



saladin at acre

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The game **Acre: Richard Lionheart's Siege, 1191** (available from **Simpubs** in the Quad-pack **The Art of Siege**) is a recent attempt to simulate the important siege of Acre by the Crusaders in which they were opposed by the field army of the Muslim Sultan Saladin. It is one of the few examples in pre-technical military history where a siege was successfully carried out while the besiegers were themselves surrounded by enemy forces and historically includes a number of interesting features regarding medieval warfare.

The siege began when King Guy camped outside of Acre on the 28th of August 1189. In the following months large numbers of French, Italians, Danes, Normans, Sicilian, and Levantine Franks gathered to participate in the siege and the naval blockade of the city. Saladin arrived before Acre with some of his forces in September of 1189. A large number of battles took place between the opposing armies during the following year and a half, with some notable Muslim victories, culminating in the arrival of a large French army under King Phillip on 20 April 1191, and an English army under Richard I on 8 June. With these additional forces the balance of power shifted to the Crusaders, who, though unable to take the city by storm, received the sur-

render of the garrison only 34 days after Richard's arrival.

The game only attempts to recreate these last 34 days of the siege (although with some simple modification, scenarios covering other phases of the siege could also have been developed). Militarily, the fighting included catapult bombardments, mining, the storming of walls, towers and breaches, sorties by the garrison, attacks from Saladin's surrounding armies and sea battles.

In attempting to accurately simulate the siege Acre must necessarily reconstruct the organisation, troop types and numbers, and weaponry of the opposing forces. A wargame will be a "simulation" of history only to the degree that the rules and structure of the game accurately reflect the historical capabilities and difficulties of the opposing armies. Unfortunately, **Acre** fails to adequately recreate the military system of Saladin's armies in nearly all aspects. The following will be a comparison between the historic reality of Saladin's military forces with the way it is portrayed in the rules and commentaries of **Acre**. In doing so only studies and translations in English will be used (the one exception being a French article), all of

which could have been incorporated in the design of Acre.

Organisation

The first problem area in the game is in the purported organisation given for the Muslim armies. According to the rulebook "The basic Moslem infantry unit was the faylag, a division of about 5000 men." (p. 14 col. 2) The first point that should be made is that nearly all of Saladin's troops were mounted (more on this later). The use of the term "faylag" as referring to the basic Muslim organisational unit also presents a number of difficulties. I assume it refers to the Arabic word "faylaq" which indeed was "a body of 5000 armed men." (Scanlon p. 124) However, it was not the basic organisational unit of Saladin's army as the rulebook suggests. Indeed, I have never seen the term used in relation to Islamic armies of any period by any Arabic historian, except in one war poem by al-Mutanabi, praising Sayf ad-Dawla (reseat at Aleppo 944-967). I also searched two major dictionaries of Medieval Arabic, but was unable to find the term listed in either. "Faylaq" would seem to be an Arabic transliteration of the Greek word 'Phalanx', and could well be how the Arabs referred to byzantine infantry formations, but I am at a loss to discover its fundamental significance in relation to Islamic warfare.

In reality, the basic unit of organisation for Saladin's army was the 'Tulb' (plural: Atlab) (Gibb p. 76-77, Humphreys p. 79-80 where he calls the Tulb 'the most important parade and field unit'). According to al-Maqrizi (an Arab historian, quoted in Gibb, p. 76) the Tulb had "a number of horsemen ranging from 200 to 100 or 70." This is nothing like the 5000 men of the supposed faylag, and note that they were all cavalry. In 1181 the entire Egyptian army was composed of 111 Tulbs with 8640 men, excluding Arab irregulars, who numbered an additional 1300 horsemen, and a few fatimid infantry (Gibb p. 76-7) who would have most likely been phased out by the siege of Acre in 1191. Having the units of the game structured around the large faylags misrepresents the basic tendency of Saladin's forces to be in small, mobile, independent tactical units which were generally organised into larger units either according to geographical location, or by need in each battle.

Geography and Troop Numbers

The geographical origins and numbers of the various units of Saladin's armies are also presented incorrectly in the game. Before describing specifically the geographical locations given to the Muslim units in the game, it would be useful to briefly outline the numerical organisation and geographical origins of Saladin's armies as reconstructed by two of the leading historians for Muslim armies of this period, H.A.R. Gibb, and Stephen Humphreys. Both of these scholars have done detailed studies of many of the available Arabic and Latin sources, and although they differ in some particulars, they are in general agreement on most issues.

Saladin himself commanded the troops from Egypt, which was the power base for his empire. The Egyptian army consisted of about 8000 askaris (armoured horse archers — see below), and the 1000 elite Halqa Guards, totalling 9,000 armoured mounted archers. Syria was divided into a number of regions, each with a separate governor and army. Damascus and Aleppo, the two major cities of Syria, along with their dependent cities, each fielded armies of 3000 askaris each. Homs and Hama mobilised an additional 1000 askaris each, bringing the Syrian total to a further 8000 askaris. Northern Iraq, known to the Muslims as al-Jazira, also had a force of some 8000 askaris, divided as follows: Mosul, the capital of the region, and its dependent cities had about 4000 askaris, with the rest of the cities of the area such as Harran, Sinjar, Hsin Kaifa Mardin, etc., together fielding another 4000. Another possible source of troops for Saladin's armies which is not discussed by either Gibb or Humphreys would be Saladin's dominions on the West coast of Arabia and Barqa (Cyrenica) in modern Libya. Although I have been unable to discover any exact data for troop strength from these regions, I would estimate that neither would be capable of fielding more than 1000 askaris. In reality it would seem that most of the troops of Barqa remained there as border guards (at least I have been unable to confirm any contingents from that region in action against the Crusaders). There

was a contingent from Mecca of unknown strength fighting with Saladin during his campaign of 1188. This would give a total force of some 27,000 regular askaris (excluding auxiliaries) as Saladin's total available force.

In actual practice, however, only about half of the available askaris were ever mobilised for foreign campaigns from any province at one time (Gibb p. 78). The rest of the askaris remained on the defensive, serving as a basis for troop rotation. The units would fight for a certain period then return home and be replaced by the askaris who had had home duty. In addition to these figures we could add 4-8,000 auxiliaries; Turkoman, Arab bedouins etc. These troops would be divided into two classes. First there were tribes which received regular yearly stipends from Saladin (but not full salaries as did the askaris) and who could be called on to serve as scouts, raiders, and light troops on any occasion. These numbered some 1300 Arab cavalry from Egypt and possibly similar numbers from Syria and al-Jazira, giving about 4000 auxiliaries with stipends. Additionally, there were the Mutawwa'in or volunteers, tribesmen, soldiers of fortune, or brigands who would serve without regular salaries for one season in return for whatever booty they could collect during the campaign. It appears that Franks were occasionally included in their numbers. Finally there were various specialist corps, Siege Crews, naphtha troops, mountaineers, etc., who were called up as the need arose. All of these types of troops and their relation to the playing units of Acre will be discussed below.

The total available troops in Saladin's empire was 25,000 askaris from Egypt, Syria and Iraq, with perhaps 2000 more from Arabia and Barqa, plus auxiliaries. Only half of the 27,000 askaris would have participated at the siege of Acre at any given time (although all may have seen action through troop rotation) giving a total of perhaps 14,000 men, with an additional 4000 auxiliaries bringing the number up to possibly 18,000. There may also have been several thousand irregulars and militia, but such troops would be disinclined to serve long at a protracted siege where there was little booty to be gained, and no salaries from the Sultan to support them. During the siege of Acre, which was a major effort on Saladin's part, more than half of the available askaris may have been mobilised, possibly bringing the total available up to 20,000 men. We must also remember, however, that perhaps half of the garrison inside Acre would have consisted of askaris as well, which might have lowered the total number of possible troops outside the city. Mobilising more warriors than this would have left Saladin's borders undefended against his Islamic enemies in Anatolia, Southern Iraq, Persia, Arabia, Nubia and North Africa, as well as increasing the potential for internal unrest within his domains. These figures can now be correlated with those given in Acre.

From the above description it should be evident that Saladin's army at Acre should be divided into four roughly equal parts, the regular forces of Egypt, Syria, Iraq and the auxiliaries, numbering at most a total of 20,000 but probably somewhat less. Acre has Saladin with 9 faylags or 45,000 men, which is over twice too many.

Although I am here dealing mainly with the Muslim armies at Acre, it might be well to point out a difficulty relating to the Hospitaller and Templar units represented in the game. Each Order is given 3 "knight" units which are oddly classed as infantry and would represent about 1800-2400 men according to the scale given in the rulebook (p. 4 col. 1) as well as 2 "Knight Cavalry" equaling about 1200-1600 men. Historically hundreds of knights of the Orders had been killed during the campaigns preceding Acre (nearly 100 at Cresson, 250+ Templars at Hattin, Saladin executed 100 after Hattin - Runciman pp. 453, 490, Gabrieli, p. 138) and many others were compelled to defend their castles. It is clear that their numbers had been greatly diminished during the campaigns preceding Acre, and it is doubtful if they could have ever mustered 3000 men each even when the orders were at full strength. Furthermore, the turcoples (light cavalry) are not represented as being part of the Orders. The numbers of the Templars and Hospitallers in the game seem to be grossly exaggerated.

The geographical regions given in the game as the origins of the Muslim troops are also incorrect. The Muslim armies in the game are divided into three major divisions: the armies of Sinjan, Egypt and Mosul. If Mosul is taken to represent the armies of Northern Iraq as a whole (although Mosul actually fielded only one half of the troops of that region) then the sections of Egypt and Mosul are fairly accurate. The Army of Sinjan, however, is difficult to deal with. I am unfamiliar with this term being used for Syria, whose armies are otherwise not represented in the game, nor am I aware of the term being used for any other region of Saladin's empire. It could be referring to Sinjar, a city in Northern Iraq, but the contingents of Northern Iraq are apparently represented by the Army of Mosul. At any rate, wherever Sinjan is supposed to be, Saladin certainly didn't come from there. He was invariably associated with the Egyptian contingents, and his Halqa Guard had their fiefs in Egypt.

Officer Corps

Noting that geographical designations and troop numbers are wrong and that the Syrian Army and the Auxiliaries are not properly represented, the designations of the commanders of each Muslim army given in the game can be examined. Gabrieli (pp. 192-214, translating Baha ad-Din) was used as the major source for the following list of commanders of the Muslim Army.

Ala Faylag 1 2-2-9	Zahir Faylag 2 2-1-9	Faylag 1 ↑↑↑ 6-5	Faylag 1 ↑↑↑ (2)6	Faylag 2 ↑↑↑ (1)9
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The commander of the Army of Mosul is listed as Zahir. This is apparently Zahir ad-Din ibn al-Bulunkari who was indeed an officer of the Mosul contingents. The other Mosul "faylag" has the commander Ala who is Ala ad-Din of Mosul. The Mosul Army, as noted above, however, should be only one half of the Army of Iraq which would make it one eighth of all of Saladin's troops, whereas in the game it is 1/4 of the entire army.

Saif Faylag 1 3-2-9	Qutb Faylag 2 2-2-9	Husam Faylag 3 2-1-9	Faylag 1 ↑↑↑ 6-5	Faylag 1 ↑↑↑ (2)6
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Saif ad-Din is listed as a commander of the Egyptian army. He was actually a Kurdish prince who was commanding Kurdish troops who had fiefs in Egypt and would therefore be considered part of the Egyptian askaris. However, Qutb ad-Din was the commander of the regiments of Hisn Kaifa in Iraq, not of Egyptian units, and Husam ad-Din, also listed as an Egyptian in the game, was actually commander of the troops of Nablus which formed a small part of the Syrian army.

Faylag 1 8-9	Taqi Faylag 1 3-2-9	Zain Faylag 2 3-2-9	Isa Faylag 3 3-2-9	Faylag 1 ↑↑↑ 6-5
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There are a number of problems with the army of 'Sinjan' as well. The game gives Taqi, Zain, Isa and Saladin as the four generals of "Sinjan". Taqi ad-Din commanded the askaris of Hama in Syria. Zayn ad-Din commanded Kurds from Arbela in northern Iraq. Isa was Governor of Jerusalem and would have been included with the Syrian askaris. Saladin's guard or halqa was stationed in Egypt. Thus each of the commanders who are listed as being from the 'Sinjan' army actually come from a different province in Saladin's empire. Two important Muslim commanders, Saladin's two sons, Al-Malik al-Afdal (Egyptian) and Al-Malik az-Zahir who commanded the Aleppo contingents, are also not included even though they were more important than some of the leaders used in Acre.

Faylag 3 8-9	Faylag 1 ↑↑↑ 6-5	English 8-4	Saldns G. 14-8	Faylag 2 ↑↑↑ (1)9
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Cavalry-Askaris

The description of the Muslim cavalry forces in the Acre rulebook, and the corresponding format for the Muslim cavalry units in the game contains a number of inaccuracies. First, there is the previously mentioned problem of the tulb as the basic unit of organisation, rather than the faylag. It is also claimed that "The light horse archers were unarmoured and avoided melee combat; they had

swords for defensive use." (p. 14 col. 3). This description raises a number of questions. First, in the game all the horse archers, which include nearly all the Muslim cavalry, are represented as being light cavalry. In reality nearly all Muslim regular cavalry were horse archers who carried spears, swords and/or maces, and generally wore chain mail as well (Gibb p. 81). Regular cavalry were designated as askaris (see Gibb and Humphreys throughout). The askari warrior was a horseman who was usually of Turkish or Kurdish origin and often a mamluk, but was nearly always trained as a Turkish mounted horse archer. In the Egyptian army there were two types; the 'tawashis' and the 'qaraghalams' (Gibb p. 76-7). The Tawashis were heavy cavalry and, according to Maqrizi, each had "a squire to carry his armour" (Gibb p. 87 note 31). In 1181 AD, 6,976 of the 8,640 askaris in Saladin's Egyptian army were Tawashis, or, in other words, mailed mounted horse archers with lances and swords for charges and melees. In a sense (though with important differences) they were what the Byzantines would have called a cataphract, the rest of the troops were Qaraghalams or light cavalry. However, the major difference between the Tawashis and the Qaraghalams was in pay and the Qaraghalams probably also had armour of some sort. There is no proof that the same proportion existed between light and heavy askaris in the armies of Syria and Northern Iraq but it probably did.

From the above discussion it becomes apparent that the sentence from the rulebook, "A heavy cavalry faylag was heavy only by Moslem standards, for the men and horses lacked armour. Armed with swords and lances" (p.14-5) is wrong on all counts. The cavalry unit was not a faylag, the askaris did wear armour, and they were armed with composite bows as well as swords and lances.

It may be that the majority of Muslim cavalry were designated as light horse archers in the game based on a description given by R.C. Smail of Turkish troops in *Crusading Warfare: 1097-1193* pp. 75-83. However, despite the fact that in general the work is a superb reconstruction of Latin crusading armies, there are a number of difficulties (as he himself admits on p. vi) in relation to his descriptions of Muslim troops. First he describes Turkish tactics using almost exclusively Latin sources, which, although useful, naturally give a distorted view of Muslim armies (It would likewise be impossible to gain a correct understanding of Frankish armies and tactics from reading mainly Arabic sources). Second, he is forced to rely solely on translations of extracts, which are often really abridgements or summaries of Arabic sources. In doing so the possibility of understanding technical Arabic military terms is often lost. Finally, his description fails to clearly make the important distinctions between the light Turkish nomadic auxiliaries (which is basically what Smail is describing), the Arab and Fatimid heavy lancers (the famous Usamah was one of these who were essentially like Latin Knights) and the armoured regular askaris, all of which fought in different armies at different times during the first century of the Crusades.

But even if Smail's description is accepted and used at face value, the representation of the cavalry of the Muslims in the game Acre is inadequate. The horse archers are given a defensive melee strength only (and that only of one point) while it is clear from both the Latin and Muslim sources, as pointed out in Smail's book (pp. 82 - 3), that the Turks would use missile fire to disrupt the enemy ranks followed by the same horse archers charging for close melee combat. The point system of the horse archers in the game denies the Turks the important charging and melee capacity.

Saladin Guards 544-9	English 8-4	Saldns G. 4-6	Saldns G. 12-8	Saldns G. 16-4
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Infantry

Since the battle of Acre was a siege, the infantry Siege Corps would certainly have been present, but they would have consisted of a few thousand men at most. According to the number of pieces in the game, Saladin's besieging army was composed of over 25,000 infantry (5 faylags) and 15,000 cavalry (3 faylags), plus Saladin's Guard faylag of

5000 mixed cavalry and infantry. Despite the fact that these numbers are excessive, the proportion of troops is also completely incorrect.

It seems possible that Smal's description of the Fatimid army (p. 83-7) was used to some degree in formulating the rules relating to the Muslim troops. This would be a mistake, however, since Smal is describing the Fatimid forces of the first half of the 12th century. When Saladin became Vizier of Egypt in 1169 he immediately started the "Turkification" of the army of Egypt, beginning with the massacre of the Fatimid Sudanese and Armenian infantry in Cairo (see A. S. Ehrenkreutz, Saladin pp. 76 - 80). He continued to reorganise the military of Egypt, developing it into a system based on Turkish askaris and mamluks which has been described. In fact these military reforms constituted one of his major policy objectives of his early rule, including continued repression and phasing out of all Fatimid troops (Ehrenkreutz, Saladin pp. 69-96). To try to draw any comparison between the Fatimid army of the first half of the 12th century, which indeed had large contingents of infantry, and Saladin's army of 1191 is very anachronistic.

Faylag 2 (2)6	Saladin G. (2)6	Faylag 2 (1)9	Faylag 1 (2)6	Norman (2)5
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Archery

There are also a number of questions relating to the system for representing archery firepower in the game. According to the rules there are four types of archers which are represented on the following reproduction of the Fire Combat Table:

	Target distance (in hexes)			
Firing unit	4	3	2	1
Archers of the Eyes	2	3	4	4
Crossbows	1	2	3	4
Bowmen	-	1	2	3
Horse archers	-	-	2	1

There are a number of problems with this system. First, only Crusaders are given crossbows while all Muslims are either bowmen or horse archers. In reality the crossbow was used extensively by Saladin's troops, especially during sieges (This is clear even in the Latin sources, see Itinerary 3:5, 5:19 etc.). Furthermore, the Muslims in Acre itself would have special high powered crossbows (essentially miniature ballistae) mounted on the walls which would certainly have exceeded the range and power of the crusader's hand weapons (Cahen, p. 129-35 and his comments; he discusses a number of different types of crossbows and their uses). It is true that most Muslims didn't carry crossbows as most Muslims were mounted, but the infantry certainly did, especially in besieging or defending city walls. At least a portion of the Muslim archers should therefore be crossbowmen.

In addition, there is still a debate concerning the comparative effectiveness of the 12th century crossbow and the composite bow used by the Muslims. It is far from certain that the crossbow was more effective as the Fire Power Table would indicate, this gives the crossbow a one point advantage at each range level (see Latham, & Faris pp. 77-81, 145-53). For one thing, the composite bow, even if shot from horseback had a much higher rate of fire than the crossbow (Patterson pp. 69ff). Patterson also discusses the fact that in modern tests the composite bow has been shown to be able to effectively penetrate medieval European armour at 100m. The numerous discriptions of unharned knights with a number of arrows protruding from their armour come from the fact that the horse archers often shot from beyond the 100m mark (to a maximum of c. 240m which would give the Muslim bows a range of 4 or 5 instead of 2 and 3) to provoke the knights into a charge and to avoid return fire from Crusader crossbowmen and archers. At these longer ranges the bows were naturally less effective. It was not until the 15th century with the development of the steel crossbow that it was able to surpass the composite bow in range and penetrating power (Payne-Galloway pp. 20-30). Therefore, although it is not provably incorrect to make the crossbow more effective in the game than the Composite bow, it is highly problematic.

An additional problem is the fact that not all crusaders used the crossbow. Many were armed with shortbows (the long bow didn't come into widespread use in England until the following century) as is made clear by the Latin sources (Itinerary 4:18). What the proportions were between crusader archers and crossbowmen is hard to say, although it does seem that the crossbowmen were more important.

Norman 6-7	English 10-4	English 8-4
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Armour

The rulebook gives the impression that the armour of the Muslim troops was, for the most part, either non-existent or very light (p. 14 col. 3), which is born out by the fact that all Muslim troops except Saladin's guard are inferior in melee value to the Crusaders. This interpretation of the relative quality of the troops is not sustained by the historical evidence.

It is possible that the mail of the Muslims might have been generally lighter than that of the Christians. However it should also be recognised that Muslim steel was superior to Christian at this time, and therefore a lighter Muslim mail suit would have been stronger and afforded more protection than its Christian counterpart. The Christian armour had to be heavier to provide equal protection.

Whichever armour was superior, (and it should be noted that captured armour of the enemy was often worn by both sides) there is no doubt that most Muslim troops were armoured to some degree. The "Treatise on Armament" written for Saladin describes three types of armour used by Muslim troops. First is the 'Jaushan' which was a form of scale armour composed of small plates of either iron, horn or leather. This is described as a 'Persian' form of armour, and since at that time Turks had come to completely dominate the military of Persia, it is likely that 'jaushan' was used by the Turks, perhaps mostly by the Turkomen nomadic tribesmen who didn't have the metallurgical expertise to form good mail. The second type is the 'Kazghand' made by the Arabs and was the common coat of mail. This armour was used extensively by the askaris. Finally there was the 'Kimukht' or leather armour, used by light troops and perhaps the Qaraghalum askaris (Cahen, pp. 138-9). In addition, there are a number of references in Muslim histories to where the Muslim troops are said to have plundered the coats of mail off dead Christian soldiers (for example, there is a fascinating tale of a Turk wearing the armour of a Christian Knight whom he had killed, who is himself killed by a crossbow bolt from Richard Lionheart - Itinerary 3:13). Thousands of mail coats and other types of armour would have been included in the plunder from the battle of Hattin which would then certainly have been worn by the Muslims at the siege of Acre. Obviously, then, many if not most Muslims were armoured.

The Muslim sources mentioned above make it clear that chain mail was widespread, which the Latin sources confirm. For example, describing the Turks defending Acre the Itinerary states "however close the (Turks') armour fitted, or whether the coat of mail was twofold, it availed little to resist the darts from their (the Crusaders') arbalests." (3:13). In other words, not only did the defenders of Acre have mail coats, many of them used double coats, much like many heavy Christian knights.

In addition I have seen, handled and worn an Islamic coat of mail, and from my examination (although admittedly not scientific) it was of very high quality. There are a large number of such mail suits in any military museum in the Middle East.

Saladin's Guard

The rules claim that "there was a faylag known as Saladin's Guard ... A heavy armoured infantry infantry contingent with a longer spear and sword and shield; it was basically a copy of the Christian infantry it faced" (p. 15 col.1). Saladin's only personal Guard unit was the 'Halqa' or 'circle', so called because they surrounded the Sultan in times of danger. They were the troops personally commanded by the Sultan in battle, were all

askaris (i.e. armoured horse archers), and numbered some 1000 men, not the 5000 men faylag the rules imply (Humphreys p. 82-3). They were also usually Mamluks (i.e. freed slave soldiers) and wore special yellow uniforms. William of Tyre states that Saladin's bodyguard was "A thousand of the most valiant knights", They certainly were not trying to copy Christian infantry, although the Halqa often fought on foot protecting the tents of the Sultan.

The rulebook also states that part of Saladin's Guard consisted of elite archers known as "The Archers of the Eyes". In actuality such a unit never existed in Saladin's army. It seems possible that the inclusion of this unit comes from a misinterpretation of a passage in Ian Heath's *Armies of the Dark Ages*, where it discusses Fatimid Sudanese Archers, and relates them, somewhat misleadingly, to the Nubian "Archers of the Eyes" (p. 104). Historically, it was only Nubian archers who were ever called "Archers of the Eyes" and this was mainly in relation to one battle where the Nubian archers shot out the eyes of 150 Muslims (al-Baladhuri p.380; Ayalon, Mamluk, p. 201). The problem comes from equating Sudanese archers in general (Sudani being the Arabic generic term for Negro, of which Nubians were only one group), which were used mainly by the Fatimids rather than Saladin, with one specific group of Nubian archers from a specific period of the past. At any rate, there was never such a unit in Saladin's army.

Naphtha

Another unit included in Saladin's Guard in the game is a special naphtha corps. As a general rule the special corps of Saladin's army were not under the personal command of the Sultan but were drawn from any number of cities in Saladin's empire depending on local conditions and skills (Gibb p. 83-4, & p. 90 note 77). To my knowledge the Naphtha troops were never gathered together into one large unit but were generally in small platoons which would be attached to various Tulbs for a specific action. Instead of having one naphtha unit, it would be more realistic to have a number of naphtha units which would be attached to regular units and serve to increase their melee value in some way. Additionally, Naphtha was used extensively by the Muslim troops in Acre itself, and "Greek Fire" is often given as the reason the Crusaders were forced to retreat from the walls (Itinerary 3:15). This factor is not represented in the game.

Militia

The rulebook states that "The rest of the army (other than Saladin's guard) was a militia, raised as needed and ... returned home at harvest time." This interpretation of Saladin's army is reflected by the general inferiority of the Muslim units in the game. However, the askaris of Saladin's army were by no means militia. They were a highly trained standing army. They did, on occasion, return to their bases at harvest because they owned fiefs and wanted to be there to supervise their affairs, but this was often by means of troop rotation. Calling them a militia, with the implication that they were an untrained rabble is incorrect.

There were militia units in Muslim armies at this time, but they were generally raised only for defense when a specific city was attacked. Gibb (p.83) states that "local or militia troops, (were) distinguished from the askaris in that they were not mounted archers, but fought with spear and sword. By this time, (c.1180) however, it is likely that the old militia organisations of Syria were falling into disuse ..." For a long term siege such as Acre, it is unlikely that the militia units would have been able to remain in the field as could the regularly paid askaris.

Mashtub Garrison 3-3-7	Qaragush Garrison 3-2-7	Garrison 6-5	Garrison (6)6	Garrison (6)6
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The Garrison and Fleet at Acre

As mentioned above, Saladin stationed a large number of Egyptian askaris in Acre in order to bolster the defenses of the local Syrian askari garrison and the city militia. It would be impossible to estimate accurately what portion of the troops were askaris, but there could have been

several thousand present. Muslim crossbowmen should also have been included in the garrison.

Another crucial aspect of the campaign which is not represented in the game was blockade running by the Egyptian fleet. On various occasions throughout the siege Saladin's fleet entered Acre, bringing supplies and reinforcements. The crews of the vessels that entered Acre apparently often participated in the defense of the city. The flow of ships, supplies and troops into Acre played a vital role in the defense of the city which allowed it to hold out for so long. It was only with the arrival of the large English and French fleets that the Crusaders were finally able to securely blockade the harbour and prevent any further arrival of supplies and reinforcements. During the course of the last month of the siege, however, there were a number of naval battles as Muslim ships tried to break the blockade (see Ehrenkreutz, "Naval" on this entire question). The naval aspects of the siege would represent an important and interesting aspect which could have been included in the design.

Auxiliaries

The rulebook also fails to make clear the fact that there were Turkoman, Kurdish, and Arab tribal irregulars who actually served as Saladin's light cavalry. The light horse archers in the game would be equivalent to the Turkoman and Kurdish tribesmen but there were also mounted irregular Arab Bedouins as well as regular paid Arab contingents having varying degrees of armour protection serving as lancers. On occasion, such as at the Battle of Arsouf, Bedouins were seen dismounted firing bows, but they were not trained in mounted fire, which is a highly complex skill requiring extensive training. It is likely that there were Bedouin units who rode camels to the battlefield and dismounted to fight on foot, either as archers or spearmen. These light auxiliaries were used as scouts, skirmishers and raiders.

Playability

Although there are many errors in the historical reconstruction of the Muslim armies for the game (and other problems with the Crusader armies which haven't been dealt with here), the game design and playability, like most SPI products is generally good. A few of the rules which attempt to recreate the military environment in which the Crusaders and Muslims fought will be briefly examined.

The division of the game-turn into a Bombardment phase, or alternatively an Assault phase is a good attempt to recreate both strategic and tactical considerations in one game. If the Crusader decides only to work on damaging the walls a turn will pass with only a single Bombardment phase. On the other hand, if melee combat occurs, an Assault phase of ten "impulses" is utilised, allowing for tactical manoeuvring and combat.

Although the basic idea is good there are a number of problems with the actual format of the Assault phase. Since one game turn (which apparently equals two days) is divided into ten assault impulses, one would assume that one impulse is the equivalent of either one hour if the assault phase is supposed to equal one day of fighting, or two hours if it equals two days. A man in an hour could easily walk a mile to two even over rough terrain. Each hex in the game is about 50 metres, making a mile some 32 hexes. In an hour, or one "impulse," then, a man should be able to walk 32 hexes. In the game, however, the average movement capacity for infantry is only from 4 to 6 hexes, making the integration of time and space, which is of vital importance in actual warfare, rather confused. Furthermore, each unit equals from 600 to 800 men and stacking is not allowed, which in many ways limits the range of tactical possibilities by limiting the possibility of concentration of force at a given crucial area.

The rules for siegecraft, (which seem to have been based on another SPI game dealing with the Turkish siege and conquest of Constantinople) including ladder assaults, bombardment, mining, repairs, etc. are very good, and in some ways they seem to me to be historically the best aspect of the game. However the rule on Muslim Intervention, which limits the Muslims to deploying only a portion of their army in any turn, creates an un-



historical limitation on the Muslim player. According to the rulebook (p. 6 col.1) the entire Muslim army can be deployed only twice during the game. During the other 14 turns only various portions can attack the Christians. The problem is that the Muslim player must decide which portion of his army is to attack before the Christian player decides whether to make an assault on the city. Therefore, if the Christian Player makes a major assault, and the Muslim player has chosen only to commit a limited number of units on that turn, the Christian player has the potential of taking Acre while the entire Muslim army sits idly in their camp. Actually, whenever the garrison of Acre was hard pressed by Crusader assaults, they would send signals by means of drums and signal fires to Saladin, who would then mobilise his army to assault the Crusaders in the rear and relieve the pressure of the city (Itinerary 315, 319). Historically, then, Saladin attacked the Crusaders at precisely the moment the Crusaders attacked the city, something which will happen in the game only fortuitously if the rule on Intervention is followed.

On the whole the game is enjoyable to play and offers a number of interesting challenges to the players on both sides. Generally speaking, the problems are not with the design, but with the attempt to simulate a given moment of warfare between two historically definable armies. In many ways it seems that the game takes the name of the city of Acre, the names of the rulers of the opposing sides, and organises them in an imaginary fashion which often bears little resemblance to historical reality. In a sense, the historical inaccuracies make it so that the game is not really an historical simulation of the siege of Acre, but rather a "fantasy" game wearing an historical mask.

This situation is very unfortunate. The Acre rulebook makes the observation that "The Crusades have been ignored by wargame designers" (p. 15 col. 3), which is essentially true. In a single year there are more wargames produced dealing with either the American Civil War or World War II than have ever been produced on the Crusades in the entire history of the Wargaming Industry. As one who has a deep interest in the Crusades and Medieval warfare in general, such a situation is very depressing. Yet it is equally depressing to see those few games which are produced on the Crusades being marred by sloppy research and scholarship.

The Crusades and the period of Medieval warfare in general has great potential for exciting and interesting wargames which has been virtually untouched by the industry. Yet to anyone who knows the period, it is inherently no less interesting than either the classical period that preceded it, or the age of technical warfare which followed. It is hoped that a combination of accurate historical research and clever game designing will one day rescue the Crusades as a period for wargames from the oblivion where it so unjustly lies.

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