

**GURPS**

Fourth Edition

# CRUSADES™



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# INTRODUCTION

The Crusades were one of history's most colorful dramas. They were also a source of friction and misunderstanding between Christianity and Islam that lasts to this day.

The Crusaders brought back more than spices from the Middle East. They brought back new crops, improved medical and scientific technologies, and new geographical knowledge. Europe was never the same after the Crusades. The Eastern world had been opened to the West.

The Crusades were a maze of contradictions: honor and treachery, bravery and cowardice, and greed and sacrifice. They were filled with battles, exploration, hardship, intolerance and acceptance, political maneuvering, imposing castles, and famous warriors. In *GURPS Crusades*, you will find the violent collision of two societies, but also great deeds, colorful heroes, and huge castles rising out of the desert heat haze. So on to Jerusalem! God wills it!

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

*GURPS Crusades* covers 200 years of Middle Eastern history from the end of the 11th to the end of the 13th centuries. It can be used along with *GURPS Middle Ages 1*, *GURPS Swashbucklers*, and *GURPS Vikings* to create realistic historical adventures. Likewise, there's enough background and atmosphere to create any number of fantasy or alternate

history adventures, especially if used in conjunction with *GURPS Arabian Nights*, the *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* series, *GURPS Infinite Worlds*, and *GURPS Places of Mystery*. *GURPS Magic* can add further excitement to any campaign or adventure set in the world of *GURPS Crusades*.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Gene Moyers studied medieval history at the University of Oregon. He is a former U.S. Army armor crewman and long-time gamer. He has contributed to other *GURPS* books including *GURPS WWII: All the King's Men* and *GURPS WWII: Return to Honor*. *GURPS Crusades* is his first complete *GURPS* book. Gene currently works as a massage therapist in Portland, Oregon, while continuing his freelance writing.

Graeme Davis is the author of *GURPS Middle Ages 1*, *GURPS Vikings*, and *GURPS Faerie*. He has also written several articles for *Pyramid*, including one on Templar-like organizations that appeared in issue #3/19: *Tools of the Trade – Clerics*. He started gaming at college in the 1970s, got a job with Games Workshop in 1986, and has been in the games industry ever since. In addition to his work on tabletop games, he has been a writer and designer on a number of video games, including two titles in the acclaimed *Total War* historical strategy game series.

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# CHAPTER ONE

# THE WORLD OF THE CRUSADES

In order to understand the Crusades, it is first necessary to understand the world in which they took place. The Crusades were not simply a conflict between Christians and Muslims. The Christian world was split between western Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians, and the Muslims were divided

along both religious and ethnic lines. While it is true that the majority of crusaders were western Catholics, there was rivalry between their individual homelands, and between their rulers and the pope. The reality was anything but simple.

## The Roman Empire

The shape of Christendom owed a great deal to the Roman Empire of classical times. The Emperor Constantine had divided the Roman Empire into western and eastern halves in the fourth century. The western half of the empire had succumbed to barbarian invasions and was emerging from the so-called Dark Ages. Although united by the Roman Catholic faith, Europe was fragmented politically into many kingdoms, principalities, and duchies.

The eastern half of the empire – now the Byzantine Empire – had continued as one political entity but was made up of many nationalities. Asian, Greek, and Middle Eastern influences led to a schism between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. Although wealthy, the Byzantine Empire was short of manpower and under pressure from an expanding Islam and various Eastern peoples.

## THE FRANKS

To the Byzantine Empire, all Catholics were Franks, named after the Germanic peoples that dominated Western Europe after the collapse of Rome. Among themselves, of course, they were French, English, German, and so on.

*Although most Crusaders were from France, the most famous Crusader was English.*

### FRANCE

The greatest numbers of Crusaders came from France, which was a major power in Western Europe. It was at the Council of Clermont in 1095 that Pope Urban II issued the call that led to the First Crusade. King Louis VII of France led the Second

Crusade along with Conrad III of Germany. The Third Crusade was led by Philip II of France with Richard I of England and Emperor Frederick I of the Holy Roman Empire. French crusading continued until Louis IX died on the Eighth Crusade.

Paris became the European headquarters of the Knights Templar, and many French nobles were motivated to join the Order. However, it was a king of France – Philip IV – who spelled their doom (p. 6).

### ENGLAND

It is perhaps ironic that the most famous crusader of all time – King Richard I “the Lionheart” – was English. While it is true that England sent many men on the Crusades, its actual contribution was far less than those of France and the Holy Roman Empire.

Apart from Richard, only one English royal went crusading. Edward Longshanks – the future Edward I – arrived in Tunis after Louis IX of France had died during the Eighth Crusade, and retreated to Sicily before mounting an expedition which is regarded by some historians as a Ninth Crusade.

Despite the comparative lack of royal interest in crusading, English troops traveled to the Holy Lands, both on their own account and as members of the military orders. The Templars were active in England, and the Hospitallers inherited their holdings there along with other Templar properties throughout Europe.

## THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

At the time of the Crusades, the lands that would later become Germany and Austria were divided into a number of small states held together under the banner of the Holy Roman Empire. The name dates back to the empire founded by Charlemagne three centuries before the First Crusade.

After France, the German states were the most active crusaders, with kings and emperors leading several crusades. The Hohenstaufen dynasty (1138-1254) took over the Kingdom of Sicily from the Normans. Its most famous member was Frederick Barbarossa, who died on crusade in 1190.

## SPAIN

At the time of the Crusades, Spain was divided. The Muslim Moors held the south of the Iberian Peninsula, and the north was split between the Christian kingdoms of Aragon, Castile, Navarre, and Leon, with Portugal occupying the Atlantic seaboard.

### *The Reconquista*

The *Reconquista*, or “reconquest,” had been under way ever since the Moors invaded Spain more than 300 years before the First Crusade. While it definitely had religious as well as ethnic motives, the *Reconquista* was not declared a Crusade by the pope. The forces involved were mainly local, although Templar and Hospitaller knights took part in some battles.

By the time of the First Crusade in the late 11th century, Spanish Christians had succeeded in pushing the Moors back from about half of their initial gains, but much remained to be done. The need to free their homeland from Muslim rule meant that there were relatively few Spanish crusaders in the Holy Lands.

## ITALY

Like Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, Italy was a series of small states rather than a unified nation. Sicily and southern Italy were battlegrounds for competing Norman, Muslim, and Byzantine interests. The Papal States held central Italy, but were weak militarily. Northern Italy was dominated by city-states such as Pisa, Genoa, and Venice, which were often ruled by oligarchies of powerful merchant or banking families. Isolated and hemmed in by mountains and a poor road system, these city-states focused on sea trade in the Mediterranean.

The city-states offered some naval support to the Crusaders, but were focused mainly on the lucrative business of establishing trading concessions in Outremer (as the lands of the Crusades were called) and transporting pilgrims and Crusaders across the Mediterranean. As the age of the Crusades progressed, they also supplied mercenaries to the Latin Kingdoms and to the military orders.

By the 13th century, a conflict between the papacy and the Holy Roman Emperors engulfed Italy. Some papal campaigns

were declared to be Crusades, but attention was drawn away from the Holy Lands.

## THE NORMAN KINGDOMS

*GURPS Middle Ages 1* covers the Norman conquest of England, but the Normans were also active in the Mediterranean. Starting as mercenaries in the employ of Lombard and Byzantine factions in southern Italy, they established the Kingdom of Sicily in 1130 following more than a century of expansion. In the process, they conquered the Muslim Emirate of Sicily and forced the Byzantines out of southern Italy.

While the Normans did take part in the Crusades, they were often occupied by territorial disputes with the pope, baronial revolts, and tensions with the Byzantine Empire. They traded with Pisa, Genoa, the Byzantines, and even Egypt. The Kingdom of Sicily fell to the German Hohenstaufen dynasty in 1194.

*Behold, brethren, now is the  
accepted time, now is the day  
of salvation.*

*– St. Bernard of Clervaux*

## THE LATIN KINGDOMS

After the success of the First Crusade, there were four main Crusader kingdoms. The Kingdom of Jerusalem consisted of what is now present-day Israel and occupied Palestine. The Principality of Antioch and the Principality of Edessa were in present-day Turkey, bordering on Christian Armenia and the Byzantine Empire. The County of Tripoli was a narrow strip along the coast of present day Syria. Together, these four states made up the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem; to avoid confusion between the group and the Kingdom of Jerusalem itself, they were also known as the Latin Kingdoms.

In theory the rulers of Antioch, Edessa, and Tripoli owed allegiance to the King of Jerusalem as his feudal vassals. In practice, these three Crusader states were quite independent, especially if a weak king sat on the throne of Jerusalem. A strong king could bend the other states to his will and present a unified front to Muslim threats, but all too often, the rulers of the Crusader states were divided, even to conducting their own wars and making alliances. This made the whole Christian presence in Outremer vulnerable.

## THE MILITARY ORDERS

At the time of the Crusades, the nature of European warfare was changing. Feudal armies were being replaced by professional standing armies, and the military orders played a great role in this process.

The two most important military orders involved in the Crusades were the Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitaller. The Teutonic Knights were less important in the Mediterranean, but took the leading role in the Northern Crusades that stamped out paganism around the Baltic (see p. 17).

By the end of the Crusades, all three of these orders had grown from small groups of warrior monks into wealthy and powerful organizations whose standing armies rivaled those of some European nations. Often they were the Crusader kingdoms' first line of defense. Despite their small numbers, they formed the backbone of many crusading armies, and were consulted on almost every military decision.

Ejected from the Holy Lands after the fall of Acre in 1291, the Templars and Hospitallers built up their naval power and continued raiding Muslim strongholds while lobbying in Europe for a new Crusade. Unfortunately, many people blamed them for the fall of the Latin Kingdoms. The orders fell from favor in European courts, while kings and nobles began to cast greedy glances at their castles and treasures.

## The Knights Templar

The Templars were the first of the great military orders to be created, and in many ways they formed a template for the others.

In 1118, the French knight Hugh de Payens and eight others approached King Baldwin II of Jerusalem, who allowed them to set up their headquarters on the southeastern side of the Temple Mount. Taking their name from the Temple of Solomon which had stood there in Biblical times, they became The Poor Knights of the Temple of King Solomon and devoted themselves to the protection of Christian pilgrims in the Holy Lands.

In 1129, the Order received papal sanction at the Council of Troyes, and came under the patronage of leading churchman Bernard of Clairvaux, who was a nephew of one of the original nine knights.

The Templars followed a monastic rule of poverty, chastity, and obedience, which they combined with martial vigor and a devotion to the liberation of the Holy Lands from the Muslims. Their recruitment efforts in Europe brought them donations of money and land as well as new followers. They earned a reputation for ferocity on the battlefield, rarely surrendering and refusing to pay ransoms for any of their number who was captured. The Muslims grew to hate and fear them, and routinely executed Templar prisoners.

With their wealth and international reach, the Templars also became bankers. Money could be deposited in any Templar preceptory in exchange for a letter of credit that could be redeemed for cash at any other Templar preceptory. Business boomed, and soon kings were coming to them for loans, or to hire their growing fleets for the transportation of pilgrims and crusaders. At the height of their power in 1139, a papal bull was issued making the Order answerable only to the pope.

The Templars held lands in France, England, Scotland, Spain and Portugal. Their European headquarters was in Paris. Unlike the Hospitallers they held few castles in the Holy Lands, but for a time they owned the whole of Cyprus.

In 1307, King Philip IV of France presented charges of heresy against the Templars to Pope Clement V, his childhood friend and his creation as pope in Avignon. Clement authorized

the arrest of Templar leaders and the seizure of all their assets. Coordinated raids took place all over France and in other countries on October 13 that year. On the basis of confessions given under torture, the Templar leaders were executed and the Order was dissolved.

Ever since that time, there have been conspiracy theories about Templar survival and a lost Templar treasure. These were given a fresh impetus in 1982 with the publication of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln (see bibliography on pp. 43-44), but the Order remains lost to history.

## The Knights Hospitaller

The Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem was formed around 1070 to provide lodging, care, and medical treatment to Christian pilgrims visiting the holy sites of Jerusalem. By 1113, papal privileges freed the order from paying tithes and allowed the brothers to elect their own grand master. After 1154, the Order was answerable only to the pope.

In the 1130s, the Hospitallers began hiring sergeants to protect pilgrims, and in 1136 they were given the castle of Beit Jibrin. By the early 1140s Raymond II of Tripoli had given the Order a series of frontier castles including Krak des Chevaliers, which would become one of the most powerful fortifications in the Holy Lands.

Like the Templars, the Hospitallers were also given lands, castles, and properties in

Europe. These properties supplied wealth to continue the holy wars and served as recruiting and training grounds for new Hospitallers. The Order played a role in the Spanish *Reconquista*, protecting important pilgrimage routes there.

The Order's military role was often defensive, protecting pilgrims and garrisoning castles along the frontiers. The pope criticized their participation in King Amalric I of Jerusalem's invasions of Egypt (1162-1168), but it could be argued that they were merely responding to the critical manpower shortage in the Christian kingdoms (see pp. 26-27).

By the time Saladin captured Jerusalem in 1187, the Hospitallers were a major military force. They participated in the disastrous battle of Hattin, where the Muslims executed all Hospitaller prisoners. Their castle of Belvoir fell in January 1189 after a siege of a year and a half. As their fame grew, the Hospitallers seemed to draw the blame for every Christian setback or bad decision.

Unlike the Templars, they could deflect some criticism by pointing to their extensive charitable works. They did not participate in any European Crusades, but they did become involved in the internal politics of the Crusader states. They supported Genoa in the Acre civil war of 1256-58, losing to the Templar-backed Venetians.



The Hospitallers participated in the invasions of Egypt during the Fifth and Seventh Crusades and took heavy losses at the battle of La Forbie. They held many castles but were often forced to hire mercenaries to garrison them, with a few Hospitaller knights in command. The great fortress of Krak de Chevaliers fell in 1271. Marqab, another great Hospitaller castle, was captured in 1285. After the fall of Acre, the Hospitallers moved to Cyprus, and from there to the island of Rhodes.

In the early 14th century, the Hospitallers were given most of the properties of the disgraced Templars (see p. 6). Although crusading zeal declined in the 14th century, the Hospitallers helped defend Christian Armenia and conquered and held several cities along the Anatolian coast for extended periods. After being defeated at Rhodes in 1522, the Order moved to Malta where it remained a thorn in the side of the Ottoman Empire for centuries.

### *The Teutonic Knights*

After the loss of Jerusalem in 1187, some merchants from Lübeck and Bremen founded a field hospital for the duration

of the siege of Acre in 1190. Pope Celestine III recognized the Order of the Teutonic Knights of St. Mary's Hospital in Jerusalem in 1192, granting the monks Augustinian Rule. Based on the model of the Knights Templar, the Teutonic Knights became a military order in 1198, with papal orders to take and hold Jerusalem for Latin Christianity and defend the Holy Lands against the Muslims.

Based in Acre, the Order received the port tolls for the city and received donations of land in the Holy Roman Empire, Greece, and Palestine. During Frederick II's coronation as King of Jerusalem in 1225, Teutonic Knights served as his escort in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Despite taking part in several battles, the Teutonic Knights were never as influential in Outremer as the Templars and Hospitallers. The Order relocated to Transylvania – then under Hungarian rule – in 1211, but in 1224 the King of Hungary became nervous of their growing power and expelled them. The following year they answered an appeal from the king of Poland, and took a leading role in the Crusades against the Mongols in the Baltics (see p. 22).

## THE GREEKS

Just as the Byzantines and Muslims regarded all Western Europeans as undifferentiated “Franks,” the westerners saw no difference between the various peoples of the Byzantine Empire, and called them all Greeks. They saw themselves as Romans, but were a mix of ethnic groups: Bulgarians and Greeks from Europe, Armenian Christians from Asia Minor, and ethnic Turks and Arabs who had embraced Orthodox Christianity.

The people of Byzantium were very conscious of their traditions, their wealth, and their standing in the world. They saw themselves as the sole heirs of Roman culture; to them, Constantinople was the last outpost of true civilization and the Franks were little more than barbarians.

The Byzantine Empire had been in gradual retreat for centuries. Despite its failing military strength, the empire was fantastically wealthy compared to Western countries, and its capital, Constantinople, was larger than any city in the Western world. Centuries of border wars had drained its manpower, but its wealth allowed the increasing use of mercenaries, including many from Western Europe. These “Franks” were considered fierce fighters, barbarous and sometimes unreliable, but useful in battle.

When the expanding Turks conquered Asia Minor, Byzantium faced a crisis. Emperor Alexius I appealed to Europe, hoping for more mercenaries. The answer to his appeal did not take the form he was expecting; instead, huge Crusader armies appeared, expecting to be supplied on their way to the Holy Lands.

### *Eastern Orthodoxy*

Before the schism, the Christian Church was divided into a *pentarchy* of five regions, based in Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem. Of these, only Rome was in the Western Roman Empire, and with the fall of the Western Empire and the so-called Dark Ages, the Church of Rome developed separately from that in the East.

**GURPS Russia** includes a chapter on the Orthodox Church. Although there are some differences between Russian Orthodoxy and Greek Orthodoxy as practiced at the time of the Crusades, this information is sufficient for a GM to create a reasonably accurate distinction between Catholicism and Orthodoxy.

## THE MUSLIMS

The Muslim world spread from India to Spain, and consequently it was made up of a wide variety of ethnic groups: Arabs, Persians, Moors, and others. Islam was a dynamic religion; converts might be conquered Jews or Christian, or even invaders such as the Turks.

### **SHIITES AND SUNNIS**

Mohammed, the founder of Islam, died in 632. His devoted follower Abu Bakr was chosen as his successor, becoming the

first Caliph of the Muslim world. Others favored Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law Ali, and formed “the party of Ali,” known as *Shi'atu* or simply *Shia*. The followers of Abu Bakr were known as the *Sunni*. Ali became Caliph in 656 but was murdered five years later, and the Sunni Umayyad dynasty was established.

The Shiites continued to see Ali's descendants as the true leaders of Islam, creating a schism in the Islamic faith that has been compared to the schism between Orthodox and Catholic Christians. The rivalry between Sunnis and Shiites continues today in Iraq and elsewhere.

## The Assassins

A radical splinter sect of the Ismaili branch of the Muslim faith, the Assassins in Palestine operated from mountain castles in central Syria, and were independent of the original Assassin groups in northern Persia.

Their name has been said to stem from their alleged use of hashish, but more convincing theories derive it either from the word *hashashin* (a derogatory term applied to them by other Muslims) or from the name of their Persian master Hassan-i Sabbah.

Much of the Assassin legend as it is known in the West comes from the writings of Marco Polo, who claimed to have visited their fortress in Alamut, Turkey, in 1273. However, the stronghold had been destroyed by the Mongols in 1256, and many regard his account as fictional.

The Assassins were famous for murdering their political rivals, including Sunni leaders, aggressive Christian commanders, and others whom they saw as heretical to their brand of Islam. Their name entered European

languages as a synonym for “murderer”; in English this definition became narrowed to denote a murderer with political motivations.

Their allegiances shifted constantly. Sometimes they were allied with Christian lords, and even paid tribute to them. At other times they assassinated Christian nobles and religious leaders, sometimes at the behest of Muslim rulers.

It was said that the Assassins’ preference for the dagger and their strategy of public murder were intended to create and spread terror; their alleged willingness to engage in suicide missions had the same effect. Certainly, these are the best-known aspects of their legend. Stories of their prowess – such as leaving a dagger on Saladin’s pillow while he slept, as a warning not to interfere with them – were probably exaggerated, but they were an important factor in Crusader life for many years, both as an actual force and as a frightening legend. More information on the Assassin sect can be found in *GURPS Arabian Nights*.

The Shiites saw themselves as the reform party of Islam, and decried what they saw as the Sunnis’ unseemly interest in economics and politics. In the middle of the eighth century, Shiites overthrew the ruling Umayyads and established the Abbasid dynasty. However, the Abbasids renounced the Shiite faith. The Shiites then concentrated themselves in the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina, far from the main political centers.

### The Ismailis

During this time, the Shiite faith spawned many sects. The most important of these was the Ismailis, who believed that mainstream Islam – including mainstream Shiites – had strayed from the “true path.” For many years, the Ismailis were a secret movement, slowly spreading throughout Islam and becoming especially strong in northern Africa and southern Arabia. One of their most famous offshoots was the dread Assassin sect (see above).

*Relations between the Ismailis and the Crusaders were also by and large peaceful, although there were occasional conflicts.*

– Peter Willey, *Eagle’s Nest*

Taking advantage of weakness in the Abbasid dynasty, an active Ismaili movement surfaced in 909 and founded the Fatimid dynasty. The Fatimids first took power in Sicily and conquered Egypt in 969, taking Palestine soon after. At the height of its power the Fatimid dynasty included North Africa, Sicily, Egypt, Palestine, the Red Sea coast, and most of the Arabian Peninsula.

Just as it seemed that the Ismaili Fatimids would triumph over the Sunni Abbasids, the conversion of invading Turkish

tribes stimulated Sunni power. The Turks saw Shiites in general, and the Ismaili Fatimids in particular, as their mortal enemies. Their attacks on Fatimid Palestine came at a time when the Ismailis were weakened by their own religious schisms. By the time of the Crusades, Fatimid power had fallen into a swift decline. Military coups rocked the Fatimid dynasty as Turkish attacks continued. The last few Fatimid Caliphs were figureheads for a succession of Egyptian military dictators. Their dynasty was finally ended by Saladin’s conquest of Egypt in 1169-1171.

The Ismaili sect never regained its power, though small remnants survive to this day.

## THE TURKS

The Turks were a nomadic people from the steppes of Central Asia, who converted to Islam when they conquered Persia early in the 11th century. They were not a single people, but were made up of many tribes and clans.

### The Seldjucs

The Seldjuk Turks dominated much of the Middle East at the time of the First Crusade. Seldjuk expansion following their conquest of Baghdad in 1055 brought them into conflict with the Byzantine Empire, which failed to stop them expanding into Anatolia. Upon the death of Malik Shah in 1092, the Great Seldjuk Empire included much of modern-day Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Iran, Iraq, and central Asia as far as the Hindu Kush as well as the southern shores of the Persian Gulf.

The Seldjucs defeated the Shiite Fatimids in Syria and Palestine, and conquered Jerusalem along with the rest of their empire. Their rule brought to an end the free access that Christian pilgrims had enjoyed under the Fatimids, building resentment against Islam.

By the 1080s, though, clan warfare had broken out in much of Syria, Palestine, and Anatolia. By 1200 the Seldjucs had lost their eastern territories to the Khwarezmian dynasty from Persia, and the Levant was controlled by the Egyptian Ayyubids.



## The Zengids

Founded by Zengi (see p. 38) in 1127, this Turkish dynasty ruled Syria and northern Iraq for the Seldjuk Empire, holding on to some of these territories until the mid-13th century.

## The Saracens

The Crusaders, and some historians, had the habit of referring to all Muslims in the Holy Lands as “Saracens.” One of earliest references is in Ptolemy’s *Geography* in the second century A.D.; he refers to a *Sarakenoi* people living in the northwestern Arabian peninsula, who are distinct from Arabs.

Thirteenth-century Spanish churchman Raymond de Peñafort, defining “Saracen” in his *Summa de Poenitentia*, starts by describing Muslims but ends by including every person who is neither a Christian nor a Jew.

Depending on time and place, the Muslims in the Holy Lands could be Turkish, Arabic, Persian, and from any of a number of other ethnic backgrounds. “Saracen” may be a good enough generalization for Crusaders to use, but falls far short for other purposes. Throughout this book, more precise names are used to refer to specific Muslim groups.

## EGYPT

A few different groups dominated Egypt between the 900s and the 1500s.

### The Fatimids

The Fatimids were a Shiite dynasty that ruled Egypt and parts of North Africa between 909 and 1171. At its peak, their empire stretched from Yemen to Syria.

Less aggressive than the Seldjuks, the Fatimids were renowned for their religious tolerance (appointing Sunni Muslims and even Christians and Jews to official posts) and patronage of the arts.

By the time of the First Crusade, the Fatimids had lost Syria and most of Palestine to the Seldjuks, but they retained control of Egypt.

### The Ayyubids

The Ayyubids were a Sunni Muslim dynasty of Kurdish origin that ruled Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and parts of North Africa and Arabia from 1171 to 1341. The dynasty was founded by Saladin (p. 36) after he dissolved the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt.

After Jerusalem was ceded to the Crusaders in 1228, the *emirs* of Syria tried to assert their independence from Egypt, dividing the empire until about 1247. From 1260, their territories were ravaged by the Mongols, and the empire began to disintegrate.

### The Mamluks

The Mamluks were soldiers who had converted to Islam, and were technically slaves. Many were of Turkish origin. They had been a presence in Egypt since the 9th century, but spread throughout the Fatimid and Ayyubid Empires.

The Mamluk Baibars seized power in 1250, and attacked both the Mongols and the Crusaders. The Mamluks finally drove the Crusaders from the Holy Lands, and continued to rule there until their Sultanate was conquered by the Ottoman Empire in 1517.

## THE BARBARY CORSAIRS

Muslim pirates had operated from bases in southern France and northern Italy since the ninth century. Muslim raiders sacked Rome in 846, damaging the Vatican. In 911, the Bishop of Narbonne was unable to cross the Alps in to France because Muslims controlled all the passes.

With the decline of the Byzantine Empire and continuing Turkish pressure on Constantinople, Muslim corsairs moved into bases in Cyprus, Crete, Sicily, and the Balearic Islands off the southern coast of Spain. Their bases along the Barbary Coast of North Africa gained them the name “Barbary Corsairs,” and it was not until the 19th century that they were finally subdued. (The words “to the shores of Tripoli” in the Marines’ Hymn refer to U.S. Marine Corps participation in the Barbary Wars of 1801-1815.)

Although the corsairs were not the power they would later become, they had free run of the Mediterranean and were likely to attack any target smaller than a full naval fleet. Their oared galleys could outrun and outmaneuver Frankish sailing ships unless winds were ideal. Captives either manned the galleys or were sold in the slave markets of the Muslim world.

The corsairs did not take an active part in the Crusades, but were a constant menace to shipping throughout the Mediterranean.



## CHAPTER TWO

# THE HISTORY OF THE CRUSADES

In 1095, the Mediterranean world was in a state of flux. The Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus was desperate for help against the expanding Seldjuk Turks. The Islamic world was torn by religious factions. Europe was expansive and aggressive, and easily inspired by Pope Urban II to go on a Crusade to liberate the holy shrines of Christianity from the infidel. The centuries that followed would change Europe and the Middle East forever.

### *Historical Accuracy*

Many events in the history of the Crusades are colored by inaccurate accounts, poor documentation, or outright prejudice. The accounts in this book will not agree with all available historical sources on the Crusades – but then, these often contradict each other.

## PRELUDE

Chapter 1 summarized the world at the time of the Crusades: The Roman Empire in the west had fallen to the Franks and other Germanic invaders, but Christianity had prevailed

*Lords, I am going overseas  
and I do not know whether I will  
return . . .*

– *John of Joinville*

and Rome was the center of the Catholic Church. In the east, the Byzantine Empire had succeeded Rome. Constantinople was the center of Orthodox Christianity, and saw itself as the last outpost of Roman civilization.

However, Constantinople was under pressure from the expansion of the Seldjuk Turks, who had taken Anatolia and cemented Muslim rule of the Holy Lands. Byzantium had employed mercenaries from the West for centuries despite the schism between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, and when Emperor Alexius I appealed to the West for help, he expected mercenaries to respond. Instead, he received Crusaders sent by a Catholic Church which hoped to take over the east from Orthodoxy.

## THE FIRST CRUSADE

Pope Urban II saw a great advantage in responding to Alexius' appeal for help. He had been in touch with Constantinople since assuming the papacy in 1089, and was well aware of the situation in the East. A movement of Christian warriors led by the papacy would not only save Christian lives and liberate the Holy Lands from Muslim domination. It might also lead to the rejoining of the two churches under the papacy.

Urban presented the Byzantine appeal for help at the council of Piacenza in March 1095. That August he conferred with Bishop Adhemar in Le Puy, before summoning the French bishops to a council at Clermont in November. There, before a large gathering of nobles and ecclesiastics, he called for a holy

Crusade to preserve Christianity in the East and liberate Jerusalem from the infidels.

Urban detailed Muslim atrocities against Christians and hinted at the opportunities to conquer and rule Eastern lands. He offered the remission of all sins to those who took up the Crusade, and ecclesiastical protection of lands and property. It was a very enticing package, with both material and spiritual advantages. Not only could Crusaders hope to carve out new lands in the East, but the Church guaranteed that other Christian nobles would not usurp the lands they left behind. In addition; they would store up riches in Heaven by retaking the Holy Lands for Christianity, and their past sins would all be forgiven.

# THE HOLY LANDS



On cue, a humble Bishop Adhemar came forward and begged to lead the Crusade to Jerusalem in Urban's name. Urban blessed him and handed him a large cross.

For the next nine months Urban traveled around France promoting his Crusade, which was to begin in August 1096. The crusading spirit spread so rapidly that things began to spin out of Urban's control. Instead of a cohesive army marching under the banner of the Catholic Church, the First Crusade exploded into waves of separate armies. Some were led or sanctioned by the Church, but other others were more spontaneous.

## THE FIVE ARMIES

The First Crusade was organized into five large armies, each led by a prominent noble. The official leader, Bishop Adhemar, traveled with the army of Raymond, Count of Toulouse. The other armies were commanded by Godfrey of Bouillon; Hugh, Count of Vermandois; Robert, Duke of Normandy; and Bohemund, Prince of Otranto. Leaving in August 1096, they traveled by various routes and arrived piecemeal in Constantinople.

As each army arrived, Emperor Alexius tricked or coerced its leaders into swearing an oath of fealty to him personally, and exacted promises to return all liberated Byzantine lands and possessions to the empire. He then shipped the Crusaders across the Bosphorus before they could cause trouble for his people.

By June 1097, the huge Crusader army had assembled in Anatolia and set out for Nicaea, the nearest Muslim-held city. After a two-month siege, Nicaea surrendered to Alexius, who appeared on the battlefield at the last moment. The Franks grumbled, but were reminded of their oaths.

The Crusaders moved south toward Palestine. Incensed by the loss of his capital Nicaea, Kilij Arslan, the Sultan of Rum, massed a huge army and attacked at Dorylaeum on July 1. The Crusaders killed tens of thousands of Turks in a day-long battle, smashing the main Turkish army in western Anatolia.

The victorious Franks marched south for three months. Anatolia is dry and desolate at the best of times, but in the midst of a drought, with the Turks destroying crops and poisoning wells along the way, the journey became a nightmare. The Byzantine emperor provided no supplies, and more than 50,000 Crusaders died along the route from starvation, thirst, and disease. Nobles were forced to eat their hawks and hunting dogs, followed soon by their horses; by September most of the army was afoot. The remains of the once-great army reached Christian Armenia in late September.

While the main army rested, two nobles, Baldwin (brother of Godfrey of Bouillon) and Tancred (nephew of Bohemund), moved eastward with their vassal knights and carved out their own enclaves. Baldwin took Tarsus and declared himself Prince of Edessa in March 1098, but refused to go any farther. Tancred seized Adana and Mamistra, and also withdrew from the Crusade.

## ANTIOCH

After resting for a month, Bishop Adhemar urged the remaining Crusaders south toward Jerusalem. They soon arrived at Antioch, the most heavily fortified city in Palestine. The Crusaders besieged the city, but lacked the supplies for a long siege. As winter set in, thousands of Franks became sick from cold, rain, and spoiled food. After three months, Stephen of Blois retreated north with his knights, leaving a stalemate as the defenders of Antioch awaited a Turkish army from the east and the Franks awaited Byzantine reinforcements from the west.

In February, the besieging Franks were attacked a newly arrived Turkish army in co-ordination with a sortie by the city garrison. The Turks were repulsed with heavy losses, and the weakened Crusader army continued the siege. Meanwhile, Stephen of Blois met Emperor Alexius and his army marching south to assist the Franks, but told Alexius that the Crusaders had lost and been dispersed. Convinced by this false information, Alexius turned back toward Constantinople.

## The Peasants' Crusade

In the wake of Urban's appeal an obscure figure known as Peter the Hermit (or Little Peter) began preaching a Crusade among the common people.

Little is known of Peter; some say he was a monk, others that he was a half-crazed hermit. He was short, unkempt, and unattractive, but extremely charismatic. Peter claimed that God had commanded him to lead the poor on Crusade, and that only they shared the true Christian values of poverty and faith. He rejected the luxury enjoyed by many churchmen, and did not ask peasants to pay tithes or buy blessings and indulgences.

The common people flocked to him. The nobles resented losing their serfs, but to speak against a Crusade was unthinkable; Peter's popularity was a powerful protection.

Many freemen and priests also joined Peter; as did significant numbers of knights. A group numbering more than 20,000 set out for Constantinople in the spring of 1096. In Hungary, a large group of knights and peasants foraging for food ahead of the main force came into conflict with the

locals. In Belgrade, looting led to a battle, and the city was sacked before Imperial troops killed over a fourth of the peasant Crusaders.

The Peasants' Crusade arrived at Constantinople in August. Emperor Alexius greeted Peter courteously, although this was not the disciplined army he expected. When the peasants began pillaging his lands, he quickly ferried Peter and his followers across the Bosphorus.

Peter's forces advanced to Nicaea, where the Turks were surrounded and captured many of them. Others were slaughtered in ambushes. Tens of thousands of knights and commoners died in Peter's ill-advised Crusade. Peter himself escaped, and reached Jerusalem by a circuitous route.

Peter's preaching inspired other spontaneous peasant movements. In Germany, Crusade-inspired mobs robbed and murdered thousands of Jews; no less infidels than Muslims were, they were much closer to hand. Angered by Peter's pillaging army, Hungarian nobles attacked other groups of peasant Crusaders, killing most of them.

Desperate to break the stalemate, the Franks bribed a commander of the city's defenses to open the city gates. On July 3, the Crusaders stormed in and anyone who could be identified as Muslim was put to the sword.

The victory was short-lived. Within a few days, another large army under Kerbogha, the Atabeg of Mosul, besieged the Crusaders in the newly conquered city. The Franks were exhausted from their siege, and had not had time to restock the city with supplies. Expecting help from Byzantium but knowing nothing of Stephen's betrayal, they blamed Alexius. Morale plummeted, and the Crusade's leaders needed a miracle.

As if on cue, a mystic named Peter Bartholomew came forward. Peter claimed he had been visited by St. Andrew, who had given him a vision of the Spear of Longinus – the holy lance that pierced Christ's side on the cross in the Gospel of St. John. A rusted iron spear was found buried under Antioch's cathedral, convincing the Crusaders that God was still on their side. Morale high, the Crusaders leaders planned a decisive battle.

The Crusader army burst from the city on June 28, and routed the besieging Turks in a day-long battle. The most powerful city in Palestine was now in Crusader hands, and there were no more Turkish armies of any size to oppose them.

The Crusader victory was soon spoiled. An epidemic, possibly of typhoid, broke out in the city. Bishop Adhemar was among those who died, and without a leader, the Crusaders fell to squabbling among themselves. Raymond insisted that Antioch should be turned over to Alexius while the Crusade continued to Jerusalem, but Bohemund claimed Antioch for himself. Others argued over the leadership of the Crusader armies. Law and order began to break down, and food shortages grew.

Disgusted, Raymond and his followers set out for Jerusalem in January 1099. Most of the other leaders were shamed into following, but Bohemund stayed behind, naming himself Prince of Antioch.

## JERUSALEM

Marching south into Fatimid lands, the Crusader army was supplied by Christian ships along the coast. The Fatimid cities in Palestine were not heavily garrisoned, and bought off the Franks with supplies, tribute, and free passage. Tyre, Sidon, and Acre were occupied without incident. At Arsuf, the Crusaders moved inland. Learning of their arrival, the mostly Christian population of Bethlehem appealed for relief. The Crusaders happily turned aside to liberate the birthplace of Christ, delaying their arrival at Jerusalem until early in June 1099.

By most estimates, the Crusader army was now reduced to less than 20,000 knights and men-at-arms. Lacking the troops to surround and besiege the city, the Franks mounted a hasty attack but were repulsed by the Fatimid garrison. The disappointed Crusaders scoured the surrounding country for material to build siege towers, their dwindling morale partly sustained by word of encouraging visions seen by their religious leaders.

By mid-July, several large siege towers were ready and multiple assaults were launched. Godfrey of Bouillon's men were the first to cross Jerusalem's walls, and battle spilled into the streets as other Crusaders followed. By the end of July 15, resistance had ceased – but bloodshed had not. Maddened by battle and by three years of suffering on the road to Jerusalem, the Franks slaughtered men, women, and children in one of the worst massacres of the Crusades. Some estimates put the number of dead in the tens of thousands.

## THE LATIN KINGDOMS

Despite its cost in lives, the First Crusade was successful. With the fall of Jerusalem many Crusaders considered their vows fulfilled, and were anxious to return to their homes.

However, conquering Jerusalem had created fresh problems. Other cities and fortresses needed to be subdued to secure the Crusaders' hold on the holy city, and the defense of the newly conquered lands had to be organized.

While the original Crusaders consolidated their conquests, a third wave of Crusaders set out for the Holy Lands. Numbering over 100,000, these armies retraced the overland route of the original Crusaders, but most met with the same fate. Tens of thousands were lost to unrelenting Turkish attacks and other dangers of the long journey across Asia Minor.

When the survivors arrived in Palestine, Guy of Lusignan had been elected King of Jerusalem and the surrounding country. Bohemund still ruled the Principality of Antioch, Guy's younger brother Baldwin ruled Edessa, Tancred was conquering nearby Galilee, and Raymond of Toulouse was carving out the County of Tripoli along the Syrian coast. Emperor Alexius reminded new Frankish princes of their promises to restore Imperial territory, but they ignored him.

*God Wills It!*

*– Battle cry of the  
First Crusade*

The massacre at Jerusalem had terrified many Muslims. Many cities voluntarily opened their gates to the new overlords, willing to pay taxes and reestablish trade. The Franks wanted to establish the kind of feudal society they knew from Europe, but this proved difficult. They lacked sufficient manpower to defend the new kingdoms, and Palestine's natural resources could not support feudal estates. The Franks eventually realized that they must rule a more urban population through domination of trade routes. Alliances with local Arabs became crucial, and some Christian knights began to take local Orthodox Christian wives.

King Guy died after only a year and was replaced by his brother Baldwin, who did much to stabilize the Crusader kingdoms. He expanded the boundaries of Kingdom of Jerusalem and built castles around the Dead Sea in Outre Jordan. He repelled a large Egyptian army in 1102, captured or negotiated agreements with most of the coastal cities in Palestine, and fought constant border skirmishes until his death in 1131.

Similar events were taking place in the other Crusader kingdoms. Pilgrim travel from Europe increased; more Franks made their way to Palestine, some traveling alone or in small groups, others in armies under the leadership of minor nobles. Some adventurers and fortune seekers stayed to pledge loyalty to a local lord, while others came to fight or worship in Jerusalem before returning to Europe.

## Outremer

This was a wild time in Outremer (literally “over the seas”), as the Crusader lands became known. Throughout the 12th century, the military situation was fluid. The Franks were constantly repelling invasions, raiding Muslim territory, or besieging castles. Cities and castles changed hands regularly, and captured knights were often ransomed, some multiple times. Bohemund of Antioch was held captive for several years before being ransomed, as were Baldwin of Le Bourg and Joscelin of Edessa. It was not uncommon for the wife of a captured Crusader, or a noble appointed by his king, to rule his estates at home for many years.

In 1103, King Baldwin and several hundred knights were surrounded by a fast-moving Egyptian army in southern Palestine. Baldwin escaped with the aid of an Arab sheikh whose wife he had spared during his attack on an Arab caravan the year before, but all his knights were captured or killed.

Baldwin le Bourg and Joscelin were ransomed in 1107. Upon their return a civil war broke out between Baldwin and Tancred, both fighting with local Muslim allies; such temporary alliances between Muslims and Crusaders were common. King Baldwin was forced to mediate between the two Christian nobles. In 1113, a combined Christian army repelled a major Saracen invasion with the help of Muslim allies, but all too often the various Christian kingdoms did not co-ordinate their defensive efforts.

King Baldwin died in 1118 and was succeeded by his nephew Baldwin le Bourg, who styled himself King Baldwin II. The following year, a large Turkish force invaded the Principality of Antioch. Disregarding King Baldwin II's orders to wait for reinforcements, Roger of Antioch attacked; he was killed and his army scattered. Baldwin was able to eventually push the Turks back, but the loss of Roger's army was a serious blow. King Baldwin himself was captured while hunting, but was soon ransomed.

## JIHAD

When it became clear that the Franks had settled in for a long stay, the Muslims began to talk of *jihad*. The idea started slowly, discussed in the Mosques and mentioned in a few religious texts. However, by the 1120s, support for *jihad* was rapidly spreading.

## Zengi

During this period, Imad ad-Din Zengi, the Atabeg of Mosul was consolidating his hold on Iraq. He realized that to drive the Franks from Muslim territory it would be necessary to unite the various Islamic peoples under one leader. He moved into Syria, capturing Aleppo in 1128 and preaching *jihad* to his new subjects. He quickly attracted followers, but then hit an obstacle that proved insurmountable.

The key to Syria was Damascus, Muslim-held but divided into Sunni and Ismaili factions. Ismail, the tyrannical Emir of Damascus, offered to turn the city over to Zengi in return for protection from his own citizens, but was murdered before Zengi arrived. Zengi besieged Damascus in 1135 but was rebuffed. He returned in 1137, but the city had made a defensive alliance with local Christian lords and he was thwarted again.

Moving north, Zengi raided Tripoli and captured Count Raymond. Soon after, he surrounded and besieged the army of King Fulk of Jerusalem. The king was saved by the timely arrival of a Byzantine army led by Emperor John Comnenus, and this Byzantine presence curtailed Zengi's actions for several years. When the Greek troops withdrew, Zengi claimed his greatest triumph. In 1144, he captured the city of Edessa and forced the Franks from most of its surrounding principality. This setback led to the Second Crusade, and Zengi died less than two years later.

# THE SECOND CRUSADE

The fall of Edessa in 1144 to Zengi sent a shock through the Latin Kingdoms and their European homelands. Pope Eugenius III welcomed the idea of a new Crusade, but was involved in a power struggle with the Normans in Italy and could not devote himself to the project. He left it to the greatest churchman of the time, Bernard of Clervaux, to preach the Crusade in 1146, supporting Bernard's call with a full range of church indulgences. A charismatic preacher with blood ties to the Crusaders, Bernard traveled to the courts of King Louis VII of France and Holy Roman Emperor Conrad III.

Both responded enthusiastically. King Louis organized over 15,000 knights and soldiers while Conrad III raised more than 20,000 troops. Both armies were accompanied by many thousands of followers. In the spring of 1147 the Germans set off overland to Constantinople; because of friction between the two monarchs, the French army traveled separately.

Surprisingly, the two armies crossed Hungary without major incident, but the usual atrocities began when they entered Byzantine territory. The Crusaders extorted supplies from the Greek cities, looting and burning several towns.

Emperor Alexius' grandson, Manuel, ruled the Byzantine Empire at this time. Unlike his grandfather, Emperor Manuel

had not asked for help from the West and was not expecting an army of Crusaders in Constantinople. With tens of thousands of armed soldiers at the city's gates, he gave them supplies and moved them across the Bosphorus as quickly as possible.

Manuel advised Conrad to wait for the French before moving along the coast, promising support from the Byzantine fleet. Disdaining this advice, Conrad set out across Anatolia, but his army soon ran into trouble. Food ran low and water was in critical supply.

On October 25, 1147, near the battlefield of Dorylaeum, the army came to a small stream. Desperate for water, the parched soldiers broke ranks and rushed forward, only encounter a Turkish army waiting in ambush. The Turks closed in from all sides, firing clouds of arrows and charging into the disorganized Crusaders. It was a terrible rout. Conrad and his son, the future Frederick Barbarossa, fought their way clear with a small body-guard of knights, but most of the German army was destroyed.

Louis learned from this terrible mistake and took his army by the coastal route. The journey was long, slow, and expensive; supplies were scarce and very expensive when purchased locally. At the City of Attila, an impatient Louis took ship for Antioch with a small contingent of knights.

Other nobles followed his example, and most of the army's thousands of common soldiers were left to make their way their own way. Some were demoralized and turned back, and others were killed in skirmishes along the way. Less than half of the French infantry eventually reached Antioch.

At Antioch, Louis, Conrad, and local Frankish leaders debated their next step. Some were in favor of retaking Edessa, while others preferred taking Aleppo. Either course would have pushed boundaries outward and helped stabilize the threatened Latin Kingdoms, but in the end Conrad and Louis moved their reduced forces to Jerusalem and planned a joint attack on Damascus in conjunction with local Franks. Damascus was not a threat; in fact, it was an important trading partner of the Latin Kingdoms.

On July 24, 1148, the Crusaders besieged Damascus. Unfamiliar with conditions in Palestine, the new armies set up camp without adequate supplies and in positions vulnerable to attack by highly mobile Muslim forces. As losses mounted, arguments broke out among the nobles, and within days, the besiegers withdrew.



A disillusioned Conrad returned home. Louis stayed, not wanting to leave with so little to show for the enormous resources he had expended. Eventually, though, he too sailed back to Europe, where he put the blame for his failure on Emperor Manuel, further weakening relations between Europe and Byzantium.

The failure of the Second Crusade highlighted the differences between Europe and the Crusader states. The Latin Kingdoms wanted reinforcements to solidify their rule, while the new waves of Crusaders were motivated by fresh conquests and loot. Some were keen to fight the infidels, but after a few battles many of these considered their duty done and returned home, leaving an ever-present manpower shortage behind them. Jerusalem needed permanent reinforcements, not uncontrollable and ambitious nobles who would only destabilize the situation.

## NUR AL-DIN

Zengi's son Nur al-Din ruled most of southern Syria, but shared his father's dream of uniting all Muslims in a *jihād* against the Europeans. Damascus' appeal for help against its Frankish besiegers increased his power in the area, and during this time he made a sustained effort to attack the Crusader leadership.

In 1149, he killed Raymond of Antioch and destroyed a Christian army. The following year, he captured Joscelin of Edessa; instead of being ransomed, Joscelin died years later in a Muslim prison. In 1152, Assassins killed Raymond II of Tripoli at the gates of his city, possibly at Nur al-Din's request. While the Crusaders were mounting a large-scale attack on the coastal city of Ascalon, Nur al-Din captured Damascus and made it his capital while he consolidated his power in Syria.

With Palestine and Syria under his control, Nur al-Din needed only Egypt to complete his encirclement of the Crusader lands. Seeing the risk, Christian leaders formed an alliance with the Fatimids to stop him.

## SALADIN

The success of the First Crusade was due in large measure to the fact that the Muslims were divided. Zengi and Nur al-Din realized that Muslim unity was needed to defeat the Franks, and their dream was finally realized by the greatest Saracen leader of all.

In 1164, Nur al-Din sent General Asad al-Din Shirkuh, an Iraqi Kurd, to conquer Egypt. Shirkuh was accompanied by his nephew *Ṣalāh ad-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb*, who became known in the West as Saladin (see p. 36). When Shirkuh died, Saladin succeeded him as leader of the conquered lands. Saladin's rise to prominence in Egypt created increasing tension with Nur al-Din until the latter's death in 1174.

The same year, King Amalric of Jerusalem died. His successor, Baldwin IV, was a young boy who suffered from leprosy. With the two most powerful rulers in the Middle East gone, Saladin saw his chance. It took some years before his empire was secure, but Saladin never lost sight of his main goal. Even while consolidating his hold on Syria and Mesopotamia he continued to attack the Crusader kingdoms. He was rebuffed from Jerusalem in 1177 by Baldwin and a large Crusader army, but was back to threaten Christian cities in 1179. In 1180, Saladin signed a truce with Baldwin to buy time while he built his power. It is thought that he had a genuine respect for the frail young Christian king.

Meanwhile, Baldwin's rule was surrounded by intrigue. A European adventurer named Guy of Lusignan arrived in Outremer and gained a claim to the throne of Jerusalem by marrying Baldwin's sister Sybilla. Reynald of Châtillon (see pp. 36-37), released after 16 years of captivity, gained control of the powerful castle of Kerak, dominating crucial Muslim caravan routes and behaving like a robber baron. Baldwin and Saladin tried to keep the peace while Reynald captured Muslim caravans and attacked pilgrims.

Reynald also built a fleet of galleys on the Red Sea to harass Muslim pilgrims traveling to Mecca. When the Muslims eventually destroyed Reynald's pirate fleet, he escaped north to Kerak. Saladin invaded the Latin Kingdoms in 1183 after Reynald's outrages, but made little progress.

The situation changed with Baldwin's death in 1185. He had appointed his nephew Baldwin of Montferrat as his successor, but his sister Sybilla and her husband Guy of Lusignan seized the throne. A conservative faction of barons led by Raymond of Tripoli opposed Guy, but reluctantly swore fealty to him rather than weaken Jerusalem by internal conflict.

In Kerak, Reynald took advantage of this distraction. He continued his raids on Muslim outposts and extorted money from passing Muslim caravans. Saladin's patience was exhausted when the European noble captured a large Muslim caravan early in 1187 and carried off its treasure to Kerak. Saladin called for a *jihad* against the Franks and his army swelled to tens of thousands. He was determined to end the Frankish occupation once and for all.

*If the war's to be now or  
later, I would have it now.*  
– Reynald of Châtillon,  
**Kingdom  
of Heaven**

### *Hattin*

Saladin planned to draw the combined Christian armies into a decisive battle. He sent raiding parties to isolated Crusader outposts in order to draw the Christian army out. King Guy summoned the Christian nobles to a conference at Acre. Raymond and many of the barons called for caution in advancing against Saladin, but a warlike faction led by Reynald and the Templar Grand Master Gerard de Ridefort demanded an immediate attack. Unsure of his best course, King Guy ordered the army to advance as far as Sephoria.

On July 1, 1187, Saladin surrounded Tiberias. Eschiva, the wife of Raymond of Tripoli, gathered all available forces and held out against the siege. At Sephoria, some Christian lords

wanted to march immediately to Tiberias, but the extreme heat of summer baked the land and there was no source of water between the two cities. Despite his wife's predicament, Raymond again argued for caution, wanting to preserve the army to face Saladin. King Guy decided to await developments.

That night, the Templar Gerard de Ridefort demanded a personal audience with the king. He argued that Guy would be seen as a coward unless he attacked, and harangued the king about his duty to destroy the infidels and liberate Christians. The weak King Guy was swayed, and ordered an advance at dawn.

The troops immediately began to suffer. Water ran out quickly, and the army was continually harassed by squadrons of horse archers firing volleys of arrows and retreating before the Christian knights could organize a charge. At nightfall, the army camped near twin hills known as the Horns of Hattin. With no water that night, few rested.

The next morning, the army attempted to reach the springs at the village of Hattin. Saladin's auxiliaries set brush fires to the west and the Christian infantry began to lose cohesiveness amid clouds of choking smoke. Some began to break eastward, where Lake Tiberias could be seen in the distance. Small groups either fought through Saladin's troops or were allowed to slip away. Nearly surrounded, King Guy ordered Raymond and the vanguard to charge and break through the enemy forces. Raymond escaped with some knights and foot soldiers, but Saladin quickly closed the ring around the Crusaders. The broken remains of the army gathered on top of the hills with King Guy.

Saladin's infantry attacked from the east and north while his cavalry attacked from the west and south. The Christian infantrymen were overwhelmed; most were killed. King Guy's knights attempted several charges and a few actually broke through the surrounding Muslims, but almost the entire remaining leadership of the Kingdom of Jerusalem was captured or killed. Surviving infantrymen were sold as slaves. Most of the knights were held for ransom. All Templars and Hospitallers were executed at Saladin's order. Reynald of Châtillon was beheaded in Saladin's tent – according to some historians, by Saladin himself.

Within a few weeks most Christian-held cities had surrendered to Saladin. Only Tyre held out.

## THE THIRD CRUSADE

Once again, Europe was shocked by events in the Holy Lands. Pope Urban III collapsed and died upon hearing the news. His successor, Gregory VII, wrote to King Henry II of England and King Philip II of France calling for a new Crusade. Refugee church leaders from Palestine traveled the countryside calling for a new Crusade. King Henry committed England to the Crusade, levying a new 10% tax known as "Saladin's Tithes" to finance the expedition, but died suddenly in July 1189. His son King Richard I (see p. 35) was crowned in September 1189 and took up the Crusade as his own.

Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa set out in May 1189 with an army said to be nearly 100,000 strong, with 20,000 knights. However, some historians believe that this is an exaggeration and that the true figure was closer to 15,000 men, including 3,000 knights.

Frederick's march through Hungary was peaceful – indeed, he was joined by Prince Géza, brother of King Béla III, with a Hungarian army of 2,000 – but problems began as he neared Constantinople. The Byzantine Emperor Isaac II Angelus had made a secret alliance with Saladin, and did all he could to slow Frederick's army. Frederick was forced to threaten Constantinople itself before the emperor would ferry his troops across the Bosphorus to Anatolia.

Although harassed by Saracen troops, Frederick successfully crossed most of Asia Minor. Unfortunately, near the Tarsus Mountains he drowned in the Saleph River as his army was approaching Antioch from Armenia. According to Arab historians, he had gone to the river to bathe and was carried away by the current.



Demoralized by their leader's death, thousands of troops turned back for Germany. Emperor Frederick's son, Frederick VI of Swabia, pressed on to Antioch with the remnants of the army. Once in Antioch, though, many of his soldiers elected not to go on to Syria. To make things worse, a plague then struck the city. Thousands died, and only a pitiful fraction of Frederick's great army reached the Holy Lands. Frederick of Swabia fell ill and died soon after reaching Palestine.

To protect their highly profitable trade with the Latin Kingdoms, the Italian city-states decided to co-operate with this new Crusade, and transported the English and French armies by ship. Richard turned aside to conquer Sicily and Cyprus, leaving Philip to go ahead.

Philip arrived just in time to save the former King Guy of Jerusalem from disaster. Saladin had released Guy some time before, possibly to sow dissension among the Franks. The newly arrived Conrad of Montferrat had rallied the remaining Christian nobles to defend Tyre, and he refused to acknowledge Guy as sovereign of the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

Guy decided to attack Acre on his own, his small army reinforced by the remnants of Frederick's army, some survivors of Hattin, and a fleet of soldiers and supplies from the Italian city-state of Pisa. However, Saladin brought up an army and quickly surrounded Guy's forces, besieging the besiegers. Philip reinforced Guy's trapped army when he landed in March 1191, and the strengthened Crusaders made several attacks on Acre while holding off Saladin's forces, but failed to take the city.

## The Northern Crusades

Also known as the Baltic Crusades, the Northern Crusades were a series of campaigns between 1198 and 1316 to crush the remnants of paganism in Northern Europe. Some were official Crusades, and others have been called Crusades by later historians.

The Kingdoms of Denmark and Sweden were both nominally Christian, but large rural populations still followed the old Norse gods. The Finns and the various tribes of the eastern Baltic were a mixture of Christian and pagan. Various campaigns had already been waged against the pagans when Pope Celestine III called for a northern Crusade in 1193.

The forces of Denmark and Sweden were augmented by the Teutonic Knights and another German military order, the Livonian Brothers of the Sword. Both orders came to control lands in the eastern Baltic. The Brotherhood had its headquarters at Fellin (Viljand in present-day Estonia), while the Teutonic Knights arrived in the Baltic to join the Prussian Crusade of 1230 and went on to fight against Orthodox Russia.

## RICHARD THE LIONHEART

King Richard I of England arrived in June 1191, shifting the odds in the Crusaders' favor. Over the next few weeks they both attacked Acre and repulsed Saladin's forces. Richard was initially sick with scurvy, and it is said that he had himself carried within range of Acre on a stretcher, from which he amused himself by picking guards off the walls with a crossbow. When Acre surrendered on July 12, 1191, French and English troops occupied the city.

As part of the surrender negotiated with the city, Saladin was supposed to pay huge sums to both Richard and Philip and release some 1,500 Christian captives. Saladin had not been consulted on these terms, however, and refused on the grounds that Acre did not have the authority to negotiate on his behalf. Outraged, Richard ordered the execution of over 3,000 Muslim prisoners, including women and children, within sight of Saladin's camp.

On July 27, 1191, Richard brokered an agreement that re-confirmed Guy as king of Jerusalem, with the crown going to Conrad of Montferrat upon Guy's death. Richard was also involved in a dispute over the ownership of Acre. He refused Philip's demand for half the city and also insulted Leopold V of Austria, the new commander of the German Crusaders. Angry and feeling that his vows were fulfilled, Philip sailed for France with most of his army on August 3. Richard moved south and defeated Saladin at the Battle of Arsuf, opening the way to Jerusalem.

## Truce

While planning the capture of Jerusalem, Richard opened negotiations with Saladin. Nothing came of them, although Richard discovered that Conrad was also in secret negotiations with Saladin.

Richard advanced, and by Christmas he was within a few miles of Jerusalem. However, he hesitated to attack because he was convinced that Jerusalem was isolated and could not be held without support and more manpower. He was already planning his return to England, and was aware that few of his army would choose to stay once he left.

He turned his army back to the coast and again attempted negotiations with Saladin, advancing to within sight of Jerusalem once again in June. Saladin used this opportunity to attack Jaffa. Richard retreated and reinforced Jaffa by sea, inflicting a humiliating defeat upon Saladin's forces.

After these moves and counter-moves, it became apparent to both leaders that neither could easily gain the upper hand. On September 2, 1192, Richard and Saladin signed a three-year truce recognizing the coastal strip that the Crusaders had reconquered and allowing free passage to Jerusalem for Christian pilgrims.

## TROUBLE IN JERUSALEM

After the truce took effect, the Kingdom of Jerusalem had to be reorganized. Guy's claim to the throne was supported by Richard and the Pisans, but Philip and Genoa supported Conrad, as did many nobles.

Richard summoned a council of Barons, who overwhelmingly chose Conrad of Montferrat as their king. As a consolation, Richard sold Cyprus to Guy. Less than two weeks later, Conrad was murdered on a public street. His murderers were captured and admitted to being Assassins (see p. 8). One of them stated that Richard had arranged the murder. This was never conclusively proven, but the scandal stuck to Richard.

Conrad's widow was quickly married off to Henry of Champagne, who became King of Jerusalem. Perhaps it was only coincidence that Henry was Richard's nephew.

With Richard and Philip leaving and Guy sent to Cyprus, a degree of stability returned to the Holy Lands. Henry ruled for five fairly peaceful years from his capital in exile at Acre.

Richard sailed home from Acre in October 1192. Philip of France and his own brother John were taking advantage of his absence from England to plot against him. Along the way, he was captured by Leopold of Austria, Conrad's cousin, who blamed him for Conrad's assassination and held a grudge from the dispute over Acre the year before. England raised a

huge ransom and Richard was released, spending the rest of his life fighting Philip over English possessions in France.

The Third Crusade marked the end of an era in Outremer. Never again would such large armies reach Palestine. Kings and popes would launch further Crusades, but the armies seemed to go everywhere but where they were needed. The Latin Kingdoms would linger on, but never again would they achieve their earlier glory.

## THE FOURTH CRUSADE

Pope Innocent III called for a Fourth Crusade in late 1198, but it was not until November 1199 that a group of nobles at a tournament in decided to take up the cause. Concerned with finding a leader he could control, the pope settled on Count Tibald of Champagne to lead the Crusade.

This Crusade showed less spontaneity and more organization than any before. Learning from earlier campaigns, the leaders of the Crusade decided to go by sea in order to avoid the attrition of an overland trek and land a fresh, intact army in the Holy Lands. Tibald contracted Venice to provide transportation.

As the army gathered in Venice in 1202, Tibald suddenly died. Boniface of Montferrat was elected to replace him as leader of the Crusaders. Boniface was highly independent and allied with many anti-Byzantine leaders in Germany. With his election, the pope's control of the Crusade began to slip away.

The current emperor, Alexius' uncle Alexius III Angelus, was shocked by the appearance of this large army at his doorstep, but powerless to drive it away. Instead, he waited inside Constantinople's massive walls as the Crusaders attacked several small cities. They hoped that Byzantines would flock to the banner of their Alexius, but when this did not happen, the Crusaders were at a loss.

As the Crusaders hesitated to attack Constantinople's massive fortifications, the Venetians took the lead. Their fleets broke through the chain barrier that blocked the harbor entrance and attacked the sea fortifications, landing Crusader troops. Alexius III gathered as much wealth as he could carry and fled the city on July 16, 1203. Hoping to avoid a sack of Constantinople, the city's leaders freed Isaac and acknowledged his son Alexius as the restored emperor.

### HIJACKED BY THE DOGE

The Venetians asked an enormous sum for their help. Each Crusader was to pay a share, but even once the army was assembled there was still a significant shortfall. The Doge of Venice, a blind man named Dandolo, proposed a compromise: Venice would transport the Crusaders if they would help him recapture the port of Zara in Dalmatia from the Hungarians. To keep the Crusade from falling apart, its leaders agreed. The army was transported across the Adriatic and attacked Zara in November 1202. The city quickly fell and was sacked by rampaging Crusaders. Thousands of Christians were massacred by a Christian army. Pope Innocent was outraged, and excommunicated the entire Crusade.

### THE SACK OF CONSTANTINOPLE

In the spring of 1203, Alexius Angelus, the exiled son of the deposed Byzantine Emperor Isaac II Angelus, appeared in Zara. Speaking of the riches to be found in Constantinople, he persuaded the leaders of the expedition to help him regain his throne. Despite some dissent, most of the army agreed to this further diversion from their purpose. Pope Innocent was helpless to prevent the coming disaster.

Transported by the Venetian fleet, the Fourth Crusade arrived off Constantinople in June, 1203.

### The Children's Crusades

Despite the catastrophic results of the Fourth Crusade, the crusading spirit still burned bright in certain quarters. In 1212, a German youth named Nicholas began to call for a Crusade based on dreams that had come to him. He preached a peaceful conversion of infidels based on a personal example of faith and devotion.

Thousands of people followed him. Most were illiterate children, but some were adults and even a few clergy took up the Crusade. Nicholas and 30,000 followers crossed the Alps and made their way to Italian ports. Many died on the journey. Shocked to find that the rich Italian ship owners were not prepared to give them free passage to the Holy Lands, they milled around helplessly for months. Many became victims of crime. Eventually the remnants of this Children's Crusade dispersed to their homes.

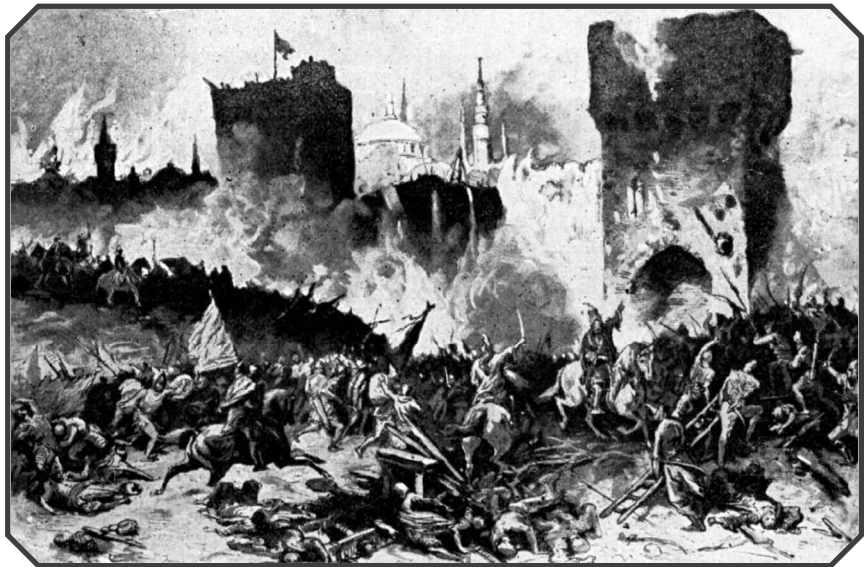
A similar movement sprang up at the same time in France, where a young shepherd named Stephen also had visions. After being expelled from the king's court, he traveled around France preaching and attracted thousands of young followers. He led the children south to the port of Marseille, and met with the same reluctance to provide free passage that their German counterparts had encountered in Venice. Finally, two French businessmen volunteered to transport the hordes of children across the sea.

The children filled seven ships and set out. Two of the ships were lost at sea; the other five dropped anchor in Algeria, where the children were quickly taken prisoner and sold as slaves in the local markets. Only years later did some of them escape and bring word of the tragedy to Europe.

At first things went well, but the newly crowned Alexius IV exhausted his treasury paying the Franks. Tensions built in a cycle of Byzantine riots and Frankish atrocities. A revolt began in February 1204; Alexius was arrested and the Franks were forced out. Led by Venetian ships, they again attacked the city. Somehow, a fire broke out and destroyed large parts of the city. Once in control of Constantinople, the leaders of the Crusade decide to pay their troops – and their debt to the Venetians – by opening the city to three days of looting.

Drunken Crusaders wandered the streets robbing citizens and raping women. Many buildings were burned, and thousands of civilians were murdered. Churches and businesses were looted. Many ancient treasures and works of art were carried off by the Venetians, while many others were destroyed. The Christian world's greatest city had been pillaged by a Christian army. Pope Innocent was shocked at the carnage. The Crusading movement had taken a dark turn. It would never be the same.

Following the capture of Constantinople, the Venetians set up a Latin government in the Aegean. They colonized many



ports and set up fortified trading settlements. They also moved into the Black Sea, setting up colonies as far away as the Crimea. Venice ruled Byzantium for nearly 60 years until a counter-revolution restored the Greek emperors. The Italians continued to hold many of their fortified colonies for decades afterward.

## THE FIFTH CRUSADE

Pope Innocent III realized that the crusading spirit was waning in Europe. At the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 he imposed a new 5% crusading tax on all Christians, setting up a new bureaucratic organization to collect the tax all over Europe. He also set up a plan for systematic recruitment. Merchants and nobles were coerced to outfit knights for Crusade. Innocent died unexpectedly in late 1216, too soon to see the results of his efforts.

In 1217, 30,000 Crusaders from Germany, Austria, and Hungary gathered in Venice. Their ultimate aim was to capture Cairo and subdue Egypt, protecting the southern flank of the Latin Kingdoms. However, not all the Crusaders agreed with this objective. As discussions dragged on, the King of Hungary took his troops home. King John of Jerusalem finally led the Crusade to Damietta, Egypt, in June, 1218.

### The Albigensian Crusade

Ironically, one of the few Crusades to achieve a lasting result was waged against Christians.

The Cathars (also known as the Albigensians, from their stronghold of Albi in southern France) were a heretical sect that spread through southern France between the 11th and 13th centuries. Calling themselves the True Church of God, the Cathars issued a clear challenge to the Catholic Church.

Many powerful local nobles were also Cathars, and the King Philippe II of France was concerned over losing control of the southern region of Languedoc. With a different language and cultural traditions, France's hold on the area was tenuous.

In 1209, Pope Innocent III declared a Crusade against the Cathars, who were wiped out in a 20-year campaign. In military terms, the Albigensian Crusade was a campaign by

the king and northern nobles against the nobles of the south, but the Church provided moral support, and the Inquisition took an active role in rooting out surviving Cathars toward the end of the campaign.

Like the Templars, the Cathars have become associated with the legend of the Holy Grail. In the 1930s, German historian Otto Rahn published *Crusade Against the Grail*, in which he argued that the 13th-century work *Parzival* by Wolfram von Eschenbach was a veiled account of the Cathars. His research attracted the attention of the Nazi government, and Heinrich Himmler made him an archaeologist in the SS. *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln (see bibliography on pp. 43-44) also explored possible links between the Cathars and the Grail.

The Crusaders built siege towers on their ships to attack the fortifications guarding a great chain which blocked access to the Nile. They then settled into a close siege of Damietta. They suffered floods and a plague that killed thousands of troops. Eventually the leaders of Egypt offered to give the Crusaders Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth if they would leave Egypt. King John wanted to accept this generous offer, but he was overruled by a Venetian contingent hoping for massive loot, and by the arrogant papal legate Pelagius who held out for total victory in Egypt.

The siege dragged on and both sides suffered. In November 1219, the Crusaders broke into the city to find the entire population dead or dying from a plague.

With the fall of Damietta, the Egyptians increased their offer for the Crusaders to leave. They promised to return the True Cross captured at the Battle of Hattin. Pelagius again overruled King John, demanding a march on Cairo. Reaching the city, the Crusaders unwittingly camped on a flood plain. When a severe rainstorm washed the entire camp away, all their supplies were lost and the army forced to retreat to the coast. Many were lost before the remnants returned to Palestine.

*The infantry were enough to repulse them; and before the knights could take any share in the action, they entered the town pell-mell with the besieged, and found themselves masters of it. Their only difficulty was how to distinguish the heretics from the orthodox: "Slay them all," said the abbot of Citeaux; "the Lord will know his own."*

– Jules Michelet, *History of France, Volume 1*

## THE SIXTH CRUSADE

After his coronation as Holy Roman Emperor in 1220 by Pope Honorius III, Frederick II (see p. 37) declared that he would lead a new Crusade. However, he needed time to consolidate his position in Germany and was in no hurry to fulfill his vow. While the Fifth Crusade was awaiting his arrival in Egypt, Frederick moved to Sicily, but went no further.

An impatient Honorius called a summit of Christian and Crusader leaders to resolve the situation, and it was decided that Frederick should marry Yolande, the heir to the throne of Jerusalem. It was hoped that this would give Frederick an incentive to launch his Crusade. As a large army of would-be Crusaders assembled at Brindisi, Frederick married Yolande, but he still dallied.

In 1227, after Gregory IX became pope, Frederick and his army set sail for Acre, but an epidemic forced Frederick to

return to Italy. Pope Gregory IX excommunicated Frederick for breaking his Crusader vow; tensions between the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire over territories in Italy were an unspoken factor in Frederick's excommunication.

Frederick seemed unconcerned, but in September 1228 he finally set sail for Acre with a small army. From there, he kept up a long correspondence with Sultan al-Kamil of Egypt. Feeling hard pressed by other Muslim factions, al-Kamil was looking for allies. The sultan agreed to give up Jerusalem, Nazareth, Sidon, Jaffa, and Bethlehem in exchange for an alliance with Frederick and promises of help in his dynastic struggles. Frederick traveled to Jerusalem in triumph, and there crowned himself king, since his excommunication did not allow the clergy to crown him. Alone and by negotiation, Frederick had recovered Jerusalem after 40 years of Muslim control.

## THE SEVENTH CRUSADE

Frederick's agreement with Egypt called for a 10-year truce. This truce was honored for the most part, but the Crusader kingdoms squandered much of the time it bought. Frederick continued to meddle in Crusader affairs through proxy nobles while he feuded with the papacy. Reinforcements arrived in Palestine, but not in sufficient numbers to change the balance of power.

Tibald of Champagne led an unusually large group in 1239 with the tacit backing of the pope, but led his force to a major defeat in Gaza within months of his arrival. However, he did manage to strengthen the Kingdom of

Jerusalem by recapturing castles at Ascalon, Beaufort, and Safed before returning to Europe.

During a period of strife between Egypt and Syria, the Kingdom of Jerusalem allied itself with the Damascus faction. This led the Egyptian faction, reinforced by Persian mercenaries, to recapture Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1244. Soon afterward, the Egyptians destroyed a combined Syrian and Crusader army at the Battle of La Forbie. Over 5,000 Christian soldiers were slain, including large numbers of Templars and Hospitallers.

The annihilation of this Christian army was a disaster on the scale of Hattin, which had provided the impetus for the Third Crusade. By contrast, but this latest disaster became just one more fiasco in the Holy Lands. Crusading spirit had faded to apathy, and Jerusalem was destined to remain in Muslim hands for nearly 700 years.

One of the few to take notice of the bad news was King Louis IX of France. A pious, ascetic man, he had earlier taken crusading vows. In 1248, he instigated the Seventh Crusade, leading an army of nearly 25,000 mostly French Crusaders to Cyprus in Genoese ships.

From Cyprus, Louis and other Crusader leaders decided to attack Egypt again. Damietta fell in the summer of 1249, and the Sultan of Egypt offered to trade captured Jerusalem for Damietta, but his offer was refused.

In 1250, Louis suffered a major defeat at Mansourah; losses were heavy, especially among the Templars. Muslim forces blockaded the Nile. With his supplies cut off, Louis attempted to retreat, but was surrounded. Most of the army was destroyed and Louis was captured.

King Louis was ransomed within a year by his family in France. He lingered in the Holy Lands attempting to help the Latin Kingdoms, but was unable to accomplish much and left for France in 1254. Another Christian army had been destroyed for no gain.

## THE SHEPHERDS' CRUSADE

The capture of the well-loved King Louis IX in 1250 sent shock waves through France. To many, it seemed inconceivable that such a noble and pious man could be captured by the infidels.

As the nobles and clergy debated what to do, a man known only as "The Master of Hungary" – apparently an aged Hungarian monk living in France – claimed that the Virgin Mary had commanded him in a vision to lead the shepherds of France to rescue the king. He gathered some 60,000 followers from the northern provinces of Brabant, Hainaut, Flanders, and Picardy, and led them to Paris. In May 1251, he met with Blanche of Castile, Louis' mother and regent in his absence.

The influential monk and chronicler Matthew Paris suspected that the Master of Hungary was an imposter, and had been one of the leaders of the disastrous Children's Crusade (see p. 18). Others in Paris feared that this mob presented a potential threat to public order, and the shepherds' movements in the city were restricted.

The shepherds split up and left Paris. Some went to Rouen, where they expelled the archbishop and threw some priests into the Seine. Others attacked monasteries in Tours.

Led by the Master, one group arrived in Orléans on June 11, and was denounced by the bishop following similar anti-clerical disturbances. They went on to attack Jews in Amiens and Bourges.

Blanche ordered the wandering shepherds to be rounded up and excommunicated. For the most part this was easily done, but the group led by the Master resisted outside Bourges, and the Master himself was killed.

The Shepherd's Crusade was more of a revolt against the church and nobles than a true crusade. It was fed by popular discontent at their apparent slowness in moving to rescue King Louis rather than by any zeal to fight the infidel. In any event, Louis was ransomed by his family the following year.

## The Mongols

The Muslims soon faced a new invader. In 1251, the Mongols elected Mongke as Khan. Two years later he dispatched his brother Hulagu to conquer Persia. Hulagu swept through Persia, destroying everything in his path. He even captured the strongholds of the Assassins in the mountains of northern Persia. In 1258 he annihilated the Caliph's army and sacked Baghdad, killing tens of thousands. Aleppo fell and the Mongols advanced toward Damascus. In Syria, the Mongols received help from the Armenians and the Crusaders of Antioch, who saw the Mongols as their only hope to counter the growing Mamluk strength.

Mongke Khan died in 1258 and Hulagu returned to China, taking much of his army with him. Sultan Qutuz took this opportunity to move into Palestine and deal with the remaining Mongols. The southern Franks gave him permission to cross their land, but decided to remain neutral.

On September 3, 1260, the largest battle fought during the Crusades took place at Ain Jalut in Palestine. Curiously, Crusaders took no part in this immense battle. By the end of the day, the Mongols were in retreat.

With the Mongol threat contained, the Mamluks turned their attention to the Crusader strongholds. Over the next 15 years, many Crusader cities and castles were captured by the Mamluk army under Sultan Baibars (see p. 38). After Baibars' death, the Mongols attempted to move back into Syria, but they were decisively beaten in 1281 and retreated toward Persia.

# THE EIGHTH CRUSADE

The elderly King Louis IX of France attempted to organize one last Crusade. In the summer of 1270, he sailed from France with several thousand men. Strangely, he did not sail for Palestine or even Egypt.

Instead, he landed his small force of soldiers at the city of Tunis. His motives for this landing are not clear. Perhaps he thought that the capture of Tunis could be a prelude to the capture of North Africa and eventually Egypt. Perhaps he believed

a report that the Muslim ruler of Tunis was interested in converting to Christianity.

Whatever the reason, Louis' troops did not attack the city. Within days many of them became sick, and Louis died of an unknown illness. His remaining troops quickly dispersed back to Europe. Revered for his piety and crusading spirit, Louis was eventually canonized.

# THE NINTH CRUSADE

Some historians regard this as part of the Eighth Crusade, while others treat it separately. It had the same origins, but quickly became a separate expedition.

Prince Edward Longshanks of England, later to become King Edward I, had set sail for Tunis, but arrived after Louis' death. Undeterred, he carried on to the Holy Lands to help Bohemund VI, Prince of Antioch and Count of Tripoli, against the Mamluk threat to Tripoli and the remains of the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

Edward met up with Louis' brother Charles of Anjou and the two went to Acre, now the capital of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Their joint army arrived in 1271, and broke a siege by the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt, Baibars.

Edward sent ambassadors to Abagha, the Mongol ruler of Persia, seeking military support against the Muslims. A few Mongol troops arrived, ravaging the land and spreading terror among the Muslim population, but they melted away before Baibars mounted a counterattack. Baibars landed in Cyprus to threaten the lands of Hugh II of Cyprus, the nominal King of Jerusalem. This campaign came to nothing, however, and Baibars was forced to withdraw to Egypt.

Edward tried to reconcile Hugh with some of his vassals from Cyprus, realizing that internal squabbles were disastrous for the Crusaders' cause. He also entered negotiations with Baibars, but these were interrupted when Baibars tried to have

him assassinated. Edward prepared for a direct attack on Jerusalem, but his plans were interrupted by the news from England that his father Henry III had died. Edward concluded a treaty with Baibars and returned to England to be crowned King of England in 1272.

*It does not seem to be the  
divine will that the Holy  
Sepulchre should be  
recovered, since the great  
number attempting it are seen  
to have laboured in vain.*

*– Salimbene of Adam*

## Other Crusades

While the Albigensian Crusade and the Northern Crusades were the main crusading actions fought outside the Holy Lands, several smaller conflicts were dubbed Crusades.

### *Crusades Against the Mongols*

In 1259, Mongols of the Blue Horde ravaged the territories of Poland and Lithuania, leading Pope Alexander IV to call unsuccessfully for a Crusade against them. Sixty years later, when the Blue and White Hordes had combined to form the Golden Horde, Grand Duke Vytautas the Great of Lithuania led a huge army against them, supported by the Teutonic Knights.

### *Balkan Crusades*

From 1396 to 1456, three crusades were fought in the Balkans against the expanding Ottoman Turks. Their echoes were felt in the ethnic and religious tensions that resurfaced in the Balkans after the fall of Communism there.

### *Swedish Crusades*

The Swedish conquest of Finland in the 12th and 13th centuries is sometimes described as a series of three Crusades. However, historians agree that the First Swedish Crusade (around 1155) is a legend created later to backdate Swedish claims in the region. The Second Swedish

Crusade (around 1249) is scarcely documented, but historians agree that it did take place. The Third Swedish Crusade was fought between Sweden and the expanding Novgorod Republic in 1293.

### *The Aragonese Crusade*

The Aragonese Crusade was declared by Pope Martin IV against the King of Aragon, Peter III the Great, in 1284 and 1285. It arose from Peter's conquest of Sicily, which had been donated as a papal fief by Peter's grandfather, Peter II. Martin bestowed it on Charles, Count of Valois, the son of the French king Philip III and Peter III's nephew.

French forces were joined by those of Peter's brother, King James II of Majorca, but suffered a series of defeats and were decimated at the Battle of the Col de Panissars as they tried to withdraw into France. The crusade failed, but Peter did not long survive its end.

### *The Alexandrian Crusade*

Fought in October 1365, this expedition was a preemptive attack by King Peter I of Cyprus, who had learned of a planned Egyptian attack. His forces assembled at Rhodes, where they were joined by the Knights Hospitaller, and looted Alexandria for three days before withdrawing to Cyprus.

# THE END COMES

Over the next 30 years, the Crusader kingdoms saw a slow decline. Pope Gregory X called for a new Crusade at the Council of Lyons in 1274, but to no avail. The remaining Christian kingdoms in Outremer were riven by infighting, and when the Venetians lost Constantinople to a reestablished Byzantine Empire, they began agitating for a Crusade against that Christian city, but without success.

With the Mongol threat averted, the final Muslim offensive began. Marqab, the famous Hospitaller stronghold, fell in 1285. Latakia fell in 1287 and Tripoli in 1289. Acre, Tyre, Sidon, and Beirut all followed in 1291. By 1303 the last Christian foothold in the Holy Lands – Ruad Island off the coast of Syria – had been lost, and with it the dream of Christian Holy Lands.

## A TIMELINE OF THE CRUSADES

- 1054** – Schism between the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches.
- 1070** – The Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem (Hospitallers) is founded in Jerusalem.
- 1071** – Battle of Manzikert. Seldjuk Turks capture Jerusalem from the Fatimids.
- 1091** – Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus appeals to Europe for help.
- 1095-1099** – The First Crusade.
- 1095** – Pope Urban II preaches the First Crusade.
- 1096** – The Peasant's Crusade and the First Crusade depart for the Holy Lands. The Fatimids recapture Jerusalem from the Turks.
- 1097** – Battle of Dorylaeum. Siege of Antioch.
- 1098** – Baldwin captures Edessa. Battle of Antioch.
- 1099** – Fall of Jerusalem. Latin Kingdom of the East formed.
- 1101** – Crusader army defeated by Turks in Anatolia.
- 1113** – The Hospitallers receive papal recognition.
- 1118** – The Order of Poor Knights of the Temple of Solomon (Templars) is founded.
- 1127-1250** – The Sunni Zengid dynasty rules Syria and northern Iraq.



- 1128** – Zengi captures Aleppo.
- 1137** – Zengi captures Mosul.
- 1139** – Zengi besieges Damascus, but fails to capture it.
- 1144** – Edessa falls to Zengi.
- 1146** – Nur al-Din succeeds Zengi.
- 1198-1316** – The Northern Crusades.
- 1147-1148** – The Second Crusade.
- 1154** – Nur al-Din captures Damascus.
- 1163-1169** – Crusader invasions of Egypt.
- 1169** – The Shiite Fatimid dynasty of Egypt is replaced by the Sunni Zengids.
- 1169-1171** – Saladin takes over Egypt.
- 1174** – Saladin captures Damascus.
- 1187** – Saladin defeats Crusader army at Damascus and conquers most of the Kingdom of Jerusalem.
- 1189-1192** – The Third Crusade.
- 1193** – Death of Saladin.
- 1198** – The charter of the Teutonic Knights is signed.
- 1202-1204** – The Fourth Crusade.
- 1204-1261** – Establishment of the Latin Kingdom of Romania.
- 1209-1229** – The Albigensian Crusade attacks Cathars in southern France.
- 1212** – The Children's Crusade.
- 1217-1221** – The Fifth Crusade.
- 1220** – Frederick II is crowned Holy Roman Emperor and announces his intention to undertake a Crusade.
- 1227** – Pope Gregory IX excommunicates Frederick II for failing to go on Crusade.
- 1229** – The Sixth Crusade.
- 1229** – Jerusalem is returned to the Crusaders by treaty.
- 1244** – The Muslims retake Jerusalem. Battle of La Forbie.
- 1248-1250** – Seventh Crusade.
- 1250** – King Louis IX of France is captured in Egypt. The Mamluk Sultanate is founded in Egypt.
- 1251** – The Shepherds' Crusade.
- 1255-1258** – Civil war in the Kingdom of Jerusalem.
- 1260** – Baibars defeats Mongols.
- 1261** – Byzantines recapture Constantinople.
- 1268** – Baibars conquers Jaffa and Antioch.
- 1270-1272** – The Eighth and Ninth Crusades.
- 1274** – Pope Gregory IX preaches unsuccessfully for a new Crusade.
- 1275-1277** – The Mamluks ravage Armenia.
- 1289** – Tripoli falls to the Mamluks.
- 1291** – Acre Tyre, Sidon, and Beirut fall to the Mamluks.

# CHAPTER THREE

# LIFE DURING THE CRUSADES

The Crusades changed Europe, even for those who had never set foot outside their home country. Many Europeans became aware of Islam and Orthodox Christianity for the first time. Conditions in Outremer challenged the effectiveness of feudalism as a social and economic model. New knowledge, lost to the West since the fall of Rome, made its way back to Europe, along with Muslim advances in mathematics and other sciences.

All Franks were Christians, taught to regard Muslims as hated infidels. They thought Orthodox Christians like the Greeks were little better. Many Franks went on Crusade for true religious reasons. Some saw a Crusade as an armed pilgrimage, others as a holy war to liberate Christian sites. Others still went on Crusade with dreams of adventure and riches, with no intention of ever returning to Europe.

Crusaders came from all walks of life. Soldiers moved among kings, nobles, clergymen, merchants, peasants, and even wayward children.

The Franks attempted to establish European-style feudal societies in the captured territories of Outremer, but were defeated by the arid land and a lack of manpower. Contact with Muslims and non-Latin Christians challenged their views on many things. In the end, Outremer changed the Crusaders

at least as much as they changed it. They were forced to adapt on almost every front, and some of their adaptations were more successful than others.

## Feudalism

Feudalism was based on the idea that everyone, no matter their status in society, owed something to those above them and was owed something by those below them. God was the theoretical apex of the feudal pyramid; he granted lands to kings through Divine Right, and in turn the kings granted lands to their nobles.

In exchange, nobles owed their kings and overlords a duty of military support, and – in theory at least – kings owed the same to God. Each landowner was duty bound to provide his overlord with a number of knights and other troops based on the extent of his holdings, or *fief*, and these were augmented by peasant levies in time of war.

While feudalism worked more or less well in Europe, the conditions in the Crusader kingdoms were different. The arid land simply could not support knights and men-at-arms, leading to a shortage of military manpower that had serious repercussions.

## DISTANCE AND TRAVEL

The Holy Lands was a long way from Europe. Even parts of eastern Austria are more than 1,000 miles away from Constantinople by land. It was another 500 to 600 miles across Anatolia to Antioch, and Jerusalem was even farther away.

There were two main routes to Palestine. The overland route went through southern Germany, the Balkans, and Constantinople. After crossing the Bosphorus, Crusaders traveled south across Anatolia to Syria. The sea route ran across the Mediterranean from southern French or Italian ports. The city-states of Genoa, Pisa, and Venice grew rich chartering fleets to transport men, horses, and supplies to Palestine, but they were constantly battling Byzantine warships, Muslim raiders, and assorted pirates.

Roads were often no more than a track through the wilderness, and the people who lived along crusading routes often reacted to large groups of armed strangers with fear and

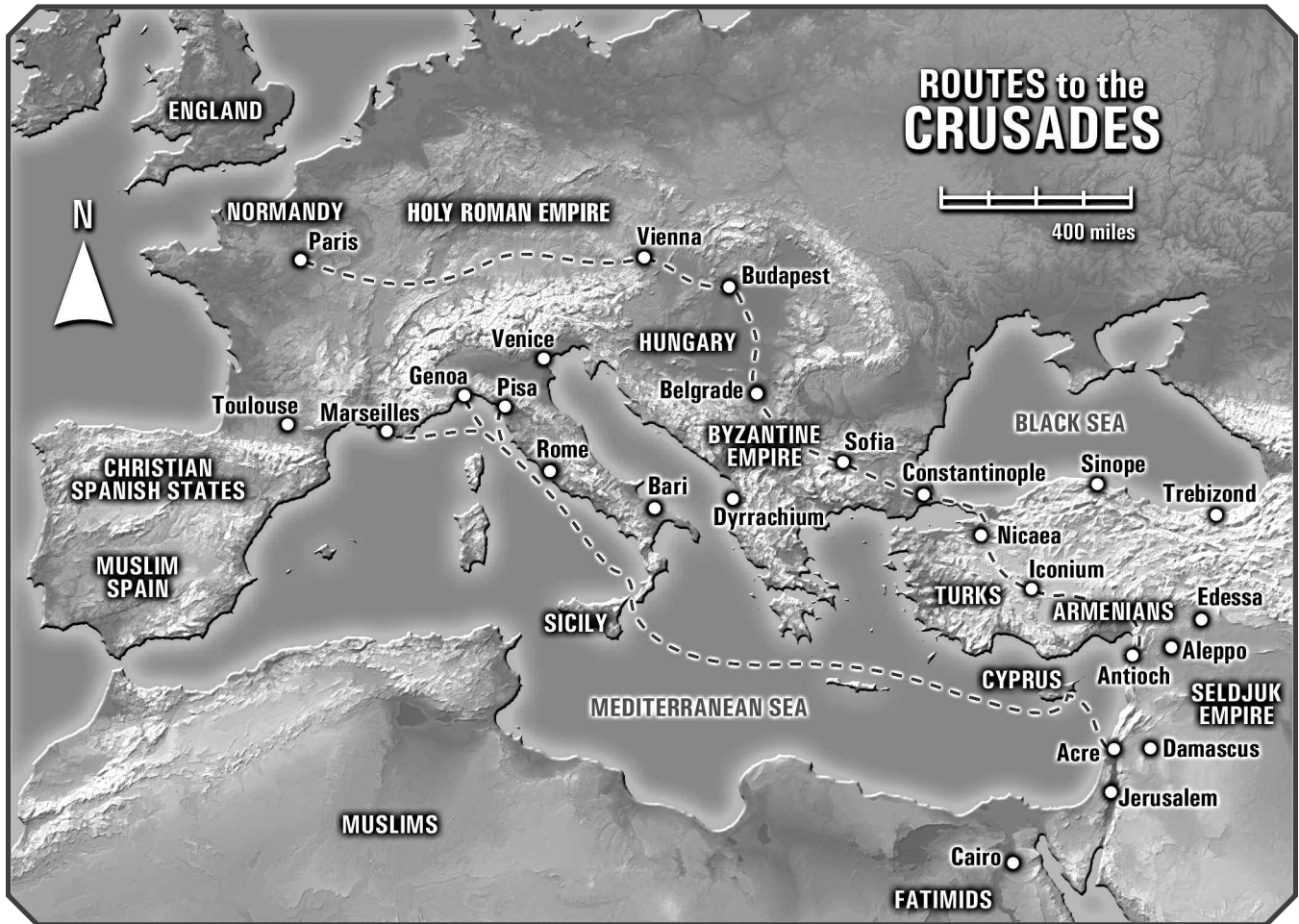
hostility. Activities that the Crusaders regarded as legitimate foraging were theft and pillage in the eyes of the locals, and the resulting disturbances frequently exploded into open warfare or degenerated into atrocities. Once across the Bosphorus, food and even water were sometimes completely unavailable.

Sea travel, while faster and more comfortable, was beyond the means of all except the wealthiest Crusaders, especially when they had to pay for scores or hundreds of knights, soldiers, and retainers. Sea travel landed Crusader armies largely intact, avoiding the massive losses involved in an overland trek, but it also had its hazards. A ship might founder in a storm or fall prey to Muslim corsairs. Outlawed Christian pirates also roamed the Mediterranean, while Venetian, Genoese, and Byzantine fleets were not above attacking and capturing merchant and pilgrim ships.



This was why the early Crusades traveled overland to Constantinople: They were often spontaneous in nature (see *The Peasant's Crusade*, p. 12) and poorly funded. For common people caught up in crusading fever, travel by foot was the only way to reach Constantinople. Tens of thousands died before they could reach the Holy Lands and come to blows with the infidel.

Later Crusades traveled by sea. These Crusades were funded mainly by Church taxes and money raised by monarchs such as King Richard I of England and King Louis IX of France, and could pay to charter ships from the Italian city-states. Fleets owned by the Templars and Hospitallers also played a major role in transporting Crusaders, carrying pilgrims, and combating Muslim piracy.



## AN ALIEN WORLD

Crusaders in Outremer found themselves in an entirely new environment. The climate was radically different to that of Europe. The population was different ethnically and culturally. Food, dress, and customs were different. Society functioned in a very different way from that of feudal Europe. In many ways, Muslim culture was more advanced at this time. Cities like Baghdad and Damascus were centers of civilization and learning. Ancient texts, long thought lost in Europe, survived in Eastern libraries. Medicine and other sciences were more advanced than in Europe. The settlers had access to luxuries such as spices, silks, and exotic fruits.

The Crusaders were exposed to new diseases such as malaria, to which they had no natural resistance. Although

local medical knowledge was advanced compared to Europe, thousands of Crusaders died of disease in this new country. Most of the kings of Jerusalem died from disease at a young age; their life expectancy was half that of their European counterparts of the time.

The fiefs set up by Christian rulers were not classic feudal fiefs based on hundreds of peasants farming a noble's land, but "money fiefs" based on commerce. There were never large waves of immigrant peasants, and the land could not support agrarian-based feudalism. The Crusaders mostly remained a ruling class of nobles and warriors with a sprinkling of merchants, pilgrims, and priests. Although ruled by Frankish nobles, Outremer remained an Eastern land.

## THE EASTERNIZATION OF THE FRANKS

Generations of Crusaders were born and raised in Outremer, and gradually came to adopt attitudes similar to those of their Muslim and Byzantine neighbors. They married native Christian women, adopted the loose, cool clothing of the warmer climes, and learned to be pragmatic in dealings with the locals, developing a certain tolerance for Muslims and Orthodox Christians.

Many of these knights could trace their lineage to ancestors in the First Crusade, but the waves of new Crusaders found their behavior shocking; they seemed to have been corrupted

by Eastern living. Those newcomers who did not simply return home after fulfilling their Crusader vows quickly adopted Eastern customs as well, but the conflict between Eastern-born settlers and newly arrived Europeans grew throughout the age of the Crusades.

## THE CHURCH

Church leaders established western-style bishoprics and parishes in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, but found themselves with more bishops than parish priests. They lacked sufficient parishioners to support this elaborate organization, and compromises had to be made. Orthodox churches, meanwhile, remained in use throughout the age of the Crusades.

## Signs and Wonders

Religion was embedded in the medieval psyche in ways that a modern reader might find difficult to understand. All kinds of objects and events were imbued with religious significance, especially when a great religious undertaking such as a Crusade was involved. Although few Crusaders doubted that God was on their side, there was great reassurance to be gained from objects of religious significance and signs of divine support.

### *Holy Relics*

Whether or not the timely discovery of the Spear of Longinus under the Cathedral of Antioch (see p. 13) was staged, the Crusaders believed in the relic, and it helped turn the tide of their campaign. Pilgrims who traveled to distant shrines were greatly respected. Holy relics, such as a sliver of wood from the True Cross or a lock of hair from a prophet or saint, were highly prized. Few people doubted they were genuine.

Later in the Crusades, elaborate campaigns and treaty negotiations revolved around the return of such relics. The recovery of a holy relic makes an excellent adventure plot.

### *Celestial Portents*

In an age where astrology was regarded as a science, celestial events such as comets, meteor showers, and eclipses were seen as divine messages portending good or ill. The common people often thought that the clergy had a direct insight into God's will, and the higher the priest's rank, the greater his insight. To them, the pope practically shared a mind with the Creator.

A few months before Pope Urban II preached the First Crusade, a spectacular meteor shower was seen across France. In 1096, the moon went into eclipse twice while the Crusaders were forming their armies, and the Aurora Borealis made a display visible in Europe. Europeans saw these events as divine portents of victory.

The first half of the 12th century was a period of particularly frequent celestial displays, possibly due to unusual solar activity. Such displays are a wonderful device for the GM. The proper timing of an eclipse or meteor shower might influence a battle, clinch truce negotiations, or terrify a wavering enemy.

## ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

Despite a promising start, the Crusader kingdoms faced a number of problems that eventually proved fatal. Manpower was a constant problem, and trade was not sufficient to sustain them economically once the Italian city-states had taken their share. Events in Europe drew attention away from the Holy Lands, and infighting between Frankish nobles weakened Outremer in the face of an increasingly unified Muslim foe.

### MANPOWER

When the Christian kingdoms were at their largest, in the first 50 years after their establishment, there was no large-scale Crusade. Crusaders came and went haphazardly at a time when the kingdoms needed a steady influx of new troops.

A disaster such as the fall of Edessa or the battle of Hattin would set off alarms in Europe and provoke a new call for

Crusade, but too often these new armies tried to conquer fresh lands instead of reclaiming and defending existing territory. Many of these armies met with disaster.

This constant manpower shortage led to the increasing use of mercenaries. Some were locally raised Turcoples while others were semi-professional armed bands from Europe. The military orders offered the only reliable standing armies available, but both the Templars and Hospitallers required large numbers of mercenaries to man their castles and fleets.

The Italian city-states supplied large numbers of troops to defend their trading concessions in the coastal cities, along with the mercenaries required by the Crusader kingdoms and the martial orders. Even as the Christian kingdoms continued to shrink, though, there were never enough troops to defend them.

## The Economics of Crusading

A noble who took the cross not only had to pay his own way to the Holy Lands, but also that of his knights, men-at-arms, servants, and other retainers. A knight might spend three to five times his annual income to finance his campaign. Some knights or nobles chose to travel alone as armed pilgrims, often attached to other groups, but the way was still long and expensive.

Early Crusades were financed by the nobles themselves. They sold or mortgaged property, borrowed money, and dipped into family funds. Nobles who survived a Crusade often found themselves bankrupt when they came

home. Smaller fiefs disappeared as land was consolidated in the hands of richer nobles, changing the political landscape of Europe.

As crusading fervor waned, the Church was forced to cover more of the cost. They taxed parishioners, sold indulgences, and used threats of damnation or excommunication to raise funds. Kings Philip II and Richard I resorted to nationwide taxes to finance the Third Crusade. Eventually, financial necessity combined with other factors to put an end to the Crusades.

## TRADE

Before the Crusades, the Italian city-states dominated what little trade there was between Europe and the eastern Mediterranean. The most important was Venice, although Pisa and Genoa were its constant competitors. Some trade with the Muslim world went through Palestine, but the most lucrative routes ran through Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire. Over the years, Venice's relations with the Byzantines had ranged from flourishing trade to outright war. Byzantium had a strong maritime tradition, and resented the Italian domination of commerce in the Mediterranean.

While some individual Italians answered papal calls to Crusade, Italian participation in the First Crusade was limited to a few ships supplying the Christian forces after they reached Antioch in 1098.

The Pisans and Genoese took the early lead in trade with the Crusader states, and the first strong Venetian fleet arrived in Palestine in 1100, after Jerusalem had fallen. After the "Battle of Blood" at Antioch in 1119, Venice sent a larger fleet to support the Crusaders, destroying an Egyptian fleet off Ascalon and landing troops and supplies. In return, it was granted preferential trading rights and obtained nearly a third of Tyre as a semi-autonomous concession.

Throughout the Crusader kingdoms, the Italians began negotiating further concessions: property such as buildings, churches, and public baths in a specific quarter of a coastal city; jurisdictional rights of low justice over their own citizens; and commercial privileges such as the reduction of fees, access to ports, and the right to build a marketplace.

The kings of the Latin Kingdoms agreed because they needed large sums of money to pay for mercenaries and defray other expenses, and such sums could only be obtained through trade. Lucrative goods such as cotton, wool, timber, silk, and sugar moved through the Crusader lands, and the Italian merchants grew rich and influential.

By the mid-13th century, the cities of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Tripoli had lost so much territory that they needed to be supplied by Italian ships. Italian troops defended the merchant quarters in the coastal cities, adding to garrisons already full of Italian mercenaries.

Trade routes shifted north to the Black Sea after the Mongol invasions of the 13th century, and Italian interest shifted with them, leaving the Latin Kingdoms behind. Italy was also changing; the Genoese annihilated the Pisan fleet in 1284,

sending Pisa into eclipse. The papacy and the Holy Roman Empire were locked in a struggle for control of central and southern Italy. Other changes in Italian politics drew interest away from the East just when the Latin Kingdoms were in peril from an increasingly united Muslim foe.

## A DISTRACTED EUROPE

The disaster of the Second Crusade had cost some public goodwill in Europe, but generally the populace remained supportive of crusading. Among the nobility, crusading was not only popular but became a tradition in many families: young knights went on Crusade with their fathers, and took their own sons to the Holy Lands a generation later.

The fall of Jerusalem in 1187 added urgency to crusading zeal, but this was shattered by the fiasco of the Fourth Crusade. By the 13th century, crusading taxes were commonplace. Common folk would hear of the Crusades, but their only contribution was the taxes they paid to Church and monarch.

The 13th century also saw a diffusion of crusading efforts. The *Reconquista* had not yet dislodged the Muslims from Spain, the Northern Crusades drew manpower into northern Europe, the Mongols ravaged as far west as Poland, and there were vicious campaigns against the Cathars in southern France. All of this reduced the numbers of Crusaders going to the Holy Lands..

The long papal war with the Holy Roman Empire did nothing to improve matters. After the death of Frederick II (see p. 37), the popes continued to fight with his successors. By the 1260s, the papacy had declared several Crusades to free Italy, Sicily, and northern Spain from Christian nobles who threatened the power of Rome. As commoners came to see Crusades as nothing more than private papal wars, their fervor waned.

While there was never a shortage of knights looking for glory and loot, papal Crusades in Italy or France were more attractive than the long trip to the Holy Lands. The lives of those who did make the trek were often squandered as the rulers of Outremer fought among themselves. As the Crusades went on, Christian armies became less and less effective. Some never even saw battle before their leadership dissolved.

The Church continued to send some money to the Latin East, but it was used mainly to pay for mercenary garrisons in Crusader towns and castles. The Latin Kingdoms were denied the large numbers of reinforcements that they needed from Europe.

## CRUSADER STATE POLITICS

Nominally a vassal state of the Byzantine Empire, Antioch was independent in most ways. The other principalities were nominal vassals of the King of Jerusalem, but in practice only the strongest kings could enforce their authority. Tripoli, Edessa, and Antioch often made their own alliances and treaties.

New waves of Crusaders made the confused situation worse. Seeing every Muslim as an enemy, they could not see the necessity of treaties with the hated Saracen, and some did not consider it dishonorable to break a treaty with an infidel. Local Christian leaders, on the other hand, were painfully aware that their survival often depended on maintaining good relations with their neighbors.

*Treaties between Saracens and Christians were sometimes necessary for survival.*

### *Shifting Alliances*

The military situation in the Christian kingdoms was constantly changing. Christian leaders would often negotiate truces or even alliances with local Muslim chiefs or cities to defend against incursions by other Muslims, only to find themselves fighting their former allies a few months later. At other times a Christian noble might even ally with a Muslim leader in dispute against a fellow Crusader.

### *The Greeks*

The Greeks respected craft and guile as much as military might. They made extensive use of diplomacy to maintain their power. Bribing opponents or making treaties to buy time were regarded as legitimate tools of statecraft, but made the Greeks appear scheming and untrustworthy to the Franks.

The Greeks, for their part, were suspicious of Frankish ambitions in the East. After the First Crusade, the Greeks reconquered large areas of Asia Minor. Apart from a few attempts to enforce sovereignty over the Christian enclave of Antioch, they mostly left the Crusaders alone, content to have stabilized their crumbling empire. Attempts to coordinate Crusader and Byzantine forces generally failed.

Greeks were encountered everywhere in the Crusader states, in all walks of life. Greek merchants were active in trade. Pilgrims, former soldiers, artisans, and farmers were most numerous in the northern states of Antioch and Edessa, but could be encountered anywhere.

### *The Franks*

As already noted, the Franks who had settled in the Holy Lands were different in many ways from those newly arrived. However, they had many things in common, and the most significant of these was a hunger for land, which according to feudalism was the basis of all power. They wanted to carve out new feudal kingdoms based on the European model. They quickly found that this was impractical.

In Europe, a knight lived on the agricultural surplus of his fief. In the Holy Lands, where farming was a marginal activity at best, these surpluses were small or nonexistent. A fief in Outremer might consist of taxes, tolls, or fees rather than land; many fiefs were a combination of both. Commerce became accepted as a legitimate pursuit of the nobility, an idea that was scorned and sometimes even outlawed in Europe.

A reduced emphasis on farming meant that there were very few manor houses and large demesnes. Nobles spent much of their time in the cities, living next to merchants, artisans, and townsfolk. This urban society allowed a degree of social mobility that was unknown in feudal Europe. Marriages that would have been unthinkable there – to the daughters of wealthy merchant families, for instance – made excellent matches here. These new ideas were exported to Europe along with Eastern silks and spices.

European monarchs regularly fought over land, succession, sovereignty, and other issues. Even nobles fought among themselves, and occasionally rebelled against their kings. If the popes expected crusading zeal to overcome personal ambition and unite all Christians against the infidel, they were disappointed. Instead of working together to consolidate the Christian kingdoms, Frankish kings and princes often undermined them with their in-fighting.

## WARFARE IN OUTREMER

European armies and tactics were ideal for fighting in Europe, but like other manifestations of feudalism they were less well suited to the conditions and opponents the Crusaders found in the Holy Lands.

## TACTICS AND COMPOSITION

Used to facing other knights on European battlefields, the Crusaders were surprised by the Muslim reliance on mobility and missile fire. They adapted their equipment and

tactics a little, but arguably not enough to counter this new enemy effectively.

### *European Armies*

The striking arm of any Christian army was a core of armored cavalry, made up of well-armored knights and more lightly armored sergeants, both armed with lance, sword, and shield. Cavalry was used to smash through enemy lines in massed charges while the infantry advanced to take advantage of the disruption created by the charge.

Armor increased in weight and coverage – and cost – as the age of the Crusades progressed, which tended to increase the differences between knights and mounted sergeants. At the same time, though, the Church and high nobility made greater use of sergeants, and their resources allowed the sergeants better equipment. Depending on the time and the resources of their masters, sergeants could be very similar to knights or radically different.

### *Shifting Tactics*

The Crusaders quickly found that their European tactics were not effective in Outremer. Muslim armies used large numbers of archers, both on foot and mounted, equipped with the superior composite bow. Most Muslim cavalry favored mobility over heavy armor, and faced with a cavalry charge they would retreat, drawing the enemy forward and tiring their heavily laden horses while showering them with arrows. They sought to separate the Frankish cavalry from the infantry and attack each separately.

Early Crusaders suffered heavy losses in set-piece battles. Given good organization and discipline they could defeat their foes, but discipline was often poor, especially amongst the headstrong nobility. Groups of arrogant knights would lose patience and charge at the enemy, breaking up the Frankish formations and giving the Saracens an opportunity to employ their archers more effectively. Crusader cavalry learned the hard way to operate in smaller groups using more limited charges.

Infantry was used to screen the cavalry from enemy archers as they prepared for a charge or reformed after one. As Christian leaders saw the effectiveness of Muslim archers, the crossbow was frequently added to the standard infantry equipment of spear and shield. Native bowmen, usually local Maronite Christians or nominally Christian Turcopoles, used composite bows. Most infantry wore only lightly padded or leather armor, with a helmet of some kind and a shield, although armor might vary from light clothing to captured mail.

### *The Turcopoles*

The Turcopoles served among Crusader armies. Their name derives from the Greek *tourkopouloi*, meaning “sons of Turks,” and many were the descendents of mixed Greek-Muslim marriages. Others were local Orthodox Christians, or converts from Islam to Christianity – although at least some served without converting.

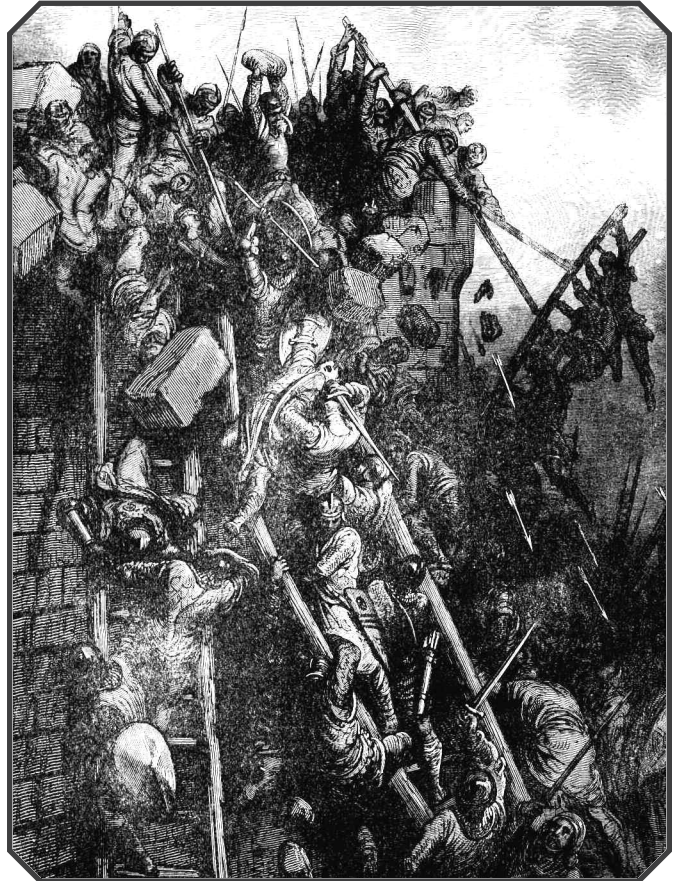
Turcopoles used local equipment and tactics, and the majority were horse archers. Light, mobile Muslim horse archers wrought havoc among early Crusader armies, and the Turcopoles were a valuable addition to Crusader armies, which had previously eschewed light cavalry in favor of knights and mounted sergeants.

As well as providing their employers with a mobile, missile-armed force, the Turcopoles fulfilled the roles that were given to light cavalry in post-medieval armies: scouting, skirmishing, and harassing the flanks of enemy forces. They also served as a second line of cavalry, backing up charges by heavier cavalry and exploiting any openings they created.

In addition to the compound bow, Turcopoles were commonly equipped with a spear, and armored with a quilted jerkin and a conical steel helmet. They were regarded as inferior to Frankish cavalymen, and suffered from various restrictions including not being allowed to eat with them.

Turcopole leaders, called Turcopoliers, acted as officers and interpreters, and were higher in rank than normal sergeants. The senior ranks of the Knights Templar included a Turcopolier who was in command of all the Order's mercenary cavalry.

The Mamluks, and probably other Muslim factions, regarded the Turcopoles as traitors and apostates, and captured Turcopoles were usually killed out of hand. After the fall of Acre, the Turcopoles went to Cyprus with the military orders, later following them to Rhodes and Malta.

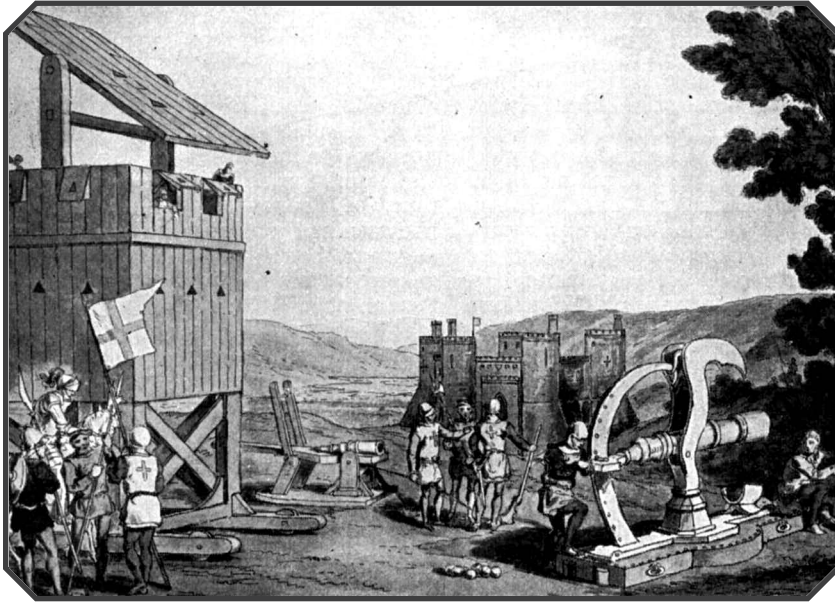


## **LOCAL CONDITIONS**

In the Holy Lands, the battlefield itself was more important than in Europe. Heat, lack of water, and rough terrain were often deciding factors. At Hattin, the Muslims used the heat and the Crusaders' lack of water to their advantage and virtually annihilated them.

Rough terrain made massed cavalry charges difficult, and especially in Anatolia it allowed a comparatively small local force to harass an army on the march. It was almost impossible for a Crusader army to carry enough food and water for a long march, and the Muslims often took advantage of this weakness by stripping an area of supplies and poisoning wells in front of advancing Crusaders.

The heat of Outremer was new to the Crusaders, and the body temperature of a heavily armored knight or sergeant could rise to dangerous levels in battle. Sweating increased dehydration and could virtually blind a knight inside an already restrictive helmet. Many Crusaders were weakened by local diseases, to which they had no natural resistance, before they even took to the battlefield.



## SIEGES

*GURPS Middle Ages 1* contains additional information on medieval warfare and sieges. *GURPS Mass Combat* can be used to recreate historic scenarios.

### Castles

Many of the largest and most impressive medieval castles were built in the Holy Lands, and most cities were also heavily fortified. Castles were placed in strong locations such as steep hills or promontories, many the sites of ancient Roman or Byzantine fortifications that the Crusaders repaired and improved. Crusader castles drew on the design of the best Armenian and Byzantine fortifications, with added refinements such as defensive artillery emplacements.

Castles were important as centers of government and as places of defense, but were often built to project Frankish power, dominating caravan routes or areas into which the Franks were attempting to expand. Well-stocked castles were also used as offensive bases by Crusader armies.

Especially later in the Crusades, the Franks lacked the manpower to defend their imposing castles. When Krak de Chevaliers fell to the Mamluks, its garrison numbered only 200 men instead of the more than 2,000 for which it was designed.

### Cities

Cities were centers of trade, especially ports such as Acre, Tyre, and Sidon. The Crusader cities were also administrative centers. Investing in a port required a naval blockade to prevent the city from being resupplied by sea, and in some cases the Crusaders turned some of their ships into floating siege towers and artillery platforms to attack from the sea.

### Hazards

A siege was dangerous to the attacker as well as to the defender. A large army often needed as many supplies as a city, and a siege camp was as vulnerable to disease as any crowded settlement – sometimes more so, because cities and some castles could rely on fresh water from wells inside their walls. On more than one occasion, a relieving army encircled a besieging force, trapping it between two enemies.

### Ending a Siege

Castles and cities could be taken by assault, by starving the inhabitants into submission, or by treachery from within. Besiegers would often use a combination of these techniques. Sieges of important cities or castles sometimes went on for years; Acre spent nearly four years under siege during the Third Crusade.

A siege could be lifted by the arrival of a relieving army that forced the attackers to withdraw. It could also end if the besieging force ran out of supplies or was weakened by disease. Both these outcomes were more frequent in Outremer than they had been in Europe.

### Siege Tactics

During most of the crusading era, Muslim siege engineering was more advanced than that of the Europeans. Trebuchets, the most effective siege weapon, were probably invented in Asia, although the Muslims preferred to attack walls by undermining and the use of massed mangonels. The Franks preferred to use huge siege towers to place heavily armored troops into close combat with a wall's defenders. Siege engineers were always well-paid, and highly sought after by both sides.

*We've been blind. We were proud, dearest, when we took the cross in our pride. We fought to conquer Jerusalem. We tried to ride through blood to the Holy Place of God. And now . . . now we suffer.*

*– Berengaria, Princess of Navarre, **The Crusades***

# CHAPTER FOUR

# CHARACTERS

A gallant knight riding across the desert is not the only character option in *GURPS Crusades*. In a campaign based on the Crusades, a character can be anything from a merchant to a mercenary, from a Saracen to a stealthy assassin.

The templates in this chapter assume a typical 150-point game, and are suitable for an adventurous style of campaign. They can be adjusted for different campaign styles at the GM's discretion.

## ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

The following traits deserve special discussion in a *GURPS Crusades* campaign. See also *Not-So-Perfect Specimens* (below).

### *Clerical Investment*

see p. B43

Religious warriors (p. 34) in the military orders take vows similar to those of monks. They are pious and spend much of their time off the battlefield in religious pursuits. However, they are not priests or clerics in the classical sense. They cannot perform marriages, conduct exorcisms, or hear confessions. It is possible, but highly unlikely, that former clerics could enter the military orders.

### *Languages*

see p. B23

At the time of the Crusades, the vast majority of people (including knights and nobles) were illiterate. Some knights and

nobles did speak languages other than their own; some spoke many languages. Thus, any character may reduce the written comprehension of his native language (*Literacy*, pp. B24-25), in addition to the disadvantage options on his template. This does not count against any disadvantage limits. Furthermore, it would be reasonable and realistic for the GM to limit additional languages to spoken understanding *only*.

### *Odious Personal Habit*

see p. B22

The Crusades take place in a time when standards of personal hygiene were fairly low. Bathing even once a month was rare for the upper classes. What we would consider an Odious Personal Habit today was an everyday failing at the time; the GM should be careful when determining the value of this disadvantage. In the Holy Lands, resident Franks adopted some Muslim habits of cleanliness; this may come into play in extended campaigns.

### *Unusual Background*

see p. B96

Christian knights had similar backgrounds. If they didn't have the right background they would not have been knighted. In a realistic campaign, the GM should be wary of this advantage. It might be more applicable in a cinematic campaign.

### *Not-So-Perfect Specimens*

Crusaders fought with disabilities that would keep a modern man from joining the armed forces at all. A knight was born to warrior status, and losing an eye or a couple of fingers would not get him a medical discharge. Names such as "Fulk the Fat" or "Rollo the Lame" were fairly common in medieval history. The GM should be flexible in allowing knights to take physical disadvantages.

## TEMPLATES

The following templates represent typical NPCs or starting PCs. Any template can be adjusted and personalized to fit the player's view of his character, or simply used as a source of ideas when designing a character from scratch. In a 150-point game, players who use these templates will have 20 points

remaining (up to 25 points after quirks) to further customize their characters; these additional points can raise the abilities purchased on the template, but they can also buy other skills and traits to help set each hero apart.

For more detail on arms and armor, see *GURPS Low-Tech*.

# CRUSADER KNIGHT

130 points

This template represents a typical Crusader from the knightly/noble class. Armored knights were the heart of any Crusader army. They were also the driving force in Crusader

politics, colonization, and administration. Although they come from many different European kingdoms, the knightly class in Outremer has a fairly common social background and similar martial training.

Knights of this time were almost always illiterate. Although they could be devout, their concerns more often revolved around the interests of family and class rather than God, country, and the common good. In between active campaigns or punitive raids, a landed knight spent his time dispensing justice, maintaining his fief, and engaging in (or just surviving) Crusader politics.

Newly arrived or non-landed knights had fewer responsibilities but were chronically short of money, giving them greater freedom for adventuring and a greater incentive to do so.

Important not only as warriors but as pillars of Crusader society, knights will play an important part in any adventure. The lower classes looked to knights for leadership. In a group of adventurers, non-noble characters may actually be servants and retainers of a knight.

## Suggested Equipment

Here are typical loadouts for various Crusader-era warriors that the PCs might play or encounter.

### *Knight*

Typical weapons for a knight are lance, broadsword, shield, and dagger. A knight's armor generally increased in coverage, weight, and cost as time went on. Helmets became heavier and fully enclosed. Cuirasses for back and chest augmented mail, and plate leg, arm, and hand armor became more common. See the *Customization Notes* for the Crusader knight for ideas (p. 33).

### *Sergeant*

A mounted sergeant used the same weapons as a knight, but was less heavily armored. Mail was more common than plate, and helmets were less likely to be closed.

### *Infantryman*

A foot soldier was usually armed with a spear and a dagger or short sword. Armor was light or absent altogether, but nearly all foot soldiers had shields. Later in the Crusades, crossbows were added to the equipment of some infantry units.

### *Foot Archer*

European foot archers were not as common during the Crusades as they would become in later European wars. They were armed with a longbow and a dagger or short sword, and were mostly unarmored.

### *Turcopole*

Turcoples (see p. 29) were armed with a lance or spear and a compound bow, and armored more lightly than mounted sergeants. They also had daggers or swords for close combat, although they relied on their speed and missile fire whenever possible.

### *Turcoman*

The Turcomans served the Seldjuk Turks in the 11th and 12th centuries. Infantry were armed with sword and bow. Their leaders wore scale mail, but lower ranks mostly wore quilted jerkins or other light armor. Cavalrymen were horse archers. All wore conical steel helms and many used small round shields.

### *Saracen Cavalryman*

The heavy cavalry of the Muslim armies was lighter than the European knights. Horses were unarmored, and riders wore chain or scale mail on their upper bodies and carried shields. They were armed with spears or light lances and swords.

**Attributes:** ST 12 [20]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 12 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

**Advantages:** Status 1 [5]. • A total of 40 points to be spent on advantages chosen from ST +1 to +2 [10/level], IQ +1 [20], HT +1 to +2 [10/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Fearlessness [2/level], Fit [5], Heir† [5], Languages [Varies]; Patron [Varies], Reputation [Varies], Signature Gear [Varies], Status 2+ [5/level], or Wealth [Varies].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -40 points in disadvantages selected from among Bad Temper [-10\*], Bloodlust [-10\*], Bully [-10\*], Callous [-5], Code of Honor (Chivalric) [-15], Duty [Varies], Fanaticism [-15], Greed [-15\*], Intolerance [-5 or -10], Overconfidence [-5\*], Social Stigma (Disowned) [-5], or Vow [Varies].

**Primary Skills:** Riding (Horse) (A) DX [2]-13. • One of these skill packages:

1. Broadsword (A) DX+2 [8]-15, Lance (A) DX [2]-13, and Shield (E) DX+1 [2]-14. • One of Axe/Mace (A) DX [2]-13 or Flail (H) DX-1 [2]-12.
2. One of Axe/Mace (A) DX+2 [8]-15 or Flail (H) DX+1 [8]-14. • Broadsword and Lance, both (A) DX [2]-13; and Shield (E) DX+1 [2]-14.
3. Lance (A) DX+2 [8]-15 and Shield (E) DX+2 [4]-15. • One of Axe/Mace or Broadsword, both (A) DX [2]-13; or Flail (H) DX-1 [2]-12.

**Secondary Skills:** Knife (E) DX [1]-13; Leadership (A) IQ+1 [4]-11; and Tactics (H) IQ [4]-10.

**Background Skills:** Heraldry (A) IQ [2]-10. • Four of Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-14; First Aid (E) IQ+1 [2]-11; Falconry or Politics, both (A) IQ [2]-10; Diplomacy or Strategy (Land), both (H) IQ-1 [2]-9; or Carousing (E) HT+1 [2]-12.

\* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† A potential advantage; see p. B33.



## Customization Notes

Early in the Crusades, the armor of a typical knight consisted of a padded *gambeson* worn under a long mail hauberk and a coif with a simple steel cap. He might have worn mail leggings. His shield was large and kite-shaped, possibly bearing his heraldic device. Later in the Crusades, a laminated (leather or iron) cuirass was added to the mail, with a heavier full-face helm. The *chapel-de-fer* (wide-brimmed helmet) and mail leggings were also popular in the later Crusades; shields were smaller and heraldic markings more common. Horses, weapons, and equipment are very expensive in a realistic medieval campaign; the Wealth advantage would be very helpful.

This template can also be adapted slightly for a *sergeant* – a non-noble cavalryman. A sergeant's weapons, primary skills, and some secondary skills would be similar to a knight's; his background would differ, however, and he would generally wear less armor.

For typical weapons for knights and sergeants, see *Suggested Equipment* (p. 32).

## SARACEN WARRIOR

130 points

This template represents a typical Muslim noble warrior. Muslim society was semi-feudal. In theory the Arab Bedouin tribes elected their leaders democratically, but in practice certain families dominated the leadership and came to be treated as noble. Persian and Syrian societies were ancient monarchies with a feudal elite. The Turks were a tribal people with dominant clans and families.

However, Islam had a strong influence on all these societies, teaching that all men are equal in the eyes of Allah. At the time of the Crusades, however, most of Islam was a roughly feudal society with somewhat more upward social mobility than in contemporary Europe.

The rulers of Islamic kingdoms were hereditary Caliphs. Under the Caliphs was a class of Emirs who gave service in exchange for land, like Western knights. Outstanding warriors or warlords were accorded high status in Islamic armies.

Islamic people respected both wealth (whether gained through hard work or inheritance) and scholarship. A Saracen warrior could attain high status through great deeds of war, scholarship, self-made wealth, or a combination thereof. Islamic nobles were more racially and culturally diverse than their Western counterparts.

Although literacy was certainly not universal, literate nobles in an Islamic army were much more common than literate knights in a Crusader army (*Languages*, p. 31). More information on Arab society may be found in *GURPS Arabian Nights*.

**Attributes:** ST 11 [10]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 12 [20].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 6.25 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

**Advantages:** A total of 40 points to be spent on advantages chosen from ST +1 or +2 [10/level], IQ +1 [20], HT +1 [10], Combat Reflexes [15], Charisma [5/level], Languages [Varies], Signature Gear [Varies], Status [5/level], or Wealth [Varies].

**Disadvantages:** Disciplines of Faith (Ritualism) [-5]. • A total of -35 points in disadvantages selected from among Bad Temper [-10\*], Bloodlust [-10\*], Code of Honor (Gentleman's, Soldier's, or Chivalry) [-10, -10, or -15], Fanaticism [-15], Intolerance [-5 or -10], Overconfidence [-5\*], or Vow [Varies].

**Primary Skills:** Bow (A) DX+1 [4]-14; Broadsword (A) DX+1 [4]-14; Knife (E) DX+1 [2]-14; Lance (A) DX+1 [4]-14; Riding (Horse) (A) DX+1 [4]-14; and Shield (E) DX+1 [2]-14.

**Secondary Skills:** Area Knowledge (Small Nation) (E) IQ+1 [2]-11; Armoury (Melee Weapons or Missile Weapons) (A) IQ+1 [4]-11; Public Speaking (A) IQ [2]-10; and Survival (Desert) (A) Per+1 [4]-11.

**Background Skills:** Four of Camouflage (E) IQ+1 [2]-11; Falconry (A) IQ [2]-10; First Aid (E) IQ+1 [2]-11; Scrounging (E) Per+1 [2]-11; Tactics (H) IQ-1 [2]-9; or Tracking (A) Per [2]-10.

\* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

## Customization Notes

Typical armor for a Saracen consisted of mail and padding, similar to that of a Crusader but somewhat lighter in weight. His shield was medium and round; his helmet was generally a simple steel cap. For weapon ideas, see the Saracen cavalryman loadout under *Suggested Equipment* (p. 32).

Saracen nobles were more concerned with their appearance than their Christian counterparts. Often, Saracen armor was sewn into their garments. This might make them appear unarmored from a distance.

Saracen cavalry were generally drawn from the affluent classes. Often they were literate and cultured, familiar with poetry and the Koran. Wealth is a useful advantage to pay for the expensive equipment a Saracen noble needed.

Since Saracen warriors came from a more varied background than Christian knights, the GM should allow more leeway in selection of background skills, as well as allowing players to shift points between primary skills in order to create more of a specialist. For example, it would be perfectly reasonable to create a warrior with Bow (A) DX+2 [8]-15, Broadsword (A) DX [2]-13, and Lance (A) DX [2]-13, who focuses on ranged combat more than melee.

## ASSASSIN

130 points

This template is representative of the fanatical Ismaili sect. Most Assassins were from the lower classes and of fairly young age; they could have any background. They were usually fit and would have other skills from the trades they followed before being recruited. In addition to their chosen profession, they also cultivated other common trades to help themselves blend in while on missions.

Assassins were fanatical in their devotion to carrying out their missions and in obedience to their order. They would only reveal Assassin secrets under torture. They preferred to kill their victims in public places to spread fear. Beside murder, other Assassin missions included reconnaissance and espionage. There was much intrigue surrounding Assassin missions, and an assassin might not know the reasons behind his orders.

Although most Assassins died performing public killings, a few were captured. While they were willing to die for their cause, there is no historical evidence of Assassins being ordered to commit suicide to avoid capture.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 12 [20].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 6.25 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

**Advantages:** A total of 30 points to be spent on advantages chosen from ST +1 to +3 [10/level], Will +1 to +3 [5/level], Per +1 or +2 [5/level], Basic Move +1 [5], Absolute Direction [5], Ambidexterity [5], High Pain Threshold [10], or Night Vision [1/level].

**Disadvantages:** Disciplines of Faith (Asceticism) [-15] and Extreme Fanaticism [-15]. • A further -10 points in disadvantages selected from among Obsession (any) [-5\* or -10\*], Overconfidence [-5\*], Sense of Duty (Assassin cult) [-5], or Vow [varies].

**Primary Skills:** Disguise (A) IQ+1 [4]-12; Knife (E) DX+2 [4]-15; Poisons (H) IQ [4]-11; Running (A) HT [2]-12; Shadowing (A) IQ+1 [4]-12; and Stealth (A) DX+1 [4]-14.

**Secondary Skills:** Lockpicking (A) IQ [2]-11 and Survival (Desert) (A) Per [2]-11. • One of Leatherworking or Sewing, both (E) DX+1 [2]-14; Carpentry or Masonry, both (E) IQ+1 [2]-12; Artist (Pottery or Woodworking) (H) IQ-1 [2]-10; or Professional Skill (any craft), either (A) DX [2]-13 or (A) IQ [2]-11.

**Background Skills:** Six of Garrote (E) DX+1 [2]-14; Escape, Pickpocket, or Sleight of Hand, all (H) DX-1 [2]-12; Area Knowledge (any) (E) IQ+1 [2]-12; Hiking (A) HT [2]-12; Scrounging (E) Per+1 [2]-12; or Survival (Mountain) or Tracking, both (A) Per [2]-11.

\* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

### Customization Notes

Assassins lived an ascetic life but were well-fed and in good physical shape. The GM should be cautious about allowing any physical disadvantages that would interfere with an assassin's ability to disguise himself or blend into his surroundings.

### A Wealth of Warriors

Readers looking for additional character templates may find inspiration in *GURPS Warriors*, which has over two dozen templates for fighters of all types. This is a *GURPS Third Edition* book, and *GURPS Update* (available free at [sjgames.com/gurps/books/update](http://sjgames.com/gurps/books/update)) will be useful in upgrading them to the Fourth Edition rules.

## RELIGIOUS WARRIOR

130 points

Strictly speaking, the knights of the military orders were not Crusaders. They were warriors who took monk-like vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and swore military service to the Church to protect the Holy Lands. They lived a Spartan existence in barracks and spent their spare time in prayer and training.

There were many military orders across Europe, but only three played significant roles in the Crusades. The Templars and Hospitallers, both founded in the first half of the 12th century, were the most important to the Crusader kingdoms. The Teutonic knights, founded in 1198, were almost exclusively a German order, and played a minor role in the later years of the Crusades. Their greatest campaigns were in Eastern Europe, crusading against pagans in Poland and Lithuania.

A religious warrior has many occasions for interesting role-playing. Such warriors garrisoned many key castles and were involved in almost every major campaign during the Crusades.

Members of the military religious orders were armed like Crusader knights (see pp. 32-33) and used the same tactics. They differed mainly in their motivations, limitations, and organization. In battle, the military orders were famed for their bravery and tenacity. They very seldom surrendered, and often fought to the death. If captured, a religious warrior would not normally be ransomed.

**Attributes:** ST 12 [20]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 12 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

**Advantages:** Legal Immunity [15] and Patron (Church; 6 or less; Equipment, +50%) [15]. • A total of 15 points to be spent on advantages chosen from ST +1 [10], HT +1 [10], Will +1 to +3 [5/level], Charisma [5/level], Claim to Hospitality (Religious order) [Varies], Combat Reflexes [15], Fit [5], Languages (Latin or other) [Varies], or Status [5/level].

**Disadvantages:** One of Duty (Church; 15 or less) [-15] or Fanaticism [-15]. • A total of -25 further points in disadvantages selected from among these two and/or Bloodlust [-10\*], Disciplines of Faith [Varies], Impulsiveness [-10\*], Intolerance [-5 or -10], Overconfidence [-5\*], Sense of Duty [Varies], or Vow [varies].

**Primary Skills:** Knife (E) DX [1]-13; Riding (Horse) (A) DX [2]-13; and Theology (Christian) (H) IQ [4]-10. • One of these skill packages:

1. Broadsword (A) DX+2 [8]-15, Lance (A) DX [2]-13, and Shield (E) DX+1 [2]-14. • One of Axe/Mace (A) DX [2]-13 or Flail (H) DX-1 [2]-12.
2. One of Axe/Mace (A) DX+2 [8]-15 or Flail (H) DX+1 [8]-14. • Broadsword and Lance, both (A) DX [2]-13; and Shield (E) DX+1 [2]-14.
3. Lance (A) DX+2 [8]-15 and Shield (E) DX+2 [4]-15. • One of Axe/Mace or Broadsword, both (A) DX [2]-13; or Flail (H) DX-1 [2]-12.

**Secondary Skills:** Hidden Lore (Religious Objects) (A) IQ [2]-10; Leadership (A) IQ [2]-10; and Tactics (H) IQ-1 [2]-9.

**Background Skills:** Four of First Aid (E) IQ+1 [2]-11; Falconry or Heraldry, both (A) IQ [2]-10; Diplomacy, Naturalist, or Strategy (Land), all (H) IQ-1 [2]-9; or Tracking (A) Per [2]-10.

\* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

### Customization Notes

The military orders built large fleets to transport pilgrims and fight pirates. Seagoing knights had skills like Navigation (Sea) and Seamanship in addition to the skills given in the template.

As part of large organizations, religious warriors did not worry about equipping themselves; expenses were paid for by their order. (See the knight and sergeant loadouts in *Suggested Equipment*, p. 32, for arms and armor ideas.) The only authorities they acknowledged were the pope and the grand master of their own order. The religious orders offer PCs great protection and support but will limit their freedom of action.

Latin is an exception to the suggestion under *Languages* (p. 31), in that written understanding is at least as common as spoken.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# BIOGRAPHIES

This chapter describes a few of the colorful characters who made history in the Crusades. *GURPS* statistics are provided for Richard I and Saladin, who may appear in a cinematic campaign.

## RICHARD I

407 points

Richard I of England, popularly known as Richard the Lionheart, was born in September 1157. The eldest surviving son of Henry II, he was raised at his mother's court in France. Highly trained in the arts of war, he spent much of his youth and early adulthood campaigning across France, defending his family's holdings and even briefly rebelling against his father.

Pardoned for his misdeeds, Richard became Henry's heir upon the death of his older brother, Henry the Young King, in 1183. Richard succeeded to the throne upon his father's death in September 1189. He had taken the cross two years previous, and spent very little time in England before setting out on the Third Crusade in 1190.

Richard planned to take his forces to Palestine in conjunction with those of King Philip II of France, who had taken the cross at the same time. Richard wintered in Sicily at the court of King Tancred, but fighting broke out between his English forces and the Sicilian Normans. Richard quickly subdued Sicily before continuing toward the Holy Lands. On the way, the ship carrying his sister Joan of England and his bride-to-be Berengaria of Navarre was attacked by forces of the Greek ruler of Cyprus. In retaliation, Richard conquered Cyprus in a swift campaign. After marrying Berengaria there, Richard continued on to Palestine.

He joined the Crusader siege of Acre in July 1191. Acre had been under siege for nearly two years, but the Crusaders themselves were surrounded by a large Muslim army under Saladin. With Richard's arrival, though, Acre soon fell to the Crusaders. After the fall of the city, Richard ordered all prisoners to be executed; thousands were killed. He quarreled with Leopold of Austria and Philip II over the spoils of the city, and Philip angrily abandoned the Crusade and returned to France.

South of Acre, Richard defeated Saladin's army at Arsuf, but was outmaneuvered in his attempts to retake Jerusalem. Sensing that Saladin could not be defeated quickly, and preoccupied with problems in England, Richard concluded a truce with Saladin in September 1192 that allowed access to Jerusalem and stabilized the situation in the Latin Kingdoms.

On the way home, Richard was captured and held for ransom by his old enemy Leopold of Austria. He finally returned to England in 1194. He spent the next five years campaigning against Philip in France, but was killed in November 1199 during the siege of a minor castle. His capture of Cyprus and his checking of Saladin's offensive were vital contributions to the

Crusades, and he is remembered as the greatest Christian military leader of the era.

**ST** 14 [40]; **DX** 13 [60]; **IQ** 12 [40]; **HT** 13 [30].  
Damage 1d/2d; BL 39 lbs.; HP 14 [0]; Will 15 [15]; Per 12 [0]; FP 13 [0].  
Basic Speed 6.50 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 10\*; Parry 11\* (Broadsword).  
6'4"; 225 lbs.

### Social Background

TL: 3 [0].

CF: Western [0].

Languages: English (Accented) [4]; French (Native) [0]; Latin (Accented) [4].

*I am born of a rank  
which recognizes no  
superior but God.*

– Richard I

### Advantages

Charisma 3 [15]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Fit [5]; Reputation +3 (Respected ruler; Everyone) [15]; Status 7 [20]†; Wealth (Multimillionaire 3) [125].

### Disadvantages

Code of Honor (Chivalry) [-15]; Impulsiveness (12) [-10]; Obsession (Bring the Holy Lands to Christ) (12) [-10]; Overconfidence (9) [-7]; Selfish (12) [-5]; Sense of Duty (Kingdom) [-10].

### Skills

Area Knowledge (France) (E) IQ+3 [8]-15; Axe/Mace (A) DX [2]-13; Bow (A) DX [2]-13; Broadsword (A) DX+1 [4]-14; Diplomacy (H) IQ+2 [12]-14; Falconry (A) IQ [2]-12; Knife (E) DX [1]-13; Lance (A) DX+1 [4]-14; Leadership (A) IQ+3 [2]-15‡; Politics (A) IQ+2 [8]-14; Public Speaking (A) IQ+2 [1]-14‡; Riding (Horse) (A) DX+1 [4]-14; Shield (E) DX+1 [2]-14; Strategy (Land) (H) IQ+2 [12]-14; Tactics (H) IQ+2 [12]-14.

\* Includes +1 from Combat Reflexes.

† Includes +3 from Wealth.

‡ Includes +3 from Charisma..

# SALADIN

402 points

Saladin was the greatest Muslim military leader of the Crusades. Pious and devout, he was an astute politician and an excellent general. Born into a warrior family in Tikrit in 1138, Saladin was raised as a devout Muslim, and showed early leanings toward religious scholarship.

Both his father Ayub and his uncle Shirkuh were war leaders under the great Nur al-Din. In adulthood, Saladin was given positions of increasing power and responsibility, and often accompanied his father and uncle on campaign.

He accompanied Shirkuh in campaigns against Fatimid Egypt in 1164, 1167, and 1168. During these three-way wars with Christian and Fatimid armies, he gained both experience and fame. At one point, he was even knighted for bravery by Humphrey of Toron.

Saladin was appointed Vizier of Egypt under the puppet Fatimid ruler in 1169, ruling for the Shi'ite Fatimids while still a lieutenant of the Sunni ruler Nur al-Din. Despite the overthrow of the Fatimids in 1171, he remained governor of Egypt until the death of Nur al-Din.

Nur al-Din's death in 1174 gave Saladin an opportunity to unite Muslims in Palestine, Syria, and Egypt and fulfill his long-held goal of annihilating the Crusader states.

King Amalric of Jerusalem also died in 1174. The successors on both sides were young boys, leaving Saladin as the strongest ruler in the Middle East.

Saladin began his *jihad* with an offensive against Christian outposts in Gaza and Sinai in 1170. He had conquered most of Syria by 1176, although he could not totally subdue the Assassin strongholds. The Assassins were persistent enemies who attempted to kill Saladin several times. He was checked by Crusader armies at the battle of Ramala in Gaza in 1177.

Fighting combined Crusader armies in 1179, Saladin captured most of the Christian leadership, including King Baldwin of Jerusalem, Raymond of Tripoli, and the grand masters of both the Templars and the Hospitallers. This led to a two-year truce with the Crusaders. Moving his capital to Damascus, Saladin extended his rule into Northern Syria and Mesopotamia.

With his empire united, Saladin returned to the divided and weakened Crusader kingdoms. Sickly King Baldwin IV was unable to control his unruly barons; they were actively undermining the kingdom by breaking truces and attacking Muslims.

After an attack on Muslim pilgrims by Reynald of Châtillon (below) in 1186, Saladin began a full-scale offensive. Moving into Galilee, he lured the combined Christian army to attack him at Hattin in the summer of 1187. During this battle he destroyed or captured most of the Christian leaders and their armies. Most of the other Crusader strongholds quickly fell to his armies. He was finally checked at the siege of Tyre in December 1187.

The Crusaders rallied, and besieged his newly captured city of Acre in 1189. Saladin was forced to intervene, but a large part of his forces had dispersed. While he could surround the Crusader armies outside Acre, he could not destroy them or raise the siege.

Reinforced by English Crusaders led by Richard I, Acre fell in July 1191. Saladin was defeated at Arsuf in September of that year. Convinced that he could not defeat the English king, he signed a truce in September 1192 to buy time until Richard returned to England. Saladin fell into ill health and died a few months later.

**ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 14 [80]; **HT** 9 [-10].  
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 17 [15]; Per 14 [0]; FP 9 [0].  
Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8; Parry 10 (Broadsword).  
5'5"; 130 lbs.

## Social Background

*TL*: 3 [0].

*CF*: Middle-Eastern [0].

*Languages*: Arabic (Native) [6]; Kurdish (Native) [0]; Persian (Native) [6]; Turkish (Native) [6].

## Advantages

Charisma 2 [10]; Luck [15]; Reputation +3 (Wise ruler; Everyone) [15]; Status 7 [20]\*; Wealth (Multimillionaire 3) [125].

## Disadvantages

Code of Honor (Chivalry) [-15]; Compulsive Generosity (12) [-5]; Disciplines of Faith (Ritualism) [-5]; Sense of Duty (Muslims) [-10].

## Skills

Administration (A) IQ+1 [4]-15; Area Knowledge (Egypt) (E) IQ+1 [2]-15; Area Knowledge (Syria) (E) IQ+1 [2]-15; Bow (A) DX+3 [12]-14; Broadsword (A) DX+3 [12]-14; Diplomacy (H) IQ+2 [12]-16; Falconry (A) IQ [2]-14; Games (Chess) (E) IQ+2 [4]-16; Knife (E) DX+2 [4]-13; Lance (A) DX+2 [8]-13; Leadership (A) IQ+2 [2]-16†; Literature (H) IQ+1 [8]-15; Politics (A) IQ [2]-14; Public Speaking (A) IQ+1 [1]-15†; Riding (Horse) (A) DX+2 [8]-13; Savoir-Faire (E) IQ+1 [2]-15; Shield (E) DX+2 [4]-13; Strategy (Land) (H) IQ+3 [16]-17; Tactics (H) IQ+2 [12]-16; Theology (Islam) (H) IQ+2 [12]-16.

\* Includes +3 from Wealth.

† Includes +2 from Charisma.

*Victory is changing the hearts of your opponents by gentleness and kindness.*

– *Saladin*

## REYNALD OF CHÂTILLON

Reynald of Châtillon was one of the great villains of the Crusades. The younger son of a French noble, Reynald left for Outremer in search of adventure and glory. He first appeared in Antioch as one of Louis VII's Crusaders. Young, charming, handsome, and bold, he soon attracted the eye of Constance, the heir to the throne of Antioch. King Baldwin III of Jerusalem had given her a list of acceptable suitors, and was annoyed when she chose the young adventurer Reynald.

They were married in 1152. Reynald was now prince of one of the most powerful Crusader states. He quickly showed his colors by invading Cyprus in 1156, despite the fact that it was a Christian province of the Byzantine Empire at the time. To finance his invasion, he extorted money from the Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch.

Reynald's plunder of Cyprus earned him the wrath of both King Baldwin of Jerusalem and Emperor Manuel Comnenus of Byzantium. Baldwin took Manuel's sister Theodora as his bride to placate the emperor. Reynald prostrated himself before the emperor, pleading repentance and begging for forgiveness, but was soon raiding and terrorizing Christian and Muslim peasants again. Captured during one of these raids in 1160, Reynald found that no Christian prince was willing to pay his ransom; he spent the next 16 years in a Muslim prison.

Released in 1176 and with his wife dead, Reynald married Lady Stephanie, the heir to the province of Outrejourdan. This marriage gave him possession of Kerak, one of the most powerful castles in Outremer, which overlooked busy caravan routes. In 1181, he captured an important pilgrim caravan, and by refusing to make restitution, he set off a war with Saladin's forces. The next year he built a fleet of galleys at Aqaba and plundered Muslim pilgrim ships on the Red Sea. At one point he landed forces and even threatened the Holy City of Mecca. He became the most hated Christian in Outremer, and reveled in the Muslims' hatred.

In 1187, Reynald captured another caravan near Kerak, and killed the Muslim travelers. This act led directly to Saladin's invasion and the disastrous Christian defeat at Hattin. Captured along with most of the Christian leadership, he was not held for ransom. He was beheaded, supposedly by Saladin himself.

in the port of Brindisi for this great enterprise. Then, supposedly for reasons of health, Frederick left Brindisi for Otranto. Most of the assembled Crusaders dispersed to their homes.

Disgusted, a new pope, Innocent III, excommunicated Frederick in 1227. Taking no notice, Frederick made a leisurely journey to Acre. Using his friendship with the Sultan of Egypt, he arranged a 10-year truce that gave Jerusalem and several other Palestinian cities back to the Crusaders, and proceeded to crown himself King of Jerusalem in February 1229.

Although he had accomplished at no cost what kings and huge armies had failed to do, no one seemed pleased with Frederick's actions. The pope refused to rescind his excommunication and the people of Jerusalem refused to acknowledge him. He left Palestine soon thereafter. Although he never returned to the Holy Lands, he continued to meddle in Cypriot and Crusader politics for many years.



## FREDERICK II

Born the heir to the Holy Roman Empire in 1194, Frederick was one of the oddest Crusaders. Intellectually gifted, Frederick spoke six languages and studied Muslim culture intensively, even corresponding with Muslim leaders. All-powerful in his domains, he dealt poorly with other leaders, especially the popes.

Pledging to go on Crusade when crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 1215, he was in no hurry to fulfill his vow. His Crusade was planned for 1221, but he missed that date. He did move his possessions to Sicily, where he adopted many Muslim customs. Anxious to gain German support for the crusading movement, the pope arranged a summit of leaders, including King John of Jerusalem, who decided that Frederick should marry John's daughter Yolande and become heir to the throne of Jerusalem.

Frederick married Yolande in November 1225, but continued to delay. He finally set the date for the crusade in August 1227. Over 100,000 Crusaders from all over Europe assembled

## BALDWIN IV

Upon the death of Baldwin III in 1174, the crown of Jerusalem passed to his son Baldwin IV, a youngster of 13 years and a leper. Raymond of Tripoli was appointed Baldwin's regent for three years. Constant intrigues surrounded his court, fueled by the common knowledge that he was sick and could sire no heir. Many maneuvered to succeed him.

Although he was not physically strong, Baldwin displayed tremendous courage. Despite his poor health, he led Christian armies into battle against Saladin's forces several times. When he was too sick to ride, he commanded from a litter that was carried along with the army. He gained Saladin's respect, and even negotiated a truce with the great Muslim leader in 1180.

As his health failed, Baldwin could do little to control powerful barons such as Reynald of Châtillon (pp. 36-37). Baldwin appointed his eight-year-old nephew as his heir, but with no strong leader to rally around, the kingdom was vulnerable. Baldwin died in 1185, leaving behind a sickly heir and a divided country with Saladin waiting in the wings.

*Zengi was tyrannical and he would strike with indiscriminate recklessness. He was like a leopard in character, like a lion in fury, not renouncing any severity, not knowing any kindness.*

– *’Imad al-Din al-Isfahani*

## ZENGI

For years after the First Crusade, Muslims remained divided. Zengi was the first great leader to attempt to unite them in a struggle against the Crusaders. Born a Seldjuk Turk about 1184, he first battled the Crusaders at the age of 15. He was a stern and devout Muslim who was greatly feared, even by his own warriors. His military reputation grew, and in 1122 he was appointed governor of the Mesopotamian provinces of Basra and Wasit.

Appointed governor of the northern province of Mosul in 1127, he had the chance to continue his war against the Christian invaders. He continually raided into the Principalities of Edessa and Antioch, earning the nickname “the scourge of the Franks” from his fellow Muslims. He took Aleppo in 1128 and moved into Syria, attacking Crusaders and Muslims alike. His attempt to take Damascus in 1135 was repulsed, but returned two years later. The city was saved when it allied with Crusaders to fend him off. The resistance of Damascus defeated his plans in Syria, and he returned to attacking Crusader strongholds in the north.

Joscelin of Esedda had been succeeded by his son Joscelin II, a weak and lazy ruler who was unable to cope with Zengi’s aggression. Zengi attacked the city of Edessa in November 1144 after Joscelin had moved his army southward. The city fell at Christmas after a month-long siege. Zengi spared the Orthodox Christians but killed or enslaved all the Latin inhabitants of the city. He then swept through most of the rest of the principality’s cities. In a few months, most of Edessa was reconquered.

Zengi’s destruction of one of the most valuable Crusader states caused great distress throughout the Latin Kingdoms and in Europe, sparking the Second Crusade. It also led to

more calls for *jihad* against the Crusaders. Not able to enjoy his success for long, Zengi was murdered by one of his own slaves barely two years later.

## BAIBARS

Revered by Muslims nearly as much as Saladin, Baibars was a ruthless and capable leader. Raised as one of the Mamluk slave-warriors, little is known of his birth or early life. Many Mamluks were taken as children from the Russian steppes and the shores of the Black Sea, raised in military barracks, and given fierce training. They became fanatic warriors who were so tumultuous that they often overthrew their own leaders.

Baibars was tall and heavyset; his brown hair and blue eyes gave him a somewhat Western appearance. He first was heard of in 1239 when he helped defeat a Christian army in Palestine, and he went on to command a part of the Egyptian army that defeated and captured King Louis IX of France at Mansourah in 1250. He overthrew Sultan Turanshah of Egypt in 1250 and replaced him with Sultan Qutuz, whom he overthrew and murdered in 1260.

After consolidating his power in Syria, Baibars launched a series of attacks on Christian cities and castles in 1265. Caesarea and Haifa fell quickly; large-scale massacres followed both surrenders. He then lured the Templar garrison at Safed to surrender, and murdered them after promising safe passage.

At the same time, other Mamluk-led forces loyal to Baibars raided Christian Armenia, destroying Sis, one of its major cities. In 1268, Baibar took Jaffa and the Crusader castle at Beaufort, and moved on to Antioch. After a massive attack he captured the city, and a massacre of the Christian population followed.

Worried by rumors that Louis IX was organizing a new Crusade to attack Egypt, Baibars withdrew his forces from Palestine. After Louis’ death he returned and captured the powerful Templar castle of Krak de Chevaliers – a feat that even Saladin had been unable to achieve.

Meanwhile, the future King Edward I arrived in Palestine with a small force of knights. Worried that this was the start of a new large-scale English Crusade, Baibars signed a truce; soon after, Edward was nearly assassinated. Rumors circulated that Baibars had arranged this attack with the Assassins. Baibars moved north, capturing cities and plundering Armenian territory. Unable to complete his conquests, Baibars died from poison in 1277; it is unknown if this was an attack or an accident.

## Other Biographies

*GURPS Who’s Who* includes a biography and game stats (for *GURPS Third Edition*) for Alexius I, the Byzantine emperor whose call for Western aid led to the First Crusade.

*GURPS Who’s Who 2* covers Rodrigo Díaz (better known as El Cid), the hero of the Spanish *Reconquista*, and Roger de Flor, a Templar and adventurer who was present at the fall of Acre in 1291 and made an unsuccessful bid to overthrow the Byzantine emperor. Again, the game stats are for *GURPS Third Edition*.

# CHAPTER SIX

# CAMPAIGNS

*GURPS Middle Ages 1* contains information useful in creating medieval adventures in Europe. This chapter presents

specific details for running *GURPS Crusades* campaigns in various styles and settings.

## CAMPAIGN STYLES

A *GURPS Crusades* campaign – even one based on history – can have many different styles and settings. In non-historical settings, of course, even more variations are possible.

### REALISTIC CAMPAIGNS

The Crusades was a brutal series of military campaigns against a background of constant low-level warfare. There were no rules. Massacres were commonplace. Prisoners captured by the Muslims were sold into slavery, killed, or occasionally held for ransom. Crusaders were little better in their treatment of prisoners; the massacre of captured Muslims was common.

Most of the Holy Lands is desert. Temperatures range as high as 130°F in summer and as low as 40°F with chilling rains in winter. Blowing sand finds its way into food and clothing, making life miserable. Flies and other insects plague travelers. Small injuries or wounds can easily become infected, and European Crusaders were especially vulnerable to diseases such as malaria. Outside of towns or oases, water was a huge problem, especially during summer months. *GURPS WWII: All the King's Men* (*Life in the Desert*, p. 89) can be consulted for additional rules.

In a realistic campaign, the GM should play up the difficulties of everyday life, emphasizing the harsh climate, hostile population, and constant threat of attack. Battle was particularly brutal. Expense, misery, and death balanced any loot or glory the Crusaders might garner. The GM should pay special attention to extreme temperatures (p. B434) and dehydration (p. B426). Basic point totals in a realistic campaign can be reduced to 75 to 100 points at the GM's discretion.

### ACTION-ADVENTURE CAMPAIGNS

In an action-adventure campaign, players are still aware of weather, water supplies, hostile Saracens, and other mundane difficulties, but the emphasis shifts more toward the mission at hand. In a realistic campaign lack of water might be life or death; in an action-adventure campaign it is just another challenge to be overcome.

An action-adventure campaign offers Crusaders more chances to explore, gain glory, or at least make a difference to whatever situations they encounter. Rather than simply gar-

isoning a castle or guarding a pilgrim caravan, Crusaders have the opportunity to distinguish themselves at the crucial point of a battle, or to save a besieged castle or a group of imprisoned Christians.

Danger is still present in an action-adventure campaign. Crusaders should still have to deal with the elements and harsh terrain. Their successes will earn them a good Reputation and increased Status, which in turn to lead more interesting and autonomous missions. The templates on pp. 31-34 can be used unchanged or altered slightly at the GM's discretion.

*You will soon be a King;  
you must start to think like  
one. Any man can kill; only  
a King can give life!*

*– Rodrigo Díaz, El Cid*

### CINEMATIC CAMPAIGNS

In cinematic campaigns, the PCs are larger than life. The normal struggles of everyday life fade into the background or only apply to lesser NPCs.

Missions that are nearly impossible for normal humans are simply a challenge for cinematic characters. Scaling a castle's walls to free hostages, breaking out of a besieged castle to bring help, or sneaking into a Saracen camp are all everyday fare for cinematic Crusaders. The epic battles and sieges of the Crusades give ample opportunities for heroic roleplaying.

A creative GM can easily bend history to add color to adventures. Having an important character like Richard the Lionheart make a cameo appearance in an adventure, or conjuring up an unchronicled minor Crusade, are completely acceptable in a cinematic campaign as history takes a back seat to good adventuring. Crusader template points might be adjusted upward to 200 or more points for this type of campaign.

# CAMPAIGN SETTINGS

Exotic locales, mysterious sects, unexplored deserts; the Middle East of the Crusades offers many settings for historic and fantasy campaigns. The following section provides some ideas for non-historical roleplaying campaigns based on the Crusades.

## FANTASY CAMPAIGNS

Adding magic and monsters to the Crusades will add a new dimension. The level of fantasy can vary according to the GM's preference.

In a low fantasy campaign, the superstitions of contemporary Christians and Muslims are true. Holy relics have some magical properties, witches and sorcerers are rare but not unknown, and there are some supernatural creatures.

In a high fantasy campaign, anything goes. Angels and djinn take to the battlefield alongside the Crusaders and Saracens, Christian priests and Muslim imams engage in spectacular magical duels, and the holy places thrum with a power of their own.

**GURPS Arabian Nights** contains many ideas for running a fantasy campaign in the Middle East. **GURPS Places of Mystery** includes information on Jerusalem and the Assassin stronghold of Alamut.

**GURPS Magic** and **GURPS Middle Ages 1** offers information on medieval magic, while **GURPS Bestiary** is filled with mythical beasts adaptable to a fantasy Crusades campaign. Except for **GURPS Magic**, these are all Third Edition sources at the time of writing, and will require adapting to Fourth Edition. **GURPS Update** will help with this process, and is available as a free download. **GURPS Powers** provides Fourth

Edition coverage of superpowers and high-powered magic for a no-holds-barred fantasy campaign.

Fantasy campaigns work better using action-adventure or cinematic styles, although a realistic style can create a low-magic world with unique challenges.

## MARITIME CAMPAIGNS

As noted in Chapter 2, many Crusaders and pilgrims traveled from Europe to the Holy Lands by ship. There were many dangers along the way. The Mediterranean Sea was haunted by Muslim corsairs and renegade Christian pirates, and maritime powers such as Venice, Genoa, and the Byzantine Empire were not above raiding the sea commerce of their rivals. Both the Templars and Hospitallers built fleets of warships to protect pilgrims on the high seas.

Seagoing Crusaders will find plenty of adventure fighting pirates, surviving storms, and raiding Muslim strongholds along the coast. Skills like Swimming, Seamanship, and Navigation are useful in this type of campaign.

The Mediterranean is not the only sea for crusading adventures. Crusader ships caught in violent storms might be blown westward into the Atlantic where they can encounter Viking explorers or run aground on hostile African shores. Crusaders and Saracens crossed swords at sea in the Gulf of Aqaba and Red Sea as well. **GURPS Low-Tech** has details on many suitable ships.

## LOST-CITY CAMPAIGNS

Lost cities, often in desolate parts of Asia or Africa, are a staple of pulp and fantasy literature. **GURPS Places of Mystery** includes a chapter on desert cities; here are some ideas specific to the Crusades.

A ship of Crusaders might discover a lost city after being blown off-course and shipwrecked somewhere along the coast of Africa, in the Red Sea, or in the Indian Ocean. Africa was unknown to most of the world in medieval times.

Lost Crusaders could come across a mysterious city populated by descendants of ancient Egyptians, Romans or Greeks. H. Rider Haggard's classic fantasy novel *She* takes place in a lost desert city, and a group of Crusaders might discover it before Haggard's 19th-century explorers. They might be captured as interlopers, or they may help save an ancient city from barbarian tribesmen – or Crusades-era Muslims.

In the movie *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, the Holy Grail – Christendom's greatest treasure – lies in a trap-infested complex in the Canyon of the Crescent Moon, surrounded by the deserts of northern Syria and guarded by the last surviving knight of the First Crusade. In *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, the Ark of the Covenant – another powerful relic – lies beneath the sands of Egypt. Either of these relics would be of incalculable significance to the Crusaders.

Alternatively, a party of **GURPS Cliffhangers** adventurers or **GURPS Steampunk** explorers could come across a lost Crusader city almost anywhere in the Middle East.

## The Gnostic Gospels

The reconstruction of the Gospel of Judas in 2006 sparked a wave of interest in the so-called Gnostic Gospels. These ancient writings are not part of the New Testament, and the Gnostics themselves were persecuted for heresy.

The discovery of Gnostic manuscripts in a ruined city will plunge the finders into a world of intrigue and danger worthy of Dan Brown.

These books are written in languages – Koine Greek, Coptic, and Aramaic – that few Crusaders will be able to read. Only Church scholars will be able to understand the manuscripts, and the discovery of these apocryphal (and therefore heretical) gospels will alarm many.

While openly following the Church line, some ecclesiastics want to obtain the manuscripts for themselves, either to study or as leverage to blackmail their way into higher office. An ancient and secret line of Gnostics, hiding in plain sight within the Church, will go to any lengths to obtain the holy books and will kill anyone who knows of their existence. The unwitting Crusaders who discovered the manuscript are first on the list.



## ALTERNATE HISTORY CAMPAIGNS

Another staple of fantasy literature is alternate history. Alternate histories often hinge on a key battle or other event having a different outcome than in history. A campaign might begin at such a crucial nexus point, and the Crusaders must decide the fate of their alternate history.

In a different timeline, the Crusades could have been a success. Spreading into Asia and Africa, an expanding Crusader empire might have fought Mongol hordes in titanic battles on

the steppes of Asia, or penetrated far enough into Africa to encounter the empire of old Zimbabwe.

In another timeline, perhaps Byzantium was saved and reinvigorated by the Crusades. Byzantine armies threw back the Saracens, Turks, and Mongols, turned their sights on Europe, and set about bringing Catholic Europe back into the Orthodox fold by force.

Alternatively, the Muslims could have repulsed the early Crusades and gone on the offensive. Crusading PCs could find themselves defending Italy or France from hordes of Muslim invaders.

## CROSSOVER CAMPAIGNS

Combining *GURPS Crusades* with other *GURPS* worldbooks can produce a wide range of campaign styles. Some of the worldbooks mentioned are for *GURPS Third Edition*, but their information can be adapted for Fourth Edition using *GURPS Update*.

### ARABIAN NIGHTS

*GURPS Arabian Nights* has already been mentioned in conjunction with fantasy campaigns. It can also be used as part of a campaign that puts the players in the roles of Muslims faced with waves of barbaric and ignorant Franks intent on wresting the holy city of Jerusalem – and anything else they can get their hands on – from the faithful.

Whether the campaign takes a historical or fantastic tone, putting the players in the role of the Muslims creates a change of historical perspective and gives them a new appreciation for the “other side” of the story. Arab historians wrote extensively about the Crusades, and the bibliography (pp. 42-43) includes some titles that will be useful in planning this kind of campaign.

### BANESTORM

Crusades took place on Yrth as well as on Earth. *GURPS Crusades* can be used as a source of inspiration for *GURPS Banestorm* campaigns set during the Crusades or involving the history of that period.

### BLACK OPS

With Christian-Muslim tensions, holy relics, and Knights Templar, *GURPS Crusades* and *GURPS Black Ops* can combine to make a campaign full of violence and intrigue. It has long been suspected that the Crusaders – and in particular, the nine poor knights of the Temple – discovered things in the Holy Lands: mystical things that could give immense power to whoever possesses them. Naturally, the Company would be interested . . .



### CABAL

The Cabal would also be interested in the secrets of the Holy Lands – chiefly to keep them away from meddling mortals who could cause untold damage. *GURPS Cabal* makes brief mention of the Templars in the modern day, but a campaign set during the Crusades will add a new twist. The players may even get a chance to *found* the Cabal as the supernatural community responds to this new wave of religious fervor, and the persecutions that inevitably result.

### CLIFFHANGERS

*GURPS Cliffhangers* has already been mentioned in connection with lost cities, but there are many other ways in which two-fisted pulp adventurers can encounter the Crusades.

The search for holy relics and other lost secrets in the Middle East of the early 20th century offers a rich vein of adventure in exotic locales. The PCs can follow the spirit of the Indiana Jones movies, racing Nazis and other unscrupulous foes to discover objects of magical and spiritual power or following rumors of lost Templar gold. They can encounter a latter-day Saladin or Baibars – or the originals, preserved by ancient magic – intent on reestablishing an Islamic empire after the Ottomans fell in World War I. Or, with the Holy Lands open once again after the Ottoman collapse, they can embark on a 20th-century Crusade to reestablish the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

### FAERIE

The Fair Folk (from *GURPS Faerie*) and Christianity do not generally mix, but faeries are known to have migrated to the New World and elsewhere along with their mortal neighbors. It is not inconceivable, then, that faeries reached the Holy Lands among the Crusaders. Some may have been changelings, unaware of their true nature.

If the trappings of Christianity make faeries uncomfortable, the holy places of the Crusades might have an even greater effect. They will have to confront native *peris* and other local feys in addition to the Muslim foes of their mortal counterparts. They might even encounter an eastern faerie realm in the style of the Arabian Nights (see above).

## HORROR AND ATOMIC HORROR

Much of *GURPS Crusades* takes place in the sparsely populated deserts of the Middle East. A group of lost Crusaders can stumble across a hidden valley filled with prehistoric creatures, find a lost city (see p. 40), or encounter a caravan that is manned by ghosts or zombies. Crusaders encamped deep in the desert find their sentries disappearing without trace every night, and investigation leads to giant ants or other terrible creatures. *GURPS Horror* and *GURPS Atomic Horror* are useful for these types of adventures.

Alien invasions didn't happen only in the Hollywood of the 1950s. Isolated groups of Crusaders might encounter aliens exploring our world, or stumble through an "inter-dimensional doorway" to some other reality. Several successful science fiction novels have used this theme. The excellent *Lost Regiment* series by William Forstchen and *The Janissaries* by Jerry Pournelle are great examples of this kind of historical fantasy.

## ILLUMINATI

The Crusades brought a great deal of scientific and esoteric knowledge back to Europe. Some of this had been lost to the West since Classical times, and some was the result of Muslim advances. The Knights Templar owe their origin to the Crusades, and they are not alone.

A *GURPS Illuminati* campaign set during the Crusades takes the players back to a crucial time in the secret history of the world, and gives them the opportunity to affect that history in ways that very few have ever done. The secrets of Solomon lie undisturbed beneath the ruins of his Temple in Jerusalem. Lost writings await discovery in Muslim libraries. Anything is possible.

## IN NOMINE

If the Crusades were a crucial phase in the histories of Christianity and Islam, they are no less important to the entities of *In Nomine*. A campaign set at this time adds a new dimension to the conflict, and the players will have their hands full keeping the squabbling Crusader princes in line, combating their Islamic counterparts, and countering the machinations of secret groups within the Knights Templar and elsewhere.

## MIDDLE AGES 1

Many English knights went on Crusade. Medieval English characters could take crusading vows (or run afoul of local authorities) and then travel to the Holy Lands for a series of extended adventures before returning to England. Combining this book with *GURPS Middle Ages 1* enables the GM to add crusading action to a much larger campaign.

*GURPS Middle Ages 1* also includes notes on romantic-chivalric campaigns, based on the Grail Romances and other medieval literature. Before they discovered the brutal reality of crusading, some who took the cross may have entertained a more romantic view of their holy quest. Mixing the European fantasy of romantic chivalry with the Eastern fantasy of the Arabian Nights will produce a very unique and atmospheric campaign.

## TIME TRAVEL

*GURPS Time Travel* can link the Crusades to any historical *GURPS* setting. Time travelers might want to be present at the fall of Jerusalem or the Battle of Hattin. If more than a one-time adventure is needed for time travelers, a malfunction could strand them in the Crusader kingdoms for an extended time. Encounters with lost time travelers would be interesting for Crusader characters. The book (and movie) *Timeline* by Michael Crichton is based on just such a situation.

Involuntary time travel opens up more possibilities. What if a CIA field office or Mossad cell in Jerusalem suddenly finds itself thrown back in time? What if a SEAL team or other covert ops group in the Middle East appears during the Crusades? Their modern weaponry will help them for a while, but they will run out of ammunition quickly – and gain a reputation as monsters or evil sorcerers in the meantime. With their empty guns only useful as clubs, the displaced soldiers have only their wits and their K-bars to keep them alive in a very hostile environment.



## VIKINGS

Although their period of greatest prosperity was over, the Vikings (discussed in *GURPS Vikings*) were still active at the time of the Crusades. Norway took over Greenland in 1261, and the Normans, a Viking offshoot, were active in Italy and elsewhere in the Mediterranean.

The Byzantine army included the Varangian Guard, a body of Scandinavian mercenaries which had served the emperors for almost two centuries at the time of the First Crusade. They fought with distinction to protect Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade.

Although some came overland through the Scandinavian colonies of Kiev and Novgorod, many Scandinavians traveled to Byzantium through the Mediterranean. An encounter between a ship of Crusaders and a Viking longship is possible; a three-way battle with Muslim corsairs would be even more interesting.

## WWII

*GURPS Crusades* can be added to a *GURPS WWII* or *GURPS Weird War II* campaign in various ways.

The Middle East was of interest to both sides during World War II. The region's oilfields were an important strategic resource, and the Nazis allegedly took a keen interest in recovering holy relics as part of the *Ahnenerbe* and other SS programs.

The extent of Nazi occult research has almost certainly been exaggerated, but it is known that during the Anschluss, when Austria was annexed to Germany, Adolf Hitler took a lance from Vienna which was thought to be the Spear of Longinus; it was not the one discovered in Antioch (see p. 13), but one that had been in the possession of the Holy Roman Emperors from the time of Otto I (912-973). Operations in the Middle East did not assume a religious aspect, but in a campaign inspired by Indiana Jones, they could.

The lost-city motif (see p. 40) could also appear in a World War II setting. Members of the Long-Range Desert Group might stumble upon Crusader remains – or survivors – while raiding German supply lines, as might a lost Eighth Army or Afrika Korps tank crew.

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*The historical reality of the Crusades was more complex than the simplistic views that are still used by political, religious and cultural leaders in both East and West.*

– David Nicolle,  
*The Crusades*

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## FILMS

There are surprisingly few films based on the Crusades. Perhaps Hollywood should take note.

*The Crusades* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1935). Directed by Cecil B. DeMille, with medieval historian Harold Lamb as technical adviser and a literal "cast of thousands," this could have been a great movie but falls short. It suffers from very muddled history

and carries a heavy-handed "peace" message, probably due to the isolationist sentiment of the 1930s in America.

*Saladin* (Youssef Chahine, 1961). Distributed by Lotus Films, an Egyptian company, this movie is a mix of confused history and rather heavy-handed Islamic propaganda. This film is heavily influenced by the Egyptian Nasser regime of the time.

*El Cid* (Anthony Mann, 1961). Distributed by Allied Artists, this is actually a Spanish production starring Charlton Heston. Filmed in Spain with actual walled cities and castles, it is a wonderful visual record of medieval settings. Thousands of extras and larger-than-life special effects (including eight full-size siege towers) make it a joy to watch, although it is based on a very romantic vision of Spain's greatest medieval hero. It is not set in the Holy Lands, but it shows the Spanish *Reconquista* that was being fought simultaneously with the Crusades. Crew and vehicles are seen in a couple of shots.

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