

# A Legacy of Faith

## Locations within the Crescent Empire

### Introduction

This eBook details two important locations in the Crescent Empire that were founded during the Crusades, that turbulent period when the forces of the Vatacine west were thrown against the different cultures of the peninsula. Scholars have argued for centuries about the true motivations of the Crusades, whether they were just a response to the death of the Second Prophet or a political gambit by the Emperor to secure his position by distracting the Church on their holy war.

While the west was eventually driven out of the entire peninsula and the Church Embargo established, there is a lasting legacy in these lands from these times that will continue to have influence on the development of the entire continent. The two sites here are also important locations for two of the most powerful groups in Theah - the dark knights of die Kreuzritter and the secretive Rose and Cross.



### Hospital of the First Witness

The Crescent city of Zafara is home to the oldest operating hospital in Théah. The Hospital of the First Witness was founded in 308 by an Eisen crusader named Erik Schumacher and his wife Francesca. Erik was serving as an officer in the armies of Emperor Corantine at the beginning of the 3rd century AV. When Malak, the second Prophet, began his march of separation toward the Crescent Empire, Schumacher was the General of one of the three armies that pursued the 40,000 followers to Rahajeel. He commanded the first wave of troops to reach the Prophet's camp early on a Tertius morning that was unusually cold for the Crescent regions. There was no sign of life around the encampment.

Birds were silent, no insects flew in the air and the horses in his cavalry refused to advance. Schumacher's scouts returned with sobering news: the entire congregation lay dead.

As Schumacher entered the camp, he saw no sign of a struggle nor any evidence of illness amongst the victims. He ordered his men to gather what papers they could find and search the food stores for signs of poisoning. Schumacher found himself in possession of Malak's final sermon,

apparently written in Crescent, before the other forces arrived. The rest of the Emperor's army arrived at the head of a great storm that forced them to abandon the scene of the massacre without any answers.

When dawn broke, there was no evidence that the 40,000 followers had ever been there save for the 10 pages of parchment tucked in Schumacher's tunic. The remaining generals joined Schumacher to discuss how to best deal with such mysterious circumstances and eventually agreed to simply return to the Emperor and let his wisdom make sense of the events.

Returning to Numa, Schumacher volunteered to present the story to the Emperor privately, as he had been the only man among them to witness the scene personally. The others refused to allow him to shoulder the responsibility alone so they went together to seek an audience with the Emperor. Erik presented a full accounting of his actions and what he had witnessed outside of Rahajeel that day. As he reached into his tunic to retrieve the papers that had been recovered, the Emperor stopped him. Corantine rose to his feet and walked down from his throne to look the soldiers in the eye before he spoke.

In a soft voice, the Emperor made his decree about the incident, “Generals, your men discovered Malak and his missionaries murdered in a horrible assault by Crescent soldiers. Their wounds were grievous and savage beyond description. Any man in your forces who whispers otherwise calls the Emperor a liar and shall be dealt with as a traitor.”

Schumacher began to protest and again reached inside his tunic for the parchments when Corantine laid his hand upon the general’s shoulder.

“Erik,” he began, “I will not have false rumours about the final words of the Holy Second Prophet urging more Imperial citizens to follow his path to their deaths. Do you understand me?”

The loyal General nodded and withdrew his hand to acknowledge the unspoken order to destroy the document but he was unclear about his Emperor’s reasons behind the official explanation. A good soldier does not disobey his leader; however, these were the words of the Prophet.

Erik Schumacher did not destroy Malak’s final sermon. One year later, the Emperor declared a Crusade to the Crescent Empire to avenge the death of the Prophet who had preached a pacifist life. Before his army was dispatched to the Empire, General Schumacher married a young healer from Numa named Francesca Ghiloni. Francesca had been a follower of the Second Prophet but had been ill when he left for the Empire. She married Erik when he promised to take her with the army as a healer when they marched on the Crescent Empire. Unbeknownst to all including his wife, Schumacher embarked for the Crusade carrying the last sermon of Malak safely in his tunic.

Schumacher quickly found his troops divided into two camps. The first found a righteous zeal in their hearts that carried them through the battles in miraculous ways. The soldiers lived an existence that some called “blessed.” Fate turned for them in every encounter as they escaped countless impossible situations to prevail in battle. The other portion of the troops found themselves lacking the will to engage the Crescents. The knowledge that the Crescents had not truly been the cause for the death of the Prophet sapped their desire for conflict. General Schumacher found himself

amongst this second group and reluctantly realised it would be best for him to resign his position and concentrate his efforts on tending to the wounded and aiding with the supply lines. He was joined by a sizeable contingent of his former soldiers who shared his feelings about the conflict.

Schumacher and his followers began setting up medical stations to tend to the wounded along the supply lines. To survive the oppressive mid-day sun, the soldiers abandoned their old garb for lighter weight white tunics emblazoned with a Golden Prophet’s cross. Although no longer an active force in the Crusader army, Schumacher and his followers often found themselves amidst conflict. Frequently they could be seen leading charges as a means of escape to surrounded forces of Crusaders. When the advance stalled during the battle for Zafara, Erik and Francesca found themselves working harder than ever before.

The initial field hospital was set up next to a well on the western side of the city. A Captain named Marcus Relifori, who had served under Schumacher for years, built tents out of ship sails to shelter the wounded from the sun. Captain Relifori had initially packed the sail expecting to use them as spare bandages. Erik, Francesca, and the remaining loyal soldiers worked under the sailcloth tents with virtually no rest during the first three weeks. As the stories of their efforts spread, aid poured in from grateful units the couple had aided. Another source of aid arrived from an unexpected source.

A Crescent answering only to the name of Khalil appeared at dawn at the beginning of the fourth week. He claimed to be a healer operating a similar clinic treating wounded in Zafara. Schumacher had heard rumours of this man and was intrigued to meet him. Khalil brought with him an interesting offer. His clinic had been overrun by the Crusader forces and destroyed. He asked Erik to allow him to bring several injured children for treatment. Erik agreed to the request after a brief “discussion” about the situation with his wife. Khalil led them back to the remains of his clinic where Schumacher’s men encountered a large group of Crusaders looting the area and threatening the Crescent residents. Outraged at the savage behaviour of the Emperor’s army, Erik Schumacher ordered his own men to



draw their swords and engage the soldiers in the defence of the citizenry.

Since the day Erik Schumacher had left his audience with Emperor Corantine he had been looking for a way to atone for hiding the Prophet's words. He had thought that serving in the Crusade would bring him peace of mind but it had not. His work tending the wounded had helped ease his conscience somewhat but did not grant him the absolution he desired. When Schumacher drew his blade in the defence of the citizens of Zafara, he finally felt a cleansing of his spirit. His followers voiced similar opinions in the days to follow. Soon, Schumacher found himself leading a cadre of former Knights self-appointed with protecting the Crescent people from angry Crusaders that had forgotten their codes of chivalry.

While Erik protected the streets, Francesca went to work establishing permanent grounds for the hospital. Khalil proved instrumental in these efforts by finding a suitable building to inhabit as well as aiding with his surgical skills and "connections" throughout the city. By the end of the year, the Hospital was handling the care for the majority of wounded Crusaders who survived to return to their homes.

Francesca and Khalil discussed a litany of names for their hospital. The two sought a name that would inspire all to the sanctity of faith in Theus and the power of humanity to care for one another. It also held a second meaning to the men who followed Erik Schumacher. Those who had stood in service to General Schumacher had been the first witnesses to the atrocity that had inspired this conflict. Every member of the unit held to the notion that the success of the Hospital would help them move along the path of salvation from their sin of silence.

In Nonus 310 AV, Francesca and Erik celebrated the birth of their son, Marcus. The child was sickly and complications with the birth left Francesca bed-ridden for months. Khalil and Erik spent every effort to care

for the infant and many hours discussing life and their beliefs in the Creator. It was during these worried nights that Erik revealed the details of Malak's final sermon to his foreign partner and asked him to translate the words in hopes of some comfort during his troubles. Khalil managed to decipher the strange dialect with effort and late one night began read the sermon to the General.

## The Last Sermon of the Prophet

Erik Schumacher and Khalil spent the night re-reading the sermon and trying to decipher the prophecies it contained. The speech held the expected promises of special places in Elaethorum for the loyal followers and spiritual glory through mortal restraint that Malak had preached during his lifetime. Malak's sermon was also laced with something else, several mysterious and sometimes rambling sections of text. The handwriting in these sections was different from the rest of the material. The penmanship of the main text was simple and clear but neither precise nor elegant. It spoke of a man who was compelled to record his deepest thoughts but was more concerned with their sound than appearance. Other sections of the text were very elegant and detailed with many flourishes that reminded Schumacher of



the details he had seen in formal declarations of the Emperor. In other places, the writing degenerated into the feverish scrawl of a madman before reverting mid-sentence to the simple penmanship. In places the words became phonetic spellings of the Teodoran language written in the Crescent alphabet. Over the span of three nights, the two men translated and puzzled over the text to seek the meaning of the second Prophet's final words.

Much of what the men read sounded like any other sermon of the era: the admonishment to avoid sin, threats of damnation, offers of salvation, life in the hereafter, and the like. Several passages, however, made no sense at all. Reading these,

Schumacher was willing to accept that he was not the worldliest man and perhaps he just was not familiar with the references. Others resonated clearly in his head and heart. The phrases spoke of things that Erik Schumacher felt were directly related to him personally. The final two pages were more than either man ever expected. These revelations guided Schumacher for the rest of his life.

The last two pages of the sermon were written entirely in alternating strokes of mad scribbles and the elegant flow of a master calligrapher. Key words, while written in the Crescent alphabet, were phonetically spelled in random languages such as Acragan. The translation was difficult and Schumacher found himself caught up in deciphering its meaning. As he worked on the text, his infant son and wife both began developing further complications in their health. On the third night, Erik abandoned the text to sit with his wife during her final hours while Khalil completed the work on the scripture. The Crescent finished the task in time to whisper the beautiful words of Malak to ease her passing at daybreak. After she was gone, Khalil and Erik sat in a small room and discussed what had really been translated from the pages.

The Vaticine faith has always presented Theus and mankind's existence as part of a puzzle. A puzzle man was meant to solve to find the true reason for his existence. At the end of his final sermon, it appeared that Malak had revealed part of the solution to his followers as a gift. As Schumacher and Khalil read the words they realised they had stumbled upon perhaps the greatest secret in Théah. Malak had left them with the secret of why mankind was created and the purpose they were intended to serve. Between the loss of his wife and the stunning revelations of the translated text, Schumacher was shattered. He barred the door to his room and wept, alone, for the next two days. He emerged with the calm and serious demeanour that had carried him across so many battlefields and summoned Khalil to determine how to best deal with this secret. They agreed that simply revealing this secret would shatter the beliefs of the world and plunge many regions into further wars far worse than they currently faced. Erik was resolved finally to destroy the document. Khalil, being more practical, suggested that it was not their decision to make for

the world and that in time, mankind might become ready to learn the secrets Malak had left behind.

Schumacher, eventually, agreed to preserve the document in a secret location of Khalil's choosing. The final sermon of the Second Prophet was buried in a tomb with the body of Francesca Schumacher. The two men swore an oath to tell no other man, woman, or child of the location or what the sermon contained in its final pages. It would only be rediscovered when Theus wished it to be revealed. Erik placed an honour guard at the door to his wife's tomb. Officially they stood to protect her remains from looters. Only his most trusted men were asked to serve at the door, unaware of just exactly what they were protecting.

## The Black Cross

Schumacher appeared the morning after Francesca's formal funeral with his Knightly vestments folded in his hands. He calmly told his men that he intended to leave the hospital and wander the desert until Theus re-united him with Francesca. The men were aghast that their General would abandon them and his wife's legacy so quickly and begged him to stay. Three times that day he refused their request. Having entrusted Khalil with the care of his infant son, he was resolved to leave in the morning.

As the sunset, various members of the unit sat talking about how to stop their leader from what was obviously a suicidal journey. A young sergeant named Rolf Legler suddenly sprang from the group and climbed to the rooftop where he began to tear down the sails that had come to serve as their symbol in Zafara. The others called for him to stop and show respect for their defacto flag but Rolf was insistent upon slicing the sails into wide strips. He claimed that his idea would save their leader and asked the others to find him some diluted pitch he could use as paint. The others thought him mad but without a better solution assisted him as best they could.

When Erik Schumacher emerged to depart the next morning he was met by the entire force of his soldiers. Each man wore a rough new tabard made of the sails adorned with a black Prophet's cross. The sight of his loyal troops took



Erik awoke for a moment and Rolf stepped forward to speak. The young soldier saluted his General and said, “General, these sails protected us from the first moment we set foot in Zafara. From this day forward they shall guard our spirit from all dangers. For the rest of our days we shall honour the efforts of your beloved wife by changing our badge to the colour of mourning.” Schumacher stood in awe at such a gesture before Rolf continued. “Sir, we will do our best in your absence but we are truly not prepared to handle this duty without your guidance. Please stay and teach us to carry on her mission.”

Erik could not refuse this request and agreed to stay. Over the next ten years, the Knights faced a series of challenges that would have broken them had Schumacher not been there to lead them past their troubles. The Crusaders accused them of harbouring and consorting with the Crescent “heathens.” The Crescent locals often treated them as hated “infidels.” Local warlords looking to control Zafara attacked them as rivals. Through it all, the Knights stood their ground and protected everyone they could. Returning soldiers had begun sending money in gratitude for treating their injuries. As the Hospital began to accumulate funds, Khalil suggested that it was time they built an actual physical building to meet the growing needs of the staff and soldiers. He suggested to Erik that they build the hospital around the tomb erected for Francesca so that she would always be close to inspire their service.

In Quartus 322, the Hospital moved into the structure that still stands today. The event was marked by a pair of deaths that again challenged and reinforced Erik Schumacher’s will to continue. Erik’s son, Franz, and Khalil were attacked during a trip to the local market and murdered by men, allegedly loyal to the Sultán who had been trying to force the Crusaders to abandon their cause in Zafara. The loss marked a sudden change in the activity of the Knights of the First Witness. Mad with grief, Erik took his troops on a binge of grim vengeance. The Black Crosses assaulted every corrupt official and troublesome cadre of thugs. Within fifteen days, Zafara was swept clean of corruption. The government was turned over to more honest individuals and from that day on, order was strictly enforced by the Hospital guard.

During this series of skirmishes, Erik was wounded in his left leg, which forced him to retire from active duty and concentrate on administrating the duties of the hospital. He sent word back home, asking for doctors to travel to the Crescent Empire to serve the order. The response, while not overwhelming, was encouraging. Physicians from western Théah travelled to Zafara to minister to the injured and learn from the local doctors. Rolf Legler took command of the military forces charged with protecting the hospital and began training the new soldiers who arrived to serve with the fabled General Schumacher. This situation continued for a few years until the anniversary of Francesca’s death in 325. On that morning, Erik gathered the last of his original soldiers together told him he had one last request of their service, he wanted to travel home.

General Schumacher asked his men to consider continuing to aid him by either volunteering to stay and serve the Hospital or to accompany him for a final visit to their homelands. The men discussed the merits of both options and formed a complement of willing volunteers to both stay and travel. Rolf Legler opted to stay and took command of the soldiers and Knights. The Hospital itself was left to the care of a recently arrived doctor who hailed from Numa. Erik Schumacher set sail for his homeland with sixteen of his original Knights all bearing the black cross on their chest.

The Hospital continued to flourish and the actions of the Knights soon gathered attention in the Emperor’s court. In Tertius, 331, the Hospital of the First Witness greeted two very important visitors. The first was the return of a pair of the original Knights bearing the body of Erik Schumacher to rest in the tomb with his wife. The General had died in his homeland and requested he be returned to the far away land to rest with his wife. The two knights who accompanied his remains were the only survivors of the sixteen that had left with him a handful of years before.

The second guest was an official representing the Heiropphant who wished to inquire about the activities of the Hospital and their Knights. Rolf Legler was detained for eleven days in a barren chamber with the Vaticine official and his guard. Questions were raised about the Knight’s loyalty to the



Church and the Emperor in light of their actions protecting the heathen locals of Zafara. The presence of Crescent born doctors treating Crusaders in the hospital was met with withering disdain at first. The closed minded Vaticine officials were seriously considering excommunication for the entire group. Legler responded to the charges by declaring, “We were asked to march to this land by the Emperor but we left our homes for our General. We stayed to serve the duties his wife set before us. She was the embodiment of peace and fellowship in these lands and honour demands we finish her tasks even if you deem it shall cost our souls.”

**Sigrun Masthof, Hero ( 7th Sea™ )**

**Brawn 2, Finesse 2, Wits 4, Resolve 4, Panache 2**

**Advantages:** Faith, Membership ( die Kreuzritter ), Miracle Worker, Language: Eisen (R/W), Aldiz-baraji, Tikaret-baraji, Tirala-biraji

**Reputation:** 68

**Background:** True Identity

**Arcana:** Altruistic

**Doctor:** Diagnosis 5, Dentist 2, Examiner 4, First Aid 5, Surgery 5, Veterinarian 2

**Priest:** Diplomacy4, Oratory 4, Philosophy 3, Theology 3, Writing 2

**Streetwise:** Shopping 3, Socialising 2, Street Navigation 3

**Commander:** Cartography3, Diplomacy4, Leadership 3, Logistics 3, Strategy 1, Tactics 2

**Knife:** Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 3

**Rider:** Ride 3

**Sigrun Masthof, Respected Hospital Leader ( d20™ )**

**Eisen Wanderer 4 / Field Surgeon 2:** CR 6; HD 4d8+2d6+12; hp 37; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AC 10; Atk dagger +4 (melee); SQ Evasion, Healing Expertise, Improved Healing, Uncanny Dodge, Ward of the Albatross; AL LG; SV Fort+5, Ref+4, Will+7; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 11; Skills: Appraise+9, Craft (Maps)+9, Craft (writing)+12, Diplomacy+9, Gather Information+9, Heal+15, Knowledge (Economics)+11, Knowledge (Philosophy)+11, Knowledge (Religion)+11, Listen+6, Perform (Oratory)+8, Profession (Tactician)+8, Ride+ 6, Speak Language (Aldiz-baraji, Eisen, Tikaret-baraji, Tirala-baraji), Spot +6; Feats: Altruistic, Faith, Membership (die Kreuzritter), Miracle Worker, Skill Focus (heal)

Sigrun Masthof is the loved and respected master of the Hospital at Zafara. Although now very elderly, she still retains a great vigor and energy that she channels into healing the sick. The recent problems of the Hospital and the political climate worries her considerably, but she tries not to let it show as she tends to her charges.

The confounded Vaticine official returned to Numa with an incomplete report and no explanation beyond a lack of materials for the change in the Knights’ insignia from gold to black. Over the next fifteen years, representatives of the Church would appear annually with more questions and new tabards bearing the original gold emblem of the Knighthood. Every year, Rolf Legler sent them home with no evidence of heresy, disloyalty, or insubordination save for an insistence on tearing apart the new wardrobe for bandages. By 345, Emperor Corantine declared he had no further interest in the Order and it was for the Church to decide what to do with those who would protect Crescents outside the Numan lands.

The Heirophant debated for the next few years and thoroughly reviewed all the information that had been gathered along with letters of support from a legion of Knights who were alive today because of the efforts of the Hospital of the First Witness. It is said that the Heirophant confided to a trusted advisor that it was quite possible for a man to deal regularly with heretics and still maintain one’s faith. In 347, the Heirophant granted the Knights of the Hospital of Zafara with title as an official Order of the Vaticine Church for their services of compassion and healing along with their duty to protect their injured charges. As years of effort to replace the Knight’s shabby black tabards had failed, the Heirophant also elected to grant the order permission to use the Black Cross as their insignia. Rolf Legler opted to use the Eisen dialect pronunciation for the edict and thus came the founding of Die Kreuzritter (The Knights of the Cross).



## Modern Day

The Hospital continues to serve Zafara to this day with unparalleled medical care and training for doctors under the ministrations of the kindly Sigrun Masthof. The Hospital Guard continues to watch over the city as a patrolling force, enforcing the local law. A small honour guard also stands a duty outside a small unmarked mausoleum built in a courtyard at the centre of the hospital of the first witness. No person has been granted permission to enter the tomb and the guard has seen fit to uphold this order to the death on more than one occasion. The men are told that this tomb holds the founders of die Kreuzritter and most are content with that. Occasionally a rumour arises amongst the guard that perhaps there is something more to this hallowed ground, possibly the remains of an early Heirophant, a Prophet or even the embodiment of Theus himself. Obviously such talk is quickly dismissed for the nonsense that it is.



## The Fortress of Tor'Rosa

The castle of Tor'Rosa is something of an aberration on the coast of the Crescent Empire, both in its look and its history. A relic of the Crusades, it was one of the last western strongholds to fall, but when it did eventually fall it sealed the outcome of the conflict. What makes

Tor'Rosa so important is that it was the last bastion of the Poor Knights of the Prophets, the order of fighting monks who were one of the few groups that consistently fought in the Crusades and maintained the tenuous grip of Vatacine holdings along the coast. With the loss of this stronghold, the western nations could no longer land troops or supplies in the peninsula, but were forced to send caravans along the long and treacherous road from Porto Spatia. The rest of the Vatacine port cities fell shortly after, leading to the last ditch attempt by Mad Queen Marietta which led to the disappearance of the entire Lorenzo island.

## Plot Hooks

- ◇ A bedraggled man arrives at the Hospital claiming to be a Vigilant of the Kreuzritter charged with protecting a dangerous Syrneath ruin. He gives a brief description of a temple carved into the side of a cliff and being attacked by blue clothed warriors before dying. Was he a real Vigilant and where is the temple, or was he delusional from sunstroke and lack of water as some may suggest.
- ◇ The sudden death of one of the guards of the tomb at Zafara looks to be natural causes, but some of the evidence suggests a very sly killer is at work. A number of clues lead to the stronghold at Mount Ozayrat and the mysterious Qatihl'i sect of assassins. What interest they would have in the contents of the tomb is a grave concern to the Knights.

## History

At the height of the Crusades when the Vatacine forces held a large swathe of coastal territories that they called Outremer, the self-proclaimed King Balfour of Urfa granted land and territories to various noble families and other factions. Most of the nobles that fought in the Crusades were the second sons of rich families, who sought the wealth, fame and glory which they had been denied at home by the fact of being born later. Various important figures, including a number of Thean monarchs and even the Emperor himself, led various campaigns into the Crescent peninsula. However, most of the troops from those endeavours then went home with their spoils, leaving others to fortify their gains against the overwhelming numbers of the local tribes. As this pattern of expansion and neglect continued, the leaders of Outremer came to rely on the strength and advice of groups such as the Poor Knights, who had been founded by Hugh Allais du Crieux to protect travellers to the area and help the transfer of funds and supplies. The Poor Knights although few in number were a permanent presence and their wealth allowed them to hire local forces, called turcoples,

from the coastal and island areas that had grievances against the inland tribes and so were sympathetic to the Vatacine forces.

Following from major battles, the two sides often entered into uneasy truces in order to deal with their wounded and other problems that arise. During these lapse in fighting, the nobles and Orders of the Outremer poured large sums of money into building a series of stone fortifications in the traditional western style to help defend their acquisitions. The Crescent tribes fought mainly from horseback and the Vatacine Knights were masters of the cavalry charge, so most battles were fast and highly mobile. A Castle with its compliment of mounted defenders could control a vast area of open desert, preventing forces from striking the less protected towns and villages along the coast with the threat of having their supply lines cut. With limited resources available in the area, fleets of merchant shipping brought timber and stone to the port towns, leading to a level of large-scale building almost unmatched in any other period of history. Major ports such as Basra and Tor'Rosa were defended with impressive fortifications, while high points of the interior were topped with highly defensible castles such as the Bastion des Chevaux. The chain of fortified positions gave some stability to Outremer against the constant threat from the tribes, but as time went on the western nations lost interest in the holy Crusade and the flow of troops and resources started to go down. In a battle of attrition the local Crescent people had the distinct advantage and a change in leadership was the only catalyst needed to change the balance. The rise of Salahdar came with the death of the leader of the Atlar-vahir, one of the largest Crescent tribes, whose lands were then distributed among his four sons. Two of the sons threw themselves in the jihad against the Vatacine settlements, determined to retake the important city of Basra. The eldest died while the younger suffered a series of defeats, mainly at the hands of the Poor Knights. The youngest son bided his time and watched events, only when all his brothers had shown themselves incapable of a sustained campaign did he enter the fray. Salahdar knew that the key to control of Outremer was the castles and their main weakness was that the feudal lords who owned them tended to look after their own interests and lands first. He signed a number of treaties with some of the Vatacine lords, followed

by besieging key strongholds of the others. Unable to intervene without risking their own lands, many of the lord defended their own lands as those of their neighbours fell. Salahdar was a patient general, the siege of the Bastion des Chevaux taking an entire year and involving his troops building a stone pathway all the way up the mountainside to the castle ramparts. Salahdar also had a powerful weapon in his arsenal, the trebuchet, a form of catapult capable of throwing boulders weighing up to 1000 pounds which could level stonework in a very short time.

As the curtain of defensive castles fell, the Vatacine forces fell back to the coast where they were helped by the support of the Vodacce navy. Control of the seas allowed the Vatacine Knights to move to where they were needed and prevented the fortified port cities from being successfully besieged. However, although the Vodacce Merchant Princes were faithful Vatacines they were also very shrewd businessmen. With the loss of the hinterland, Outremer had lost access to most of the resources that made the endeavour worthwhile. While the priests still lead the clarion cry to liberate the lands of the Second Prophet, the Merchant Princes simply watched the cost of the Crusades spiral further and further upwards. The islands off the coast were far easier to defend and provided some of the exotic spices and foodstuffs that were selling well throughout southern Theah. The strength of the Vatacine navy gradually waned and could no longer be relied on to resupply all the coastal towns. The remaining Vatacines and Order fell back to their main strongholds, for the Poor Knights this was their stronghold of Tor'Rosa.

Tor'Rosa stands on a rocky outcropping, presenting only a narrow face to the mainland. This was thought to make the castle impregnable, since the castle could be easily resupplied and there was only a small area to defend so the size of the besieging army had no effect on the attack. However, the Poor Knights did not count on the tenacity of Salahdar who viewed correctly that the Poor Knights were the only real threat left in the Crescent peninsula. He is said to have had a high level of respect for the warrior-monks, particular as their code meant that unlike the Montaigne and Vodacce nobles they were not allowed to shave and so developed full beards. This was a sign of manhood in the





Crescent cultures and with their martial skills made them among the most fearsome of the Vatacine forces. It was also true that Poor Knights would not ransom their officers that were captured in battle, again unlike the Montaigne and Vodacce leaders, who returned to the safety of their nations after the payment of large amounts of gold or land. Following a battle in which Salahdar captured the Grand Master of the Poor Knights and four of his retainers, the five men were beheaded in front of the tent in which Duke Raymaund du Lierre-Vallee was bargaining his release.

In the fall of 1291 AV, Salahdar brought most of his considerable force to bear on Tor'Rosa, which included his entire compliment of eight trebuchet. For weeks the Crescent forces pounded the castle with rocks, but succeeded only in breaching the outer wall. The Grand Master of the Poor Knights looked upon the situation and realised that the castle would eventually fall, with his requests for resupply and more forces from Vodacce being politely ignored. His last chance was to send a small delegation to plead the case with the Hierophant himself, so Senior Knight Tibauld de Jardin took a single ship with a few retainers and began the long sea-journey to Castille. However, Grand Master Severy Étalon du Toille knew that this plan was more for morale of his troops than believing that the church would rush to their rescue, so he called together all of his senior Knights and the Quartermaster of the turcoples. The discussion went on late into the night as more stones pounded against the walls of the castle. The next morning the entire Poor Knight garrison prepared to battle. The Grand Master led his mounted Knights out against the Crescent armies that outnumbered his garrison at least ten to one. With him rode a few members of the Kreuzritter who had been trapped in the castle by the siege. The turcopole foot soldiers were left to man the walls of the castle. A single ship sailed from the castle dock out to sea that morning, with only a handful of elderly or wounded Knights. The outcome of the action was as expected, once the initial impetus of the cavalry charge was spent, the Crescent forces encircled the Poor Knights and horse archers slowly whittled down their numbers. The Grand Master dismounted and died fighting hand to hand against the personal guard of Salahdar himself. With the complete slaughter of the Poor Knights on the fields of Tor'Rosa, the

#### **Aryan al-Kalawun, Hero ( 7th Sea™ )**

**Brawn 2, Finesse 2, Wits 4, Resolve 4, Panache 2**

**Advantages:** Ajedrez Master, Combat Reflexes, Crescent Servant, Faith, Warm Climate Conditioning, Language: Théan, Aldiz-baraji, Tikaret-baraji, Tirala-baraji

**Reputation:** 34

**Background:** Vow

**Commander:** Ambush 3, Cartography 2, Diplomacy 5, Incitation 3, Leadership 4, Logistics 4, Strategy 3, Tactics 4

**Servant:** Etiquette 2, Menial Tasks 3, Perception 4, Accounting 3, Haggling 2, Seneschal 2

**Athlete:** Climbing 3, Footwork 3, Sprinting 2, Throwing 2, Sidestep 3, Swimming 2

**Archer:** Attack (Bow) 5, Fletcher 2, Horse Archery 3, Snapshot 3, Trick Shooting (Bow) 2

**Knife:** Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 3, Catch 2

**Rider:** Ride 5, Animal Training 2, Mounting 3

#### **Aryan al-Kalawun, Quartermaster of Tor'Rosa ( d20™ )**

**Crescent Fighter 4 / Wanderer 4 / Captain 1:** CR 9; HD

4d10+4d8+d6; hp 43; Init+0; Spd 30 ft; AC 15 (+5 udp); Atk dagger

+8/+3 (melee) or shortbow +8/+3 (ranged); SQ Cunning Plans,

Evasion, Uncanny Dodge, Ward of the Albatross; AL LN; SV

Fort+6, Ref+5, Will+7; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha

10; Skills: Bluff+5, Climb+7, Craft (Arrowmaking)+8, Craft

(Maps)+11, Craft (Strategy)+9, Diplomacy+12, Handle Animal+7,

Knowledge (Economics)+12, Knowledge (Nobility)+8, Listen+14,

Perform (Oratory)+6, Ride+10, Profession (Servant)+7, Profession

(Tactician)+11, Sense Motive+8, Speak Language (Aldiz-baraji,

Théan, Tikaret-baraji, Tirala-baraji), Spot+14, Survival+8, Swim+7;

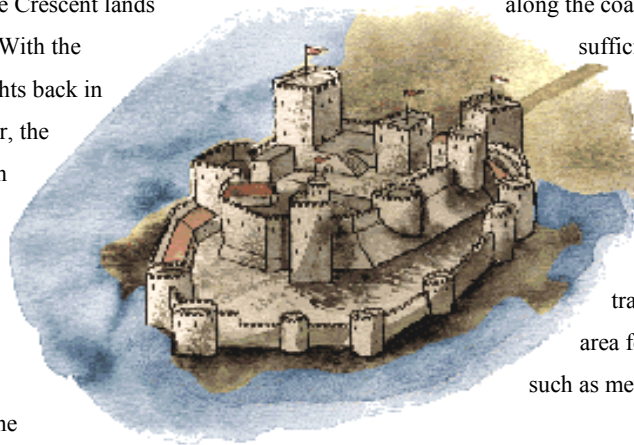
Feats: Faith, Iron Will, Leadership, Mounted Archery, Mounted

Combat, Point Blank Shot, Skill Focus (Tactician), Unarmored

Defense Proficiency, Weapon Focus (Short Bow)

Aryan is the middle aged Quartermaster of the fortress of Tor'Rosa, a position he takes great pride behind his humble exterior. He has served in the position for almost fifty years and just recently has decided that he wants to see the sacred duty of the garrison fulfilled before he dies. To this end he has taken the unprecedented step of sending out the scouting groups and also becoming more involved in the political life of the Empire.

garrison believed that they would be overrun in a matter of days, only to be amazed when Salahdar took his entire army and left. He had defeated his enemy in an epic and honourable battle, freeing the Crescent lands from the Vatacine invaders. With the disbanding of the Poor Knights back in Montaigne sixteen years later, the dreams of a Vatacine hold on the Crescent peninsula was over.



amount of respect. Even though they are no longer in danger of attack, the castle is maintained in high condition and the safety it grants has led to an extended town developing along the coast. The town is quite self-sufficient with a large fishing fleet providing most of its nourishment, with fields of dates and other crops sustained by basic irrigation systems. Flax and papyrus is traded with other tribes in the area for resources that they need, such as metal to maintain their armoury.

## The Aftermath

Following the departure of the Vatacine lords and the Poor Knights from the area, the Crescent lands fell back into internecine fighting between the various tribes. Many of the mainland tribes viewed the islanders as being in league with the invaders, leading to years of minor skirmishes although no major wars. The jihad was over and with the death of Salahdar, the Crescent tribes would not be united in a single cause again for another 70 years. The inhabitants of Tor'Rosa were left in a strange position, they had been left with the infrastructure and training by the departing Poor Knights and none of the main tribes seemed particularly interested in them. Not wanting to risk being viewed as a threat, they quietly rebuilt the castle as well as the surrounding town and quietly tried to disappear from history. Occasionally when a local tribal leader took an interest in their lands, they sent their scouts to find out his strength and support. If he was a weak leader, they gathered their forces for a quick defeat and then hoped his successor was more amenable. When a more powerful Crescent lord arose, they often sent tribute either in the form of crafted goods or the service of their trained warriors.

## Modern Day

Today the fortification of Tor'Rosa remains a slight anachronism in the Empire. The descendants of the turcoples still hold to many of the tenets of the Poor Knights and their fighting styles, while effective, remain basically unchanged since the Crusades. The Crescent leaders tolerate their presence as they are basically the same people and their actions over the years have earned an

The entire area is governed in military fashion by the Quartermaster of the castle, a position that has been passed down and who is, by tradition, awaiting the return of the Grand Master to retake their leadership. With his key advisors, they organise the defence of the area, train new soldiers for the garrison and direct the organisation of the townfolk. The success of the town has led to a certain influx of people, however the leaders carefully control the amount that settles to maintain the balance. People with skills, such as carpenters or metalworkers, are usually welcomed. While this would be thought to make weapons a major export of the town, the craftsmen produce arms for the garrison but they will not sell to any of the local tribes.

Most recently word came to the inhabitants of the castle of the destruction of the Poor Knights so many centuries ago. Not wanting to believe the stories of foreign merchants, the Quartermaster instructed a small group of his most loyal men to venture the long road to the border city of Jesalute to find out for themselves the truth. Following the coast the three men ended up taking a different route than planned and arrived in the Vodacce city of Porto Spatia, much to the interest of the locals who although used to Crescent merchants had not seen anything like these armed soldiers. Word of their arrival quickly reached the Merchant Princes and also the leaders of the Rose & Cross, who are the secret inheritors of the knowledge of the Poor Knights that the men really seek. As of 1670, the race is on to see who reaches the strangers in a strange land first and all the repercussions that their existence and knowledge will cause.

## The Fort Itself

Tor'Rosa may be archaic in the age of cannon and gunpowder, but anyone with a knowledge of tactics who sees the fort will understand why it was the pride of the Poor Knights. The castle is built on a rocky outcropping on a curved stretch of low coastline, with three of the four walls of the castle protected by the ocean. The one side that faces the land is heavily defended, with three separate curtain walls and gatehouses on a narrow causeway. Even at low tide, the only real approach to the castle against this one point. With such as small exposure and the excellent field of vision it gives, well trained archers can hold the castle against the most persistent attackers. Also being built upon solid rock, it is impossible to tunnel under the castle to undermine its foundations as done in many sieges throughout the history of Theah.

The settlement of Tor'Rosa is slightly away from the castle upon the low hills along the coast and stretches for almost two miles. At the southern end on the highest point is a single stone tower which acts as both a rudimentary lighthouse for the port and a watchtower for the surrounding lands. Most of the houses are made from clay bricks in the local fashion, with only some of the older buildings that date back to the time of the Poor Knights being imported stone and in a more western style.

## Plot Hooks

- ◇ Khan Atagun Bahabar seems to have taken an interest in the fortress after apparently seeing a small party of turcoples fighting off a bandit raid. The Quartermaster is concerned that the ambitious ruler of the Atlar-vahir will seek to bring them under his control, although he is unwilling to turn to the Sultan for help just yet. Instead he seeks a small group to go and speak with the Khan.
- ◇ A party that recently returned from the far south happened to require healing at the Hospital of the First Witness at Zafara. Although they are aware of the history of the place, one of the scouts reported that the Hospital seems to still have connection with an organisation in the West.

## Credits

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