanni del Mezzogiorno e il movimento crociato*, 87–100.

³² Geoffrey Malaterra, *Deeds of Count Roger of Apulia and Sicilia*, trans. Kenneth Baxter Wolf (Ann Arbor, MI, 2005), iv, 24; K.B. Wolf, 'Crusade and Narrative. Bohemond and the Gesta Francorum', *JMH* 17 (1991), 211.

³³ *Gesta Francorum*, ed. R. Hill (Oxford, 1967), 7. See also L. Russo, 'Oblio e memoria di Boemondo d'Altavilla nella storiografia normanna', *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo* 106:1 (2004), 137–65.

³⁴ Wolf, 'Crusade and Narrative', 212.

³⁵ Anna Komnene, *Alexias*, ed. D.R. Reinsch (Berlin, 2001), 355–60; R.J. Lilie, *Byzanz und die Kreuzzüge* (Stuttgart, 2004), 42.

³⁶ Lilie, *Byzanz und die Kreuzzüge*, 47. On this also A. Murray, 'The Enemy within: Bohemond, Byzantium and the Subversion of the First Crusade', in *Crusading and Pilgrimage in the Norman World*, ed. K. Hurlock and P. Oldfield (Woodbridge, 2015), 31–47.

³⁷ J.H. Pryor and M.J. Jeffreys, 'Alexios, Bohemond, and Byzantium's Euphrates Frontier: A Tale of Two Cretans', *Crusades* 11 (2012), 31–86.

³⁸ W.M. Aird, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy (c. 1050–1134)* (Woodbridge, 2008), 153–90.

³⁹ W.M. Aird, 'Frustrated Masculinity. The Relationship between William the Conqueror and his eldest Son', in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. D.M. Hadley (London, 2002), 39–55.

⁴⁰ On William's succession, see B. English, 'William the Conqueror and the Anglo-Norman Succession', in *Hist. Res.* 64 (1991), 221–36; Aird, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy*, 99–103; Plassmann, *Die Normannen*, 189–92.

inherited England, and Robert's efforts to take possession of the kingdom across the Channel were thwarted.⁴¹ Considering that his cousin, Robert of Flanders, and his brother-in-law Stephen of Blois also participated, we might assume that Robert was attracted by the appeal of the ideal 'miles Christianus'.⁴² His followers saw Robert as an ideal knight and thus, by taking the cross, Robert met expectations of his environment. His willingness to pawn Normandy for the expenses he expected certainly shows his devotion.⁴³ This motive can be found in the account of William of Malmesbury.⁴⁴ At the same time, even though Robert and William Rufus were reconciled, the situation with a rival brother might have been uncomfortable for Robert and he might have planned to return with additional prestige that could help him in another attempt for the English crown.⁴⁵ Robert had no qualms about swearing an oath of fealty to the Byzantine emperor, usually interpreted as a sign that he indeed wanted to return.⁴⁶ Orderic Vitalis claims that Robert wanted to atone for his sins, and this might allude to his violation of filial duty when he rebelled against his father.⁴⁷ Robert and his impressive number of knights from the duchy were identified as Normans, although they also fell under the more encompassing epithet of *Franci*.⁴⁸ All in all, Bohemond's and Robert's motives might not have been as different as our sources suggest, but were constituted from a bundle of political, social, and religious motivations.

Bohemond was a very controversial figure, and probably not everyone welcomed him when he joined the crusaders.⁴⁹ He arrived at a moment when his presence must have complicated the negotiations with the Byzantine emperor, who had been his and his father's enemy during their campaigns against Byzantium. Bohemond very pragmatically took the oath of fealty, but we cannot know if he meant to keep it. Later circumstances suggest that he was not earnest about his oath, but this might be a judgment in hindsight.⁵⁰ Even though some historians are in doubt about the integrity of Bohemond's motives and openly address his ambitions and selfishness, none of them denies

⁴¹ Aird, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy*, 139.

⁴² For piety as a possible motive, maybe even in remembrance of his grandfather who had died on pilgrimage, cf. D.S. Spear, 'The Secular Clergy of Normandy and the Crusades', in *Crusading and Pilgrimage in the Norman World*, ed. K. Hurlock and P. Oldfield (Woodbridge, 2015), 81–102 at 85 and France, 'Normans and Crusading', 93. On the connection between Robert and other crusaders that were related see Kjær, 'Conquests'.

⁴³ Aird, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy*, 158.

⁴⁴ William of Malmesbury, *GR*, i, 562f.

⁴⁵ Aird, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy*, 162.

⁴⁶ Kjær, 'Conquests', 577, infers that it is difficult to deduce from any crusader's return to his motives in 1095.

⁴⁷ OV, v, 26.

⁴⁸ France, 'Normans and Crusading', 91–93; William of Malmesbury, *GR*, i, 612.

⁴⁹ On Bohemond's expertise see S.B. Edgington, 'Espionage and Military Intelligence during the First Crusade, 1095–99', in *Crusading and Warfare in the Middle Ages. Realities and Representations. Essays in Honour of John France*, ed. S. John and N. Morton (Farnham, 2014), 75–85.

⁵⁰ *Gesta Francorum*, 13; Murray, 'The Enemy within'.

that he was crucial to the success in conquering the besieged Antioch.⁵¹ Even Raymond of Aguilers, whose favoritism to the Provençal participants has long been noted, asserts that Bohemond showed not only cunning but also courage when he was one of the first to enter the city.⁵² Timing was also crucial for the fact that Bohemond's deed at Antioch had such a huge impact on how the story of the crusade was told. The capture of Antioch was something of a rescue in the last possible moment.⁵³ The Byzantine emperor's troops, desperately needed by the crusaders, were delayed while a Muslim relief force came closer. When the Muslim army arrived, the crusaders had to conquer the city fast in order to get to safety behind the walls.⁵⁴ To take the city via treason was the optimal solution, since it meant that the destruction could be minimized.⁵⁵ Several sources agree that the crusaders were in dire straits, but they also agree that Bohemond had the means to help them earlier. The fact that he used the plight of the crusaders to further his own goals was criticized as ambitious by some of his contemporaries.⁵⁶ Although a sense of relief about the conquest of Antioch is palpable in crusaders' letters, it is only Bohemond himself who stresses the crucial contact with a traitor in the city.⁵⁷ It is interesting that although courage, trickery, and ambition are ascribed to Bohemond, none of the sources claimed that these are characteristics of a Norman. Circumstances played well into the hands of Bohemond, who could claim that the Byzantine emperor had abandoned the crusaders and used the situation to extort a promise from the other crusaders.

⁵¹ See Lilie, *Byzanz und die Kreuzzüge*, 53–57; S. Biddlecombe, 'Baldric of Bourgueil and the Flawed Hero', *ANS* 35 (2013), 79–93 as well as Baldric of Bourgueil, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, ed. S. Biddlecombe (Woodbridge, 2014), lxvii–lxx.

⁵² Raymond of Aguilers, *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem*, ed. J.H. Hill and L.L. Hill (Paris, 1969), 64. Cf. the preface of the edition in regard to Raymond's partiality and St. Köhler, 'Von Toulouse nach Tripolis. Raimund von Saint-Gilles und die Provenzalen auf dem Ersten Kreuzzug', in *Gott will es. Der Erste Kreuzzug – Akteure und Aspekte*, ed. Ph. Sutner, St. Köhler, A. Obenaus (Vienna, 2016), 23–42.

⁵³ France, 'The Fall of Antioch during the First Crusade', 13–20; Flori, *Bohémond d'Antioche*, 133–42; S. John, *Godfrey of Bouillon. Duke of Lower Lotharingia, Ruler of Latin Jerusalem, c. 1060–1100*, *Rulers of the Latin East* (Abingdon/New York, NY, 2018), 136–46. The *Gesta Francorum* intentionally focused on the capture of Antioch to hide the fact that Bohemond had left the crusaders afterwards. See Wolf, 'Crusade and Narrative', 215.

⁵⁴ *Gesta francorum*, 44–48.

⁵⁵ *Gesta francorum*, 44–48.

⁵⁶ OV, vi, 100–5; B.E. Whalen, 'God's Will or not? Bohemond's Campaign against the Byzantine Empire (1105–1108)', in *Crusades – Medieval Worlds in Conflict*, ed. T.F. Madden, J.L. Naus and V. Ryan (Farnham, 2010), 121.

⁵⁷ Stephen of Blois' letter in *Letters from the east. Crusaders, Pilgrims and Settlers in the 12th–13th centuries*, trans. M. Barber and K. Bate (Crusade Texts in Translation 18) (Farnham/Burlington, VT, 2010), no. 5 [*Epistulae et chartae ad historiam primi belli sacri spectantes. Die Kreuzzugsbriefe aus den Jahren 1088–1100*, ed. H. Hagenmeyer (Innsbruck, 1901), no. 10], 24, talks about the 'great' Bohemond; Anselm of Ribemont, *Letters from the East*, no. 7 [*Epistulae et chartae*, no. 15], 26–30, praises the conquest of Antioch, but is only Bohemond himself, *Letters from the East*, no. 8 [*Epistulae et Chartae*, no. 16], 30–33 at 31 who mentions the Turk (Firuz) whose betrayal allowed for the capture of the city.

Although contemporaries were thus critical of Bohemond and his ruthless exploitation of the adverse circumstances for his own ends, nevertheless the story was almost immediately communicated to audiences, following the patterns of courtly culture. Firuz, the man who delivered Antioch to Bohemond, was fitted into several roles that put his ally Bohemond into a favorable light. He was an offended noble after revenge, a persecuted Christian or a Muslim about to be converted, and Bohemond was there to help him.⁵⁸ Thus, the sheer fact that Bohemond had played such a crucial role enhanced his prestige enormously. The pull of moulding of Bohemond's story into that of an ideal 'miles Christianus' was obviously too great to resist. Whether the acquisition of Antioch was something Bohemond had been after from the beginning is difficult to decide. All we can say is that the contemporary sources interpreted his actions in this vein.

Robert Curthose's part in the crusade is considerably less conspicuous than that of Bohemond. If he aimed for a leading role, the sources do not tell us this, and he seems to have been content with fulfilling the tasks he was given.⁵⁹ Various sources tell us that he distinguished himself in different military conflicts,⁶⁰ and he seems to have had a reputation as a reliable warrior.⁶¹ Since our sources owe their genesis at least in part to the fact that there were several factions of crusaders backing Raymond of Toulouse, Bohemond, or Godfrey of Bouillon, it is no surprise that Robert's actions were under their radar.⁶²

English sources tell us that the crusaders offered the crown of Jerusalem to Robert, but all were written some decades after the events.⁶³ Raymond of Aguilers, who was biased towards the Provençal Raymond of Toulouse, mentions that Raymond was considered a worthy candidate as well,⁶⁴ and other sources describe how rulership was offered to Godfrey.⁶⁵ Arnulph of Choques, who was chaplain to Robert Curthose, became patriarch of the Roman Christians in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, if only for a short time.⁶⁶ We might interpret this as a clear indicator of Robert's reputation, but it also points towards the suspicion that Robert himself was never actually offered the crown. It would have been strange if he was offered the crown and refused it, and yet his chaplain became

⁵⁸ See R.L. Slitt, 'Justifying Cross-cultural Friendship: Bohemond, Firuz, and the Fall of Antioch', *Viator* 38 (2007), 339–49 and Flori, *Bohémond d'Antioche*, 152–54.

⁵⁹ Aird, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy*, 177.

⁶⁰ OV, v, 178–89 at 180–83; William of Malmesbury, *GR*, i, 702.

⁶¹ In this way he is described by Ralph of Caen. See Ralph of Caen, *Gesta Tancredi*, ed. Edoardo d'Angelo, *CCCM* 231 (Turnhout, 2011), 86–91.

⁶² Aird, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy*, 186.

⁶³ William of Malmesbury, *GR*, i, 700–7; Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia*, 452–55; cf. Aird, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy*, 184–89, also note 83 below.

⁶⁴ Raymond of Aguilers, 152.

⁶⁵ On Godfrey's election to the *principatus Jerusalemie*, see John, *Godfrey*, 178–90.

⁶⁶ He was elected in 1099 and very influential until he was reappointed to the office in 1112. See Spear, 'Secular Clergy', 81–85.

patriarch, who at least in theory would be the very man who would have crowned the new king.⁶⁷

Let us now turn to the question of how Bohemond and Robert used their crusading experience when they returned to Europe. After his release from a short captivity in 1100, Bohemond tried to stabilize the principality of Antioch and returned to Europe to recruit willing men for his next military campaign. He toured France, and apparently put his newly acquired prestige as crusader to good use.⁶⁸ According to Orderic, many men were keen to join him. It was clearly to Bohemond's benefit that the story of the alleged treason of the Byzantine emperor was widely known by the time Bohemond came to France.⁶⁹ He could present himself as an example of the opportunities available in the Latin East, and apparently the combination of his visible success as well as his reputation as warrior meant that he easily found ready followers, and the king of France even granted him the hand of his daughter Constance in marriage.⁷⁰ Although she was a widow and recent enforcement of Church marriage laws might have made it more difficult to find suitable partners to marry, nevertheless Bohemond's marriage into the French royal family shows what kind of reputation he had earned.⁷¹ It should be noted that he was the first member of the Hauteville family to succeed in gaining a royal bride. A marriage with Constance would have been out of the question before the First Crusade.

Although we do not know if any of these developments featured in Bohemond's original intention in joining the crusade, it is obvious that he had decided to throw his lot into the Latin East and characterised himself as a

⁶⁷ John, *Godfrey*, 191. On a different side, see Aird, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy*, 185. It was Arnulf's successor Dagobert who crowned Baldwin at Christmas 1100.

⁶⁸ Y. Friedman, 'Miracle, Meaning, and Narrative in the Latin East', *Studies in Church History* 41 (2005), 123–34. On literary sources see V. Sivo, 'Il Mezzogiorno e le crociate in alcuni testi letterari', in *Il Mezzogiorno normanno-svevo e le Crociate. Atti delle quattordicesime giornate normanno-sveve*, ed. G. Mosca (Bari, 2002), 355–77. L. Russo, 'Bad Crusaders? The Normans of Southern Italy and the Crusading Movement in the Twelfth Century', *ANS* 38 (2016), 169–80 at 171 has alerted us to the fact, that Bohemond did not try to recruit in Southern Italy which ties in together with the fact that an overall dynastic tradition of going on crusade was not established in Southern Italy.

⁶⁹ J. Flori, 'De l'anonyme normand à Tudebode et aux *Gesta Francorum*. L'impact de la propagande de Bohémond sur la critique textuelle des sources de la première croisade', *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 102 (2007), 717–46; M. Carrier, 'Pour en finir avec les *Gesta Francorum*: une réflexion historiographique sur l'état des rapports entre Grecs et Latins au début du XII^e siècle et sur l'apport nouveau d'Albert d'Aix' *Crusades* 7 (2008), 13–34. L. Russo, 'I rapporti tra normanni e bizantini come chiave per la comprensione della storia delle Crociate', *I Quaderni del M.A.S.* 11 (2008), 217–28; N.L. Paul, 'A Warlord's Wisdom. Literacy and Propaganda at the Time of the First Crusade', *Speculum* 85:3 (2010), 534–66 (but he does not think that the role of Bohemond was so important); Russo, *I normanni del Mezzogiorno e il movimento crociato*, 101–42.

⁷⁰ OV, vi, 68–73.

⁷¹ N.L. Barile, 'La figlia del re di Francia e il principe normanno. Il matrimonio di Costanza e Boemondo d'Altavilla (1106)', in *Con animo virile. Donne e potere nel Mezzogiorno medievale (secoli XI–XV)*, ed. P. Mainoni (I libri di Viella, 104) (Rome, 2010), 85–137; see also Flori, *Bohémond d'Antioche*, 265–73.

successful crusader. His earnings from the crusade, and reputation as a 'miles Christianus', courageous warrior, and prince in the new territories, were put to good use during his sojourn in the West. It could be argued that he changed the social capital he had earned in the Latin East into the coin of acceptance in the circle of noble families that was well understood in the West.⁷² With the backing of the French king, Bohemond's activities were even more successful. Whatever his motives for joining the crusade at the beginning, we can assume that Bohemond had no qualms about exploiting the tailwind that came with the collateral profit. The details on the failure of Bohemond's war against Byzantium are of no consequence to this argument.⁷³

With Bohemond's possible agenda in mind, we might understand better how Robert tried to make use of his status as a crusader when he returned in 1100. In Southern Italy, he married Sybil of Conversano.⁷⁴ This was a choice of bride that was instigated by Robert's pressing need for money, but which might be interpreted as a sign that Robert was ready to confront his brother William Rufus on his return. At almost fifty years old, Robert was not a young bachelor and he might have had additional aims than simply obtaining a huge dowry. The marriage to Sybil could have served as a challenge to William Rufus.⁷⁵ While the Conqueror lived, Robert could not have married without his father's consent.⁷⁶ In the decade after, he and his younger brother William Rufus might have stayed single deliberately, since the lack of heirs on both sides of the Channel enabled them to make a treaty of mutual appointment as heir.⁷⁷ That Robert now deviated from this policy can be understood as the attempt to set new conditions in his dealings with his brother. William Rufus lived long enough to learn of his brother's marriage, but when he died in a hunting accident⁷⁸ the youngest brother, Henry, took the crown. Robert arrived too late to change this,⁷⁹ but immediately after Henry's usurpation Robert tried to turn events in his favour. It is feasible that his status as a crusader had increased his reputation.⁸⁰ For Robert, the course of history took a turn for the worse when Henry managed to prevent his coming to England, turned the table, and prepared an invasion of Normandy. In a defensive war, Robert could not promise any rewards and was at a disadvantage. In contrast to Bohemond, he could not promise eastern riches, but simply the preservation of the status quo.

⁷² Whalen, 'God's Will or not?', 111–25.

⁷³ Whalen, 'God's Will or not?', 122; Flori, *Bohémond d'Antioche*, 275–92.

⁷⁴ Aird, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy*, 192.

⁷⁵ Aird, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy*, 204–11; J. Green, *Henry I. King of England and Duke of Normandy* (Cambridge, 2006), 42.

⁷⁶ Aird, 'Frustrated Masculinity', 39–55.

⁷⁷ Aird, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy*, 192.

⁷⁸ Aird, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy*, 194. On William Rufus' death see J. Green, *Henry I. King of England and Duke of Normandy*, 38–41 and Plassmann, *Die Normannen*, 200; J. Gillingham, *William II. The Red King* (London, 2015), 97–100.

⁷⁹ Green, *Henry I. King of England and Duke of Normandy*, 42.

⁸⁰ Guibert of Nogent, *Dei Gesta per Francos*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens, CCCM 127A (Turnhout, 1996), 132.

It is interesting that Henry succeeded in challenging Robert's reputation as a crusader and good son of the church.⁸¹ If we believe Orderic Vitalis, Robert soon became infamous for not looking after the interests of the Church and for wasting money.⁸² Orderic wrote later, and after Robert's defeat, but it is remarkable that Robert was not able to hold on to his prestige as a crusader. It is in this light that we must interpret the evidence in English sources that the crown of Jerusalem was offered to Robert.⁸³ In hindsight, Robert's defeat at Tinchebrai in 1106 had to be explained, and the only reason why a known crusader could have lost, was if he had lost God's favor. The fact that Robert turned down the crown in Jerusalem is not painted as a sin. What the English sources agree on is that Robert rejected the offer for the wrong reasons. He was intent on a life of ease and comfort in Normandy and took fright at the prospect of hardship in Jerusalem. For Orderic's readers, it was obvious that such an indulgence had to be punished. Thus, Robert's status as a crusader was turned on its head. Instead of cleansing himself of sins, he had rejected the task that he was given, and was punished for that.

Instead of reading the sources as evidence that Robert was offered the crown of Jerusalem, we should read them as evidence that Henry was wary of Robert's status and prestige as a crusader.⁸⁴ We might conclude, therefore, that Robert's followers painted him as a 'miles Christianus'.⁸⁵ In addition, for all his propaganda against Robert, neither Henry nor his followers ever made the claim that Robert was a coward. That would not have been believable.⁸⁶ Robert did not succeed in using his reputation as a crusader to oust his brother from the Kingdom of England, but that was not due to any lack of attraction for the idea of the 'miles Christianus'.⁸⁷ In the politics of the West, the reputation as a crusader was a card that was newly introduced into the game, but there were others as well: other cards that Henry knew to play more deftly than Robert.⁸⁸

⁸¹ Green, *Henry I. King of England and Duke of Normandy*, 82; R. Allen, 'Robert Curthose and the Norman Episcopate', *HSJ* 21 (2010), 87–112.

⁸² OV, v, 104–9, on the prophecy of Robert's disastrous reign by a hermit.

⁸³ William of Malmesbury, *GR*, 702; Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia*, 452–55; Aird, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy*, 184–89, refers to Petrus Tudebodus mentioning the 'election' of Curthose; see also Tudebodus imitatus et continuatus, *Historia Belli Sacri (Historia de via Hierusolymis)*, *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades: Historiens occidentaux* vol. III (Paris, 1866), 169–229 at 225. We must keep in mind though, that this is not a contemporary source but was written in the 1130s, when the rumour about Robert as a possible candidate might have been more widespread.

⁸⁴ On the refusal of the crown see B. Weiler, 'The rex renitens and the Medieval Idea of Kingship, ca. 900–ca. 1250', *Viator* 31 (2000), 1–42. The contemporary crusading chronicles do not mention Robert Curthose as a candidate for rulership of Jerusalem, cf. John, *Godfrey*, 178–90.

⁸⁵ Aird, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy*, 252–54.

⁸⁶ See Aird, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy*, 197–202. Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia*, 454, calls Robert 'assuetus bellis Ierosolimitanis', when he described his attack in the battle of Tinchebrai.

⁸⁷ Garnett, 'Robert Curthose. The Duke Who Lost His Trousers', 213–43.

⁸⁸ After landing in Normandy Henry encouraged his followers to lead an honest life. See OV, vi, 60–69; Guibert of Nogent, *Dei Gesta per Francos*, 132.

Let us now return to the initial topic of Normans on the crusade and the Norman contribution. With Bohemond and Robert, we have considered two Norman crusaders who were rather typical as crusaders go. For both, the motives for joining the crusade were a mixture of personal ambition, religious devotion or piety, the meeting of expectations of their environment, and, perhaps for both, a desire to escape a confining situation at home. I would argue that we see more ambition in Bohemond and more piety in Robert. Both probably saw the opportunity to further their political situations, be it in the Latin East or the West, and both tried to use their new crusader status once they had returned. But none of these motives is specifically Norman, nor were they seen as specifically Norman by contemporaries. In regard to our question about a collective Norman experience, none of their motives stands out in the crusade chronicles as being induced by their Normanness.

With respect to Norman characteristics, both Bohemond and Robert acted courageously on crusade, while Bohemond used trickery and showed ambition at the siege of Antioch. But although these attributes had a strong connection to 'Normannitas' in Europe, the contemporary historians who ascribed ambition and trickery to the person of Bohemond did not use him as an example of Norman identity. In addition, it must be noted that, in the context of the crusading histories, characteristics that were typically connected to the Normans in Western sources might be more easily understood as characteristics that were held to be necessary in a fight against non-Christians. Within the set of conditions in the Latin East, 'Norman' characteristics lost their particular Norman flavor and cannot therefore be used to pinpoint a 'Norman' contribution.

We have also seen that the situation in Europe had changed considerably for Bohemond and Robert after their return. Both tried to make the best of their new status as crusaders, Bohemond with more success, although only at the beginning. The boost in their social status was not a Norman experience, however, but part of a development after the First Crusade. Every nobleman who returned from the East could use his newly won prestige in the same way.

It can be argued, therefore, that contemporaries did not interpret Bohemond's or Robert's contribution as uniquely 'Norman', not in regard to the motives that induced them to join the crusades, not in their characteristics, nor in their behavior during and after the crusade. Even characteristics that were strongly connected to Normans in the West became part of a generally accepted behavior in the Latin East. Neither Bohemond nor Robert behaved in a particularly 'Norman' fashion in the eyes of their contemporaries, except for one characteristic that modern historians ascribed to them: they adapted easily to the horizon of expectation in any scenario. This flexibility, however, is a modern concept, and was not part of traditional characteristics of *gentes*, not even of the Normans at home, or those who, like Bohemond and Robert, traveled to participate in the First Crusade. Despite contemporary chronicles and narratives that ascribed to them a special ambition, ruthlessness, or courage when in a European context, Norman lords nevertheless were written seamlessly into the fabric of the crusading movement

when abroad. Crusade narratives subsumed their particular characteristics under the larger identity of the Latin crusader. Even given their somewhat outsized role in the First Crusade, Norman identity was not a distraction – or a distinction – when taking the cross.