

5-6. TWO LETTERS ON THE CONQUEST OF JERUSALEM
BY THE CRUSADERS (JULY, 1099).

5. A FRUSTRATED PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY CITY.

A Maghrebi Writes from Egypt during the First Crusade.

(Early summer, 1100)

This is a family letter of a Jerusalem pilgrim, who had arrived from North Africa or Spain in Alexandria a number of years before 1099. He was unable to proceed to Palestine because of the complete chaos into which the country had fallen long before the arrival of the Crusaders ^{through} ~~because of~~ the incessant wars between the Fatimids and various factions of the Seljuks. Moreover, Alexandria itself was ravaged by civil war. After the death of the caliph al-Mustansir on January 10, 1094, al-Afdal, his viceroy, placed the caliph's younger son, al-Mustalī, on the throne instead of the elder Nizār, who, however, succeeded in having himself acknowledged in Alexandria. Al-Afdal twice laid siege to the city, until it acquiesced in rendering homage to his protégé. After having restored peace at home, al-Afdal turned to Palestine and, in September 1098, took Jerusalem. Now, our pilgrim was sure that the time for the fulfilment of his vow had come and moved to the capital of Egypt, in order to travel overland from there to the Holy City. However, before he was able to do so, Jerusalem fell into the hands of the Crusaders on July 15, 1099. Still, he did not abandon all hope: he assumed that the armies were certain to join in battle "this year", i.e. summer 1100, and the Sultan, al-Afdal, because of his righteousness, was assured of victory. After Jerusalem had changed hands several times in one generation - as we have seen,