

GURPS

Fourth Edition

CRUSADES™



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*This age is like
 no other . . .
 — St. Bernard
 of Clervaux*

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INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

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

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

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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

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

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by e-mail: info@sjgames.com. Resources include:

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Bibliographies. Many of our books have extensive bibliographies, and we're putting them online – with links to let you buy the resources that interest you! Go to each book's web page and look for the "Bibliography" link.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

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The Assassins

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Ismailis

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

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

– Peter Willey, *Eagle’s Nest*

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

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

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

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

THE TURKS

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

The Seldjucs

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

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

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

THE END COMES

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

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

A TIMELINE OF THE CRUSADES

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



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

CHAPTER FIVE

BIOGRAPHIES

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

RICHARD I

407 points

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Social Background

TL: 3 [0].

CF: Western [0].

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

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

– Richard I

Advantages

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

Disadvantages

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

Skills

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

* Includes +1 from Combat Reflexes.

† Includes +3 from Wealth.

‡ Includes +3 from Charisma..

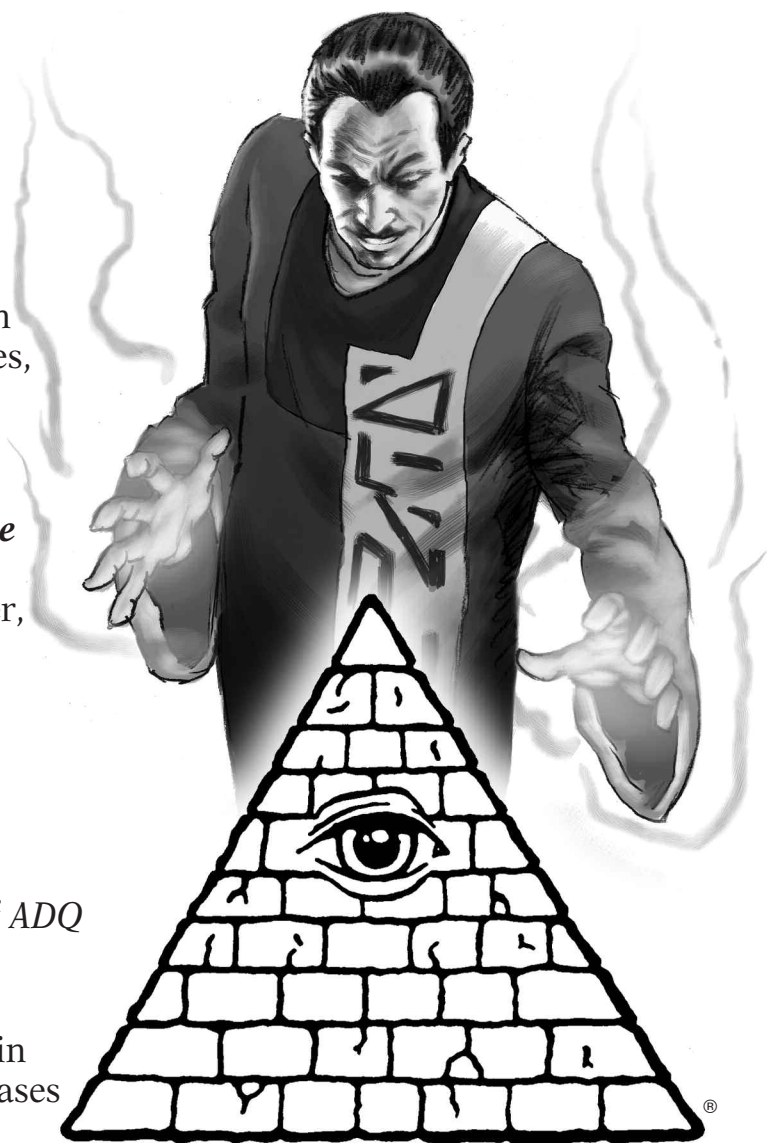
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