

Age of the CRUSADES

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Age of the

CRUSADES

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Introduction

The great frontier between the settled kingdoms of the West and the barbarian raiders of the East was already well established by the early Middle Ages. It ran from the north around Scandinavia, down through Eastern Europe, around the Byzantine Empire into the Mediterranean. It was enhanced by the advent of two great world religions.

In AD 312, the Roman Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire and established a new Christian capital at Constantinople. When the western Roman Empire collapsed at the end of the 5th century, it was replaced by a series of Christian kingdoms. The most vigorous of these was that of the Franks and it was the empire of Charlemagne and his successors that dominated the early Middle Ages in western Europe. So much so that any western warrior in Eastern Europe was known in this Greek-speaking world as a Frank. Rome remained an important city, but it was now the spiritual capital of a conglomeration of kingdoms that followed the Catholic form of Christianity, with the pope as its religious head.

The eastern Roman Empire based around Constantinople becomes known as the Byzantine Empire in this period and remained a potent force throughout the Middle Ages in Eastern Europe and the Near East until the 15th century. It followed a Greek Orthodox form of Christianity. Its greatest challenge came from the advent of Islam in the 7th century.

Within 20 years of the prophet Muhammad receiving his spiritual calling, Arabia had been converted to a new religion that sprang out of the same monotheistic root as that giving birth to Judaism and Christianity. His followers took

an aggressive path to the conversion of others and within 50 years Arab Muslim warriors had conquered Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia and Afghanistan. In the 8th century, Arab Muslims entered Christian Europe via Spain and demolished the Visigoth kingdom, advancing as far north as France where the Franks held them back at the battle of Tours. In Eastern Europe, Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire stood as a solid bulwark against Muslim expansion until the 15th century.

In the 11th century, Frankish warriors of the West turned the military trend of the previous centuries on its head and it was they who became the barbarian raiders of a settled conglomeration of Islamic kingdoms. In a series of crusader campaigns designed to wrench Palestine out of Muslim control, western warriors marched into the heart of the Islamic world and captured some of its most holy sites, sacred to both religions.

Outside the major conflict between Christianity and Islam, pagan barbarian raiders still functioned. Vikings from Scandinavia descended upon Christian settlements, burning and looting them. Turkic warriors raided Eastern Europe and formed great confederations in Russia and the Middle East. Eventually, it was the conversion of these Turkic warriors to Islam that produced the greatest threat to Christianity with the defeat of the Byzantine Empire by the Ottoman Turks proving their most devastating success.

This then is the Age of the Crusades described in this book.

Otto the Great crushes the Magyars at the battle of Lechfeld, 955



(Plate 1)

Turkic raiders had always bothered the Germanic kingdoms of central Europe since the time of the Romans. But in the 10th century, this danger had a new name—Magyar. Living on the rich grasslands around the Black Sea, the Magyars were a confederation of tribes who spoke a distinct Finno-Ugric language, which suggests they may originally have come from lands further north around Lithuania. In the early 10th century, the Magyars fell out with the Pechenegs of southern Russia and were forced westwards. They pitched their camps in the land of the Huns—Hungary—and began raiding the Germanic kingdoms of central Europe.

The Magyars raiders rode as far as northern Italy. Liutprand, Bishop of Cremona, described their devastating assault on Pavia: "the city is burning. Winds increase the fire. Magyar mobs set upon citizens choking, fleeing from the flames... Women and children are trampled down, a holy priest is slain. Pavia is burning. Gold melts through chests hidden deep in sewers. Streams of silver hiss and bubble in the gutter." As far as many westerners were concerned, this was the return of the barbarians they usually called Huns. Worst of all, they were pagans and had no respect for Christian worshippers or their monuments. Any campaign fought against them would, in effect, be a holy crusade.

At first it was the Carolingian king Louis who decided to stand up against the Magyars. He chose a battlefield near Augsburg, but the Magyars attacked at dawn, before his Bavarian force could rouse itself and they were slaughtered in their tents. Louis was lucky to escape the disaster, but his realm, as far as the eastern regions of France, was ravaged by the triumphant Magyars. Many western rulers now chose the easy option of paying a tribute to these new warlords. But as the years of Magyar dominance passed, the Germanic kingdoms became used to the battle tactics of the Magyars—their dependence on horse archery and feigned flight. Western warriors could use their heavier mail armor and long shields to counter Magyar arrows and rather than throwing themselves after retreating Magyars, they learned that discipline in battle could pay significant dividends.

In AD 955, it was Otto, a Saxon king, who decided to stand up the Magyars. In a major show of strength, a Magyar horde had ridden into Bavaria in southern Germany. They swarmed around Augsburg, plundering the surrounding area to feed their men and horses. They then constructed siege machines and had captured

Slavs whipped into pushing them against the German city walls. In the meantime, Otto had raised a mixed Germanic and Slav army bringing together warriors from Saxony, Bavaria, Franconia, Swabia and Bohemia. Together, they rode towards the Magyar force and pitched their tents near the river Lech, a tributary of the Danube. Aware of their Christian duty to face the pagans, many of Otto's warriors prepared themselves for battle by fasting during the night before combat. In the morning, they said mass and then rode out to take on the notorious Magyars. Otto's own Saxon troops rode under the banner of St Michael, the warrior angel that had thrown the devil out of Heaven.

Otto's warriors were heavily outnumbered by the Magyars, but they were confident in their own strength. "They surpass neither in weapons nor courage," declared Otto. "And we know that they are without the help of God, which is of the greatest comfort to us." In typical steppe warfare style, the Magyars began the battle by sending a contingent of horsemen around the flank of the Germans and Slavs to attack their camp. The Germans defending the camp fled under the hail of arrows and Otto faced the prospect of losing the battle before it had hardly begun. He kept faith, however, and his main force charged the Magyars.

With an effective counter-attack against the looting Magyars around the camp and a successful hard slog against the main Magyar force, the steppe warriors began to falter and some panicked, rushing headlong into the river Lech to escape the vengeful Germans. Many were drowned, while others hiding in surrounding villages were burned alive inside huts. Otto's pursuit of the Magyars carried on for two whole days and it was this ruthlessness that broke the back of them. Their leaders were hanged and those Magyars who survived rode back to Hungary, never again to bother the Germanic kingdoms. By the end of the 10th century, it was the Magyars who were sending tribute to German kings.

The painting opposite shows the initial clash of arms at Lechfeld with one Saxon warrior defying three Magyars. All warriors are well armed with mail armor and steel helmets. The central Magyar is especially well protected with lamellar armor covering his horse as well. Like all steppe horsemen, they carry composite bows alongside lances and swords.



Angus McBride 02

Irish warriors defeat Vikings at the battle of Clontarf, 1014



(Plate 2)

When the Scandinavian Vikings came as plunderers to the shores of Britain and Ireland, they came as pagans to a Christian realm. The Irish Annals of Ulster charted their progress from the year AD 793, calling them "gentiles", a Latin term for heathens or pagans. They attacked the fringes of the land first, burning settlements on the islands off Scotland, then the Isle of Man and finally parts of Ireland. Their raids grow in size until they were described as invasions. In AD 823, came the "plundering of Bangor by the foreigners and the destruction of its places of worship. The relics of Comghall were shaken out of their shrine. Etgal, monk of the Isle of Skellig, was carried off by the gentiles and died soon after of hunger and thirst."

By the end of the 9th century, the Vikings had come to stay, setting up trading settlements at the mouth of key Irish rivers, creating the towns of Dublin, Waterford, Wexford, Cork and Limerick. Ireland at this time had been a Christian country for over 400 years, since Saint Patrick first arrived around AD 432. The permanent presence of the vigorously pagan Vikings must have led to severe religious tensions, but there was little the native Irish could do about it, as the Vikings were generally regarded to be the superior fighters, both in character and the quality of their mail armor and swords. The Christian Irish and pagan Vikings must have eventually developed a tolerance of each other was proven by the numerous alliances formed between the Irish Vikings and various native Irish factions in the regular internecine warfare of the country.

By the beginning of the 11th century, times had changed and religion would no longer have been a major barrier between the two warrior cultures. The Danes had been converted to Christianity around AD 965 and King Olaf Haraldsson conducted a ruthless campaign in Norway around 1014 to convert his countrymen. It is likely that many Vikings in Ireland had already converted to the local forms of Christianity through the demands of business and trade and marriage with Irish girls.

It is likely too that the Irish had learned much from the Vikings and were just as well equipped as them with mail armor and fine swords. The result was that the Irish of the early 11th century dealt with the Vikings on a much more equal level. The proof of this came with the rise of Brian Boru, an Irish chieftain of the Dal Cais coming from the land around the mouth of the river Shannon. He led many raids against the Irish settlements, culminating in the storming of

Limerick. "The fortress and the good town they reduced to a cloud of smoke and red fire," wrote the chronicler of the Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gaill. "All the captives were assembled. Every one fit for war was killed and everyone else enslaved." Next came Dublin and soon Brian Boru had made himself high king of all Ireland.

Eventually, as he grew old, Brian Boru's grip on power weakened and the Vikings of Dublin allied with the Irishmen of Leinster to win back their independence from their brutal overlord. Brian Boru and his son, Murchad, laid siege to the city. The Vikings called up fellow warriors from across the Irish Sea on the Isle of Man and the island of Orkney. The two forces clashed at Clontarf in 1014 to the north of Dublin. "The two sides made a furious, smashing onset on each other," wrote the chronicler. "And there arose a frightful screaming and fluttering above their heads as birds and demons awaited their prey."

Murchad, son of Brian, ran into battle grasping two swords. He was followed by his retainers and they made a path of dead men through the Viking army. But Sigurd of Orkney would not be cowered and stood his ground. Murchad brought down one sword on the neck of the Viking, shattering his mail armor. Then a second blow cut through the Viking's flesh. Murchad ran onto another Viking warlord, but his sword broke in the fury of the attack and he had to wrestle with the man, dragging his mail shirt over his head. He then thrust the Viking's own sword into his ribs. But the Viking countered with a dagger stroke to Murchad's guts and he was fatally wounded.

Brian Boru took no active part in the battle, but stood behind a shield wall of his retainers. As he heard news that the Vikings had had enough and were retreating, his warriors relaxed. But at this moment of his greatest victory, a Viking horseman broke through the lines of his troops and struck at him. Brian unsheathed a sword and sliced off the Viking's leg, but it was too late, for the Viking then brought his sword down on Brian's skull and cleft it in half. The painting opposite shows the battle of Clontarf at its height with Irish and Viking warriors equally well armed and armored.



Vikings fight Saxons at the battle of Stamford Bridge, 1066



(Plate 3)

The conversion of the Vikings in the 11th century was a major addition to the armory of Christianity. The Scandinavian countries were no longer a pagan entity on the fringes of Europe and their marauding warriors could now take part in Christian enterprises. This gave a new level of aggression to the idea of taking the fight to the land of pagans or that of Islam. The most militarily effective of these former Viking forces were the Normans. They had come to settle in north-western France in the land that now bears their name—Normandy. They quickly absorbed the cavalry and mail armor warfare of the French and combined this with their own desire for foreign conquest. It made for a brutally effective war machine.

But before the Normans took up the cross against the unbeliever, they first had to strengthen their own power base. Duke William of Normandy desired control of England. His opportunity came in January 1066 when the Saxon king of England, Edward the Confessor died. Two years earlier, Harold Godwinson, Earl of Wessex, had promised William that when this happened he would throw his support behind the Norman Duke becoming King of England. But now that the king was dead, Harold, who possessed the strongest army in the country, assumed the position himself. William believed he had been double-crossed and prepared for war.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1066, William had ships built for the enterprise of crossing to England. It is measure of how quickly the Vikings and their descendants had become a key part of Christendom that William even managed to gain the support of Pope Alexander II who sent his blessings for the campaign. With that holy sanction, the war could now claim to be a crusade, even though the Saxon English were Christian—the main crime being that Harold had broken an oath before God to support William.

William was not the only problem faced by the newly crowned Harold. The year before, he had banished his own brother Tostig, Earl of Northumbria. Tostig had fled to Flanders and then to Normandy where the Duke appears to have given him sufficient military support to attack the Isle of Wight in May 1066. From there, he sailed north to attack along the river Humber. He sought help from the Scots and then the Danes, but neither was interested. It was only when Tostig sailed to Norway that he received the encouragement he needed. Harold Hardraada, King of Norway, saw it as an opportunity to place himself upon the contested throne of England.

Hardraada assembled some 200 ships and his Viking fleet set sail from Sognefjord, north of Bergen, in August 1066. They brushed past the Shetlands and Orkneys. In the mouth of the river Tyne they were joined by Tostig and his followers. They raided the north-west coast of England and sailed up the river Humber into the Ouse. They were heading for York, the greatest city of that region. By now, the two Earls of the north, Edwin and Morcar, had gathered their own troops and stood face to face with the Norse invaders. Two miles north of the northern capital they clashed at Fulford Gate. The Norwegian Vikings struck hard and the English were beaten. Hardraada marched into York and was proclaimed king of Northumbria. With Saxon troops now rallying to his standard as well, it looked very bad for Harold Godwinson in the south of the country preparing to defend his kingdom against the Norman Duke William. Harold had to make a quick choice. He chose to march northwards.

Swiftly advancing over 200 miles along the old Roman road north, Harold and his army passed through York and caught Hardraada at Stamford Bridge on 25 September 1066. A crucial moment of the battle appears to have centered on the wooden bridge crossing over the river Derwent. According to the Anglo-Saxon chronicle, "the Norwegians fled from the English, but there was one Norwegian who stood firm against the English forces, so that they could not cross the bridge nor clinch victory. An Englishman shot with an arrow but to no avail, then another went under the bridge and stabbed him through under his coat of mail. Then Harold, king of the English, crossed the bridge and his followers went forward with him and they made great slaughter." The painting opposite recreates the fighting on the bridge with a Norse warrior defending it with a Viking battle axe.

It was a decisive victory. Both Hardraada and Tostig were killed. A great many of the invaders were slain and a chronicler records their piles of bones still available to see some 70 years later. But many of these enemy warriors, with their leaders dead, must also have decided to surrender and join Harold. It was a timely addition to his army. Just three days later, Duke William landed his Norman invasion fleet on the southern coast of England at Pevensey.

Norman knights charge Saxons at the battle of Hastings, 1066



(Plate 4)

Duke William landed on the pebble beach of Pevensey with all the self-righteous confidence of a crusader warlord. The banner of St Peter flew above his troops, a token of support from the Pope. The warriors that gathered their equipment around him were the type of troops that just 33 years later would be arriving in the Holy Land in a war against Islam. Mail clad, trusting to their heavy armor and their skills with sword and lance. Indeed, the amphibious operation in England could be seen as a rehearsal for the great crusades of the following century. Except that the enemy William faced at Hastings was Christian too. Or was it?

William of Poitiers includes an intriguing passage in his history of the campaign. When he describes Duke William's determination to press ahead with the invasion, he writes "this steadfast and far-seeing Christian leader had no doubt at all that Almighty God, who rights all wrongs, would not permit his cause to fail, for it was just. He was the more convinced of this when he recalled that his purpose was not to foster his own fame and fortune, but to set right once more that practice of the Christian religion in those foreign parts." Is he implying that Christianity had lapsed in England and that the Normans considered it a pagan realm? Most likely, this is just Norman propaganda, but it certainly gives an insight into the mindset of a crusader warlord who can even consider another Christian country worthy of a cleansing crusader campaign.

Harold Godwinson was king of England and he had just defeated an assault on his rule at the battle of Stamford Bridge. It was a decisive victory and he now brought his men rapidly southwards to face the Normans in East Sussex on 14 October 1066. The place they met is now called Battle and the Saxons took a position on top of a ridge that can still be seen today. Harold's army could have been around 7000 strong. At its core was an elite personal bodyguard, known as housecarls, who were noted for fighting with long two-handed axes like the Vikings. Duke William had an army of similar strength, but of a more advanced continental style, with some 2000 Normans being mail-clad warriors fighting from horseback with long shields, lances and swords. His other warriors included foot soldiers from Normandy, Brittany, and parts of France such as Aquitaine, mainly without armor, but carrying shields, spears, bows, and slings.

With their morale high following their earlier victory, Harold and his Saxons waited behind their shield-wall for the Normans to attack.

Duke William had little alternative but to send his cavalry up the slope. To prepare the assault, Norman archers shot their arrows high in the air so they fell on top of the enemy army, but the Saxons simply raised their shields higher. Waves of Normans then attacked the Saxons in hand-to-hand fighting. Norman cavalry used their lances as javelins or spears, throwing them over-arm, hoping to break a gap in the Saxon shield-wall but this would not happen and both sides became exhausted, with longer gaps between each new assault.

At one point, the Normans feared William had been killed and he was forced to remove his helmet and show his face to his men. William of Poitiers describes the Duke in combat: "Three horses were killed under him. Three times he leapt undismayed to the ground and put paid to the man who had slaughtered his horse... With savage sword-blows, brooking no delay, he cleft shields, helmets, hauberks (mail shirts). With his own shield he struck a number of the enemy."

By the afternoon, neither side would relent. It was then that the Saxons made a fatal mistake. Thinking maybe that the Normans were on the point of defeat, some of the Saxons broke away and charged down the hill. It was the moment William had been waiting for. The Saxon wall was breaking up. He rallied some of his cavalry and turned on the suddenly vulnerable foot soldiers and cut them down. With the Saxon defensive line reduced, William ordered one more charge at the center of the shield-wall with his mounted warriors. They broke into the circle of housecarls around Harold and got through to Harold himself. The Saxon king was cut down and with his death, the battle was decided. William had won himself a kingdom.

The painting opposite shows William's Norman knights charging up the hill towards the Saxon shield-wall. They hurl their lances over-arm, as shown on the Bayeux Tapestry, and carry their distinctive long pointed shields.

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Norman warriors in Muslim Sicily, 11th century



(Plate 5)

The invasion of Saxon England by the Normans can be seen as just another Viking expedition, if these warriors had not been converted to Christianity. And they were not the only Christianized Vikings to be fighting on far-flung campaigns across Europe. Would-be king of England, Harold Hardraada, king of Viking Norway, had seen his finest Norse troops fighting on behalf of the Byzantine Empire in the Mediterranean as the elite Varangian Guard. Such was the reputation of Viking warriors that they could easily gain employment as mercenaries anywhere in medieval Europe.

The Normans carried on this martial tradition and a number of their warriors traveled south to find work fighting for and against the Byzantine Empire. Until the 11th century, it was largely the Byzantine Empire that had taken up the burden of preserving Christianity in the Mediterranean against the Islamic tide of conquest begun in the 8th century. Their territories in the central Mediterranean included the whole of Greece and southern Italy. In 1016, Norman troops arrived in Italy to fight alongside Lombard rebels against the Byzantines. In 1038, they joined the Byzantines with the Varangian Guard to attack Muslim Sicily.

By the middle of the 11th century, many leading Norman warlords had settled in southern Italy, creating estates for themselves and their followers. The foremost among these was Robert d'Hauteville, known as Guiscard. He united his fellow Normans to defeat the forces of the pope and the German emperor and, in return, was recognized as Duke of Apulia. Having secured his political relationship to the north, Guiscard concentrated on clearing the Byzantines out of southern Italy and succeeded in removing their last bastion at Bari in 1071. In the meantime, another member of the Hauteville dynasty, Roger, had come south to try his luck in Sicily.

Roger Hauteville made an alliance with one of the Muslim rulers of Sicily and tried to pick off the rest in a campaign of 1061. With the help of Guiscard, he established a base at Messina. Three years later, they tried a joint assault on Palermo but failed. With the final elimination of Byzantine power in Italy, Guiscard assumed control of all local sea power and used this in a renewed attack on Palermo, besieging it by land and sea, until it fell in 1072. Follow up campaigns carried on over the next two decades, until Muslim Sicily was entirely back in the hands of Christian rulers. It was a turning point in the balance of power in the Mediterranean. Mail clad, lance-wielding

western horsemen had shown that they could beat the once invincible Arab war machine. In only a few years, this renewed Christian dynamism would explode in the blood and fury of the crusades—and Sicily would become a strategically important supply base for this enterprise, sending food and arms to the crusader states.

The power unleashed by the Normans in the Mediterranean was too tempting for Guiscard and he used it to attack the Byzantine Empire in Greece at Duraazo in Albania. It would not be the last time that western Christians would attack the bastion of eastern Christianity from a motivation of pure greed. Further fighting carried on between the Normans and the Byzantines in the Adriatic until the preaching of the First Crusade gave a new direction to western conquest. The combat in southern Italy and Sicily was truly the prelude to the crusader campaigns in the Near East.

The painting opposite shows three Norman warriors fighting in Arab Sicily. They wear the long mail hauberks typical of the period and one holds a kite-shaped shield designed for combat on horseback. The pointed fluted helmet appears to have been a typically Italian variation of the usual helmet with nasal.

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Norman mercenaries gamble outside a brothel in Constantinople, 11th century



(Plate 6)

The Byzantines were no fools and could see which way the wind was blowing towards the end of the 11th century. They had already clashed with the Normans in southern Italy and lost this part of their empire to them. They had already long employed Vikings in the Varangian Guard. It was time now to use these fierce northerners on a grand scale in their life-and-death struggle against the Muslim Turks flooding into Asia Minor, just beyond the eastern walls of Constantinople.

Although impressed by the fighting skills of the Normans, the refined Byzantines found their manners appalling. They called them Franks or Kelts or sometimes just barbarians. Anna Comnena was the daughter of the Emperor Alexius I who asked the pope to send a large force of these western warriors to help him. She describes them as too talkative and traditionally pugnacious. "The Keltic counts," she writes, "are brazen-faced, violent men, money-grubbers and where their personal desires are concerned quite immoderate. These are natural characteristics of the race. They surpass all other nations in loquacity. When they came to the palace, they did so in an undisciplined fashion, every count bringing with him as many comrades as he wished."

But they could fight and Anna Comnena describes their military virtues. "A mounted Kelt is irresistible," she writes, "he would bore his way through the walls of Babylon." But they had a weak point too. "When the Kelt dismounts he becomes anyone's plaything." The Byzantines knew that to fire arrows at the mail-clad shield-carrying Normans was pointless. "Any arrow, whether it be Scythian or Persian or fired by the arms of a giant, will be repelled by that shield and rebound against the firer." Any enemy of the Normans was advised to fire their arrows at their horses to bring them down.

It seems likely that it was the pressure brought by the Normans on the western regions of the Byzantine Empire in the late 11th century that led to the chain of events culminating in the First Crusade. The Byzantines were being squeezed on both sides of their empire. In the east it was the Seljuk Turks. These steppe warriors from central Asia had served as mercenaries to the Muslim Arab Abbasid Caliphate based in Baghdad. But aware of their own power, they had sought to create their own independent realm and Turks surged into the Byzantine territories of Asia Minor. What a good idea to play both these forces off against each other. Or at least it seemed a good idea at the time when the Byzantine Emperor asked the pope

to send Norman warriors to help fight the Muslim Turks.

Like the Normans, the Turks had a fierce reputation as soldiers. Al-Jahiz, an Arab chronicler, described their superior stamina: "When a Turk travels with a non-Turkish army he travels 20 miles for the time other people do. He cuts off from the army to the right or left, racing to the summits of peaks or penetrating the bottoms of valleys in search of game. At the same time, he shoots at everything which creeps, steps, flies and lands." Their mounted archery was formidable and better than that of the Arabs. "If a thousand Turkish horsemen attack, they shoot a single volley, felling a thousand horsemen. What would remain of any army after this sort of attack?"

The answer to that question was soon to be proved to the Byzantines at the battle of Manzikert. The result of this combat between Byzantium and the Turks would lead to western warriors intervening directly in the Near East. The painting opposite shows a bunch of carousing Normans gambling outside a brothel in the heart of Constantinople. In the background is the great Byzantine church of St. Sophia.

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Angus McBride
03

Turks descend on the Byzantines at the battle of Manzikert, 1071



(Plate 1)

The Seljuk Turks had served the Arab Caliph of Baghdad well, but now they wanted a kingdom of their own. To the west they saw the high grasslands of Asia Minor or Anatolia, as it is now known. It was a land much like their homeland in central Asia and they could see very little stopping them from taking it for their own. Politically, this land belonged to the Byzantine Empire, but their important settlements were far to the west along the Aegean coast and it was difficult for the Byzantines to maintain a firm grip on this wilderness land. It still is a remote wild place today, being the homeland of the Kurds.

As the Turks overran eastern Asia Minor, it came to the attention of the Byzantine Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes and he decided that they needed to be stopped, otherwise his grip on the more important towns to the west might be lessened. Rather than defeat them piecemeal, he wanted to bring them to one major decisive battle, best suiting the strengths of his own forces. It is worth noting that at this time the Byzantines still referred to themselves as "Romans" and their Turkic enemy as "Persians"—so they set off for a campaign no different, in their eyes, to those fought by Romans in the Middle East in the previous thousand years.

Romanos gathered a force some 40,000 strong, consisting of Greek-speaking warriors—his "Romans"—as well as mercenaries drawn from Armenia, some Turks themselves, and, of course, westerners, including Normans. The army was a mixture of footsoldiers and cavalry. They marched east to the land north of Lake Van in eastern Anatolia, accompanied by a thousand supply wagons and 10,000 cattle. The Turks were mainly a marauding cavalry force and avoided the Byzantines at first, but their leader, Alp Arslan, known as "Hero Lion", wanted to secure this territory as a base before he could strike south towards richer lands in Palestine and Egypt.

Finding no immediate Turkish army to do battle with, Romanos began to split up his force to take control of various fortresses in the area, including that in the town of Manzikert. It was a fatal error. Arslan's Turks had been shadowing the Byzantine army. Outside Manzikert, a Turkish scouting force teased a group of foraging Byzantines to chase them. They then rounded on the Byzantines and slaughtered. The Byzantines that survived rushed back to tell Romanos they faced a much bigger Turkish force in the immediate vicinity. Some negotiating between the two forces then followed,

but broke down. On Friday 26 August, Romanos advanced south from Manzikert with his soldiers in battle formations.

The Turks took up a typical steppe-warrior crescent formation with their center retreating before the main Byzantine advance so that their wings could surround and harass the Byzantine flank, hoping at some point to encircle them completely. Provoked by the Turkish horse archers, groups of Byzantines dashed out to fight them but were defeated in small groups, gradually reducing the strength of the army. As the hot summer day wore on, Romanos could see that he was in trouble. Rather than risk his troops in further futile skirmishes, he decided to order a retreat, but by this time, the nerves of his soldiers were frayed and a withdrawal seemed like defeat. Some of his troops thought he was dead, panicked and began to run.

The Emperor's rearguard should have now advanced to stiffen the main Byzantine army, but its commander preferred to save his own life and left Romanos to it. By the end of the day, the main Byzantine force was surrounded. Romanos fought a desperate last stand as his troops fell about him. The emperor led the fighting but had his horse killed beneath him and was knocked unconscious. The next day, he was found among his dead and wounded troops and taken to Arslan. The Turkish commander spared his life, knowing that his career was over. The Byzantines had been humiliated and Asia Minor lay wide open to a major Turkish invasion, bringing their control of the region almost up to the walls of Constantinople. It was a bad day for eastern Christendom and a good day for Muslim expansion. The once mighty Byzantine Empire was in tatters, torn apart by subsequent civil war. It is little wonder that its emperors should now look to the west for salvation.

The painting opposite shows the battle of Manzikert in its final phase with Turkish horsemen riding in among the disintegrating Byzantine formations. Norman mercenary warriors are among the Byzantine footsoldiers fighting for their lives.

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Byzantines humbled by the Turks at the battle of Manzikert, 1071



(Plate 8)

Militarily, the Byzantine defeat at Manzikert was not such a disaster. Historians now believe fewer men died at the hands of the Turks than the medieval chroniclers claimed. The entire rearguard escaped unharmed and returned to Constantinople. Many other units withdrew safely too. As always, the Turks seemed to have been more interested in the vast amount of treasure captured in the imperial baggage train. Even the wounded Emperor Romanos was let go after a few days of humiliating captivity. Politically, of course, the fall-out was much more devastating. The commander of the rearguard that had betrayed Romanos now helped launch a coup against the emperor. A decade of civil war followed in which the Byzantine Empire further weakened itself, allowing the Muslim Turks to dominate the Near East.

In 1081, Alexius I ascended to the Byzantine throne. More than ever, he depended on mercenaries to prop up his ailing empire, including Turks, Pechenegs, Franks/Normans and Varangians. In 1095, he sent an embassy to Pope Urban II in Rome. Knowing that the pope was overlord to the Normans in southern Italy, he asked him to send some more Franks to help him in battle against the Muslim Turks of Asia Minor. What happened possibly surprised everyone involved.

It seems likely that the pope saw this as an opportunity to extend the influence of Latin Christianity over the Greek Byzantine Empire. Ever since the battle of Manzikert, word had passed round Europe that the Byzantines were no longer as strong as they appeared. The pope now decided to preach a crusade in which he invited western warriors to travel to Byzantine territory and attack the Muslim Turks. Knowing the nature of the Normans, he knew this could result in Western conquests of Byzantine land.

Alexius was probably hoping for just a few thousand Norman mercenaries. What he got was tens of thousands of crusaders and pilgrims all mixed up together. The sense of shock is captured well in his daughter's chronicle of the period: "Alexius had no time to relax before he heard the rumor that countless Frankish armies were approaching. He dreaded their arrival, knowing as he did their uncontrollable passion..."

Anna Comnena records that it was "a certain Kelt called Peter (the Hermit)" that was in part responsible for this sudden tide of humanity coming their way. He was a frustrated pilgrim to the Holy Land who began to preach that all westerners should help liberate

Jerusalem from the Turks. "What actually happened," she wrote "was more far-reaching and terrible than rumor suggested, for the whole of the west and all the barbarians who lived between the Adriatic and the straits of Gibraltar migrated in a body to Asia, marching across Europe country by country with all the households."

"The arrival of this mighty host was preceded by locusts," wrote Anna Comnena. She numbers at least 180,000 soldiers among them, 10,000 of them being Normans. They passed through Byzantine Eastern Europe and met with the Emperor in Constantinople. There they swore that any cities or territory captured from the Turks would be passed on to the Byzantine Emperor. But an incident occurred that must have shaken the confidence of Alexius in his grand strategy. "After the oath had been sworn by every count," wrote Comnena, "one (Frankish) nobleman dared to sit himself on the emperor's throne. Alexius endured this without a word, knowing the old haughty temper of the Latins." Later, he asked the man who he meant by that disrespectful action. The warrior replied: "I am a pure Frank and of noble birth... I have long waited for a man to fight me, but none have dared." Alexius replied that he would get his fight soon and to watch out for the Turks.

The first crusaders to cross the Sea of Marmara into Asia Minor was Peter the Hermit's pilgrim rabble. They were quickly massacred by Turkish horsemen and it was up to a more professional force of crusader warriors led by Godfrey of Bouillon to secure a permanent conquest. Using mining and sophisticated siege techniques, the crusaders encouraged the citizens of Nicaea to surrender in 1097. This was the first blow delivered by the crusaders to the Muslim Turkish realm. From there, they marched southwards towards the Holy Land. The First Crusade had begun.

The painting opposite shows Byzantine troops under attack by Turkish archers at the battle of Manzikert. The noble Byzantine warriors wear scale armor.

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Frankish Crusaders storm Jerusalem, 1099



(Plate 9)

By late 1097, the crusader army led by Godfrey of Bouillon and other French and Norman warlords had advanced through Asia Minor to reach Syria. There, they took nine months to capture the great city of Antioch. As the siege dragged on, they suffered terribly from a lack of food and it was said they were even reduced to eating dead Turks. Finally, the fortress was betrayed by a Christian Armenian and the crusaders rank amok inside. But no sooner had they captured it than the crusaders were themselves besieged by a relief force of Turks. The situation looked dire until one crusader discovered the remains of the Holy Lance used in the Crucifixion. Uplifted by this miraculous discovery, the crusaders charged out and put the Turks to flight.

After six months at Antioch, the crusaders marched on to their main prize—Jerusalem. Their force was now severely reduced, possibly as low as 6,000, as other crusaders stayed behind to make the most of their new conquests. It was up to Godfrey of Bouillon to take the holy city. Italian and English supply ships followed the army along the coast of Palestine. Their brutal sacking of some cities meant that others now paid them tribute, such as Sidon, Tyre, and Acre. In June 1099 they stood before the walls of Jerusalem. Inside was a garrison under the command of the Fatimid vizier of Egypt. All nearby wells had been poisoned and all wood that could be used for siege machines had been cut down and removed. An initial assault failed due to a lack of siege ladders.

The crusaders had no choice but to settle down into another siege. It was extremely hot and water had to be carried from six miles away to the crusaders. Christian ships at Jaffa managed to provide wood for the construction of siege machines. Over a month, two great siege towers were constructed. The mighty engines were dragged against the walls and two simultaneous assaults, from north and south, were launched. Both were repulsed, but two days later, on 15 July, the crusader warriors on the north tower forced the defenders off the battlements. The painting opposite shows this moment of victory. The crusaders then poured into the city and slaughtered any Muslims they came across, thoroughly looting the ancient capital.

By general acclamation of his soldiers, Godfrey of Bouillon was chosen to be king of Jerusalem, but he refused, saying: "I cannot wear a crown of gold in the city where Jesus wore a crown of thorns." With this pious thought, it was decided to style him Protector

of the Holy Sepulchre. A year later, however, Godfrey was dead and the title passed on to his brother Baldwin who had no doubts about accepting the crown. The crusaders had won a tremendous victory in the heart of the Muslim world and controlled several key cities, but the challenge now was to keep hold of it.

Although the crusaders had learned to fear the horse archers of the Turks, they also possessed powerful weapons of their own. Among these was the crossbow. Anna Comnena describes it in detail: "The crossbow is a weapon of the barbarians, completely unknown to the Greeks. In order to arm it one does not pull the string with the right hand while pushing the bow with the left away from the body; it has to be stretched by lying on one's back and using each foot on loops at the end of the bow and two hands to tug the string." Having loaded this extremely powerful weapon, it is then fired "with extreme violence and force so that its bolts do not rebound. They can transfix a shield, cut through a heavy breastplate and carry on in flight... The unfortunate man who is struck by this bolt dies without feeling a blow." Clearly, Anna is exaggerating, but the crossbow appears, in her description, to have been much more powerful than even the Turkish composite bow.

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Knights Templar in the Holy Land, 12th century



(Plate 10)

The kingdom of Jerusalem demanded a strong defense force and two great orders of knighthood were initiated to perform this role. They combined supreme martial vigor with a spiritual calling that saw them taking the stance of warrior monks. The Knights Hospitaller originally began as a monastic order devoted to helping pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land, but in 1118 they became a military order. They still retained brothers taking care of charitable services, but those equipped with swords and armor became the Knights of St John of Jerusalem. They wore a white cross on a red surcoat.

The other famous order was the Knights Templar. They got their name from their headquarters near the sacred Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, becoming knights of the temple. They were founded in 1123 and wore a red cross on a white surcoat. Soon, both these orders became rich as their fame spread to Europe and pious warlords made wealthy donations to them. Both orders of knights took vows of obedience to a Grand Master they elected and bound themselves to a life of chastity and virtue. They manned the great crusader castles that ringed their conquests, with the most famous one of Krak des Chevaliers belonging to the Hospitallers. In battle, they neither gave mercy nor expected it. They were the mailed fist of Christianity in the Near East. The painting opposite shows a team of Knights Templar manning a bolt-throwing ballista against Muslim raiders.

In 1187, the holy orders of knights failed in their duty to preserve Jerusalem when it was taken by the great Kurdish warlord Saladin. This action put into motion the Third Crusade. Led by Richard I of England, Philip II of France, and German emperor Frederick Barbarossa. The German emperor died on the way and Richard was distracted by a clash with the Byzantine governor of Cyprus. He won the island from the Byzantines and it became a useful base for the crusader states in Palestine. Once in the Holy Land, Richard took the city of Acre and entered into negotiations with Saladin. When these broke down, Richard massacred 3000 of his Arab prisoners—it sent the required chill through the Muslim world.

At the battle of Arsuf, Richard showed that mail-clad knights could take on Saladin's swift-moving horse archers and win. The Templars and Hospitallers rode with Richard, but it was his combination of heavy cavalry working with crossbow-firing footsoldiers that won the day. An Arab chronicler described the

encounter: "The enemy marched in order of battle, their infantry placed between us and their cavalry, keeping as level and firm as a wall. Each footsoldier wore a thick cassock of felt and under it a mail shirt so strong that our arrows made no impression. They in the meantime shot at us with crossbows, striking down horse and man among the Muslims. I noted among the crusaders men who had from one to ten arrows sticking in their back, yet they trudged on regardless..."

Military discipline would win the day: "The Muslims sent in volleys of arrows from all sides," wrote Beha ed-Din, "attempting to irritate the knights into leaving their rampart of infantry. But it was all in vain. They kept their temper admirably and marched without hurrying themselves in the least... It was impossible not to admire the patience these people showed."

This victory left the road open to Jerusalem, but Saladin destroyed all food supplies on the way and poisoned the wells. Richard could not cross this territory without major logistical support and chose to withdraw to the coast. Neither side had won a decisive advantage, but Richard had won a strip of territory along the coast for the crusaders, including the major bastion of Acre. Richard set sail home, never to return the Holy Land. The next year Saladin died and the Holy Land remained in the grip of crusader states.



Crusaders escort Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land, 12th-13th centuries



(Plate 1)

Despite their precarious position in the heart of the Muslim world, the crusader states proved remarkably resilient and remained a potent force well into the 13th century. Crusader knights provided armed guards for groups of Christian pilgrims visiting the most sacred places in the Holy Land. Indeed, their success in maintaining a grip on Palestine encouraged more speculative ventures north and south.

In 1202, an army of Franks engaged on a Fourth Crusade decided to forget liberating the Middle East and chose instead to turn on the Byzantines who for so long had hoped to play them off against the Muslims. The plan came out of the involvement of the Venetians in providing the ships for the Frankish warriors they had long been in competition with the maritime power of Byzantium and saw an opportunity to further their own commercial ends by encouraging the crusaders to attack the Byzantines.

When the crusader army arrived outside Constantinople, Venetian ships broke through the great chain guarding the Golden Horn and drew up against the mighty walls of the city. Crusaders surged across planks leading from the mast-tops of the ships onto the battlements. Villehardouin's chronicle of the campaign described the scene: "You could see the Venetian mangonels hurling stones from the decks of warships and transports, bolts from their crossbows flying across the water, archers loosing shower after shower of arrows, and the Greeks on their side fiercely defending the city from the top of its battlements, as the scaling ladders of the ships came so near that in many places swords and lances clashed against each other. The din was so tremendous that it seemed as if both land and sea were crumbling in pieces."

The next day, Baldwin of Flanders defeated the Byzantine army outside the city. The Venetians now had their candidate for emperor on the throne but after several months of uneasy peace, the crusaders fell out with their reluctant Byzantine hosts and fighting resumed. This time, Baldwin stormed the city and his crusaders looted it. The Byzantine emperor fled and Baldwin became the new emperor. The land around Constantinople down into Greece belonged to a new Latin empire, but Baldwin failed to impress his new power on the Bulgars to the north and was captured by them. The Venetians managed to rescue the surviving crusaders, but it underlined the reality of the situation. Increasingly, it was the Venetians who dominated the Greek islands and the Aegean Sea.

The capture of Constantinople in 1204 fatally wounded the Byzantine Empire as a power to stand up against the Muslim Turks, but it would be a couple more centuries before they took decisive advantage of it. In the meantime, the crusader states in Palestine proved an excellent base for two expeditions against Muslim Egypt.

The Fifth Crusade in 1218 saw a mixed group of European crusaders advancing down the Nile Delta to the city of Damietta. They used their ships to attack the city walls, but the Muslim defenders fought back hard. It took months before it fell, but it left the road open to Cairo. Desperately needed reinforcements did not arrive from Europe and although the crusaders marched toward the Egyptian capital, they lacked the resources to win it. Hemmed in on the delta by the Arabs, they were forced to buy their freedom by giving up Damietta. This action was repeated again in the Seventh Crusade when Louis IX of France led armies along the Nile to capture Damietta. Again, hoping to take Cairo he was defeated and had to buy his freedom by giving up his one triumph. On an Eighth Crusade against Tunis in 1270, the French king died.

Elsewhere in the Mediterranean in the 13th century, there was a resurgence in Christian military fortunes. Crusaders re-conquered half of Spain as far south as Toledo. But all this would be threatened by the arrival of a new force from the east—the Mongols.



Angus McBride

The Mongols ride West, 13th century



(Plate 12)

Islam was not the only threat facing a resurgent Christendom in western and central Europe. Events in far away Mongolia would soon have a tremendous impact. In the 12th century, Turkic and Mongol tribes fought bitter turf wars in the steppe land of east and central Asia. Tatars clashed with Mongols and a boy called Temujin witnessed the brutal conflict at first hand. His father was poisoned by Tatar enemies and as a result the power of his clan crumbled, leaving his family vulnerable. Then when he was old enough to claim a wife, a second blow fell upon him. His wife was kidnapped by Merkit tribesmen. Enough was enough. Temujin rode out with his closest followers and struck back at the Merkit, winning back his wife. It was an impressive victory and many men who had deserted his clan following the death of his father came back. It was the beginning of a process that would see Temujin unite all the Mongol tribes.

By 1206, Temujin had been elected Khan and he gained vengeance against the Merkit and incorporated them in his confederation of steppe tribes. As for the Tatars, the men who had killed his father, he captured their khan and had him executed. Revenge was complete and Temujin had become Genghis Khan. With an impressively efficient military organization, Genghis Khan now decided to take his war machine beyond the lands of the Mongols. He struck against the Hsia-Hsia in the desert of western China and with his western flank secured, he plunged into northern China to raid the Sung dynasty. With each victory in battle, the Mongols won tribute and booty, and with money came new arms and armor and political power. Prisoners could be useful too, as many Chinese and Arab engineers became incorporated into the steppe army, adding their talents for siege warfare.

To the west of the land of the Mongols, beyond the rule of China, lay the immensely wealthy trading states of central Asia. These were Islamic principalities and were protected by formidable armies of mercenary Turks. But Genghis Khan was not discouraged by this and sent his troops against the first of these, ruled by the Khwarazm shah, in 1219. With the aid of his captured Chinese engineers, the Mongols took the key cities of Bukhara and Samarkand. Genghis Khan now added Turkish soldiers to his horde and an immense new conduit of wealth. Eight years later, Genghis Khan was dead but his military organization was too well entrenched to collapse. It carried on under the leadership of several talented Mongol warlords.

In 1237, the Mongols began to impinge on the Christian world. Their first target was the hopelessly divided principalities of Russia. Batu, nephew of Ogedei Khan, now ruler of the Mongols, was in command of the expedition, along with his general Subadai. They rode north and torched Moscow, then a minor settlement. Russians huddled inside their churches but the Mongols had no respect for these holy places and burned them alive inside them. It was an atrocity that would ring throughout the Christian world and see the Mongols demonized as the worst of pagans.

In 1240, the Mongols turned towards southern Russia and captured the key mercantile city of Kiev. They reduced its beautiful churches to rubble. Russian resistance was no more. The stage was now set for the most daring of all assaults by the Mongols in the west. They were ready to take on the Christian knights of central Europe.

The painting opposite shows a Mongol warlord of the early period, still strongly influenced by his own native culture and that of China. The heavily armored warriors behind him reveal the wealth that his armed forces could already project. They wear the lamellar armor of wealthy central Asian warriors.

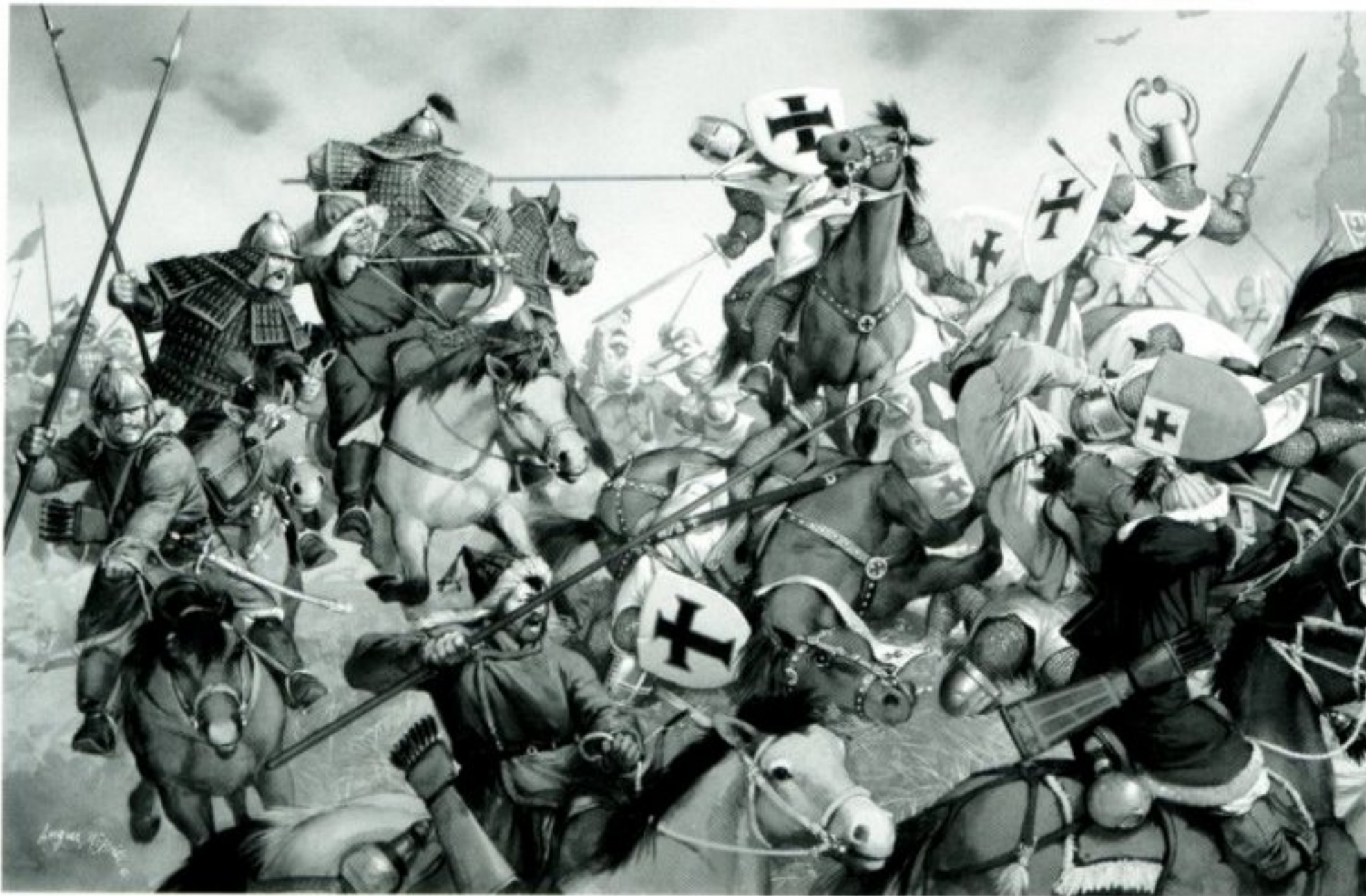
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Mongols defeat Christian knights at the battle of Liegnitz, 1241



(Plate 1)

The Mongols struck the west at its weakest point. The western states of England and France were increasing in power under strong centralizing monarchies, but in eastern Europe there was discord. Poland in the early 13th century was a country in fragments with one king and three dukes competing for power. Duke Henry II of Silesia was the most important of these. Added to this was the presence of the Teutonic Knights along the Baltic coast. This was a Germanic organization modeled on the crusader fighting orders of the Holy Land. Their crusade, however, was directed not against Muslims but against the pagan tribesmen of the Baltic states, including the most powerful of these, the Lithuanians. With so many conflicting forces, it was easy for the Mongols to drive a wedge into this land.

Batu, leader of the Mongols that had ravaged Russia, had his sights on Hungary, a land that was traditionally attractive to Turkic raiders for hundreds of years. Partly because it included a considerable stretch of steppe land, perfect for resting his horseborne army. It was also a crucial trading area linking German central Europe with the Byzantine Empire. But first he had to secure his flank against intervention by the Teutonic and Slavic knights of Poland. Camped along the Polish border during the winter of 1240-41, he decided to attack Poland at the same time the Mongols struck south towards Hungary. Two Mongol subordinates were put in charge of the Polish expedition: Orda and Baidar. In early February 1241, they led a force of 30,000 warriors in two columns from their winter camp between Vladimir and Galich.

The Mongols rode across the frozen Vistula river and sacked the town of Sandomierz. Five days later, near Chmielnik, they were confronted by an army led by the Polish king Boleslaw IV. The Polish army was an amalgam of both eastern and western styles of warfare. Their leading warriors—their knights—would have been armored in mail and steel helmets, fighting with sword and lance, but the Poles could also call upon Tatar mercenaries fighting as horse archers. Unfortunately, the blend of arms was not enough and the Poles were quickly overcome, with their king fleeing to Moravia. By March, the Mongols stood before the walls of Krakow, the most important city in southern Poland. They set fire to it and made prisoners of its citizens. Riding on further west, they next sacked the town of Breslau.

The most powerful figure left in Poland was Duke Henry II of Silesia. It was up to him halt the pagan advance into western

Christendom. He raised some 30,000 warriors and chose to make his stand near the town of Liegnitz (now known as Legnica). The Teutonic Order could see that it was in their interest to support the Polish defense and sent their own knights and warriors to help. A call went out far and wide for more troops and even English chronicles recorded this new threat to Christianity.

"The men are of the nature of beasts," wrote Matthew Paris describing the Mongols from rumors he had heard. "They thirst after and drink blood. They clothe themselves in the skins of bulls and are armed with iron lances... Their horses are very swift and able to perform a journey of three days in one. They have swords and daggers with one edge—sabers—and are excellent archers... They come with the force of lightning into the territories of the Christians and are believed to have been sent as a plague on mankind."

The King of Bohemia pledge to send troops to stem the Mongol advance, but they arrived too late for the Poles at Liegnitz. The two forces clashed on 8th April. Orda and Baidar chose a classic steppe tactic of withdrawing before the assembled western knights—and the Poles and Germans fell for it. The Christian knights charged head-on for leather after the Mongols but as they raced away from the supporting units of footsoldiers, their formations broke up and when the Mongols close to round on them after a few miles, they were easy meat for the more disciplined steppe warriors. Storms of arrows further reduced their resistance and by the time the heavily armored Mongol lancers ploughed into them, their spirit was broken.

At the end of the day, the Mongols could ride across the battlefield and collect at least nine sacks of ears sliced off the heads of the defeated knights. Duke Henry had tried his best but paid for his lack of military coherence with his life. This victory silenced any further resistance in Germanic northern Europe, leaving the road open to the real target of the Mongol expedition—Hungary. Three days later, the main Mongol force defeated the Hungarian king. They then ravage Pest and got as far as Vienna. Others tore off south towards the Balkans. It was a highly profitable raiding campaign, but nothing more. The Mongols had not come to stay. With the death of Ogedei, they returned eastwards, never again to threaten Christian Europe.

The painting opposite shows the fighting at the height of the battle of Liegnitz. The Teutonic knights are shown wearing white surcoats with black crosses clashing with Mongol heavy cavalry.



Mongols lay siege to Muslim caliph in Baghdad, 1258



(Plate 14)

Christian kingdoms in Europe watched the advance of the Mongols into the Muslim Middle East with a mixture of delight and horror. These pagan warriors were doing their job for them, taking apart the empire of Islam, but they seemed a far more ruthless adversary. At least, Islamic strong men had a degree of respect and tolerance for all other "people of the book", including Christians and Jews, but the Mongols had none—massacring Christians alongside Muslims. In turn, Muslims had no respect for these people they considered pagans, believing Genghis Khan was in league with the devil, receiving instructions from him in trances. Little quarter could be expected on either side.

The first Muslim target for the Mongols had been the wealthy trading cities of Central Asia. After the death of Genghis Khan, Mongol raiders rode south into Iran. In 1243, a Mongol general defeated the Seljuk Turks of Konya at the battle of Kose Dag, thus adding these fierce warriors to the horde. In 1253, Mongke Khan conducted a major campaign of conquest against the Middle East with his brother Hulagu in command. They faced some of the toughest warriors of the Islamic world—the Assassins—an offshoot of the Ismaili Shiite sect and spiritual ancestors of 21st century Islamic suicide bombers. The Assassins were based in fortresses in northern Iran and sent suicide warriors to assassinate leading opponents. To silence them would be a major statement of intent and would confirm the dominating position of the Mongols.

The Mongols prepared their campaign against the Assassins thoroughly. They employed the hundreds of Chinese and Arab engineers captured in previous campaigns to prepare the way, repairing roads and building bridges. The engineers devised ingenious siege engines to take on the mountain strongholds.

An Arab chronicler described some of the weapons employed during the assault on one Assassin castle. "From their towers came swift feathered shafts (ablaze with fire) and an ox's bow (a giant crossbow) which had been constructed by Khitan craftsmen and had a range of 2500 paces, was brought to bear on these fools, when no one solution remained. Many of the devil-like Heretics (the Assassins) were burnt by these meteoric shafts. From the castle also stones poured down like leaves, but no more than one person was hurt by them."

One by one, the Muslim strongholds fell, until the Mongols

completed their campaign by taking the castle of Alamut in 1258. The Grand Master of the Assassins was captured and kicked to death in the assault. It was a smart move. The removal of this terrorist sect received the approval of the Sunni majority of Muslims. But the next move did not. Hulagu advanced on the Sunni Islamic capital of Baghdad.

In 1258, the Mongols arrived outside the walls of Baghdad. They began the siege by sending a cloud messages by arrow to the citizens inside. If they resisted, they warned, only non-combatants and government officials would be spared, everyone else would be slaughtered. But the citizens had heard of their brutal reputation and preferred to go down fighting than chance their lives to the mercy of the pagan Mongols. The Mongols now proceeded with their well-rehearsed routine of rolling forward their siege machines. Ammunition for these formidable weapons had to be gathered up to four days' journey away, including palm trees torn down to make the bolts for their giant crossbows and stones gathered from quarries and river beds. Fire-bombs were made from naphtha contained in clay pots. The painting opposite shows Mongol warriors at the siege of Baghdad with a stone-throwing trebuchet in the background.

The Mongols concentrated their assault on the eastern wall of the city. When some citizens tried to escape to the river, they were pelted by stones and fire-bombs. There was no escape. The Mongols took the city and executed its caliph. A shudder went through the Islamic world. One of their most important religious leaders had been killed by the pagan Mongols. From Baghdad, the Mongols rode on to Syria and sacked Aleppo and Damascus. The Christian king of Armenia exploited the situation and added his troops to the Mongol horde. The Sultan Nasir fled before them and the Armenians made the defeated Muslims carry a Christian cross. The Mongol onslaught came to an end with their defeat at the battle of Ain Jalut in 1260, when they were defeated by the Mamluks. In 1265, the son of Hulagu, Teguder Ahmed, converted to Islam.

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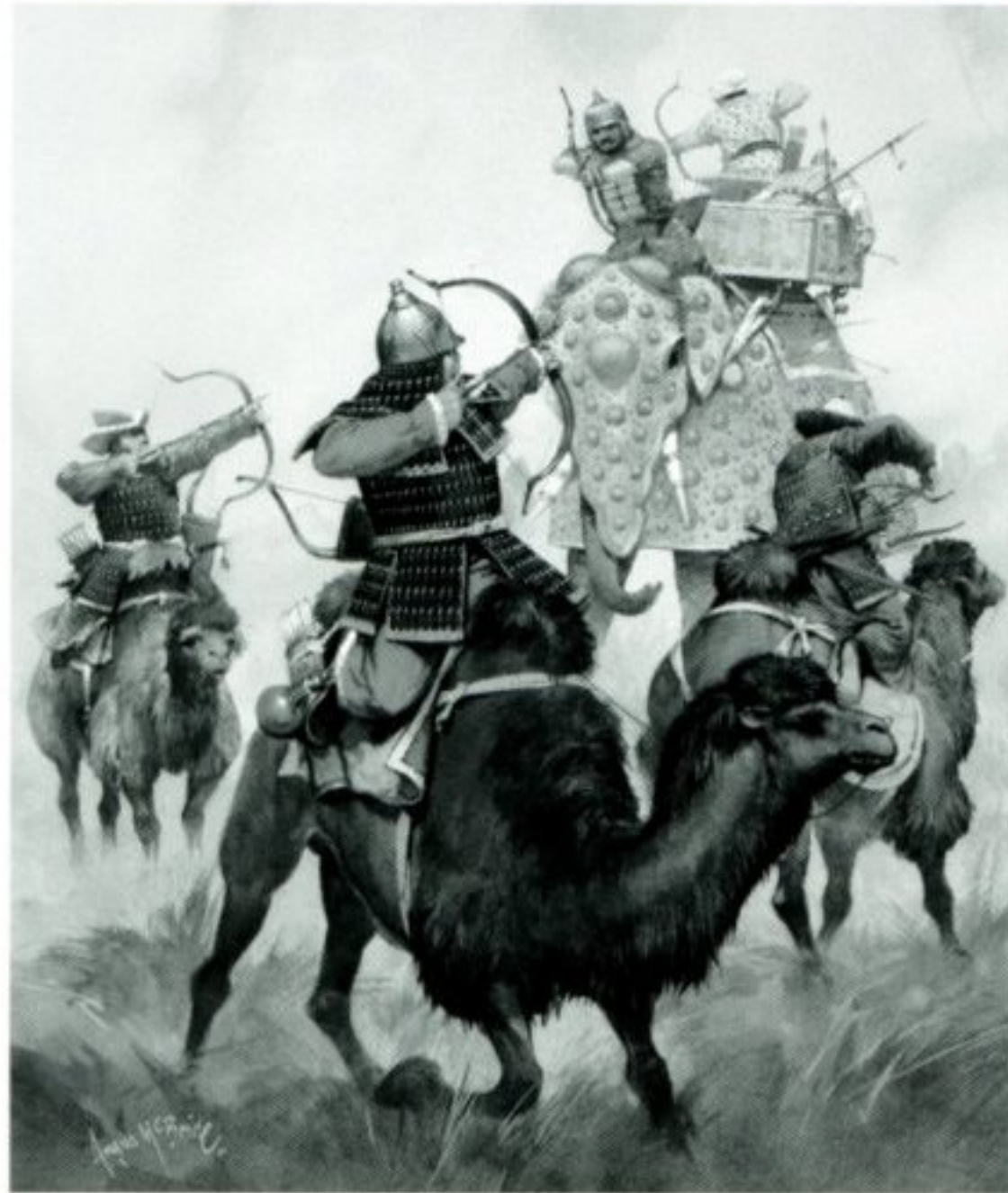
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Tamerlane's warriors attack India, 1398



(Plate 15)

Tamerlane (also known as Timur Lenk or Timur-I Lank) claimed to be restoring the Mongol empire of Genghis Khan and his successors, but in reality he was a Turk and his horde was composed of mainly Muslim Turks, riding alongside Mongols, Iranians and other freebooting raiders. His power base was in the Muslim region of central Asia, but he expanded his realm to include Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. Tamerlane's name means "Timur the Lame" as he limped throughout his life because of arrow wounds to one leg. He exploited dissension within the ranks of the successors of Mongols and Turks to grab power in 1388 and become master of central Asia.

With his capital at Samarkand, Tamerlane and his horde set out on a series of plundering raids across the Middle East. Unlike Genghis Khan and his Mongol successors, who were influenced strongly by the Chinese to establish a well run empire, Tamerlane seems to have followed more in the steps of other Turkic warlords stretching back to Attila the Hun. He was more interested in quick riches. That said, his administration was strict and aimed at military efficiency. He laid down laws for the equipping of his troops.

"For the private soldiers," he ordained, "on an expedition every 18 men should take one tent. Each man should be supplied with two horses, a bow and a quiver of arrows, plus a sword, awl, axe, awl, thread and 10 needles, and a leather knapsack." Tamerlane wanted his men to be self-sufficient and fast moving. Armorers were required to produce "new suits of plate armor of the sort stitched on a backing of red canvas", that is, lamellar armor. Helmets should be "made round and high, some turning back to a point, while in front a piece comes down to guard the face and nose—which is a plate, two fingers broad, reaching the level of the chin below."

Tamerlane spread his realm across central Asia into Iran. Whenever a city refused to surrender, he would massacre all the citizens. Piles of heads would stand outside the city walls as a warning. From there, he struck against the Christian kingdom of Georgia. The defeated Georgian king was forced to become a Muslim. In southern Russia, a rival to Tamerlane had risen, called Toktamish, and he had raided as far north as Moscow, imposing the "Tatar yoke" on the Russians. After many clashes, Tamerlane met Toktamish and his Tatar army in 1391 and defeated them, chasing them for days afterwards to remove this threat. Having secured his rule across the Middle East, Tamerlane next chose to ride against India.

The Muslim sultanate of Delhi was very rich and very attractive to steppe marauders. It included the land of Punjab and Doab. The Turkic campaign began in 1398 with a preliminary raid across the Indus to take the city of Multan. Tamerlane followed six months later with the main army and advanced on Delhi. Some 100,000 prisoners were captured on the way. They were claimed to be all Hindu so that when Tamerlane ordered their mass execution he could pass it off as an act of war against idolaters.

The Sultan of Delhi confronted Tamerlane near the Jumna river. In the Indian army were many war elephants but not even these were enough to stop the Turkish Timurid cavalry. The Indian army was beaten and the Sultan fled, leaving Delhi to be sacked for three days and its citizens slaughtered. Hindu prisoners were subject to horrific torture, including being flayed alive. Tamerlane returned home with an enormous amount of booty and left north India in chaos. The painting opposite shows the clash between Timurid camel archers and Indian war elephants at Jumna river.

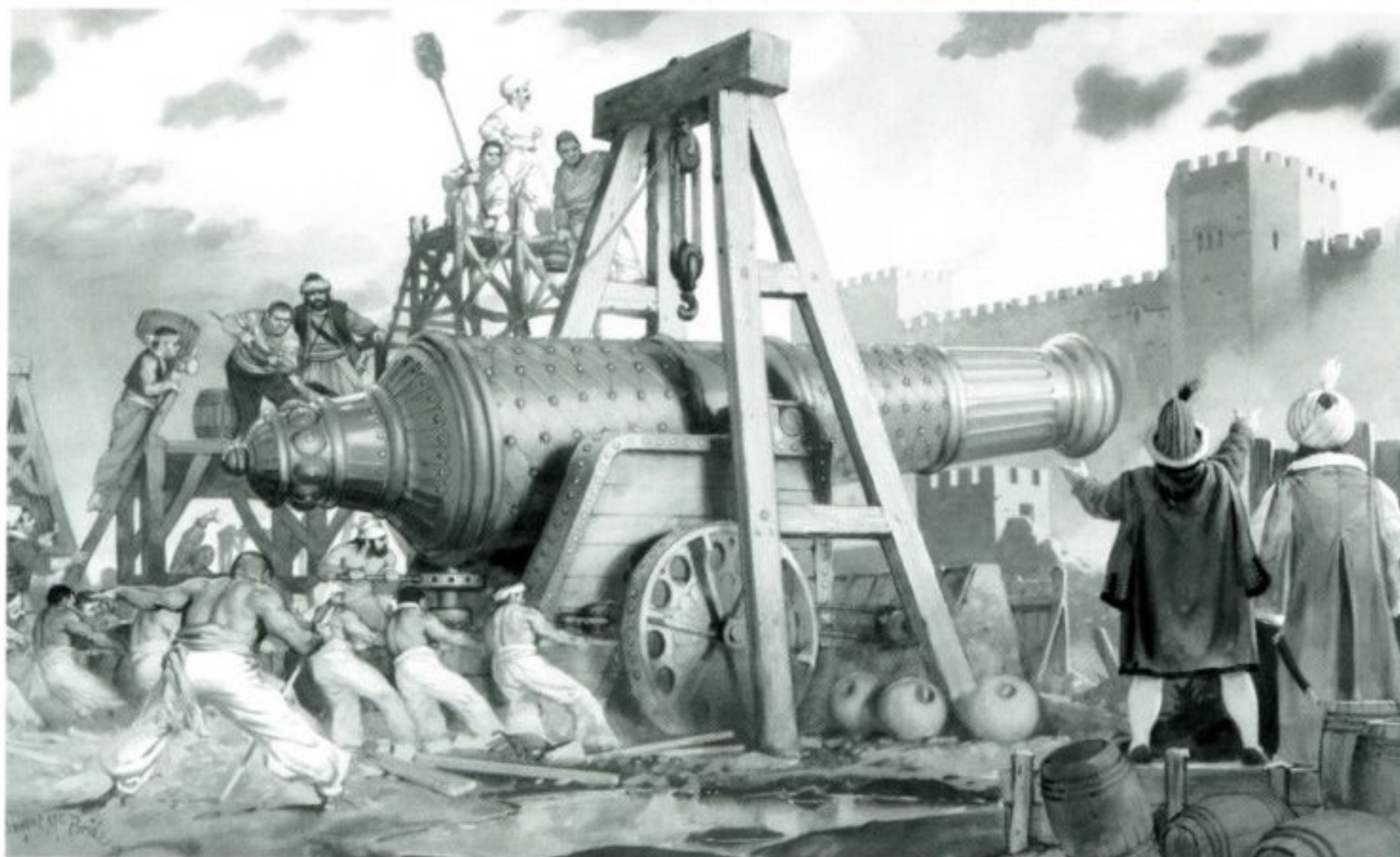
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Giant Turkish cannon at the siege of Constantinople, 1453



(Plate 16)

The greatest blow to effect Christendom in the Middle Ages was the Turkish assault on Constantinople. With the remnants of the Byzantine Empire swept aside, Islam could advance deep into central Europe. The Turks were led by the Ottoman dynasty and their new sultan was Mehmet, the 21-year-old son of a slave-girl. Constantinople had formidable defenses and its impregnable walls meant it remained a bastion of eastern-Christendom long after the surrounding territory had come under Muslim rule. Mehmet prepared his campaign carefully by building a castle on the European side of the Bosphorus, just north of the great city.

The Emperor of Constantinople, Constantine XI, sent out messages to Italy, asking the Pope and the Venetians to come to his assistance with a great crusader army. But only a handful of ships came bringing a few hundred Italian troops to protect commercial interests in the city. By 1453, the total defense force numbered just 8,000 men. Outside the walls, Mehmet's army grew daily. By spring, the Ottoman Turkish army was approximately 160,000 strong, outnumbering the defenders 20 to one. Alongside a fleet of some 90 warships were 200 cannon. The artillery were the pride and joy of Mehmet's army and, especially for the siege, he had a giant cannon created. Cast out of eight-inch thick bronze, the barrel was 27 feet long, and when tested, fired a ball weighing some 1340 pounds for over a mile before it buried itself in six feet of earth. The painting opposite shows the giant cannon in action at the siege.

The siege began in April 1453. The citizens of Constantinople halted the Sultan's ships from entering the bay to the north of the city, called the Golden Horn, by pulling a massive chain across its entrance. On land, a massive bombardment begun with the 200 cannon firing hundreds of rounds every day. The stone and iron balls crashed into the ancient walls, pounding the stone and brick to dust. The defending forces ran from breach to breach, throwing down rubble and working through the night to repair any damage.

Two weeks into the siege and a section of the land wall finally gave way. Mehmet ordered a major assault at night and hundreds of Turkish warriors scrambled over the rubble. Greek and Italian soldiers fought hand to hand to force the Turks back out of the breach. In the face of this resistance, Mehmet grew impatient. Money was pouring from his war-chest. To speed up the process, he ordered thousands of his men to build a road from the Bosphorus to the Golden Horn. Next, he ordered 70 of his warships to be lifted ashore and mounted on wheels. Slowly but surely, being pulled by oxen and men, each ship was transported across land and lowered into the city's impregnable bay. The defenders were dumbfounded.

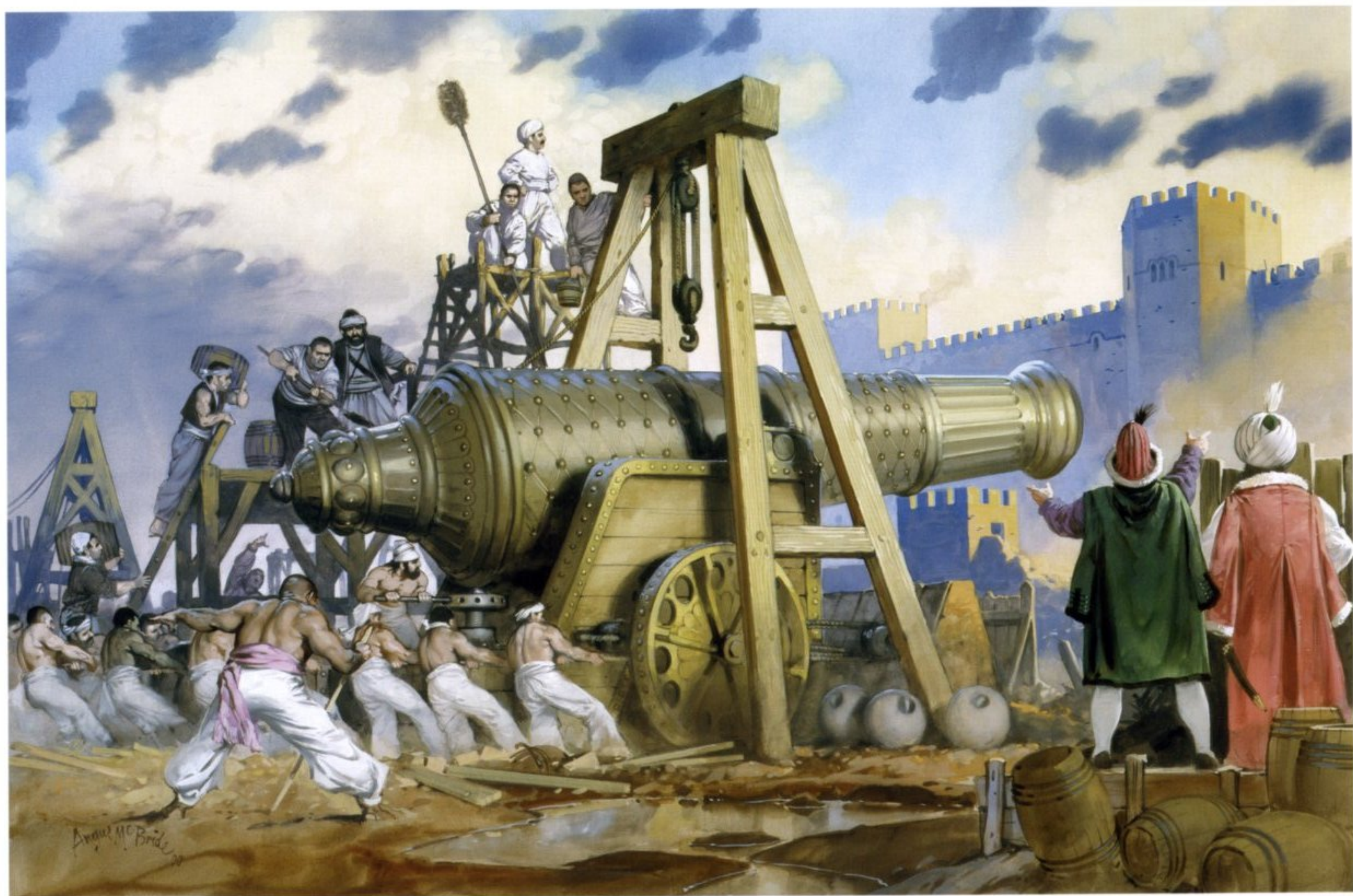
Mehmet could now attack the Greek and Italian ships within the bay and seal off its northern wall. All the sailors captured by his warships were paraded on the shore and executed. In retaliation, the Byzantines marched out their Turkish captives and had their heads cut off. No quarter was to be given or taken.

On Monday, 28 May, the Turkish camp outside Constantinople went remarkably quiet. A few citizens dared to hope it meant that Mehmet was going, but the opposite was true. The Sultan had ordered his soldiers to prepare for one final great attack. Having gathered all their weapons and laid in supplies of cannon balls and arrows, the troops were now resting. Early on Tuesday morning, a dreadful sound rang around the walls of the city. The drums and trumpets of the Turkish army announced the first waves of attack.

Despite a ferocious assault, the first wave of Turks was beaten back, but Mehmet had anticipated this. They had served their purpose of draining the defenders' energy. He sent in a second wave of Turkish soldiers from his homeland. They fought harder and longer, but still the Byzantines held their battlements, the fear of conquest and death forcing them into greater feats of endurance. Mehmet was beginning to doubt himself and flew into a rage. He ordered his final wave of loyal and elite Janissaries to march toward the wall.

To the sound of their drums, the Janissaries hurled themselves up the banks of rubble and clashed with the defenders, who by now had been fighting non-stop for five hours. Janissaries surged over the battlements and many citizens now ran from the walls to be with their families in their homes. Constantine could now see there was little point in organizing a defense and rather than be taken alive, he and his closest companions rushed into the mass of attacking warriors. They were cut down as they fought to their last breath. A worthy end for the very last Christian Roman emperor.

Some citizens managed to scramble into boats in the Golden Horn and escape from the Turkish ships, but the majority fell victim to a day of looting, rape, and massacre in which Mehmet allowed his men to run amok. By the end of the day, Mehmet rode his horse into the city and entered the great church of St. Sophia. From then on, it would be a mosque and the great minarets erected as a result of the Sultan's victory still stand around the ancient Byzantine dome. Constantinople, once the greatest bastion of Christianity, had become the capital of a Muslim empire and its name would be changed forever to Istanbul.



German warriors defend Vienna against the Turks, 1529



(Plate 17)

The conquest of Constantinople heralded a new Muslim invasion of Europe. Already, the Ottoman Turks had taken control of Greece, most of the Balkans, and Bulgaria. Frontier states such as Wallachia and Serbia would next to tumble to their authority, becoming vassal states of the Ottomans. In 1526, Suleiman the Magnificent led a powerful army into Hungary and defeated a Christian army at Mohacs. King Louis II was killed and the road seemed open to central Europe. In 1529, the Ottoman Army entered Austria. Archduke Ferdinand fled before them. The Ottomans seemed about to take Vienna. A siege of the Austrian capital began in late September. Turkish raiders rode as far as Regensburg and Brunn, spreading the kind of fear the Germans had not experienced since the time of the Magyars or the Huns.

Suleiman had believed that Christendom was fatally divided. The fierce rivalry between King Francis I of France and the Habsburg Emperor Charles V, which had been fought out in Italy, had led the French king to make a secret alliance with the Turkish Sultan, allowing them to thrust into the Mediterranean and central Europe without the full force of Christendom opposing them. Following the defeat of Francis I at the battle of Landriano, however, a peace treaty was concluded with the Habsburg emperor in July 1529 at Cambrai. But it came too late for Vienna. The Emperor could not mobilize his full force in time to send help to the Austrian citizens. They would have to face the Turks with a more modest force.

Many Hungarians and Transylvanians recognized the new reality of Ottoman rule and sent troops to join the Sultan's army. But Buda resisted and paid a heavy price for its defiance. Its garrison was mainly German and when the citizens of Buda decided to open their gates to the Turks, rather than being overrun, it was the German soldiers who were massacred by the Janissaries as they left the gates, in contravention of the Sultan's pledge to spare them.

A medieval wall only six feet thick protected Vienna—with little more than 17,000 German and Spanish troops to defend it. The situation did not look promising. Desperate preparations were carried out under the command of the Palatine Count Philip. All buildings beyond the city walls were demolished to make clear fields of fire. An inner defense of earth ramparts protected the south-east corner of the city. On 23 September, Austrian cavalry collided with overwhelming Turkish forces on the approach to Vienna. Over the next three days, the Turks raised their siege works and surrounded the

city.

The main Turkish assault was directed at the southern side of the city at the Carinthian gate. Impressive Ottoman batteries of cannon pounded away at the walls, while Turkish soldiers armed with arquebuses and bows kept the battlements under constant attack. Most dangerous of all was the mining, with Turks seeking to dig under the walls. Counter-mines were dug and blew in some of the tunnels. A massive sortie was then undertaken by the defenders to clear the area behind the Turkish trenches. After heavy fighting, the Turks resumed their mining. On 9 October, two Turkish mines were blown up and the Ottomans rushed at the breach, but the Austrians used beams and stakes to block the gap and fought fiercely, forcing the Turks back.

Three days later, the Sultan was told by his advisers that their supplies were running low and the winter fast approaching. One more effort was needed he decided. Two mines were blown to the east of the Carinthian gate and a section of the wall fell. But this time the Sultan's troops were not as enthusiastic as before. The citizens of Vienna could see that Turkish officers were forced to beat their own troops with maces to encourage them forward. But death at the hands of a German gun or a Turkish beating seemed the same and the assault petered out.

The siege was over. The Sultan gave the order to withdraw to Hungary, but before he left he ordered all Austrian prisoners to be slaughtered. It was a grisly end to the campaign. The painting opposite shows German Landsknechts helping defend Vienna during the siege.



Angus McBride '88

German Landsknechts in the army of Emperor Charles V



(Plate 18)

The Habsburg Emperor Charles V was perhaps the only Christian leader to possess the same magnitude of vast wealth and territory as Suleiman the Magnificent. Not only did he inherit vast estates in Spain, Germany and Italy but he also laid claim to the enormously wealthy trading cities of Burgundy and the Netherlands. On top of this came a massive influx of silver and gold from the New World as a result of the conquests of Cortez and Pizarro. Militarily, Charles could also call upon the martial expertise of the Spanish—at that time the most effective and experience military machine in western Europe—as well as an array of ferocious mercenaries, including the famous German Landsknechts—pike-wielding footsoldiers modeled on the Swiss.

The titanic struggle between Emperor Charles V and the Ottoman Sultan was fought mainly across the Mediterranean with both sides seeking to claim control of strategically important coastal regions and ports, especially along the North African coast. Spain had already established a foot-hold on the Maghreb with conquests of Oran in 1509 and Tripoli in 1510. This advance eastwards suffered a setback in 1517, when the Ottomans defeated the Mamluks in Egypt and incorporated this wealthy land into their empire. A year later, the sultan acquired the services of Barbarossa, the Barbary pirate. Given an official title and an impressive fleet of galleys, Barbarossa took his looting war against the Spanish and captured both Algiers and Tunis. He then raided Reggio Calabria and, most daringly, the city of Nice. In this he was helped by the French who were happy to see an ally of the Emperor—the Duke of Savoy—savaged.

Charles took his crusade against Islam very seriously and personally led a great invasion fleet full of 25,000 soldiers from Barcelona to re-take Tunis in 1535.

The fortified island of Goletta became the southernmost fortress of Christian Habsburg power. In response to this, the Sultan planned an invasion of Italy and landed an advanced force of cavalry in Apulia in 1537. A necessary step to following this up was the seizure of Corfu, but the Venetian island had been recently provided with the latest form of fortification and could not be taken by the Ottomans, forcing the Sultan to abandon his Italian invasion.

Charles struck back by sending his Genoese admiral Andrea Doria to capture Castelnovo in Montenegro. The following year,

however, Barbarossa returned to the city and re-captured it with a tremendous slaughter of the citizens. It looked like stalemate had been reached. But then Charles again took personal command of a massive army and fleet that he led to capture Algiers. Unfortunately, the elements were against him and when he landed, a storm wrecked the Spanish fleet and the invading Imperial army quickly ran short of supplies and had to be evacuated. This disaster meant that for the next ten years, the Ottomans were free to push their frontier forward along the North African coast.

The Ottomans took Tripoli from the Knights of St John in 1551. The Sultan then sent large raiding forces to join with the French in their campaigning in Tuscany against the Habsburg Emperor. A Spanish expeditionary force in Jerba was destroyed in 1560 and a Spanish navy wrecked off the coast of Sicily in 1562. Bad fortune and military failure meant that the tide was turning against Charles V. It was then that the Sultan decided to take the key strategic island of Malta from the Knights of St John, given its defense since the loss of Tripoli.

The painting opposite shows Landsknecht warriors in the army of Charles V. They fought in phalanx formations, modeled after the hugely successful Swiss. They used pikes, halberds and double-handed swords to break the formations of their enemies. They were famous for their slashed multi-colored outfits. The richness of their clothing demonstrated their success in battle (because it reflected their vast amounts of booty) and was meant to outrage their more soberly dressed civilian contemporaries.

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Russians capture Kazan from the Tatars, 1552



(Plate 19)

For hundreds of years, Christian Russians had suffered under the Tatar yoke, being dominated by the remnants of the Mongol hordes that came to their land. But in the 15th century, the Russians began to reverse this process. It was their turn to push back the Islamic realm of Tatar. Russian Tsar Ivan III started the military renaissance with campaigns against the khanate of Kazan from 1467-9. He took advantage of internal conflict to place his own claimant on the throne of Kazan. But the Tatars of the Crimea could not rest with this state of affairs and removed the pro-Moscow dynasty in favor of the bother of the Crimean Khan. There then followed a series of raids into Russian territory. The final straw came when the Khan of Kazan paid homage to Suleiman the Magnificent in 1524. Ottoman power was now on the doorstep of Moscow.

Tatar raids continued on Russia, bringing misery to the thousands who lived in this frontier land. It was said that at least 60,000 Russian men, women and children languished in Kazan as slaves of the Tatars. It was an intolerable situation and when Ivan IV—Ivan the Terrible—came to power, he was determined to bring an end to this abuse of his people. He launched two winter campaigns against Kazan in 1547 and 1549, but both times he had not prepared the land in advance and had no fortified base. The terrible weather meant he was forced to leave his artillery behind and was reduced to nothing more than a large cavalry raid. In 1551, he used ingenuity and engineering to much better effect. He had an entire wooden fortress built in sections in Russian territory and then floated down on the Volga on barges bristling with cannons and soldiers. In just 28 days, they erected the fortress of Sviyazhsk a few miles from Kazan. With a base firmly established, Ivan had more and more stores and siege guns shipped down. In the meantime, the Crimean Tatars had further provoked his fury by raiding deep into southern Muscovy with arms provided by the Ottomans.

Ivan the Terrible's army arrived outside Kazan on 20 August 1552. He had 150,000 warriors and 150 siege guns. The city itself stood on a hill overlooking two rivers. Its oak log walls were covered in clay and stone with 14 stone towers at intervals along them. The garrison was 30,000-strong with 70 cannons, but a horde of 20,000 Tatar cavalry was ready to ride to its rescue from outside. Ivan proceeded methodically with the siege, constructing siege lines from which his artillery could pound the wood and clay walls. A giant siege tower was constructed with cannons mounted on it. Kazan cavalry attacked the besiegers but were driven off. On 2 October, a mine

was blown up beneath the walls and the Russians surged in through the gaps. The Turkic inhabitants were slaughtered and the thousands of Russian slaves liberated.

The fall of Kazan was an enormously symbolic victory for Russia in the early 16th century. It signified their first major use of modern weaponry and showed how this could be employed to push back the Islamic Turkic realm that had for so long dominated the region. From this point onwards, the Russians armed with firearms and artillery proceeded to conquer all of Siberia and Tatar in central Asia over the next few centuries. In the khanate of Kazan, Russian rule was met by a series of rebellions but each time the Russians crushed the revolts with tremendous brutality and maintained their presence. The boundaries of Orthodox Christianity were expanded eastwards.

The painting opposite shows Russian warriors at the siege of Kazan. They are equipped with mainly eastern-influenced weaponry and the horse-mounted figure wears Turkish inspired armor. But although many Russians troops were armed similarly to their Tatar foes, it was their mastery of cannon and firearms that proved the decisive factor.

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La Valette, leader of the Knights of St John at the siege of Malta, 1565



(Plate 20)

The Knights of St John had been an important bulwark against the Ottoman Turks, but the immense power of Suleiman the Magnificent meant they were pushed further and further away from the Holy Land. In 1522, they surrendered their base at Rhodes. In 1551, Tripoli fell to the Turks and they had to withdraw to their island fortress of Malta. From here, Christian pirates sailed out to attack the Ottoman fleets and bases along the North African coast. If Suleiman the Magnificent was to rule the Mediterranean then Malta had to be captured.

In 1565, with recent disasters endured by the Habsburg Spanish fleet and army, Suleiman judged the time right for an assault on Malta. He gathered a large fleet and army 40,000 strong. It seemed an enormous hammer with which to crush the nut of Malta. Grand master Jean de la Valette could only call upon a force of 2500 soldiers. But he was a veteran of the Ottoman siege of Rhodes and many of his inner core of Knights Hospitallers were formidable soldiers. Their defense centered on three castles around the Grand Harbor—St Elmo, Senglea and Birgu.

Landing on 18 May, the Ottoman forces initially concentrated their forces on St Elmo. They brought an enormous artillery train and fired some 60,000 rounds at the walls of the bastion. But the fortress was of a new design by an Italian engineer and resisted the initial storm of firepower with its angled ramparts able to deflect incoming fire and provide outgoing flanking shots. The 1500 defenders had just 20 cannons to reply, however, and the Turkish onslaught eventually smashed down its walls. The defenders fought to the bitter end, hurling grenades down at the assaulting Turks. Their gallant defense lasted until 29 June when the walls of St Elmo finally crumbled and all the defenders were killed.

In the meantime, the Turks had attacked both Senglea and Birgu and it seemed as though they might be able to close their stranglehold on Valetta and the port. But then a Christian force from Medina counter-attacked the Ottoman camp on 7 August. This raised a fear that a major relief force might be on its way and the Ottomans faltered, withdrawing from their positions. They returned to the attack later in the month, but by this time the summer heat was proving a problem, with their supply chain unable to deliver enough drinking water—a crucial supply fleet had been captured by the Christians. The Knights of St John stayed at the battlements of their defenses at Birgu and would not be move, despite not being strong

enough to launch any sorties of their own. But help was coming.

On 7 September, the Habsburg Spanish viceroy of Sicily, Don Garcia de Toledo, sailed into view with 11,000 troops. It was too much for the Turks. They did not have the strength to resist this new force and sailed away—never to attack Malta again. It had been a costly venture for the Sultan with at least 24,000 of his men estimated as casualties. The Maltese lost about 5000 defenders. The painting opposite shows la Valette leading his Knights of St John at the height of the fighting.

The siege of Malta was the penultimate campaign of Suleiman the Magnificent. The next year he led one last campaign into Hungary and died in a camp besieging Sziget. Emperor Charles V had died eight years earlier, but he had passed his Spanish possessions on to an equally vigorous warlord in the guise of Phillip II. The battle between Christian and Muslim in central Europe and the Mediterranean would continue throughout the rest of the 16th and 17th centuries.

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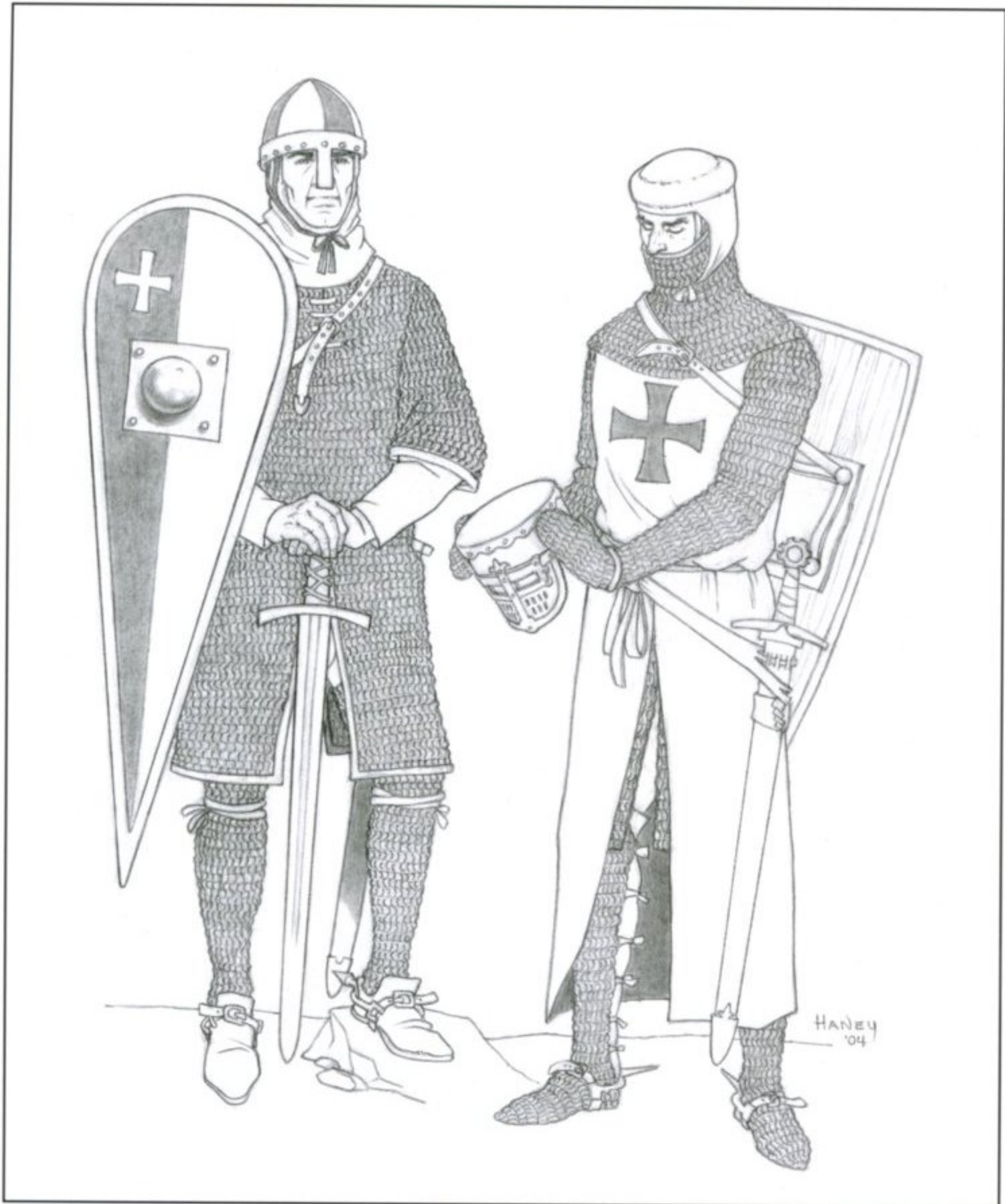
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Crusader warriors, 12th to 13th centuries



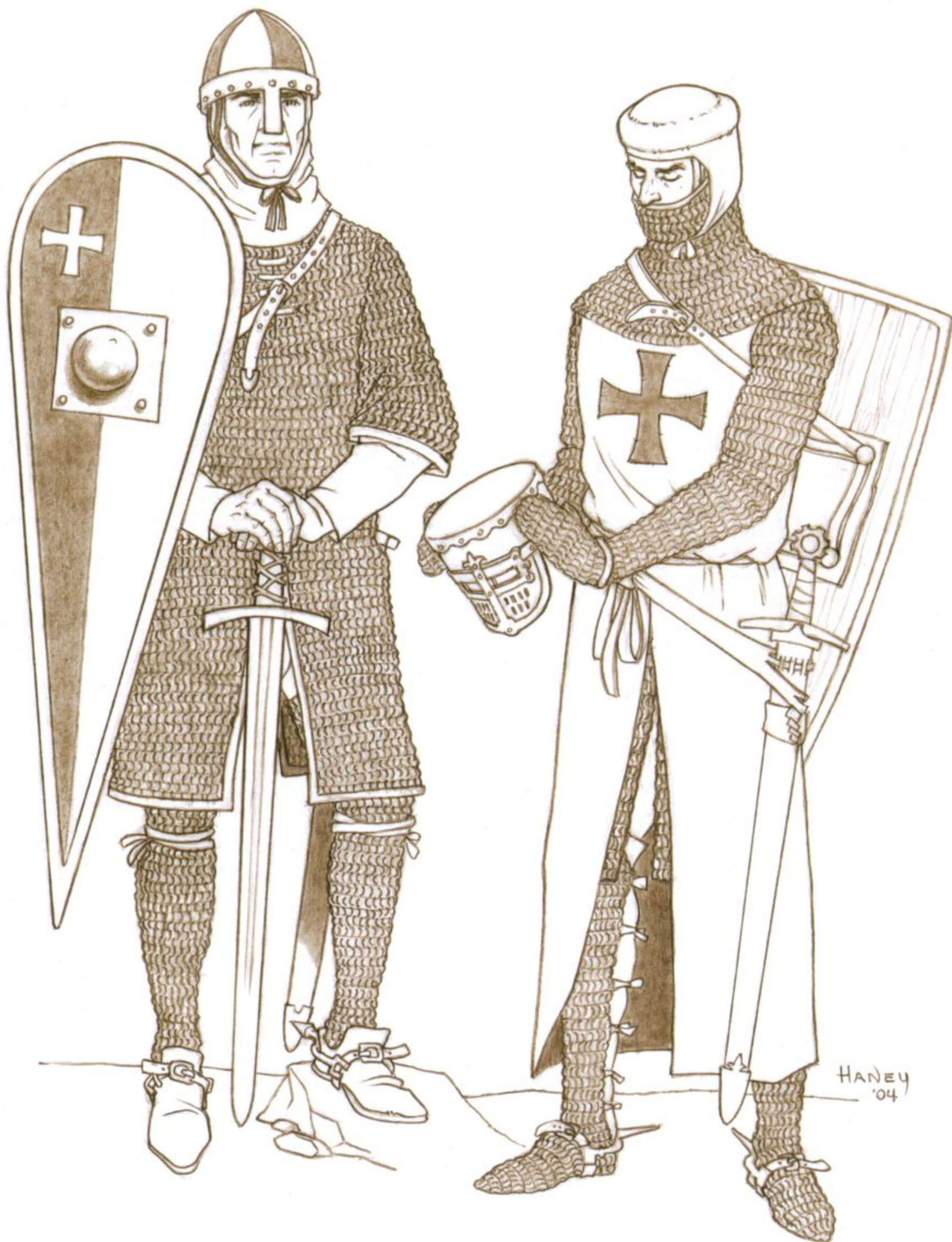
(Plate 21)

The figure on the left is typical of Crusader warriors of the First Crusade. Unsurprisingly, he looks very much like the Norman warriors we are familiar with from the Bayeux Tapestry, because many of the early Crusaders were in fact Norman warriors experienced in fighting Muslims in Sicily and the Mediterranean.

He wears mail armor in the form of a hauberk with wide elbow length sleeves and the addition of mail chausses or stockings gartered below the knees. He wears a typical conical helmet with steel nasal. Beneath this he wears a leather coif. His scabbard is worn beneath the hauberk. He is a horseman, equipped with prick spurs and a round top kite-shaped shield ideal for fighting from horseback. In addition to his sword, he would have carried a lance.

The figure on the right is typical of a later Crusader warrior of the Third Crusade. He wears a mail hauberk with strips of mail covering his legs, but in addition has close fitting mail sleeves with mail mittens and a mail aventail giving extra strength to his shoulder armor and

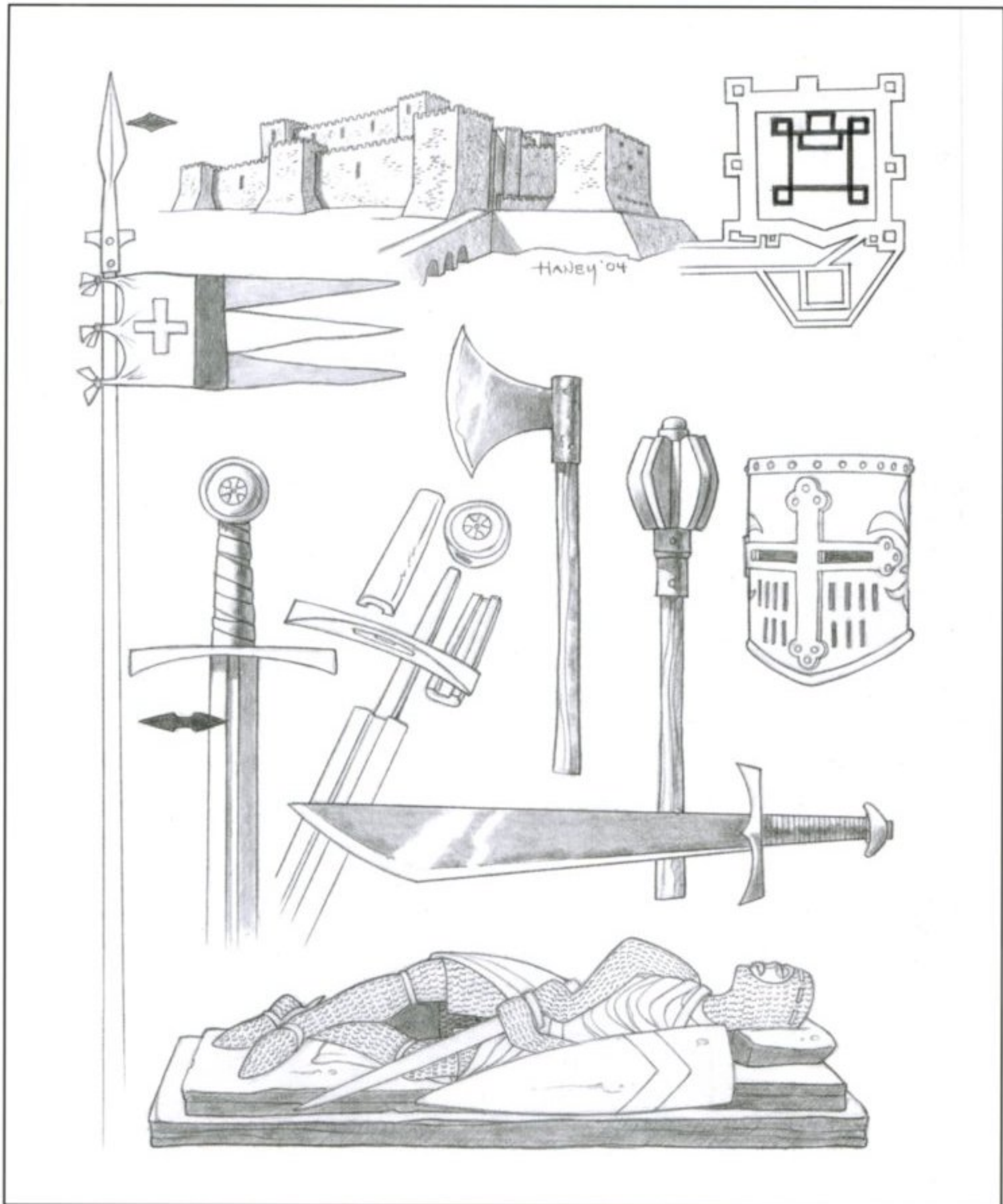
protecting the neck and lower head. He wears a padded arming cap over which he would wear a helm. Over his armor, the warrior wears a long surcoat, which in this case is white with a red cross, signifying the order of Knights Templar.



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Crusader arms & armor, 12th to 13th centuries



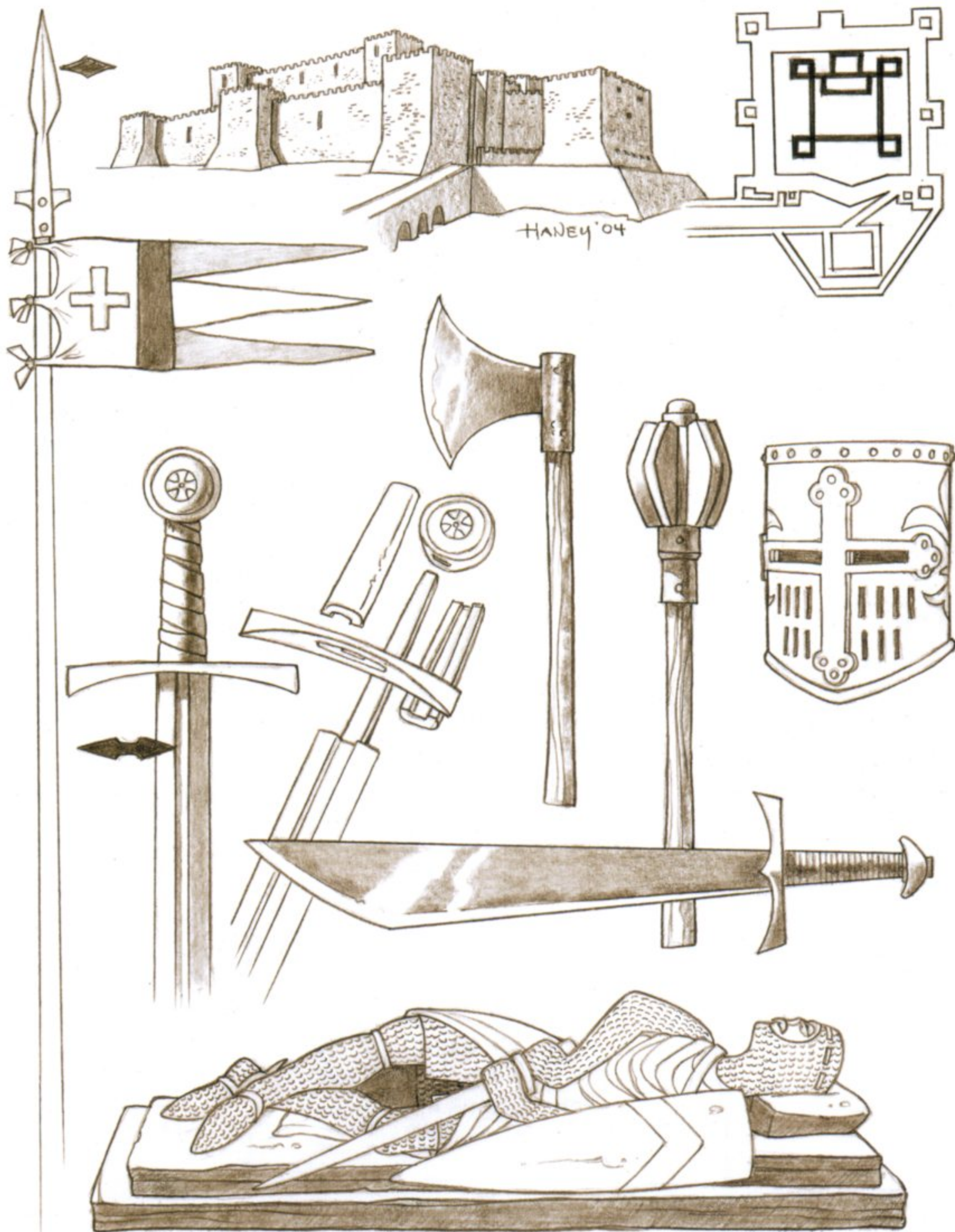
(Plate 22)

The Crusader knights of western Europe took their particular method of contact warfare to the Near East. This was in stark contrast to the manner of Asian warfare that had predominated for hundreds of years in this region (and still does) in which endless guerrilla raids are the preferred method of attack, finally wearing down an enemy. But this was not what the Crusaders wanted. They were brought up on the idea of the decisive conflict in which two forces gathered to win power in one day. To this end, the Crusader knights preferred contact weapons such as lances, swords and flanged maces, all illustrated here. The falchion, with its broad slashing blade, is a heavy armor-shattering sword.

The typical armor for these Crusader knights consisted of a great steel helm worn over a mail shirt with mail armor and leg coverings. The tomb effigy drawn at the bottom is typical of many that still survive in Britain's churches. They are excellent records of the details of arms and armor carried by these warriors, but the crossed legs, once thought to signify a journey to the Holy Land, is now believed

to be simply an artistic device, perhaps indicating a figure ready to spring to life again and draw his sword to defend Christianity whenever needed.

The drawing and plan of Belvoir Castle is a good example of the Crusader castles built in the Holy Land. This magnificent fortress was constructed overlooking the Jordan valley in Galilee. Belvoir was a bastion of the religious fighting order of the Knights Hospitaller. This order, enriched by massive donations, could afford to build some of the finest castles in the region.



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