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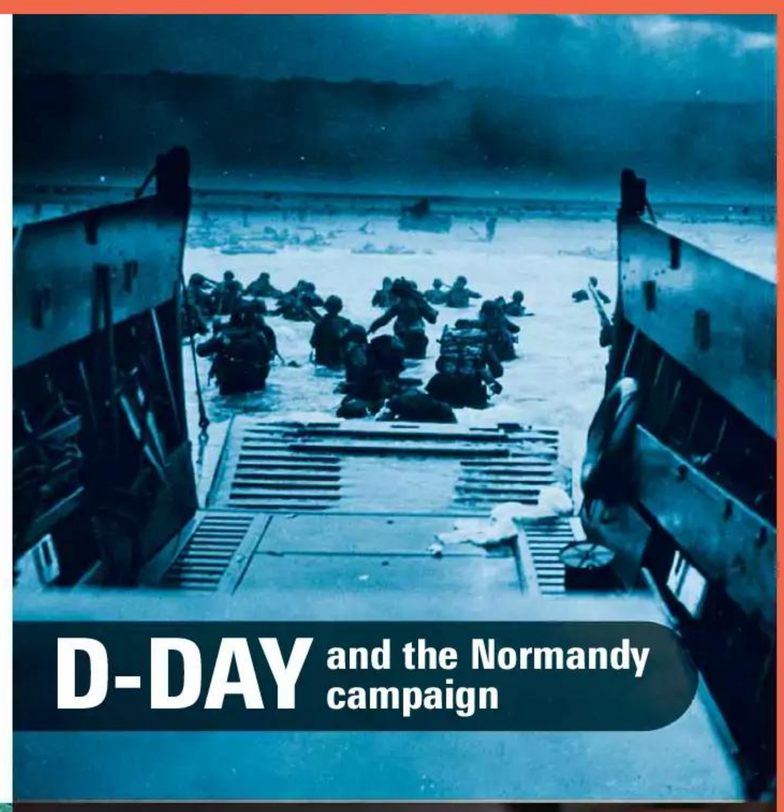

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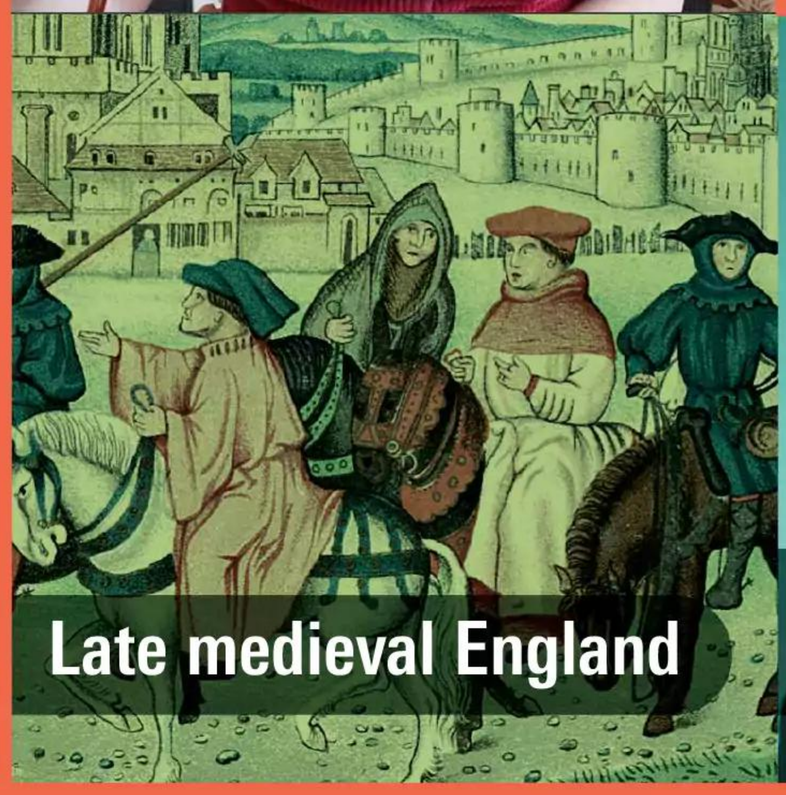

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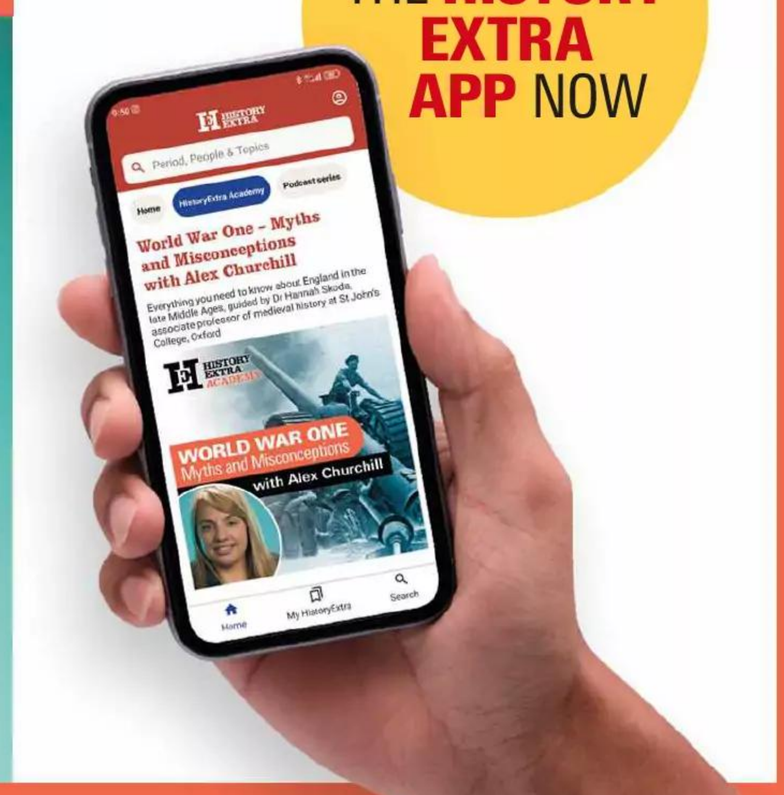

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EDITORIAL
Editor Matt Elton
matt.elton@immediate.co.uk
Production editor Joe Pontin
Art editor Sarah Lambert
Picture editor Lisa Moses

THANKS
Sheu Ho, Susanne Frank, Robert Attar, Samantha Nott, Spencer Mizen

PRESS & PR
Communications manager
Natasha Lee *natasha.lee@immediate.co.uk*

CIRCULATION
Circulation manager John Lawton

ADVERTISING & MARKETING
Senior brand sales executive
Sarah Luscombe 0117 300 8530
Brand sales executive
Victoria Allen 0117 300 8212
victoria.allen@immediate.co.uk
Group direct marketing manager
Laurence Robertson 00353 5787 57444
Direct marketing executive
Aisha Babb
US representative
Kate Buckley *buckley@buckleypell.com*

PRODUCTION
Production director Koli Pickersgill
Production manager Lee Spencer
Senior repro technician Darren McCubbin
Ad services co-ordinator Cherine Araman

PUBLISHING
Commercial director Jemima Dixon
Content director David Musgrove
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BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE
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WELCOME

The crusades have captured the public's imagination like few other periods in medieval history. Romantic tales of brave Christian soldiers venturing to the Holy Land have been the stuff of Victorian novels and Hollywood blockbusters.

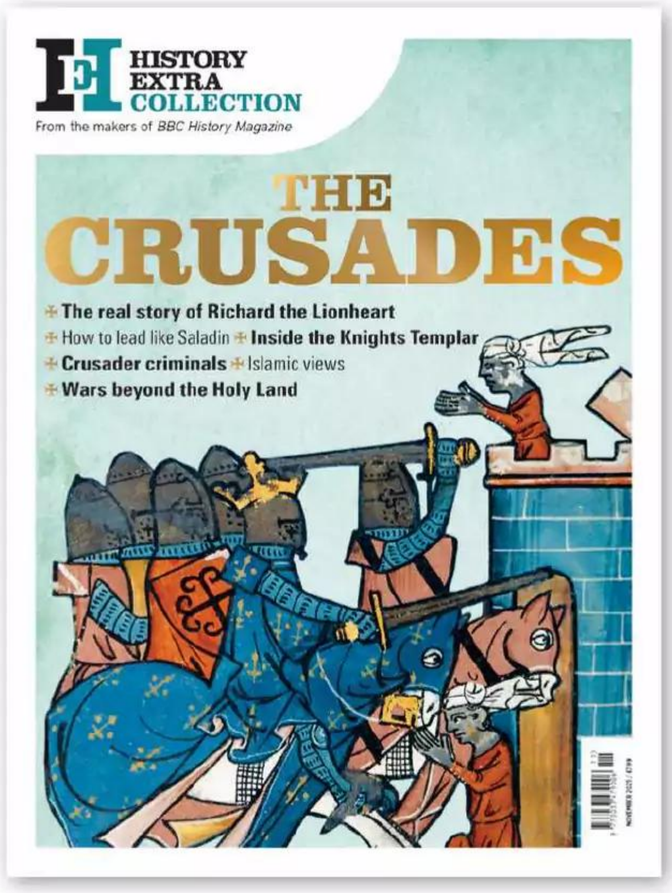
In this collector's edition of *BBC History Magazine*, we ask where the truth lies, starting at the 11th-century **roots of the crusading movement**. Experts describe the **lives of ordinary people** who joined the crusades, and examine their motives – from **piety to greed**. And we take a look at the profound, and lasting, impact of the crusades on the region and its people.

The crusades have their own cast of extraordinary characters from **Richard the Lionheart** to **Saladin**. We ask what made them such great leaders. We'll examine the surprisingly complex relationships between **Muslims and crusaders**, and ask whether the crusades were really a 'clash of civilisations' between **Islam and Christianity**.

Finally, we'll explore the continuing impact of the crusades on the **modern world**, nearly a thousand years after the first blood was shed.

The Crusades is a newly expanded version of our collector's edition first published in 2019, and compiles and updates articles that have appeared previously in *BBC History Magazine*. I hope you find it an enjoyable and informative read.

Matt Elton
Managing editor



"Your reputation would have been enhanced by going on crusade, with benefits for your material standing"

Historian CHRISTOPHER TYERMAN explains why fighting for your faith was a rational move, on page 22

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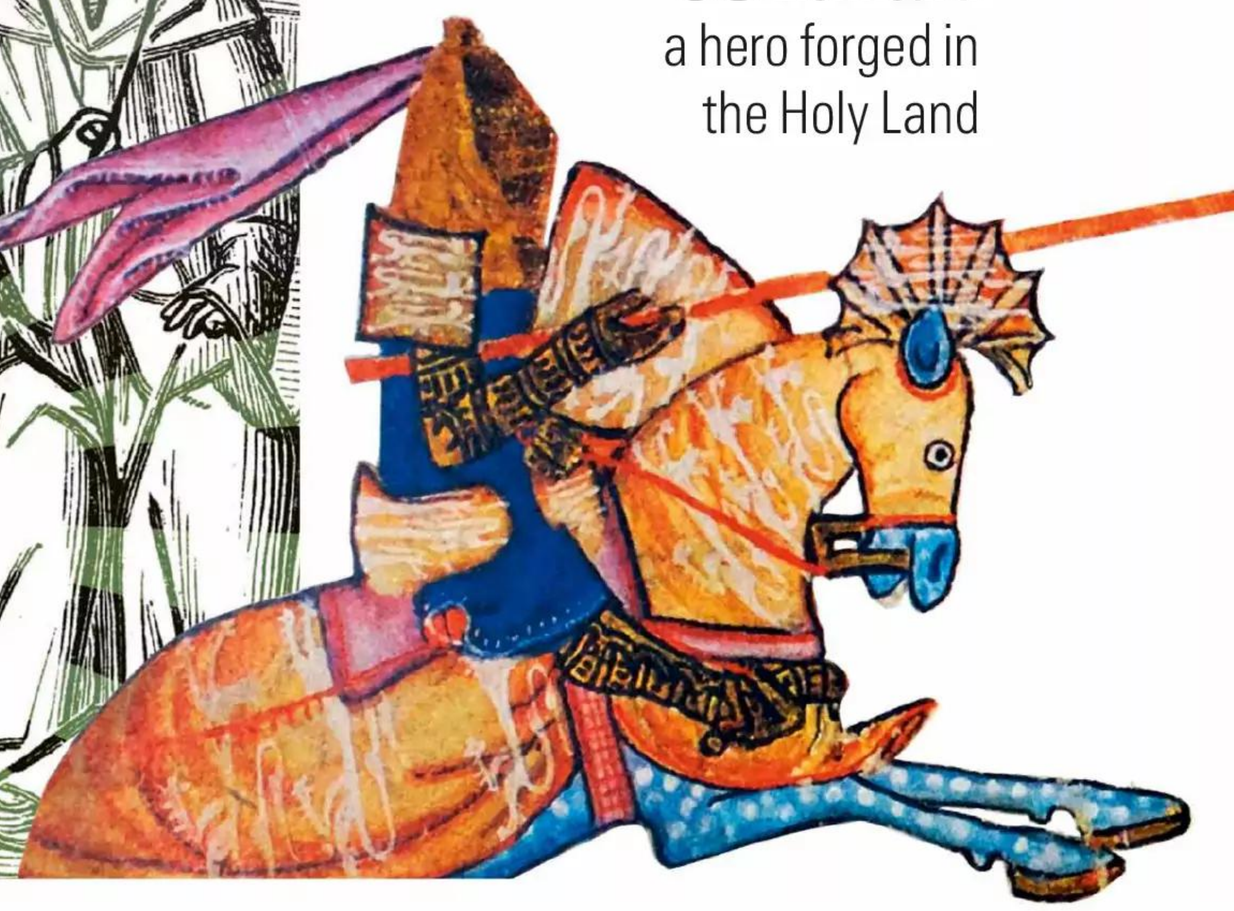

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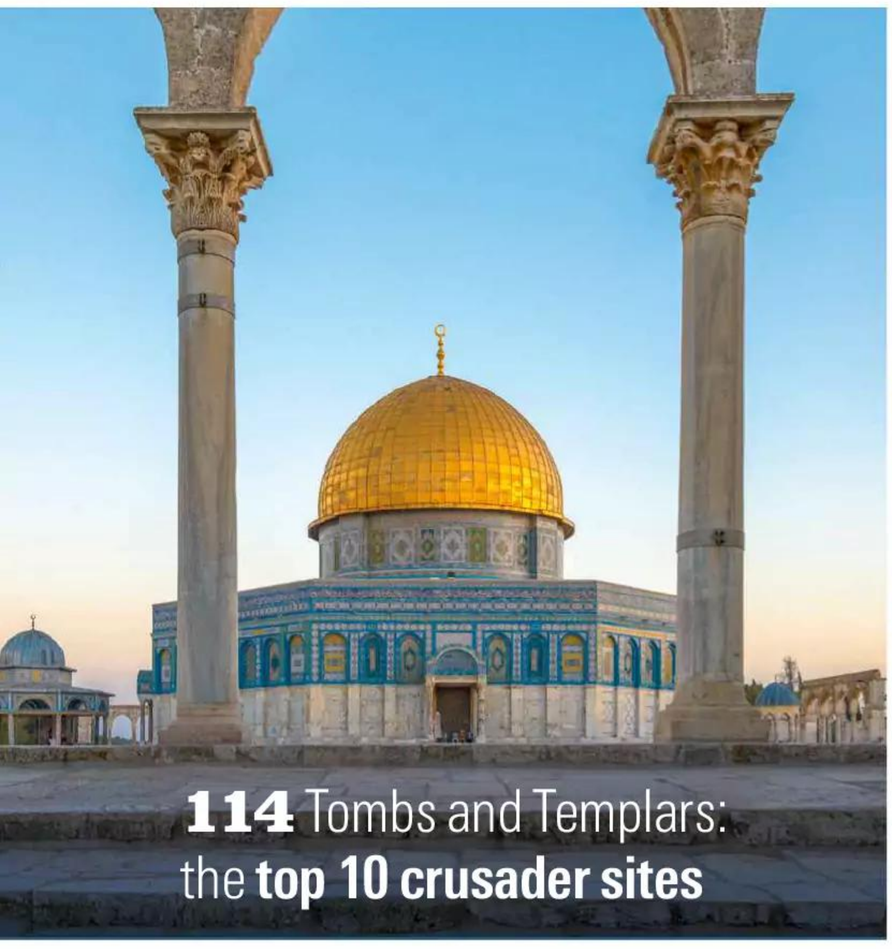

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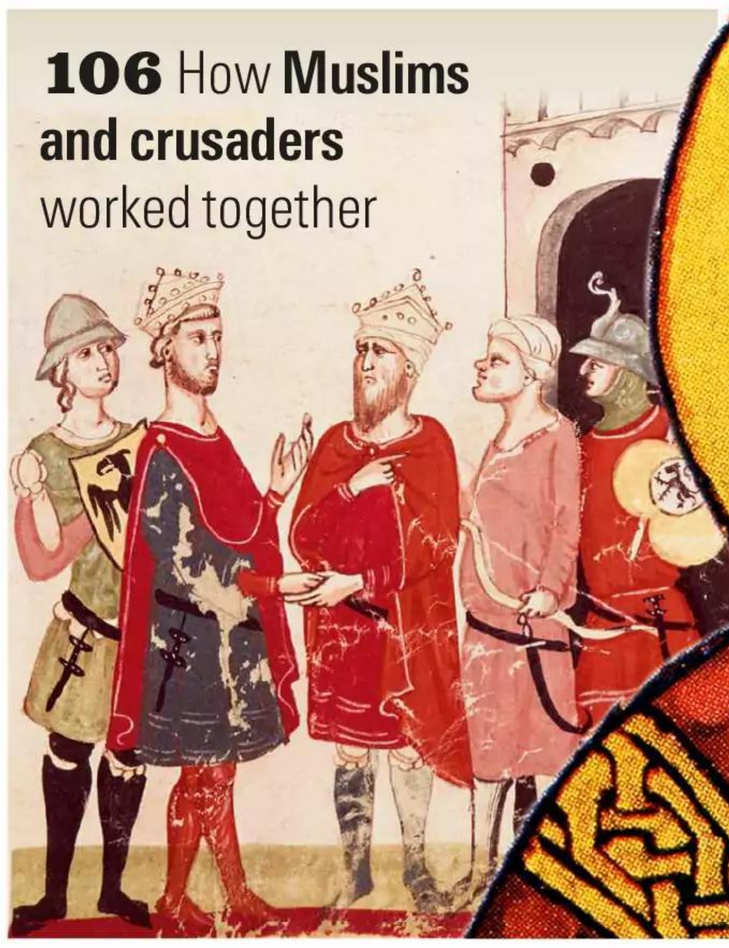

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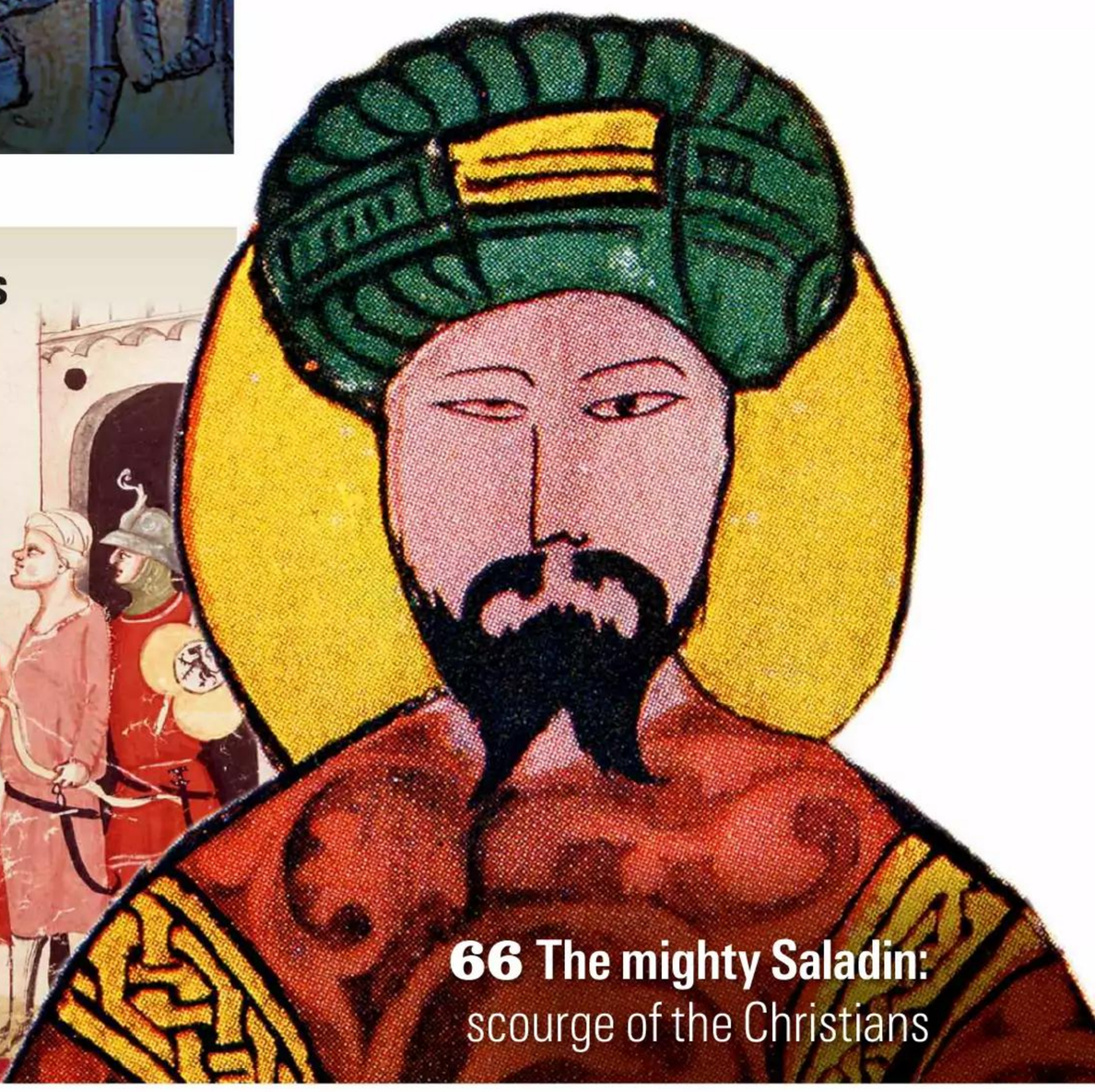

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Europe and the Holy Land in the 13th Century

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Athens

Methoni

CRETE

RHODES

KINGDOM OF CYPRUS

Tripoli

Tyre

Hattin

Acre

SEA OF GALILEE

Jaffa

DEAD SEA

Ascalon

Jerusalem

Damietta

Alexandria

Cairo

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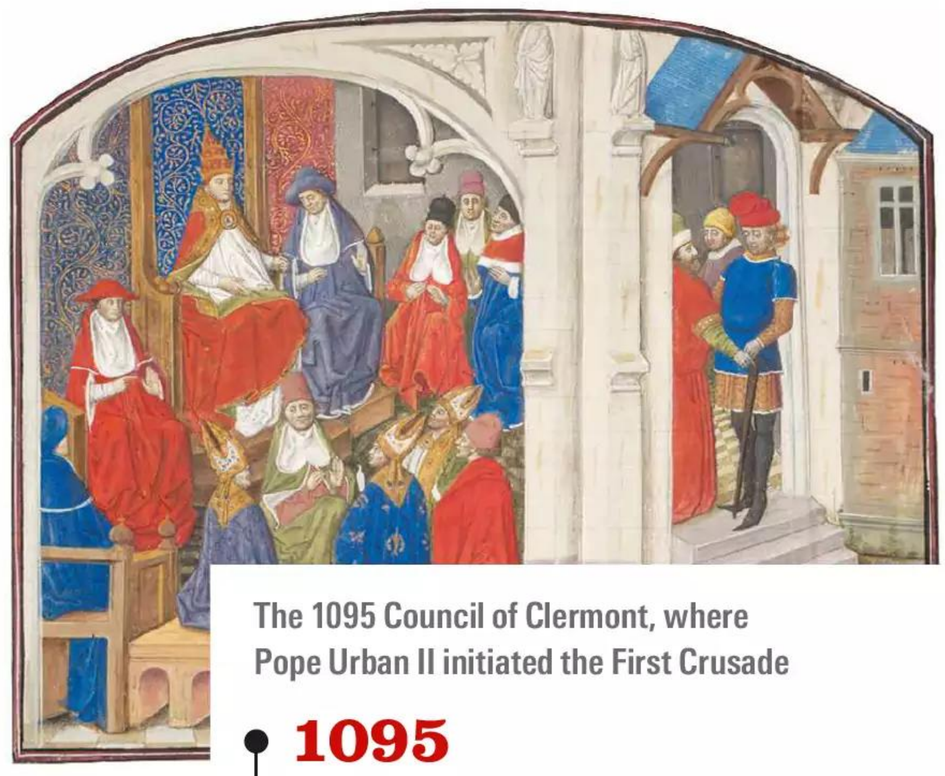
Timeline

Sophie Thérèse Ambler describes the events that shaped Christendom and the Islamic world during the long struggle for the Holy Land



The 1095 Council of Clermont, where Pope Urban II initiated the First Crusade

The Christians march out of Antioch to face the Turks in 1098. The city lay in a crucial position on the route to Palestine

1071
Turks overrun the Byzantine border

After taking control of Iraq and Syria, the Seljuk Turks under the command of Sultan Alp Arslan defeat Byzantine forces at the battle of Manzikert and conquer Anatolia.

1095
The crusading movement is born

Pope Urban II summons a council at Clermont and charges the crowd of knights and churchmen to aid the Greeks in the east and stop the molestation of pilgrims and the desecration of Christian sites in the Holy Land.

28 June 1098
St George 'saves' the crusaders

The Franks march out of Antioch to engage Kerbogha's forces in an all-or-nothing battle. According to participant reports, they see "a countless host of men on white horses, whose banners were all white": heavenly reinforcements led by St George, St Mercurius and St Demetrius.

1090

Alexius I Comnenus appealed to western Europe for help fighting the Seljuk Turks

March 1095
A call from the east

A papal council at Piacenza receives an envoy from the Byzantine emperor, Alexius I Comnenus. Assailed and desperate, the Byzantines plead for military assistance against the Seljuks – and Pope Urban II determines to respond.

1096
The First Crusade gets underway

Christian knights and pilgrims from the west, known as the Franks, journey towards the Holy Land, taking Nicaea and surviving a ferocious Seljuk attack at Dorylaeum. They besiege Antioch in northern Syria, finally entering the city in June 1098 – before they, in turn, are besieged by the forces of Kerbogha, the atabeg (governor) of Mosul.

1099
The Holy City is conquered

Inspired by victory at Antioch, the crusaders march on Jerusalem, capturing the city from the Fatimids in July and massacring the inhabitants. Godfrey of Bouillon, who engineers the victory, is chosen as first ruler of Jerusalem.

French nobleman Godfrey of Bouillon led the successful siege of Jerusalem

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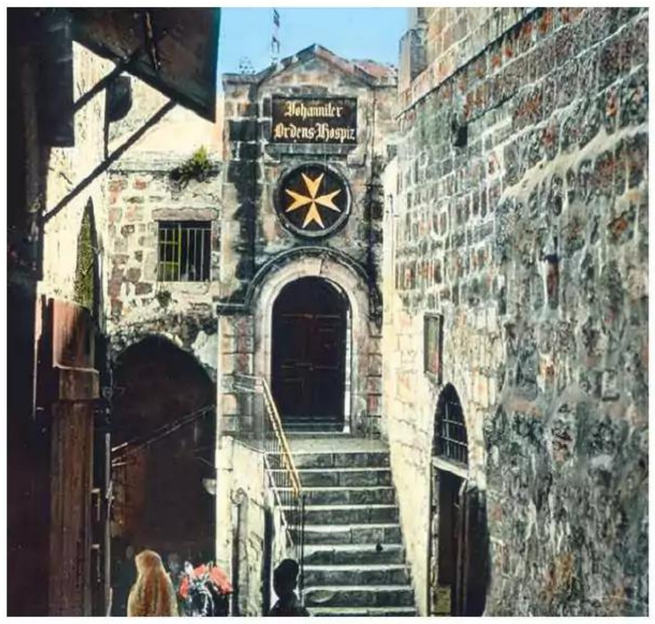
The death of Roger of Salerno at the battle of the Field of Blood on 28 June 1119

1119
Christian forces meet disaster
With the four new crusader states established after the First Crusade (Jerusalem, Antioch, Edessa and Tripoli) politically unstable, the regent of Antioch, Roger of Salerno, engages the Turkmen ruler Ilghazi. His army is annihilated in a battle known as the Field of Blood.

1105
A call to jihad
In the wake of the Christian victory, a jurisprudent from Damascus, Ali ibn Tahir al-Sulami, preaches a sermon calling on Muslims to take up arms in jihad against the Franks.

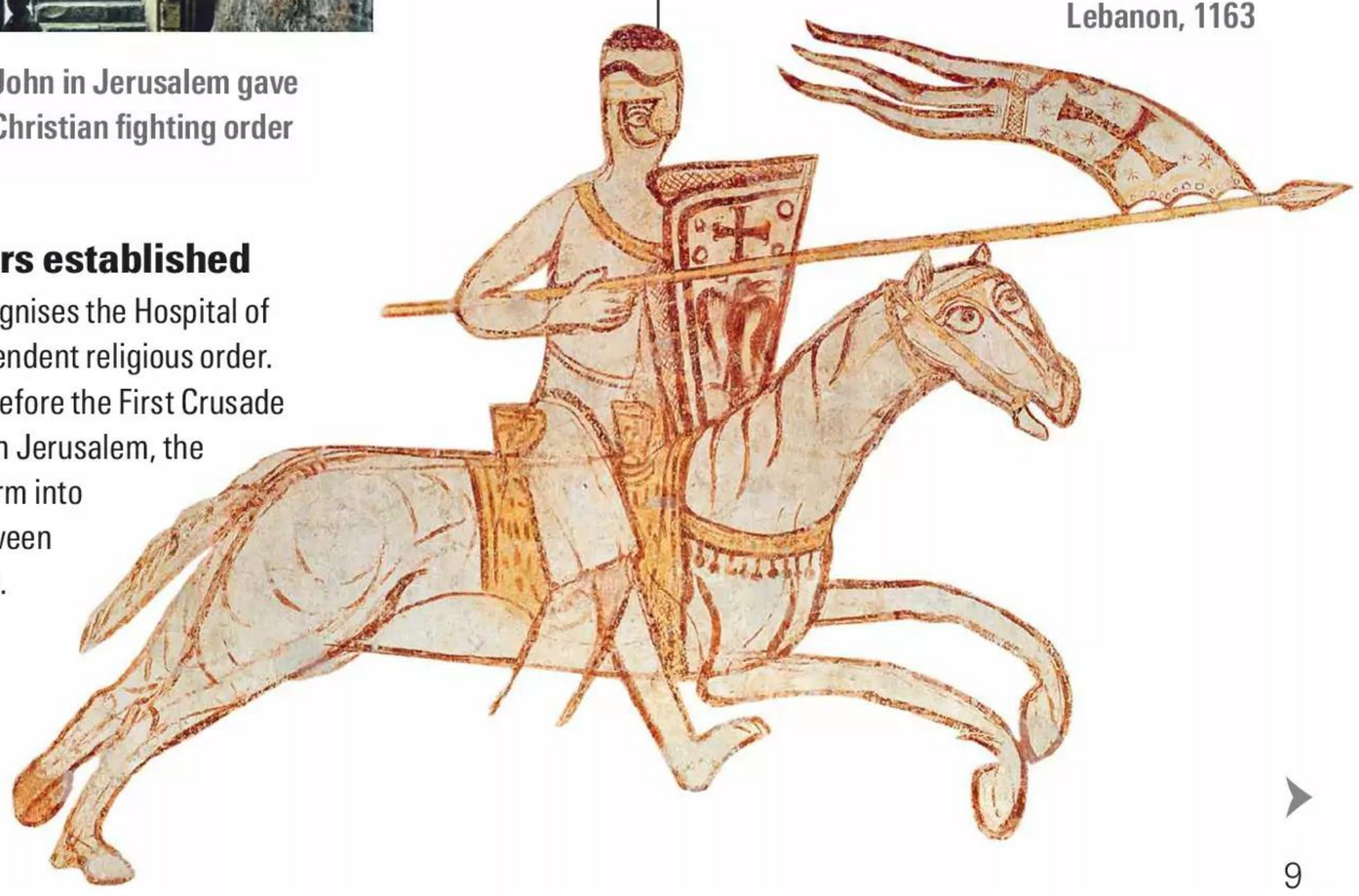


The Hospital of St John in Jerusalem gave rise to a fearsome Christian fighting order

1113
The Hospitallers established
Pope Paschal II recognises the Hospital of St John as an independent religious order. Originally founded before the First Crusade to care for pilgrims in Jerusalem, the Hospitallers transform into a military force between the 1120s and 1160s.

1129
The Templars swear oaths
Under the guidance of Bernard of Clairvaux and grand master Hugh de Payns, the first rule of the Knights Templar is drawn up. Members of the order, originally founded in 1119, are sworn to abandon worldly goods and devote their lives to protecting pilgrims and defending the crusader states.

A chapel fresco showing a Templar knight charging into battle at al-Buqaia, modern Lebanon, 1163



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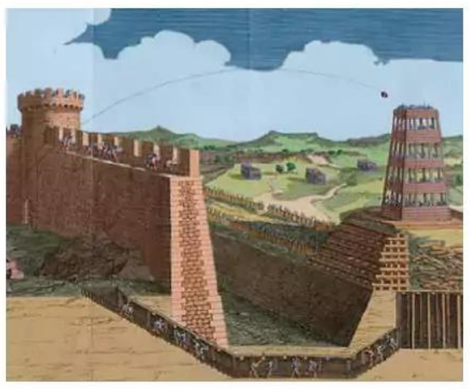
Timeline

The cover of the *Melisende Psalter* depicts scenes from the life of David in ivory and turquoise

1130 1150 1170

1131
A crusader queen takes the throne
Melisende, daughter of Baldwin II, ascends the throne of Jerusalem with her husband, Fulk V of Anjou. She later commissions a manuscript known as the *Melisende Psalter*, one of the most stunning artworks of the era.



The siege of Edessa in 1144. The city's fall was the catalyst for the Second Crusade

1144
The resurgence of the Seljuks
Imad al-Din Zangi, a Turkish atabeg, conquers Edessa on behalf of the Seljuks. Pope Eugenius III responds by launching a new crusade, with a preaching campaign led by Bernard of Clairvaux.

1147–49
The Second Crusade ends in failure
Crusader armies – led by Conrad of Germany and Louis VII of France, accompanied by his queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine – are overwhelmed by the Seljuks. After a failed attempt on Damascus, Louis and Eleanor return home.

1169
Saladin emerges
Nur al-Din, son of Zangi, appoints as head of his armies in Egypt a young Kurdish commander named Salah al-Din – perhaps more commonly known today as Saladin. Gathering power, he goes on to conquer Syria by the mid-1170s before leading attacks on the kingdom of Jerusalem.

An 16th-century portrait of Saladin, great sultan of Egypt and Syria – and Richard the Lionheart's mighty opponent

1183
A literary giant writes his masterpiece
Usama ibn Munqidh, a leading diplomat and warrior who goes on to serve Saladin in his later years, describes in his remarkable *Book of Contemplation* his encounters – and occasional friendships – with the Franks.

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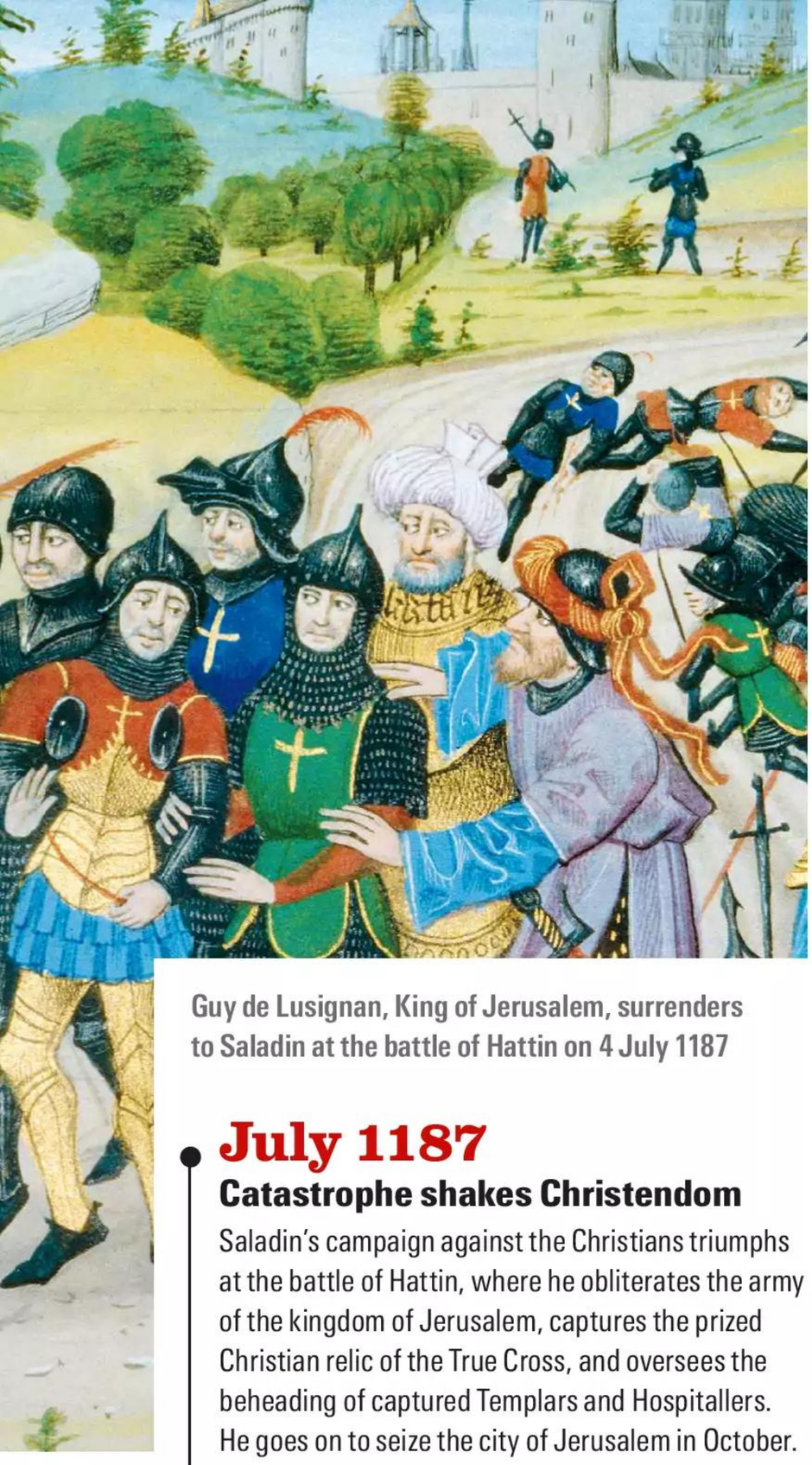


Guy de Lusignan, King of Jerusalem, surrenders to Saladin at the battle of Hattin on 4 July 1187

July 1187

Catastrophe shakes Christendom

Saladin's campaign against the Christians triumphs at the battle of Hattin, where he obliterates the army of the kingdom of Jerusalem, captures the prized Christian relic of the True Cross, and oversees the beheading of captured Templars and Hospitallers. He goes on to seize the city of Jerusalem in October.

The Muslims of Acre surrender the keys of the city to Philip II and Richard I after the siege

June–August 1191

The Lionheart arrives at Acre

Richard (who acquires the name 'Lionheart' due to his brave leadership) brings his army to join the siege of Acre. He takes the city, and – wanting to press on and claiming that Saladin has stalled negotiations – orders some 2,700 Muslim prisoners to be executed in view of both armies.

1206

The rise of the Mongol empire

The warlord Temüjin is elected leader of the Mongols and assumes the title Chinggis (Genghis) Khan. Over the following decades, he and his successors conquer north China, what will become Iran and Turkmenistan, and the Seljuk sultanate of Rûm, sacking Baghdad in 1258.

The great Mongol leader Genghis Khan, whose armies conquered most of Eurasia

A 16th-century portrait of Philip II of France, who joined the Third Crusade alongside Richard the Lionheart

October 1187

France and England respond to Hattin

Aghast at the calamity of Hattin, new pope Gregory VIII calls on Christendom to repent of its sins. The greatest Christian rulers – including Philip II of France and Richard I of England – subsequently take crusading vows.

August 1191–October 1192

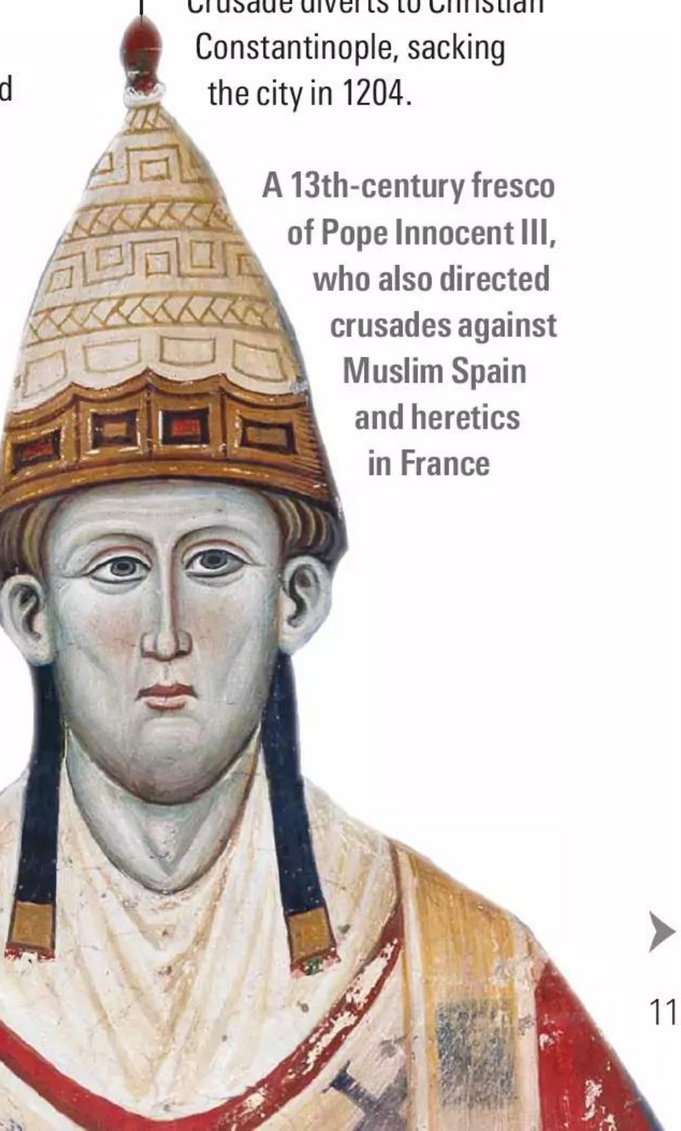
The Third Crusade ends in truce

En route to Jerusalem, Richard's army defeats an attack by Saladin at Arsuf. The king decides Jerusalem cannot be held long-term, agrees a truce with Saladin and departs, having secured a key foothold in the Holy Land.

1198

A new leader for Christendom

The young, dynamic pope Innocent III is elected, and spearheads a resurgence of the crusading movement – but the first phase ends in infamy when the Fourth Crusade diverts to Christian Constantinople, sacking the city in 1204.



A 13th-century fresco of Pope Innocent III, who also directed crusades against Muslim Spain and heretics in France

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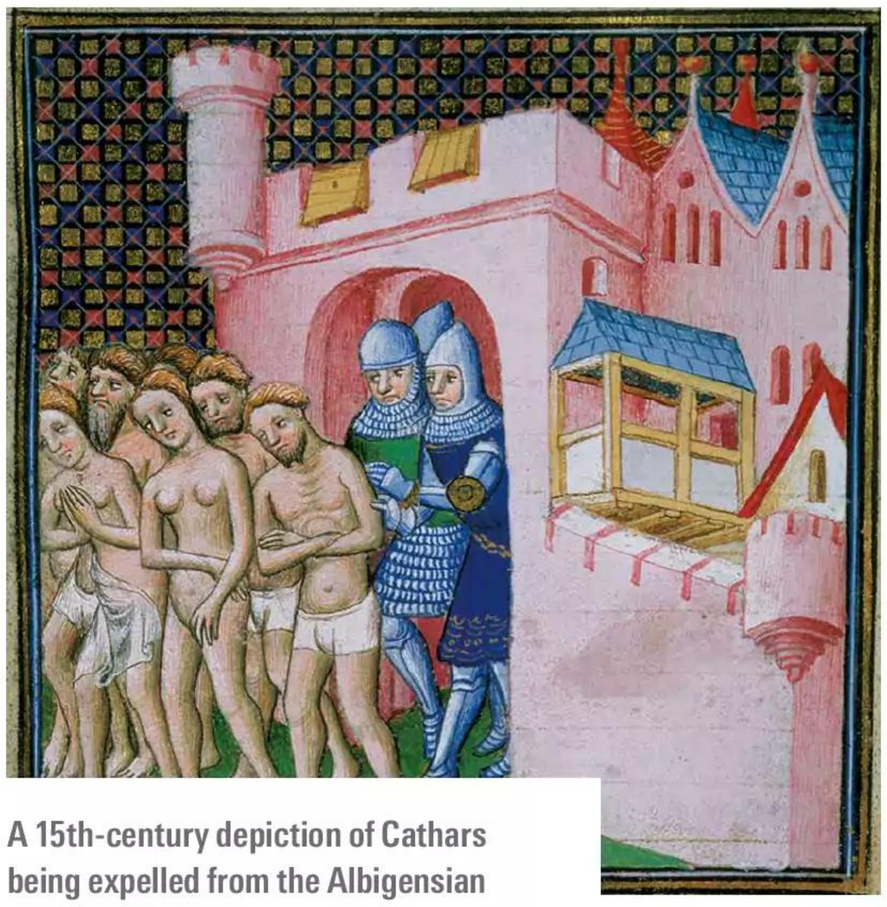


A 15th-century depiction of Cathars being expelled from the Albigensian stronghold of Carcassonne, France

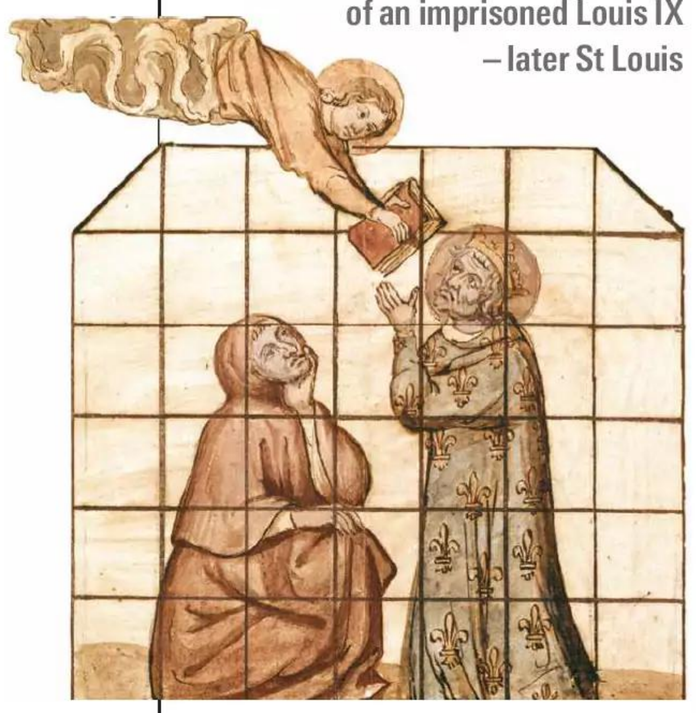
1209
Holy war at home
Fearing the spread of a dualist heresy known as 'Catharism' in Languedoc, Innocent III proclaims the Albigensian Crusade, which begins in 1209. Simon de Montfort, 5th Earl of Leicester, is elected leader and will conquer swathes of the region in a brutal campaign.

A coin featuring Töregene Khatun, empress regent of the Mongols and mother of Güyük Khan

1245
The friars meet the Mongols
Pope Innocent IV sends an embassy of friars to the Mongols, hoping to forestall incursions into western Europe. The Franciscan emissary John of Plano Carpini writes up his account of their mission into the depths of the Mongol empire to meet the great khan Güyük (grandson of Genghis Khan).

1249–50
A king is captured
A further crusade, led by King Louis IX of France, lands in Egypt and captures Damietta, but Louis' forces are crushed at the battle of Al Mansurah in February 1250. In April, the survivors attempt to evacuate but, caught by Ayyubid forces, many are cut down and Louis himself is taken captive.

A 15th-century drawing of an imprisoned Louis IX – later St Louis



1210

1212
Crusader triumph in Spain
With Innocent's support, the kings of Castile, Aragon, Navarre and Portugal unite to battle the Almohads (a Berber Muslim dynasty) at Las Navas de Tolosa. Their eventual triumph marks a decisive victory for the *Reconquista* – the movement to reclaim the Iberian peninsula from Muslim rule.

1217–21
The chaotic Fifth Crusade
Innocent's successor, Honorius III, launches a crusade to the east, targeting Saladin's successors in Egypt – a dynasty known as the Ayyubids. The crusaders eventually take the port of Damietta but are caught in the Nile's annual flood as they advance inland towards Cairo, and are forced to surrender their gains.

A combination of bad luck, poor organisation and infighting put paid to the Fifth Crusade

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Acre was the last major crusader stronghold in the kingdom of Jerusalem. Its fall in 1291 marked the end of attempts to take the Holy Land

Mamluk sultan Baybars took the Hospitallers' formidable Krak des Chevaliers after a 36-day siege

1271

An attempted assassination

Baybars captures the mighty fortress of Krak des Chevaliers from the Hospitallers, before a new crusade arrives led by the future Edward I of England. The heir to the throne only just survives an attempt on his life by one of Baybars' agents.

1290

The scourge of the crusaders

With the death of Qalawun, his son Al-Ashraf Khalil takes command of the Mamluks and assumes the task of defeating the crusaders once and for all.

1291

Acre falls

Throughout April and May, Khalil lays siege to Acre. The defenders are devastated by arrow storms, Greek fire (a type of incendiary weapon) and bombardment from Mamluk trebuchets, leading to the deaths of the Templar master and Hospitaller marshal. Khalil overruns the city, slaughtering and enslaving thousands and crushing the last remnant of the crusader states. H

The lion 'passant', or walking, was the heraldic blazon of Sultan Baybars I. Baybars' aggression was the beginning of the end for the crusaders

1260

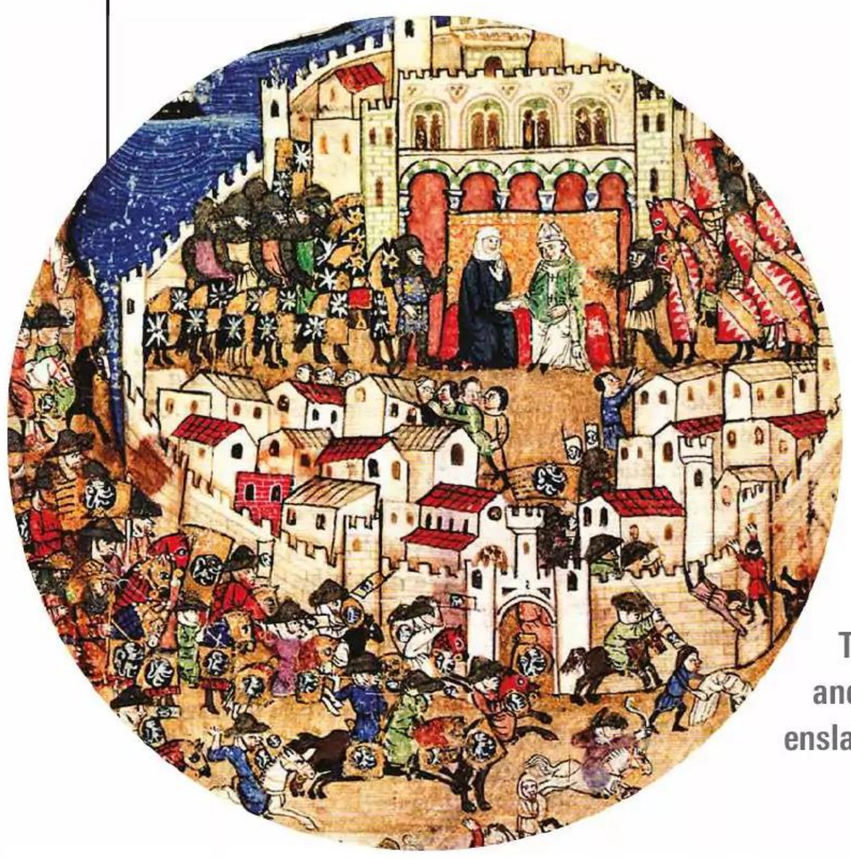
The Mamluks counter the Mongol threat

The newly formed Mamluk sultanate, having seized power from the Ayyubids in Egypt, defeats the Mongols in battle at Ayn Jalut in Palestine. Baybars, leader of the army vanguard, becomes sultan and begins campaigns against the crusader states, taking Antioch in 1268.

1289

Qalawun takes Tripoli

Mamluk forces under sultan Qalawun capture the crusader city of Tripoli, slaughtering the inhabitants. Edward I of England responds to papal pleas for aid by sending a contingent to reinforce Acre, the last great crusading stronghold.



The fall of Tripoli to the Mamluks in April 1289 marked the end of 180 years of Christian rule. The city was razed and its residents enslaved or massacred

Sophie Thérèse Ambler is reader in medieval history and director of the Centre for War and Diplomacy at Lancaster University, and author of *The Song of Simon de Montfort: England's First Revolutionary and the Death of Chivalry* (Picador, 2020)

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An in-depth look at the events that kickstarted the first battle for Jerusalem

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From maps to medics, a peek into the logistical challenges of waging holy war

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How breathless tales of heroic deeds inspired successive waves of crusades

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Why cleansing your soul wasn't the only reason to strike out for the Holy Land

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Not all holy wars took place in the Middle East – nor even involved Muslims

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How Simon de Montfort led a daring rebellion against the English crown

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FIRE

A fanciful engraving imagines Peter the Hermit presenting Pope Urban II (centre) with a letter from Simeon II, Patriarch of Jerusalem, giving him permission to preach a crusade to the Holy Land

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Launching the **First Crusade**

When Muslim power grew in the east, Pope Urban II called on the knights of Europe to defend the Holy Land. **Rebecca Rist** recounts a quest that devolved into massacres, treachery and greed

"When Pope Urban had said these and very many similar things in his urbane discourse, he so influenced to one purpose the desires of all who were present that they cried out, 'It is the will of God! It is the will of God!'"

So wrote the monk Robert of Rheims in his *Historia Hierosolymitana* ('History of Jerusalem') during the early 1100s. Some years earlier, on 27 November 1095, Urban II preached a public sermon outside the town of Clermont in central France, summoning Christians to take part in the First Crusade, a new form of holy war. It was a carefully stage-managed event, in which the pope's representative, the papal legate Adhémar of Le Puy, supposedly moved by the pope's eloquence, tore up strips of cloth to make crosses for the crowds. Urban had been travelling through France accompanied by a large entourage from Italy, dedicating cathedrals and churches and presiding over reforming councils, and his proposed crusade was part of a wider programme of church reform. In March that year, at the Council of Piacenza, a desperate Byzantine emperor, Alexius I Comnenus, had pleaded for western help against the Seljuk Turks, whose conquests were decimating Byzantium and preventing Christians from reaching pilgrimage sites. Urban wanted to extend the hand of friendship to the Orthodox church and to heal the schism with Catholicism, which had gone from bad to worse since the time of his predecessor Leo IX.

We have a number of accounts of Urban's speech, contemporary and later, although they differ somewhat in what they record. Yet we know that he called on knights to vow to fight in a penitential pilgrimage on Christ's behalf, in a war to defend the Holy Land from Muslim oppressors, and that he used the Christian symbol of the cross as an emotive sign of commitment to the enterprise. Urban promised the crowds that crusading would not just benefit the church and European Christian society but their own souls, since all sins, past and present, would be wiped away through his dramatic promise of the 'remission of sins'.

Of course, those who responded to his call were inspired by a range of motives beyond the religious: material, economic, political, social and cultural. Nevertheless, they were drawn to Urban's vision of a military campaign that soldered together ideas of pilgrimage, holy war and just war.

Urban promised the crowds that crusading would wipe away all sins, past and present

A knight's cross from the First Crusade. The cross became an emotive sign of commitment to fight

For would-be crusaders, the religious and political situation of 11th-century Europe was complex and confusing. In Rome, popes were trying to reform the Church, beset by problems of simony (the buying and selling of ecclesiastical office), Nicolaitanism (clerical marriage) and the need to reform monasticism. These drives for reform, particularly over the issue of investiture – who had the right to invest the clergy with their spiritual office – had caused great divisions between the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire, and chaos in Europe.

Indeed, though embryonic nation states had begun to emerge in Germany, France, England and the Iberian peninsula, led by powerful dynasties such as the Norman, Capetian and Salian kings, Europe was still a fractured, violent place of lawlessness, hardship, civil war and famine. It is easy to see why Urban's crusading message appealed to the knightly classes: it gave many the opportunity to harness the military skills in which they had been trained for a greater, religious cause. Furthermore, a resurgence of millennial fervour was now gripping many Christians, who believed that the end of the world was at hand and wanted to seize the opportunity of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to witness the Last Days. Urban's speech sparked a wave of recruitment in which those who took the cross were promised a

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Charismatic preacher Peter the Hermit urges warriors on to the Holy Land, in a c1270 image of the First Crusade's disastrous opening sally, the People's Crusade

host of special privileges including protection of their families, lands and assets and exemption from repaying debts while they were absent on crusade.

Onward, Christian soldiers

Nevertheless, most westerners knew little of the situation in the Holy Land that Urban believed sparked the need for a crusade. For centuries, the Muslim world had been divided between two major caliphates: the Abbasid at Baghdad (modern-day Iraq), which espoused Sunni Islam, and the Fatimid caliphate at Cairo, which followed Shia Islam. In 1009, the Holy Sepulchre, which housed the tomb of Christ himself, had been vandalised by the Fatimid caliph al-Hakim, who led a campaign of persecution and prevented pilgrims journeying to Jerusalem. In recent decades, the Byzantines had also been troubled by a new wave of aggressors: the Seljuk Turks, against whom they had suffered a cataclysmic defeat at the battle of Manzikert in 1071. Alexius I's ambassadors were present at the Council of Piacenza in March 1095. Relations had been rocky in recent years between east and west, not least because a former pope, Gregory VII, had formally excommunicated the Byzantine emperor. Urban listened carefully to the ambassadors' appeal from Alexius to western knights to help him restore lost Byzantine territory, and planned his speech for Clermont accordingly. He might well have had in mind that Gregory VII had earlier also issued (unsuccessful) appeals to help Byzantium.

So Urban II had appealed to the knightly classes of medieval Europe. But the result was not what he had anticipated. His promise of 'remission of sins', together with the hope of material gain, was so popular that huge crowds of peasants began to dedicate themselves to the cause, incited by charismatic, itinerant and determined preachers such as the persuasive Peter the Hermit and the dubious Walter the Penniless. From the spring of 1096, disorderly mobs began to journey across Europe in what came to be called the People's, or Peasants', Crusade. These groups travelled across Germany and Hungary, often clashing with Hungarians and Byzantine mercenaries, yet met outside Constantinople, relatively intact, at the end of July 1096.

Alexius was dismayed at the disorderly rabble that had appeared. These were not the fearsome western Christian knights he had hoped for! He advised Peter the Hermit to await the arrival of the better-armed main contingents, but was not heeded. At the beginning of August, many crossed the Bosporus and marched towards the city of Nicomedia (modern Izmit). Some, Germans and Italians led by a nobleman named Reinald, captured the castle of Xerigordos before being besieged by Muslim forces and taken captive, or dying of heat and thirst. Others, without their leader, Peter, who had returned to Constantinople, marched out of Civetot, were ambushed by the Turks, and captured. By October 1096, the People's Crusade was over.

Luckily for Alexius, from late 1096 onwards more effective military forces in the shape of the Princes' Crusade began to arrive outside Constantinople. These warriors, some more reluctantly than others, swore an oath of allegiance to him before crossing into Asia Minor, accompanied by Byzantine forces. No kings took the cross, but there was an illustrious list of nobility, including the pious Godfrey of Bouillon, Duke of Lower Lorraine; his pragmatic brother Baldwin I; the handsome Bohemond I, son of Robert Guiscard; his nephew Tancred; as well as Raymond IV, Count of Toulouse; Robert II, Duke of Normandy; Robert II, Count of Flanders; Hugh the Great of Vermandois, brother of the King of France; and Stephen of Blois, brother-in-law of the King of England. All hoped for penance, glory, adventure and land.

BRIDGEMAN

ANTI-SEMITISM AND THE PEOPLE'S CRUSADE

How mob fervour led to forced baptism and murder

The first wave of the First Crusade, the People's Crusade of 1096, was a mixture of peasants and knights led by dynamic and persuasive rabble-rousers such as Peter the Hermit, Walter the Penniless, Count Emicho of Leiningen, the priest Volkmar, and the monk Gottschalk.

Although many of these crusaders got no further than the Balkans, they often took part in ferocious persecution of Jews, particularly in the Rhineland, in towns such as Cologne, Mainz, Speyer and Worms, but also in France, Hungary, Bavaria and Bohemia, where they sacked Jewish quarters, massacred the inhabitants and destroyed whole communities. Some tried forcibly to baptise Jews, despite the fact that forced baptism was contrary to canon law.

In response, some Jews preferred to martyr both themselves (the practice of *Kiddush ha-Shem*, 'sanctifying the Name of God') and even their own children rather than be forced to convert. We know of these forced baptisms and massacres not only from Catholic sources but also from Jewish writers, who recorded in Hebrew chronicles what happened, to record the atrocities for posterity and to keep their faith alive.

The reasons for these massacres were manifold. Whipped up by crusading rhetoric and fervour, mob armies were likely to become disorganised, unruly and predisposed to violence. Since they had taken the cross to kill Muslim 'infidels', they may have thought it was their duty to kill other 'infidels' – the Jews – whom they encountered not only in the near east, but in Europe, in their very midst.

These ideas were enhanced by the belief that it was the Jews who had killed Christ, whose death it was the crusaders' duty to avenge. Hence, in committing these atrocities, the crusaders may have been driven by ideas of purification, vengeance and a desire to scapegoat an 'other'.

The first target the crusaders besieged was the Turkish-held town of Nicaea. Its governor, Kilij Arslan, immediately fled the scene and his attempt to gather a relief force was unsuccessful. The town surrendered in June 1097 – but to the Byzantines, to the crusaders' dismay. Manuel Butumites, the crafty Byzantine commander, had struck a deal with the Turks that restored Nicaea to Alexius. The westerners were far from happy, but there was nothing they could do about it. Meanwhile, Kilij Arslan waited in the nearby hills and attacked Bohemond's forces at Dorylaeum. After a hard-fought victory, the crusaders opened a strategic road to Antioch, and through cooperation with another Byzantine leader, Tatikios, soon won back many towns – but for Alexius.

This was not at all to Baldwin and Tancred's taste, and they split off from the main contingent to carve out territories for themselves. After the pair quarrelled, however, Tancred rejoined the main army while Baldwin marched north to the town of Edessa. Although its citizens made him joint ruler with their own lord, Thoros, Baldwin staged a coup and the county of Edessa became the first crusader state.

Meanwhile, the main body of crusaders reached and besieged the city of Antioch in October 1097. Its siege lasted months, and low morale deepened still further. Finally, after Bohemond persuaded a traitor to open the gates to the crusaders, the city fell in June 1098 and its inhabitants were massacred. Almost immediately, the crusaders were themselves besieged by a new Muslim army led by the formidable Kerbogha, the atabeg of Mosul. In dismay, Alexius and other Christian deserters, including Stephen of Blois, returned to Constantinople. The morale of the army was only saved by the discovery of the Holy Lance – which supposedly had pierced Christ's side – by a peasant-soldier named Peter Bartholomew in the Church of St Peter. This supposed relic was certainly fake, but it gave the army's mood a vital boost. The crusaders marched out of Antioch and routed the Muslims in a famous victory. Bohemond, who by now had no intention of marching onwards to Jerusalem, seized control of the city and established the principality of Antioch.

A depiction of the siege of Antioch in 1098. Amid a food shortage, the invaders' morale dipped to dangerous lows before Bohemond I persuaded a traitor to open the gates. The inhabitants were slaughtered

Territorial armies

Nevertheless, with the death of the papal legate Adhémar of Le Puy, who had kept the crusader armies together, relations between Byzantines and crusaders could only worsen. The latter continued their march to Jerusalem and, led by Raymond IV of Toulouse, laid siege to the town of Arqa in the spring of 1099. On reaching Jerusalem, they besieged that too, and on 15 July Godfrey of Bouillon and his troops entered the city, slaughtering the inhabitants. The anonymous *Gesta Francorum* ('Deeds of the Franks'), described how: "Rejoicing and weeping for joy, our people came to the Sepulchre of Jesus our saviour to worship and pay their debt."

Yet the capture of Jerusalem did not bring harmony. Godfrey and Raymond argued over who now owned the city. Eventually, Godfrey was declared 'defender of the Holy Sepulchre', and rallied his crusaders to defeat an Egyptian counter-invasion force, which was repulsed on 12 August near the coastal town of Ascalon. The kingdom of

Starstruck by the exploits of their illustrious predecessors, new armies arrived to support the crusader states

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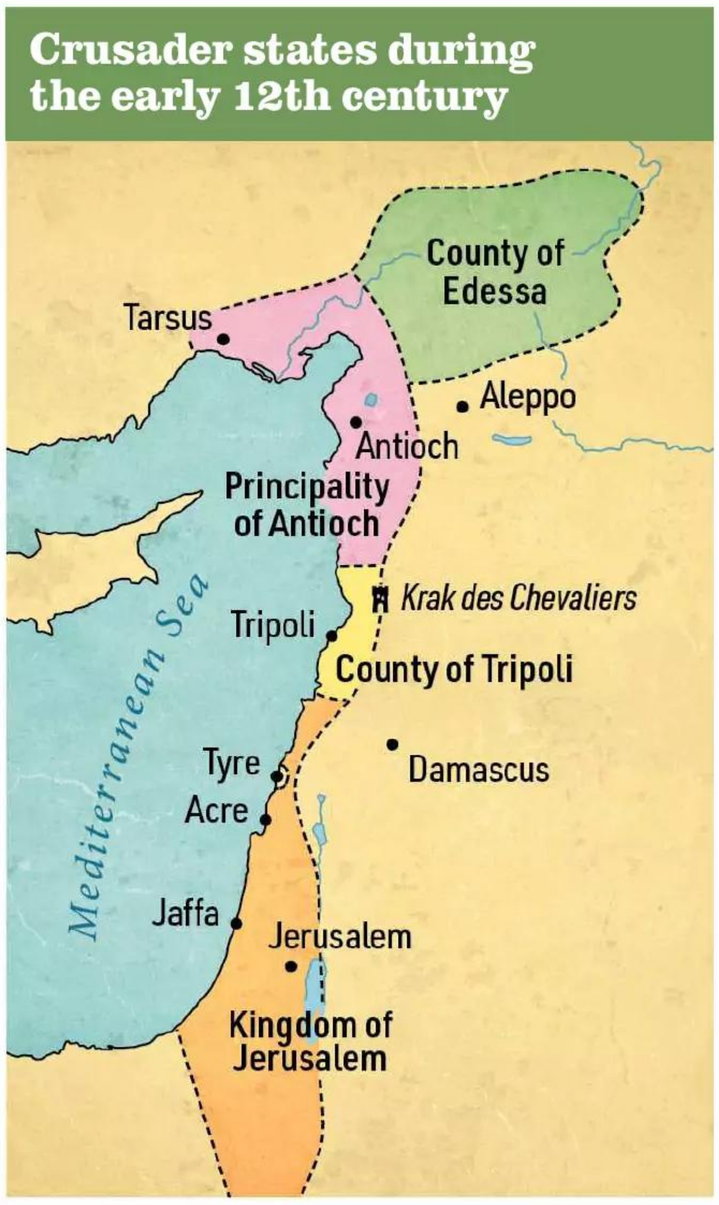

The crusaders engage with the Fatimids of Egypt at the battle of Ascalon on 12 August 1099, having captured Jerusalem a few weeks earlier. Their victory on that day effectively ended the First Crusade

GETTY IMAGES/MAP: PAUL HEWITT-BATTLEFIELD DESIGN

Jerusalem was born. Raymond had lost the ultimate prize, and had to content himself with carving out land to the north of Jerusalem, which became known as the county of Tripoli.

So, through their combined endeavours, western crusaders had managed to create four distinct territories in the east which together formed the crusader states: the county of Edessa, the principality of Antioch, the county of Tripoli and the kingdom of Jerusalem. Godfrey was succeeded by his brother Baldwin, who took the title 'King of Jerusalem'.

Many knights now went home, but Urban II had already commissioned the archbishop of Milan to preach the cross anew in Lombardy, and in 1100 recruitment drives began in France and Germany. After Urban's death, papal successors such as Paschal II (1099–1118) and Calixtus II (1119–1124) continued to encourage crusaders to travel to the near east with great 'encyclicals' (papal letters) distributed far and wide. Starstruck by the exploits of their illustrious predecessors, new armies arrived to support the crusader states, which then saw the imposition of western European culture on eastern indigenous peoples including Muslims, Greeks and Jews.

During the 12th and 13th centuries, popes continued to call for the defence of the crusader states, and to issue the plenary indulgence – a remission of the temporal punishment owed for sin – for crusading in the east. Their calls resulted in large-scale expeditions such as the Second Crusade, which aimed to recover Edessa; the Third Crusade to recover Jerusalem; the Fourth Crusade, which sacked Constantinople and established the Latin empire; the Fifth Crusade to Egypt; and the two crusades of Louis IX. They also indirectly inspired countless smaller expeditions, including grassroots, 'popular' crusades. None were as successful as the First. Nevertheless, from 1099 onwards, the crusader states, despite gradual loss of territory, continued in one form or other until the last crusader stronghold of Acre fell in 1291, marking the end of the 'golden age' of crusading.

Also as a result of the First Crusade's success, popes began to call for crusades in other theatres of war. These included crusades against Muslims in the Iberian peninsula as part of the *Reconquista*, and against non-Muslim opponents, such as the Baltic crusades against pagan peoples, the Albigensian Crusades in the south of France against Cathar heretics, and 'political crusades' against enemies of the papal states. Crusades widened to become any holy wars authorised against heretics, pagans and enemies of the papacy for which crusaders took vows and gained special privileges. Furthermore, from the 14th to the 18th centuries, popes continued to call for crusades against Turks and Ottomans to protect Christian Europe. Although the crusades were originally a medieval phenomenon, their legacy lived on. H

Rebecca Rist is professor in medieval history at the University of Reading. Her books include *The Papacy and Crusading in Europe, 1198–1245* (Bloomsbury, 2009)

“Religious war isn’t an irrational act, and we shouldn’t dismiss it as irrational”

Christopher Tyerman talks to *BBC History Magazine* about the process of manning, planning and executing a crusade – and argues that their complexity reveals much about the rational minds at work in the Middle Ages

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A 15th-century depiction of fighting during the First Crusade. "The reality of trying to organise an army was exactly the same as any other period," says Christopher Tyerman

BBC History Magazine: **The crusades were massive military enterprises involving thousands of people. Who answered the call to go?**

Christopher Tyerman: The social reach was very broad. There were the military elites, the urban elites, military households and those from the wider community who had been recruited to fight as infantry. Beyond that, there's evidence of modest farmers, urban and rural artisans and rich peasants, all of whom could hope to earn some money on crusade. And poor peasants could have gone, but would have needed someone else's funds. So it was socially quite embracing – not just knights and soldiers.

Women went too: lists of crusaders from the late 12th century feature around 10 per cent women. Some were wives, but others went by themselves or in groups – in other words, they weren't chaperoned. Some rich women even hired groups of soldiers to take with them, so they were very powerful. The involvement of society as a whole, women as well as men, is very revealing about wider social structures.

What techniques were used to try to get people to go on crusade?

It was a multimedia activity. Firstly, there was a written side: campaigns would start with papal letters being sent out, as well as newsletters and doctored eyewitness accounts of some atrocity that they wanted to advertise to stimulate attention. There was also a visual aspect: during the Third Crusade, preachers went around with big posters on canvases depicting Saladin and his horse crapping on the holy sepulchre, or pictures of Muhammad beating up Christ.

There were also sermons, which were big theatrical performances. You assembled a crowd who knew what to expect, in the same way that you know what to expect when you go to a pop concert. The preacher would be on the stage, using props and an array of oratorical and theatrical tricks. Most of the sensory perceptions were involved, and the message was a universal one: salvation, duty, necessity. It was carefully constructed to generate the maximum effect.

People signed up for various reasons. You could commit to go because you believed that it was the right thing to do, as people believed that fighting against the Nazis or Napoleon was the right thing to do. So it could be an ideological, emotional commitment. But it was also seen as a respectable thing to do. You were fulfilling your role in society, your cultural obligation. Your reputation would have been enhanced by going on crusade, with benefits for your material standing. So the pressures on lords were social and cultural as much as religious.

If you were employed, of course, you went – you were an employee, your livelihood depended on your lord and you went with him. You may have believed in it, you may not. This idea that everything was spontaneous is something commentators projected for religious reasons, but the reality of trying to organise an army was exactly the same as in any other period: you needed resources, leadership, social structures and so on.

The involvement of society as a whole, women as well as men, is very revealing about wider social structures

The crusades took place over a huge area. What effect did this have on the way they were planned and managed?

Coordination was extremely difficult – but it was achieved. Deadlines were set for

when people left, and muster points were set at particular times. There were rounds of diplomacy, with endless letters going to and fro preparing for markets and contracts with shippers. We know that the Third Crusade took Germany a year to prepare for and a year to get to the Holy Land. Interestingly, in 1190, Richard I prepaid his soldiers' wages, and took the money with him to pay them for the next year. And, hey presto, they got to the Holy Land at the end of that year.

So there was practical intelligence and planning, and people arrived in a fairly coordinated way. This was partly because there were only two seasons in which people could get to the Holy Land by sea, but it was not done by coincidence or chance. There was a pattern to these campaigns, based on networks of communication founded on lordship patterns, regional, monastic and trade links, and connections between towns. These communities came together because they already had contact.

How did the crusaders find their way?
Well, they knew where they were going. Not initially, perhaps, in the way that we would, by using maps, but through their version of satnav: people – veterans and locals who told them where to go. When you look at itineraries you see they were organised in a linear way from town to town, like satnav. They were diagrammatic maps just like that of the London Underground.

The idea that they set off over the horizon not knowing where to go is a modern myth. There's plenty of evidence that they were using maps by the end of the 13th century, and there are written accounts of journeys to the Holy Land that specify in which direction to go and how many days it would take.

How did crusaders go about providing medical care?
The idea that medieval medicine was a form of licence to assault and murder is untrue. Crusaders took doctors with them on the Fifth Crusade, for instance, and provisions were made for nursing. Not all wounds were fatal, and you needed to save people's lives if they had injuries, look after your wounded, and bury your dead. This is true of any army, and was also true during the crusades.

Obviously the treatment was hit and miss, but there was an understanding of how to treat wounds. You can tell this from surviving skeletons that wounds have healed and so couldn't have been fatal. Contrary to the beliefs of some, these weren't clods inspired by crude superstition, credulously following some bogus spiritual ideal. Well, to our eyes the ideal may have been bogus, but they thought it through rationally. It had to be explained to them: if the cause of a crusade wasn't convincing, people didn't join up. This was not an obedient society, but a questioning one. The medical care shows that we should take these people seriously: these were serious people, doing their best to confront serious problems.

Medieval medical treatment could be hit and miss, but doctors were skilled at treating wounds and accompanied the fighters on the Fifth Crusade

The idea that the crusaders set off over the horizon not knowing where they were going is a modern myth

Are there any characters who have been particularly overlooked?
I think that the unsung are the mass of the crusaders. The physical conditions of going on crusade weren't pleasant. One shouldn't get sentimental about this, but the common experience of the common person going on crusade was, shall we say, strenuous. There were things to compensate for this, such as the camaraderie, but it was often tough.

My reaction – and you see this in a lot of historians who write about the crusades – is somewhat split. On the one hand, you have to acknowledge the crusaders' intellectual and physical effort and psychological stamina. Yet I think that their actions are to some extent characteristic of a very different society from ours. There's no point in historians even considering whether or not the crusades were a good thing or a bad thing. That seems to me to be sloppy self-indulgence, a condescending judgmentalism of the worst sort, which doesn't help us understand the historical reality. These were real people motivated by very different impulses, even if those impulses are, to me at any rate, repulsive in many ways: the violence, the intolerance, the assumption of religious, racial and moral superiority. Those things were all shared by the other side, of course.

One can't escape from the victims, and any attempt to see the crusades in terms of either moral superiority or moral inferiority of western Europe, or in simplistic debates about the 'clash of civilisations', seems to me to be entirely fruitless and historically incorrect.

The excitement of history is to engage with people who were different, not the same, but nonetheless led real lives. We can't know all about them, or much about them in many ways, but we don't owe them judgment – we owe them understanding.

How do you think people's views of the crusades, and this period more generally, are in need of an update?
People put the wars of faith into a category of either admiration or lunacy, or they see them as being alien. These weren't alien activities, so it's important to set the crusades in a more explicable, believable context.

The Middle Ages was a time of rationality. The condescension that somehow we're above superstition now is just wrong: we have homeopathic medicine, for God's sake!

People did things for rational reasons, and worried about things as we do. Life was difficult, and they came up with rational solutions, whether it was building scaffolding or worrying, as King Amalric of Jerusalem did, if there was any evidence outside the Bible for Jesus's resurrection. They were asking serious questions about their world as we do: yes, they were doing it with a different knowledge base, but they were still asking questions based on reason and rationality.

We can then turn the lens back and look at ourselves and say that, if religious war is not an irrational act, we shouldn't dismiss it as such in the 21st century. It is rational, and we must therefore use reason to combat it. H *Interview by Matt Elton*

Christopher Tyerman is professor of the history of the crusades at the University of Oxford. His books include *The World of the Crusades: An Illustrated History* (Yale University Press, 2019)

BRIDGEMAN

CRUSADE SUPER HEROES

Legends were woven around fighters of the First Crusade to persuade knights to take up arms again. It was a medieval propaganda masterclass, writes **Jonathan Phillips**

ALAMY

Godfrey of Bouillon leads a company of knights in this 14th/15th-century depiction of the First Crusade

On Easter Sunday 1146, the most important nobles and churchmen in France gathered on a hillside below the beautiful abbey church of Vézelay in northern Burgundy. A rough wooden stage had been set up (the crowd was too big to fit in the church), and sitting there, already bearing the sign of the cross, were King Louis VII of France and his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine. Yet the royal couple were not the star attractions of this pious congregation. The centre of attention was, in fact, a short, frail man, undernourished due to fasting and abstinence. Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, was the most charismatic orator of the age and he began a passionate speech to recruit warriors for the Second Crusade. He urged the knighthood of France to fulfil their Christian duty to help defend the Holy Land from the Muslims. His message was clear and direct: "What are you doing, you mighty men of valour? … I call blessed the generation that can seize an opportunity of such rich indulgence as this… Mighty soldiers, you have a cause for which you can fight without danger to your souls: a cause in which to conquer is glorious and for which to die is gain."

Bernard's appeal received a rapturous reception from the crowd. Next he played his trump card, reading out a papal bull – a formal appeal for a crusade from Pope Eugenius III. Its effect was immediate. As one contemporary wrote: "When Heaven's instrument poured forth the dew of the divine word, with a loud outcry, people from every side began to demand crosses." The audience surged forwards to have a cloth cross pinned to their shoulder as a mark of their commitment. There was a near disaster as the stage collapsed, but miraculously (of course) no one was injured. So many wanted to join the crusade that Bernard's supply of crosses ran out and the abbot was forced to tear up his own cloak to make more.

Over the next few months, preachers toured Europe reading out Eugenius's and Bernard's letters in a carefully orchestrated effort to incite people to support the crusade. In the remainder of 1146 and into the spring of 1147, tens of thousands of people joined the expedition. With the benefit of hindsight, the campaign to the Holy Land was an abject failure. Yet in terms of recruitment, at least, it was hugely successful. What sparked such tremendous enthusiasm? Part of the reason was undoubtedly Bernard's brilliant preaching, yet Pope Eugenius's message was also enormously seductive – and the essence of his approach is revealed in the opening lines of his text: "We have learned from what men of old have said and we have found written in their histories how greatly our predecessors worked for the liberation of the eastern church."

There was tremendous pressure on knights to live up to the deeds of their forefathers and not disgrace themselves

Eugenius's rhetoric focused on the success of the First Crusade, 50 years previously, acknowledging the importance of written texts and conjuring notions of honour and shame. The pope employed carefully calculated language to make his appeal: "We recognise how great the danger is that threatens the church of God and all Christianity… It will be seen as a great token of nobility and uprightness if those things acquired by the efforts of your fathers are vigorously defended by you, their good sons. But if, God forbid, it comes to pass differently, then the bravery of the fathers will have proved to be diminished in the sons." Contemporary knights could be in little doubt as to what these words meant – there was tremendous pressure on them not to fall short of the achievements of their forefathers and bring disgrace upon themselves. Eugenius had chosen to exploit the legacy of the First Crusade, a legacy sustained and embellished as no prior event in medieval Europe had been before.

It is hard to imagine today the feelings of delight and amazement that rippled across Europe after the armies of the First Crusade captured Jerusalem in 1099. While the victory was ascribed to divine approval, it also created instant heroes of those who took part in the triumph. In a society that placed immense value on military prowess – these were among the formative decades of the age of chivalry – to secure such a result (a four-year expedition, 3,000 miles from home, against fierce opponents in an unknown land) was truly remarkable. When combined with the fact that this was achieved in the service of God, it formed a highly potent concept.

The splendour of their courage

One consequence of this was an unprecedented blossoming of historical writing – no previous episode had so caught the imagination of people across the Latin west and inspired them to write about it. The Norman conquest, for example, had prompted a couple of narratives, but little detailed treatment outside north-western Europe. Because of the international nature of its armies and the fact that the recovery of the Holy City mattered to all Christians, the First Crusade was a Europe-wide phenomenon. Robert of Rheims wrote a popular chronicle in c1106–07, which related: "Since the creation of the world what more miraculous undertaking has there been (other than the mystery of the redeeming cross) than what was achieved in our own time by this journey of our own people to Jerusalem? … And so it deserves to be publicised through a faithful account as much as to those living, as to now, as for future generations, so that through it, Christians' hope in God may be strengthened."

At the root of this literary outpouring was a work now known as the *Gesta Francorum*, a short, anonymous eyewitness account of the crusade that was circulated widely in Europe. This dramatic piece vividly conveyed the hardships and determination of the crusaders. At the centre of the story lay Bohemond of Taranto, the first Prince of Antioch, who, as we will see, gained a towering reputation. Then there were the reports of the surviving crusaders who had returned home. They were welcomed as heroes, feted with processions and ceremonies – and they, of course, told of their deeds to the writers.

Within a decade, a first generation of texts had been created in northern and southern France, the Rhineland,

Mary appears to Bernard of Clairvaux in a 14th-century depiction by Giovanni da Milano

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A c15th-century manuscript showing Bernard of Clairvaux preaching before King Louis VII

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A 15th-century painting depicts the combined Christian armies besieging Damascus during the Second Crusade

Dissension, derision and defeat

THE SECOND CRUSADE (1147–49)

In December 1144, the Christian city of Edessa fell to Zangi of Mosul. This was by far the most serious defeat yet for the crusader states, and messengers appealed to Europe for help. The efforts of Pope Eugenius III and Bernard of Clairvaux caused many thousands to enlist, including King Louis VII of France and King Conrad III of Germany – the first time major European monarchs risked joining such an expedition. Western Europe was inflamed with crusading zeal and further theatres of war were opened against the pagans of the Baltic region and the Muslims of Spain – marking an extraordinarily confident and aggressive movement of Christian expansionism.

In the summer of 1147, the main armies marched into the Byzantine empire. There, as on the First Crusade, relations with the Greeks were tense, although there was no major confrontation. Once into Asia Minor in October 1147, Conrad hurried on ahead, only for his army to be decimated by the forces of the Seljuk Turks. Louis proceeded more cautiously, but in January 1148 his army was routed on Mount Cadmus. The remainder of his troops struggled on to Antioch, where it is alleged that Eleanor of Aquitaine had an affair with her uncle, Prince Raymond. In the summer of 1148, the combined Christian armies laid siege to Damascus but the fear of Muslim relief forces caused them to retreat without even fighting a major battle – an enormous humiliation to the Christians and a massive boost to the cause of the jihad.

In the meantime, crusaders from England and the Rhineland had decided to sail to the Holy Land. En route, they joined with King Afonso Henriques of Portugal to recapture Lisbon from the Muslims in October 1147. In eastern Iberia, Genoese fleets combined with the king of León-Castile to take the city of Almería in the same month and, the following year, the Genoese and the count of Barcelona took Tortosa. In the autumn of 1147, a group of Saxon nobles and bishops had joined forces with the Danes to try to push the frontiers of Christianity eastwards against the pagan tribes of northern Europe. Dissension within the army and tough resistance meant that it did not succeed. In sum, then, other than in Iberia, the Second Crusade was a failure. Its dismal outcome surprised and horrified the Christian west. As one contemporary wrote, it had done "irreparable harm to the Christian faith". Another derided it as having achieved "nothing useful or worth repeating".

Bavaria, Italy and Spain. Under the overarching framework of God's guiding hand, the deeds of the holy warriors came to the fore: "No matter how much the terrible glint of [enemy] arms glittered from innumerable columns, the splendour of their courage would still outdo it if it were visible. They march out to fight with one mind – not to flee but to die, or win."

Everyone who had taken part in the campaign wanted their role to be immortalised, and families had a huge sense of pride in the achievements of individuals of their clan. The standing of Godfrey of Bouillon, for example, was immense. He had been one of the greatest warriors on the expedition, said to have cloven a man in half (from side to side), leaving his horse to gallop away still carrying the legs and lower torso. Whether such stories were true or not is, in some ways, irrelevant – they were told and retold and formed part of the legend of the expedition.

Another prominent figure in the First Crusade narratives was Bohemond, probably the leading military figure on the campaign. The *Gesta Francorum* described him in battle as "a lion which has been starving for three or four days, which comes roaring out of its cave… and falls upon the flocks careless for its own safety".

A visit to the west enhanced Bohemond's reputation even further. He had been held prisoner by the Muslims between 1100–03, but once freed he returned to Europe to seek support for a new crusade. With advance publicity carefully arranged by his cousin, he arrived in France in 1106 to a rapturous reception – in effect, a victory tour. Crowds flocked to hear him tell of his exploits and eyewitnesses reported that many asked him to be godfather to their children. Bohemond suddenly became a popular name, as one contemporary wrote: "Afterwards the name became famous in the furthest corners of the world." The prince had grown up in Norman Sicily, but his father had passed over him in the line of succession. Yet in the aftermath of the First Crusade, such was the crusader's standing that the King of France was happy to offer Bohemond the hand in marriage of his eldest daughter – not a bad step forward.

The recording and retelling of the First Crusade was not just a passing phase. The second and third decades of the 12th century saw the production of further accounts of the expedition and, if anything, the warriors of 1099 were treated with even greater reverence. In his extremely popular *Gesta Regum Anglorum* ('Deeds of the Kings of England'), written in the 1120s, William of Malmesbury described "… leaders of high renown, to whose praises posterity will

ALAMY

A 13th-century depiction of Prince Bohemond sailing to France to marry King Philip I's daughter

Bishops are shown urging crusaders forward in this 14th-century manuscript

assign no limits; heroes who from the cold of uttermost Europe plunged into the intolerable heat of the east, careless of their own lives, if only they could bring help to Christendom in its hour of trial… Let poets with their eulogies now give place, and fabled history no longer laud the heroes of antiquity. Nothing to be compared with their glory has ever been begotten in any age. Such valour as the ancients had vanished after their death into dust and ashes in the grave, for it was spent on the mirage of worldly splendour rather than on the solid aim of some goodly purpose; while of these brave heroes of ours, men will enjoy the benefit and tell the proud story, as long as the round world endures and the holy church of Christ flourishes."

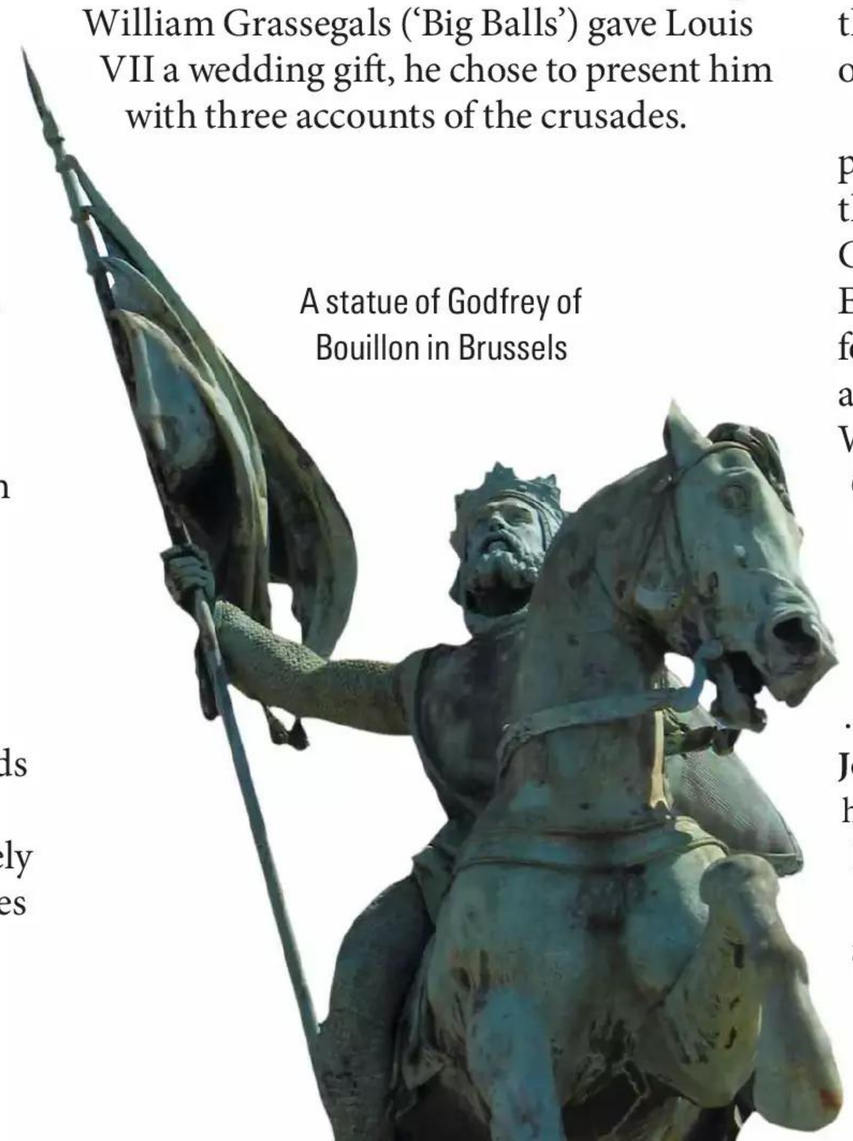
Surpassing the Titans

As well as demonstrating that medieval people did not believe the world to be flat, this passage is interesting because it shows the First Crusaders stepping up and surpassing the heroes of antiquity – Titans such as Alexander and Achilles who, prior to 1099, had been the benchmark for bravery. With the capture of Jerusalem, medieval Europe had generated its own heroes – good Christian knights, whose claims to glory could be amplified and enhanced. This eye to the future is shown in William of Malmesbury's epitaph for Count Baldwin of Boulogne, another hero of the First Crusade: "His astonishing and almost superhuman courage [was] an inspiration to his contemporaries, just as it will be the admiration of posterity."

It was not just in narratives that the deeds of the crusaders were recorded. Literacy levels were limited, so these tales were widely circulated through song. Knights and nobles would gather in their halls and listen to minstrels and troubadours perform epics such as the *Chanson d'Antioche* and the *Chanson de Jérusalem*, pieces that championed the bravery of the crusaders. As the former urged:

"Be still my lords, leave off your chatter now,
If you want to hear a glorious song be sung.
No jongleur ever sang a better song;
Hold this song in your heart and love it deep,
It tells of a story great, and of brave men.
You ought to love this song and hold it dear;
In it you'll find examples of brave men
And other things you'll need to keep in mind."

By the Second Crusade, such stories were one reason why the idea of crusading was so firmly established in the consciousness of the Christian west. The perceived values of a crusader – piety, devotion to a cause and bravery – were held out as exemplars of behaviour. When, in 1137, the French knight William Grassegals ('Big Balls') gave Louis VII a wedding gift, he chose to present him with three accounts of the crusades.



A statue of Godfrey of Bouillon in Brussels

ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN/DREAMSTIME

Everyone who had taken part in the First Crusade wanted their role in the campaign to be immortalised

Tellingly, William had the collection inscribed thus: "…you might look at this book with the eye of reason as if in a mirror image of your ancestors… and you might follow in their footsteps on the path of virtue".

So when Pope Eugenius III called upon those wishing to enlist in the Second Crusade to emulate the past, he chose to tap into an immense seam of collective memory and pride, carefully polished over time, that gave the generation of 1146–48 a sense that it was imperative they should live up to the achievements of their ancestors. Indeed, in the course of the expedition, some decisions about the route of the army were dictated by the need to (literally) follow in the footsteps of their fathers.

Ultimately, overconfidence was the primary factor in the military misjudgments that caused the collapse of the Second Crusade. To a generation who left western Europe with the deeds of their heroic forefathers ringing in their ears, defeat was a concept they had given little thought to. While invoking the legacy of the First Crusade may have proven a wonderful recruitment tool, with hindsight, the sense of utter conviction that victory was assured turned out to be a fatal weakness for the warriors of its successor. H

Jonathan Phillips is professor of crusading history at Royal Holloway, University of London. His books include *The Crusades, 1095–1204* (Routledge, 2014) and *The Life and Legend of the Sultan Saladin* (Vintage, 2019)

FAT CATS OF THE CRUSADES

Waging holy war could be a lucrative business. **Dan Jones** tells the story of the crusaders who returned from the front line with their souls cleansed – and their pockets full

Bountiful battle
Crusaders defeat the Turks at Dorylaeum in 1097, as shown in a 14th-century illumination. While the victors may have believed that their triumph had earned them a place in heaven, it benefited them materially as well: they were soon looting the Turkish camp and plundering the bodies of the dead

ALAMY

On the morning of 1 July 1097, tens of thousands of Christian pilgrim soldiers of the First Crusade scrambled to make a desperate stand against a horde of advancing Turkish horsemen.

The crusaders were only a few days into a three-month march through 800 miles of hostile terrain when the Turks took them by surprise, attacking early in the morning while the crusaders were still in camp, near an old Roman settlement in Anatolia called Dorylaeum. One eyewitness to the battle, a French priest called Fulcher of Chartres, recalled the terror he felt when the Turks descended, as he and his companions "huddled together like sheep in a fold, trembling and frightened". The fighting raged for six hours until eventually – miraculously – it became clear that the Turks did not have the numbers to prevail.

The Christian cavalry, commanded by a wily Norman nobleman called Bohemond of Taranto, held the tormentors at bay for long enough to allow reinforcements to arrive from several miles away. These fresh troops forced the Turks into a disorderly retreat, which soon became a rout. After it was finished, the crusaders buried their dead and gave thanks for their victory.

The battle of Dorylaeum was remembered for years afterwards as a demonstration of God's approval for crusading and an example of the first crusaders' extraordinary resilience and motivation. It was also remembered as a day that had proven unexpectedly lucrative. One writer recorded the slogan shouted from man to man on the front line at Dorylaeum: "Stand fast all together," they had yelled as the Turks swooped, "trusting in Christ and in the victory of the Holy Cross. Today, please God, you will all gain much booty!"

This had proved prophetic. For not only did the crusaders record an inspirational military victory; they also gleefully looted the camp of the Turkish leader, Qilij Arslan, and enriched themselves by plundering the bodies of the 3,000 enemy soldiers who had been killed. They had trusted in Christ and, just as promised, gained much booty. Their pithy, two-pronged war cry captured the two great preoccupations of the crusader age: faith and gold.

Glory and gain
Bernard of Clairvaux preaching the Second Crusade in the presence of King Louis VII and Eleanor of Aquitaine at Vézelay, Burgundy

A hotchpotch of enemies

Many historians date the crusades from the preaching of the First Crusade by Pope Urban II at Clermont in 1095 to the fall of the last Islamic strongholds in al-Andalus (southern Spain) in 1492. They were a series of interconnected Christian 'holy wars' fought against a wide variety of foes.

The First Crusade was called to aid Greek Christians of the Byzantine empire in their wars against the Turks of Anatolia, and subsequently to seize Jerusalem from its rule by Fatimid Shia caliphs based in Cairo. But over the generations, many more crusades were raised – against Arabs, Turks and Kurds, Sunni and Shia Muslims, Berbers from north Africa, pagans in Latvia, Cathars in southern France, Mongols in eastern Europe. War was also waged on a hotchpotch of other real and perceived enemies of Christ – including both Byzantine and Holy Roman Emperors and several Christian kings.

The purpose of all these crusades was ostensibly twofold. Popes authorised warfare in Christ's name because they thought it was their duty to protect Christian people and lands from non-believers. Ordinary medieval people took crusade vows, sewed distinctive cloth crosses to their garments and joined crusader armies because they were promised that in doing so they would earn forgiveness for their earthly sins, thereby easing their passage into heaven.

The victors' two-pronged war cry captured the two great preoccupations of the crusader age: faith and gold

These two aims were repeated throughout the history of crusading. When Urban II launched the First Crusade, chroniclers

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God's approval Gustave Doré's engraving of the funerals of the crusaders after the battle of Dorylaeum in 1097. The battle was remembered as an extraordinary – and extraordinarily lucrative – victory against the odds

recalled that he spoke of avenging insults to "the sanctuary of God" (ie Jerusalem) by declaring "wars which contain the glorious reward of martyrdom". The great Cistercian abbot Bernard of Clairvaux helped preach the Second Crusade, which began in 1147, calling upon the knights of western Europe to join "a cause in which to conquer is glorious and for which to die is gain". When Pope Gregory VIII preached the Third Crusade in 1187, after Jerusalem had fallen to the sultan Saladin, he asked crusaders to be "courageous, because it is better to perish in a fight than to behold… the profanation of holy things".

There were, by contrast, very few occasions when churchmen encouraged crusaders to think of material gain. In fact, crusade preachers more often spoke of the miserable hardships of crusading, the expenses that would be incurred by those who joined the movement, and the necessity of, as Gregory VIII put it, rejecting "luxury and ostentation and wearing simple clothes as would befit people doing penance for their sins". The official line, at least, was that crusaders were expected to comport themselves humbly and expect their reward in the next world rather than on earth.

Combining profit with piety

Yet throughout its history, crusading was founded on doublethink. The truth was that, just as those men who called the crusades managed to square Christ's peaceable teachings with the idea of waging wars of conquest in his name, so too were they quietly relaxed about the prospect of crusaders going off to fight as penitent pilgrims while still hoping to come home with their pockets full, as well as their souls cleansed.

In the decades before the crusades began, several western writers noted that Christian warriors thought about their personal wealth at least as much as their spiritual health. Describing commerce between Christians and pagan peoples of the Baltic in the 1070s, the chronicler Adam of Bremen wrote that "men cared as much for [trading] furs as for their immortal souls". Around the same time, in the southern Mediterranean, a writer called Geoffrey Malaterra was describing the Norman conquest of Arab Sicily; he noted that these Normans attacked Sicily's Muslim rulers not just for religious purposes but for "material benefit". Eleventh-century kings who conquered lands from Muslim rulers in Spain used

It's a steal
This enamelled Byzantine liturgical book, encrusted with pearls, was almost certainly looted during the Fourth Crusade (1202–04)

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Rich pickings
Venice shown in a c14th-century manuscript. The Italian trading city profited hugely from participating in the crusades

their war spoils to make large donations to the Cluniac monastic order. The instinct to combine profit with piety predated crusading, and when the church decided to institutionalise war on non-Christians, it survived intact.

Of course, not all crusaders got rich. Many who joined the First Crusade were maimed, killed or bankrupted themselves due to the expense of the journey. Yet there were a significant number of others who did very well out of the enterprise. When the first crusaders entered Jerusalem in July 1099 and put the city to the sword, one of the Norman leaders, Tancred of Hauteville, sent his personal bodyguards to the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount), where they spent two days relieving the shrine of the Dome of the Rock (known by the crusaders as the Temple of the Lord) of its most precious ornaments.

Tancred pilfered what one chronicler called "an incomparable quantity of gold and silver". He wasn't alone. All over the city, crusaders seized "gold and silver, horses and mules and houses full of all sorts of goods". So much for Christ's plea to "sell what you have, give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven" (Matthew 19:21). The crusaders in 1099 put that recommendation firmly out of their minds.

From this point on, the possibility of financial reward remained one of several strong motivators for crusaders. In 1107–11 the first king to travel from Europe on crusade was Sigurd I of Norway. The sagas that tell of his epic journey to Jerusalem, via Muslim-held cities of modern Spain and Portugal, are full of gleeful references to the amount of booty Sigurd's sailors seized along the way. When Sigurd left the Holy Land, his ships were laden with so much treasure that they displayed it on their masts and sails, where it caught the light to dazzling effect.

Many more followed suit. In the aftermath of 1099, four crusader states were established along the Palestinian and Syrian coast: the kingdom of Jerusalem, the counties of Edessa and Tripoli and the principality of Antioch. They offered estates to be farmed, villages to be taxed, port cities to be developed and merchant routes connecting the Mediterranean world with the faraway markets of India and China. Very quickly, the more resourceful powers of western Europe realised how much potential lay in these acquisitions. They made a beeline to the east to carve out their own roles in this exciting new world, establishing lordships, bishoprics and trading stations.

Prominent in this were the three great trading cities of northern Italy: Genoa, Pisa and Venice. All three possessed significant naval power, which they could lend to crusader campaigns to conquer or defend coastal cities in the east, such as Acre, Tyre and Beirut. They were keen to establish their reputations as prominent members of the Christian world. And they each knew that if they engaged with crusading, they would be rewarded not only with the forgiveness of sins promised by successive popes, but also in economic terms.

Few episodes illustrate this more effectively than the siege of Tyre – a stoutly defended city in modern Lebanon – which took place in 1124. More than 100 Venetian ships, commanded by the doge [duke] of Venice, Domenico Michiel, sailed to the east to take part in the siege. Their presence was vital to Tyre's capture and their reward was quite magnificent: a third of the city's revenues were granted to the Venetians,

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Spoils of war These gilded bronze horses were plundered from Constantinople in the Fourth Crusade and brought back to Venice as booty. They are now located at St Mark's Basilica

Across the city crusaders seized "gold and silver, horses and mules, and houses full of all sorts of goods"

and a self-governing Venetian trading colony was established, with its own laws, regulations and tax exemptions.

Tyre would remain in Christian hands for more than 160 years, and during that time the republic of Venice profited handsomely. This was by no means unique. In every major city up and down the coast, Italian merchant colonies were a familiar sight, their willingness to pour investment into the crusading cause amply and visibly rewarded.

Conquer and prosper

Needless to say, the tension between crusaders' dedication to the "victory of the holy Cross" and the pursuit of "booty" could have unpleasant and even fatal consequences for those on the receiving end. The most notorious example of this, perhaps, occurred in the Fourth Crusade of 1202–04 and once again involved the republic of Venice.

The citizens of Venice agreed to build – at great cost – a massive fleet to transport the armies of the Fourth Crusade to Egypt, where they planned to conquer the wealthy city of Alexandria. In the end, however, the crusading fleet diverted to the Christian cities of Zara (modern Zadar) and Constantinople. Both of these were treated savagely, and Constantinople was pillaged, to the disgrace of Christendom but the lavish profit of Venice. Visitors to St Mark's Basilica can still see four magnificent gilded bronze statues of horses that were taken from Constantinople at that time.

Venice was hardly a lone villain. Throughout the 13th century, bitter complaints were levelled at the international 'military orders' of religious warriors – Templars, Hospitallers and Teutonic knights – who were sworn to live lives of austere, pious hardship, devoting all their efforts to the crusade. It was very often muttered that, far from being poor knights of Christ, the members of these orders enjoyed lives of great wealth and comfort, thanks to their broad-ranging tax exemptions and the lavish donations they received from their supporters.

In a sense, this was quite true. The Teutonic knights profited handsomely from their deployment around the Baltic, where they fought a perpetual crusade to clear pagans from the land and claim it for themselves and other Christian settlers. The Templars, meanwhile, were brought down in 1307–12, in part because of the sheer envy that their vast wealth aroused in the mind of the French king Philip IV.

It is important to reiterate that not everyone who went on crusade during the Middle Ages came home rich. Many lost everything, including their lives. At the same time, few crusaders were motivated solely by one factor. Humans are complicated, and crusading bound together passionately held Christian faith with a real belief in the need to defeat Christ's enemies and atone for earthly sins.

Yet in the cocktail of reasons for crusading often lay a base but timeless human instinct: the desire to get rich quick. H

Dan Jones is a historian and presenter whose books include *Crusaders: An Epic History of the Wars for the Holy Lands* (Head of Zeus, 2019)

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PRIZE FIGHTERS

Three money-mad crusaders

THE NORSE PLUNDERER

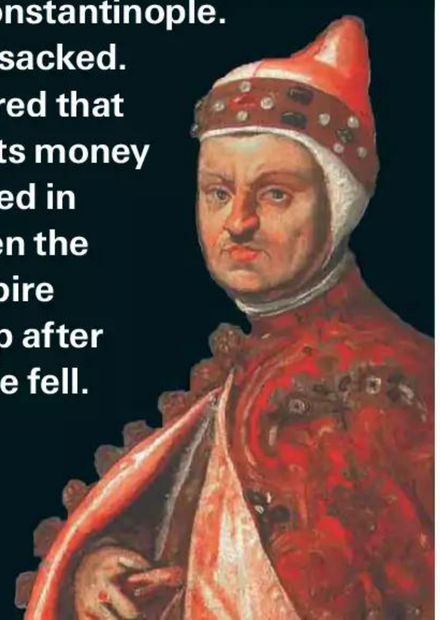
Sigurd 'Jerusalemfarer' was a Christian king of Norway who led a band of Vikings on an armed pilgrimage from Scandinavia to Jerusalem between 1107 and 1111. On their journey, Sigurd's men plundered Muslim strongholds in Lisbon, Ibiza, Formentera and Menorca and banqueted with Roger II of Sicily. Once in the east, Sigurd was feted by King Baldwin I of Jerusalem, who took him to bathe in the river Jordan and worship at Christ's tomb. Sigurd was given a fragment of the True Cross to take back to Norway, and he also shared in the vast amount of booty taken when his men helped wrest the city of Sidon from Muslim rule.

GOLDEN CAMPAIGNER

Although **John of Gaunt** was born long after the kingdom of Jerusalem was destroyed in 1291, the uncle of Richard II of England still considered himself a crusader. He managed to have his campaign to claim the crown of Castile in 1386–87 classified as a crusade. Although he never secured that prize, he signed a peace accord to end his campaign that awarded him so much gold it took 47 mules to transport it all back to England. This wealth helped fund the crusade adventures of his son Henry Bolingbroke (the future Henry IV), who joined the Teutonic knights fighting pagans in the Baltic.

RANSACKER-IN-CHIEF

Although he was in his 90s and completely blind, **Enrico Dandolo** (below) was a formidable ruler of the republic of Venice during the Fourth Crusade of 1202–04. When French crusaders could not pay the bill for Venetian shipping, Dandolo insisted on diverting to the Christian cities of Zara and Constantinople. Both were ransacked. Dandolo ensured that Venice made its money back and shared in the spoils when the Byzantine empire was divided up after Constantinople fell.



Crusading beyond the Holy Land

Our standard image of the crusades shows Europeans fighting Muslims in faraway places. But, says **Susanna Throop**, holy war also took place much closer to home – and even against Christians

Hitting close to home
Crusaders and Muslims fight on the Iberian peninsula in a 13th-century image. Warriors crusaded in Africa and Europe as well as the Holy Land

“Go forth, therefore, knight of Christ; go forth, most Christian prince! … Gird on our sword, so that we may both be avenged on these criminal and inhuman evildoers”

Pope Innocent III, 1208

SHUTTERSTOCK

With these words, Pope Innocent III urged Philip II, the self-styled King of France, to go on crusade. Popes had written similarly to kings before. In 1208, however, Innocent was not encouraging Philip to crusade to the Holy Land, but rather to crusade in what is now southern France. In this war, the ‘evildoers’ were in fact local: purported heretics operating in the coastal region of Languedoc.

The history of crusading outside the Holy Land shakes up conventional ideas of holy war. Earlier generations of western scholars prioritised geographic location and Christian piety when they tried to determine what was and was not a crusade. This led them to decide on the traditional, numbered crusades. Starting in the late 20th century, however, scholars have begun to recognise that most crusades took place outside the immediate environs of Jerusalem. These campaigns, too, were described with pious rhetoric and imagery in historical sources, even when other potential motivations were also present. And all of them featured certain standard practices such as papal authorisation, the taking of vows, and spiritual privileges for participants. This approach to the study of the crusades is now dominant, and it has vastly expanded our understanding of the crusading movement.

We now recognise that, from the late 11th century onwards, crusades were directed against alleged heretics, pagan non-Christians, Muslims and enemies of the papacy in a wide range of locales in Afro-Eurasia. The crusading movement focused primarily on the intentions, the behaviours and above all the perceived divine backing of the crusaders themselves, and accommodated diverse targets and locations with broad, generalised rhetoric. Crusading was thus a highly versatile form of Christian holy war that was easily applicable in many different contexts. This fuller history upsets epic narratives of civilisational clashes between east and west.

Over the next few pages, we explore five distinct areas beyond the Holy Land that witnessed episodes of crusading activity.

A defender wields a slingshot in an Arab fresco showing the conquest of Mallorca by King James I of Aragon, preached as a crusade

GETTY IMAGES

IBERIAN PENINSULA

“We should become knights of Christ and, after defeating his wicked enemies the Muslims, open the way to the same Sepulchre of the Lord through Iberia, which is shorter and much less laborious”

Archbishop Diego Gelmírez, 1120s

Crusading in Iberia was deeply entangled with pre-existing warfare, in particular the campaigns of competing Christian rulers who aspired to ‘reconquer’ the peninsula. These rulers were already infusing their wars with Christian rhetoric, but the rise of the crusading movement added a further layer of sanctity and legitimacy, as well as a powerful spiritual incentive for those who fought.

The first pope to firmly connect this ongoing and episodic Iberian warfare with crusading was Calixtus II, who in 1123 envisioned simultaneous crusading against the ‘enemies of Christ’ at either end of the Mediterranean Sea. The idea that crusading in Iberia was like crusading in the Holy Land – indeed, that it would also ‘open a way’ to the Holy Sepulchre of Christ in Jerusalem – became a recurring theme in Iberian crusading. At some times in the centuries that followed, the papacy took the lead in declaring a crusade, while at others, popes simply recognised post hoc that a certain campaign had, in fact, been holy and penitential.

Crusading in Iberia waxed and waned through the Middle Ages, and ended in 1492, when the joint Christian monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile successfully conquered Granada, the last Muslim-ruled state on the peninsula. In years to follow, Isabella and Ferdinand would expel all practising Jews and Muslims from their realm, and the state-controlled Spanish Inquisition would prosecute thousands for religious non-conformity. Simultaneously, Spanish (and Portuguese) crusading would continue beyond the peninsula, most especially in Africa.

GETTY IMAGES

Crusaders fight the Republic of Novgorod in the 1242 battle on the Ice at Lake Peipus in the Baltics

BALTICS

“We completely forbid that a truce be made with these people for any reason, either for money or tribute, until, with God’s help, either their religion or their nation be destroyed”

Bernard of Clairvaux, 1147

In 1147, the crusade preaching tour of Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, visited Frankfurt. While there, he heard an appeal from local magnates: might they fulfil crusade vows and merit spiritual privileges by continuing their warfare against the Wends? The Wends were an originally pagan people who had been conquered and nominally converted. They had rebelled against their new rulers and, by doing so, made themselves apostates – thus justifying warfare against them. Bernard and his former pupil Pope Eugenius III granted this request and authorised warfare against the Wends as a form of crusade, alongside crusading to the Holy Land and in Iberia. Clearly concerned that expedient truces might end the crusade prematurely, Bernard added a caveat that there was to be no peace until the Wends’ religion or nation was destroyed.

In the Baltics, then, as in Iberia, crusading complemented a pre-existing tradition of Christian warfare. Crusading added an explicit layer of spiritual privilege and divine sanction to wars that were already conceptualised as an expansion of Christendom, even while they also served to boost the power and wealth of ambitious Christian magnates and monarchs in north-eastern Europe. Nonetheless, in the decades that followed Bernard’s stark admonition, attitudes towards the ‘crusading-ness’ of Christian warfare in the Baltics shifted back and forth.

By the papacy of Innocent III (1198–1216), the crusading nature of this warfare was established, although some still considered it less meritorious than campaigning in the Holy Land. Furthermore, Innocent III empowered local leaders to recruit fighters largely at will, resulting in what has been called a ‘perpetual crusade’. The result was conquest, colonisation and conversion. At the same time, religious imagery and rhetoric infused these campaigns: the Baltics were also described as ‘holy lands’, and were in particular imagined as the dowry of Mary, who actively blessed the crusades. Ultimately, crusading in the Baltics burned itself out by the end of the 14th century: the culture of those living there earlier had indeed been subjugated, as Bernard had insisted.

NORTH AFRICA

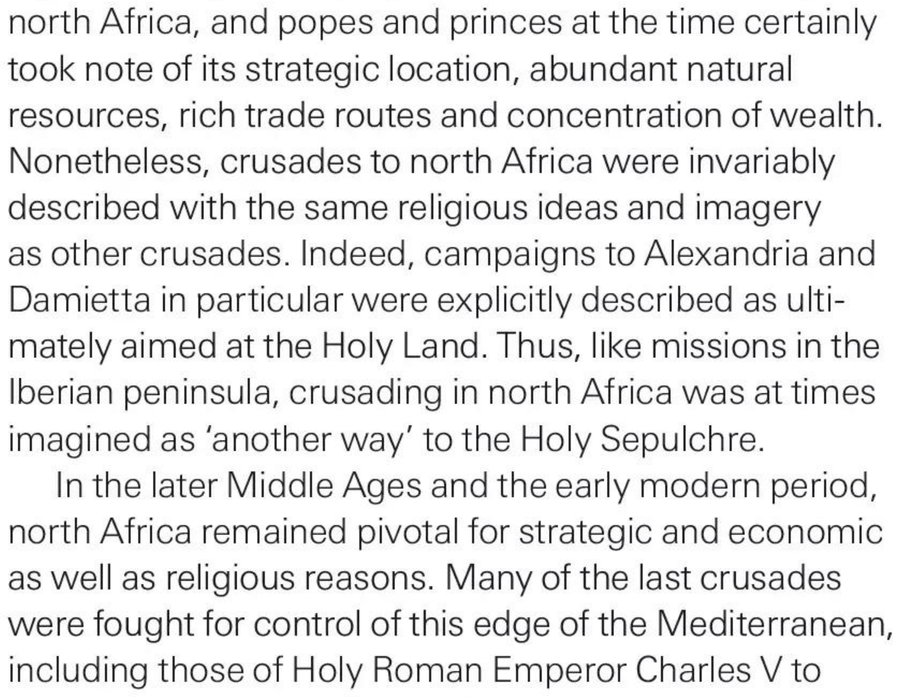
“Baldwin, a relative of Roger the Frank who had conquered Sicily, gathered a great host of Franks and sent to Roger, saying: ‘I shall proceed to Ifriqiya [north Africa] to take it and I shall be your neighbour.’”

Ibn al-Athir, early 13th century

It’s only 200 miles from Palermo to Tunis. If we remember that, until very recently, the fastest means of travel was by sea, and if we recognise the position of north Africa in the larger Mediterranean world, it’s no surprise that crusading took place there. Some Muslim commentators – like the author of the above quote – even ascribed the desire to control north Africa to the crusaders of 1096, thus linking the First Crusade with other expansionary Christian warfare, such as the 1061–91 Norman conquest of Sicily. And as early as 1114, 15 years after the First Crusade took Jerusalem, the papacy granted the remission of sins to those who fought Muslims in the Balearics.

Particularly from the early 13th century onwards, major north African cities including Alexandria, Damietta, Tunis and Mahdia were crusading targets. With hindsight, it’s easy to see pragmatic reasons for focusing on north Africa, and popes and princes at the time certainly took note of its strategic location, abundant natural resources, rich trade routes and concentration of wealth. Nonetheless, crusades to north Africa were invariably described with the same religious ideas and imagery as other crusades. Indeed, campaigns to Alexandria and Damietta in particular were explicitly described as ultimately aimed at the Holy Land. Thus, like missions in the Iberian peninsula, crusading in north Africa was at times imagined as ‘another way’ to the Holy Sepulchre.

In the later Middle Ages and the early modern period, north Africa remained pivotal for strategic and economic as well as religious reasons. Many of the last crusades were fought for control of this edge of the Mediterranean, including those of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V to Tunis, Algiers and Mahdia in the first half of the 16th century, and that of King Sebastian of Portugal to Morocco in 1578.



The siege of Mahdia, Tunisia, in 1390 during the Mahdia Crusade

ITALY

“Perhaps you say: we take up arms against pagans, but not against Christians. But whom should you fight more – a pagan who does not know God, or a Christian confessing himself in words and deeds to be opposed [to God]?”

Peter the Venerable, 1150

When Peter the Venerable, the influential Abbot of Cluny, wrote these words, he was expanding on an established tradition of righteous violence against heretics, which had long been seen as acceptable. However, Peter and thinkers like him took this idea that little bit further by justifying crusading violence against Christians who were thought to have shown themselves to be ‘false’ Christians. Naturally, foremost among these were those who opposed the initiatives and claims of the papacy and its allies.

The first granting of full crusade privileges to those fighting Christian enemies of the papacy dates to 1135. The practice would continue for centuries: as late as 1551, Pope Julius III threatened to crusade against the Protestant-supporting King of France. While clearly not all crusades against papal enemies took place in Italy, many did, and this is no

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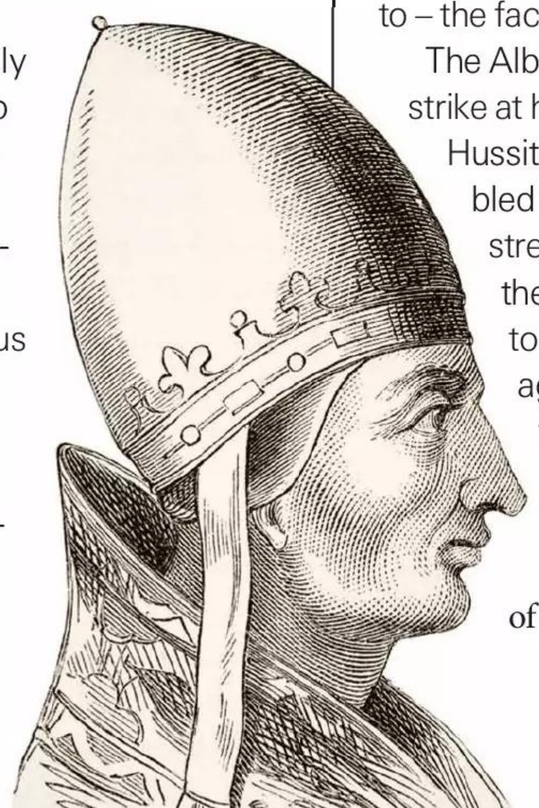
A knight drags the body of King Manfred of Sicily along the ground, after his defeat by Charles of Anjou in a crusade preached by Pope Urban IV

surprise. Southern Italy, and the island of Sicily in particular, were critical strategic locations in the greater Mediterranean world. Furthermore, the centuries-long conflict between emperors and popes for supremacy in Latin Christendom played out in Italy at intervals, since both emperors and popes laid claim to territory there and had loyal supporters in Italy's towns and cities.

Perhaps the most dramatic moments of conflict over southern Italy and Sicily took place between the Hohenstaufen imperial dynasty and the papacy in the 13th century. Frederick II Hohenstaufen, King of Sicily and Germany and Holy Roman Emperor, was famously unpopular with the papacy, despite having had Innocent III as one of many guardians during an orphaned childhood. Crusades against Frederick II were first preached in 1239 and continued to be preached against his descendants well after his death in 1250. Indeed, by the 1260s and 1270s, crusades were being preached and fought in rapid succession after Charles I, the ambitious count of Anjou, accepted the papacy's invitation to seize and claim Sicily. Yet the accompanying onslaught of crusading did not achieve all its aims. Although the male heirs of the Hohenstaufen family were extinguished, the female heirs were not, and ultimately Charles and the papacy were outmanoeuvred on Sicily.

It's often wondered whether Christians found crusades against papal enemies as appealing as crusades against other targets. The short answer is: yes, they did. Of course, such crusades were loudly denounced by those who were targeted, but nonetheless calls to crusade in this way were successful over many centuries. This should not surprise us too much: the spiritual privileges on offer were the same. And presumably Peter the Venerable's reasoning seemed sound to many.



WESTERN EUROPE

"Jesus Christ governs us…. But the lord pope, who ought to care for us, and the prelates of the church who condemn us to death – may God give them courage, knowledge and judgment, so that they know what is right…"

***The Song of the Albigensian Crusade*, early 13th century**

The account of the Albigensian Crusade (1209–29) quoted above was written from two dramatically different perspectives. Its early pages were penned by a supporter of the crusade, while the larger, second part of the text – the source of our quote – was from an anonymous opponent, who wrote a continuation of the work at a later date. It is a pointed reminder that those deemed 'enemies of Christ' by crusaders may have seen themselves in very different terms.

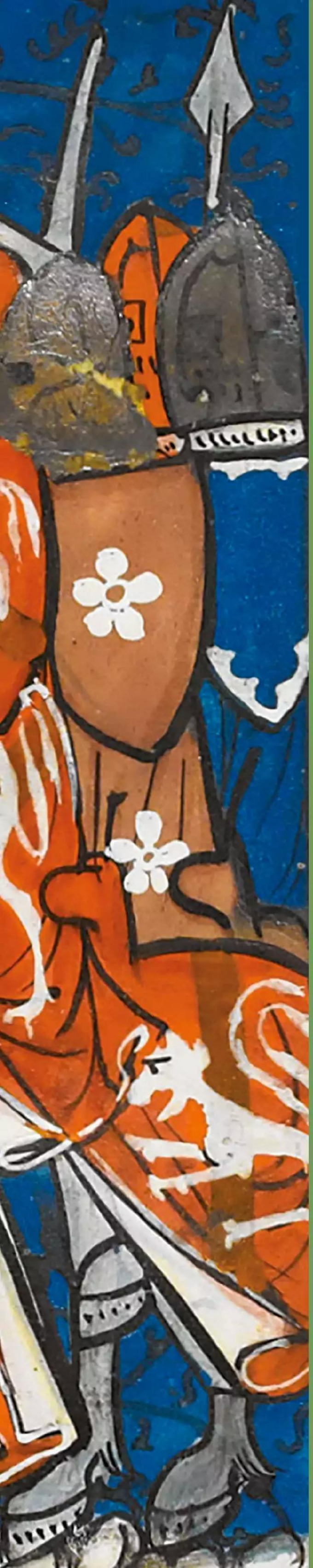
The Albigensian Crusade was hardly a surprise. For decades, the papacy had been worried about reports of heresy in what is now southern France, and had been trying to coax the French monarch and other nobles to tackle the problem for almost as long: stamping out heresy was theoretically the responsibility of secular rulers. Pope Innocent III (pictured below) was only successful in getting a crusade into gear after the killing of a papal legate in 1208 – and once he'd decided that those who crusaded in the Languedoc would be allowed to keep the property of heretics and their supporters.

The crusade took place over 20 years of seasonal campaigns, and resulted in a substantial realignment of power within the area we now know as France. It also contributed to the establishment of two tools against heresy: the Dominican Order, and the institution of a church-wide Inquisition. These tools were deemed necessary for the future, in part because the crusade did not root out all heresy in the region.

The rhetoric and imagery of the Albigensian Crusade, and of other crusades against heretics, were drawn from the same well as those of other crusades, with the added vitriol that 'deliberate' rebels against God had long been thought to deserve. The spiritual privileges on offer were the same. The one identifiable distinction is that the fighting in this crusade was particularly brutal on all sides, despite – or perhaps due to – the fact that neighbours were fighting neighbours.

The Albigensian Crusade was far from the only one to strike at heretics in the Middle Ages. In particular, the Hussite Crusades in early 15th-century Bohemia resembled the events in the Languedoc. Again warfare stretched over decades, again papal authority and the military strength of secular leaders combined to combat a perceived threat to Christendom, and again the crusades were viewed as blatant territorial expansion by those it targeted. H

Susanna Throop is associate professor of history at Ursinus College, Pennsylvania. She is the author of *The Crusades: An Epitome* (Kismet Press, 2018)



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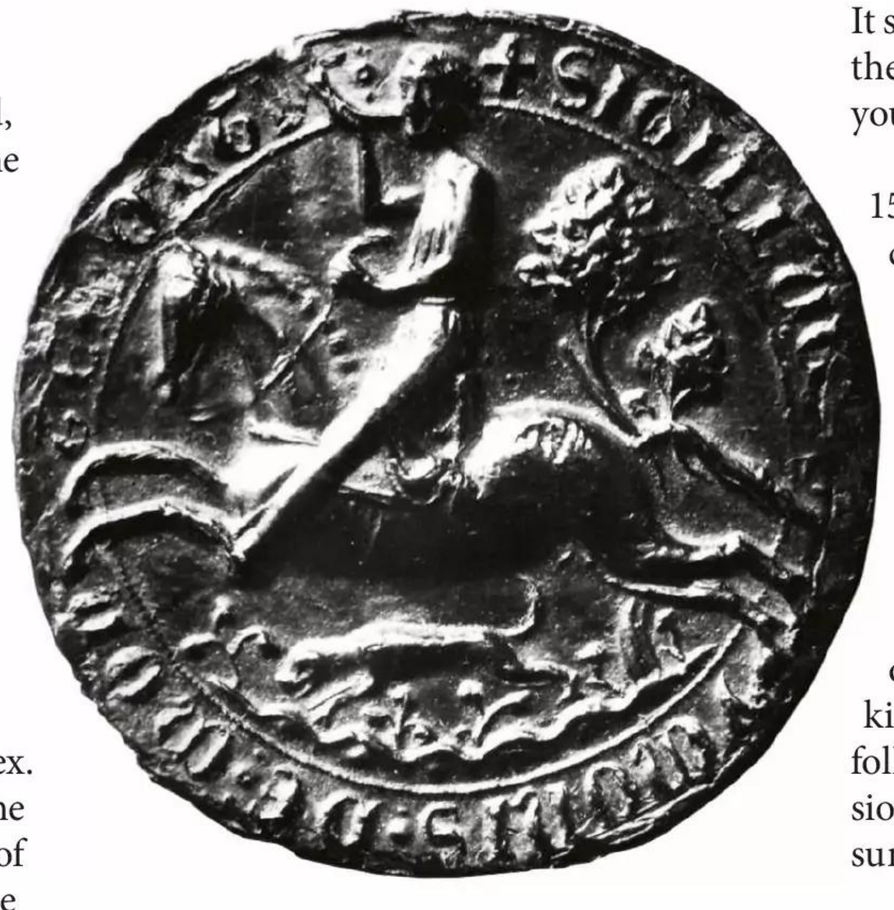
Royal at arms
In a 14th-century manuscript, Henry III (left) fights his nobles during the Second Barons' War (1264–67). This was both a revolutionary war and, from the perspective of Henry's foes, a religious conflict, too

Holy war on the HOME FRONT

The nobleman Simon de Montfort saw himself as a righteous general leading his army in a holy struggle. As **Sophie Thérèse Ambler** recounts, not only did he fight infidels overseas but, in the 1260s, he also challenged the authority of the crown on home soil

As the darkness seeped away into the dawn, the army reached the crest of the hill and the men put down their packs. Each of them wore on his chest and shoulder an insignia: the cross. They were *crucesignati*, crusaders. Before they set out on their march through the early hours, a bishop had promised them remission of their sins if they fought hard in the hours to come. Now, as they readied for battle, they turned to listen to their leader. They were fighting today, he told them, for the honour of God, the saints and the church. May the Lord, he prayed, grant them the strength to do his work and overcome the wickedness of all enemies. Finally, he commended to God their bodies and their souls. Then the men, in their thousands, sank to the ground. Laying their faces against the earth, they stretched out their arms, sending out their own prayers for heavenly aid.

They went on to fight, and to win, that morning. Their battle, though, was not fought amid the arid mounts and plains of the Holy Land, but on a hillside in Sussex. Their enemy not the Muslim infidel, but the monarch of England. This was a new sort of holy war, for their objective was neither the taking of sacred ground nor the preservation of the Christian faith. It was a new way of ruling England, a way that had no effective place for kings. Their leader was Simon de Montfort, 6th Earl of Leicester – and his victory that day in May 1264 in the battle of Lewes would make him the most powerful man in the kingdom.



Simon de Montfort's seal. The 6th Earl of Leicester briefly exerted more power in England than King Henry III

The movement had begun six years before, in the spring of 1258. Seven noblemen, de Montfort among them, had donned their armour and marched on Westminster Hall. Their ultimatum was clear: Henry III must hand over the reins of power or they would take them by force. It struck home. "What is this, my lords?" the king had cried. "Am I, poor wretch, your captive?"

The nobles went on to set up a council of 15, which took control of the machinery of central government – the exchequer and chancery – and the instruments of royal power in the shires: the king's castles and the sheriffs. The council would rule with the help of parliament. This had hitherto been summoned only at the king's wish – usually when he needed consent to raise a tax – but was now to meet three times a year to help make decisions about the running of the kingdom. These measures, and those that followed, came to be known as the Provisions of Oxford, after the parliament in the summer of 1258 at which they were drafted.

The Provisions were nothing short of radical. Medieval Europe was accustomed to protests against improper royal rule in the form of rebellions, but those were demands

EDWARD REEVES PHOTOGRAPHY/ALAMY

Power struggle Baronial troops clash with Henry III's forces in the battle of Lewes. Following his victory in the hills of Sussex, Simon de Montfort took charge of a radical new regime with a parliament at its heart

Clash of faiths King Baldwin II of Jerusalem engages Muslim forces in 1119. The Second Barons' War saw troops replicating the ideals of the crusades – and fighting a 'holy war' – on English soil for the very first time

for the restoration of good government by the king. This was the first attempt to overturn the political system, doing away with monarchy as a means of ruling and, in early 1265, producing the first parliament to which representatives of the towns were summoned. It was the first revolution in England's – or indeed in Europe's – history.

Low-key monarch

Yet there was nothing in Henry III's rule that warranted such drastic measures. Henry, unlike his father, King John, did not rule with disregard for the law and was not cruel – indeed, he was devout, generous and tolerant towards his nobles. But Henry was *simplex*, a term used by his subjects to mean that he lacked political nous and was easily led. In 1258, frustration with Henry's simplicity peaked when he demanded a tax to fund his proposed conquest of Sicily – an eye-wateringly expensive venture about which his subjects had not been consulted – and failed to bring to heel his half-brothers, the Lusignans, who were perpetrating illegal and insulting attacks on their fellow magnates. But in the historical parade of tyrannical or disastrous rulers, Henry III's reign hardly ranked at all. There was no clear reason to turn to radical action. The barons did so, it seems, in the heat of the moment, as tensions and tempers flared in the crucible of a particularly rowdy parliament.

But even if de Montfort's regime was hard to justify rationally, reasons soon emerged to preserve it. First, the council set out to provide justice to the numberless women and men of low status who had suffered under Henry's rule (for the king, unable to extract the money he needed from his nobles, had borne down upon those who could not resist). The council introduced a stream of measures to alleviate their suffering and to offer them ready access to justice, so that the royal officers responsible for their maltreatment could be called to account. The ruling nobles also imposed on themselves the same standards of good government that they demanded of the king – and offered the same right of redress to their own subjects.

There was a second moral buttress to the Provisions, too: an oath. At the Oxford parliament, all (except the Lusignans) vowed to support each other in defence of the Provisions. This was a sacred promise, made in the sight of God, and it required the staking of one's soul.

De Montfort transformed the rebellion into a holy cause, for which he and his men would go on to offer their lives

It was this sense of sacred commitment that brought Simon de Montfort to the fore. It was de Montfort who seems to have driven the legal and social reforms, and insisted that magnates hold themselves to the new moral standard, and it was he who reminded those who wavered of their oaths. He was "moved to rage" (as the chronicler Matthew Paris reports) at the Earl of Gloucester for hesitating to implement the reforms in his estates. "I have no desire," he told his fellow noble, "to live or keep company amongst people so inconstant and false. What we are doing now we agreed and swore together."

To emulate his father

In presenting the situation in these terms, de Montfort set in train the transformation of the rebels' political programme: it would become a *holy* cause, for which he and his men would go on to offer their lives. In a culture that valued armed devotion to God and the church above almost all else, it was an alluring proposition.

But such fervour had a dark side – with terrible consequences, in particular, for England's Jews. The year before the battle of Lewes, the Montfortians, seeking funds for their campaign and giving vent to their hatred, launched a frenzied attack on the Jewish people of London. "Sparing neither age nor sex", as the chronicler Thomas Wykes reports, they "inhumanly butchered the aged and elderly… children wailing in the cradle, babies not yet weaned hanging from their mother's breast." Independent reports suggest that between 400 and 500 people were killed. The massacre was part of a developing pattern in which Jewish people were persecuted systematically, but its furious nature was probably the result of crusading fervour.

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Gullible monarch
Henry III – shown visiting France in a 14th-century illustration – was a generous king, but lacked political nous and was easily led

For all its brutality, it was this fervour that gave de Montfort's sentiments their wide appeal, attracting not only noblemen but bishops, monks, friars and many people from society's lowest ranks to the cause. But as for de Montfort himself, his inspiration was personal – and it came from his father.

Simon de Montfort the elder, known to his followers simply as the Count, was elected leader of the Albigensian Crusade in 1209, charged with commanding the expedition against the Cathar heretics of Languedoc. The Count has been widely vilified, although this reflects subsequent attitudes more than medieval ones. (Modern audiences tend to be disturbed more by the killing of white Europeans than of Muslims of the Middle East). In his own time, the Count was greatly admired for his prowess and dedication to the holy cause, and was even chosen in 1212 by the barons of England plotting to replace King John. To de Montfort, who grew up listening to stories of his father's deeds, the Count was a hero.

There was one element of the Count's character that was emphasised above everything else in these stories: he held true to his oath to fight the holy war no matter what suffering he had to endure, while lesser men, those who were faithless, timid or selfish, abandoned their oaths and abandoned the Count. As de Montfort the elder's story was committed to parchment, and tales of his heroic deeds were sung in the family's feasting hall after his death, this became a model for leadership in holy war. The Count's children, including Simon, the youngest of three sons, were being exhorted to live up to his example.

And so when the young Simon de Montfort became leader of his own holy cause, he looked to his father's memory for inspiration and a model for his leadership, casting himself as indefatigable in his dedication and denouncing those who failed to keep their oath to the Provisions. When many of his allies submitted to the king in 1261, he reportedly proclaimed that "he would rather die without land than withdraw from the truth as a perjurer". After his great triumph at the battle of Lewes, the song composed to celebrate his victory emphasised his unparalleled commitment: "Hence can they, who readily swear and hesitate little to reject what they swear… estimate with how great care they ought to preserve their oath, when they see a man flee neither torment nor death, for the sake of his oath… Woe to the wretched perjurers, who fear not God, denying him for the hope of earthly reward, or fear of prison or of a light penalty."

There was a final example set for de Montfort to follow. The Count had been killed fighting his holy war in 1218 (his head was smashed open by a boulder from a trebuchet while besieging Toulouse), and other de Montfort men were killed in the same campaign: the Count's brother and second son, Guy. De Montfort's eldest brother, Amaury, survived this expedition only to die in 1241 on his way home from the Holy Land.

This extraordinary rate of attrition was the result of the de Montfort family's dedication to holy war. Death for noblemen was unlikely in European conflict between Christians at this time, because the values of chivalry protected those of knightly status and they would normally be taken captive for ransom. In holy war, whether in Languedoc or the Middle East, killing regardless of status was expected and the risk of knightly death was accepted. As de Montfort the younger took up his oath-bound cause in England, and transformed that cause into a crusade, he did so knowing that death in holy war was a family tradition. And just 15 months after his triumph at Lewes, he would follow in the footsteps of martyred family members, in the expectation of a martyr's reward.

Rebels brought to heel

Since the battle of Lewes, the Montfortian council had been ruling England, holding captive the king and his eldest son, Edward (the future King Edward I). But fortunes turned suddenly in the spring of 1265 when Edward escaped. He raised an army and, on 4 August 1265, caught up with the Montfortians at Evesham. He quickly secured the high ground; de Montfort's army, caught unawares, faced the dismal prospect of fighting, outnumbered, uphill. While withdrawal was still possible, he reportedly told his men to flee: "Fair lords, there are many among you who are not as yet tried and tested in the world, and who are young; you have wives and children, and for this reason look to how you might save yourselves and them." Turning to his old friend Hugh Despenser, he urged him to withdraw. Hugh could recover his position, for he would leave behind him "hardly anyone of such great value and worth". Hugh did not hesitate in his reply: "My lord, my lord, let it be. Today we shall drink from one cup, as we have done long since."

Carnage and cruelty

In the battle, Hugh would be cut down, one of the host of knights, together with thousands of non-noble troops, who chose to follow de Montfort to the end. That morning, Edward had selected his 12 best men, who were charged with killing de Montfort on the battlefield. This calculated brutality continued after de Montfort's death. Edward's men set upon his corpse, cutting off his hands, his feet and his head, and cutting off his testicles and stuffing them into his mouth. His head was dispatched as a prize to the wife of the man who struck the lethal blow.

The barbarity did not end there. When the battle was lost, de Montfort's men attempted to take shelter in Evesham Abbey, but

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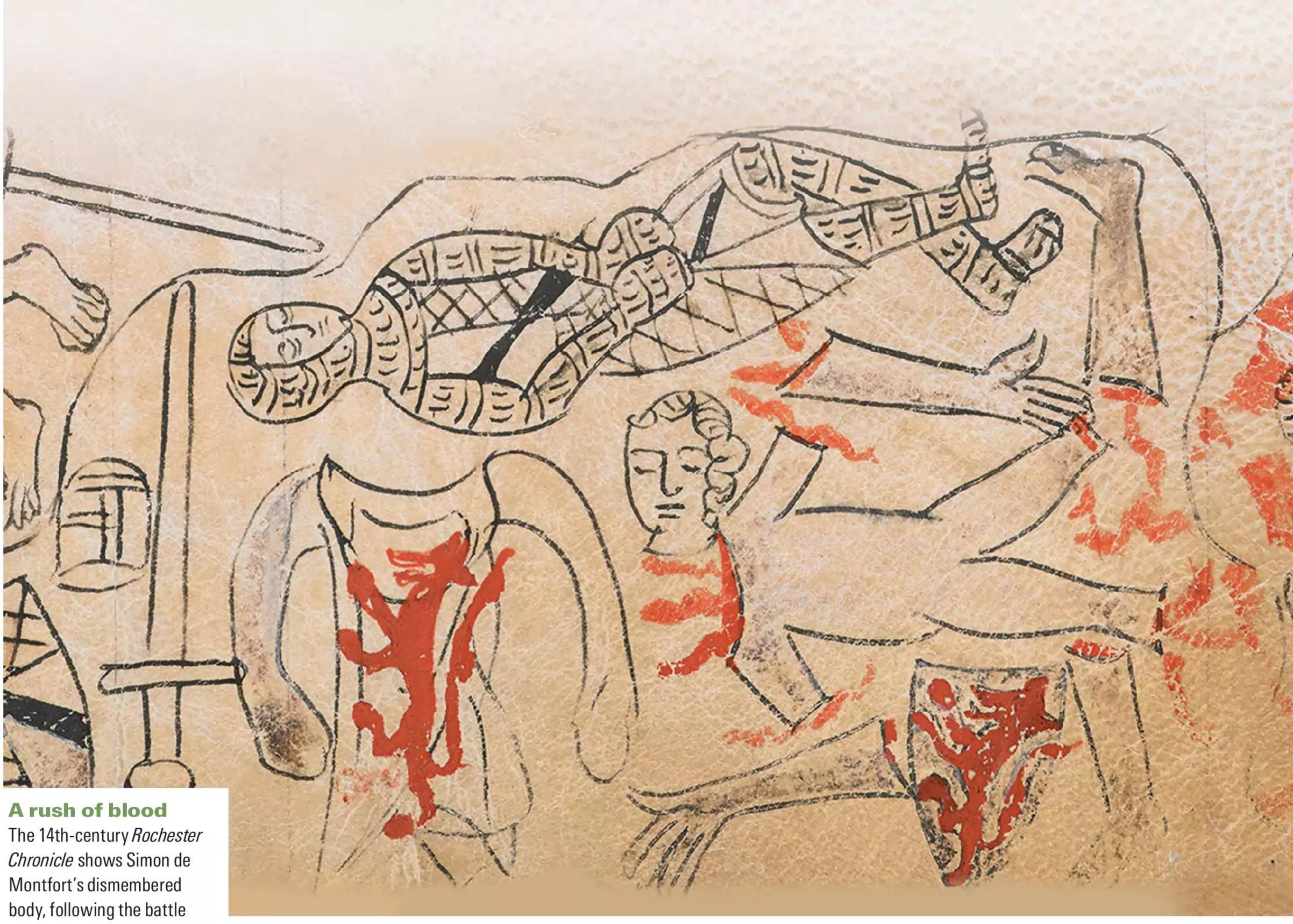

A rush of blood
The 14th-century *Rochester Chronicle* shows Simon de Montfort's dismembered body, following the battle of Evesham

Edward's men broke the laws of sanctuary and hacked them down. "What was horrendous to see," recalled one of the monks of the ghastly scene that confronted him, "the choir of the church and the inside walls and the cross and the statues and the altars were sprayed with the blood of the wounded and dead, so that from the bodies that were there around the high altar a stream of blood ran right down into the crypts… No one knew how many there were except God."

No such battlefield slaughter had been seen in England since Hastings. The massacring of de Montfort and his fellow nobles was a mark of their transgression, for stepping far beyond the bounds of noble conduct when they trampled on the crown. But it was also tied up with a monumental change in military culture: the descent into intra-noble killing, on and off the battlefield. This would see terrible results during conflicts in Sicily in the 1260s–80s – indeed, in 1271, two of de Montfort's sons would avenge their father's death by butchering Henry of Almain, Henry III's nephew, in the Church of San Silvestro in Viterbo, Italy. Such intra-noble brutality would also be repeated in the British Isles in the Wars of Scottish Independence, and across Europe in the Hundred Years' War.

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A carved stone entrance in Evesham Abbey, where de Montfort's supporters sought shelter, only to be brutally hacked down by Prince Edward's men

Edward's men set upon de Montfort's corpse, cutting off his testicles and stuffing them into his mouth

De Montfort's story is key to understanding how this happened, for his elevation of a political struggle to the level of holy war was part of a larger phenomenon. In the 1250s and 1260s, the papacy launched a preaching campaign across Europe to raise an army of crusaders to attack the Hohenstaufen dynasty (whose territorial expansion threatened papal power in Italy), while the papal legate sent to oust de Montfort's regime was authorised to offer indulgences to those fighting for the English crown.

Men were now being told that taking up arms against fellow Christians was not only acceptable but laudable, and would gain them the same spiritual rewards as fighting in the Holy Land. If that was the case, was *killing* fellow Christians equally acceptable? For two and a half centuries, the mental and geographical boundaries governing the conduct of war had been coterminous. Now, with no guidance as to which rules applied where and when, they began to disintegrate. It meant the death of chivalry, at least in the form that it had been known since the turn of the millennium. H

Sophie Thérèse Ambler is reader in medieval history at the University of Lancaster and author of *The Song of Simon de Montfort: England's First Revolutionary* (Picador, 2019)

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The count whose machinations caused the fall of the kingdom of Jerusalem

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A kingdom falls
Muslim forces clash with crusaders in a miniature from a 14th-century French manuscript. Raymond's desertion at the battle of Hattin in 1187 played a key role in the crusaders' defeat and the end of the first kingdom of Jerusalem

RAYMOND *of* TRIPOLI: CRUSADER, DESERTER, TRAITOR

In 1187, a crusader army confronted Saladin in a decisive battle for the Holy Land – but was crushed when one power-hungry count fled the fight. **Jeffrey Lee** explores the life and legacy of Raymond III of Tripoli, whose treacherous desertion cost the kingdom of Jerusalem

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Around nine o'clock in the morning on 4 July 1187, Count Raymond III of Tripoli took a fateful decision. Around him an apocalyptic battle raged. From his position as commander of the vanguard, Raymond could see that the great army of the kingdom of Jerusalem (the crusader state established after the First Crusade) was crumbling, suffering from heat and thirst. Beset from all sides by arrows and the swirling attacks of Saladin's cavalry, crusader resolve was wavering. At this crucial moment, after years of scheming, rebellion and treachery, Raymond could have chosen to fight and prove his loyalty to the Christian cause. Instead, he and his faction turned and fled.

After Raymond deserted the battle at the Horns of Hattin, the Muslim forces inflicted the greatest defeat ever suffered by a crusader army. Knights and infantry were annihilated, the king captured. Saladin, the Muslim leader, then swept through the kingdom of Jerusalem, taking cities and strongholds at will. In October, 88 years after its capture during the First Crusade, the holy city of Jerusalem surrendered to the jihad.

Many other factors contributed to this catastrophic reversal for the crusaders – the endemic shortage of fighting men, the wealth and manpower of their Muslim enemies, the loss of Byzantine support in the early 1180s, and the emergence of the ambitious Saladin as a leader in Egypt – but the single most damaging factor for the kingdom of Jerusalem in the decade leading up to 1187 was Raymond's lust for power.

Dissent among the crusaders in the months leading up to Hattin ensured Saladin won the battle, depicted here in a 14th-century manuscript

Fiendish ambition

Raymond was born in 1140, and became Count of Tripoli after assassins murdered his father in 1152. He was dark-complexioned, with a hooked nose. Renowned for his intelligence and inquiring mind, he was considered by friends and enemies alike a shrewd and accomplished leader. He was related to the ruling family in Jerusalem; but for a man so fiendishly ambitious, Tripoli – a coastal crusader state spanning what is now northern Lebanon and western Syria – was to prove too small a pond.

In 1164, Raymond was taken prisoner by Turkish warlord Nur al-Din. During nine years in captivity he broadened his mind, learning to read and write. Ransomed for the huge sum of 80,000 dinars, he showed he had broadened his ambitions too. Almost immediately, he began interfering in the kingdom of Jerusalem, which bordered his county of Tripoli to the south.

Raymond could have chosen to fight and prove his loyalty… Instead, he turned and fled

In 1174, and now in his 30s, he demanded to be made regent to his distant cousin, the 13-year-old King Baldwin IV. State affairs were under the control of the powerful noble Miles de Plancy, but that did not deter him. Miles was murdered in that same year, possibly assassinated as the result of a feud with a noble family, and Raymond became regent. He enhanced his status by marrying Lady Eschiva of Bures, becoming Prince of Galilee and Lord of Tiberias – the greatest feudal magnate in the kingdom.

The barons of the kingdom worked loyally with Raymond, but he proved a weak and selfish leader. He still owed most of his exorbitant ransom, and when the up-and-coming Muslim leader Saladin cleverly forgave the debt, Raymond allowed him a free hand to unite his power base of Egypt with Syria, hemming in the crusader lands. Even staunch partisans of Raymond

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The crowning of Guy de Lusignan. His inheritance of the throne of Jerusalem dashed Raymond's hopes of ever becoming king

criticised this short-sighted deal.

Raymond's next round of machinations almost delivered the entire kingdom to Saladin. Raymond's regency ended when Baldwin came of age in 1177, but the youthful king suffered from leprosy and periodically needed someone to take charge when he was too ill to rule. Given Raymond's poor record as regent, the king turned instead to the loyal Reynald de Châtillon. Later that year, still smarting from his demotion, Raymond stymied a joint offensive against Saladin's Egypt by Baldwin and the Byzantine imperial fleet. This soured relations with Byzantium and snuffed out the last real chance to crush Saladin's growing power.

Raymond and his ally Bohemond of Antioch then went campaigning in their own territories to the north, allowing Saladin to attack across the unprotected southern frontier. The Muslims pillaged across the coastal plain to Mont Gisard, in the very heart of the kingdom. Jerusalem was saved only when Reynald de Châtillon's generalship, and the inspiration of the brave young leper king, delivered a stunning victory against overwhelming odds.

Raymond's first attempt to supplant Baldwin came in 1180. It appears he planned to make his ally Baldwin of Ibelin heir to the throne by marrying him to the king's sister Sibylla. The king neutered the conspiracy by marrying Sibylla to a handsome knight from Poitou, Guy de Lusignan. The traditional crusading story tells that Guy was resented as a poor leader and bumptious newcomer. But it was frustrated ambition, rather than incompetence or outsider status, that lay behind Raymond's loathing of Guy.

In 1182, Raymond threatened an armed coup, but Baldwin turned him back at the border with Tripoli. Raymond was not with the royal 'host' (army) when, later that year, Saladin invaded the kingdom with a vast

GETTY IMAGES/MAP: BATTLEFIELD DESIGN

Regent to the king

Raymond of Tripoli, who had designs on the kingdom of Jerusalem, is appointed regent to his distant cousin, the young King Baldwin IV. Raymond benefited from the assassination of the noble Miles de Plancy, who had been in charge of state affairs

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force but was obliged to withdraw after a sharp encounter at Le Forbelet. Tellingly, with Raymond absent, the crusader army acted decisively, without discord or prevarication.

Raymond's nefarious influence was back at work the following year when Saladin attacked again. The king was too sick to ride so the largest crusader army for years, funded by a dubious innovation – an income tax – was led by the new regent, Guy de Lusignan. While Saladin's soldiers sacked and burned, Raymond and his cronies arranged for the crusaders' campaign to fizzle out in an embarrassing fiasco of inactivity. In hindsight, the results were positive – Saladin retired without significant gains – but Guy had failed to exploit a mighty host, and his reputation was ruined. Baldwin relieved Guy of the regency and in November 1183 sought to cut him out of the succession altogether by crowning a co-ruler: five-year-old Baldwin V.

Hunger for power

By now, Raymond's hunger for power was common knowledge. Ibn Jubayr, a Muslim traveller from Andalusia who passed through the crusader lands in 1184, recorded that the most prominent crusader was "the accursed count, the lord of Tripoli and Tiberias. He has authority and position among them. He is qualified to be king and indeed is a candidate for the office."

By early 1185, Baldwin IV was clearly dying, and he turned again to Raymond as regent. The barons, though, so distrusted Raymond and his regal ambitions that they imposed stringent conditions. First, the boy-king Baldwin V was to be protected from Raymond by placing him in the care of his great-uncle Joscelin. Second, all royal castles were to be put beyond the regent's control, entrusted instead to the military orders of the Templars and Hospitallers. As regent, Raymond resumed his perniciously passive foreign policy. He made a four-year truce with Saladin, enabling the crusaders' most dangerous enemy to complete his subjugation of all neighbouring Muslim territories, untroubled by Frankish interference.

Then, in 1186, Baldwin V died (poisoned by Raymond, if you believe William of Newburgh, the 12th-century English historian). Raymond moved to seize power, convoking a council in Nablus, the stronghold of his Ibelin allies. But the supporters of the royal house, led by Reynald de Châtillon, crowned Sibylla and her husband Guy instead. Decisively outmanoeuvred, Raymond refused allegiance to the new king, and retreated to Tiberias in flagrant rebellion. The crusaders' foes watched this political meltdown with glee. "Thus was their unity disrupted and their cohesion broken," wrote the great Muslim historian Ibn al-Athir. "This was one of the most important factors that brought about the conquest of their territories and the liberation of Jerusalem."

Saladin was endeavouring to undermine Christian power by fomenting discord among the parties

Things soon got even better for the Muslims. Not satisfied with dividing the kingdom, Raymond defected to the enemy. He "solicited and easily obtained the assistance of Saladin, who was endeavouring to undermine the Christian power by craftily fomenting discord among the parties". Raymond even welcomed Muslim cavalry and archers into Tiberias.

In siding with Saladin, Raymond's aim was simple: to seize the throne. Ibn al-Athir confirmed that Saladin accepted Raymond's allegiance and, in return, "he guaranteed that he would make him independent leader of all the Franks".

Raymond III's treason had devastating military consequences for the crusaders. He allowed Saladin to send a powerful raiding party through Galilee, confronted only by a scratch squadron of Templar and Hospitaller knights, who were massacred. With another Muslim invasion looming, the kingdom had just lost a tenth of its elite soldiery. Raymond's vassals were enraged, and pressured him to renounce his alliance with Saladin.

A grudging reconciliation was arranged with Guy, but it barely papered over the cracks in the crusader leadership. Raymond's presence added a strong military contingent, but it also introduced his trademark dithering and dissension. As Saladin swept across the Jordan with a force large enough to surround much of the Sea of Galilee, Raymond's arguments for restraint paralysed the army. His more bellicose rivals protested, plausibly, that Raymond was trying to undermine Guy – as he had in 1183 – by ensuring another wasted campaign.

Raymond's treachery

Historians still believe Guy was wrong to leave his well-watered base at Sephory and take the fight to Saladin, but his real mistake might have been listening to Raymond and waiting too long before attacking. The crusaders delayed until Saladin had stormed Tiberias and forced Guy's hand. Saladin chose the battlefield.

Raymond's role in the ensuing battle of Hattin is murky, to say the least. The author of the *Estoire de Eracles*, a contemporary chronicle, wrote that it was Raymond's suggestion to camp halfway to Tiberias on the night of 3 July, adding: "The king accepted this advice, but it was bad advice. If the Christians had pressed home the attack, they would have defeated the Turks." That night, both armies were exhausted but Muslim morale was boosted by the defection of five crusader knights. Significantly, they were followers of Raymond of Tripoli. Early next morning, 4 July, battle was rejoined in deadly earnest. Not long into the fight, Raymond performed his disappearing act. "He saw that the signs of defeat were already upon his co-religionists and no notion of aiding his fellows stopped him thinking about himself, so he fled at the beginning of the engagement before it grew fierce."

Most sources agree that Raymond and his knights charged at the Muslims, who simply opened their ranks and allowed them through. He "fled from the battle with his accomplices, while the Turks (as it is said) took no care to follow them", says one. Another source describes how, in their desperation to escape, "The speed of their horses in this confined space trampled down the Christians and made a kind of bridge… In this manner they got out of that narrow place by fleeing over their own men, over the Turks, and over the cross. Thus it was that they escaped with only their lives."

To many, Raymond's desertion was rank treachery. According to the *Itinerarium Regis Ricardi*, a chronicle of the Third Crusade, Raymond "intended to betray his people, as he had agreed with Saladin… [and] right at the moment of engagement, the aforesaid Count of Tripoli fell back and feigned flight. It was rumoured that he did this in order to break up our formation and that he had agreed to abandon his own people, to strike fear into those whom he should have assisted, while arousing the enemy's courage."

This desertion of perhaps 300 knights, a quarter of the crusaders' most potent fighting strength, was the decisive moment.

After the battle of Hattin, Christian defenders at Tyre held out against Saladin's army, as depicted in this 15th-century miniature. Raymond failed in his bid to seize the castle and was forced to flee

Ibn al-Athir wrote that: "When the count fled, their spirits collapsed and they were near to surrendering." According to the chronicler Michael the Syrian, "after the departure of the count, the Franks were like unto men who had lost all hope". The *Old French Continuation of William of Tyre* agrees that, after Raymond's troops left, "Saladin vanquished them quickly. Between the hours of terce and nones [9am and 3pm] he won the entire field."

Astonishingly, despite all the evidence, Raymond is normally perceived as a crusader hero. His divisive quest for power is interpreted as a worthy struggle against villainous warmongers such as Reynald de Châtillon. Even his flight from Hattin is seen as a result of the defeat, rather than a principal cause of it. Seduced by the pro-Raymond chroniclers William of Tyre and Ernoul, 20th-century historians feted the count as a wise statesman whose dealings with Saladin represented a rapprochement between Christians and Muslims. Recent scholarship has gone some way to rebalancing this view, but not far enough – nor has it penetrated the general consciousness.

Despite the evidence, Raymond is normally perceived as a crusader hero

Raymond's reputation

After the battle of Hattin, the only city in the kingdom to resist Saladin's armies was Tyre, led by the defiant Conrad of Montferrat. Tripoli was not besieged – thanks, some believed, to Raymond's pact with Saladin. Even as the crusader enterprise fell apart, the count persisted in his pursuit of power.

According to William of Newburgh, Raymond secretly made his way to Tyre to "corrupt the populace and seize the citadel". His aim was to oust Conrad, his new rival for supremacy over the last dregs of the crusader polity. Conrad foiled the attempt and Raymond fled, leaving some of his men behind "whom the zealous marquis condemned to be hanged, as manifest traitors to the name of Christ".

Raymond died soon afterwards – of grief and shame, chroniclers wrote. The count had ardently wished to rule the crusaders but, contrary to popular belief, no man had done more to bring about their defeat. H

Jeffrey Lee is the author of *God's Wolf: The Life of the Most Notorious of All Crusaders, Reynald de Châtillon* (Atlantic Books, 2016)

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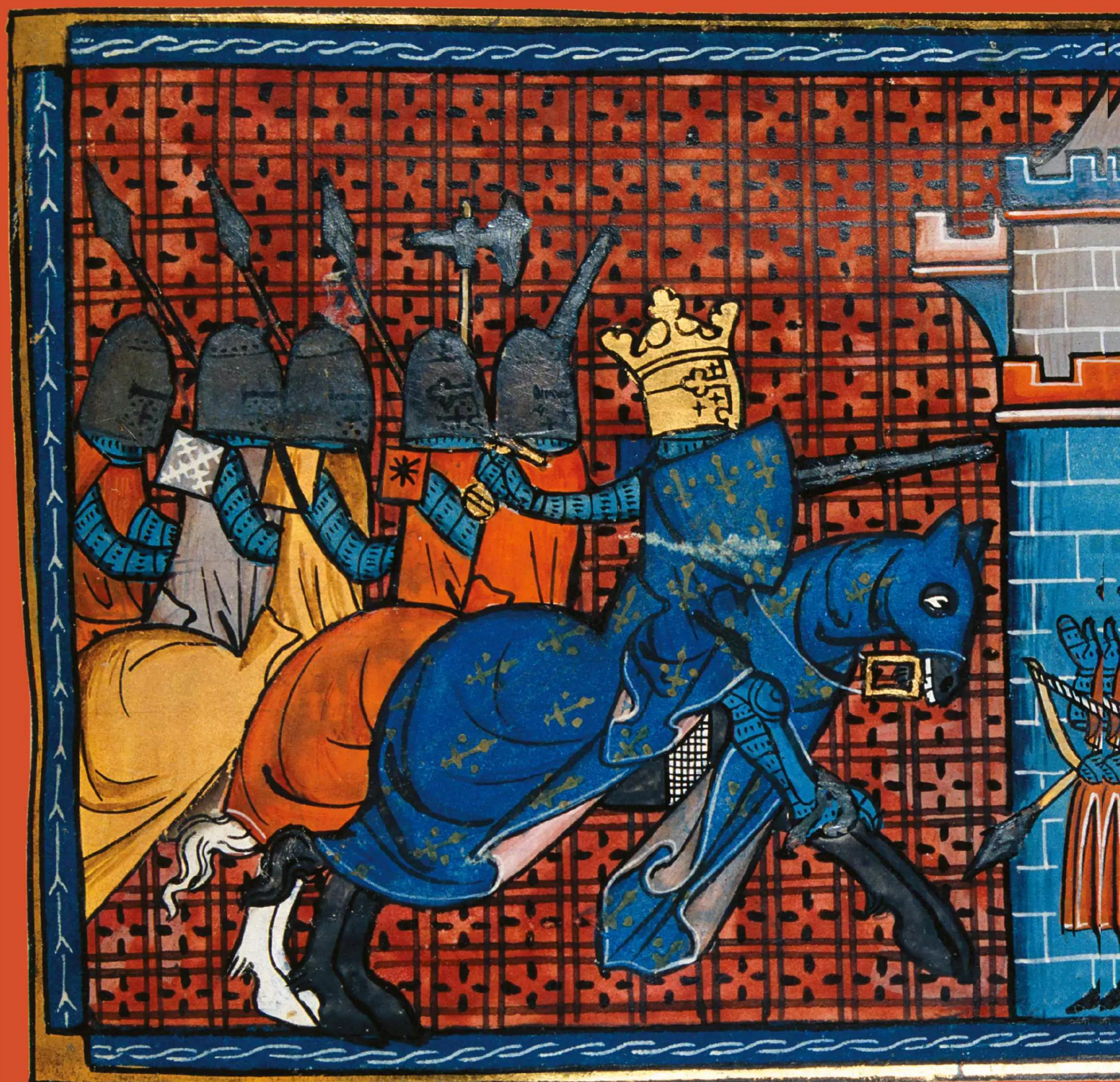

LIONHEART KING OF WAR

Richard I knew the business of war from his early victories in France. But, says **Thomas Asbridge**, it was on the Third Crusade that the English king honed his military genius and transformed himself into the best commander of his generation

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Richard the Lionheart, in yellow, showed his military acumen during clashes with the French king Philip Augustus at the key strategic stronghold of Gisors in the 1190s

On 25 March 1194, King Richard I, the Lionheart, laid siege to Nottingham Castle. Intent on reasserting his authority over England, the king directed the full force of his military genius and martial resources against this supposedly impregnable, rebel-held fortress.

Eleven days earlier, Richard had landed at Sandwich in Kent, setting foot on English soil for the first time in more than four years. During the Lionheart's prolonged absence – first waging a gruelling crusade in the Holy Land, then enduring imprisonment at the hands of political rivals in Austria and Germany – his devious younger brother, John, had sought to seize power. Richard thus returned to a realm threatened by insurrection and, though John himself soon scuttled across the Channel, Nottingham remained an outpost of those championing his dubious cause.

Richard fell upon the stronghold with chilling efficiency. He arrived at the head of a sizeable military force, and possessed the requisite tools to crack Nottingham's stout defences, having summoned siege machines and stone-throwing trebuchets from Leicester, 22 carpenters from Northampton, and his master engineer, Urric, from London.

The castle's garrison offered stern resistance, but on the first day of fighting the outer battlements fell. As had become his custom, Richard threw himself into the fray wearing only light mail armour and an iron cap, though he was protected from a rain of arrows and crossbow bolts by a number of heavy shields borne by his bodyguards. By evening, we are told, many of the defenders were left "wounded and crushed", and a number of prisoners had been taken.

Having made a clear statement of intent, the Lionheart sent messengers to the garrison in the morning, instructing them to capitulate to their rightful king. At first they refused, apparently unconvinced that Richard had indeed returned. In response, the Lionheart deployed his trebuchets, then ordered gibbets to be raised and hanged a number of his captives in full sight of the fortress. Surrender followed shortly thereafter. Accounts vary as to the treatment subsequently meted out to the rebels: one chronicler maintained that they were spared by the "compassionate" king because he was "so gentle and full of mercy", but other sources make it clear that at least two of John's hated lackeys met their deaths soon after (one being imprisoned and starved, the other flayed alive).

With this victory Richard reaffirmed the potent legitimacy of his kingship, and support for John's cause in England collapsed. The work of repairing the grave damage inflicted by John's machinations on his family's extensive continental lands would take years – the majority of Richard's remaining life, in fact – but the lion-hearted ruler had returned to the west in spectacular fashion. Few could doubt that he was now the warrior-king par excellence – a fearsome opponent unrivalled among the crowned monarchs of Europe.

Richard wrestles with a lion in this illumination from the *Peterborough Psalter*, produced c1220, two decades after the king's death

As a meticulous logician and a visionary strategist, the Lionheart could out-think his enemy; but he also loved frontline combat

Martial genius

Richard I's skills as a warrior and a general have long been recognised – though, for much of the 20th century, it was his supposedly intemperate and bloodthirsty brutality

TIMELINE **Richard the Lionheart: life of a crusader king**

8 September 1157
Richard is born, the son of Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine, founders of the Angevin dynasty

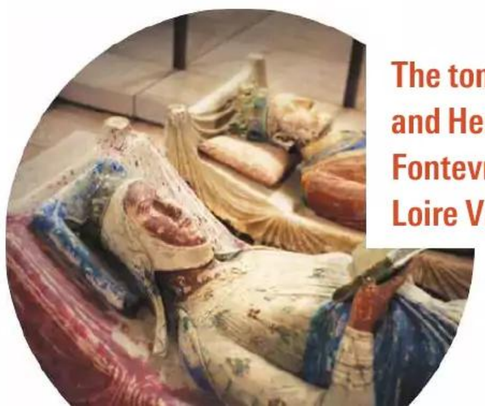
June 1172
Invested as Duke of Aquitaine in the abbey church of St Hilary in Poitiers

11 June 1183
His elder brother dies. Richard becomes heir to the English crown and Angevin realm (including Normandy and Anjou)

Autumn 1187
Saladin reconquers Jerusalem. Richard is the first nobleman north of the Alps to take the cross for the Third Crusade

3 September 1189
Having rebelled against his father Henry's authority and hounded the old king to his death, Richard is crowned king

4 July 1190
Sets out on crusade to the Holy Land, leaving his younger brother, John, in Europe



The tombs of Eleanor and Henry II at Fontevraud Abbey, Loire Valley, France

A 14th-century image of Richard's coronation at Westminster Abbey

ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN

King Richard oversees the beheading of 2,700 Muslims following a breakdown in negotiations with Saladin after the siege of Acre, 1191

Summer 1191
Richard seizes Acre from Saladin's forces. He marches to Jaffa, defeating the Muslim army at Arsuf en route

2 September 1192
After abortive attempts on Jerusalem, Richard agrees peace with

December 1192
Travelling home, Richard is seized by Leopold of Austria, then held by Henry VI of Germany until 1194

26 March 1194
Richard takes Nottingham Castle. His brother John's cause in England collapses

1196–98
Richard spends £12,000 on Château Gaillard, which helps him reassert Angevin dominance in northern France

6 April 1199
Richard dies during the siege of Châlus

A 15th-century representation of Saladin, Richard's great Muslim rival

Richard the Lionheart depicted in an effigy on his tomb at Fontevraud Abbey

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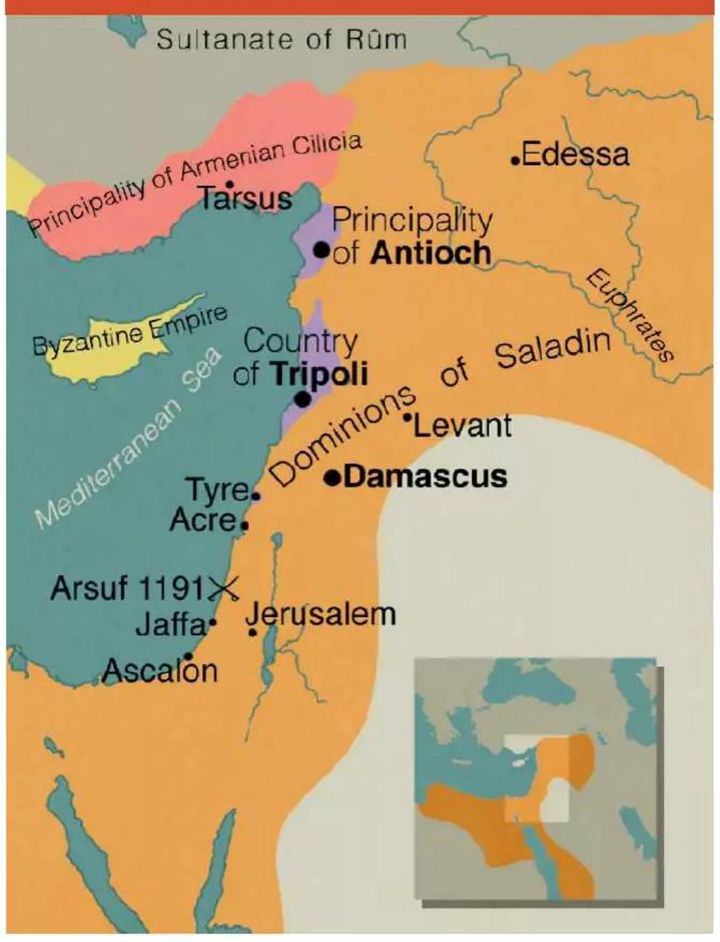
The near east on the eve of the Third Crusade



that was emphasised, with one scholar describing him as a "peerless killing machine". In recent decades a strong case has been made for the Lionheart's more clinical mastery of the science of medieval warfare, and today he is often portrayed as England's *rex bellicosus* (warlike king).

Current assessments of Richard's military achievements generally present his early years as Duke of Aquitaine (from 1172) as the decisive and formative phase in his development as a commander. Having acquired and honed his skills, it is argued, he was perfectly placed to make his mark on the Third Crusade, waging a holy war to recover Palestine from the Muslim sultan Saladin. The contest for control of Jerusalem between these two titans of medieval history is presented as the high point of Richard I's martial career – the moment when he forged his legend.

However, this approach understates some issues while overplaying others. He embarked on the crusade on 4 July 1190 as a recently crowned and relatively untested king. Years of intermittent campaigning had given him a solid grounding in the business of war – particularly in the gritty realities of raiding and siege-craft – but to begin with, at least, no one would have expected Richard to lead in the holy war. That role naturally fell to Emperor Frederick Barbarossa of Germany, Europe's elder statesman and veteran campaigner, and it was only Barbarossa's unfortunate death through drowning en route to the Levant that opened the door for the Lionheart.

Arguably, the extent and significance of Richard's achievements in the Holy Land have also been exaggerated. True, he brought the crusader siege of Acre to a swift and successful conclusion in July 1191, but he did so only in alliance with his sometime-rival King Philip Augustus of France (of the Capetian dynasty). The victory over Saladin's forces later that year at the battle of Arsuf, on 7 September, appears on closer inspection to have been an unplanned and inconclusive encounter, while Richard's decision to twice advance to within 12 miles of Jerusalem, only to retreat on both occasions without mounting an assault, suggests that he had failed to grasp, much less harness, the distinctive devotional impulse that drove crusading armies.

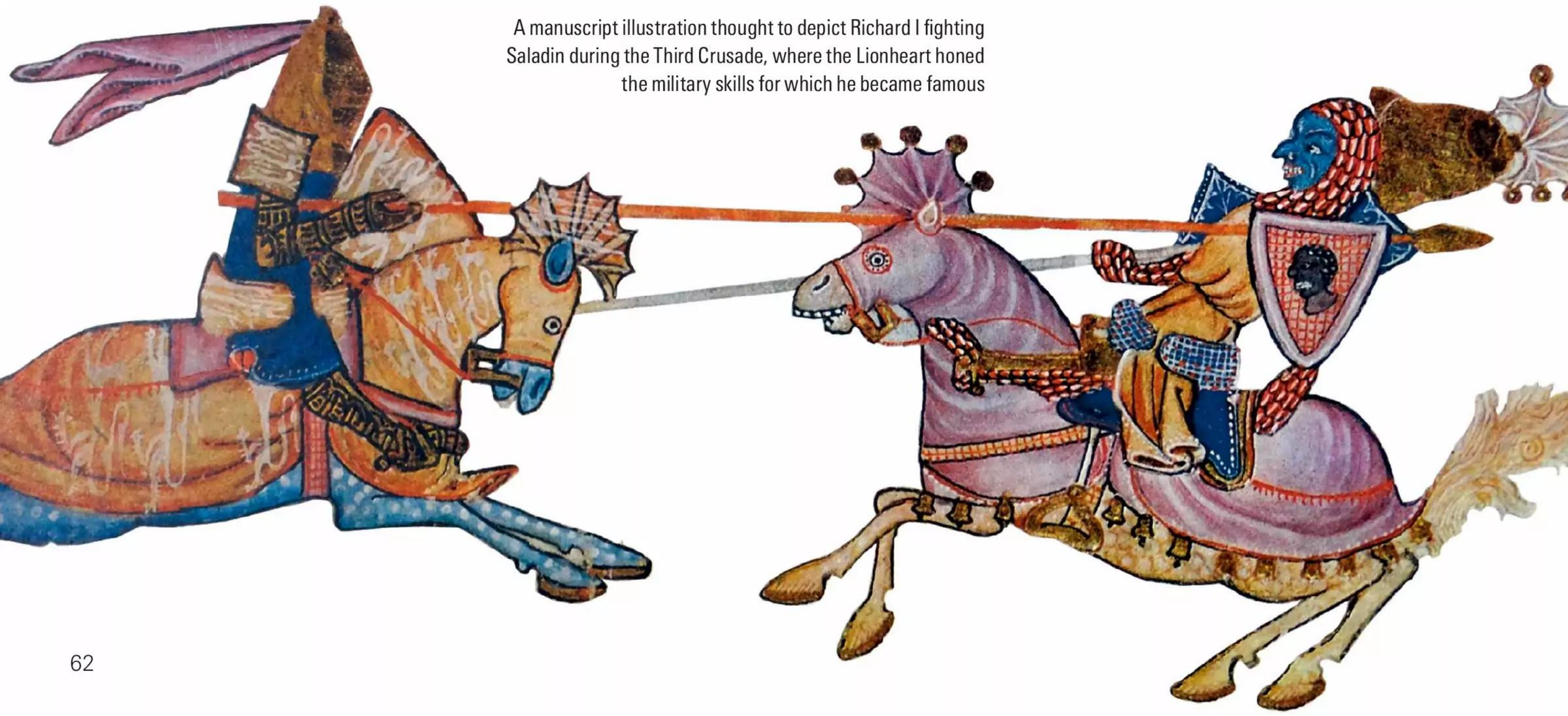
This is not to suggest that Richard's expedition should be regarded as a failure,

He returned to the west having acquired a new depth of experience and insight... putting the lessons to good use as he strove to subdue England

nor to deny that his campaign was punctuated by moments of inspired generalship – most notably in leading his army on a fighting march through Muslim-held territory between Acre and Jaffa. Rather, it is to point out that the Lionheart was still sharpening his skills in Palestine. The Third Crusade ended in stalemate in September 1192, but it was in the fires of this holy war, as Richard and Saladin fought one another to a standstill, that the English king tempered his martial genius.

He returned to the west having acquired a new depth of experience and insight, and proved only too capable of putting the lessons learned in the Levant to good use as he strove first to subdue England, and then to reclaim the likes of Normandy and Anjou from Philip of France. It is this period, between 1194 and 1198, which should rightly be recognised as the pinnacle of Richard I's military career.

By the time he reached England in March



A manuscript illustration thought to depict Richard I fighting Saladin during the Third Crusade, where the Lionheart honed the military skills for which he became famous

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1194, the 36-year-old king had matured into an exceptionally well-rounded commander. A meticulous logician and a cool-headed, visionary strategist, the Lionheart could out-think his enemy; but he also loved frontline combat and possessed an exuberant self-confidence and inspirational charisma, allied to a grim but arguably necessary streak of ruthlessness.

All of these qualities were immediately apparent when Richard marched on rebel-held Nottingham. This veteran of the siege of Acre – one of the hardest-fought investments of the Middle Ages – understood the value of careful planning, the decisive capability of heavy siege machinery and the morale-sapping impact of calculated violence. Though one contemporary claimed Nottingham Castle was "so well fortified by nature and artifice" that it seemed "unconquerable", Richard brought its garrison to the point of surrender within two days. Other striking successes in siege warfare followed, not least when the Lionheart captured the mighty fortress of Loches (in Touraine) in just three hours through a blistering frontal assault.

Sparring with the enemy

While campaigning on the continent to recover Angevin territory from Philip Augustus, Richard also demonstrated a remarkably acute appreciation of the precepts governing military manoeuvres and engagements. During the crusade he had sparred with Saladin's forces on numerous occasions, through fighting marches, exploratory raids and in the course of the first, incremental advance inland towards Jerusalem, conducted in the autumn of 1191.

This hard-won familiarity with the subtleties of troop movements and martial incursion served the Lionheart well when, in the early summer of 1194, Philip Augustus advanced west towards the town of Vendôme (on the border between the Angevin realm and Capetian territory) and began to threaten the whole of the Loire Valley.

Richard responded by marching into the region in early July. Vendôme itself was not fortified, so he threw up a defensive camp in front of the town. The two armies, seemingly well-matched in numerical terms, were now separated by only a matter of miles. Though Philip remained blissfully unaware, from the moment the Lionheart took up a position before Vendôme, the Capetians (French) were in grave danger. Should the French king attempt to initiate a frontal assault on the Angevin encampment, he would have to lead his troops south-west down the road to Vendôme, leaving the Capetian host exposed

Richard I of England and Philip Augustus of France lead the siege of Acre. After they took the city, Richard led a daring fighting march towards Jerusalem

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Three kings square up to Saladin

THE THIRD CRUSADE (1189–92)

On 4 July 1187, the Muslim sultan Saladin inflicted a crushing defeat on the crusader kingdom of Jerusalem's army in the battle of Hattin, capturing the kingdom's monarch, Guy de Lusignan, and the Christians' revered relic of the True Cross. Saladin went on to seize control of Jerusalem itself on 2 October.

These ruinous setbacks sent shockwaves through western Europe, prompting the pope to launch a new call to arms for what would come to be known as the Third Crusade. Tens of thousands of Christians enlisted, including King Philip II of France and Richard the Lionheart, who soon ascended to the English throne.

Nonetheless, the crusade's first attack was launched by King Guy in late August 1189, shortly after his release from captivity. Guy laid siege to the strategically significant Muslim-held port of Acre (today in northern Israel) and, against all odds, his force survived Saladin's best attempts to drive it from the field. Over the next two years, successive waves of crusader reinforcements arrived from Europe. After the kings of France and England reached the Levant, Acre finally fell on 12 July 1191.

Having helped to secure this initial victory, Philip II elected to return home, leaving King Richard to direct what remained of the crusade. Fearing a loss of momentum, the Lionheart controversially executed some 2,700 Muslim captives outside Acre on 20 August 1191, before leading his army on a daring fighting march down the coast of Palestine, repelling a major Muslim assault at the battle of Arsuf on 7 September.

Richard went on to attempt two sustained advances inland towards the Holy City, but on both occasions he turned back without launching an assault, perhaps fearing the collapse of his supply lines. Ultimately, the crusade ended in stalemate when the two sides agreed terms in the Treaty of Jaffa on 2 September 1192. Richard secured control of a thin strip of coastal territory, but failed to recover the True Cross and, perhaps most importantly of all, left Jerusalem in Saladin's hands.

Richard drew on his crusading expertise when devising Chateau Gaillard ('Castle of Impudence') in the Norman Vexin

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to flanking and encircling manoeuvres. However, any move by the French to retreat from the frontline would be an equally risky proposition, as they would be prone to attack from the rear and might easily be routed.

At first, King Philip sought to intimidate Richard, dispatching an envoy on 3 July to warn that a French offensive would soon be launched. Displaying a disconcerting confidence, the Lionheart apparently replied that he would happily await the Capetians' arrival, adding that, should they not appear, he would pay them a visit in the morning. Unsettled by this brazen retort, Philip wavered over his next step.

When the Angevins initiated an advance the following day, the French king's nerve broke and he ordered a hurried withdrawal north-east, along the road to Fréteval (12 miles from Vendôme). Though eager to harry his fleeing opponent, Richard shrewdly recognised that he could ill-afford a headlong pursuit that might leave his own troops in disarray, perilously exposed to counterattack. The Lionheart therefore placed one of his most trusted field lieutenants, William Marshal, in command of a reserve force, with orders to shadow the main advance, yet hold back from the hunt itself and thus be ready to counter any lingering Capetian resistance.

Having readied his men, Richard began his chase around midday on 4 July. Towards dusk, Richard caught up with the French rearguard and wagon train near Fréteval, and as the Angevins fell on the broken Capetian ranks, hundreds of enemy troops were slain or taken prisoner. A wealth of plunder was seized, ranging from "pavilions, all kinds of tents, cloth of scarlet and silk, plate and coin" to "horses, palfreys, pack-horses, sumptuous garments and money", chroniclers wrote. Many of Philip Augustus's personal possessions were appropriated, including a portion of the Capetian royal archives. It was a desperately humiliating defeat.

Richard hunted the fleeing French king through the night, using a string of horses to speed his pursuit, but when Philip pulled off the road to hide in a small church, Richard rode by. It was a shockingly narrow escape for the Capetian. The Angevins returned to Vendôme near midnight, laden with booty and leading a long line of prisoners.

The power of a castle

By the end of 1198, after long years of tireless campaigning and adept diplomacy, Richard had recovered most of the Angevin dynasty's territorial holdings on the continent. One crucial step in the process of restoration was the battle for dominion over the Norman Vexin – the long-contested border zone between the duchy of Normandy and the Capetian-held Île-de-France. Philip Augustus had seized this region in 1193–94, while Richard still remained in captivity, occupying a number of castles, including the stronghold at Gisors. Long regarded as the linchpin of the entire Vexin, this fortress was all but impregnable. It boasted a fearsome inner keep enclosed within an imposing circuit of outer battlements and, even more importantly, could rely upon swift reinforcement by French troops should it ever be subject to enemy assault.

The Lionheart was uniquely qualified to attempt the Vexin's reconquest. In the Holy Land, he had painstakingly developed a line of defensible fortifications along the route linking Jaffa and Jerusalem. Later, he dedicated himself to re-establishing the battlements at Ascalon, because the port was critical to the balance of power between Palestine and Egypt. Richard might already have possessed a fairly shrewd appreciation of a castle's use and value before the crusade, but by the time he returned to Europe there can have been few commanders with a better grasp of this dimension of medieval warfare.

Drawing upon this expertise, Richard immediately recognised that, in practical terms, Gisors was invulnerable to direct attack. As a result, he formulated an inspired, two-fold strategy, designed to neutralise Gisors and reassert Angevin influence over the Vexin. First, he built a vast new military complex on the Seine at Les Andelys (on the Vexin's western edge) that included a fortified island, a dock that made the site accessible to shipping from England and a looming fortress christened 'Château Gaillard' – the 'Castle of Impudence', or 'Cheeky Castle'. Built in just two years, 1196–98, the project cost an incredible £12,000, far more than Richard spent on fortifications in all of England over the course of his entire reign.

Les Andelys protected the approaches to the ducal capital of Rouen, but more importantly it also functioned as a staging post for offensive incursions into the Vexin. For the first time, it allowed large numbers of Angevin troops to be billeted on the fringe of this border zone in relative safety, and the Lionheart set about using these forces to dominate the surrounding region. Though the Capetians retained control of Gisors, alongside a number of other strongholds in the Vexin, their emasculated garrisons were virtually unable to venture beyond their gates, because the Angevins based out of Les Andelys were constantly ranging across the landscape.

One chronicler observed that the French were "so pinned down [in their] castles that they could not take anything outside", and troops in Gisors itself were unable even to draw water from their local spring. By these steps, King Richard reaffirmed Angevin dominance in northern France, shifting the balance of power back in his favour.

In the end, Richard's penchant for siege warfare and frontline skirmishing cost him his life. One of the greatest warrior-kings of the Middle Ages was killed by a crossbow bolt in 1199 while besieging an insignificant Aquitanean fortress. The Lionheart's death, at just 41, seemed to contemporaries, as it does today, a shocking and pointless waste. Nonetheless, he was the foremost military commander of his generation – a *rex bellicosus* whose martial gifts were forged in the Holy Land. H

Thomas Asbridge is reader in medieval history at Queen Mary, University of London. His books include *Richard I: The Crusader King* (Allen Lane, 2018)

The contested border zone between Normandy and French lands

He was the foremost military commander of his generation – a *rex bellicosus* whose martial gifts were refined in the Holy Land

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HOW TO LEAD LIKE SALADIN

You don't unite the Muslim world and strike fear into the west's fanatical crusaders without being an exceptional ruler. **John Man** reveals the eight qualities that made Saladin one

SALADIN'S CV

BORN: To a family of Kurdish ancestry, in Tikrit (modern-day Iraq), in c1137/38

BEST REMEMBERED FOR: Defeating a crusader army at the 1187 battle of Hattin (present-day Israel) and seizing Jerusalem from the crusaders later that year

OTHER KEY ACHIEVEMENTS: Establishing a mighty Muslim empire that encompassed today's Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Yemen and the Palestinian territories

REVERED BY: The Muslim world, especially his fellow Sunnis. But he was also greatly respected by his sworn enemies, the crusaders, who it is said regarded him as highly as their own leaders

DIED: Of a fever in Damascus in 1193

BURIED: In the Umayyad Mosque, Damascus

Saladin, seen here in a 12th-century portrait, led Muslim opposition to the crusaders and united much of the Middle East

Saladin's achievements in bringing together much of the Middle East under one vast Muslim empire, and crushing a crusader army in 1187, mark him out as one of history's most accomplished leaders. Here are the eight secrets behind his incredible success…

Nur al-Din (right), who wanted to unify Islam, was an inspiration to the young Saladin

1 Learn from the best

An inspirational ruler and a warrior uncle were key to Saladin's rise

One key to Saladin's leadership skills surely lay in his childhood. This is an assumption, for almost nothing is known about the young Saladin. But something can be deduced from his later success. He was raised in a violent world, yet gained emotional security from religion and family.

In *Outliers*, his 2008 book analysing attributes that distinguish the most successful people from the rest, Malcolm Gladwell points out that a key element in a person's rise to greatness is a mentor or guiding light – someone who provides both an example and a helping hand.

If his father provided for his emotional security, then Saladin's two mentors were Shirkuh, his warlike uncle, and Nur al-Din, the inspirational ruler of Aleppo and Mosul: anti-crusader, would-be unifier of Islam, and Saladin's master and employer.

It was Nur al-Din who gave Saladin his big break and sent him off with an army to Egypt, his idea being that Egypt's wealth would provide a basis for unifying Islam and confronting the crusaders. Without Shirkuh and Nur al-Din – one a campaigner, the other a ruler – Saladin could have remained insignificant.

2 Show no mercy

One of the most effective weapons in Saladin's armoury was the capacity to brutalise

Leadership is often equated with ruthlessness. One exponent of this was the Chinese theorist of leadership Lord Shang, writing when China was torn by rival states in about 400 BC. He advised rulers that human beings are idle, greedy, cowardly, treacherous and foolish, and the only way to deal with them is to entice, terrify, reward and punish. Two thousand years later, Machiavelli, confronted by Italy's warring mini-states, made the same point: only the ruthless exercise of power can guarantee the peaceful continuity of the state.

In some circumstances, Saladin too knew how to use force, even brutality. His new position in Egypt presented problems. Sunni Syrians and Shia Egyptians were old rivals. Each despised the other. Each had a caliph. In Egypt, Saladin could rule only by force and duplicity. He collaborated in the murder of the vizier (a high-ranking minister) Shawar, built up a formidable army and bullied the young Egyptian caliph, Al-Adid, into naming him vizier with power over both government and armed forces. He also engineered plots, arrested and tortured the plotters, and dismissed troublesome members of the Egyptian army and palace guards. Then he ended the Cairo-based caliphate, scattered the caliph's library, divided Cairo's palaces among his family, crushed revolts – even crucifying two ringleaders in central Cairo – and spread his control to Yemen.

Later, after the battle of Hattin, one of his captives was French crusader Reynald de Châtillon, a man he had sworn to kill in revenge for his brutal and treacherous behaviour. In one account, Saladin beheaded him with one stroke of his sword. Soon afterwards, volunteers executed a further 200 captives, while Saladin looked on approvingly.

Saladin, shown beheading the captive Reynald de Châtillon, was not afraid to use force

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A 13th-century French manuscript shows Saladin's troops wreaking devastation on the Holy Land, taking prisoners and stealing cattle

3 Have a cause worth fighting for

Saladin's rallying cry – holy war – proved irresistible to thousands of his followers

From his youth, Saladin was in some sense programmed for leadership, which he seized in Egypt. For his next move, he needed to inspire. One vital element for a leader – some say the most vital – is the agenda, the vision. Effective leaders need a noble cause, something bigger than the leader himself.

As psychologist Daniel Goleman and his co-authors comment in *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (2013), those with vision "exude resonance: they have genuine passion for their mission, and that passion is contagious".

Saladin's vision was powerful and simple: an Islamic world unified and free of the non-Islamic, anti-Islamic crusaders. He did not even have to originate it. The cause had been in the air for a generation, since the arrival of the crusaders in 1096. His mentor, Nur al-Din, had preached jihad – or holy war – against them.

Saladin took up the cry: "Do battle not for my cause, but for God's cause."

His vision was powerful and simple: an Islamic world unified and free of the crusaders

4 Be prepared to negotiate

Saladin quickly learned that he couldn't always bludgeon his way to power

But now what? Egypt's wealth was the key to power, but the door to Islamic unity and jihad was Syria. By about 1170, it was obvious that Saladin was a rival to his master, Nur al-Din. There could have been civil war – except that the two shared the same vision, and both held back from outright confrontation for three years.

Then Nur al-Din's death gave Saladin a chance to claim his former master's realm. This would not be easy, because major cities – Damascus, Aleppo, Mosul, Homs, Hama, Baalbek – were held by Nur al-Din's heirs or allies. It was now that Saladin's leadership skills came to the fore. He became an expert in what leadership theorists call 'soft power', in which persuasion trumps force.

His task was to usurp power, while pretending deference to Nur al-Din's lineage. There was no point forcing himself on other Muslims, if by doing so he turned them from rivals into enemies. If he besieged a city, he did so with restraint. In victory, he took care not to pursue, slaughter and pillage. He often wrote to the caliph in Baghdad, asking for his backing.

It took 10 years of steps forward, steps back, negotiations, appeals and shows of force followed by displays of magnanimity – but in the end it worked. The caliph granted him a 'diploma of investiture', and Saladin became ruler of Syria as well as Egypt. He had the legitimacy he needed to turn his unified army against the crusaders, achieving his stunning victory in the battle of Hattin in 1187 and following this up by seizing Jerusalem.

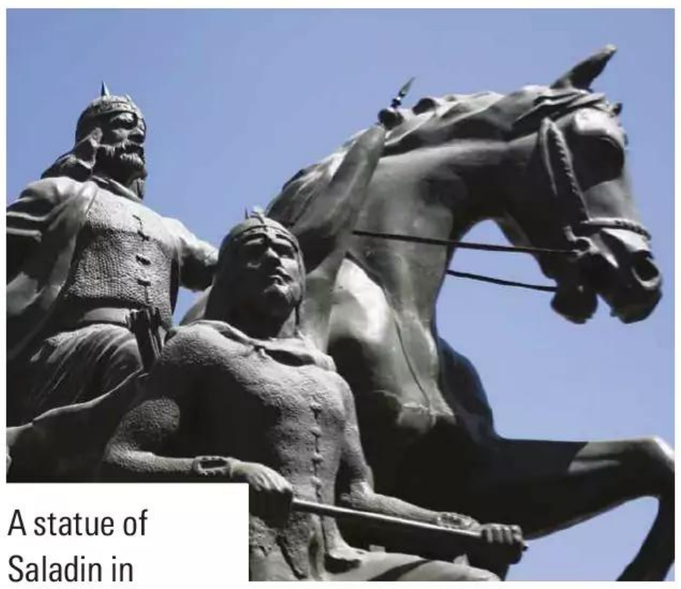
Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of his soft leadership was that he applied it in his dealings with his enemies. He probed, retreated, consulted, negotiated, exchanged prisoners, changed his mind with changing circumstances, and dealt courteously with his enemies. He acted like this partly because that was his character, and partly because it worked, saving much fruitless fighting and unnecessary losses.

5 Put your life on the line

To inspire true loyalty, Saladin was prepared to go where only the bravest would follow

Another element of Saladin's rule was his readiness to share adversity. The nature of revolutionary leadership demands it. In the words of the American political scientist James MacGregor Burns: "The leaders must be absolutely dedicated to the cause and able to demonstrate that commitment by giving time and effort to it, risking their lives, undergoing imprisonment, exile, persecution and continual hardship." Saladin risked his life in battle, and at the age of 50 almost died from a disease caught while campaigning.

Shared suffering does not guarantee success, but a refusal to do so may open the door to failure. Saladin is in good company here. Successful revolutionary leaders who suffered for their causes include Alexander, Jesus, Muhammad, Genghis Khan, Mao Zedong, Lenin, Fidel Castro and Nelson Mandela.



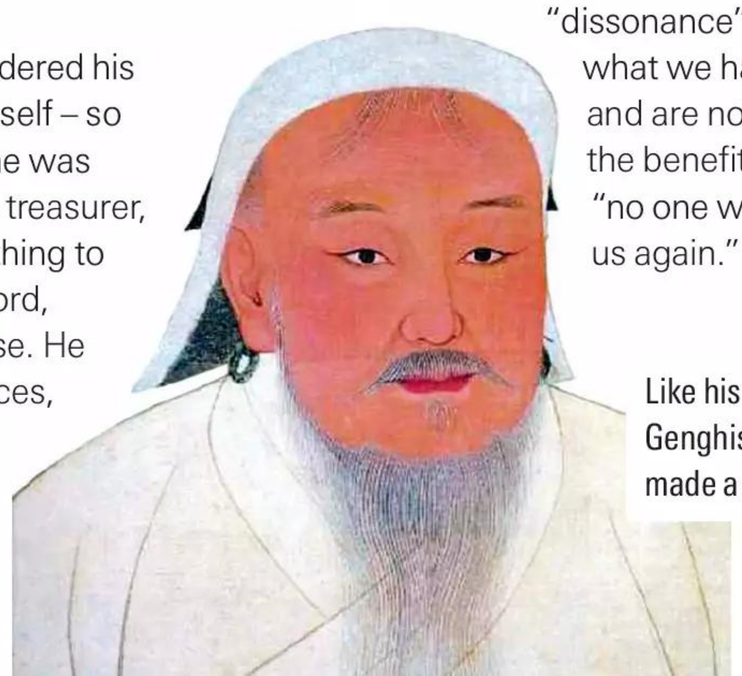
A statue of Saladin in Damascus, 2011

6 Live a simple, austere life

The most powerful man in the Muslim world resisted the temptation to amass riches

Embracing danger is one way of demonstrating your willingness to share your followers' pain. Another is to refuse the urge to amass riches. This is a rare quality, because it works best in combination with adversity. Kublai Khan ruled China with a massive display of wealth. However, his grandfather Genghis Khan, from whom Kublai inherited a vision of world rule, made a virtue of austerity, adopting the guise of a simple Taoist sage: "In the clothes I wear or the meats I eat, I have the same rags and the same food as the cowherd or the groom."

Saladin too considered his followers before himself – so much so that in life he was often rebuked by his treasurer, and in death had nothing to his name but his sword, coat of mail and horse. He built himself no palaces, and wanted only a small mausoleum.



Like his contemporary Genghis Khan, Saladin made a virtue of austerity

7 Keep your promises

Trust was the key to building a stable alliance against the crusader armies

Saladin kept his word. Lord Shang and Machiavelli were all for duplicity, if it served the leader's purpose. That was not Saladin's way. Keeping promises is a fundamental attribute of good leadership, for without it the trust of allies and those further down the chain of command vanishes, morale plummets and concerted action becomes impossible. This creates what Daniel Goleman refers to as a "toxic organisation", in which "resonance" gives way to "dissonance". "If we refuse what we have promised and are not generous with the benefits," said Saladin, "no one will ever trust us again."

Saladin could be magnanimous. This image shows him taking Jerusalem in 1187, but not before he had the wife of one of the crusaders escorted to safety

Despite his commitment to jihad, Saladin retained his respect for individuals

GETTY IMAGES

8 Extend the hand of friendship

The great nemesis of the crusaders showed them surprising acts of generosity

Despite his commitment to jihad, Saladin retained his respect for individuals – as was proven in the following incident, which happened in the summer of 1187, between the battle of Hattin in July and the seizure of Jerusalem in October.

Balian of Ibelin, head of one of the most eminent of crusader families, escaped from Hattin and took refuge in Tyre. With Saladin's army controlling the surrounding territory, Balian's wife, Maria, was stuck in Jerusalem. So Balian sent a message to Saladin, asking to be allowed to get her. Saladin agreed – on the understanding that Balian spent only one night in Jerusalem.

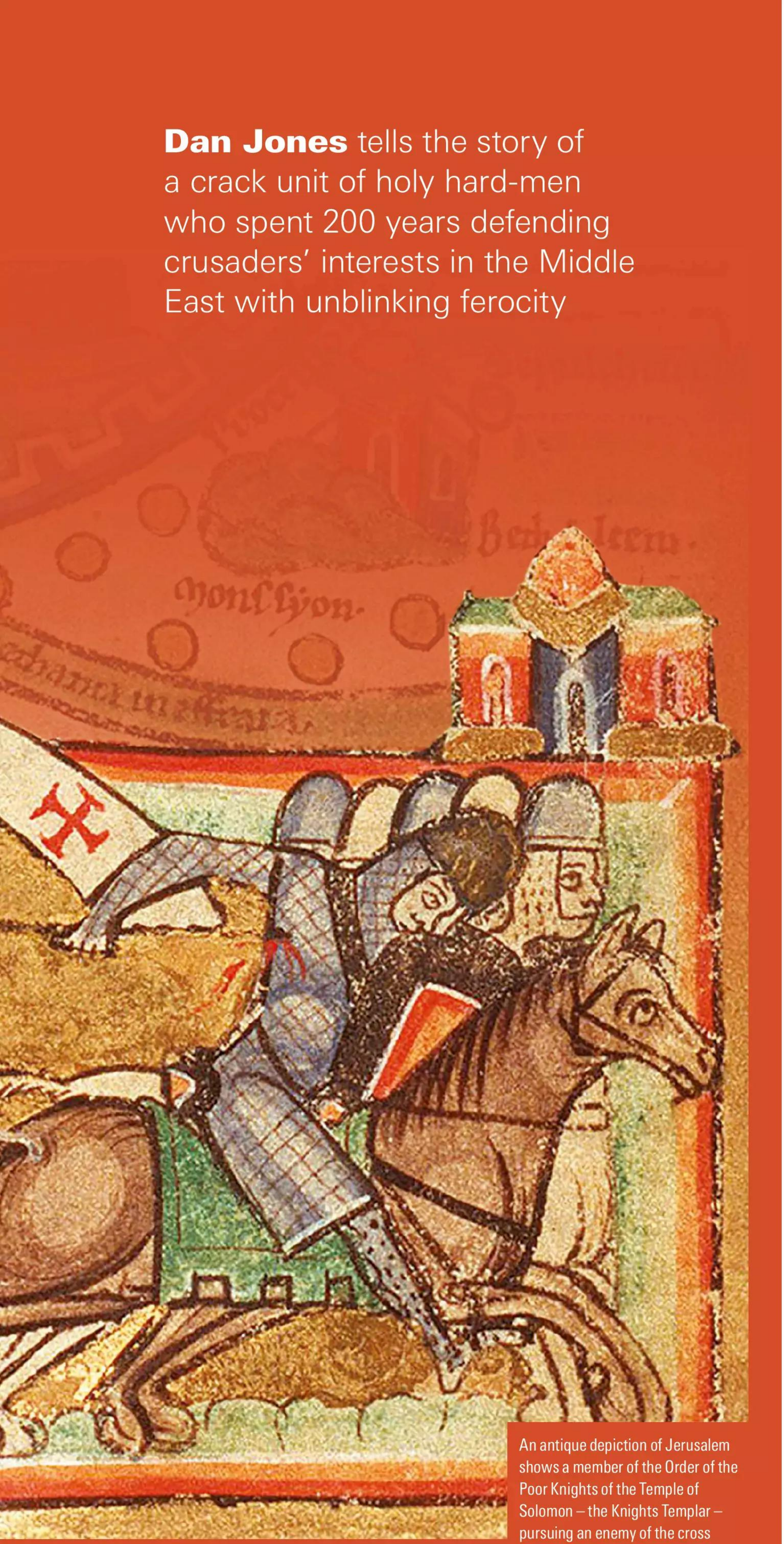
But when Balian arrived in the city he found it leaderless. He stayed to organise its defence, sending profuse apologies to Saladin for breaking his promise. Saladin chivalrously accepted the apology, and then sent an escort to convey Maria to Tyre, while her husband set about finishing Jerusalem's defences. Such actions won Saladin the admiration of his Christian enemies, who came to think of him as more worthy than their own leaders. H

John Man is a historian and travel writer whose books include *Saladin: The Life, the Legend and the Islamic Empire* (Bantam Press, 2015)

THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR
GOD'S ELITE WARRIORS

ALAMY

Dan Jones tells the story of a crack unit of holy hard-men who spent 200 years defending crusaders' interests in the Middle East with unblinking ferocity



An antique depiction of Jerusalem shows a member of the Order of the Poor Knights of the Temple of Solomon – the Knights Templar – pursuing an enemy of the cross

On a punishingly hot day at the start of July 1187, Saladin, the sultan of Egypt and Syria, stood beside his son al-Afdal and peered across the battlefield towards a red tent on a hill. The sultan's face was pale with worry. The armies before him had been fighting for hours, tortured by near-unbearable heat, dust and smoke, which billowed up from the desert scrub Saladin's own men had set alight. Thousands of men and horses lay dead. The enemy – a vast force led by the Christian king Guy of Jerusalem – was badly battered and falling back, but until the king's red pavilion fell, victory would not be complete.

Al-Afdal, youthful and bullish, cheered every Christian charge that the Muslim army repulsed. Saladin scolded him. "Be quiet!" he said. "We have not beaten them until that tent falls." Moments later, the sultan's angst turned to tearful jubilation. The tent collapsed, King Guy was captured and the battle of Hattin was over. The Christians' holiest relic – a fragment of the True Cross – was seized. The dead were left to rot where they lay, while the living were led off in disgrace: the lowliest Christian prisoners destined for slavery, the more valuable for ransom.

But there was one category of captives who received quite different treatment from all the rest. A reward of 50 dinars was offered to anyone who could present the sultan with a member of the military orders: Hospitallers and Templars. These knights and sergeants were the elite special forces within the armies of the cross. They were the most dedicated and highly trained warriors in the Holy Land. And Saladin had special plans for them.

These knights and sergeants were the elite special forces within the armies of the cross – the most dedicated and highly trained warriors in the Holy Land

In 1187, the Order of the Poor Knights of the Temple of Solomon was about 68 years old. The Order had first been assembled in 1119 at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem by a French knight called Hugh de Payns. Hugh had travelled to the east around the time that Jerusalem fell to the Christian armies of the First Crusade, and he stayed there, seeking a way to combine his skill as a soldier with his yearning for religious purpose.

With a small number of like-minded men – later accounts said there were nine – Hugh established a brotherhood of religious warriors: skilled fighters who took oaths of chastity and poverty. They dedicated themselves to protecting Christian pilgrims on roads around the holy city, which were menaced by brigands preying on vulnerable travellers touring unfamiliar countryside.

This fraternity of holy hard-men soon gained official recognition. The then-ruler of Jerusalem, Baldwin II, put them up in al-Aqsa Mosque, which they identified with the biblical temple built by Solomon. This was how the Templars gained their name.

Papal tax breaks

For survival, the brothers relied on charitable handouts, and they quickly became expert at soliciting these – particularly in western Europe, where they built up a large network of profitable estates donated by supporters of the crusading movement.

The seal of the Knights Templar, who were, according to one Muslim chronicler, "the fiercest fighters of all the Franks"

The Knights Templar were able to fight across all terrains. They were the equivalent of the SAS, the Navy SEALS or the French Foreign Legion

In the 1120s, the order was granted a quasi-monastic rule to live by, designed by the Cistercian abbot Bernard of Clairvaux. In the 1130s, the pope granted them sweeping tax breaks and an official uniform of white or black tunics emblazoned with a cross.

By the 1140s, the Templars had begun to expand their mission of merely providing roadside rescue for pilgrims. In parallel with the Hospitallers, who branched out from providing medical services in Jerusalem to assuming military duties, the Templars manned castles throughout the Holy Land and assisted in raids on Muslim cities such as Damascus.

At the other end of the Mediterranean they had been drafted into the *Reconquista*: the Christian campaigns for control of the Muslim states of al-Andalus, in today's southern Spain. The Templars were by now a self-sustaining paramilitary organisation, a crack squad of hardened and dedicated soldiers, able to fight across all terrains and oath-bound to serve God and their brothers. In modern terms, they were the equivalent of the SAS, the Navy SEALs or the French Foreign Legion.

"They were the fiercest fighters of all the Franks," wrote the Muslim chronicler Ibn al-Athir about the Templars. (By 'Franks', he

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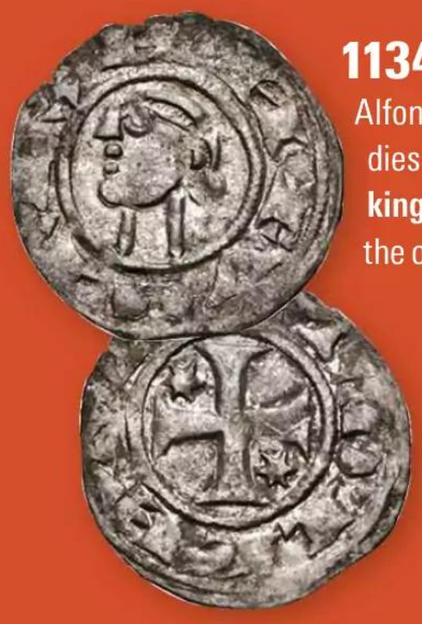
Saladin captures a relic of the True Cross from a crusader army at the battle of Hattin in 1187, as depicted in Matthew Paris's *Chronica Majora*. After the victory, the Muslim leader would inflict a terrible vengeance on the Knights Templar

TIMELINE **The rise and fall of the Templars**

1119

Hugh de Payns and eight other knights band together in Jerusalem, **agreeing to protect Christian pilgrims outside the city**. They are officially recognised in 1120. Their base is al-Aqsa mosque, which they call the Temple of Solomon.



A coin depicting Alfonso I and, on the reverse, a cross

1134

Alfonso I 'the Battler', King of Aragon, dies and **leaves one-third of his kingdom** to the Templars, drawing the order into the *Reconquista*.

1148

During the Second Crusade to liberate the city of Edessa, the Templars repel Turkish attacks and shepherd a French army all the way to the Holy Land.

A 19th-century painting imagines a heroic Guy de Lusignan, once king of Jesrusalem

1191

Richard the Lionheart conquers Cyprus and sells it to the Templars. But the order cannot hold it peacefully and quickly sells it on to Guy de Lusignan, the former king of Jerusalem.

1218

The Templars join the Fifth Crusade in the Nile Delta, **fighting on board armoured galleys**.

1307

On Friday 13 October, agents working for King Philip IV **arrest every Templar in France.** In 1312, the order is disbanded and its property confiscated.

1129

The first Templar Rule is written at a church council in Troyes. Templars are committed to a life of celibacy, poverty and military exercise, and banned from knightly frivolities such as hunting with birds or wearing pointed shoes.

Templars wear their distinctive uniforms in a French mural

1139

Pope Innocent II decrees that the **Templars are only answerable to papal authority**, and grants them the right to wear the sign of the cross on their chests.

1187

On 4 July, Saladin defeats a huge Christian army at the battle of Hattin. He then orders the **summary beheading of all Templars** captured by his forces.

A medieval depiction of the battle of Hattin, a black day for the Templars

c1200

German poet Wolfram von Eschenbach casts Templar-like figures as the defenders of a mysterious item known as the **Holy Grail.**

1291

Mamluk armies attack **the last crusader outpost** in the city of Acre. The Templar master Guillaume de Beaujeu is killed leading the defence.

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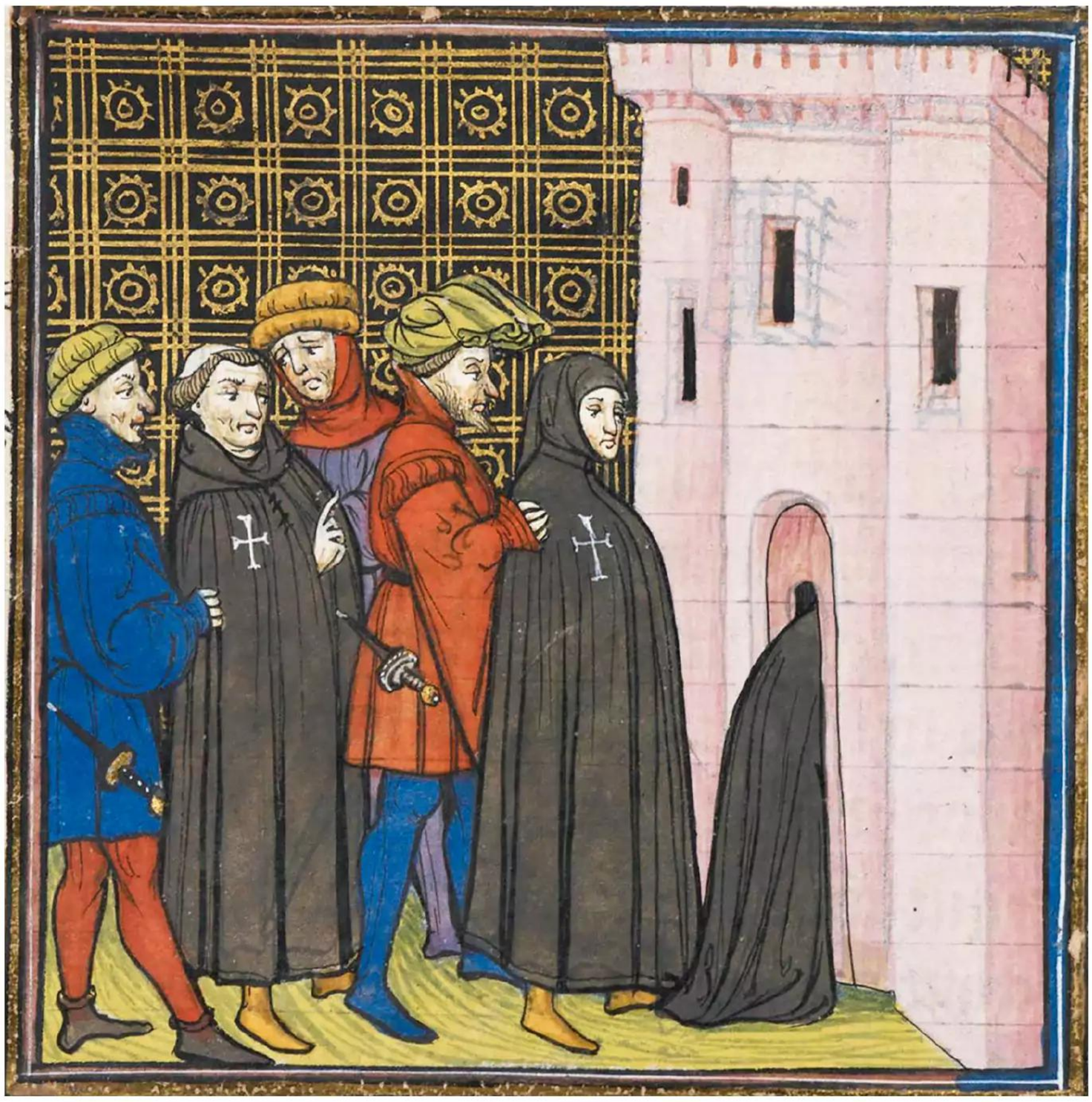

Templars are arrested on the orders of the "cruel and conniving" French king Philip IV, in a scene from the 14th-century *Chroniques de France ou de St Denis*

Discipline was paramount. The order's famous black and white flag was only to be lowered when the last man defending it was dead

meant the western Christians in the Holy Land.) Ibn al-Athir was around 27 years old in 1187 and, like his contemporary Saladin, he knew just how competent – and dangerous – the Templars could be.

After all, history fairly buzzed with examples. In 1148, the Templars had saved the French armies of the Second Crusade from annihilation. Tens of thousands of ill-disciplined troops led by King Louis VII had tried to cross hostile territory in Asia Minor on foot and horseback, on their way to Syria, where they planned to liberate the city of Edessa. Bedraggled and badly led, they were prey to repeated attacks from Turkish horsemen, who inflicted a particularly terrible defeat on them at Mount Cadmus, near modern-day Denizli in Turkey. Hundreds were killed and Louis only escaped capture by hiding on a boulder.

In desperation, the French king handed over military command of the entire expedition to a Templar named Gilbert. He was one of only 50 or so brothers among the vast procession, but Gilbert's leadership was inspired. He divided the pilgrims into battalions, each with a single brother in charge. All the able-bodied were given a crash-course in military conduct, and shown how to hold their shape and discipline under attack. As a result, the French survived the hard trek east, and on arrival in the Holy Land the Templars even raised an emergency loan to keep Louis's troubled campaign afloat.

In the years that followed, the Templars were trusted to defend castles around Gaza in the south, where Christian territory gave way to Egyptian lands. Further north they guarded the passes through the Amanus Mountains, which controlled the routes from Asia Minor into the Christian principality of Antioch. They advised secular leaders on military strategy, but were also pointedly independent, carrying out kidnapping missions and raids of their own as they pleased. Even the Assassins – the shadowy Shia terrorist sect who lived in the Syrian mountains and specialised in spectacular public assassinations of leaders of all faiths – would not touch the Templars, and paid them a fat fee to be left alone.

The Templar Rule, which originally resembled a Cistercian monk's order of daily routine, was heavily revised in around 1165 to become more of a military handbook: setting the Templars' battlefield protocols and emphasising the importance of discipline and obedience. The order's famous black and white flag was only to be lowered when the last man defending it was dead. "No brother should leave the field… while there is a piebald banner raised aloft; for if he leaves he will be expelled from the house for ever," it read.

When they rode into battle, the Templars sang a psalm: "Not to us, O lord, not to us, but to your name give the glory, for your steadfast love and faithfulness." The sight and sound of these men charging in their distinctive red-crossed cloaks was rightly feared throughout the Holy Land.

Suicidally proud

When Saladin's men had finished rounding up Templars and Hospitallers after the battle of Hattin in 1187, around 200 prisoners had been delivered. These included the Templar grand master, Gerard de Ridefort, an impulsive and suicidally proud leader who led his men into fights against impossible odds, yet somehow always emerged with his own life. He would do so again now, as Saladin ordered him to be imprisoned and exchanged for the Templars' castle at Gaza.

The rest were not so lucky. Saladin had witnessed the Templars' bravery at first hand several years previously, when the commander of their besieged fortress at Jacob's Ford met his death by deliberately riding

ALAMY

headlong into a burning section of the castle. Now, wrote his secretary and biographer Imad al-Din: "He wished to purify land of these… unclean orders, whose practices are useless, who never give up their hostility and who have no use as slaves… He ordered that each would have his head cut off and be erased from the land of the living."

Instead of committing the job to a professional headsman, Saladin asked for volunteers from his religious entourage. Sufis, lawyers and scholars stepped forward for the chance to decapitate an infidel, with predictably gruesome results. Some deaths were swift. Others were painful and slow, as inexperienced clerics hacked away with blunt blades and no technique. Many, wrote Imad al-Din, "proved themselves ridiculous and had to be replaced".

Saladin sent a letter to Baghdad containing news of his extermination of the Christian military orders. "Not one of the Templars survived," he wrote, with satisfaction. And he was very nearly correct.

A 14th-century image showing Jacques de Molay, the Templars' last grand master, being burned at the stake. The order was at the heart of Christian crusading efforts for 200 years, but its collapse was shockingly swift

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The Templars fight back

Nearly, but not quite. It took several years for the Templars to rebuild their numbers and their military reputation, but they managed it. When Richard the Lionheart arrived in the Holy Land to lead the Third Crusade in 1191 he revived the order's fortunes, installing new leaders from his own entourage and ensuring that the Templars rode either at the vanguard or rearguard of his army as it marched down the coast from Acre to Jaffa, reclaiming cities Saladin had conquered. He briefly handed the Templars a military dictatorship on Cyprus, although they found the island ungovernable and sold it on. And when Richard left the Holy Land for Europe in 1192, he was said to have travelled incognito, wearing Templar uniform.

The order remained at the military heart of the crusades for another century. In 1218–19 they starred in the Fifth Crusade to Damietta in Egypt, deploying armoured galleys in the water of the Nile Delta as the Christian armies attempted an amphibious siege of the city. Two generations later they were back again, having helped fund and provision another crusader army with designs on Damietta, this time led by Louis IX of France. Throughout the 13th century, the Templars continued to be involved in the *Reconquista*, helping King James I of Aragon to conquer Ibiza and Mallorca between 1229 and 1235, and the kingdom of Valencia by 1244.

Then, at the end of the century, when the Christians were being swept from the Holy Land by an Egyptian slave-soldier regime called the Mamluks, the Templars provided the very last line of defence. Their huge fortress in Acre was the last bastion to hold out against Mamluk forces storming through the breached walls in 1291, in what turned out to be the crusaders' final stand.

In 1307, however, the order was destroyed by a cruel and conniving king of France, Philip IV. Philip used a popular wish for the Templars and Hospitallers to be merged into one military super-order as a pretext for investigating their practices and then confiscating their wealth. Their collapse was swift and dramatic, as the king's lawyers and papal inquisitors accused the brothers of corruption, blasphemy and sexual crimes (for more on this see the feature on page 84). By 1312, the Templars had been disbanded. The last master, Jacques de Molay, was burned at the stake as a heretic in Paris in 1314.

Other orders survived the decline of crusading. The Hospitallers continued the fight against the church's enemies from a new base on the island of Rhodes, while the Teutonic Order governed a semi-autonomous state in Prussia for centuries. The Mamluks, who were themselves somewhat like an Islamic military order, ruled Egypt and Syria until they were swept aside by the Ottomans in 1517.

Why did the Templars fall? Part of the answer lies in the weakness of their last master, Jacques de Molay; part in the ruthless caprice of Philip IV. But what is seldom noted is that the Templars, for all their wealth and privilege, never established for themselves a geographical base that they could defend against all assaults, even from their own side.

The brothers were famed for their bravery, dedication and piety, but these were not enough to save them when Philip IV attacked. Had they established themselves as the rulers of Cyprus when they had the chance in 1191, their history might have been different. But they did not, and the Knights Templars' shocking demise now dominates our memory of an order that was, in its day, better known by Ibn al-Athir's assessment:

Dan Jones is a historian, author and TV presenter. His books include *The Templars: The Rise and Spectacular Fall of God's Holy Warriors* (Head of Zeus, 2017)

WARZONE

A crusader army led by French king Louis IX clashes with Ayyubid forces at Mansurah in 1250. Two centuries of warfare across the Middle East "drew a torrent of often dangerous young men into the region", writes Steve Tibble

The crusades sparked centuries of violence and chaos – and not just on the battlefield. **Steve Tibble** describes the surge in criminality – from petty theft to cold-blooded murder – that accompanied the warring armies to the Holy Land

Dark knights

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A QUESTION OF FAITH
Christians battle Muslims in a 13th-century illustration. Though the crusades are usually painted as wars between faiths, many acts of violence were unrelated to religion

Modern statesmen live in the expectation of a metaphorical knife in the back from their political enemies. The situation in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem was similar, but the knives were far less metaphorical.

Miles of Plancy, a powerful nobleman, was not popular with his peers. He could be rude. He could be arrogant. But his main failing, in the eyes of his fellow nobles at least, was that he was far too successful.

Miles stepped in to become regent in July 1174, after King Amalric – who had ruled the crusader state since 1163 – died unexpectedly. Miles's elevation to one of the most important roles in all of the Christian Levant was unwelcome to the older families. He was warned that conspiracies were in train. But instead of taking a more conciliatory stance, Miles appears to have made light of it.

Events moved far more quickly than Miles expected, however. One day, "while staying at the city of Acre, he was stabbed on the public street just at dusk" – so William of Tyre, the famous chronicler of the crusades, tells us – and "died after suffering ignominious and shameful treatment".

The murder was ruthlessly carried out and the assassin was probably on a ship back to France or Italy within the hour. The brutal world of crusader politics moved on without skipping a beat.

Bishop William of Acre appears to have made far fewer enemies than the ambitious Miles of Plancy. But that had not prevent him from meeting a similarly grisly fate two years earlier, in 1172.

After hearing blood-curdling cries, William's servants had broken into his room in the Byzantine city of Adrianople to discover his butchered body. An assailant had slashed at the highly respected bishop while he rested and recovered from his long, exhausting travels.

It was an astonishing episode. Although it occurred during the crusades, William was a member of a peaceful mission travelling through the Byzantine empire, deep inside Christian territory. His was a diplomatic corps of unassuming mediators – priests going about their business. Violence was the last thing they expected. Even more astonishingly, as we'll see, the killing had been perpetrated by one of their own.

Yet perhaps William's party should have been accustomed to such bloodshed, because they were living in a region swamped by wave after wave of often violent crime.

The real problem of the crusades was not religion – it was dislocated, disinhibited young men, arriving in large numbers

Existential threat

By the time of the attack on Bishop William, the long, episodic fight for the Holy Land that followed the launch of the First Crusade in 1096 had been raging intermittently for three-quarters of a century, and was reaching a bloody crescendo. A Kurdish general named Salah al-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub – better known to the crusaders and to posterity as Saladin – had taken Egypt, in the process gaining control of great wealth and large numbers of mercenaries. He now posed an existential threat to the crusader states established across the region.

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In 1171, these Christian states launched a flurry of diplomatic activity, seeking allies who could help them face this new danger. Bishop William of Acre and his small team of negotiators and household servants were part of this charm offensive. By June 1172, they had been travelling on the punishing roads of the eastern Mediterranean and the Byzantine empire for more than a year.

The gruelling mission had taken a heavy toll on everyone in the party, but had proved particularly hard on one young man, a valued member of Bishop William's household named Brother Robert. He seems to have had a breakdown of some kind, brought on by stress and the seemingly unending rigours of their journey.

So the group stopped at the city of Adrianople (now Edirne, far north-west Turkey) on their way back to the Byzantine court in Constantinople. There they rested, hoping that Brother Robert would recover enough to be able to continue the journey. Sadly, the opposite happened. It seems that Robert experienced a psychotic episode, sparking a bout of inexplicable violence. While his companions were asleep, wrote William of Tyre, "suddenly a madness came upon him; he seized his sword and stabbed the sleeping bishop, inflicting fatal wounds". The attack was over within seconds, leaving the bishop fatally wounded.

The dying man didn't, though, call for revenge to be meted out to the young priest. Instead, he insisted that Robert be treated gently. The assailant was clearly not responsible for his actions, William recognised.

Yet that defence wouldn't stand up to scrutiny for the majority of crimes committed across the region – and there were many. We think of the crusades as a succession of campaigns in which violent attacks on Muslim-held targets in the Middle East were met with violent resistance – a bloody clash of ideologies and faiths. But the real problem of the crusades was not religion – it was young men. Dislocated, disinhibited young men, arriving in disturbingly large numbers. This tsunami of youth was the propellant that fuelled two centuries of warfare and shocking levels of criminality.

ROGUE RECRUITMENT
A 15th-century manuscript shows King Louis IX of France embarking for the Seventh Crusade in 1248. According to accounts by the chronicler Jean de Joinville, recruits among the king's troops included men known to be violent criminals

Co-opting criminals

The myriad of anecdotes that I discovered while researching my book, *Crusader Criminals*, suggests that a massive, and largely untold, increase in crime took place at this time. And this crusader crimewave was shaped by three principal – and surprisingly modern – factors: migration, male entitlement and climate change.

In the decades before the launch of the First Crusade, the climate in the eastern Mediterranean and western Eurasian steppes became unstable, frequently causing unusually cold and unusually hot spells, typically accompanied by famines or droughts. The nomadic Turkic tribes of the western Eurasian steppes were hit particularly hard. Unlike sedentary societies, they maintained limited food reserves, so their only response to a sudden famine was to move away.

This was the first major wave of migration to consider in this story: the movement of a loose confederation of Seljuk Turkic warbands into the Middle East in the second half of the 11th century. These nomadic tribes were recent converts to Sunni Islam, but most had little interest in theology. They attacked settled communities, fighting Christians and Muslims alike, and took what they wanted. By the 1080s, these steppe warlords had taken much of Byzantine Anatolia and Palestine, plus most of the Arab Syrian city-states.

The Byzantine empire called on the Christian powers of western Europe for help, sparking the expedition that became known as the First Crusade – the second pivotal migration. Following a succession of military victories, including the capture of Jerusalem in 1099, some of the crusaders established colonies in the region – polities that later became known as the 'crusader states'.

That was, of course, far from the end of the conflict. Two centuries of war followed, fuelling an ongoing recruitment drive for young mercenaries and other long-distance recruits to bolster both Christian and Muslim forces, drawing a torrent of often dangerous men into the region. The incidence of violence soared – and remained spectacularly high, even by the standards of a region noted for its lawlessness, resulting in widespread chaos and social upheaval.

That's unsurprising when you look at the kind of men being recruited. Consider this episode of 1248, during the French king Louis IX's preparations for what became known as the Seventh Crusade, recounted by the chronicler Jean de Joinville. "As I was on my way to Paris," wrote Jean, "I came across three dead men on a cart whom

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STRENGTH IN NUMBERS
As this 15th-century illustration of a battle during the early stages of the crusades shows, large numbers of men clashed on battlefields. But they were also let loose among local populations

Crime wasn't just tolerated and its perpetrators recruited to the crusaders' cause – it was sometimes even nurtured

a clerk [a trainee priest] had killed, and I was told… that the men were three [policemen]" who had set out to rob local people.

On encountering the young priest, they "stripped him of all his clothes. The clerk, wearing only his chemise, went to his lodgings and took up his crossbow." He also got hold of his falchion – a short, hefty sword with a broad, curved blade, like a machete. Chasing his assailants, he "drew his crossbow, fired and struck one of them in the heart. The other two took flight, while the clerk took up the falchion… and chased them by the light of the moon, which was bright and clear."

The angry clerk struck one fleeing man with his sword "and cut right through his leg so that only the boot [was] holding it on". He then struck the other's head with his falchion, splitting his skull down to the teeth.

The king recognised a useful man when he saw one. With ecclesiastical employment now unlikely to be an option for the triple killer, Louis gave the clerk the opportunity to make a radical career change. The church's loss was the Seventh Crusade's gain.

To catch a thief

Crime wasn't just tolerated and its perpetrators recruited to the crusaders' cause – it was even nurtured by some in the 'wild east' of the medieval Holy Land.

When Jean de Joinville was on crusade in the 1250s, he discovered a theft. "I asked my new servant, Guillemin, to show me his accounts, which he did," Jean later wrote. "I found that he had cheated me out of a good 10 livres or more… I dismissed him and told him I would give him what he owed me, since he had certainly earned it."
A curious reaction? Perhaps Jean's later discoveries – and his own actions – explain his leniency. It transpired that Guillemin already had an extensive criminal record. Speaking later to his servant's previous employers, a band of Burgundian knights, Jean "learned from them that they had brought Guillemin overseas in their company, and that he was the most obliging thief that there ever was". Indeed, he often pilfered things on their orders: "Whenever a knight was in need of gloves or spurs or anything else," they told Jean, "Guillemin would go and steal it and then give it to him."

Was Jean, too, party to some of Guillemin's criminal activities? Or did his servant know things about Jean that he'd prefer left untold? We know, for instance, that Guillemin had found lodgings for them conveniently – perhaps suspiciously – close to the sex workers and bath-houses of Acre. Was that at his master's request? And did Jean avail himself of these facilities? We don't know – but it's clear that, even at the highest echelons of crusading societies, crime was pervasive.

Multi-ethnic murder

Crime in the region wasn't confined to theft. Bloodshed, fuelled by demographic imbalance, testosterone and cultural disinhibition, was endemic among the crusaders and their enemies in the region.

An episode involving Zengi, the powerful 12th-century Turkic ruler of Mosul (now in Iraq) – an opponent of the crusaders whose family had been part of that wave of migration from the steppes – was just one of thousands of examples of wanton violence.

Zengi had a predilection for murder, violence and rape, and a preference for young men. From the outset of his rule, it was said that "when he was unhappy with an amir, he would kill him… and leave that individual's children alive but castrate them. Whenever one of his pages pleased him by his beauty he would treat him in the same way so that the characteristics of youth

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would last longer in him." Zengi's sleeping arrangements reflected these tastes. "A few of his servants sleep around his bed," wrote one chronicler. "He loves them as they love him and, despite their loyalty to him, he is sometimes harsh with them. They are the children of the… Turkish, Armenian and Byzantine lords."

His rule – and his life – was ended at the hands of one of those beautiful but mutilated pages. On the night of 14 September 1146, Zengi had, as usual, been drinking heavily. He slumped into a stupor and woke to find his servants, led by a Frankish slave named Yaranqash, finishing his fine wines.

Enraged, Zengi made the mistake of telling his prisoner-lover that he was going to have him killed in the morning. The Frankish eunuch, presumably also drunk, responded by killing his master and – in a final act that speaks to the high emotions involved – beheaded him for good measure.

On one level, this dramatic incident seems lurid but perhaps not too unusual. Yet consider: who were the people involved? The answer highlights the issues at the heart of the crusader crimewave.

First, everyone was male and, apart from Zengi himself, they were all young. Importantly, all were also foreigners or relatively recent arrivals. Zengi was a Turk of steppe heritage, while his assassin was said to be of European ethnicity. Others present were Byzantine or Armenians, displaced by the Turkic invasions of the preceding decades. None were Arab.

Similarly, religion wasn't a prominent factor in anyone's actions or motives. Zengi was – nominally, at least – a Sunni Muslim, but his predilection for alcohol and mutilated slave boys suggests a less-than-orthodox approach to observance. Many, perhaps the majority, of his young lovers seem to have been from a Christian background. So the diverse origins of the people involved was a consequence of demographic forces particular to this time and place: lots of young men detached from their families and the countries of their birth.

The two centuries of conflict in the Middle East known today as the crusades sucked in a huge number of often violent young men, armed and adrift, who were let loose in the Holy Land, with profoundly scarring effects on the region. War was the most visible consequence of these forces – but criminality and pervasive civil violence were just as prevalent, and arguably even more fundamentally destructive. H

Steve Tibble is a research associate at Royal Holloway, University of London, and author of *Crusader Criminals: The Knights Who Went Rogue in the Holy Land* (Yale University Press, 2024).

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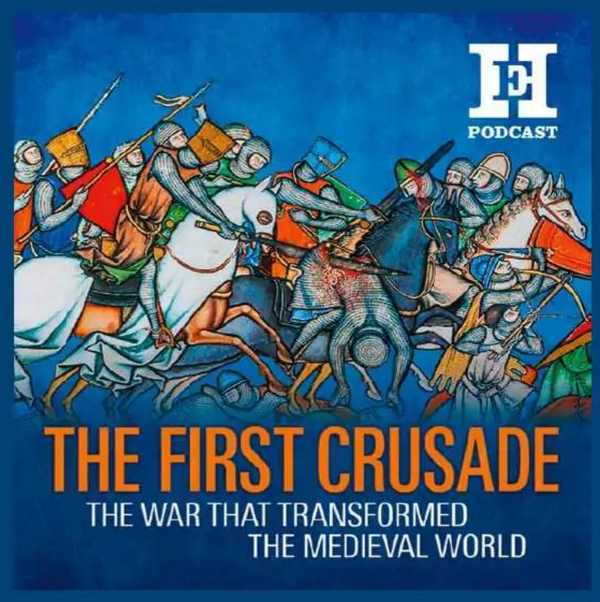

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TIDE OF CRIME

Shiploads of men, including merchants and mercenaries, turned to piracy in the eastern Mediterranean

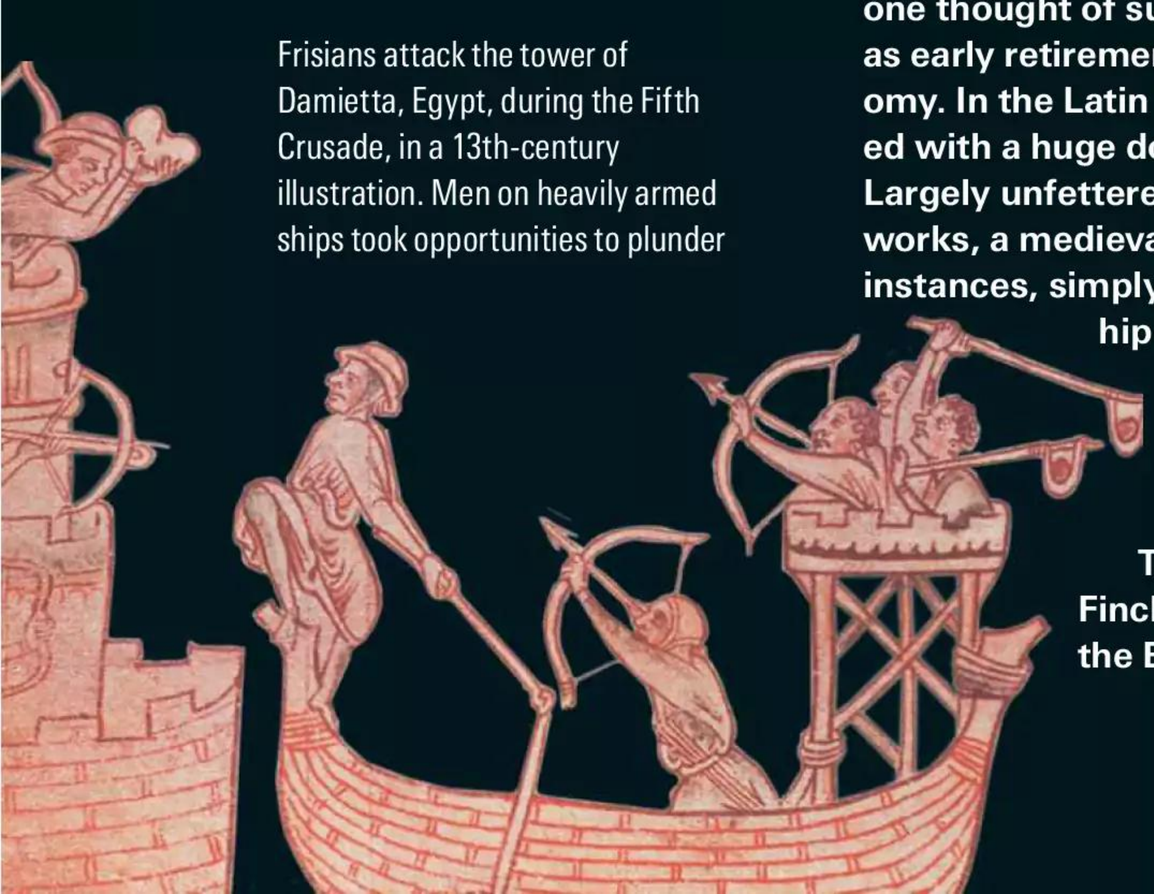
As well as driving the incidence of violence and theft on land, the deluge of young men surging into the Middle East also coincided with a rise in crime at sea. Vast numbers of ships, sailors and naval entrepreneurs were drawn to the region. Crusader pirates did not feature heavily in the chronicles of the time, but evidence shows that they were always there in the background, often operating in large numbers.

In medieval times, piracy was part of a 'portfolio career' long before anyone thought of such first-world issues as early retirement or the gig economy. In the Latin East, it was treated with a huge dose of pragmatism. Largely unfettered by legal frameworks, a medieval pirate was, in most instances, simply someone with a ship and an opportunity. Such an opportunity might attract men from every walk of life.

Take Godric of Finchale (c1070–1170), the English ship's captain and venture capitalist who saved the life of King Baldwin I of Jerusalem, carrying him safely to Jaffa after defeat by Egyptian forces at Ramla in 1102 – thus influencing the course of crusading history. He later became a hermit monk, and even found time to write the lyrics to the earliest known English-language songs surviving with their original melodies. But he's also equated to a pirate named Godric who operated in the eastern Mediterranean at that time.

Some men arriving as crusaders engaged in slave-trading: one such was William Jiba, who operated out of Acre in the early 1140s and who was renowned for his cruelty. Even one of his customers called him "a real devil of a Frank".

There are even tales of crusading Viking pirate-knights who boasted that, en route to the Holy Land, they had landed on the north African coast to "shoot at the lions as they were spurring their horses on as hard as they could". It's a story so strange that it's probably true.



Frisians attack the tower of Damietta, Egypt, during the Fifth Crusade, in a 13th-century illustration. Men on heavily armed ships took opportunities to plunder

Templars on trial

From 1307, members of the Knights Templar were beaten, brutalised and put to death on charges of heresy, Satanism and mass murder. But, asks **Steve Tibble**, were this elite band of holy warriors fitted up for crimes they didn't commit?

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A brutal reckoning

This c1413–15 manuscript illustration by the Boucicaut Master depicts the burning of Knights Templar in the presence of King Philip IV of France. Philip, jealous of the Templars' reputed vast wealth, drove the persecution of the crusading order

They arrived with no warning, striking swiftly as a guillotine blade. As dawn broke over France on Friday 13 October 1307, hundreds of royal troops stormed the residences of Templar knights, rounded up the brethren and put them in chains.

The knights were caught completely unawares – and the charges that were set out against them were extraordinary. Allegations included participating in Satanic initiation ceremonies; spitting or trampling on the crucifix; worshipping idols; and kissing their brothers on the navel, penis, lips and anus in profane masses.

It was a spectacular fall from grace for the Knights Templar, a military-religious order that had long been esteemed across Europe and beyond (see *God's elite warriors* on page 72). For nearly two centuries, since the order's foundation in Jerusalem c1119 (see box, right), the Templars had been charged with defending residents of, and pilgrims to, the crusader states of the Middle East. Once celebrated across the Christian world for their unwavering courage in battle and the zeal with which they served God, suddenly they were being reviled and attacked. How and why did this dramatic collapse in fortunes come about?

The driving force behind the assault on the Templars was France's King Philip IV, 'the Fair'. Philip was outwardly pious, but also in great need of cash. Indeed, he had a track record of crushing minority groups in pursuit of easy money. In the early 1290s, he had arrested all of the so-called Lombard bankers – Italian moneylenders – in France, and confiscated their goods. And in 1306, he had expelled France's Jewish community and seized their assets.

Now he turned his sights on the Templars – another reputedly wealthy group. Pope Clement V was coerced into acquiescence and, in 1307, the pontiff ordered the Templars' arrest. The torture now began.

Accused of a litany of heinous crimes, some Templars proclaimed their innocence. Thirty-six such men died during the initial interrogations in Paris; their defiant testimonies were erased from the legal records. Most, though, confessed quickly. Across France, torture was routinely applied to suspects: victims were told what to say, and then brutalised until they said it.

One Templar priest in Albi, north-east of Toulouse, told how his feet had been burned over a fire. This did not mean just an uncomfortable toasting: a couple of days later, two bones fell out of the dead flesh of his gruesomely barbecued foot. One brother later testified that he was encouraged to confess "by the hanging of weights on his genitals and other members".

Another French Templar, Brother Ponsard of Gizy, disarmingly honest about the power of torture, summed up the pros and cons of the methodology. When he appeared in front of a papal commission in November 1309, he was adamant that the charges made against him were trumped up – but added that, if his captors chose to torture him, he would readily agree with whatever they suggested. He wanted it placed on record that he would confess to anything – if subjected to torture.

Over the following months, the confessions kept flooding in. Satanism, heresy, sexual perversion and financial corruption – the Templars of France were found guilty of them all. In fact, given the sheer weight of the obscene and outlandish crimes of which they stood accused, it's perhaps surprising that it would be another four years before the order was finally dissolved.

A papal edict

Templars weren't only found in France, though: this international order drew members from Christian nations across Europe. What, then, was the fate of the Templars across the Channel? After all, at the time England was still a Catholic nation, subject to papal edict just as much as France. And though Edward II initially doubted the charges levelled at the order, in December 1307 he received a directive from the pope to arrest Templars in England – which he did in January 1308. Soon, all but a very small handful of the 144 Templars based in Britain and Ireland were in custody.

Relations between Templars in Britain and France were close, and members on either side of the Channel would almost certainly have been equally guilty (or, more likely, innocent) of the alleged crimes. But the two groups experienced strikingly different fates at the hands of the respective authorities following the mass arrests of October 1307, mostly because English law was strikingly different from that of France.

In early 14th-century England, there was less royal control of the judiciary. English courts did not have an inquisition. Most importantly, English law relied on witnesses and a jury, and torture was not routinely used within the legal system. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, two years of harsh but non-violent interrogation in England yielded no confessions and almost no evidence of guilt.

For all that, Templars in Britain were still charged with terrible crimes – and by examining those accusations in greater detail, we can get to the bottom of a question that has puzzled historians for centuries: were the Templars guilty of any of the charges laid against them, or were they the victims of an egregious 14th-century stitch-up?

Chief among the charges in Britain was the allegation that the Templars' leaders had deliberately sent whistleblowers overseas to die. One of the witnesses, for example, was a Carmelite friar (the Templars, it should be noted, had privileges that did not always endear them to rival monastic orders) named Robert of Maidenesford, who said that he had been told by a servant, who remained conveniently anonymous, that because a brother "did not agree to their cursed profession he was sent secretly to overseas regions and there was killed by those to whom he was sent". But Robert of Maidenesford was no ordinary cleric. The imaginative Carmelite was also allegedly party to a plot to burn a man to death in an oven, so he may not have been the most reliable witness.

Similarly, two Dominican friars testified that troublesome Templars in Britain were given sealed letters to take out to the east, the contents

Far from hoarding 'secret treasure', the property owned by the Templars in Britain was carefully documented

Philip IV, known as 'the Fair' – for his looks, not for his grasping, vindictive character. As well as targeting the Templars, he expelled all Jews from France

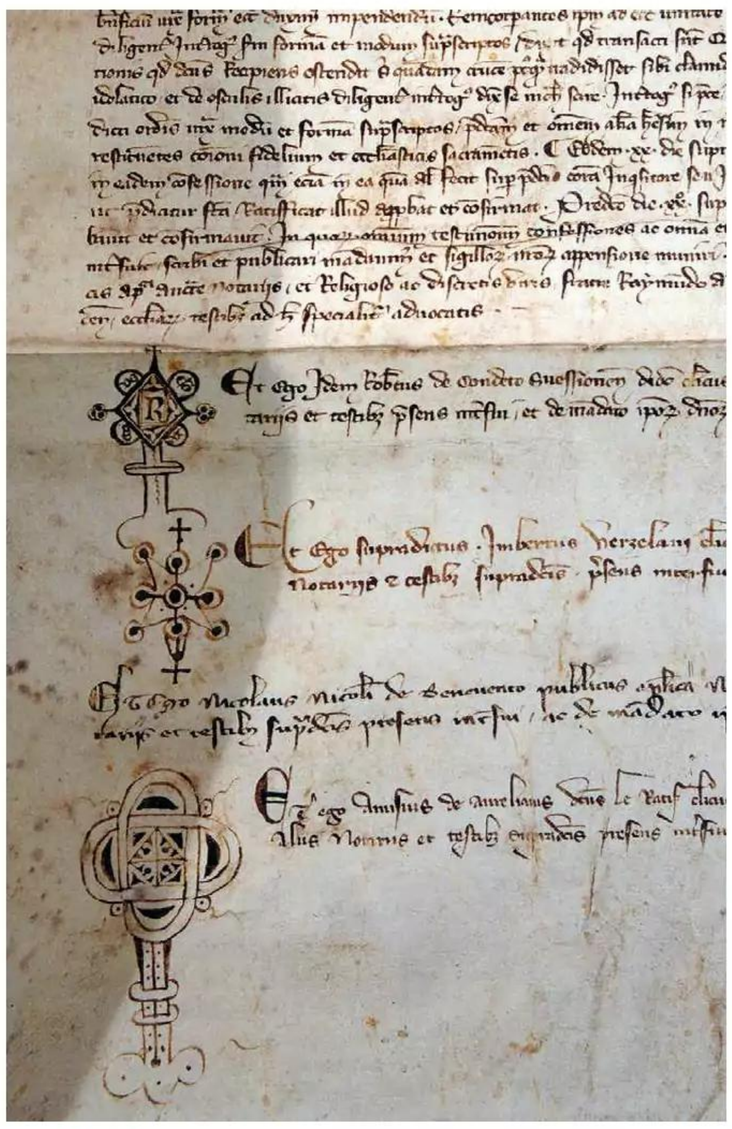
ALAMY

of which were later found to include instructions that the recipient of each letter should kill the bearer. But this hearsay was an old trope: it later found a suitably dramatic and equally fictitious home in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Of course, many Templars in Britain were sent abroad – fighting and serving overseas was, after all, what they had volunteered to do. In the absence of any real evidence, or real crimes, their inquisitors were surely just scraping the barrel with this allegation.

But was another grave accusation made against the Templars also false: that they were fabulously rich and hoarding treasure? This charge was not entirely irrational. The money for crusading had to come from somewhere, and the Templars were given substantial tax breaks and properties through which to fund the defence of the Holy Land. It's not hard to see how other clerical orders, lacking these advantages, could soon start accusing the Templars of greed and avarice.

Far from hoarding secret treasure, though, property owned by Templars in Britain was carefully documented. Inventories of their assets were made by royal officials in January 1308, when the brothers were first arrested, and again a year later, on 4 March 1309. Any Satanic idols or secret treasures would not



Under pressure This papal report on the Templars' trial was lost for 700 years. It suggests the pope may have been inclined to leniency, but succumbed to pressure from Philip IV

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Holy HQ Temple Church was built for the Templars in London in the 12th century. After the order was suppressed, the church was rented to lawyers' colleges that became known as Inner Temple and Middle Temple

IN CONTEXT

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

On 15 July 1099, Jerusalem – the Holy City, spiritual epicentre of Christianity and Judaism, and third-holiest city of Islam – was captured from Muslim forces by the armies of the First Crusade. Yet it would prove immensely difficult to hold on to. Set inland and desperately underpopulated, Jerusalem was a military disaster waiting to happen for the Christian occupiers.

The success of the First Crusade, launched in 1096 following a papal call for Christian forces to retake the Holy Land, had enjoyed a huge stroke of luck. The big problem the new occupiers now faced was how to recruit high-quality soldiers to defend it in the long term. The answer to that problem was the Templars, established in Jerusalem in c1119. This hybrid military-religious order, officially the Poor Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon, comprised dedicated men who combined the spiritual and martial virtues that would enable them to help protect pilgrims to the Holy Land and defend the new crusader states of the near east.

The order quickly grew into an elite warrior force, and a close approximation of a standing army. Volunteers were recruited from across Europe, and pious donors gave the order estates though which it could generate funds for the cause. The Templars rose to the challenge, taking over the policing of major roads, building fortifications and garrisoning vulnerable frontier lands.

For almost two centuries, the order led the defence of the Christian Middle East – ultimately to no avail. By 1291, the last crusader cities there had fallen, and in 1307 the Templars in France were rounded up and arrested for heresy and Satanism, while their brethren in Britain were also targeted, though with less virulence. The order was officially suppressed in 1312.

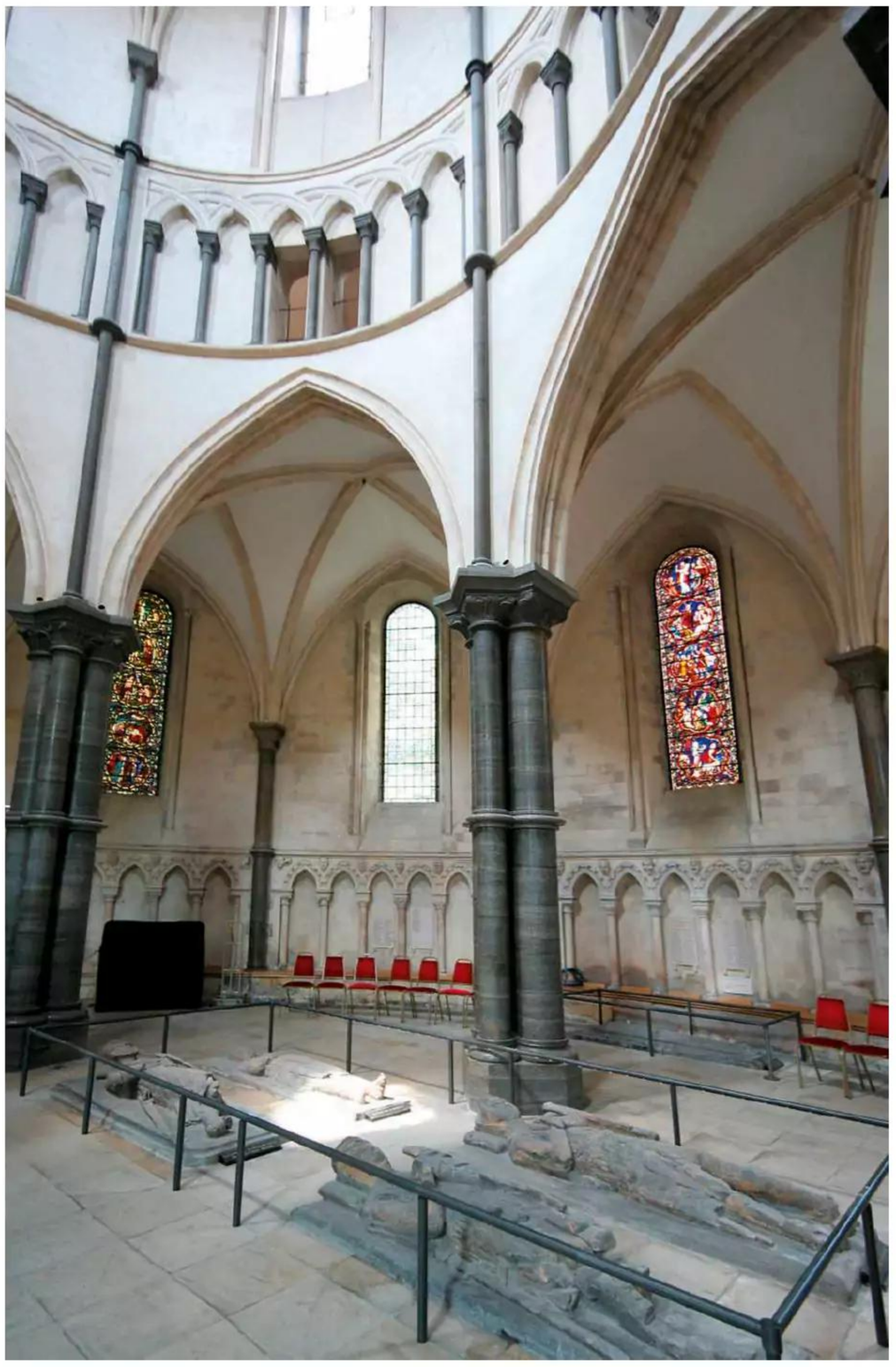
A Templar knight in a 12th-century fresco from Cressac-Saint-Genis in south-western France

have remained secret – yet the accounts show that the personal possessions of the Templars were, in fact, surprisingly simple.

In London, the king's men seized only some clothes and wall coverings; two crossbows and a few swords; two books; and some sundry iron forks and fire stands. They found no precious metals, with the poignant exception of the property of one Richard of Herdwick, from whom were confiscated two silver cups and 12 silver spoons.

Certainly, any hidden treasure remained firmly hidden. Even the rumoured corporate treasure of the order's New Temple headquarters proved a major disappointment for the bailiffs. A number of valuables *were* held in its vestry – rich furnishings and beautiful fabrics, some reliquaries, ivory and high-quality silverwork – but nothing out of the ordinary for the provincial headquarters of a major religious order.

Was there any concealed loot? Inventories of goods owned by Templars in Britain record no hoards of money, jewels or idols, just items that might be expected in a holy order's properties. A total of 53 silver spoons were mentioned in the inventories, six of which were found at a home for aged and infirm Templars in Denney, Cambridgeshire. This amounted to one spoon for every two Templars arrested in Britain – hardly a treasure trove. Even in France, where the order was taken completely by surprise, no treasures were discovered.



Carved in stone
Effigies of nine knights survive in Temple Church, including that of William Marshal who was advisor to five kings

Dark knights?

Another of the most damaging charges laid against the Templars – and the one that has arguably done most to fuel the conspiracies and bizarre tales of covert societies that still reverberate around the internet today – was the accusation that the Templars had evolved into a secret Satanic cult.

A secret cult requires, above all else, secrecy – but the Templars were never shut off from the rest of society. Their famous New Temple headquarters complex in London had the walls, the money and the financial skills that helped to create the Templar legend. Yet, as with so much of the mythology surrounding the order, almost nothing was what it seemed.

The New Temple was a vibrant and public centre for finance and worship, law and commerce – the very antithesis of a malevolent nest of conspiracies, devil worship or secret societies. If Templars in Britain were, in fact, trying to run a secret society, they were doing a spectacularly bad job of it.

This headquarters was a remarkably public place: people were walking in and out of the precinct almost all of the time. The church was open to the public for prayer. Pilgrims came to see the relics held there. Many non-Templars – women as well as men – worked or lived in the order's houses.

There was even a thoroughfare running through the middle of the precinct. This right of way was used by pedestrians and as a lane for transporting goods down to a wharf on the Thames. In other words, the supposedly most secretive and private site owned by the order had what was, in effect, a public road running through the middle of it. Yet not one of the countless people passing through the Templars' headquarters spotted that the order had turned away from mainstream Christianity to devil worship and idolatry.

Another accusation was that admission to the Templars was a secretive affair. Admission ceremonies were of particular interest to the inquisitors, who imagined such a ritual to be the moment when devout and enthusiastic volunteers would learn that the order was a front for Satanic worship. But could this really have been true? In Britain, the Templars' induction service was held in public. Far from being secretive, it was a cross between a family party and a modern graduation ceremony.

Across western Europe, young recruits usually joined the Templar house closest to their homes, so their devout and often influential families were close at hand, had there been anything untoward to report. They would have been eager to support their sons in revealing any trace of heresy.

It is true that many left the order, sometimes because of misdemeanours, or because they did not take to the rigours of Templar life. But these men, often disgruntled and with every reason to hold a grudge, told no tales of rampant wrongdoing.

Then there was the lack of complaints from the new entrants. Young knights joined because they were, as one Templar told the papal commissioners in Paris, "inspired by zeal for the orthodox faith, [and] have made their profession in the order of the Temple, remaining in it until the end of their lives. If such men had known, seen or heard of the detestable insults and blasphemies to the name of Jesus Christ, they would have cried

If the Templars were trying to run a secret society, they were doing a spectacularly bad job

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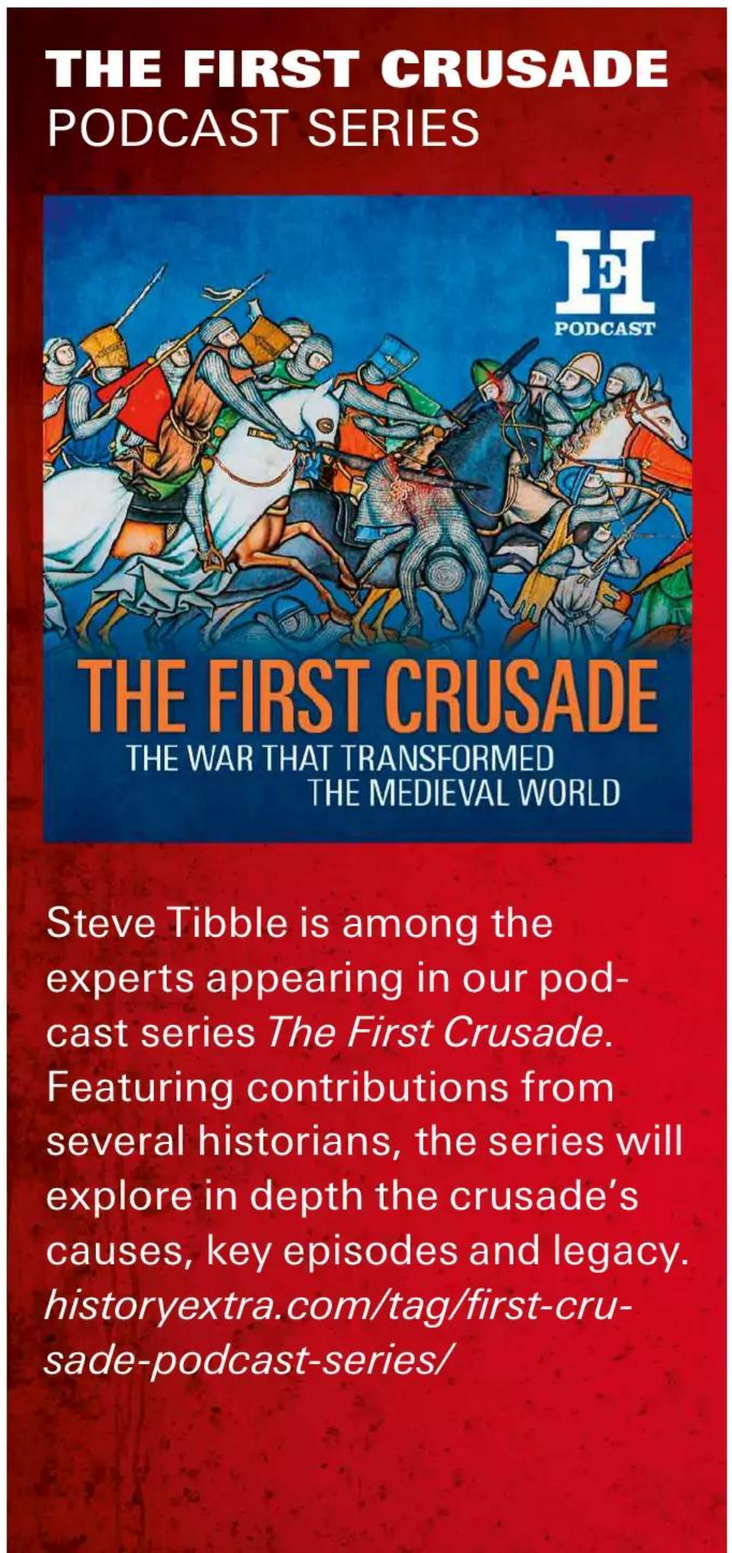
Beginning of the end
This 19th-century painting depicts the 1291 siege of the coastal city of Acre. Defeat to Muslim Mamluk forces here heralded the end of the Christian states in the Holy Land



Steve Tibble is among the experts appearing in our podcast series *The First Crusade*. Featuring contributions from several historians, the series will explore in depth the crusade's causes, key episodes and legacy. *historyextra.com/tag/first-crusade-podcast-series/*

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out against them and revealed everything to the whole world." His logic was unarguable.

But perhaps the most convincing proof of innocence – especially relating to charges of Satanism – was conspicuous by its absence at Templar trials. It was never produced in court precisely because it was so compelling.

On the day the order was dissolved in France, an inventory was made of all Templar possessions. There had been no warning of the impending suppression, so all idols would still have been held in Templars' treasuries and chapels. But the results were hugely disappointing for the inquisitors. Physical evidence of devil worship was non-existent in both France and Britain. Many religious books were found, but no hint in writing of any Satanic worship. There were crosses – large and small, precious and valueless – again, all normal items of Christian devotion and in suspiciously good condition. This was particularly embarrassing, given that new entrants to the order were supposedly forced to trample and then urinate on a crucifix.

In fact, the meticulous catalogues of possessions reveal nothing more than the pious reliquaries and other devotional aids that might be expected in one of the less academically gifted holy orders. So why, in the absence of real evidence, was the order suppressed?

Greed and credulity played a large part. The Templars' property portfolios were undoubtedly tempting. But perhaps the final key to understanding the 'guilt' of the Templars lies in their role – or, rather, lack of one.

No longer useful

For as long as the Templars still had a useful part to play in defending the Christian near east, no one accused them of anything substantive. But in 1291, Acre, capital of the last remaining crusader outposts in the Middle East, fell. On 18 May, Mamluk armies broke through the city's defences. The Templar grand master, William of Beaujeu, had gathered his men for a last charge, but their numbers were pitifully few – no more than "10 or 12 brethren and [William's] own household troops".

In that last battle, an English Templar squire struggled to rise from the body of his dead horse, while pots of Greek fire – an early incendiary weapon – exploded around him. He was so badly hit "that his surcoat burst into flames. There was no one to help him, and so his face was burned, and then his whole body, and he burned as if he had been a cauldron of pitch, and he died there."

But heroism counted for nothing. The fall of Acre meant the loss of the crusader states of the Middle East. It also meant that the Templars were left unemployed, unfocused and easy prey for opportunistic enemies.

Templars were doubtless guilty of many minor misdemeanours. But, beyond the normal vagaries of human weakness, the charges they faced were trumped up, based on almost no evidence other than irredeemably compromised confessions extracted from frightened men under torture.

Their real 'crime' was far more prosaic than all of the medieval and modern conspiracy theories. No one needed an elite and expensive army on the frontiers of Christendom any more – the Templars were redundant. And in March 1312, the papal order was finally issued to suppress the order. The Templars were no more. H

Steve Tibble is research associate at Royal Holloway, University of London. His latest book is *Templars: The Knights Who Made Britain*, (Yale University Press, 2023)

In the 12th century, a sect of killers spread fear throughout the Middle East, executing a series of high-profile political murders. **Steve Tibble** introduces the original Assassins

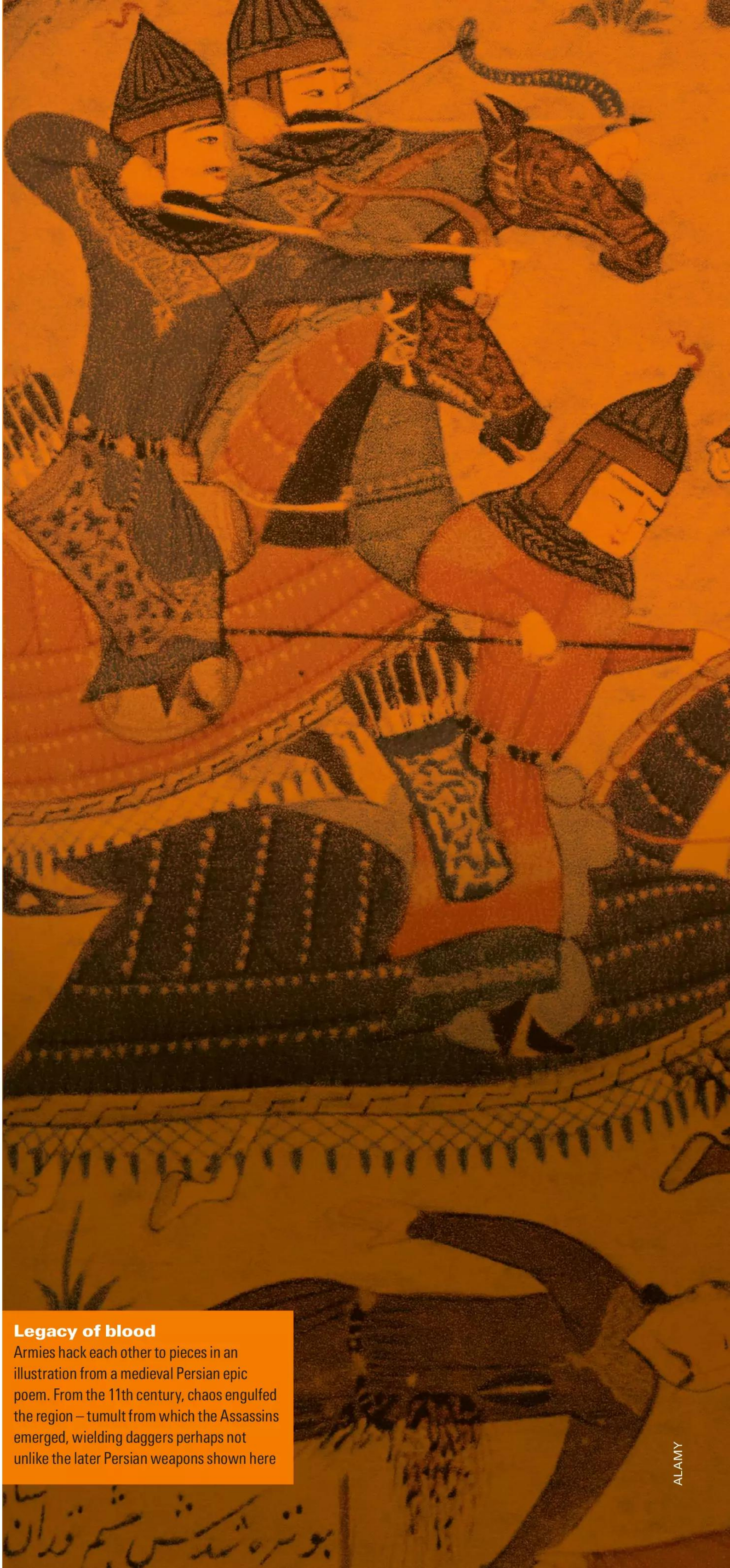
There were 13 men: unlucky for someone. They were dressed to kill – but so was everyone else. In what was essentially an army camp, crammed with armed men, the assailants blended right in. Moving casually but intently through the bustling camp outside Aleppo in Syria, past stalls and shopkeepers, beggars and soldiers, they headed towards their target.

Suddenly their progress was checked by a shout from behind: "What are you doing here?" Cover blown, their response was shocking: an explosion of violence, weapons flashing, blood splashing. The team of Assassins erupted into the tent where their victim sat unawares, surrounded by generals, lackeys and bodyguards. The attackers' daggers and swords struck once more.

The target that day in January 1175 was a Kurdish general, Salah al-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub – better known to us as Saladin. He had displaced the Fatimid dynasty to rule as sultan of Egypt, and was now muscling in on Syria. That vicious attack on his life failed – for now. But who were these men? And why had they launched such a murderous and seemingly suicidal assault?

Power through murder

Those brutal killers were Assassins. The upper case seems pedantic, but it is important. In the true medieval sense, that term was used for members of the Nizari Ismailis, a Shia Muslim sect who sought to defend themselves and to project power through



Legacy of blood
Armies hack each other to pieces in an illustration from a medieval Persian epic poem. From the 11th century, chaos engulfed the region – tumult from which the Assassins emerged, wielding daggers perhaps not unlike the later Persian weapons shown here

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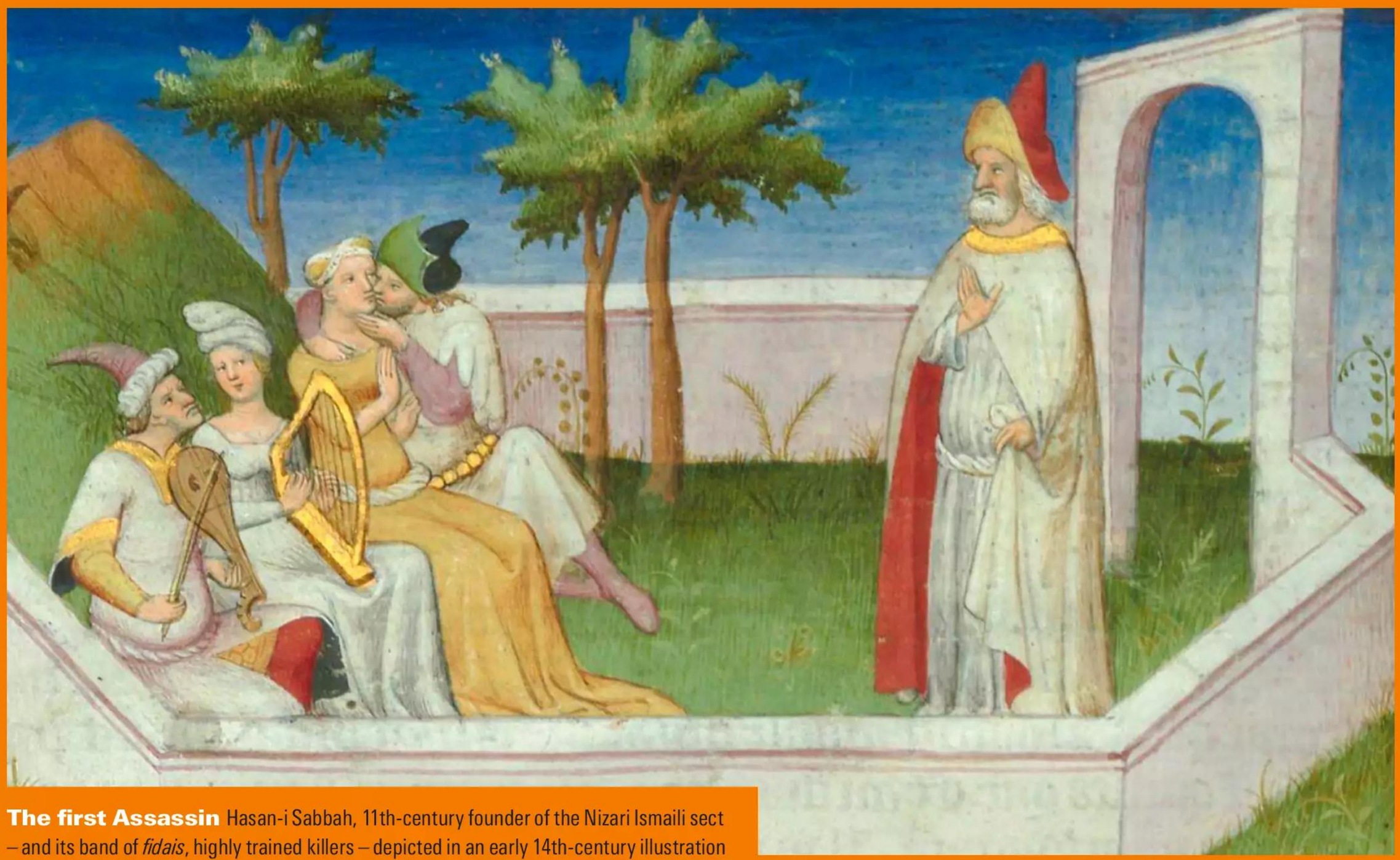
Reign of terror



The first Assassin Hasan-i Sabbah, 11th-century founder of the Nizari Ismaili sect – and its band of *fidais*, highly trained killers – depicted in an early 14th-century illustration

political murder. The word 'Assassin' (or *hashishin*) was used as a pejorative by those on the receiving end of their remorseless hit squads in the 12th and 13th centuries. And the name stuck, becoming synonymous for premeditated murderers or contract killers – even though most of the broader Nizari Ismaili community were in fact peaceful peasants, scholars and merchants.

The origins of this sect lay in the chaos of the Middle East in the late 11th century. Turkic tribes from the Eurasian steppes had stormed into the region and seized power from local Arab rulers, before starting to jockey among themselves for control of these new lands. Then, between 1092 and 1094, most of the major political leaders in the region died, including the vizier and caliph-imam of Fatimid Egypt, and the Seljuq sultan Malik-Shah, who ruled a vast empire stretching from Anatolia through the Middle East to central Asia. The resulting power vacuum was quickly filled with mayhem.

The Nizari Ismailis were widely despised by their powerful Sunni Muslim neighbours as heretics and traitors, so launched an audacious uprising against the Sunni Seljuq Turks in Persia – and, importantly for our story, sent out missionaries to set up bases in the mountains of Syria. This was occurring in the last decade of the 11th century, around the same time as the crusaders were sweeping into the area, carving out kingdoms of their own from which to defend the Holy Land.

A 1560 portrait of Saladin. The Ayyubid sultan, who portrayed himself as a champion of Sunni orthodoxy, took aim at the Nizari Ismailis – making himself a target

By the start of the 12th century, the entire region had become disastrously fragmented. For the Nizari Ismailis – and for the recently arrived crusaders – Syria now seemed a land of opportunity. Members of this small breakaway sect were small in number and without obvious economic assets, but they had a terrifyingly effective secret weapon: the savage skills and unquestioning loyalty of a cadre of elite killers – the *fidais*.

Promise of death

During the crusades, most major players employed a similar strategy: channel enormous amounts of money and energy into acquiring big armies, the basic building blocks upon which almost all power structures were built. But assembling these voraciously expensive and disruptive armies was a big enough challenge for wealthy nations – how could minor players survive? The short answer is that, in most cases, they did not. Before long, almost all of them were swept away.

The Nizari Ismailis chose a revolutionary

ALAMY

Crusader criminals? Steve Tibble reveals how the crusades unleashed a crimewave in an online article*: historyextra.com/crusader-criminals*

Fortress of solitude
The ruins of Masyaf Castle in western Syria, one of the Assassins' isolated fortresses from which the sect's *fidais* were dispatched to kill Sunni adversaries and other targets

alternative: rather than rely on the generality of death embodied by large (and expensive) armies, they chose the specificity of death. Individuals are afraid of violent endings, so any power that could spark and exploit that primal fear had no need of costly, clumsy armies. For the Nizari Ismailis – now, for our purposes, synonymous with the Assassins – violent, targeted death became their power, and their promise.

Their overall goal was to secure the survival and growth of the sect in a hostile environment, but specific tactical objectives varied. Murders were perpetrated for political reasons, to intimidate, for revenge, for money – for example, to pay for the construction of castles – out of personal animosity or, frequently, a combination of these reasons.

In their remote bases in Syria, the Assassins perfected and professionalised their squads of *fidais*. Only the most committed and able, mentally as well as physically, were chosen to receive the rigorous training needed to fulfil their highly dangerous missions, often with slim chances of survival. Most of their attacks were on high-profile individuals, and took place in very public spaces. Every member of a *fidai* team had to be courageous and committed to the cause.

There were lurid descriptions of the Assassins as drugged-up fanatics eager to die for a twisted cause

They were described by their enemies as fanatical and brainwashed, but by admirers as dedicated and skilful. Regardless, the *fidais* were extraordinarily focused and effective – the ninjas of the 12th century Middle East.

Then, as now, there were many lurid descriptions of the Assassins as drugged-up, deluded fanatics eager to die for a twisted cause. But this was all part of the illusion – an essential element in the promise of 'unstoppable death' at the heart of the brand. The fear sown by the *fidais* – along with their own fearlessness and relentlessness, which made them such terrifying and efficient killers – was at the core of the Assassins' power. As one of their leaders retorted to an attempt at intimidation by an enemy, a general commanding vast armies: "Do you threaten a duck with the river?" If death was a river, in other words, the *fidais* were all too happy to swim in it.

Most of the associated rumours were untrue. It is unlikely, for instance, that *fidais* were given drugs such as hashish (cannabis resin) to numb their senses and inspire fanaticism before they carried out a hit. Being under the influence of narcotics would have been counterproductive: a skilled Assassin needed to have his wits about him.

BRIDGEMAN

The original Assassins

Death wish A disguised *fidai* fatally stabs the Seljuk vizier Nizam al-Mulk in 1092 – the Assassins' first major hit – as shown in a 14th-century manuscript illustration

The Assassins' political murders started with a huge success in 1092, when a *fidai* named Bu Tahir Arrani stabbed the Seljuq vizier Nizam al-Mulk as he was being carried in a litter towards Baghdad. Other Sunni leaders were then attacked and killed, including Janah al-Dawla, the Turkic governor of Homs, in 1103. Even Mawdud, the ruler of Mosul and the general entrusted with coordinating the campaign against the crusaders, was killed in Damascus in 1113, despite being surrounded by the best bodyguards that money could buy.

Mawdud's successor, Aqsunqur al-Bursuqi, fared no better, assassinated while at his prayers in the Great Mosque of Mosul in 1126. Members of the *fidai* squad were, as usual, cut down by the numerous bodyguards stationed around the target, with only one, "a youth from Azaz", surviving. (This was highly embarrassing for his mother, who was deeply proud of the celebrity status her brave son enjoyed in the sect and was already in mourning for him when he returned alive.)

By the mid-12th century, the Assassins had become feared across the region. This reputation was further confirmed under the rule of Rashid ad-Din Sinan, known as Sinan, who became ruler of the de facto Nizari Ismaili state in Syria and Persia in 1162. He strengthened the Assassins' network of mountain fortresses and perfected their deadly craft. Under him, the *fidais* became an even more professional and fearsome weapon – more formalised, better trained and increasingly highly motivated.

Sinan was an extraordinary figure: highly intelligent, a great leader and capable of acting with profound strategic insight. He was also a man of a deeply esoteric, mystical and, some would say, even 'magical' disposition. As one Sunni commentator later wrote, "the Ismaili sect followed him as they had followed no one else, and he was able to achieve what no other had achieved".

The main Nizari source about his life, an early 14th-century biography, was written by the scholar Abu Firas, who went to some lengths to emphasise the leader's orthodox Islamic credentials but also listed Sinan's supposed occult achievements. There were stories of telepathy and clairvoyance. Sinan was never seen eating, and he did not say much, but deliberately adopted strange poses. There were rumours among his own people that he did not cast a reflection in water.

He became known as the 'Old Man of the Mountain' – a title that, though originally a personal honorific, was later used to signify the Assassins' leader in Syria, a little like 'Caesar' or 'Sultan'. This helped create a sense of fear that transcended death: regardless of who was in charge at any moment, there was always an 'Old Man of the Mountain'.

The 'death cult' image that Sinan so fastidiously cultivated was a huge success.

The last surviving Assassin escaped from Saladin's tent but was torn apart by the crowd that had gathered outside

ALAMY

Killers killed A medieval miniature illustration shows Mongol warriors capturing Alamut Castle, the Nizari Ismaili sect's headquarters in northern Persia (now Iran), in 1256 – auguring the end of the Assassins

ALAMY

The Assassins' enemies fomented 'legendary' tales in attempts to denigrate and isolate their ruthless foe, but the killers benefited from the additional fear these stories fuelled. As one Nizari poet put it, a single *fidai* could strike fear into the heart of the most powerful king. And there was one particular 'king' that the Assassins had in their crosshairs.

Saladin, a usurper desperate to shore up his image as a legitimate ruler, found it useful to pose as the champion of Sunni orthodoxy – and as Shia 'heretics', the Nizari Ismailis were handy scapegoats. They, along with the crusaders, were the unifying bogeymen of his self-justification. The Assassins correctly identified that his new Ayyubid empire posed an existential threat to the Nizari Ismaili sect – and decided that he should be eliminated.

Hard target

As outlined at the start of this story, and reported by the chronicler Ibn al-Athir the following century, the first *fidai* team struck while Saladin was besieging Aleppo in 1175, when 13 men armed with knives were dispatched to kill him. The attack was timed to coincide with the communal meal, when servants and guests would be distracted. But, as we've seen, on that occasion the *fidais* were thwarted by a piece of bad luck. An emir in Saladin's camp recognised them as Nizari Ismailis, and asked: "What has brought you here? On what business have you come?"

Knives were drawn: the Assassins stabbed the emir "with some deadly blows, and one of their number charged towards Saladin to slay him but was killed before he could reach him", said Ibn al-Athir. The *fidai* who got closest had his head hacked off by an emir, and Saladin's chancellor, Imad al-Din, wrote that "the others were not killed until they had killed a number of people". The Assassins failed on this occasion – but they did not die quietly.

The next year, Saladin was besieging the castle of Azaz, belonging to one of his Sunni rivals, north-west of Aleppo. Here the Assassins launched another, even more deadly attempt on his life, with a smaller but more focused team ordered to strike Saladin's neck and head. Al-Athir wrote that "while Saladin was in a tent belonging to one of his emirs, [an Assassin] leapt on him, struck him on the head with a dagger and wounded him".

The blade met iron rather than flesh and bone. Spooked by the earlier attempt on his life, Saladin was almost totally covered in layers of concealed armour.

"Had it not been for the mailed helmet under his cap," wrote Ibn al-Athir, "he would have been killed. Saladin grasped the [Assassin's] hand in his, although he was unable totally to prevent him striking a blow."

The sultan's men rushed to his aid, and killed that assailant. Another member of the hit squad killed one of Saladin's commanders; a third fought on until he was killed by Saladin's brother. The last surviving *fidai* escaped from the tent but was torn apart by the crowd outside. A bloodied Saladin was hustled away "in a state of shock, hardly crediting his escape… The sultan rode to his tent, terrified by this event, with his blood flowing down his cheek and the collar of his chain mail wet."

Saladin quickly sent a reassuring message back to Egypt to dispel any sign of weakness and to discourage possible uprisings. "There was only a scratch with some few drops of blood," he wrote. But he knew that he could no longer ignore the Assassins.

In July 1176, Saladin moved his armies into the heart of Nizari Ismaili territory and "ravaged their land, destroying and burning". His armies besieged their fortress of Masyaf, about 30 miles north-west of Homs.

No further hostilities developed. Sinan did not want a huge army camped outside his castle, ravaging the hard-won Nizari lands in Syria. Saladin wanted to preserve his life and family, and he had plenty of other enemies to attend to. Both sides quickly sought peace.

After this, the Assassins generally remained neutral, presumably having given reassurances to Saladin about his personal safety. He seems to have pulled back from further antagonism, and even included them in treaties that might affect their interests.

End of the Assassins

Ultimately, the Assassins failed to overthrow the Seljuq Turks or their successors. They carved out a couple of minor principalities for a time, but little more, and did not hold any major cities. They were eventually brushed aside by much larger, more violent and less easily intimidated military opponents. In 1256–57, they were destroyed by the Mongols in Persia, then neutered by Sultan Baybars and the Mamluks in Syria after 1265.

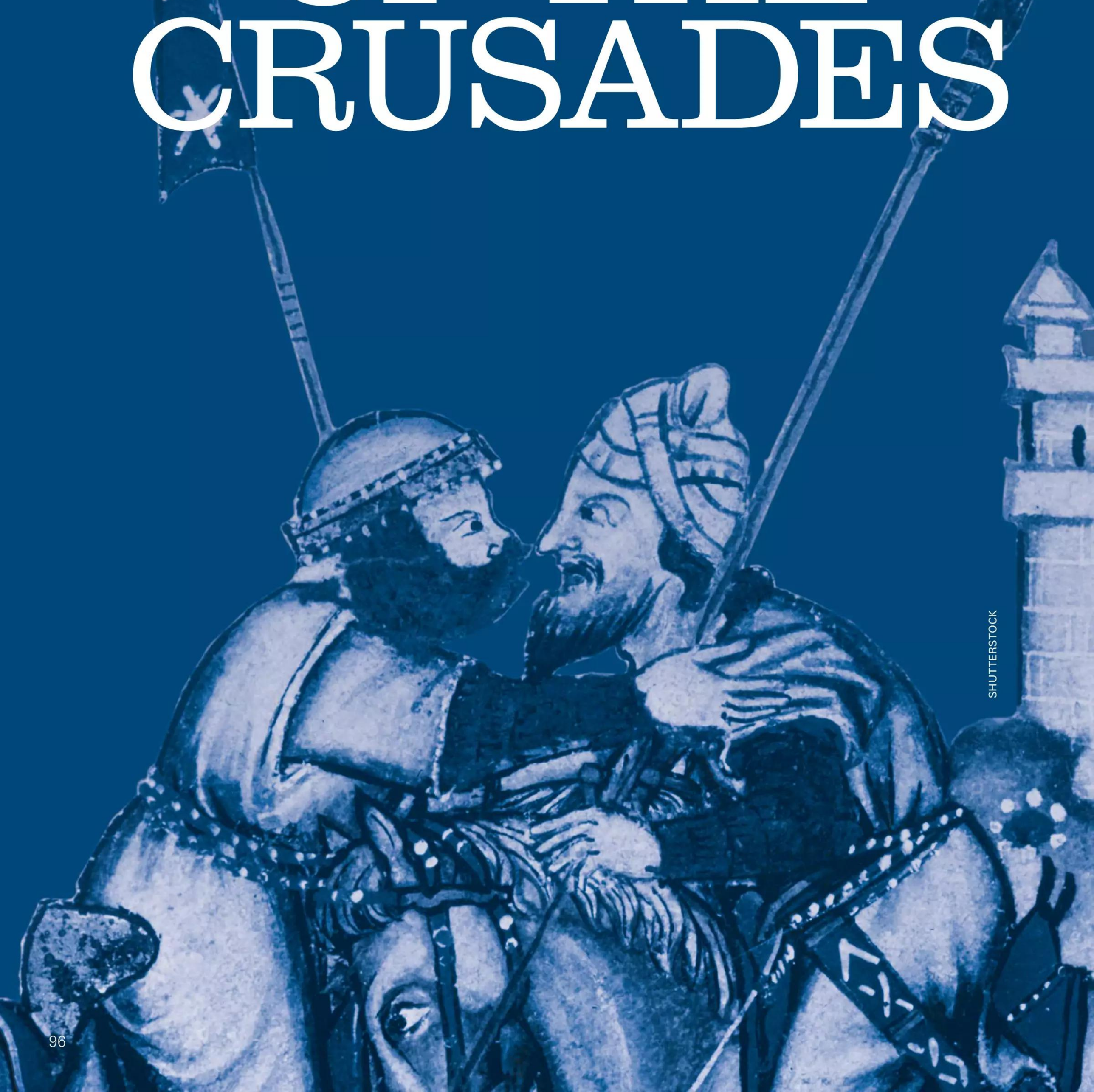
The Assassins had persisted for more than a century and a half – far longer than might have been expected. Despite being vastly outnumbered by their Sunni enemies, they had made themselves heard, hated and feared. They pushed the bounds of dedication and commitment to new limits. And it is that extraordinary legacy, with all its faults, that deserves to be remembered. H

Steve Tibble is a historian and author. His latest book is *Assassins and Templars: A Battle in Myth and Blood* (Yale University Press, 2025)

Hear Greg Jenner and Jonathan Phillips discuss the story of Saladin on an episode of **You're Dead to Me** at *bbc.co.uk/programmes/p07r6hjz*

BBC SOUNDS

LEGACY OF THE CRUSADES



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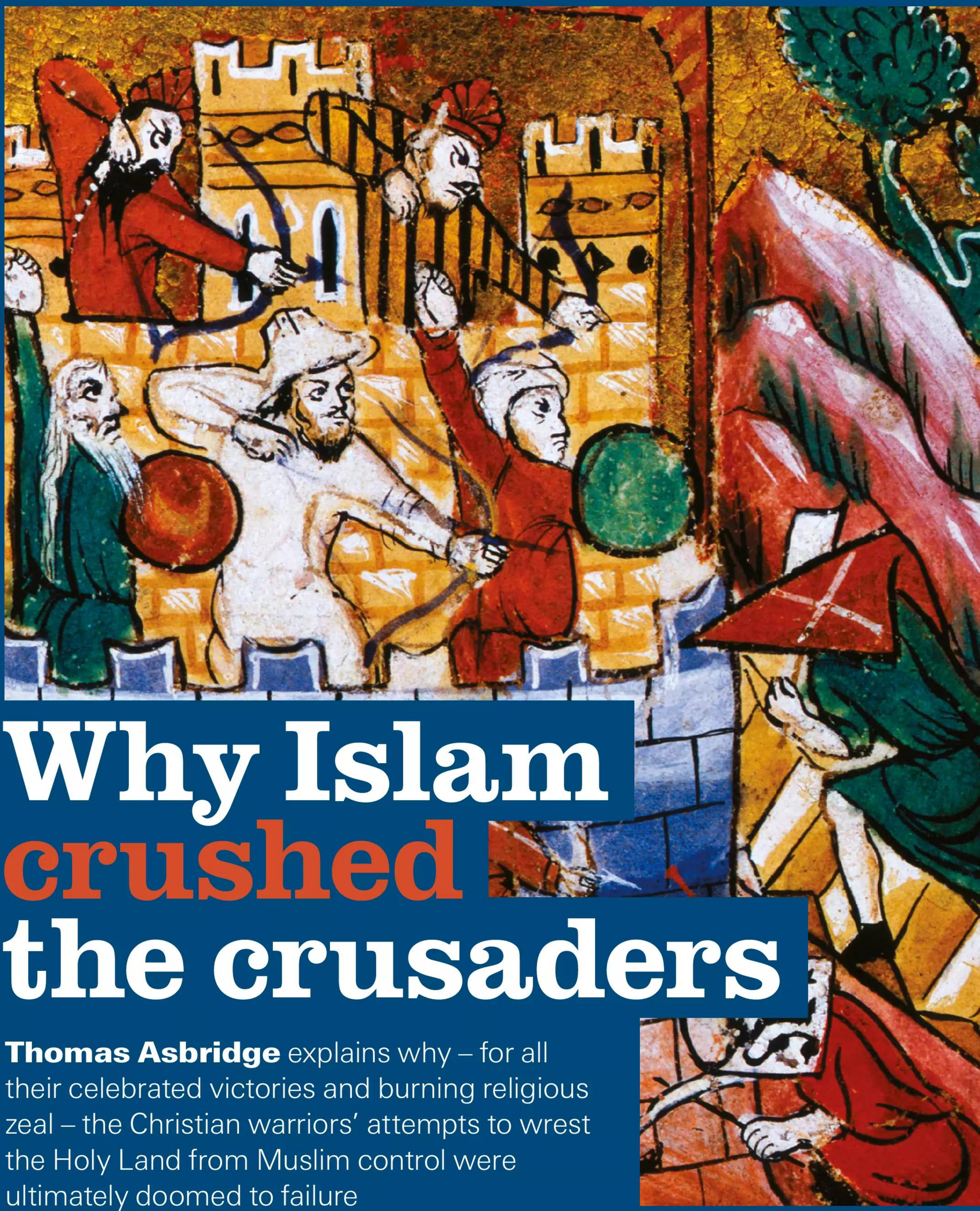
Crusaders' attempts to control the Holy Land were ultimately doomed to failure

106 When worlds collide
Why the 'clash of civilisations' narrative doesn't tell the full story of Muslim-crusader interactions

114 Crusader landmarks
The most evocative sites from the Crusades, both in the Holy Land and beyond



Why Islam crushed the crusaders

Thomas Asbridge explains why – for all their celebrated victories and burning religious zeal – the Christian warriors' attempts to wrest the Holy Land from Muslim control were ultimately doomed to failure

This illustration shows the siege and capture of Antioch in 1268, when Baybars' mighty Mamluk army laid the crusader city to waste

GETTY IMAGES

This image from the c1286 *Histoire Universelle* shows Peter the Hermit, one of the church's leading advocates of the First Crusade (1096–99), at the head of a group of soldiers

At dawn on Friday 18 May 1291, a furious Muslim assault upon the crusader city of Acre began. This heavily fortified and normally bustling port in northern Palestine had been locked into a siege for more than a month: encircled by tens of thousands of Islamic troops; subjected to an aerial bombardment that brought hundred-pound boulders crashing down onto its battlements and buildings.

Now, on this last morning, the air resounded with the thunder of war drums as thousands of Muslims raced forward, and their archers loosed arrows "in a thick cloud" that, according to one Christian eyewitness, "seemed to fall like rain from the heavens". Driven forward by the immense momentum of their onslaught, the Muslims broke through two gates and began rushing into the city.

Sharing a vain last stand were the leaders of two elite Christian military orders. The master of the Templars was mortally wounded when a spear pierced his side, while his counterpart, the master of the Hospitallers, took a lance thrust between his shoulders and was dragged back from the walls, grievously injured. Before long, the defenders were overrun and the sack of Acre began. One Christian, then in the city, wrote that the "day was terrible to behold. The [ordinary people of the city] came fleeing through the streets, their children in their arms, weeping and despairing, and fleeing to sailors to save them from death." Hundreds were hunted down and slaughtered.

Acre's fall was a final and fatal disaster for the Christians of the crusader states – the western European settlements in the near east that had survived for almost two centuries. Within a few months, their remaining mainland outposts had been evacuated or abandoned. For the Muslims, by contrast, the victory at Acre affirmed the efficacy of their faith, sealing their triumph in the war for the Holy Land. Reflecting on the wonder of this event, a Muslim contemporary wrote:

"These conquests [meant that] the whole of Palestine was now in Muslim hands [and] purified of the Franks, who had once been on the point of conquering Egypt and subduing Damascus and other cities. Praise be to God!" The crusades had culminated in a categorical victory for Islam.

The crusading era had begun with a seemingly miraculous Christian success: the First Crusade's conquest of Jerusalem. Answering a papal call to arms, thousands of western European warriors had marched across the face of the known world to reclaim the Holy City from its Islamic overlords. Perhaps 90 per cent of these original crusaders had been lost to death or desertion, but on 15 July 1099 a hardened core of survivors had forced their way into Jerusalem, butchering much of its Muslim population. In the years that followed, four crusader states – including the kingdom of Jerusalem – were forged.

Through the early decades of the 12th century these crusader states continued to expand, until they covered a swathe of territory stretching from modern-day Israel and Jordan, through Syria and Lebanon, to Turkey. Collectively, they came to be known by contemporaries as 'Outremer': the land beyond the sea. But a rising tide of Muslim resistance and counterattack soon placed these isolated western satellites under pressure, and a succession of further crusades were launched from Europe to defend the Holy Land. Through eight major crusading expeditions – including the Third Crusade, during which Richard the Lionheart sought to defeat the mighty Muslim sultan Saladin – and scores of smaller crusading campaigns, hundreds of thousands of Christians fought to preserve this fragile foothold in the east.

Acre's fall was a final and fatal disaster for the Christians of the crusader states

Dramatic extinction

Nonetheless, the startling victories of the First Crusade were never repeated, and the strength and geographical extent of Outremer was gradually eroded until its dramatic extinction in 1291. So why did Islam prevail in this protracted struggle for dominion of the Holy Land?

Historians have sometimes suggested that Christendom was defeated because of a gradual slump in crusade enthusiasm after 1200, a malaise supposedly brought on by papal manipulation and dilution of the crusading 'ideal'. This view is somewhat simplistic. True, the 13th century did not witness the same massive expeditions that

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In these scenes from a c1450 book by Sebastian Mamerot, French troops under Philip II embark at Acre during the Third Crusade (top) and the English fleet under Richard I destroys an enemy ship

A papal legate presents a cross to Louis IX of France, who rose from his sickbed to lead a remarkable, if doomed, crusade to Egypt

BRIDGEMAN

had punctuated the period between 1095 and 1193, but recruitment for a plethora of smaller-scale campaigns remained buoyant. Above all, the essential allure of the crusades – the idea of fighting to defend or reclaim sacred Christian territory in return for the reward of spiritual purification – seems to have remained largely undimmed. The call of the cross undoubtedly could still move the hearts and minds of the masses.

One popular outburst of ecstatic piety was witnessed in 1212, when large groups of children and young adults in northern France and Germany spontaneously began to declare their dedication to the cause of the crusades. In the 'Children's Crusade' that followed, hordes of youngsters began marching to the Mediterranean believing that God would oversee their journey to the Levant and then lend them the miraculous power to overthrow Islam and recapture Jerusalem. Unfortunately, the seas did not part to allow these children to walk to the Holy Land and the whole venture collapsed. Undeterred, a similarly popular uprising was witnessed in the so-called Shepherds' Crusade of 1251.

Yet, although the crusading fire still burned brightly, its force was frequently directed away from the defence of Outremer itself to combat new enemies in different theatres of conflict. In the course of the 13th century, the papacy launched numerous crusades against heretics in southern France, eastern European pagans and even its own political enemies within Italy.

Campaigns and resources were also channelled into the Christian reconquest of Iberia from the Moors and the defence of Constantinople (recently captured from the Byzantine Greeks). The lack of a singular focus on the Holy Land undoubtedly weakened the war effort in the Levant, but it would be a mistake to imagine that the 13th century passed without its own grand crusades to the east. Indeed, perhaps the most remarkable of these expeditions was led by a king so pious and devoted to the war for the Holy Land that he would later be canonised by the Roman church as a saint.

From sickbed to sainthood

King Louis IX of France first vowed to go on crusade in December 1244, while in the grip of severe fever. The 30-year-old monarch was confined to his bed, and apparently close to death, when he "asked for the cross to be given to him" there and then. Once recovered, he stood by his promise, dedicating much of his life to the cause of holy war. Louis spent four years laying the most assiduous preparations for his campaign. Selecting Cyprus as his advance staging post, the king set about building up a supply of the food, weaponry and resources needed for war. After stockpiling goods on the island, the vast mounds of wheat and barley awaiting the crusade apparently resembled

Barber-surgeons moved through the ranks to cut away the scurvy-ridden gums of screaming soldiers

hills, while the stacks of wine barrels were, from a distance, easily mistaken for barns.

Louis's crusade targeted Egypt – the heartland of Muslim military and economic power – and began with a startling victory at the mouth of the Nile. On 5 June 1249, the king led around 20,000 crusaders in a desperately dangerous opposed beach landing near the town of Damietta. The troops guarding the coastline for the Ayyubid regime (Saladin's successors) buckled and fled in the face of the Christians' fierce, well-coordinated assault, and on the very next day Louis was able to occupy Damietta itself. This was the most stunning opening foray of any crusade.

In its wake, Louis marched his forces down a branch of the Nile to confront the main Ayyubid army at the town of Mansoura. On 8 February 1250, he launched a daring dawn raid on the Muslims camped in front of Mansoura. Catching the enemy unawares and asleep, the assault became a massacre. As this brutal riot overran the Ayyubid encampment, it seemed that a stunning victory was at hand, but at that moment the king's brother, Robert of Artois, made a woefully hot-headed decision to lead a large party of knights in pursuit of the Muslim stragglers fleeing towards Mansoura itself. Once they had charged into the town, Robert and his men found themselves trapped within a warren of confined alleyways and, falling prey to sniping spear and arrow attacks, they were annihilated, almost to a man.

Louis IX's crusade never recovered from this setback. The king sought to hold his position before Mansoura for another three months, but food shortages and the ravages of disease brought his army to its knees. With the crusaders reduced to eating cats and dogs, barber-surgeons moving through the ranks to cut away the scurvy-ridden gums of screaming soldiers, and Louis afflicted with dysentery, a general retreat was ordered on 4 April. The withdrawal quickly turned into a rout and almost the entire force was either killed or taken captive.

In the midst of the mayhem, King Louis became separated from his troops. He now was so stricken with illness that he had to have a hole cut in his breeches. A small group of his most loyal retainers made a brave attempt to lead him to safety, and eventually they took refuge in a small village. There, cowering, half-dead, in a squalid hut, the mighty sovereign of France was captured. His daring attempt to reconquer the Holy Land had ended in catastrophe.

The fact that such a carefully planned crusade, led by a paragon of Christian kingship, had still been subjected to an excoriating defeat horrified western Europe and raised serious doubts about the efficacy of the crusading movement. And even as Christendom was faltering, a fearsome power that would bring Islam full victory in the east was just beginning to emerge.

A new Islamic dynasty – the Mamluk sultanate, governed by members of the mamluk (slave-soldier) military elite – seized power in Egypt in the wake of King Louis IX's failed crusade. Mamluks had been used by Muslim rulers in the Levant for centuries. Fiercely loyal and highly professional, these warriors were the product of an elaborate system of slavery and military training. Most were Turks from the Russian steppes, north of the Black Sea; captured as boys, they were sold to Islamic potentates in the near and Middle East and then indoctrinated in the Muslim faith and trained in the arts of war.

Elite slave soldiers

By 1250, regiments of these elite slave-soldiers formed the backbone of the Ayyubid army (indeed, they were instrumental in ensuring the defeat of Louis's invasion), and in the decade that followed they overthrew the last vestiges of Ayyubid rule. In 1260, one mamluk commander, Sultan Baybars, emerged as the overall leader of the new Mamluk state – a man hungry for power, unflinchingly ruthless and supremely gifted in the arts of war. This blue-eyed, white slave became an unrivalled champion of Islamic jihad.

Baybars had already proven himself as a general, playing a central role in defeating the ferocious Mongols at the battle of Ayn Jalut. He now set about extending and perfecting the Mamluk military machine – creating perhaps the most formidable fighting force of the Middle Ages.

Baybars ploughed massive financial reserves into building, training and refining the Mamluk army. In total, the number of mamluks was increased fourfold, to around 40,000 mounted troops. The core of this force was the 4,000-strong royal mamluk regiment – Baybars' new elite, schooled and

CRUSADER REVERSES

How the Christians met their match

1144
Edessa, capital of the first crusader state, is captured by the merciless Turkish warlord Zangi

1148
Attempt by the Second Crusade to besiege Damascus ends in crushing failure

1187
Saladin defeats the forces of the kingdom of Jerusalem at the Horns of Hattin and goes on to recapture Jerusalem

1192
Richard the Lionheart leads the Third Crusade to within a day's march of Jerusalem, but then turns back, judging that the Holy City could not be held even if it could be conquered

1221
The Fifth Crusade's invasion of Egypt ends in defeat

1229
German emperor Frederick II negotiates the temporary return of Jerusalem to the Christians

1244
The forces of the kingdom of Jerusalem are annihilated at the battle of La Forbie

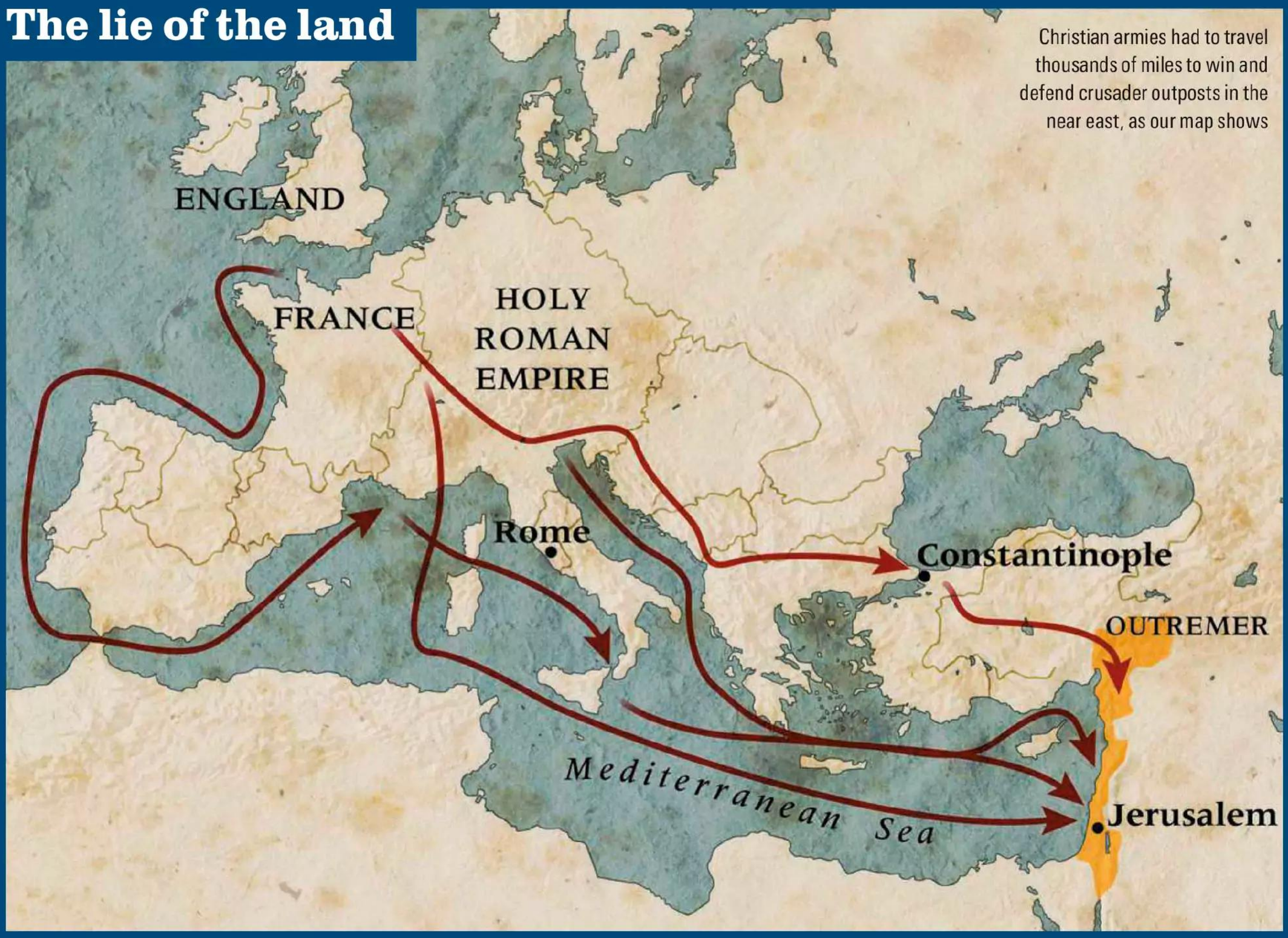
1268
Sultan Baybars sacks the city of Antioch, massacring its populace

1289
Baybars' successor, Qalawun, captures crusader Tripoli

1291
Crusader Acre is conquered by the Mamluks – and the crusader states on the Levantine mainland come to an end

The lie of the land

Christian armies had to travel thousands of miles to win and defend crusader outposts in the near east, as our map shows



MAP: MARTIN SANDERS-MAPART.CO.UK/GETTY IMAGES

The crusades to the near east were waged on what was tantamount to 'home turf' for the Muslims. This simple geographical reality played a fundamental role in the war for the Holy Land. Indeed, it was probably this factor more than any other that accounted for Islam's ultimate victory over the Christian crusaders.

For the western Europeans, the difficulties of conducting sustained military campaigns thousands of miles from home during the medieval era were manifold. Issues of transport, supply, communication and logistics all posed almost insuperable challenges.

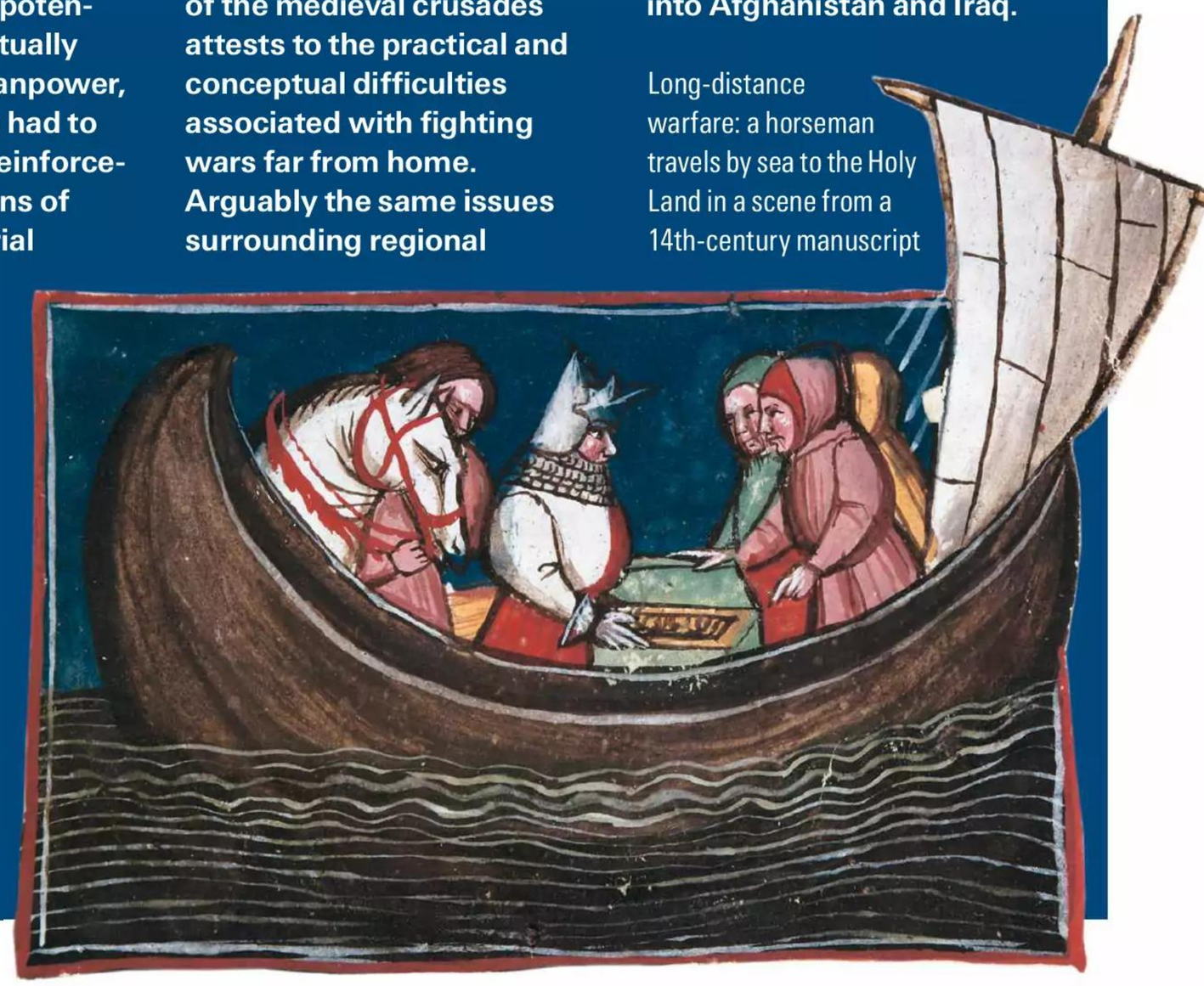
The early crusaders effectively walked 2,000 to 3,000 miles to the Holy Land – often taking years to do so – and although naval travel became the norm for Christian warriors from the later 12th century onwards, the costs involved were enormous.

Maintaining the European crusader outposts of Outremer also proved a struggle, isolated as they were amid a sea of potential enemies. Perpetually short of fighting manpower, the crusader states had to rely upon military reinforcements, and injections of financial and material aid from the west.

Yet, evocative and potent as the fate of Jerusalem and the Holy Land might have been, western Christendom often remained immune to Outremer's urgent appeals for assistance.

Domestic problems and concerns – from succession disputes and dynastic rivalries to failed harvests and outbreaks of heresy – might only too easily trump the distant needs of the crusader states.

The eventual outcome of the medieval crusades attests to the practical and conceptual difficulties associated with fighting wars far from home. Arguably the same issues surrounding regional spheres of influence continue to play a prominent role in modern conflicts, in spite of advanced technology, and help to explain the difficulties of recent American-led incursions into Afghanistan and Iraq.



Long-distance warfare: a horseman travels by sea to the Holy Land in a scene from a 14th-century manuscript

Mamluk cavalry train for combat in a military manual from 1371. These fearsome Egyptian slave-soldiers finally overran the fractured remains of the crusader states

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honed in a special practice facility within the citadel of Cairo. Here, recruits were taught the arts of swordsmanship – learning to deliver precise strikes by repeating the same cut up to a 1,000 times a day – and horse archery with powerful composite recurve bows.

The sultan emphasised rigid discipline and rigorous military drilling across every section of the Mamluk host. His mamluks were also encouraged to experiment with new weapons and techniques, some archers even attempting to use arrows doused in Greek fire from horseback. To reinforce the human component of the Mamluk armed forces, Baybars invested in some forms of heavier armament. Close attention was paid to the development of siege weaponry, including sophisticated counter-weight catapults or 'trebuchets' – masterpieces of advanced military technology.

In 1265, the sultan turned the terrifying might of this Mamluk army against the fractured remnants of the crusader states. For the Christians of Outremer, themselves riven by factionalism, the results were calamitous. Baybars was able to move through the crusader states unhindered, crushing settlements and castles almost at will. No force, nor fortress, could stand before him.

In that first year, the mighty crusader fortifications at Arsuf and Caesarea were overrun and demolished. In 1268, Baybars marched into northern Syria, broke through Antioch's legendary battlements in a single day and then put thousands of its citizens to the sword. The ancient city was left in a state of ruin, one from which it would not recover for centuries. Even the mighty Krak des Chevaliers – perhaps the closest thing to an impregnable castle in the medieval world – fell before a Mamluk onslaught in 1271.

The ancient city was left in a state of ruin, from which it would not recover for centuries

Baybars' demolition of the crusader states was all the more remarkable given that the primary concern of his reign was not the waging of a holy war against the Christians, but preparing for another Mongol invasion. In many ways, the destruction of the crusader states became little more than a sideshow, as these two new superpowers – the Mamluks and the Mongols – fought for control of the near and Middle East. After Baybars' death in 1277, Outremer's inexorable obliteration continued, as the sultan's successors conquered Tripoli in 1289 and finally targeted Acre itself in 1291.

Baybars did not live to see this final triumph, but he was undoubtedly its chief architect. For the next six centuries, first under Mamluk and then Ottoman rule, the Holy Land remained in the hands of Islam. H

Thomas Asbridge is reader in medieval history at Queen Mary, University of London. His books include *The Crusades: The War for the Holy Land* (Simon & Schuster, 2010)

WAR OF THE WORLDS?

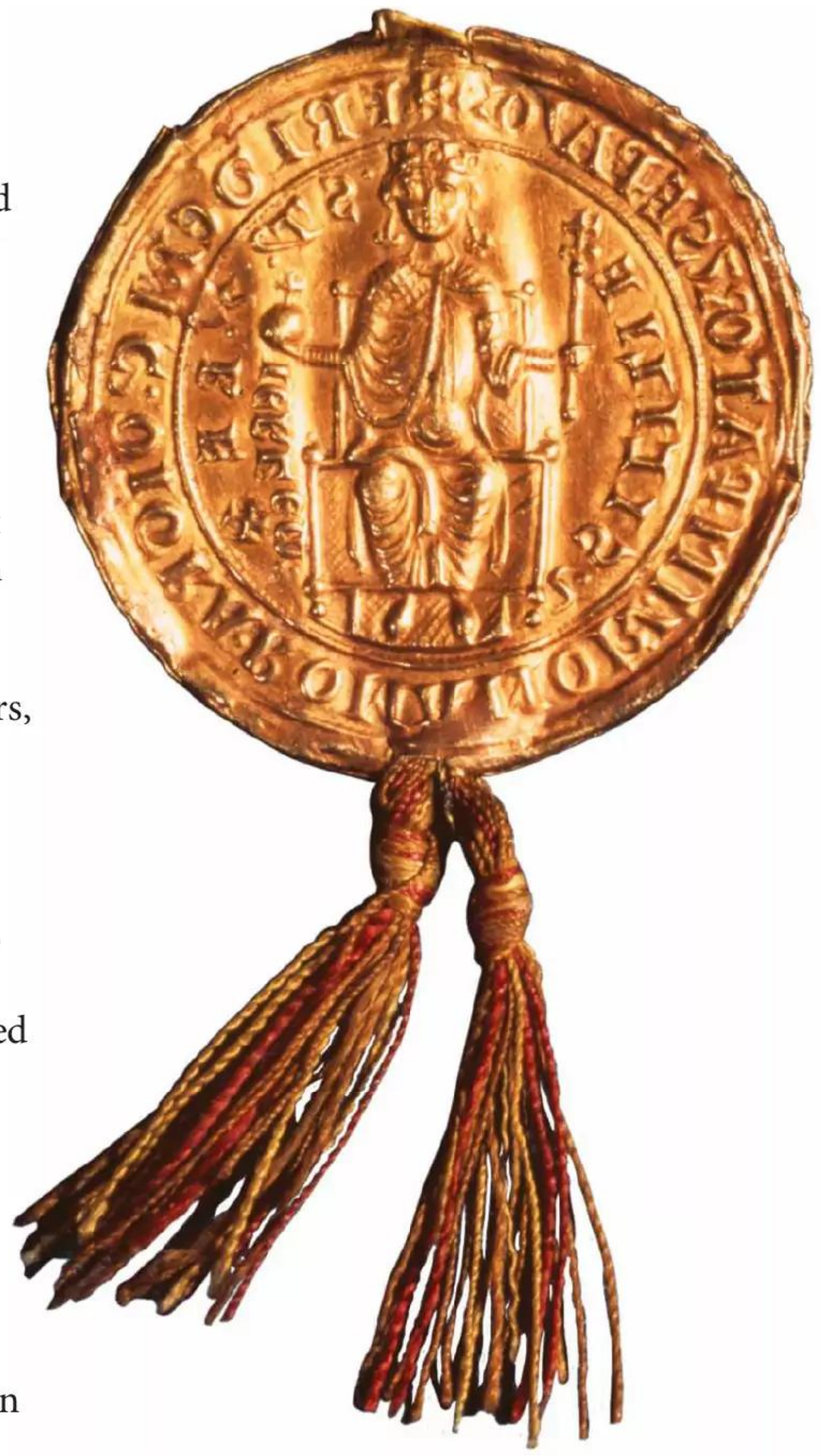
GETTY IMAGES

Modern scholars often characterise the crusades as a mighty ‘clash of civilisations’ between east and west. But to paint the era as a time of total war is to ignore the trade links, exchanges of ideas and mutual respect that also flourished, writes **Suleiman A Mourad**

Brothers in arms
The Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II reaches an accord with the Muslim sultan al-Kamil in 1229, which sees Jerusalem handed to the crusaders – just one instance of cooperation between east and west in the era

Lying in his own blood on the battlefield near Mansoura, his standard covering his grievously wounded body, Emir Fakhr al-Din left this world on 8 February 1250. He had gone out with a handful of his guards to assess the army of King Louis IX and devise a plan to defend Egypt from the onslaught of what became known as the Seventh Crusade. This was a sad ending for someone who had been at the centre of political life for more than 30 years, and only a few months earlier had become the de facto ruler of the Ayyubid sultanate.

Fakhr al-Din hailed from a prestigious scholarly family who only two generations previously had moved from eastern Iran to Damascus. But it was luck, too, that positioned him for greatness. His mother nursed the future Ayyubid sultan al-Kamil, which strengthened the bond between the two families. So when al-Kamil became sovereign in 1218, Fakhr al-Din was his closest confidant, and never left his side except on important missions. One of these missions was an embassy to Sicily to meet Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen and negotiate an alliance between the two powers. Fakhr al-Din achieved much more than that. In the short time he stayed in Palermo, he profoundly impressed the emperor. The two conversed about poetry, science and falconry (see box on page 106), and before sailing back to Egypt, Frederick held a ceremony to knight his Muslim friend. Since then, Fakhr al-Din had carried the insignia of Frederick as Holy Roman Emperor on his staff – the same standard that wrapped his body in Mansoura.



Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II's golden *bulla*, or seal. Frederick II sustained scholarly cooperation with the Ayyubid dynasty for several years

Two agendas

The story of Fakhr al-Din sums up the history of Muslim-crusader interactions during the period. There were times for war – a lot of it. There were other times for diplomacy, alliances, friendships, commerce and the exchange of science and knowledge. There were also times when the two – war and peace – coincided. This complex legacy of the crusader period in the Middle East is little known. The reason is very simple: modern scholars have generally been attracted to studying the violence of the period – so much so that it has blurred our ability to see the other side. This was no honest mishap. We have inadvertently allowed modern agendas – one Eurocentric, the other Islamocentric – to determine the way we have reconstructed crusader history.

Indeed, since the 18th century, the Eurocentric and Islamocentric agendas have imposed themselves on the historiography of the crusades. They have shaped its narrative as a clash of civilisations. In the process, all the evidence to the contrary has been silenced or ignored; if acknowledged at all, it has only been seen as inconsequential marginalia.

When crusader history is treated as 'European' history, it becomes easy to think of it as a past extension of modern Europe, tied to the national narratives of modern European countries (Italy, France and Germany, to name a few – none of which existed as such in the Middle Ages). This also tempts scholars and readers to reassess and evaluate the crusades in terms of the values they personally cherish. The Eurocentric agenda led some to imagine the crusaders as predecessors of those later colonialists whose duty was to 'civilise' the world – as in the French scholar Joseph-François Michaud's 1840 *Histoire des croisades* ('The History of the Crusades'), a book that still exerts tremendous impact in Europe in general, and France in particular. Other Europeans, influenced by the ideals of the Enlightenment or enraptured by oriental romanticism, were critical of the crusades and treated them as an ugly mix of religious fanaticism and savagery – the Europe they wanted condemned. Two great examples of this trend are Sir Walter Scott's 1825 novel *The Talisman* and the 1935 movie *The Crusades* by the great American film-maker Cecil B DeMille.

The Eurocentric reading of crusader history also gave medieval European sources a place of dominance in writing the modern narrative of the crusades. As such, non-European medieval sources, which document the experiences of Greek-Byzantines, Armenians, Muslims and Arab-Christians, are read according to the European sources. I do not mean to say that these other sources furnish a more accurate history, but they are indispensable for a proper understanding of the complexity of crusader history, and must be given a central place in the rewriting of the narrative, rather than a secondary role.

Similarly, the Islamocentric reading of crusader history was shaped during the years of colonial subjugation of most Muslim-inhabited lands, starting in the 19th century. Modern Muslim scholars have both imagined and used the crusades as a predecessor of European colonialism; they forewarn of the colonialists' evil schemes and augur that they will assuredly meet the same humiliating fate as their medieval ancestors. A great example of this trend is found in the very popular survey *Al-Haraka Al-Salibiyya* ('The Crusader Movement') by the Egyptian Said Ashour,

We have inadvertently allowed modern agendas to determine the way we have reconstructed crusader history

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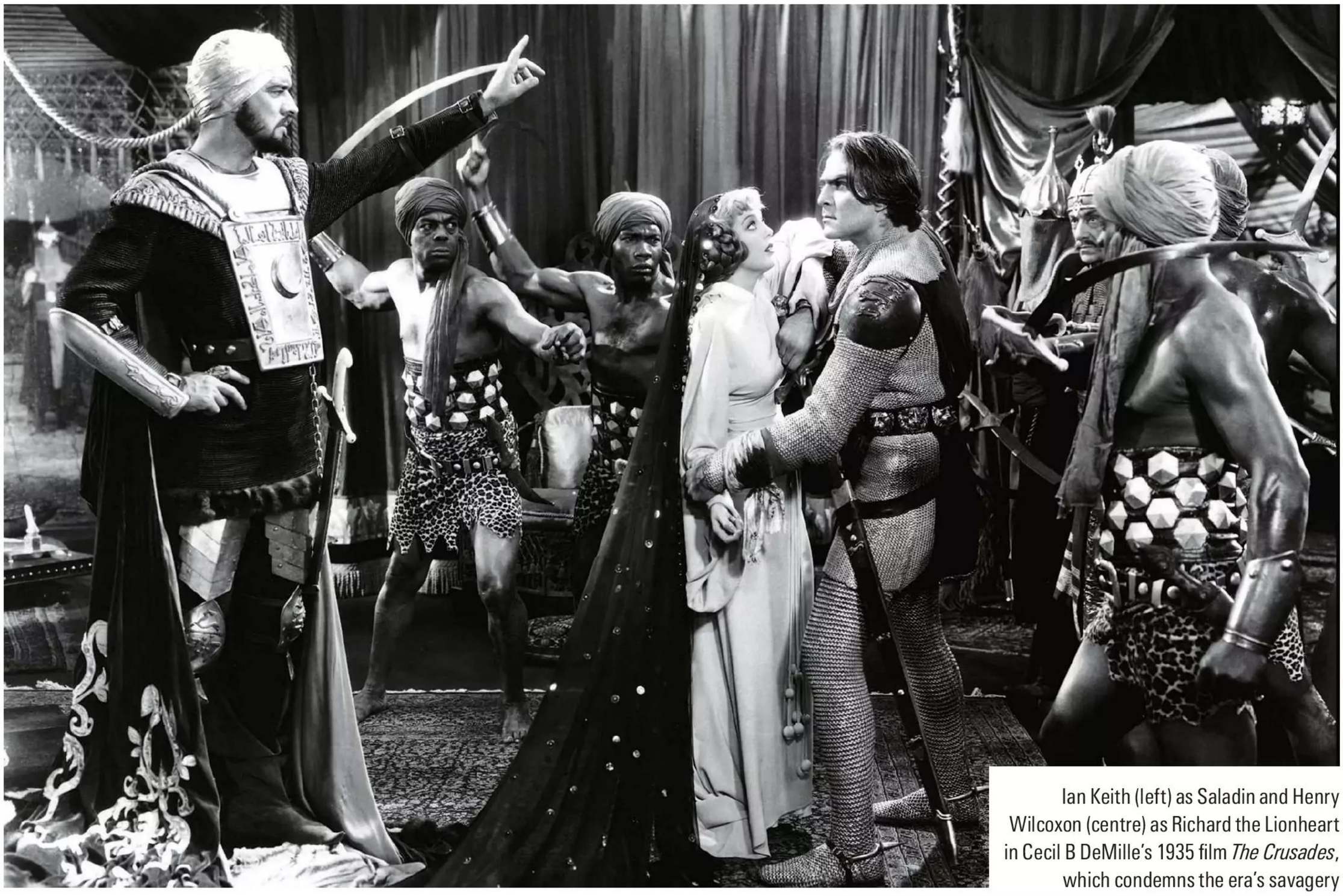


Ian Keith (left) as Saladin and Henry Wilcoxon (centre) as Richard the Lionheart in Cecil B DeMille's 1935 film *The Crusades*, which condemns the era's savagery

A Muslim sultan thought to be Baybars, centre. Islamocentric scholars celebrate his victories but fail to mention his friendly interactions with crusaders

ALAMY

which was first published in 1982. These Islamocentric readings selectively employ Arab sources from the period, and champion specific figures – such as Saladin and Baybars – by exaggerating their anti-crusader accomplishments, and ignoring their friendly interactions with certain groups among the crusaders.

In more recent decades, the Eurocentric reading has been nuanced but never completely challenged, while the Islamocentric reading has not changed at all, thanks to the political situation in the Muslim world. My point in raising these issues is that crusader scholarship – like many other areas in academia – has failed to recognise its subjectivity, and that the ways we conceive the past are largely determined by the intellectual moods and locations of the readers of history.

"Christian pigs and filth"

The crusades was not a clash of civilisations. Only a fool would say that the Muslims and crusaders loved each other, but this does not justify going to the other extreme – for the sources (especially the Islamic ones) draw a mosaic picture of the period, featuring wars and alliances, boycott and exchange, hatred and amicability and myriad shades in between. In other words, there were never two camps. There were, however, many actors, with different agendas and varying schemes to achieve them.

The Islamic sources draw a mosaic of war and alliance, boycott and trade, hatred and amicability and myriad shades in between

An Islamic astrolabe from Zaragoza, dated to c1079. Muslim scholars were consulted by their Christian peers on matters of astronomy

GETTY IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN

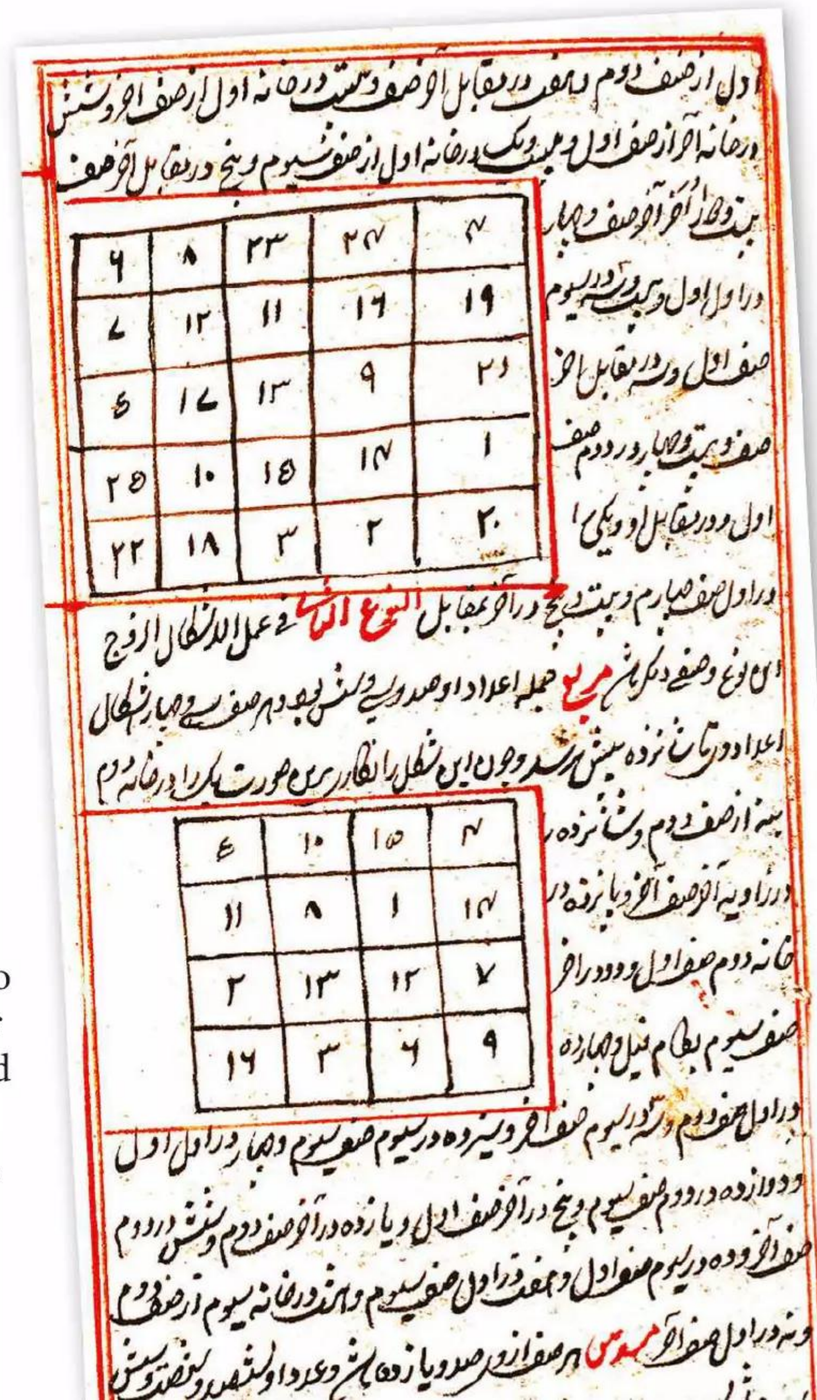
A window into this complex reality is provided in *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*. A Muslim secretary from medieval Iberia (Spain), Ibn Jubayr, who died in 1217, sojourned in the eastern Mediterranean and saw things not always palatable to his taste. One observation he made was that, despite occasional wars between the Muslims and crusaders, merchants and commerce continued to move freely between the two realms as if everything was normal. For him, this was a sign of the corruption of rulers on both sides. In one instance, in the summer of 1184, he crossed the plain from the Sea of Galilee to Acre, where he discovered countless farming villages inhabited by Muslims who seemed to him to live in complete harmony with the crusaders. What irritated Ibn Jubayr the most was not only that the crusaders were not harming the Muslims; he also bemoaned the fact that these Muslims did not seem bothered by their mingling with – to use his words – "Christian pigs and filth". As such, in Ibn Jubayr's eyes, these Muslims could not have been good Muslims.

The complexity of the crusader period is apparent in the contemporary Muslim sources. For instance, the physician and chronicler Ibn Abi Usaibia (d1270) recounts

A jeweller, herbalist, butcher and baker in a 13th-century Turkish manuscript. Despite the wars, commerce moved freely between the two realms

the story of an envoy from Emperor Frederick II arriving sometime in the 1220s at the court of the Muslim ruler of Mosul bearing a list of questions on astronomy for a specific scholar, Kamal al-Din Ibn Yunus. The emperor knew from his court philosopher, Theodore of Antioch, that only Ibn Yunus could solve them. Ibn Yunus obliged and provided the answers to the envoy, who carried them back to Sicily. On a different occasion, another envoy was sent to Cairo to seek answers for mathematical problems, and Sultan al-Kamil instructed his court's mathematicians to write down their solution and send them back to Frederick.

The scholarly cooperation between Frederick II and the Ayyubids was sustained for several years. Al-Kamil's son, Sultan al-Salih Ayyub, delegated the logician and jurist Siraj al-Din al-Urmawi to the court of Frederick in Palermo, and while there al-Urmawi authored a book on logic for the emperor. A few years after that, in 1261, the jurist and logician Ibn Wasil travelled to Apulia in southern Italy on an embassy from the Mamluk sultan Baybars to Frederick's son King Manfred. He stayed for two years in Manfred's court in Barletta, and like al-Urmawi before him, Ibn Wasil wrote a book on logic that he dedicated to his host, which he titled *The Imperial Treatise*.



Charts from a Persian edition of the 12th-century Arabic work *The Wonders of Creation*. Muslim scholars refined older scientific ideas

There is also the example of the scholar al-Harawi, who, almost a century before, took up residency in Jerusalem for several weeks in 1173, during which time he frequently visited and prayed in the Islamic shrine known as the Dome of the Rock. The crusaders had transformed the building into a church, which they called 'Templum Domini', or the Temple of the Lord. Al-Harawi, who was fanatical about alchemy, was a regular feature in the royal court of Jerusalem's King Amalric. More importantly, in his *A Lonely Wayfarer's Guide to Pilgrimage*, al-Harawi criticised and deconstructed many of the popular customs of making pilgrimage to particular shrines and religious sanctuaries in Palestine and the surrounding regions as reflective of popular Muslim superstitions and false associations. Yet his observations attest to numerous cases of Muslims, Christians and Jews converging on the same spots to worship. Some of these locations were under crusader rule, and others where under Muslim rule.

This complex reality of Muslim-crusader interaction is not properly studied, and though it is known to some modern scholars, in general it is not taken seriously. The main reason for this is the modern fascination with the

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Four medieval innovations that arose through collaboration between crusaders and their Muslim counterparts

The Islamic world produced the first specially trained pharmacists, and attracted Christian scholars hoping to improve the west's understanding of medicine

MEDICINE

In the 1110s and 1120s, Stephen of Pisa journeyed to Antioch in search of Arabic knowledge, specifically philosophy. His desire for learning the superior sciences of the Muslims led him into other fields, including medicine and astronomy. He copied some books and acquired others. First in Antioch, and then in Pisa, he led a team, including a Muslim convert to Christianity, to translate these works into Latin for European scholars. It is thanks to the list Stephen composed as a result of his translation of Ali ibn al-Abbas's *The Complete Book on the Craft of Medicine* that many Arabic medical names entered the medieval vocabulary in Europe. Some are still in use today.

A c12th-century Fatimid ceramic bowl featuring a mounted falconer. Emperor Frederick II drew on Arabic works when writing his treatise on falconry

FALCONRY

A great admirer of falconry, Emperor Frederick II developed such a passion for the subject that he once decided to author a book on the subject. He first asked some scholars in his court to translate for him the authoritative Arabic book on falconry, *Kitab al-Mutawakkili*, attributed to the ninth-century Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil, and other Arabic books as well. They showed Frederick how to study falconry as a science, based on observations and tests. Together, they inspired Frederick's *De arte venandi cum avibus* ('On the Art of Hunting With Birds'), which scholars consider the first 'scientific' study on birds of prey.

study of violence and warfare during the crusader era. If we were to invest serious attention into the more peaceful aspects of Muslim-crusader interactions, the entire field of crusader historiography would be transformed. Again, it must be made clear that I am not talking about a *convivencia* – the disputed 'golden age' of tolerance that supposedly existed between faith groups in medieval Andalusia – but instead a complex web of interactions between crusaders and Muslims that cannot and must not be reduced to one thing only: violence.

An avenue for ideas

In the history of the transmission of knowledge between the Islamic civilisation, which featured a burgeoning scientific culture, and medieval Europe, two main avenues have been identified. This Islamic civilisation was shaped by Muslims, Christians, Jews and others, who improved and corrected many of the older sciences of the Hellenic, near eastern, Persian and South Asian civilisations in mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, optics, logic and theology. One avenue for the flow of ideas was through medieval Spain, which has received most of the modern scholarly attention. The other is via the Byzantine empire. There is also Sicily, but attention to this possibility has largely been limited to the reign of Frederick. Similarly, direct interactions during the crusader period between Muslims and Christians has not yet received a sufficient level of attention, although a few scholars, notably Charles Burnett, have made a case for it.

One location that witnessed the direct exchange of knowledge was crusader Antioch. Pisans, in particular, benefited from the fact that they had developed a commercial base in the city, picking up a lot of Arabic scientific books which they brought home and translated into Latin. It was in Antioch in the 1120s that Stephen of Pisa (see box above) came across Ali ibn al-Abbas al-Majusi's 10th-century *Kitab al-Malaki* ('The Complete Book on the Craft of Medicine') and brought it home to Italy. There he translated it into Latin, and for several centuries the volume became a must-read on the practice and theory of the medical profession. Also, more complete manuscripts of Ptolemy's *Almagest*, the infamous mathematical-astronomical masterpiece, were brought

ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN

ARCHITECTURE

When Saladin took control of Egypt and ended the reign of the Fatimids in the 1170s, he constructed his palace on a promontory beneath the Muqattam hills in medieval Cairo, away from the alien Shia and Christian communities. Many of the artisans who worked there were captive crusaders, and employed techniques unknown to the Muslims and others in the Middle East. Crusader architecture was much stronger and more durable, and allowed for bigger structures than those the locals were used to. The Muslims gradually learned these techniques of building and fortification by observing and studying the crusader castles that were spread all over the eastern Mediterranean.

A keystone from the 12th/13th-century Montfort Castle in Israel. Muslims learned the techniques of fortification by studying crusader strongholds

A flock of sheep pictured in a 14th-century handbook of health. A dispute regarding ovine ownership was the subject of a pioneering lawsuit brought about by Usama Ibn Munqidh

JUSTICE

During one of his many visits to crusader Acre, Usama Ibn Munqidh, a nobleman who fought many battles against the Christians, brought a case against the Lord of Banias for seizing a flock of sheep belonging to him. Usama presented his grievance there to the King of Jerusalem, who convened a jury of knights to adjudicate the case. After hearing both sides, the jury retreated to a room to deliberate, and came back to deliver a verdict in favour of Usama. The king had no choice but to accept their verdict. This was how the Muslims came to know about jury justice.

from Antioch and retranslated into Latin, infusing new energy into both areas of study.

Complex relations

In the winter of 2016, the Al Jazeera network aired the first episode of its documentary on the crusades, which featured a lineup of notable scholars. The narrator opened the episode with these words: "In the history of conflict between east and west, the mightiest battle between Christianity and Islam. A holy war in the name of religion. For the first time: the story of the crusades from an Arab perspective."

It is clear that this new, 'first time' story is the same old yarn about violence that has been told and retold since the 18th century. But medieval sources, especially the Muslim chronicles, tell us a different story. Few today will listen to it, however, because the one that feeds the clash of civilisation discourse is more captivating, more exploitable.

The period was, for some, an opportunity to kill, loot and amass riches and fame. For others, it was a time for alliance and exchange

The period was, for some, an opportunity to kill, loot and amass riches and fame. There were others who saw it as an occasion for commerce, alliances or the exchange of knowledge. There were some who pursued both. This is crusader history as it was, and it is this complexity that we as historians ought to present. We might not be able to free ourselves of our biases, but we should at least be beholden to the intricacy of history. H

Suleiman A Mourad is professor of religion and Middle East studies at Smith College, Massachusetts. His books include *The Mosaic of Islam* (Verso, 2016) and *Ibn 'Asakir of Damascus* (Oneworld Academic, 2021).

ALAMY

Top 10 crusading landmarks

From Christ's final resting place to the spiritual centre of Byzantium, via a mountaintop Cathar stronghold and Andalusia's extraordinary Alhambra, **Jonathan Phillips** takes us on a tour of the crucial sites in crusader history

1 The Church of the Holy Sepulchre Jerusalem

The crusaders' ultimate goal

In 1095, Pope Urban II urged the knights of western Europe to liberate Jerusalem from the Muslims, saying: "May you be especially moved by the Holy Sepulchre of Our Lord, which is in the hands of unclean races." In launching the First Crusade, Urban initiated a movement that came to have an extraordinary durability and range, but in 1095 he was especially focused on Christendom's most sacred site: the tomb in which Jesus's body was believed to have been placed after the crucifixion. Within decades of conquering Jerusalem in 1099, the crusaders built much of the church we see today, drawing together the Sepulchre, Calvary (the site of the crucifixion) and other shrines. When Saladin captured Jerusalem in 1187, he respected the integrity of the Holy Sepulchre, although the tombs of the crusader kings were smashed by Turkic invaders in 1244. While many other churches are larger or more beautiful, none can match the spiritual intensity of the Holy Sepulchre. Under a complex and sometimes fractious arrangement, monks from the Greek Orthodox, Armenian, Catholic, Coptic, Ethiopian and Syriac churches perform their liturgical observances as pilgrims and tourists continue to flood in.

ALAMY

2 The Haram al-Sharif Jerusalem

Saladin's great rallying point for the jihad against the crusaders

The Haram al-Sharif ('Noble Sanctuary') in Jerusalem, also known as Temple Mount, is the third most important site in Islam after Mecca and Medina. It's the place where the Prophet arrived in the Holy City and then ascended to heaven during the *Isra*, his night journey from Mecca. In the late seventh century, the Umayyads built a stunning shrine called the Dome of the Rock, a blend of beautiful mosaics and multicoloured tiles, topped off by a famous golden centrepiece. Also on the Haram al-Sharif stands al-Aqsa Mosque, constructed originally by Caliph Umar when he took the city in 638 – although what we see today dates from later, with some of the facade constructed by the Knights Templar. During the 12th century, the Muslim jihad against the crusaders gathered momentum, and the desire to recover these sites for Islam – and defeat the crusader states – became a major source of motivation. Once Saladin took Jerusalem in 1187, he restored both buildings and added inscriptions to celebrate his personal religious commitment and the victory of his faith.

GETTY IMAGES

3 Acre Israel

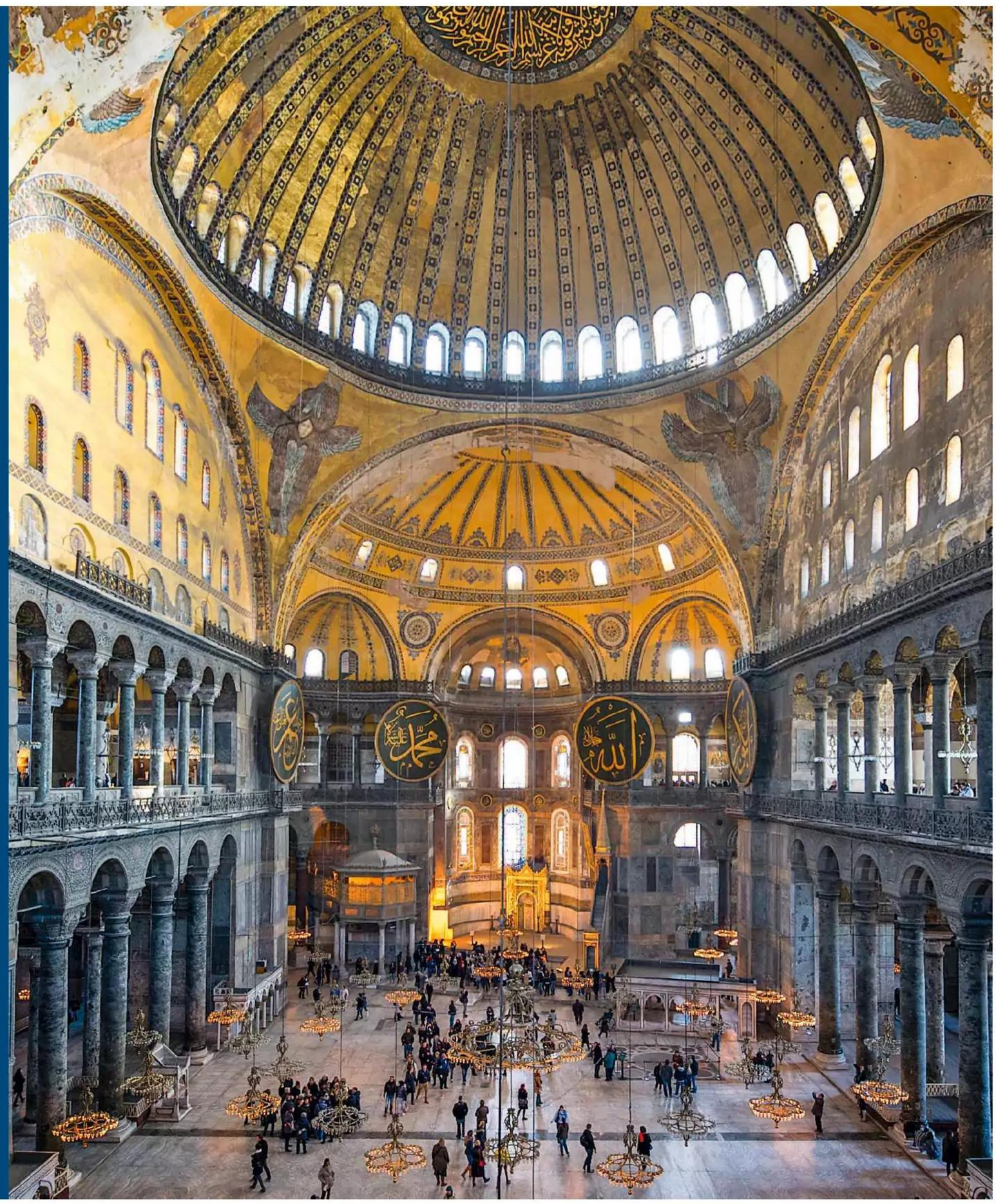
The lifeline of the crusader states

As the major port of the crusader states, Acre was a crucial lifeline to western Europe, with the ships of Genoa, Pisa and Venice bringing a vast influx of trade and pilgrims to the Holy Land. Europeans mixed with merchants from Alexandria, Damascus and Constantinople, and life in the city was a powerful sensory experience: one visitor wrote that "its streets are choked by the press of men, so that it is hard to put foot to ground… it stinks and is filthy, being full of refuse and excrement". During an epic siege from August 1189 to July 1191, King Guy of Jerusalem tried to wrest it from Saladin, before the arrival of Richard the Lionheart brought victory to the Christians. Acre became the capital of the kingdom of Jerusalem until its fall to the Mamluks in 1291. Today, the city gives a tremendous sense of the medieval age – especially the huge compound of the Knights Hospitaller, expertly excavated and restored by Israeli archaeologists.

4 Hagia Sophia Istanbul

Byzantium's spiritual heart, torn out by the Fourth Crusade

At the heart of 'the queen of cities', as the Byzantines described Constantinople, stands the Hagia Sophia ('Church of Holy Wisdom'). Inaugurated in 537 and for centuries the biggest building in Christendom, it dazzled visitors with its sumptuous mosaic and marble walls and vast collections of holy treasures. But a toxic blend of Byzantine political rivalry and misjudgments by the French and Venetian leaders of the Fourth Crusade led to the disastrous Sack of Constantinople in 1204, during which pack animals loaded with booty were said to have fouled the floors. Some of the plunder remains in St Mark's Basilica in Venice. Constantinople was recovered by the Greeks in 1261, but it fell to the Ottomans in 1453 and the Hagia Sophia became a mosque, with its mosaics damaged or covered. Ataturk turned the building into a museum in 1935 and even though President Erdogan restored it to a working mosque in 2020, its splendour also continues to astonish tourists.



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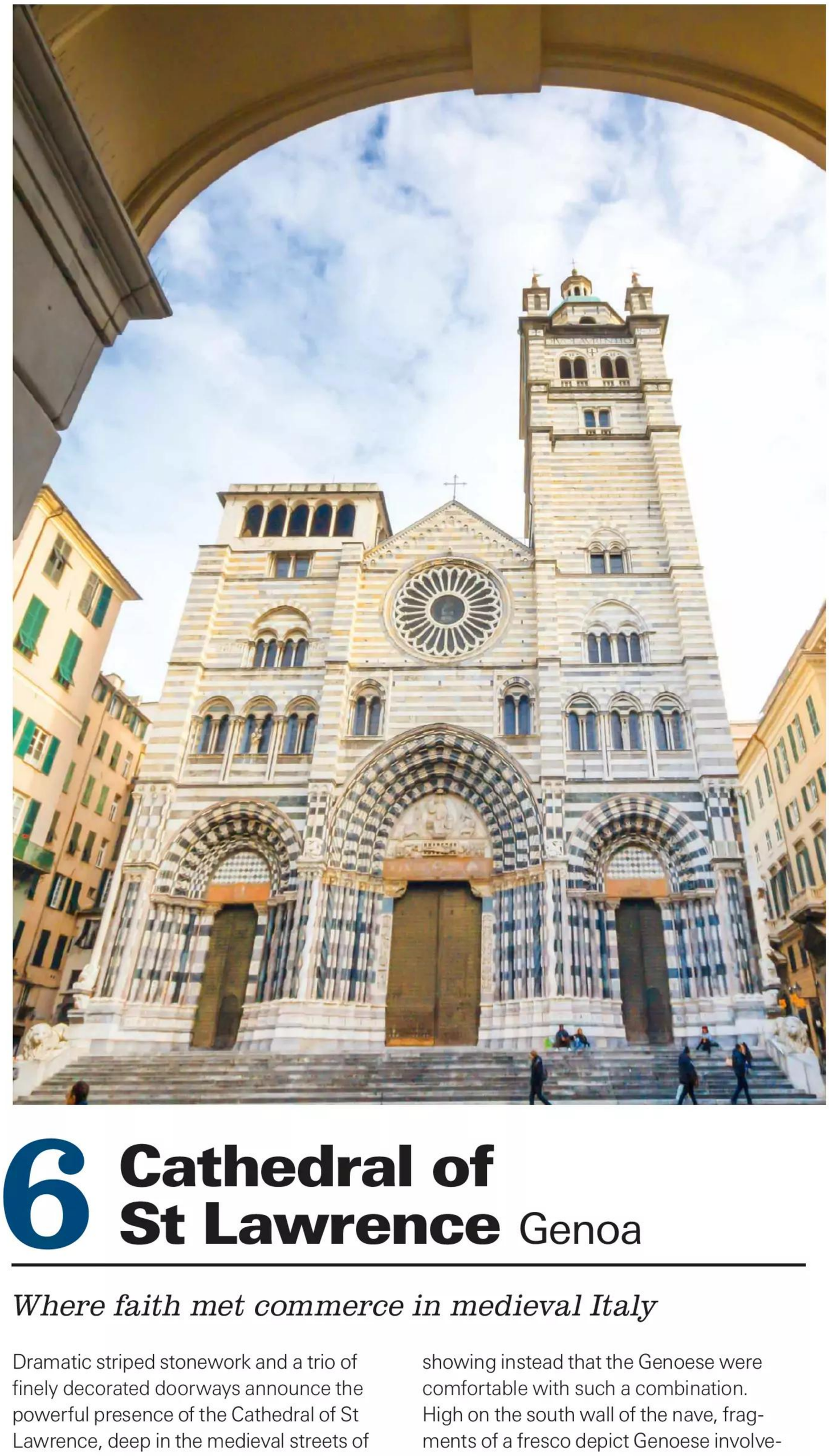
5 Malbork Castle Poland

Symbol of the Teutonic Knights' power in eastern Europe

The Teutonic Knights were originally founded at the siege of Acre during the Third Crusade, but this military order, closely modelled on the Knights Templar, came to be of far greater influence in north-eastern Europe than in the Holy Land. From the 1230s, the acquisition of territories in Prussia and Livonia, coupled with strong papal support, made it an enormously powerful and wealthy institution designed to wage a perpetual crusade, and drive the Christian faith deep into pagan lands. Founded in 1280, and from 1309 the seat of the order's grand master, the castle at Malbork – known as 'Marienburg' in German – acted as a symbol of the Teutonic Knights' strength, as well as a major administrative centre. A series of building programmes produced the magnificent refectory and a new chapel, along with later defences intended to resist cannon fire. Today located in Poland, this huge complex is striking for its brick construction, and reminds us of the geographical and ideological range of the crusading dream.

SHUTTERSTOCK/GETTY IMAGES



6 Cathedral of St Lawrence Genoa

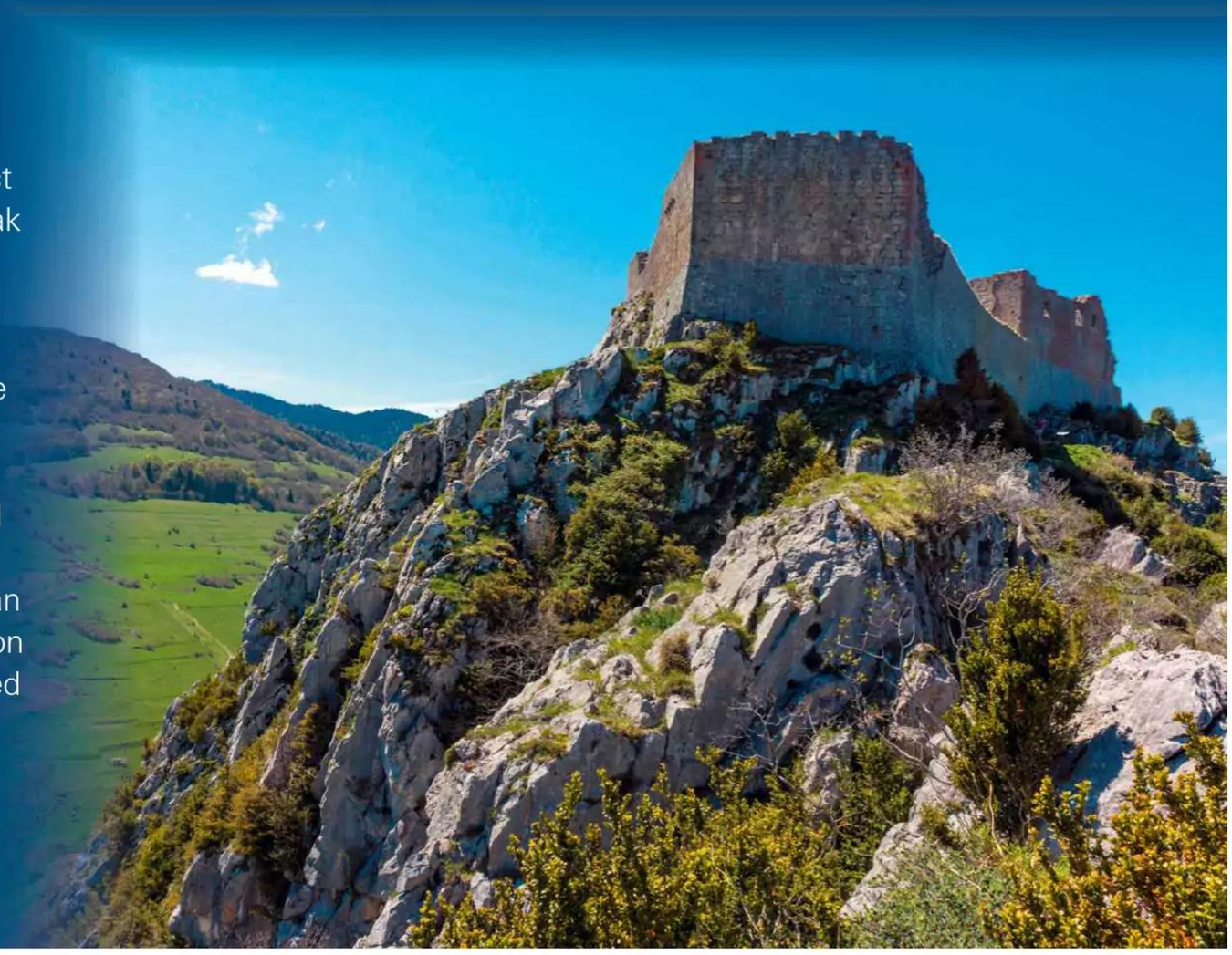
Where faith met commerce in medieval Italy

Dramatic striped stonework and a trio of finely decorated doorways announce the powerful presence of the Cathedral of St Lawrence, deep in the medieval streets of Genoa. Inside the church (an uneasy blend of medieval columns and baroque gold), the treasury houses a stunning, emerald-green glass bowl, believed by Genoese crusaders to have been used at the Last Supper.
This object represents the religiosity often seen as absent from Italian crusaders' determination to seek commercial gain, showing instead that the Genoese were comfortable with such a combination.
High on the south wall of the nave, fragments of a fresco depict Genoese involvement in the capture of Tortosa in Spain during the Second Crusade (1148), and a celebration of Genoa's achievements in the crusading cause. Down at the quayside, the infirmary and pilgrimage church of the Knights Hospitaller – San Giovanni di Prè – stands as another marker of Genoa's close links with the campaigns.

7 Montségur France

Remote Cathar sanctuary high in the Pyrenees

Around 220 Cathars were burned alive below the hilltop fort in 1244 after a desperate last stand against the crusaders



Perched at an altitude of 1,200 metres, this gravity-defying structure in the northern Pyrenees was the refuge of a large group of Cathars – believers in a dualist faith whose austere lifestyle proved highly attractive to many in south-western France. From 1208, Catharism posed such a serious a threat to the authority of the Catholic church that it became the target of crusades led by the uncompromising holy warrior Simon de Montfort. King Louis VIII of France died while returning from a crusading campaign to the south in 1226, and it took the pervasive effect of the Inquisition to break the Cathars' strength. By 1243, they had been forced back to Montségur, where more than 300 held out until March 1244. After the surrender, most refused to renounce their faith. They were confined to an enclosure that was set on fire; thus, as one satisfied churchman reported, "they were burned and passed on to the fire of Tartarus [hell]".

8 Valletta Malta

Splendid port city and stronghold of the Hospitallers against the Ottoman Turks

The Knights Hospitaller were, along with the Templars, warrior monks dedicated to the defence of the Holy Land. After the fall of Acre in 1291, they retreated to Cyprus, then to Rhodes, which was lost to the Ottomans in 1522, prompting their move to Malta. For centuries the Ottoman Turks represented the main threat to Christendom, and the Order of St John, by continuing their vocation of fighting for the faith, were an important bulwark against this. A massive Ottoman attempt to take the island failed in 1565, and in the aftermath the master decided to build a new city overlooking the Grand Harbour. Valletta was the first planned city in modern Europe, and its huge walls, orderly grid of streets, Grandmaster's Palace, fine churches and hospital buildings still remain today.

Its huge walls, ordered streets and fine churches still remain today

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

9 The Alhambra
Granada

Site of the final defeat of Muslim Spain

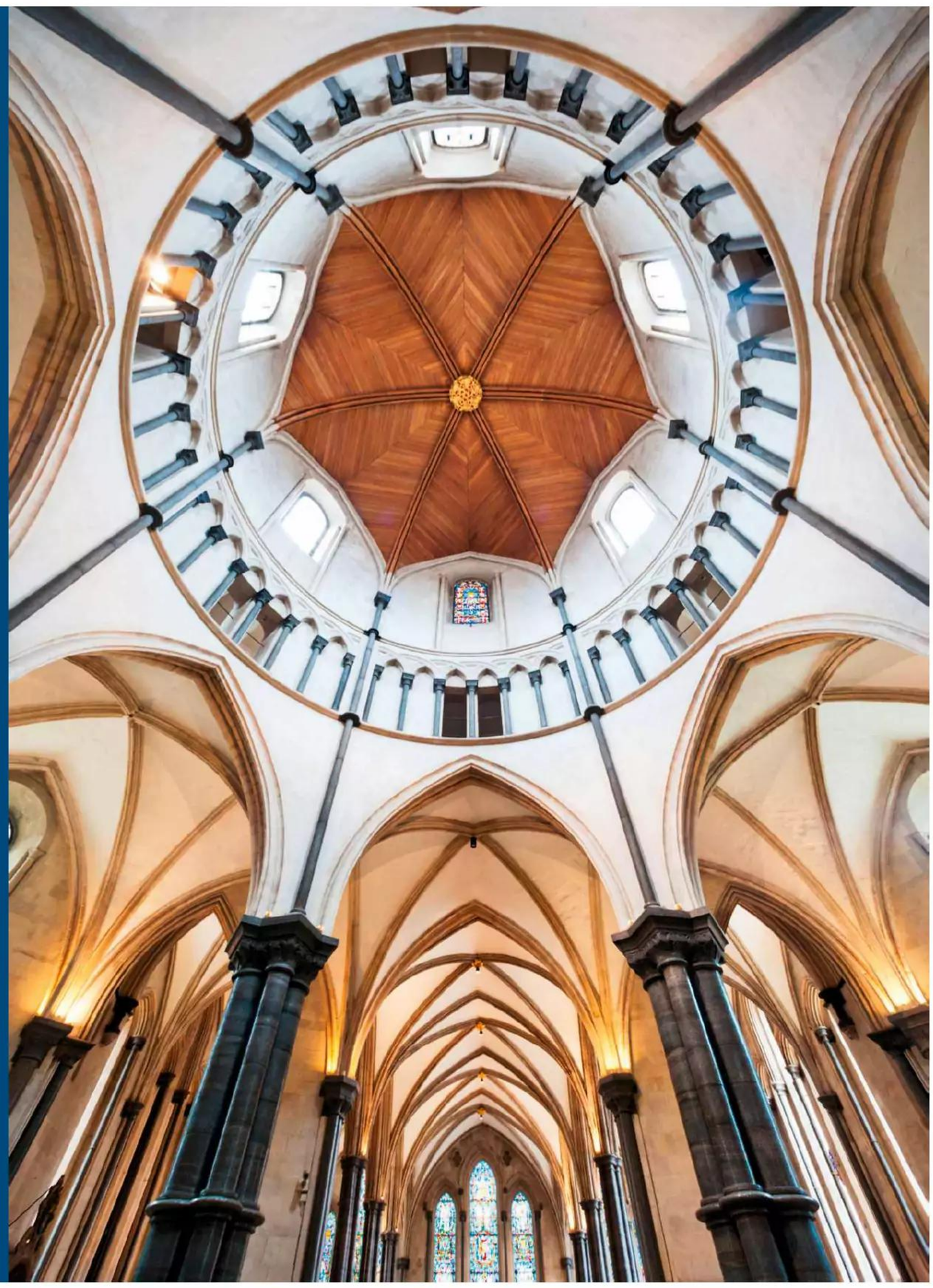
Granada is dominated by the Alhambra, a sprawling complex containing the sumptuous palaces built by the Nasrid dynasty in the 14th century. They represent the epitome of the sophistication of Islamic Spain, an era that began in 711 with an invasion from north Africa. By the late 11th century, Christian kingdoms had begun to push the Muslims southwards and then, from the early 12th century, the rallying call of the crusades, offering a spiritual reward for fighting, gave the conflict a far harsher edge. Victory at the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212 did much to advance the Christian position, yet the Muslims retained a foothold in the peninsula for almost another 300 years. By 1492, not even the formidable defences of the Alhambra could resist the well-organised armies of Ferdinand and Isabella, and the surrender of Emir Muhammad XII, also known as Boabdil, is a key watershed in history of the crusades.

10 The Temple Church London

Bringing Jerusalem to England

Deep in London's legal heartland of the Inns of Court stands arguably the most powerful reminder of the crusading age in Britain. The Temple Church is centred on a round structure consecrated in February 1185 by the Patriarch of Jerusalem. The shape was a deliberate copy of the Holy Sepulchre, and represented a wish to bring Jerusalem to the west and emphasise the Templars' role in preserving the holy of holies in Christian hands. Similar churches (not always associated with the Templars) are found in Cambridge and Northampton, in Pisa and Bologna in Italy, and in Segovia in Spain. In their heyday, the Templars attracted considerable support, and the Temple Church contains the effigies of nine medieval knights – an evocative sight as they lie under the rotunda – including, notably, William Marshal (died 1219), a major figure from the reigns of kings Henry II, Richard I, John and Henry III, who became a Templar on his deathbed. H

Jonathan Phillips is professor of crusading history at Royal Holloway, University of London, and the author of several books including *The Life and Legend of the Sultan Saladin* (Bodley Head, 2019)



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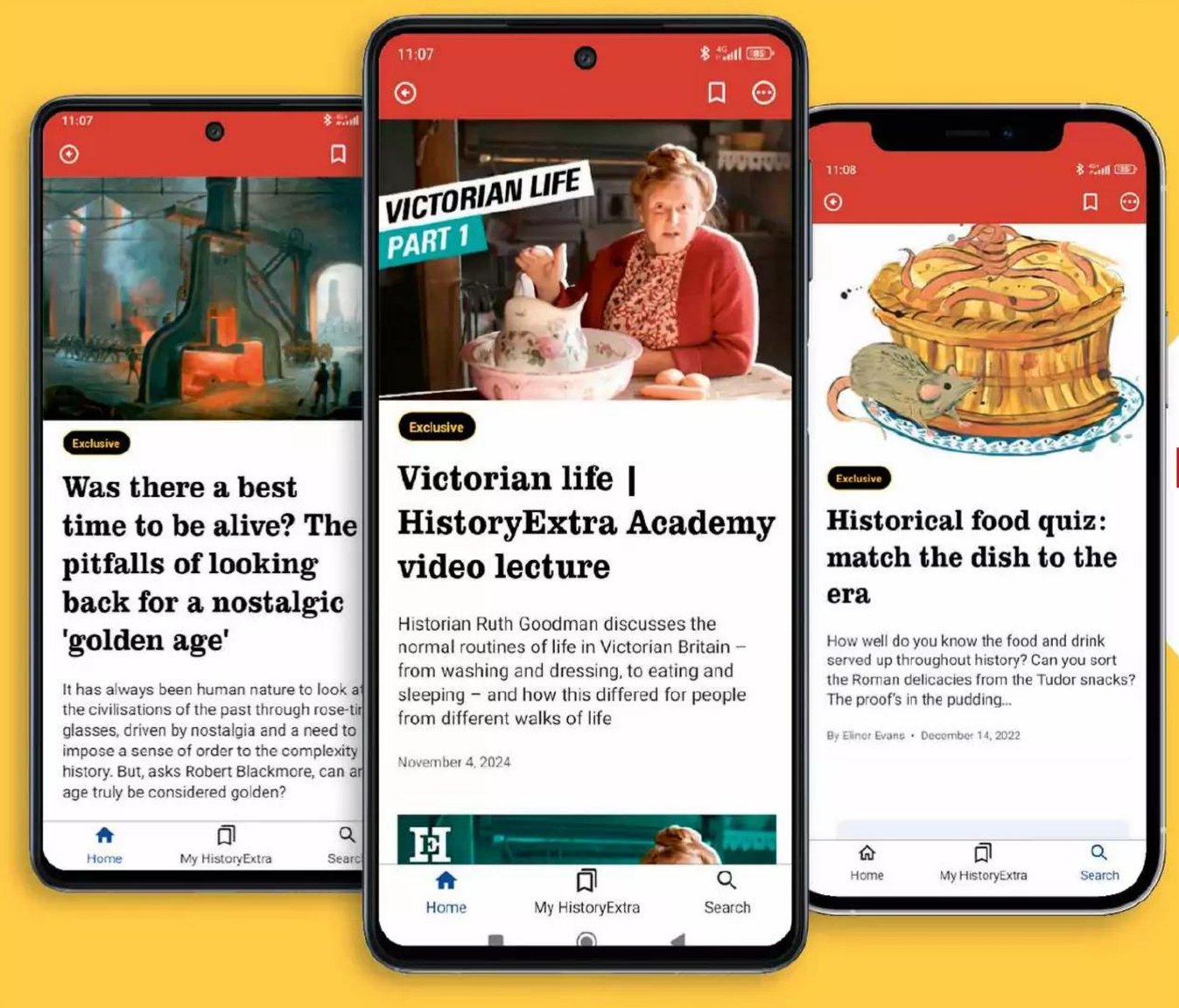

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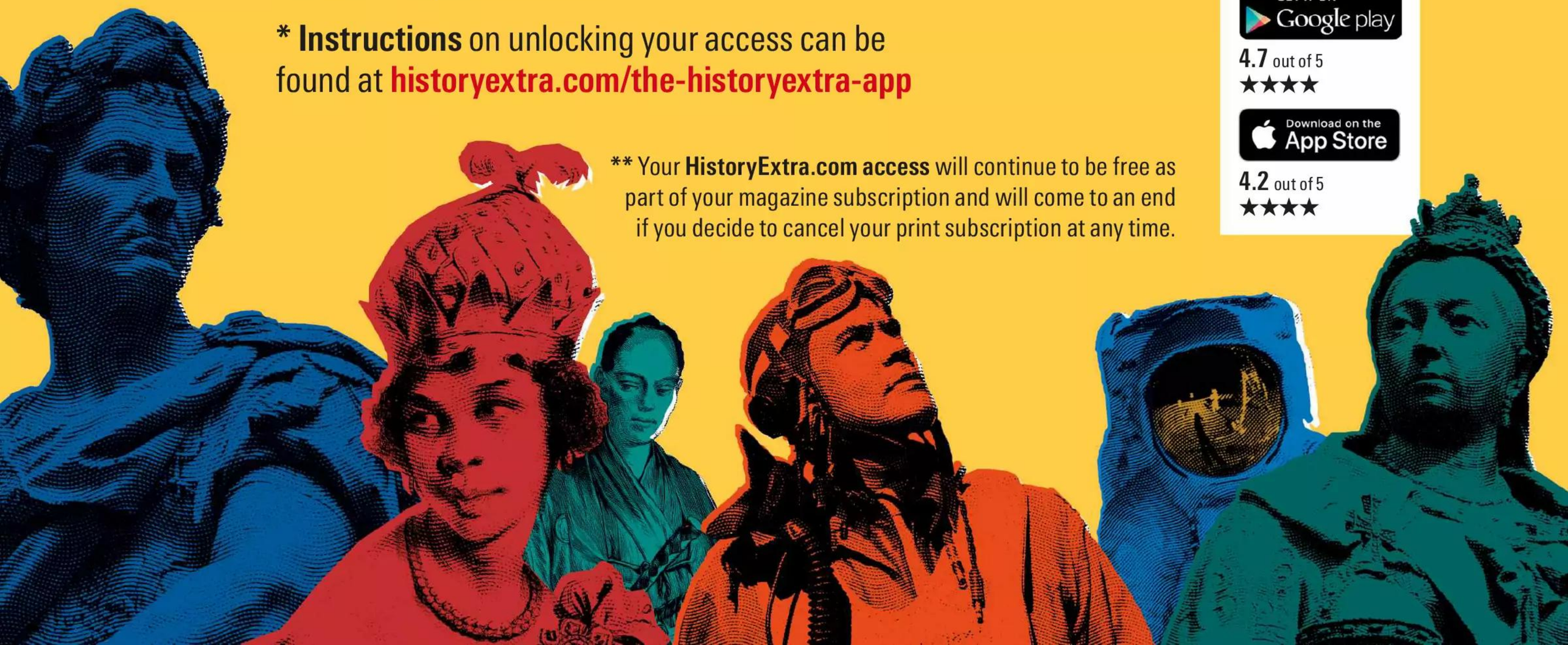

The era of crusades is known for war – but there are examples of cooperation. Here, the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II reaches an accord with the Muslim sultan al-Kamil in 1229, which sees Jerusalem handed to the crusaders – just one instance of collaboration between east and west in the era

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