Nature during the Crusades

_Chapter Title_

_Physical and psychological affects from the environment in crusader narratives._

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Abstract

In this study, I have investigated what some of the crusaders thought of and how they were affected by the nature they encountered during the crusades. This have been done based on written sources from the crusades using the concept of Environmental imagination in medieval texts. The texts in this study have been chosen depending on their availability and their translation. The crusaders found themselves in a new nature that they were not prepared for and in which the enemy could hide in. The nature could also work as a moral boost for the crusaders confirming that God was on their side or work as a death-trap when they were led astray. It is clear that the crusaders experienced both physical and psychological effects from the nature that they encountered during the crusades.
Sammanfattning

I denna studien så har jag undersökt vad några korsfarare ansåg om naturen och hur de blev påverkade av den när de mötte den under korstågen. Detta har undersömts med hjälp av skrivna källor som härstammar från tiden då korstågen genomfördes. Texterna har valts ut beroende på deras tillgänglighet och hur väl de har varit översatta. Den använda metoden och teorin som har använts är ’Environmental imagination’. Korsfararna hamnade i en Natur de inte var beredda på att möta och som deras fiender kunde använda sig av för att gömma sig i. Naturen kunde också vara moraliskt upplyftande då de ibland tolkade som att Gud var på deras sida genom händelser i naturen men naturen kunde också fungera som en dödsfälla när de var på okänd mark. Det är klart att korsfararna blev både fysiologiskt och psykologiskt påverkade av naturen.
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Introduction

In 1095 the crusades were started by Pope Urban II to take back the Holy Land from the Islamic rulers. This was a great military expansion that lead Christian people into new landscapes. As the landscape changed around them they encountered different difficulties and successes that were affected by weather and natural obstructions during their journey. As the crusaders were highly affected by their religion so also were these encounters with nature interpreted within the religious framework. Therefore, it is interesting to see how the crusaders wrote about these encounters with nature.

The purpose with this study is to investigate what some of the crusaders thought of nature and how they were affected by the nature they encountered during the crusades c. 1071- c. 1291.

The central questions of the study are:

- What was important for the crusaders to write about the nature they encountered?
- How do the narratives describe how the crusaders were physically affected by the nature?
- How do the narratives describe how the crusaders were psychologically experienced the nature?
Previous research

This study is situated at the intersection of histories of the Crusades, medieval environmental history, and religious environmental thought.

Writings on the crusades

The crusades are a subject that have been well researched. Many historians have focused on explaining why the crusades happened. Jean Richard (2001) has written a through history on the crusades. He considers the consequences of the crusades such as the changes of the Latin east into feudal states. He explains that it is the crusades that put East in contact with West, which could have led to an awakening to differences and similarities. Even if that happened sometimes, the current trend of rupture between groups is thoroughgoing even during the crusades (Richard 2001).

The crusades are one part of a bigger movement of fighting for Christianity (Tyerman 2004, pp. 211-217). Cristopher Tyerman (2004, p. 211) starts his timeline with a theory of just war (c. 400) in Christianity and ends his timeline with the Iraq war 2003 (Tyerman 2004, p. 217). This is a timeline that is partly supported by The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades which uses a timeline between 1095 and ends it 1798 (Riley-Smith et al., 1995). What decides these timelines is how the writers think about the crusades and what the central topic of the book is. Richard tries to isolate the crusades to find the consequences of the crusade while Tyerman focuses more on finding a common ground in the different writings on the crusades. Tyerman divides his book in two parts. What were the crusades? And; The causes and consequences of the crusades? This makes the crusades a part of a bigger picture for Tyerman.

For this study, the beliefs of the Christian knights who went on the Crusades matters. They believed that they had been called by God to participate in the actions. Their assumption was that God was on their side. This had implications for the ways that they interpreted natural events, which were understood as signs from God.

Writings on medieval environment.

Medieval environmental history is a new field of study. Richard Hoffman (2014) states that environmental relations can bring about cultural change as well as be determined by cultural frameworks. People in the West shared similar assumptions about the nature of culture and it
was God’s will that they had to learn and follow but a hegemonic Christianity is not necessarily the context of which a single human understands the world (Hoffmann 2014). There was also a view that humans were supposed to suffer on earth (Hoffmann 2014). Nature existed to show God’s will—nature lacked any intrinsic value on its own but existed only for humans to use in making sense of God’s affairs with the humans. Nature started being used in theology and later in other cultural expressions as an allegory.

Verena Winiwarter (2003) gives an interesting approach to environmental history in which not only the nature is important but also the humans. Winiwarter (2003) explains that it is important to study human interaction with the natural world, but that the concept of nature is ever changing and often is viewed as the other society. The concept of nature is a reflection of the social construction and that nature also can have an effect on human societies (Winiwarter 2003).

This means that there is a value in researching the crusaders view on the nature since we know that the crusaders might have had a greater understanding about nature and environment than we knew.

Connecting religion and the environment in medieval thought

Ellen Arnold (2013) explores how the natural environment changed medieval religious shows that there existed no unifying view on nature, as earlier scholars thought (2013). She explains that the monks had a great understanding of their environment, and that a cultural approach to environmental history can help us understand how humans constructed shifting images of nature to their advantage (Arnold, 2013). The people that wrote the sources used in this study will likely have used images about nature to their advantage when writing for others.

Leonie Hicks (2015) has studied the connection between crusaders of the First Crusade and the landscape. She notes that even if the crusades have been studied a lot, the landscape and key themes have been neglected (Hicks 2015, p. 187). According to Hicks (2015, p. 177), many miraculous events were written down create a connection between the familiar and the unfamiliar. She also explains that if the texts from the pilgrimages were meant to be read out aloud then descriptions of the landscape were used as means to connect time and space, people and the past with the present. Many of those who engaged with texts from the crusades would not have been a part of it and therefore the writer might have considered their response and therefore have found it important to make these connections (Hicks 2015, pp. 179-180). The landscape needed to be familiar so that the readers/listeners would recognise it but also
unfamiliar so that it did not become ordinary (Hicks 2015, p. 192). Pilgrimage, which was a common religious practice at the time and became how the landscape was interpreted by the reader. Using Arnold’s thought about how the crusaders might have written to an audience and Winiwater’s concept of nature as a social reflection, it is possible to search for a meaning behind what the Crusader narratives say about nature and the human relationship with it.
Theory and method

This study is based on the concept of environmental imagination in medieval texts proposed by 
Arnold in *Negotiating the Landscape*. She advocates using environmental imagination as a way 
of reading look for the historical actors’ imagined and material environment. It is possible to 
use this when researching what people thought about the environment. It is a complex method 
and need many sources that is composed together to give a whole picture to what people thought 
about the environment and how people used it. The environment is thus both a real physical 
encounter and an imagined space of interaction.

Lawrence Buell, Professor of American Literature at Harvard University, has stated that an 
environmental text contains four main points:

1) The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a 
presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history;

2) The human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest;

3) Human accountability to the environment is part of the text’s ethical orientation; 
and

4) Some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is 
at least implicit in the text (1995, p.7-8)

Buell thinks that an environmental text should incorporate all four of these items. These points 
are focused on the environment which is clearest in point three. Since nature in text is the main 
emphasis and not environment the focus will be on point one, two and four but with focus on 
the nature instead.

I have read the sources from the Crusades using Buell’s four points of what an environmental 
text is. The focus has primarily on parts in which they talk about the environment, mainly how 
they thought about the environment but also how they made use of the nature in order to 
understand the construction of their environmental imagination. Events that have happened 
because of the environment are also of importance, such as the Crusaders being trapped on a 
place because of bad weather, the enemy used the environment against them, and catastrophes 
or good luck brought upon them from the environment such as a storm at sea or rain after a long 
drought.
The sources have been worked through two times. The first time I read the source I marked parts that was relevant to the study with Buell’s four points as a base and the second time the sources was searched through to see if anything had been missed. Since there are a more than one life story used, sometimes patterns can be found and if not all parts that can be regarded as environmental text is included the pattern might change (Thomson 2012). In finding the patterns, reading the language becomes important. It is reliable to read the language plain and obscure but if there is a context to which the text was written it can be possible to find a more complex interpretation, a scholar must always detailed explanation of their interpretation if they choose to make it more complex (Strange 2012). In this study both interpretations are important.

To have a direct interpretation of what they wrote and to see the patterns that may exist. A complex interpretation will be important if the text had a purpose when written because then the writer might have had a message behind what was explicit written.

The selected parts were divided into different categories depending on the main theme in the texts: mountains, water and drought. This made it possible to analyse if they thought and were affected the same by different natural environments.

Boundaries

The time boundary is about c. 1071- c. 1291, which spans from the first to the ninth crusade. The main focus will be on the first to the fourth crusades (c. 1096- c. 1204). The focus will be on texts that are written during the Crusades and not on text that explains what happens before and after the Crusades.

Rather than limiting the analysis to a single crusade, the whole history of the crusades is included because the crusaders thoughts on the nature might have changed over time which would be relevant for the analysis.

Materials

The sources in this study are English translations from Latin writing from the time of the crusades. The texts are translated but often the original text is also available in the sources. The sources are life stories from the crusades that have been gathered with help from my library and supervisor. During this research not all writings have been taking into consideration either because they had no immediate value to this particular research or because there was no particular mention of the nature that they encountered. Some sources have not been taken into

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consideration because they were not available in a complete text which meant that even if they mentioned nature I had no access to that part.

Tyerman (2004, pp. 218-219) gives a warning on how to handle writings from the crusades as a source since the archives on the crusades are not complete and that the writings in some cases might be a form of storytelling. This means that since a complete archive on the crusades does not exist, there will not be a complete base to work on. The result can only be based on the materials available. This is true for almost all writings on the crusades but since it was such a big event during a longer time we still have many reliable sources to work with. It is still important to be aware that the missing stories and what they could have contributed (Thomson 2012). The material used in this analysis has been chosen depending on transmission transcription and translation. The sources can have been rewritten many times before the translation which could have introduced errors in the text and the translation are both between language and over time. This means that no translation is completely right since a word to word translation is impossible but they main point in the story can still be found and used. Writings that we only have parts of or that have not been fully translated have only been of a small relevance since they mostly cannot give a complete picture of what people thought since it can change over time. Storytelling sources have not been of interest to this study since they are meant to be stories and not necessarily writings on actual events.

When reading these materials, one has to be aware that most of them was not written for personal keeping like a diary would have been but were written to be read by others. In some cases, the text was not written by someone that was there, but by someone being told the story. This does not make the text unusable but one has to be aware that the thoughts in the texts will not be personal but will have a meaning behind them. As Arnold explains in her case of monks writing for an audience, it is possible to search for a meaning behind what the crusaders and their chroniclers wrote to find what they wanted to convey to the audience. This will not give us the crusaders initial thoughts about nature but rather what they thought was important to convey to the reader. And in some cases understand God’s will in what is happening in the nature and the meaning behind it.

Since life stories is the only source from the crusades that is used in this study it is important to consider why someone narrates their life and how this effects what they say and don’t say (Thomson 2012). Since there are a more than one life story used sometimes patterns can be found (Thomson 2012).
The sources that have been used are:

Aachen, A. o., 2007. *Historia Ierosolimitana, HISTORY OF THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.* New York: Oxford University Press Inc. Written 1095-1119 and is a contemporary narrative attributed to Albert of Aachen. It is edited and translated by Susan B. Edgington. It contains twelve books were the first six tells about the firsts crusade and the first capture of Jerusalem in 1099. The last six describes the politics of the crusader states during the first two decades of settlement.


Barton, S. & Fletcher, R., 2000. *The World of El Cid: Chronicles of the Spanish Reconquest.* u.o.:Manchester University Press. This is the English translation of four narrative sources from the 11th-12th century. The first three focus on the Reconquest of the Spanish peninsula from Islam. The forth narrative is about Rodrigo Diaz often referred to as El Cid and is the main source about his career as a mercenary who fought on both sides.


J. A. Giles, 1888. *Chronicles of the crusades; contemporary narratives of the crusade of Richard Coeur de Lion.* London: George Bell and Sons. Contains the chronicles of Richard of Devizes concerning the deeds of King Richard the first, Geoffrey de Vinsauf's Chronicle of Richard the First's crusade and Lord de Joinville's Memoirs of Louis IX., King of France, commonly called Saint Louis with appendix. The texts are mainly from the 12th century.

Nogent, G. d., 1997. *The deeds of God through the Franks, GESTA DEI PER FRANCOS.* Woodbridge: The Boydell Press. Is a narrative of the first crusade written by Guibert of Nogent in the beginning of the 11th century. Guibert himself never went on a crusade but wrote the book after hearing crusaders talk about their experiences and after reading ananonymys eyewitness accounts called Gesta Francorium. It is not only an historical narrative but also contains moral instructions and elements of prophesy making it an allegory.
Background

Because this project involves reading crusader texts for their interpretation and interaction with nature, we have to keep in mind the political, social, and religious context within which they were written.

Crusades to the East

As the 11th century came to an end, western Europe had become a significant power even if it still was weaker than other civilizations such as the Byzantine Empire. But Byzantium had started to lose territory to invading Turkish people. In 1095 the Byzantine Emperor Alexius I asked Pope Urban II for troops to confront the Turks. At the Council of Clermont in southern France Pope Urban II called to take up arms to aid Byzantines to recapture the Holy Land and was met with an overwhelming response and almost all became determined to follow his call.

The First Crusade started in 1096 lead by Raymond of Saint-Gilles, Godfrey of Bouillon, Hugh of Vermandois and Bohemond of Taranto (Richard 2001). The People’s Crusades, a subgroup of the First Crusade, lead by Peter the Hermit manage to set off before the others and as they passed through Byzantine they left destruction behind them. When the four other Crusader armies arrived to Byzantine Alexius had them swear that all land they captured belonged to him. All but Bohamed took the oath. By working together despite struggles between the Byzantines and the crusaders they arrived at Jerusalem.

With their goal achieved many of the crusaders made their way home. To manage the control of the captured territories four crusader states were formed and well maintained until about 1130 when Islamic forces started to gain ground again and year 1144 the city Edessa was recaptured by Muslims. When news of this reached Europe a second crusade lead by King Louis VII of France and King Conrad III of Germany started year 1147 (Richard 2001). After many attempts to capture Egypt and almost as many defeats the Third Crusade started lead by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, King Philip II of France and King Richard I of England. And year 1191 King Richard managed to defeat Sultan Saladin and recaptured the city Jaffa and with some re-established Cristian control he approached Jerusalem. 1192 a peace treaty was signed by king Richard and sultan Saladin that established a kingdom of Jerusalem without Jerusalem.

After the peace treaty there were three more crusades but they did not manage to have a long lasting impact or an impact at a greater scale.
The Seventh Crusade (1239–41), led by Thibault IV of Champagne, briefly recaptured Jerusalem, though it was lost again in year 1244 to Khwarazmian dynasty forces enlisted by the sultan of Egypt. Other wars came but the greatest era of the crusades ended when Acre (that had been a Christian territory since the third crusade) fell.

The Reconquista

In addition to crusades to the Holy Land, Christian knights also fought Islamic forces that had settled in Iberia. The Reconquista was a series of wars between Christian kingdoms and Muslims that lasted between year 718-1492 in the Iberian Peninsula were Spain and Portugal are today. Year 711 the Moors started to invade Europe by sea from North Africa to the Iberian Peninsula. And year 718 the Reconquista started when King Pelayo of the Visigoths managed to defeat the Muslims in city Alcama and are by some seen as the first significant victory that Christian had over the Moors. There were later numerous battles between Christians and the Moors but it took about 700 years before the Christians manage to conquer the peninsula. During the latter part of the Reconquista it was considered a Holy war along with the crusades since the Catholic Church wanted all Muslims away from Europe. The battles ended with the war against of Emirate of Granada year 1482 and ended with a Christian victory 1492 when the Granada surrendered.
Results

In this study I have looked for narratives of the nature in texts from the crusades. I looked at how they interpreted the nature and their encounters with it. These texts are not presented chronologically; instead all evidence is discussed simultaneously, regardless of which Crusade it originated from. This is done in order to stress the thematic nature of the evidence.

The three main types of nature that was found in the texts are mountains, greenery such as trees and bushes, and deserts. I have also looked at how they handled being in an unfamiliar terrain. Mountains and greenery is something that they probably had encountered before since they are also common in some European nature. The deserts were probably more unfamiliar to them. The final section deals with encounters with water, both in terms of storms and rivers that had to be forded.

Mountains

Mountains are often mentioned in texts from the crusades, they served as a place for the enemy to hide in and take flight to.

In the passage below from an account after the First Crusade, the Turks had concealed themselves in the mountains to back away from a fight with the crusaders. Later the Arabs used the mountains to hide their forces and only send out a decoy to lure men out from the city to surround them. Roger, the leader of the Christian forces, suspected an ambush and stood ready to fight the Arabs. But being unaware that the Arabs had hidden troops in the mountains Roger followed them in their false retreat only to face a new force from the mountains. Believing that God was on their side, they still took up the battle.

Turks, who saw the count's steadfastness and the courageous assistance of the great number who turned back, swiftly took flight, concealing themselves in the mountains. (Aachen 2007 p. 601)

But the Ascalonites and Arabs, taking pains to conceal their forces in hiding places in the mountains which were opposite Jaffà, sent men in advance who were very skilled on horseback with lance and arrow, to gallop up to the city gate and lure men some distance out of the city until they fell into an ambush, and then they would surround them on all sides and, bursting out of their hiding places, catch them unawares and unprepared, slaughtering some, taking others captive. But Roger and his comrades were ready with their weapons and rode out to meet them, and did not refrain from fighting with the (. . .) At length, when the Christians had won the day and were pursuing for some distance, and while the Arabs in the meantime were deliberately retreating, the enemy troops came out of the mountains and began to appear on all sides in vast,
countless numbers and to draw near. But the Christians, although they thought this war force had been sent from Egypt, were not at all intimidated, but fought back strongly and put their hope of life in Lord Jesus, for whose name and love they had relinquished all their kindred of flesh and blood. (Aachen 2007 p. 729)

The enemy used the mountains to ambush the crusaders and because of this the Crusaders always had to fear where the enemy comes from. One account noted this: “Our men, on setting out on their march, were attacked by the Turks from the mountains, and some of our camp-followers were slain, though they were repulsed by our horsemen, from not having good horses” (Giles 1888 p.311). This might have made them think negatively of the mountains since it clearly is enemy terrain and not something that they lightly could approach. But even when they saw a war force coming from the mountains they did not back down since they had a mission from God to complete.

At another time the sultan also made use of the mountains to escape from the crusaders and used the topological advantage of the mountain to shoot down arrows at anyone that might have followed.

At night, the sultan ordered all his tents and property to be carried to the mountains; and what could not be moved in time was burnt. It was the part of a spirit conquered and hesitating, thus declining battle on the plain, to destroy his own property, change his position, and retreat to the mountains. When he found a spot not easy of access, he halted; and sent out an overwhelming number of infantry and bowmen to check those who should pursue, that at least he might annoy from above, those whom he feared to engage at close quarters. Our men, therefore, cheated of their battle in the plain, and unable to follow the foe up the precipitous road, returned equally without hurt and without glory. (Giles 1888 p.137)

The crusaders seem annoyed at the sultan for using the mountains to hide in instead of meeting them on the open field. It is clear that mountains were of great use for the enemy and this might have brought distress to the crusaders.

This is also eminent when the crusaders worry about the rough terrain. When climbing a mountain, the crusaders were afraid of the narrow roads that they had to travel on in fear of being attacked and unable to avoid the enemy. They later praised God that they did not meet any enemies on the way.

Ascension of the Lord they ascended a mountain along a very narrow road, in great fear that the narrowness of the path might prevent them from evading any enemies they might meet at the end of the road. But God's providence prevented anyone from daring to attack them. (Nogent 1997, p. 125)
They clearly were aware of that they were in a disadvantage in the mountains and knowing that the enemy often hide in the mountains, it is easy to see why they might have been afraid of being attacked.

The crusaders were also unfamiliar with the terrain in the mountains and sometimes had to use guides, which left them open for attack if the guide was reporting to the enemy as well. The crusaders might have been well aware that using a guide was risky but when facing with an unknown landscape they might not have had much of a choice. Because not only was it a trouble of finding their way, but the terrain was at times so unpredictable that you had to know where you went to avoid certain death.

In this example, after being granted a Saracen guide to show them the way through a mountain that they knew could be treacherous, the Crusaders made their way through the mountains to Jubayl. They stayed there over the night and on the third day they traveled on a mountain passage that could kill them if they did not know where they were going.

He satisfied them with gifts and peaceful words and granted them an elderly man as guide on the journey, since the whereabouts of paths through the mountain regions next to the seashore were intricate and unknown. He led them from the seashore on a winding route through difficult mountain passes, on a path so narrow that a man could scarcely march after a man, an animal after an animal. This mountain stretched out from the range an outstanding length right to the sea. On its top a tower, projecting over a certain gate, had been built across the road, and in its living space six men could be stationed, whose defense could deny the road to all who lived under the heavens. But, faced by the army and the ruler of Tripoli's guide, no one now resisted those passing through. When these narrow and very difficult passes had been successfully negotiated using the knowledge of their Saracen guide and fellow traveler, they took the road to the seashore again, and arrived at the town of Jubayl, for which the ruler of the city of Tripoli had interceded. (. . .)

Then on the third day they struck camp and moved on their way once more along the seashore and they were brought back onto a certain mountain path of amazing and incredible narrowness. It is said that this had suffered undermining from a sudden downpour of rain flowing down on top of it, and that the way for travelers there was through this hollowing out. And this mountain is constantly pounded by the waves of the sea which were so close that it was strictly forbidden to turn aside to right or left, in case someone stumbled and fell straight into the depths of the sea. When this journey through the defiles was completed, and once more a certain fortress tower was bypassed through the mountains, as unassailable as the above-mentioned tower, both of them remaining empty of any defender—fear of God not of man being inspired in the Saracen guards—towards evening they drew near the city of Baurim or Beirut to take up quarters, always with the Saracen, their companion and fellow traveler, going first and leading them. (Aachen 2007, pp. 389-391)
The text does not say that the crusaders was betrayed by the guide, but later in the text they were attacked by the Saracen’s further down their journey. Even if the guide betrayed them it is unlikely that they would have made their way thru the mountains without significant losses. This must have been a hard choice to make: either go into unknown rough terrain or risk being betrayed by a guide. In the end they saw it as more dangerous to go into the mountains unprepared than risk being attacked which show the respect they had for the nature.

In History of the Journey to Jerusalem Albertus Aquensis describes the kingdom of Khurasan that is surrounded by mountains and that anyone “who is once captured and enters there is unable to come out again, any more than a beast out of a stall, unless with the license and permission of the Turks” (Aachen 2007, p. 613). This must have been terrifying for the Crusaders that risked being captured by the Turks.

The mountains must have been an impressive environment that they had respect for. The Turks had a greater knowledge about the mountains and used it greatly in their favor which must have made the mountains even more of a terrifying landscape.

The crusaders looked down at the Arabs use of the mountains and described it as “having immediately hidden in mountain caves and blind lurking places like mice” (Aachen 2007, p. 747). They were not considered proper men for hiding in caves in the mountains but having figured out were the enemy were hiding they could use it to their advantage and smoke them out.

The king came down the valley with his army, surveying the caves of the entire region, and blockaded the mouths of the caverns by pitching tents. But he was not able in this way to force the men to emerge, so at length fire and smoke were stirred up in front of the mouths of the caves, and all were obliged to come out. Some of them were soon killed by weapons, others were taken prisoner and some sixty were taken off, all their spoils having been taken out of the cave, with very many donkeys, oxen, sheep, and goats. (Aachen 2007 p. 747)

But despite looking down on the Arabs for hiding in the mountains the crusaders used similar tactics themselves.

When these things had been done and volunteers had been found, the aged father himself was the first to call for weapons and horse and to mount, and, crossing over the ship bridge in the darkness of night, he concealed himself in a hiding place In a valley next to the mountains with his beloved son and the companions he had taken with him. When morning came he left a Christian foot soldier on the level plain where he would be clearly visible to the Turks. The Turks, therefore, with their own cruelty and Christian slaughter in mind, set out again from the city across the bridge over the river Orontes or Farfar and halted
on the mountain Tom, as was their custom, from where there was a long lookout for almost two miles from one mountain range to another across the level plains. There they observed the lone pilgrim going to and fro collecting brushwood and they charged their horses at speed to kill him, they frightened him with a sudden shout, then in the course of chasing the fugitive all the way to the mountains and scrubland they passed close by the ambush of the hiding Christians. The pilgrim had already taken cover in the mountains, so these four Turks took the road back near the Christians’ ambush, hoping confidently to return. But immediately the count and his men rose out of the valley and rode at them at speed, leaving two destroyed in a single moment, whose horses and armour they took away, and taking the other two alive, whom they brought back in fetters to the army. The pilgrims ran from all sides, nobles and lesser men, to see the Turkish prisoners, giving glory to God for this favourable outcome. And they heaped praises on Count Hugh and his son Engelrand, by whose wisdom and manly courage such criminal opponents had been captured and destroyed. (Aachen 2007, p. 48)

Even if they did not hide in the mountains, the tactical use of the nature is similar to the ones the enemy had used before.

In this transfer, the mountains changes from something that solely the enemy uses to something that the Crusaders can use to their advantage. But even when learning how the enemy uses the mountains to their advantage it is hard to think that they thought favorably about the mountains since it had caused them great loses. Learning how to make use of the mountains made it possible to turn more fights in their favor as shown above.

Trees and bushes

The enemy could also hide among the trees and bushes and from there they made efficient ambushes on the crusaders.

When Joscelyn of Edessa heard of the death of the lord of Antioch he took some men with him to travel to Antioch and rule there (Tritton, Gibb 1933, p.301). But on his way to Antioch he got ambushed by Turks who promised that they would give them all that he had if taken to a city. Along the way he got betrayed to other Turks and thrown into jail. The enemy made especially good use of the trees and bushes when the crusaders had stopped for a rest near some apple treas. Managing to slip by the guards they hid among the trees to kill the archdeacon and the woman keeping him company. But the crusaders managed to learn from this and were ready when the Turks came the next time to make a similar ambush.

They did not like that they had an environment so close to them that the enemy could use and therefore decided to cut down almost all vegetation where the enemy had hidden.
With Tancred keeping watch on these two gates, the one towards the mountains and the other towards the stone bridge, and the Christian army quiet and somewhat unconcerned with warlike things, and with some of the comrades meanwhile taking to dicing because of the leisure, it happened one day that the son of Count Conrad of Luxembourg, named Adelbero, a clerk and archdeacon of the church at Metz, a very high-born young man of royal blood and Related to Henry III, emperor of the Romans, was also taking his recreation and occupied playing dice with a certain woman of great birth and beauty in a pleasure garden full of apple trees, but also as dense as a forest with an abundance of plants, which was next to the position and that same city gate which Duke Godfrey and the Germanic company were blockading. While these two, as I have said, were intent on resting and playing dice, the Turks sneaked out of the gate with the idea of ambushing and killing Christians, and, hiding themselves carefully among the tall and towering plants and the density of trees, they attacked with a sudden shout the archdeacon and the woman playing with him, catching them unaware and by surprise; they shot them with arrows and scattered and wounded the comrades who were there as judges of the game, and who now forgot about dice games in their fear( . . .) And so the heads of both were found and taken to Duke Godfrey and shown to him. He recognized the archdeacon's and ordered the grave to be opened where his body had already been buried, and the head to be restored to its proper place, so that the parts of such a noble man should not remain unburied. (Aachen 2007, p. 46)

Having enemies being able to come this close to them was obviously irritating and they chose to get rid of the nature that they decided were a part of the enemy success.

But cutting down the enemies hiding place was not enough to stop the enemies and next time the enemy came the crusaders were ready and prepared to fight them.

Then another day the Turks, pleased with the success of their deception and thinking to carry out a similar one against the Christians, came out of the gate and secretly approached among the thickness of the bushes and the slender reeds of the marsh. They rose up against some pilgrims in the aforementioned orchard with their usual fierceness and noise. But soldiers came from all sides to aid the pilgrims and the Turks were forced back and put to flight. No one was hit by them then, or wounded, except Arnulf of castle Tirs. (Aachen 2007, pp. 46-48)

As with the mountains the enemy used the nature to their full advantage and the crusaders had to adapt to their strategies.

Deserts and being denied water

The crusaders seem vulnerable to drought both natural drought and being refused water by the enemy.

In one episode, when the Turks attacked the Crusaders they also prevented them from collecting water and since the Crusaders did not have a great amount of water with them, they suffered greatly. They started to drink blood from the horses, as well as their own urine to find some
relief. Others dug themselves down in the earth and covered themselves with dirt up to their necks. (Nogent 1997 p. 50)

The bishops and priests who were present, and were themselves suffering in the same way, seeing that the dangers were hideous and human help unavailable, offered consolation, continuing to promise heavenly rewards. For eight days their suffering continued. While they all seemed to be subject to the same misery, they did not all hope for God's mercy in the same way; those who had been the leaders plotted treacherously to save themselves. Rainald, who lead them in prosperity, secretly and foully concluded a pact with the Turks, promising to betray to them all the soldiers he commanded. And so he marched out as though about to go to battle with them, but while pretending to lead them in this way, he and many of his own men fled to the Turks, and he remained with them from then on; the others were captured. Some of the prisoners were challenged about their faith, and ordered to renounce Christ, but they proclaimed Christ with steady heart and voice, and were decapitated. (Nogent 1997 p. 50)

It is obvious that being refused water took a great toll on them. Even if some looked to God for salvation, being refused water could bring them to betray the cause of the crusades. Even if this is not a drought brought on by nature it shows the great suffering that a drought could bring. Yet it had to go really far before they were ready to betray the crusade and their comrades. This shows their determination in the crusades and indicates how far they were ready to go before giving up the cause.

Another time, the crusaders had gotten lost and found themselves in a dessert. After many had died and after losing many horses, they had to use whatever they could to bring their equipment with them.

Afterward, in searching for the infidels through pathless solitudes, our men entered a deserted, pathless, waterless land, from which the pitiful men emerged scarcely alive. They suffered from hunger and thirst; nothing edible could be found, but the cruel deprivation seemed sometimes to be relieved by rubbing their hands with the spikes. Certainly many noble knights died there, and the desert, to which they were unaccustomed, took the lives of many horses. The feeble succumbed to the relentless hardship. The great lack of horses and carts compelled them to use cattle, goats, rams, and what is more amazing, dogs, to carry whatever supplies were appropriate to their size. From there they moved on to a province rich in what they needed, and they reached the city of Iconia, famous for its tolerance of Paul and his writings. Meanwhile, the inhabitants of this province urged our men to provide themselves with supplies, and to bring water in bags with them, because they would not be able to find any water on the entire next day's journey. (Nogent 1997, p. 69)

They also tied to adapt to the environment since they took precautions after going through a desert when they had learned that water might not be readily available the next day.
In another drought, they suffer terribly and this could have been a period in which they cursed the land and God. Yet this is not mentioned anywhere in the text describing the drought. But it is obvious that the nature in which they travel in was extremely hard on their mentality and bodies.

When writing “gave up the ghost” the crusaders refer to death and that many people died by the drought. This must have been a terrible experience and is definably not a positive one. Aquensis did not mention that it might be a test from God but most likely it must have seemed that way too many since they still carried on with the crusade.

Then the day came, a certain Saturday of the same month, when the great shortage of water worsened among the people. And therefore, overwhelmed by the anguish of thirst, as many as five hundred people of both sexes gave up the ghost on that same day—so they say who were there. In addition, horses, donkeys, camels, mules, oxen, and many animals suffered the same death from extreme thirst.

We actually found all this out not merely from hearsay, but from the truthful account given by those who also shared in that same trouble: that in that same trial of thirst men and women endured wretched tortures, such that the human mind dreads to contemplate, and trembles to hear of such a pitiable affliction of thirst. For indeed, very many pregnant women, their throats dried up, their wombs withered, and all the veins of the body drained by the indescribable heat of the sun and that parched region, gave birth and abandoned their own young in the middle of the highway in the view of everyone. Other wretched women rolled about next to their young on the common way, having forgotten all shame and modesty because of their extreme suffering in that drought. They were driven to give birth not by the due order of months or because their time had come, but were forced by the raging of the sun, the fatigue of their travels, the swelling of their thirst, their long distance from water. Their infants were discovered in the middle of the plain, some dead, some half alive. Moreover, many men, growing weak from the exertion and the heat, gaping with open mouths and throats, were trying to catch the thinnest mist to cure their thirst. It was no use at all. For a very great part, as we have said, is claimed to have died there on that day. Even the hawks, no less, tamed birds and favourites of high-born nobles, were dying of that heat and thirst in the hands of their owners who were carrying them. Dogs as well, who were excellent in the hunter's art, panting with the same torment of thirst, perished in the hands of their masters. Now, while everyone was thus suffering with this plague, the river they had longed for and searched for was revealed. As they hurried towards it each was keen and longed excessively to get before the rest in the great throng. They set no limit to their drinking, until very many who had been weakened, men as well as beasts of burden, died from drinking too much. (Aachen 2007, pp. 139-142)

When trying to take Jerusalem in the middle of the summer the crusaders were faced with a terrible heat. The heat affected them during battles so much that they were ready to risk their lives both getting the water and drinking it.
The holy city and our mother Jerusalem, which her bastard sons had assaulted and her legitimate sons had denied, was besieged on the Tuesday in the second week in July when the heat and burning of the sun is said to be unbearable, and especially in these eastern regions, when not only do the streams lack water, but even the small springs are only to be found three miles away. In this siege the Christian army was severely tormented by the heat of the blazing sun, by the unbearable lack of water and the incredibly arid landscape. When some comrades were sent to track down and draw on the springs scattered here and there, sometimes they returned unharmed, having drawn water, and at other times they were in danger of having their heads cut off in gentile ambushes. The water they brought back in goatskin bags was stirred up and muddied because so many were competing in their efforts to draw it and it had in it it slippery worms of leeches. From this, as much as a person could take in his mouth from the narrow opening of the skin was sold for twopence, although it might be old and putrid, or taken from filthy marshes or ancient cisterns. Very many of the noncombatant crowd who were tormented by unbearable thirst took this opportunity of drinking, and while did so they swallowed down the slippery water worms and so were killed by swollen throat or stomach. Only the tiniest streamlet killed by swollen t Sion, and its subterranean channel runs an arrow flowed from Noun flight away from the palace of Solomon to that place where there is a building walled and squared like a cloister, in the middle of which the streamlet collected in a pool through the night. The citizens used it during the day and watered their herds. (Aachen, 2007, pp. 411-413)

It seems like the crusaders were not prepared for shortages of water which drew them to the extremes when faced with drought or shortage of water. The droughts also drew them to such extremes that they were ready to drink dirty water and sell their own comrades to the enemy.

After being betrayed by Alexius ruler over Constantinople, the Crusaders found themselves being led into a desert surrounded by enemies. And at another time after having captured Edessa the crusaders were lead to go on a bad road that led to a desert.

Another Frank lord named Pitabin (Poitevin ?) 4 planned to start when he heard that the Franks who had come had conquered the lands of Syria and Palestine. He planned to pass by Pamphylia and Cappadocia and possess the northern lands. Arrived in Constantinople he took counsel with Alexius and asked him for guides who knew the roads. He betrayed and misled him. He sent men with him but told them to lead him into a desert where there was neither water nor fodder and he told the Turks of those parts so that they could surround them. This came to pass. A great force of Turks enveloped them and overtook them as they were weary and weak from hunger and thirst. The Turks surrounded them, smote them with clouds of arrows so, as they had no strength to fight and no place to flee to, they ( . . . ) were defeated. (Tritton, Gibb 1933, p.74-75)

In 1458 (n. d. 1148) after the second capture of Edessa, the king of the Germans and the king of the Franks with three hundred and ninety-five thousand men came by sea to the capital of the Greeks. The emperor caused them to go by a bad road and sent with them guides to lead them to a desert where neither water nor any needful thing was to be found. When they had gone ten days march from Constantinople and their food was exhausted, they found no houses nor villages where they could buy, not even water, they
wandered in a dry desert and knew not where to go. Their guides had deserted them in the night and warned the Turks of Cappadocia against them. The prince Mas’ud came with his army, found them in the desert exhausted with hunger and thirst, attacked and routed them. Many died of hunger. The two kings with a few troops escaped to the sea, reached Attalia, and went by ship to Antioch having lost all. The Turks grew rich for they had taken gold and silver as pebbles with no end. (Tritton, Gibb 1933, p.298)

It is unsure by just reading this text that Alexius actually betrayed Pitabin since they also mention that he sent his own men with him, but when Pitabin found himself in the desert surrounded by Turks it must have felt like that. It also shows that he himself was unfamiliar with the roads since a desert is generally hard to miss. But being weakened by the desert it was easy for the Turks to attack them. It was a real problem that the guide could abandon them in the night and tell the enemy were they were. Since they were so unfamiliar with the roads and were to go it was easy to lead them into a road that would cause them to weaken and therefore be easier for the enemy to kill.

Water and weather

In one case, the crusaders faced a terrible storm right at the beginning of the journey and were terrified for their lives. But since they were true Christian believers, the crusaders thought they were saved by God in a divine miracle.

But as night came on a tempest arose, and we were scattered in every direction. Indeed, the excessive darkness of the night and the unaccustomed tossing of the waves compelled even the bravest of our seamen to despair. At intervals the Sirens were heard, a horrible sound, first of wailing, and then laughter and jeering, like the clamor of insolent men in a camp. Accord-ingly, through all the night of Ascension divine mercy was present as companion and protector of our men in travail, to the end that they might be corrected by chastisement but not delivered unto death. How many there where who, becoming penitent and confessing their sins and short-comings with sor-row and groaning and atoning with a flood of tears for the per-version of their pilgrimage, however it had been begun offered sacrifices to God upon the altar of the contrite heart. Thus it happened that divine grace passed no one by, and, indeed, that everyone con gratulated himself upon receiving the singular privilege of a heavenly favour, to such an extent that it would be tedious to relate in detail the divine miracles which were reviled in visions. And so the next day, the storm having somewhat abated, wee happily made land in Spain at the port of San Salvador. (David 2001, pp. 59-60)

It is debatable whether it was a miracle or just luck that made them survive a storm at sea but for someone going on a crusade it must have seemed as a miracle and also as an approval from God to continue the journey. It was not uncommon for ships caught in a storm to sink and that might have enforced a belief that God was with them and protected them.
In the People’s Crusade led by Peter the crusaders found themselves in a terrible pinch after they had to run from former allies because of their plundering. Slowed down by the river Sava and not finding enough boats they had to build their own rafts and with no way of steering, they were easy targets for their pursuers.

Peter realized the anger of the king and the great seriousness of the alliance against him, so he left Zemun with all his companions (taking with them, however, all their spoils and herds and booty of horses) and set to cross the Sava. But he found few ships only a hundred and fifty in number on the whole riverbank – in which such a great number could immediately cross and escape through fear of the king who was in hot pursuit. Because of this, as many as possible of those for whom there were no ships tried their best to cross using timbers joined together and fastened with osiers. But while they were tossing about on that same raft of joined timbers and osiers, with no way of steering and meanwhile separated from their companions, most of them perished, shot by the arrows of the Pechenegs, who inhabited Bulgaria (Aachen 2007, pp. 17-19)

Unprepared, the river made a perfect place for the enemy to kill the crusaders. Not counting with having to cross Sava lead to many crusaders being killed and some probably drowned since they had no way of steering.

But water would bring more dangers to crusaders with its unpredictability. When the Crusaders were feeling brave they went out to plunder the Saracens without the emperor’s command (Barton & Fletcher 2000, p. 220). When they had to cross the river on their way back, the crusaders decided to wait until the next day counting on being able to cross the river then (Barton & Fletcher 2000, p. 221). But the next day they could not cross the river by any means because the water in the river had increased (Barton & Fletcher 2000, p. 221). That same morning, the enemy that they had plundered from caught up with them, killing everybody except one man that managed to swim over to the other side.

The emperor, foreseeing what was going to happen, went far away with his own army so as not to witness the death of his people. At around the third hour of the day, that multitude, lifting their gaze, saw great companies of horsemen and foot-soldiers of the Moabites and Hagarenes drawn up, coming to destroy them, and they shouted to the commander of Toledo and to Count Rodrigo to have pity on them. The nobles answered them: ‘You can see that between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; for neither can you pass over to us, nor can we pass over to you’. Again the nobles said ‘Confess your faults one to another, and pray, and partake of the consecrated bread you have with you and God have mercy upon your souls.’ (Barton & Fletcher 2000, pp. 220-221)

Trapped between water and the enemy they prayed to God to fill them with courage to face the horrible situation. God was not blamed for the situation they were in but rather praised that one managed to survive with his own skill and with. Both those who were on the safe side of the
river and those who were about to lose their lives were filled with fear. This could seem like a friendly nature to travel through. Not only could the enemy hide in the mountains, but the waters unpredictability serves as a trap for the enemy to kill them in.

When Tancred and other crusaders decided to return home they were met by a new storm but this time they were not so lucky and many died at sea or was killed.

After Tancred had returned with the other princes, more than a hundred and forty thousand pilgrims, who had come together this year in Jerusalem to worship and had driven away the Egyptians from the siege of Jaffa, ( . . ) But they had sailed scarcely two days in calm weather, when around the winter equinox the serenity of the sky began to be disturbed, horrible winds to be stirred up, the ships everywhere to be threatened by severe turbulence and to be shattered and broken up by wild waves. When at length the sailors and pilgrims were exhausted and overwhelmed by the swelling currents, some were carried to the depths with their sails and oars destroyed, some were scattered by the strong gusts of wind and tossed on unknown waters and shipwrecked, some arriving at Acre, others at Sagitta, or Sidon, others at Ascalon, and, fetching up in the towns of the gentiles, they were either captured, or slain, or drowned by the waves. In fact there were three hundred ships of the Christians which perished; a tenth of them are said to have been narrowly salvaged. When the fate of so great a multitude was heard in Jerusalem, the king and all the men and women of the town broke into a great lamentation and weeping, because so many thousands of their brothers had died such a bitter death, and not only in the waves, but also by the weapons of the gentiles. (Aachen 2007, pp. 659-661)

When it did not go well for them in the storm at sea they might have blamed God but as seen earlier. It seems as it is more appropriate for the writers to praise God when something goes right then to blame him when something goes wrong. So it is hard to say for sure whether they never blamed God for the horrific event that had happened but since those going on a crusade where highly religious they might have done so.

Another time at winter God froze the river Euphrates so that the enemy could cross it faster than what they would be able to do by boat. There was also snow falling which made it easy for them to track the crusaders and find them when they were unprepared for battle.

Michael was a proud youth who did much evil to all, maintaining brigands and thieves in all these parts. Balaq son of Ortuq, who once ruled Saruj, held Hanzit and the castle of Zaid. He warned Michael to desist from his evil ways and restrain his thieves from attacking merchants and travellers. He paid no heed. Complaint was made to Balaq continually till he could not contain himself but gathered a great force of Turkmen in K&nun, a bitter month, to go to the populous land of Gargar. God’s providence accompanied, helped, and guided him, for the Euphrates was frozen and he and all his Turkmen crossed in an instant, while, had they been forced to cross in boats, they could not have done it in five days. He came to the land in the evening and hid his army among difficult rocks, and none knew of them. God was angry with the people of the land. That night heavy snow fell so the Turkmen tracked by the footsteps in the snow all who
left the villages to flee to the hills or upland pastures and killed them or took them captive. They spread through the land like a flood, burned houses and villages and did much harm. (Tritton, Gibb 1933, p.87)

They thought God was angry with them and therefore helped the enemy in their pursuit by freezing Euphrates hiding the enemy and by helping the enemy track them with snow. This must have been a sure sign that God was angry with them and showed it by using the nature to aid the enemy.

Water could therefore be seen as a death-trap as they suffered great losses by either being caught in the wrong side by a river or at a storm at sea. But the crusaders rarely blamed God for this but praised him when they survived.

Water could also be used in strategies to weaken the enemy by guarding lakes so that the enemy could not bring in relieving troops and necessary supplies.

Now one night, when the people were distressed by this struggle and by the experience of the very great slaughter about the city, and had withdrawn into the camp for a while, it was discovered that the Turks often sailed out of the city by way of the lake, and secretly brought in relieving troops, weapons, and all necessary supplies, and that merchants from all parts came together there, and that every sort of merchandise was obtained by the Turks by way of that same lake. Because of this the princes finally held very many councils, discussing what they should do, or how they should continue, how the lake might be closed to the Turks and further sailing in and out be denied to the besieged, and saying that otherwise their own attacks or exertion could not succeed. At last in the course of very many discussions the following conclusion was reached: that unless the lake, which was so large, was guarded by ships, the enemy could in no way be kept in check, nor the city be made empty of food. So the people great and small were called together and it was announced by general agreement that countless numbers of common people, (Aachen 2007, p. 115)

This might was been a great use of the nature to take away an advantage that the enemy had and since the enemy might have been unprepared it must have been more effective than it otherwise would have been. And by blocking of supplies that would have gone to the enemy they might have had the possibility of taking those supplies for themselves.

At one time the crusaders thought they saw clouds having a battle the white clouds that was seen as accompanying the crusaders were last left. It was seen as the white clouds were last left and therefore won it was a sign that God was with them and that he had driven away their enemies. Something that any other day might just have been seen as regular clouds are now seen as a sign from God. This could also have been a tale written to show that God was on their side and controlled nature in their favor.
When we had passed the night on the aforesaid island, we set sail at dawn and had a prosperous voyage until, when we were almost at the mouth of the Tagus River, a squall came down from the hills of Cintra and struck the ships with such amazing violence that several of the smaller boats were sunk with the men on board. And the squall continued until we entered the shelter of the Tagus River. As we were entering the port a wonderful portent appeared to us in the air. For behold, great white clouds coming along with us from the direction of the Gauls were seen to encounter other great clouds bespattered with blackness coming from the mainland. Like ordered lines of battle with left wings locked together they collided with a marvelous impact, some in the manner of skirmishers attacking on right and left and then springing back into line, some encircling others in order to find a way through, some going right through the others and reducing them to a void like vapor, some being pressed downwards and now almost touching the water, others being lifted upwards and now borne from view in the firmament. When at last the great cloud coming from our direction and carrying with it all the impurity of the air, so that all on this side appeared as purest azure, pressed back all the others which were coming from the direction of the mainland, and, as a victress driving the booty before her, held all alone the mastery of the air, and all the others had either been reduced to nothing, or, if some fragments remained, they appeared to be in flight towards the city, we all shouted, Behold, our cloud has conquered! Behold, God is with us! The power of our enemies is destroyed! They are confounded, for the Lord has put them to flight!” And so at last the squall ceased. And a short time afterwards, about the tenth hour of the day, we arrived at the city which is not far from the mouth of the Tagus. (David 2001, pp. 89-90)

Judging by the crusaders reaction this must have been a great boost of their morale knowing that God is on their side driving the enemy away from them. Even if this is just an interpretation by the crusaders, the effect is still have been there giving a new sense of self-esteem when being a long way from home.
Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to research how some of the crusaders thought of and were affected by the nature with help from narrative sources. Buell’s four points about environmental text have been important when searching through the sources to find important parts to analyse. Using the texts that was found with Buell’s four points, it is clear that the crusaders was affected in different ways by the nature that they encountered.

Crusader narratives as environmental texts

Buell’s four points is not used with its original purpose to cover environmental texts but is instead used here to cover texts regarding nature but have been retained in their original form. The texts identified in this study meet Buell’s criteria as discussed below.

1) The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history (Buell 1995, p.7)  
Almost all of the text qualifies at this point since the environment in the text is not only described but effect the crusaders in some way. The nature might serve as a framework of where they are but there is always a factor of the crusaders being effected by the nature, they survive a storm and the enemy use the nature to hide and attack. The nature has a distinct presence in the text. The one exemption that exist is when the enemy is hiding in the mountains, then the mountains work mora as a framework but still have a distinct presence.

2) The human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest (Buell 1995, p.7)  
This one is harder to fulfil since the nature in the texts don’t have a spoken interest and the crusaders aren’t acting in the interest of the nature, but the nature can be seen as having a more of an implicit interest. The enemy hide in the nature, God’s will was shown in the clouds, the desert was killing them and driving them mad and they were trapped by water. So the Nature is present but it is hard to say if there are another interest other that the human one but in many of the text the presence of an interest from the nature can be interpreted in the texts.

3) Human accountability to the environment is part of the text’s ethical orientation (Buell 1995, p.7)  
None of the text fulfill this part completely since the Crusaders were not interested in preserving nature for its own sake. They don’t write about saving an animal or debate whether it is ethical to cut down the trees. If these texts were found it would have been a great insight in how they
thought about the nature. However, the texts do show that the Crusaders believed they were accountable for adapting to natural conditions, working with the landscape rather than trying to fight it.

4) Some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text (Buell 1995, p.8)

In many of the text as the crusaders wrote about a living nature water rising, snow falling and storms coming and going. The only text where the nature is a constant is when they talk about the mountains and even then they describe how the water is undermining the mountain. But since mountains take thousands of years do change they must have been seen as a constant.

With the texts that were identified with Buell’s four points in mind, the questions asked in this study can be answered.

What was important for the crusaders to write about the nature they encounter?

From what I have encountered, they write about things that have had an effect on the crusade. Rising their morals or losing troops because the enemy managed to hide in the landscape and then attack them.

It is clear that they tended to praise God in their writings when things went well for them.

If we look at these writings in the context that they were on a mission from God to retake the Holy Land it is reasonable to see why they wanted the reader to believe that God was on their side in this crusade and therefore praise him when things go well. But to blame God when things don’t go well when you are on a holy crusade might make it seem like God doesn’t want it to happen. Such is the case when they were faced with a great storm at sea and somehow manages to survive God saved them. But when they face another storm at sea and many people died, the writers do not blame God. Why would God have sent them a terrible storm if he wanted them to succeed with the crusade? As Hicks (2015) explains, miraculous events were written down to connect the familiar and the unfamiliar and text mentioning the nature would have had a similar role it was something for the reader to connect to. Then it would have been important not to connect everything to God but instead keep it on a level that people could understand. So when writing about something unusual like surviving a storm, it could be important to say it was thanks to God so that people could understand why they survived. But when writing about being ambushed by the enemy it might be more useful to write that they were outsmarted and next time write how they managed to outsmart the enemy instead.
Another trend in their writings is that they often wrote about where the enemy is hiding and their cunning when they managed to outsmart them. Perhaps it is a warning to others who might make a similar journey in the future. But as Hicks (2015) points out many of these writings were made to be read by people who won’t go on crusades; thus the adventure aspect may have been used so that it made a great story to tell.

As Hoffman (2014) writes Christianity is not the only context that a human uses to understand the world. This can also be seen in the text—very little were connected to Christianity but were instead connected to the surroundings and how to make use of the nature. Hoffman (2014) also wrote that nature existed to show God’s will and had no value on its own. Although some of the writings have nature as exercising God’s well, in others nature was more of a hindrance but could serve both the enemy and the crusaders in their goals.

How do the narratives describe how the crusaders were physically affected by the nature?

The crusaders seemed to be affected by the nature in three ways, as something that the enemy could use to hide in and as a natural death-trap.

Nature could function as a place for the enemy to hide in. It is clear that the crusader was unused to the new nature that they encountered and a big part of it was the landscape. The enemy could often use the nature to hide in and then mainly they hid in the mountains. As seen when the Ascalonites and Arabs hid in the mountains to conceal their forces so that they later could attack the crusaders when best befitting them (Aachen 2007, p.729). And it can also be seen when the Sultan ordered his men to take cover in the mountains were the crusaders could not follow (Giles 1888p.137) The enemy being much more used to the landscape it can be used in their advantage and the crusaders became increasingly more aware of it and learn how the enemy used the landscape to their advantage. This can best be seen when the Arabs had hidden in the mountains and the crusaders smoked them out with their knowledge of where the enemy would be hiding (Aachen 2007 p.747). And this can also be seen in other types of environment. Like when the Turks had hidden among trees so that they could surprise the Duke and his companions and kill them (Aachen 2007, p.46). but knowing were the enemy hid they cut down the trees and surrounded them (Aachen 2007, p.46-48). So even if they suffer great losses in the beginning because of that the enemy could use the landscape to their advantage, they sometimes manage to strike back by hiding in the landscape themselves.
Nature during the crusades | Camilla Gustafsson

Nature could also be a death-trap. The crusaders often found themselves in deserts, trapped by water or getting lost. They did not know how to handle these situations and many were killed by natural phenomena. The desert with its lack of water seems to be one of the biggest killers and sometimes nearly drove them mad. One of the droughts that we are told a lot about is from the first crusade in which both men, women, kids and animals died, and when they later found water, people and animals died of drinking too much (Aachen 2007, pp. 139-142). After another drought people were driven to drink unclean water that probably was filled with parasites (Aachen 2007, pp. 411-413). Two times they are lead into deserts by their guides, one of those times it drove them into drinking horse blood and their own urine, and one time only a few managed to get out of the desert (Tritton, Gibb 1933, pp. 74-75, 298). As seen there are horrible tales from the crusades about deserts and being denied water and it takes a great toll on the crusaders and killing many.

But they also found themselves trapped by water and easy for the enemy to kill, like when the crusaders in the people’s crusade found themselves being killed when trying to cross Sava with self-made rafts (Aachen 2007 pp. 17-19). Afterward when the crusaders had managed to plunder from the enemy, they ended up caught on the wrong side on a rising river unable to cross and unable to fight back when attack from the enemy (Barton & Fletcher 2000, pp. 220-221).

They were also cautious going through mountains using guides sense it could be easy to get lost there or getting killed by taking a wrong turn. As written when they make their way to Baurim or Beirut “this mountain is constantly pounded by the waves of the sea which were so close that it was strictly forbidden to turn” (Aachen 007. Pp. 389-391). When describing the mountains around Khurasan they explain that only the Turks can find their way there and anyone who is captured and enters the mountains won’t come out (Aachen 2007 p. 613).

It was often the fact that they were unaccustomed to the nature and the landscape that got them into the dangerous situations by being lead on the wrong path by a guide or being unprepared for the nature that they stepped into.

How do the narratives describe how the crusaders were psychologically experienced the nature?

The nature must have seemed terrible with the storms, mountains and deserts that could kill them if they weren’t careful. So even if they might have enjoyed some of the nature that they
encountered, it must have felt unwelcoming in the beginning. They had respect for the mountains and most likely had respect for the desserts as well.

There are instances where the nature boosts their moral either that they survive a storm or a sign in the sky. Almost always are this boosts of moral in connection with God. They saw that God was aiding them on their journey and that they were doing the right thing. These boosts of moral must have meant a great deal to them. There were two examples in which I found this and both are in the beginning of their journey. The best example was from when they saw the clouds having a battle and when the white clouds won it was seen as God driving away their enemies and that God was with them (David 2001, pp 89-90). Another of these signs was when they survived the storm at sea with the help from God (David 2001 pp. 59-60).

The crusaders were a long way from home and on unfamiliar territory. Knowing that God is with them must have made them deal with the tough times better and stopping them from losing heart on such a long journey were enemies can hide behind every corner. It was a holy place that they were traveling to so even with the hardships they carried on and learned how to use it in their favour. The sky had told them that God was on their side after all.

One thing to consider is that most of the time the crusaders separated their mission and the nature. When confronted with the unfamiliar nature they don’t write about it as being holy or special. It is what they experience in the nature that is important to them, not how it looked. As Richard (2001) writes, the crusades brought east in contact with west and this could have led to an awakening to differences and similarities but that rupture was more common instead. Something similar might have happened to the crusaders perception of the nature: it had some similarities with the nature at home but it was not the nature that they were used to. Yet the writers make no comparison of the nature at home with the nature that the crusaders encountered which might mean that they didn’t experience the nature as a part of a culture but something to conquer and survive instead.

As Arnold (2013) concluded in her book Negotiating the Landscape there were no unifying view on nature and this is very likely also the case for the crusaders that what some thought as a sign from God, others thought of as a trial or something else. With the example of the first storm many praised God for their survival, but it is unlikely that no-one thought of it as a trial from God for proving themselves worthy. For some crusaders the mountains were something for the enemy to hide in, but others managed to see the mountains as an opportunity for them to use and trap the enemies.
Further research

This is a rather new field of research and there are many texts left to read and study in this subject. It would be impossible to make a complete picture of the nature during the crusade how it affected the crusaders and how they thought about nature. It is a complex subject and I have only managed to scratch the surface of it. More studies on this subject connecting to different sources and studied from different perspectives. It is important to see if other materials give similar conclusions to this study or if they deviate completely.

So in the future it would be interesting to see if other kinds of mentions of nature during the crusades exists like certain phrases being used or the nature of the city. This would expand our knowledge about what the crusaders thought about the nature and how they used nature to describe something. Connecting with a similar research on nature in the cities during the crusades would bring a better picture on how the crusaders thought about the nature. (Riley-Smith, et al., 1995)
Literature list


Cited works


J. A. Giles, 1888. *Chronicles of the crusades; contemporary narratives of the crusade of Richard Coeur de Lion.* London: George Bell and Sons.