The game Acro: Richard Lionheart's Siege, 1191 (available from Simpuls in the Quadrant Pack The Art of Siege) is a recent attempt to simulate the important sieges 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-medieval 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 Acre on 26th of August 1189. In the following months large numbers of French, Italian, Danes, Normans, Sicilians, and Levanites crossed the city. Acre arrived before Acre with some of its 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 Philip on 20 April 1191, and an English army under Richard I on 8 August. With these additional forces the balance of power shifted to the Crusaders, who, although unable to take the city by storm, received the surrender 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 of Acre, it 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, Acro 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 Acro. 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 portrayal of the forces in 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 of the number of Islamic infantry units that were highly skilled in both archery and sword fighting. The number of units in the Muslim armies was limited in the rulebook suggests. Indeed, I have never seen the use term “faylag” in relation to Islamic armies of any period. It appears that Islamic armies were organized in one war poem by al-Mutanabbi, praising Sayf ad-Dawla (death at Aleppo 944-967). I also searched two major dictionaries of Medieval Arabic, but was unable to find the term listed in either. If the term “faylag” would seem to be a transliteration of the Greek word ‘Phalanx’, and it 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 armies was the 'Tulb' (plur. 'Atlab') (Gibb p. 76-77, Humphreys p. 79-80 where he calls the Tulb the 'most important parade and field unit'). According to Akeziz (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 fatimids (Gibb p. 76-77) 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 faylag 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 Acro's 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 of this period, H.A.R. Gibb, and Stephen Humphreys. Both of these scholars have done detailed studies of Muslim armies and Barbary Arab forces, 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 Halaq guards, totalling 9,000 armoured mounted archers. Syria was divided into a number of districts, 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 Hamah also provided some additional 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 3000 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, Hinn Kafra Mardin, etc., together fielding another 4000. Another possible source of troops for Saladin's armies which is not discussed by either Gibb or Humphreys is the Muslim garrisons on the west coast of Arabia and Bara (Cyrenaica) in modern Libya. Although I have been unable to determine an exact date for these garrisons, if they were present in 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 Bara remained there as border guards (at least I have been unable to confirm any contingents from there 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 irregulars (including auxiliaries) as Saladin’s total available force.

In actual practice, however, only about half of these levies were ever mobilised for foreign campaigns from any province at one time (Gibb, p. 78). The rest of the askari remained on the defensive, serving as a basis for troop rotation. The units would serve three years at home and be replaced by the askari who had held home duty. In addition to these figures we could add on the regular cavalry, the large number of horse-mounted mercenaries, etc. These troops would be divided into two classes. First there were tribes which received regular yearly stipends from Saladin but not full salaries, and were sometimes called on to serve as scouts, raiders, and light troops on any occasion. These numbered some 20,000 from Egypt, and possible numbers from Syria and al-Jazira, giving about 4000 auxiliaries with stipends. Additionally, there were the Mutawwa’in or volunteers, tribesmen, soldiers, elected for a year, who received no regular salaries for one season in return for whatever booty they could collect during the campaign. In between the campaigns they 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, and on these types of operations their relation to the playing units of Acre will be discussed below.

The available troops in Saladin’s empire was 25,000 askaris from Egypt, Syria and Iraq, or perhaps 2000 more from Arabia and Bara’a, plus auxiliaries. Only half of the 27,000 askaris would have been present at the battle of Acre for only a 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 total to about 18,000. The askari, also have been several thousand irregulars and militia, but such troops would be disbanded to preserve the city. Mobilising more warriors than 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 two units put on the field would have consisted of askari as well, which might have lowered the total number of possible troops outside the city. Mobilising more warriors than 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 two units put on the field would have consisted of askari as well, which might have lowered the total number of possible troops outside the city.

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 the major components of the armies of 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 there) then the relationship of Egypt and Mosul are fairly accurate. The Army of Sinjar, however, is difficult to deal with. I am unfamiliar with the differences of the troops of the mountains 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 Kurdistan or Northern Iraq, because the campaigns of Northern Iraq are apparently represented by the Army of Mosul. At any rate, wherever Sinjar is supposed to be, they are not historically or officially in the game.

The commander of the Army of Mosul is listed as Zahir. This is apparently Zahir ad-Din ibn al-Bulunkuri, who was indeed an officer of the Amurathid contingent. The other officer ‘Sayf ad-Din 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.

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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 Arabia. Approximately 20,000 men gave a total of 20,000 but probably somewhat less. Acre has Saladin with 9 faylags or 45,000 men, which is twice twice too many.

Although I am here dealing mainly with the Muslim armies at Acre, it might be well to point out that the Seljuk forces of Syria had 4,500 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 were used during the campaigns preceding Acre (nearly 100 at Cresson, 250+ Templars at Hattin, Saladin executed 260 after Hattin – Runciman pp. 463, 490, Gabrieli, p. 138) and some would have been used to defend their castles. It is clear that their numbers had been greatly diminished during the campaigns preceding Acre, and that they could have had mustered 3000 men each even when the orders were at full strength. Furthermore, the turcopoles (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 description of the Muslim cavalry forces in the game is not accurate, 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 tughra 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 light 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 or mail hauberks. Second, this description of the light horse archers is quite different from what the Byzantines would have called a cataphract. The rest of the troops were Caraphracts and light cavalry. However, that major difference between the Tawashis and the Caraphracts should be noted as well. There is no reason to believe that the same tactics were used by both 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 Muslim standards and was usually armed with swords and lances ...” (p.14-5) is wrong on all counts. The cavalry unit was not a faylag and the troops were not heavy cavalry. 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 tactics (p 181). However, despite the fact that in general the work is a superb reconstruction of Latin crusading armies at Acre, his description of some aspects of Middle Eastern armies, which is basically what Smail is describing, the Arab and Fatimid heavy lancers (the famous Usamah was one of them) in Egypt and Syria and the mounted 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 as the source material, the list of the Muslims in the game Acre is inadequate. The horse archers are given a defensive melee strength only (and that only one point) while it is clear from the battle reports of the period, including that of the famous Usamah, that there were some very important Muslim commanders, Saladin’s two sons, Al-Malik al-Afdal (Egyptian) and Al-Malik az-Zahir (Iraqi), and Zayn ad-Din commanded Kurds from Arbeia in Northern Iraq, who is Governor of Jerusalem and would have been included with the Syrian askaris. Saladin’s guard or haifa was stationed at Egypt. Thus each of the commanders who are listed as being from the "Sinjar" army actually come from a different region. Even including all the important Muslim commanders, Saladin’s two sons, Al-Malik al-Afdal (Egyptian) and Al-Malik az-Zahir (Iraqi), and Zayn ad-Din commanded Kurds from Arbeia in Northern Iraq, who is Governor of Jerusalem and would have been included with the Syrian askaris. This is an important part of the problem. It is only a basis for the use of terminology and structure.

Cavalry-Askaris

The description of the Muslim cavalry forces in the game is inaccurate, 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 tughra 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.” (pp 14 col. 3). This description raises a number of questions. First, in the game all the horse archers, which include nearly all the light 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 defences (as askaris (see Gibb and Humphreys throughout). This askar warrior was a horseman who was usually armed with a sword and often a mace, but was nearly always trained as a Turkish mounted horse archer. In the Egyptian army there were two types: the tawashis and the qaraghulans (Gibb, p. 181). The tawashis were heavy cavalry and, according to Mqziri, each had a ‘squire to carry his armour’ (Gibb p. 87 note on p. 181 AD), 6,876 of the 8,840 askaris in Saladin’s Egyptian army were Tawashis, or, in other words, mailed mounted horse archers with lances and swords for charges and melee. In a second type of the light horse archers were what the Byzantines would have called a cataphract. The rest of the troops were Caraphracts and light cavalry. However, the major difference between the Tawashis and the Caraphracts was in pay and the Caraphracts probably also had armour of some sort. There is no evidence that the same tactics were used by both light and heavy askaris in the armies of Syria and Northern Iraq but it probably did.

Infantry

Since the battle of Acre was a siege, the infancy 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 25,000 infantry (5 faylags) and 15,000 cavalry (3 faylags), plus Saladin’s Guard faylag of
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). It is likely that the Turks were deaf to the appeal of the crossbow (Iteration 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.

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 the Fatimids were defeated by 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 Christian armies. However, the armors should also be regarded as being superior to that of their Christians. The armors had to be heavier to provide equal protection.

Whichever armor was superior, and should be noted that captured armor of the enemy was often worn by both sides, there is no doubt that most Muslim troops were armored to some degree. The ‘Treatise on Armament’ written for Saladin describes three types of armor used by Muslim troops. First is the ‘Jaschun’ which was a form of scale armor composed of small plates of either iron, horn, or leather. This was described as a ‘Persian’ armor, and was the standard type used by the Turks. Second was the ‘Kazgardh’ made by the Turks and the common coat of mail. This armor was used extensively by the askers. Finally there was the ‘Kimshuk’ or leather armor, used by light infantry. This armor had a thickness of 13-89. In addition, there are a number of references in Muslim histories to where the Muslim soldiers were said to have plucked the sweat from their bodies after a battle (see reference in text). For example, there is a fascinating tale of a Turk wearing the armor of a Christian knight whom he had killed in battle, taken from Richard Lionheart (Iteration 3:13). Thousands of mail coats and other types of armor would have been included in the plunder of the battle, and many would have been worn by the Muslims at the siege of Acre. Obviously, then, many if not most Muslims were armored.

The Muslim sources mentioned above make it clear that there was widespread, albeit locally different. The Latin sources confirm this fact. For example, describing the Turks, the sources say ‘however close the [Turk’s] armour fitted, or what the cost of their mail coats was, they always seemed to have the art of their mail coats, the Crusaders’ (Iteration 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, there have been handled and worn an armament coat of mail, and from my own examination (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 footlog known as Saladin’s Guard ... a heavy armoured infantry unit armed with a helmet, coat of mail and shield’ (p. 13 col. 3). Saladin’s only personal Guard unit was the ‘Halo’ 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 askers (i.e. armoured horse archers), and numbered some 1000 men, not the 5000 men fayagh the rules imply (Humphreys p. 82-3). They were also usually Mamlikus (i.e. freed slave soldiers) and were known to the Turks as the ‘Tulba’ (p. 4:18). It states that Saladin’s bodyguard was ‘A thousand of the most valiant knights’, they certainly were not trying to copy Christian infantry, although the Turkmans 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 did not exist in Saladin’s army. It seems possible that the inclusion in the list is supposed to be a misreading of a passage in Ian Haith’s ‘Arms of the Dark Ages’, where it discusses Fatimid Sudanese horse archers as having been used by the Crusaders. This interpretation of the relative quality of the troops is not sustained by the historical evidence.

Archery

There are a number of questions relating to the system for representing archery firepower in the game. The following describes the types of archers who are represented on the following reproduction of the Fire Combat Table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Archery Type</th>
<th>Target Distance (in hexes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Firing unit</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archers of the Eyes</td>
<td>2 3 4 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossbows</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowmen</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse archers</td>
<td>2 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are a number of problems with this system. First, only Crusaders are given crossbows while all Muslims are given shortbows. It is debatable whether this reality the crossbow was used extensively by Saladin’s troops, especially during sieges (This is clear from the Latin sources, see Iteration 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 certainly had exceeded the range and power of the crusader’s hand weapons (Cahen p. 129-35 and his comments; he discusses a number of dates, 1294-1314, and their uses). It is true that most Muslims didn’t employ the crossbow, but most of the most Muslims were mounted, but the infantry certainly did, especially in besieging or defending cities. It can be assumed that 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 over the composite bow (see Lahann, & Fisk p. 77-81, 145-53). For one thing, the composite bow, even if shot from horseback had a much higher rate of fire. For example, Paterson 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 composite bow, with its string and arrow flights may be a more effective way to return fire from Crusader crossbowmen and archers. At these longer ranges the bows were naturally less effective. It was not until the 15th century that the development of the steel crossbow bow that it was able to surpass the composite bow in range and penetrating power (Payne-Gallway p. 20-30). Therefore, although it is not probably incorrect to make the crossbow more effective in the game than the Composite bow, it is highly problematic.

Naphtha

Another unit included in Saladin’s Guard in the game is a special naphtha corps. As a general rule, however, the use of naphtha 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 (see reference in text). It is important to be aware that the Naphtha troops were never gathered together into one large unit but were generally in small platoons which would be attached to various Tulba 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 each Tulba as needed and would be of similar value in some way. Additionally, Naphtha was used extensively by the Muslim troops in Acre itself, and the Turks were used for similar reasons. Therefore, the idea of having the Crusaders if these were 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 milita units, (were) as numerous as the king’s troops but were not mounted archers, but fought with spear and sword. By this time, c.1180 however, it is likely that the number of 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 archers.

The Garrison and Fleet at Acre

As mentioned above, Saladin stationed a large number of Egyptian askaris in Acre in order to bolster the defence of the local Syrian askar garrison and the city itself. 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 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 harbor 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 instances where 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 Türkoman, Kirdish, and Arab tribal irregulars who actually served as Saladin's light cavalry. The light horse archers in the game would be equally effective to Türkoman and Kirdish tribesmen but there were also mounted irregular Arab Bedouins as well as regular paid Arab contingents having varying degrees of Norman protection serving as lancers. On occasion, such as at the Battle of Arsuf, Bedouins were seen dismounting firing bows, but they were not trained in mounted fire, which required an entirely different skill requiring extensive training. It is likely that there were Bedouin units who rode camels to the battlefield and dismounted to fight as foot archers, light archers, or spearmen. These light auxiliary units 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's design and playability, like most SPI products is generally good. A few of the rules which attempt to recreate the military environment in which 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. The Crusader player is limited only to working 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 is also available, allowing for tactical maneuvering 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 one day is 24 hours. 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 30 hexes. More, if you could walk 30 hexes in a day, then, one impulse should be able to walk 30 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 800 to 800 men and, as such, 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 Turkic or Central Asian tactics of the period) 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

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 of army can attack the Christians. The problem is that the Muslim player does not decide which portion of his
army 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 attack the Crusaders in the rear and relieve the pressure of the city (Itinerary 316, 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 players are not playing with a realistic design, but with a game of the invasion of the city. A game of the rulers of the opposing sides, and organising them in an imaginary fashion which often bears very little resemblance to historical reality. In such an imaginary game, the Crusader's game are to make the game not really an historical simulation of the siege of Acre, but a rather "fantasy" game wearing an historical mask.

This situation is very unfortunate. The Acre rulebook makes the observation that the Crusader 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 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 have 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 which preceded it, or the age of technological 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 war games from the oblivion where it so unjustly lies.

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