

## **RULES OF THE TEMPLARS**

The Templars rules were based on the concepts adopted at the Council of Troyes by Hugh of Payns.

They were clearly based on religious ideals, by the ideology of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux and the Cistercian monks.

It is a meticulous text ruling every religious and military aspect of the brotherhood. It is also complemented by a number of hierarchical statutes that are discussed later. Over the proceeding 150 years, the text continually evolved, finally reaching over 600 articles.

The Templar rules did not allow any members freedom of initiative.

This gave cohesiveness to the troops, and was something completely innovative to any Christian army of the time, where each knight did everything according to his own criteria.

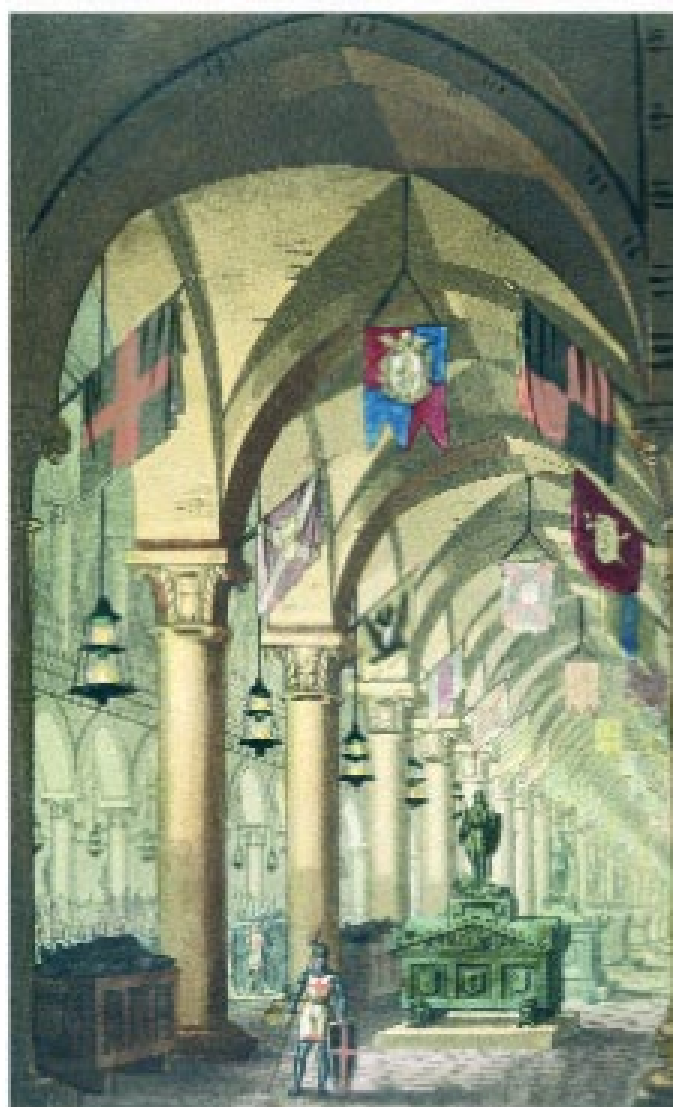
The monastic vow of obedience gave the Order a religious character. Any misconduct or insubordination was seen as a sin in the Templar's mind.

Among their multiple articles and dispositions, can be emphasized the following:

- Novices were first accepted for a probationary period. If the Grand Master and the Brothers were pleased, he was allowed to express his aspiration "with a pure heart" before the Council of the Brotherhood.
- There were two types of council. The General Council, where all important matters were decided, including the election of the Grand Masters, and the Ordinary Council, held weekly if there were more than four brothers.
- All knights should eat in the refectory in silence whilst listening to the Holy Texts.
- No children were allowed in the Order.
- The dress code was strict in every aspect. It had to be austere and functional, excluding any kind of jewelry, gold or silver ornaments.
- The Grand Master controlled all of the Brother's goods, and he exercised maximum authority over the Order.
- If one of the members was sick, he could be



*The order's seal, showing two knights on a single horse.*



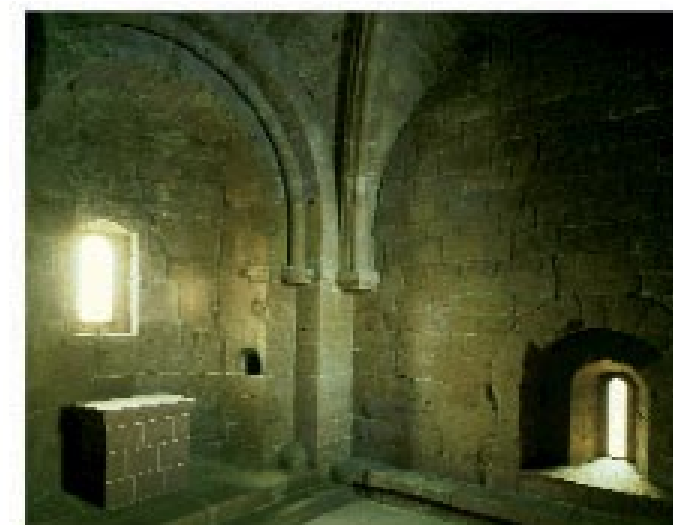
*There were two chapters: General, for important matters and Ordinary for the daily life.*



*The Church blessed the swords and the killing of Muslims.*

- relieved of attending religious ceremonies, though still attending daily prays. They were attended to in separate hospitals.
- Hunting and archery were forbidden. The only animal allowed to be hunted was the lion (!).
- Without the Grand Master's consent, no one was allowed to have a bag (purse) or a locked chest; nor were they allowed mail from relatives or any other person.
- When a Brother committed a small misdemeanour, as when talking in combat or in any other circumstance, he had to personally present himself before the Grand Master and beg for penance. If the misdemeanour was too big, he was banished from the company while waiting for the Grand Master's decision.
- If the fault was serious, and the Brother in question expressed no regret, he was banished from the rest of the group "the pious cattle" i.e. "We

- must banish the immoral from the group".
- "Indulgence should not be bigger than the fault itself nor the punishment smaller that make the sinner to repeat the fault."
- The Order was considered as something born from the Holy Scriptures and the Divine Providence in the Holy Land. For that reason, they could kill any enemy of the Cross without committing a sin. They could keep land and slaves, villains and fields and rule them in justice.
- All of the Order's resources were organized into provinces with a Knight Commander in charge.
- Over time, the Templars ruled over ten provinces. There were three in the Middle East, Jerusalem, Antioch and Tripoli. There were also seven provinces in Europe, France, Britain, Poitou, Aragon, Portugal, Hungary and Apulia.
- There was a chance to join the Order for a short period of time, although all rules should be followed.
- Women were not allowed in the Order and consorting in any way with women was forbidden.
- They were not allowed to enter cities, towns or castles in a 5 km. radius from their headquarters. Older knights were not allowed to retain their military equipment; they had to give it away to other brothers. IN return, a docile horse was given to them so they could spend their time taking care of the animal.



*Templar architecture was functional and austere, much like the order's spirit.*

## EVOLUTION OF TEMPLAR ARMAMENT AND EQUIPMENT

### XI CENTURY

1. Double-edged fighting sword or "great sword".
2. Battle axe. Mace
3. Crossbow
4. Turkish bow.
5. Sling
6. Wooden, leather-covered shield.
7. Norman chain-mail.
8. Chain-mail.



1. - The arms, shields and tactics of Crusaders and the Templars evolved greatly during the two centuries of Frankish occupation. Christians and Muslims influenced and learnt from each other.

Most of the northern European knights wore chain mail as body armour. Chain mail was constructed of thousands of metal rings, each hooked together to another four rings.

Originally, chain mail coats were very long, as they reached to below the wearer's knees. With the passing of time, they became shorter, eventually reaching half-way above the knees, and were worn over a leather or

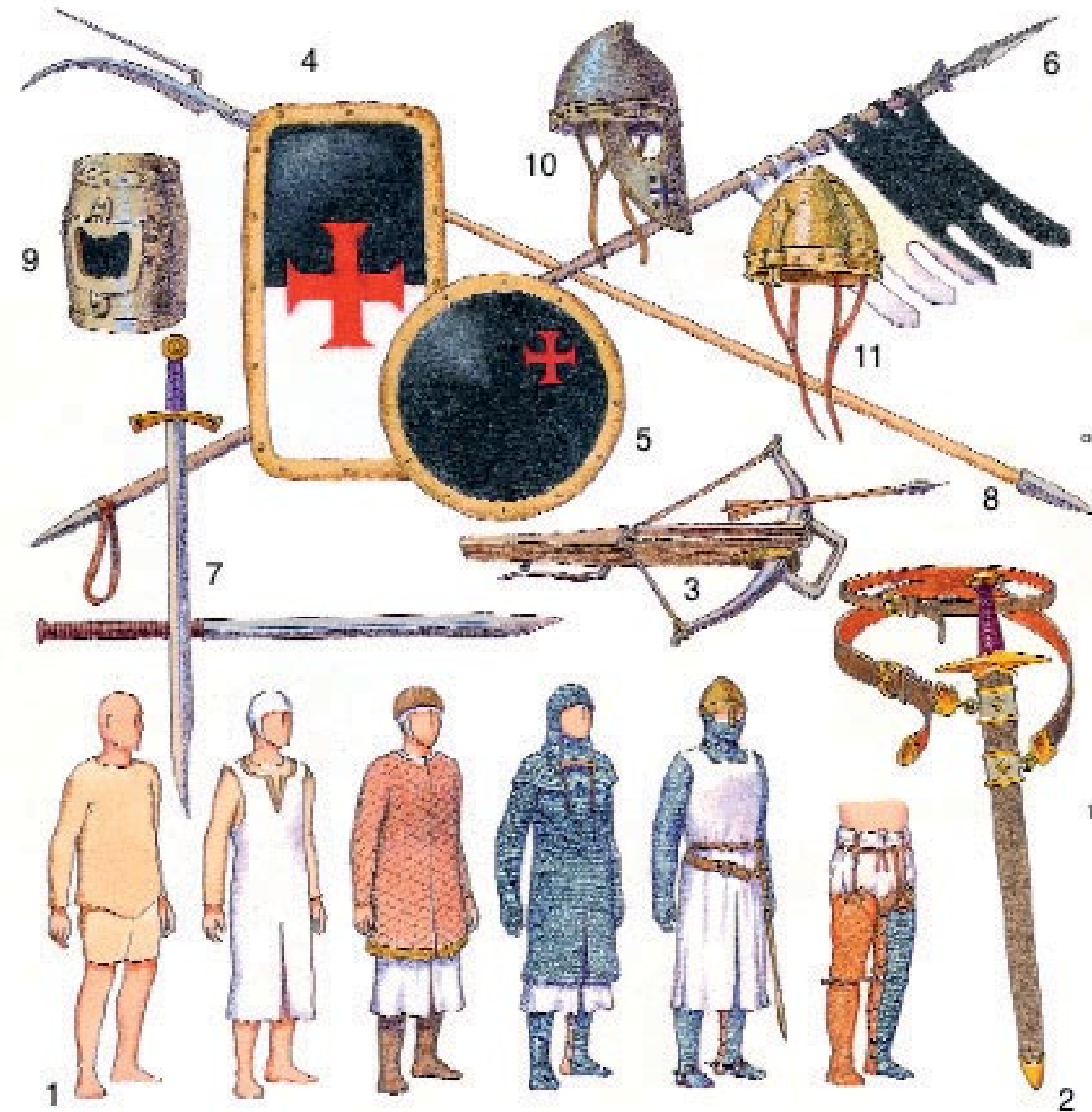
cloth shirt. Later, this shirt became cushioned cotton cloth to better protect the body from the metal.

The majority of the sergeants and poorer warriors had no sleeves to the chain mail. Most, in fact, wore a short-sleeved shirt that left their forearms unprotected. With time, the arms too became totally covered. Even the legs eventually became covered with metal wedges that were tied around the back of the leg with laces.

The chain mail surcoat was complimented with a cap that was secured to the head by means leather straps. During subsequent evolutions, the head, too, became totally covered leaving only openings for the eyes.

### XII CENTURY

1. A knight's full suit of armour Belt and shoulder belt or baldric.
2. Baldric.
3. Evolved crossbow.
4. Infantry shield.
5. Round shield.
6. Cavalry lance.
7. Muslim swords.
8. Infantry pike.
9. Complete helm.
10. Norman helmet with face guard.
11. Infantry helmet.



Most of the knights wore a cushioned leather or cloth cap on their heads to protect the skull from the metal of the chain mail cap.

The vast majority of the knights carried a simple metal helmet, with a band around the rim. Sometimes, the helmet was constructed from a number of metal sheets. Helmets, too, evolved to the point where they covered the whole head, leaving just a small opening for the eyes.

2. - Between the XI and XII centuries, a kite-shaped shield was used by mounted troops. It was designed to

protect the left flank from shoulder to feet. The infantry were equipped with lighter shields, rounded or flat at the base to allow them to be set on the ground.

The shield also evolved over time, becoming smaller and lighter, specially the ones used by the cavalry, to allow the horseman to see over. In the beginning, the shield was decorated with the knight's ornaments, but during the XII century, heraldic colours were added. The Templar rules proscribed any form of decoration on the armour, spurs, or on arms in general, putting a stop to traditional, ostentatious military displays.

## TEMPLARS IN WAR

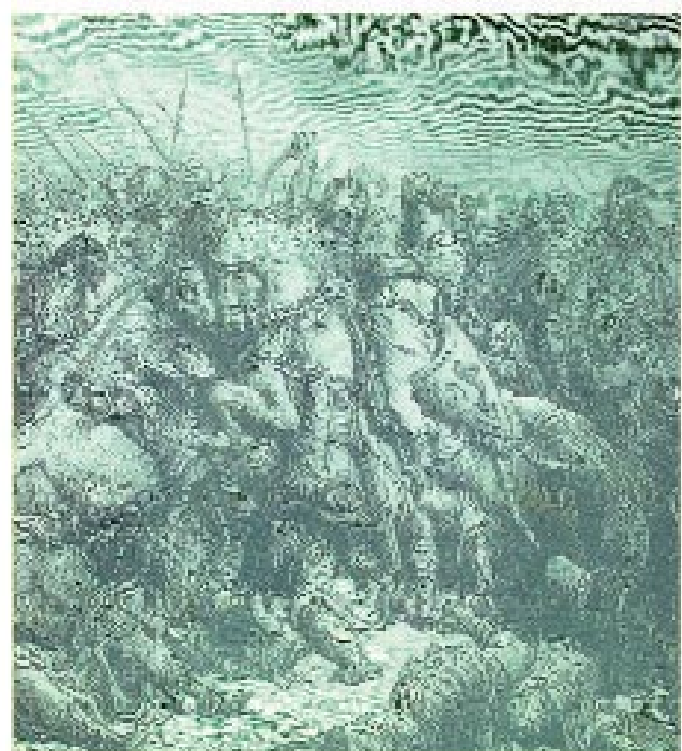
The Templar war scenario did not just take place in the Middle East. Christianity also had another Crusade against Islam, on the Iberian Peninsula, and the warrior monks could fight there without resigning their vows.

Their bravery and effectiveness in combat was evident from the start. So much so that monarchs entrusted their castles and fortresses to them on the borders of Islam.

Donations by royal and noble houses got bigger in terms of land, castles, rents and one fifth of all conquered land. The Christian territory in Spain became dotted with castles and Templar tracts.

The Templars success story spawned a school of followers in Spain, including the Calatrava and Santiago Orders. When the Templars were accused of heresy and were dissolved, many a Brother received assistance from these orders.

Templars received a warm welcome in Spain and Portugal. The conditions of war in Spain made it an



*Templar's bravery pushed them in several occasions to make suicidal cavalry charges against Muslim armies much greater in numbers.*



*Armies were followed by the necessary provisioning.*

idyllic scenario for these monks to develop their Order.

Templars monks participated in the Mallorca conquest and, in consequence, received 20 percent of the territory and a castle near Palma.

Donation flooded in to the Templars from various Royal houses and this cannot just be attributed to their devotion or admiration for the Soldiers of Christ. Templars were an invaluable force for conquering territories and were very close to being a standing army. Kings were very interested in having them on their territories and the Templars, in return, gained in power each time they fought and won a battle or subdued a castle.

The Templar Order took part in most of the battles in Syria, Palestine, Egypt. Each time, the sole objective was to defend the conquered territory.

At the same time, they often entered into alliances with their Muslim opponents; a situation that was



*Even though they have a tremendous Muslim pressure, Franc knights got time to fight among each other.*

looked down upon by their co-religionists who, at times, called these deals treasonous.

These policies of alliances with Muslims powers was not well thought of in the Christian World, especially the one with the sect of assassins of Hassan ibn Sabah, "the old man of the mountain". Eventually, it all went far in consolidating the "black legend" of the Templars as an order of heretics. In fact, the French King, Philip the Fair, would later use these arguments, among others, to proscribe the Order. As mentioned, Templars participated in numerous battles. To gain an idea of the extent of their commitment, 13 Knight Masters out of a total of 23 were killed in battle.

As an anecdote, one should mention the siege of Ascalon, a Fatimite city in the middle of the Frankish possessions.

After many days of siege, the Crusaders eventually created a breach in the wall with their war machines. William of Tyre, the Crusader chronicler, who did not think highly of the various Orders,

wrote, "Bernard de Tremelay, the Temple's Great Master, advanced with his men and placed himself just at the breach so no one could enter they did. He did this to gain more plunder. 40 Templars entered through the wall, while the remainder guarded the breach thus preventing any other Crusader to follow them. The Turks were astonished to see this. All the Templars were slain, along with their Knight Master that day."

From this, it can be deduced that fear was not part of the Templar Brothers make up, nor did the approbation of other Crusaders bother them. It seems absurd to think that an experienced Knight Master like Tremelay, could think that he could subdue the city with a mere 40 knights. The situation can be viewed in a different and more logical way.

When the wall was breached, the Templars, as was usual, were in the van. They entered the fortification, with the plunder in mind, and were followed by the Crusaders. Tremelay prevented the Crusaders from entering the city as he felt that the disorganized Crusaders would not effectively be able to subdue the city. The Grand Master and his band then fought their way forward until they entered a small square and found themselves surrounded by Turks..... and were all killed.

There are many obscure and ambivalent stories like this in the Templar history, and each contributed to its eventual ruin.



*Detail of a fresco from the templar Cressac chapel.*