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As humans began to grow in numbers, they began to create civilizations for themselves in order to better survive, and as those civilizations grew, there came to be a divergence of roles for people to perform. The most universal of all these was the Warrior Elite, a class of people who were part of the lesser nobility and would function as officers and generals in times of conflict. For Japan it was the Samurai, for Iran it was the Persian Immortals, and for Europe in the 9th to late 15th century, there was the Knights. Let us look at what knights were, how they grew and changed through history, their eventual decline, and even a few chivalric orders[1].

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[1] A brotherhood of Knights joined together for a specific purpose or cause. Sometimes compared to fraternities.

A staple of Medieval Europe, Knights have been written about in song, legend, and history, and live on in various novels, movies, and video games. Yet many people today would favor the myths about knights rather than the reality of the knights. Many a person has grown up with at least one story about a knight in shining armor on a quest, usually rescuing a beautiful princess from a dreadful foe. Upon defeating the dreadful foe through the strength of his martial prowess, the knight would end up marrying the princess and they would live happily ever after. Some individuals would have read, watched or perhaps even played a video game of the many tales and retellings of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. This is the view of the Knight in Shining Armor is one that many of the Medieval minstrels and the people after the Middle Ages (to about the 1950s) had of the knights of old: an inspiration to every boy and a standard to every man as seen by the statement "Not all knights were good men, but all good men were knights." A good ideal, but ideals are rarely if ever lived up to in their fullest. For in

light of the awe that the stories bring upon us, people often forget the that the knights were still human, and suffered from the same vices and temptations that we all do, and they did not always overcome them anymore than people today do.

Of course, nowadays we of the modern world are above such childish fantasies and have come to acknowledge that there were many lies told by history to paint a golden age. This desire to portray what is "real" has led to a different sort of knight. This one is a trained cold-hearted killer, with arrogance bred by his birth in higher status and brutality born from his "rights." This knight spills more blood during times of peace than in times of war and leads from the rear of the army if at all, and spends most of his time feasting, drinking, and whoremongering. A modern representation for a modern man, but not, I think, for a Medieval Knight. This kind of view probably stems from the fact that knights were considered part of the nobility, those who would have greater privileges because of which family they were born to rather than because of personal skill, and since this is an age where people love to cheer for the underdog, most people think that the nobility, and in conclusion the knights, were corrupt and abused their powers just like politicians and other wealthy individuals do today.

Let us make one thing clear involving the Medieval Knight that is often overlooked by many: he was a product of his time. His thoughts and reasoning were for the location and era he lived, not for all time and everywhere there ever was, is or will be. Furthermore, some elements of the knights are constantly exaggerated by both above-mentioned groups. Were knights good men? They strove to be by the standards of their society. Were knights trained killers? What soldier, be they modern or ancient, is not? Did knights go on quests? Many were the youngest sons of nobles and had no land, so they would travel in order to find their place

the kingdoms and do impressive deed to get noticed. Did they live by the code of Chivalry? They would try, but what that code meant was often interpreted by whoever the knight was serving at the time, as Chivalry itself would not be fully set in stone till near the end of the Middle Ages. Did knights oppress the peasantry? Sometimes, but not always their own.

Knights were trained fighters who would serve a lord in exchange for a place to stay and would follow the orders that they were given by said lord. Most knights were practically born into the role, having started training as a page at an incredibly young age (estimated between 4-7), becoming then a squire in their mid-teens and then knights around their 20s. Aside from being a group of body guards for their lord, a knight would round up troops to fight and functioned as commanders in battle and a heavy cavalry unit in times of war. When there were times of peace, they would function court judges and community leaders, listening to the complaints of the peasantry in order to dispense justice for minor crimes while also making sure the crops were harvested and stored for the winter. As is the case with all of humanity, there were good individuals just as there were bad ones and pragmatic ones who looked after themselves as well.

There is a claim that knights originated from a cavalry class in Greece and Rome, a claim that the knights of England would have eagerly accepted as they were also claiming to be the descendants of Brutus, grandson Aeneas, the mythical founder of Rome who was a prince of Troy before its fall. While many of the Roman institutions survived and some of those whose descendants would later become the knights of the Middle Ages were of Roman citizenship, most of the first knights were in fact the free land-owning middle class that were alive outside of the Empire's borders during the Fall of Rome, and many others were also Anglo-Saxons. With

a lack of a standing army like there was at the height of the Roman Empire, the various Gothic groups began to raid settlements so long as they were not their own people, or if the neighboring settlement was unable to put up a fight. From a desire to protect themselves, the once powerful merchant and nobility who were living at the Fall of Rome began to hire from the Free Middle class as warriors who would protect them and their investments. Part of the reason that the Middle class was chosen was because the lack of available martials and craftsmen meant that the warriors needed to supply themselves with weapons and armor, as well as horses so that they may be able to reach the settlement before the enemy destroyed it. These Anglo-Saxon warriors were rather different than what we would think of as knights, for they were more likely to simply ride to their location, dismount and fight on foot rather than charge at their enemy in full gallop, though this changed with time. While this arrangement worked for a while, there rose an issue of how to pay the warriors, as the various nobility acknowledged that their enemy's gold could be spent just as efficiently their own, and since the Fall had made many of common things they once had scarce. As a result, many of the warriors would be serving multiple nobles at once, giving more focus to whichever one was the highest bidder. In order to make sure that the warriors would only be loyal to one master/lord, as well as save some money, the upper classes that hired them began to offer land instead of gold[i], as the quality and location of land was something that they could use that their rivals could not often match. This would also provide the Middle class with a more personal reason to protect their lord a well as a way them to have greater personal freedom by being able to support themselves. From this desire to ensure the loyalty of their hired help, the system of

government that would later be called the Feudal system was born, and the knight was a critical

part of it.

One aspect of the knight that is often forgotten or misrepresented is the knight's

authoritative power. Knights occupied a sort of outsider status with the nobility, who were part

of a large complex social structure that how much land and personal privileges one could have,

in that to a nobleman being a knight would be an additional title, as such a man could be baron

or viscount or another title/rank as well as a knight, with the other title carrying greater sway

than the title of knight ever did. On top of this, the Law at the time stated that only one

member of a family could hold a noble title at a time unless the individual was married, with

the wife sharing the rank of her husband. This meant that while there were families of noble

blood, many were not actually nobles. Because of this knighthood was a unique status as it was

possible for multiple members of the same family can be knights at the same time, which was

useful as this allowed the sons who did not inherit their father's title to have a way to make a

living.

But the title of knight only gave a horse, weapons and armor to the man to make a living

with. As to how they made that living, there was one of a few ways of a few ways they could do

it. A very common way to do it was to seek an *aventure*, or adventure. To a knight this was the

best way to earn himself a house and (possibly) a wife. The adventure could be most often

done in the form a tournament field, which was a small, controlled (but dangerous) mock

battle. Though often shown in movies and later times as one-on-one combat scenarios, it was

possible for the fights to be groups of 20 vs 20 or higher. Should a knight able to beat an

opponent or two, he would gain the loser's armor and weapons, as well as, if the opponents

were stronger and wealthier than he was, he could gain fame and even ransom these opponents so as to earn more spoils from the fight[2].   Another way a knight may have an adventure was to locate a feud that was happening and offer his services to one side in hopes that victory for that side would lead to a permanent employment in the noble's house.

One key element of the knights is that they were servants. Within the Holy Roman Empire[3] many of the Imperial Knights were essentially noble-born slaves, alongside with the English word being derived from the Anglo-Saxon *cniht*, which can be translated as "servant" (Bouchard). What is more, the motto of Sir John of Bohemia (1296-1346), arguably the best knight that ever lived, was the Latin phrase: "Ich Diene" meaning "I Serve". True, many were the sons of nobles as the previously existing middle class became absorbed into the lower nobility by the time the Middle Ages had become fully established, but they were (if not inheriting a separate title) closest to the peasantry as a noble-born could get. So close in fact that the later appearing Yeoman, considered the highest rank in the peasantry, could become knights during the late Middle Ages, making them essentially the Medieval middle class. Furthermore, during the dawn of knighthood only knights could make other knights, which meant that if a knight deemed a man worthy, he could knight them. It was not until the intervention of the Church that this was changed to only the sons of knights could become knights, making it knights were exclusively of the nobility and either the King, another knight or the Church could create a knight.

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[2] In the event of group battles, the spoils were gathered together and divided equally.
[3] Modern-day Germany

In truth, the relationship between the knights and the Church was always a complex one. The Church had a desire to create a more peaceful society, which meant they needed to curb the more violent attributes of the knights and other warriors in the aristocracy. In order to do this, the Church first placed various rules like the Peace of God that limited the fighting to Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday (SBS) as well as certain times of the year, alongside with different rules for what was allowed in a public war (fought for king and/or princes) and in private war like feuds (Bouchard). However, when these were not quite as effective as the Church hoped, Pope Urban II established the concept of the Crusades, the Holy wars that would have knights fight in the name of God and the Church, in 1095 in order to claim Jerusalem under Christian rule. This allowed the Knights to do their duty in the name of the Christian Church, though they did not always do it in the Christian way. Yet it was through the Crusades that the concept of the Christian knight or *miles Christi* was born. With this information in mind, let us look at the history of the Knights.

The first knights are recorded to have appeared at the end of the tenth century in France. As stated elsewhere, these early knights were not considered part of the nobility but of the free peasants that made up the Middles Class. Through the virtue of his warrior status, these free peasants may be raised to the status of lesser noble, which granted them large tracks of land to govern along with vassals who would work the land for him in exchange for his protection in times of conflict. These early knights also lacked the extensive training that their descendants would receive, as well as often being looked down upon by the nobility, though

some castellans began to reward veteran knights with fiefs[4]. The Knight's rise in numbers and

renown began to understandably make various members of the Church and Peasantry nervous.

Indeed, there was a risk that those of the knights who could not gain a fief would turn into

raiders and pillagers or begin to wander the countryside and deliver justice as they saw fit.

which then led the church to attempt to establish the Peace and Truce of God in the 990s,

sweeping up many people (including some of the knights and nobility themselves) to uphold

these tenants and, while not actually stopping it, greatly lessen the amount of violence that was

done to those who otherwise could not fight back.

Though the concept behind them was born through warfare, the first *official* knights

were not part of a public war till the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. In October of that

same year, William the Bastard (later called William the Conqueror), Duke of Normandy, landed

near the port of Hastings to remove Harold Godwinson, Earl of Wessex, who had claimed the

throne of England when the previous king, Edward the Confessor, was said to have made

William heir to the throne. Harold Godwinson, now called Harold II, rallied his troops, a little

over 5,000 men, to form an Anglo-Saxon shield wall along a gentle slope, making it so that

William's troops, who numbered between 7,000-9,000 in total, would have to climb up the hill

to reach the Anglo-Saxons (Bouchard). Within the pre-gunpowder world, a shield wall was one

of the most effective tactics an infantry could employ, so long as the enemy had no siege

weapons. When the battle started at nine o'clock on October 14[th,] the Shield wall held against

everything that William threw at it until his army feigned a retreat. Feeling the enthusiasm of

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[4] A small track of land which the vassal could build a house and such which would remain in the vassal's ownership so long he was loyal to his lord and/or alive.

their previous success, some Anglo-Saxons broke away from the wall and gave chase, only for

Norman knights to wheel about and cut their pursuers and break through the shield wall's left

wing, ending the Battle of Hastings nine hours after it began (Bouchard). With William's

conquest, the concept of knighthood spread in England and other parts of Europe. With the

knights gaining notoriety, combined with the aristocracy becoming more militaristic, the

knightly houses began to intermarry with the noble houses until the two were

indistinguishable. Knights would participate in the various wars and feuds that happened with

Europe for the next four hundred years, aiding their lords and kings as a key component of the

army. On a slight tangent, it is important to note a difference between Medieval warfare and

what is understood as warfare today. While most people will associate pitch battle with war, it

was much rarer in the Middle Ages, with most of a war consisting of raiding enemy supplies and

towns as well as laying siege to castles in order to gain control of a region. There was also the

practice of ransoming, which meant those taken live after a fight could be freed in exchange for

something else (usually money), and here is records of animals being ransomed as well as

people. Knights also did not fight alone on the battlefield, as they were usually in charge of a

group called a *lance*, which consisted of the knight and usually group of archers with mounts

though the knight was by no means limited to just archers, only that all members of the lance

have mounts for the sake of mobility (Bouchard). But back to the history aspect.

  Knighthood and warfare became further developed in the reign of Henry Plantagenet

(Henry II) who was one of the most powerful rulers of Medieval Europe (Bouchard). Henry II

standardized the arming of both the knights and the freeman infantry in The Assize to Arms

(Bouchard). Henry II also introduced the "shield tax", which allowed knights to escape having to

fight by sending money to their king instead. However, Henry II also removed the Tournaments that the knights used to do, and they would not return until the reign of Henry II's son, Richard (the Lionheart) who implemented a tax so as to make any knight wishing to participate would have to pay to do so.

While there were some changes in Knighthood during the reign of Henry II and Richard the Lionheart, who had likely been knights themselves, it was during the reign of King John that knights gain the most power. King John was not a good leader[5], for he had made several military and diplomatic mistakes that caused to lose nearly all the territories that his father Henry II had acquired, reaching a point where the barons were worried that he would very well lose the country and them with it. It was also the period in which knights made full use of the shield tax and did their best to not fight for him. Rather than perform a Coup-de-tat, they sat King John down and made him sign the Magna Carta, which gave the barons greater power as well as reassert the rights and duties of knights, as well as keeping King John from levying the shield tax (Bouchard).

Perhaps one of the biggest sets of the wars that the knights participated in were the Crusades. As stated earlier, the Crusades were used by Pope Urban to have the knights more violent tendencies to reclaim Jerusalem, but this was only part of the reason for the Crusades. In truth, the Crusades were likely to happen because of the long history of Christian-Muslim conflict.

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[5] There is a reason why no other English monarch is ever named John.

Since the year 634, Muslims had made many incursions against Christian territories, taking Jerusalem in 638 from the Christians who held it since the fourth century, and even launching attacks upon Rome to the point that even the popes were forced to fight them. Muslims would continue to attack Christian territories, claiming areas in the Mediterranean, eastern parts of Byzantine, Large tracks of Spain and had even reached deep into France before being repelled (Bouchard). Upon the rise of a ruler named Hakim, a (possible) madman who destroyed the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, combined with the Turk incursion of Arab territories and conversion to Islam, the Christian's ability to visit important religious site in the Holy land was nonexistent, and the frustration of the situation finally was more than they could bear, so they took action (Bouchard). Pope Urban II gave a public urging for Western warriors to risk life and fortune, to "take up the cross" and retake Jerusalem and the Holy Land for Christians and make pilgrimages safe for them again. Any who died on the Crusade[6] would escape the penance for their sins so long as they were still confessed. Though not always the practice, the Crusades were viewed as a defensive war, with the devout Christians reclaiming the territories that they once had before Muslim incursions. There is a mistaken belief that the crusading knights were greedy and had no real religious devotion to the cause. In reality, most who did go were acting out of love and self-sacrifice, as well as many who went on crusades never got rich from them. The Crusades were, however, where knights had the potential to be their worst, as while there was the code of Chivalry, it was considered to only apply to those of

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[6] This was later changed to just joining one.

the Christian faith, meaning that the knights could treat the Muslim people, or Saracens, as they saw morally fit, similar in a way to how people may act when their government collapses.

The First Crusade began in 1096, with even the Pope being surprised by how many came to answer the call. Starting with Asia Minor and moving east, the First Crusaders managed to claim cities, which were then turned into crusader states, and defeat the Muslim leaders at every turn and managed to capture Jerusalem in 1099. For the first time in nearly four hundred years, Jerusalem was in the control of Christians, and with the goal of retaking Jerusalem complete, many of the crusaders returned to their homes feeling proud, but also a great deal poorer than when they started.

Had the crusaders left more manpower in the crusader states or perhaps if the crusade was a war of conquest instead of defense, the following Crusades may not have even happened. Yet by the year 1144, the Muslim nations had stabilized themselves and launched a jihad[7] against the crusader states (Bouchard). This became known as the Counter-Crusade, and though much longer than the First Crusade of the Christians, it was just as successful. Many of the Crusades that followed the First Crusade were attempts to stop the Counter-Crusade's advancements, yet the unified front of the First Crusaders escaped those of the later crusades, and the defeats combined with the massive expenses needed to establish a crusade began to take its toll on Christendom. In 1291, the last crusader state, Acre, fell and with its fall the European Crusades ended. The jihad, however, did not. In 1299 under a Turkish chieftain, the Muslim Turks, calling themselves the Ottoman Turks, began to launch attacks from Asia Minor

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[7] Islamic holy war.

to Europe for the next three hundred years, bringing an end to the Byzantine Empire as well as the Mamluk Muslims of Egypt, with their attempts to conquer Europe successful beaten back in 1571[8].

While the eight Crusades to retake the Holy Land are the most famous and were ultimately unsuccessful after the first one, the crusades that were done in Europe to reclaim the territories of Europe which the Muslims had control of were much more successful as the Christians did not lose those territories to the Muslims again as was the case with Jerusalem and other sites in the Holy Land. Two major areas were Spain and the Iberian Peninsula, as there were Islamic kingdoms in these places since the seventh century. Many knights that were involved in this reconquest were given some of the conquered territories as fiefs of their own.

Alongside the Crusades, the Hundred Years' War[9] was another major event that shaped the way knights were to be. For a long time, certain parts of France were under the jurisdiction of the King of England, yet because of the failures of King John and his son Henry III (1216-72), the King of England was a vassal to the King of France, making so that if the English King did something his French subjects didn't like, they could appeal to the French King and have that something dealt with. When they began doing this with King Edward III (reigned 1327-77) of England, however, he was unwilling to put up with it, and when other options failed him, Edward III asserted his claim to the French Throne through his mother's family and renounced his homage to King Philip VI of France, who likewise desired to have the French territories that

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[8] The Ottoman Turks attempted to conquer Europe a second time in 1683, with their defeat being seen by some as the last crusade.
[9] Despite its name, the Hundred Years' War was 116 years long, and it was often more both sides raiding and laying siege to one another than pitch battle. Part of the reason that the war took so long was because the Black Death struck in the middle of it.

Edward III held dispossessed and returned to French control. In 1337, war was declared, and

the English launched an invasion of France from Flanders (Bouchard). The Hundred Years' War

had begun. Within the first few battles of the Hundred Years' War, the English held the

advantage, as while the knights of both sides were equals, the infantry of the English, who were

developed styles of fighting against the Scots, were more well-rounded which made them as a

whole superior to the infantry of French. It was during this time that the cannon and the English

longbow was put to use with deadly effect, particularly in the Battle of Crecy where the English

killed 2,000 knights and squires, amongst whom was a blind John of Bohemia, with minimal

losses. The English also employed a tactic known as *chevauchees*, raids that would weaken the

people's belief that the French King could protect them. These tactics led to the early successes

of the English army such as the capture of Calais, an important strong base that was close to

England (turning what would have been a French advantage into a weakness), as well as the

capture of King Philip's successor, John II, who signed a truce with England which required him

to pay a large ransom and give a portion of western France to the English. The truce led to a

political uprising in France known as the Jacquerie, and this in turn led to a new treaty being

formed because the Jacquerie made it impossible for the English to enforce the truce

(Bouchard). The treaty was not held by the English or the French King Charles (reigned 1364-80)

which led to the two countries going to war again. This time, however, the English did not have

the advantage they had before, as the French did not offer them battle like before. As a result,

the English and French developed a series of truces that lasted until 1415, when Henry V took

the English Throne. Henry V was a warrior king and knight who had been in battle since he was

sixteen, and from his experiences in battle he became personally involved in the politics of his

kingdom. An exceptional tactician and one who preferred to lead by example, Henry V

managed to pull off some impressive military operations, which led to the French seeing him as

a continuous threat if they kept trying to fight him. This led to both sides creating the Treaty of

Troyes in 1420, through which a lasting peace was developed in Henry V's marriage to Princess

Catherine of France, which would make their firstborn heir to the French Throne. This treaty

collapsed, however, when Henry V died two years later while his son was only nine months old.

When the fighting after Henry V's death began, France was in a dire situation, as most

the country was either controlled by the English or their allies and the parts that were not had

lost faith in the current French king, Charles VII, who had neither crown or throne. Yet, as if by

some miracle, the French were given the strength and hope to fight back from a most unlikely

knight: A female one. Joan of Arc began to hear what she believed to be the voices of the saints

and went to Charles VII to tell him that God had called her to be the savior of France. After a

background check, the desperate king agreed to send Joan of Arc with the relief force to

Orleans in 1428. Through charisma as well as combat, Joan of Arc became the co-commander

of the French forces and led them from one victory after another as well as getting Charles VII

finally crowned. The victories of Joan of Arc continued until 1430, when she was captured by

the Burgundians and sold to the English; rather than support her as she had done him, Charles

refused to try and bid her from the English, partly from the desire for a diplomatic resolution

with England but also out of jealous fear over the fact that she was more popular than he was

(SBS). After a trial that little more than a farce, Joan of Arc was burned at the stake as a heretic

on the 30th of May in 1431, though she would later be canonized as a saint in the early

twentieth century[10] (Bouchard).

Though Joan of Arc had been executed, the French did not stop their fighting and

continued to tighten the noose on the territories under English control. Despite the tactical

superiority remaining with the English, they had exhausted their efforts during the previous

battles and were trying to find a peaceful way to end the war. However, the English king Henry

VI (reigned 1422-61 & 1470-71) was unwilling to give up the French Throne which he believed

to be his birthright. As the English's efforts were winding down, the French were starting to

rise. With the success brought by Joan of Arc, Charles VII began to gather his forces and

reorganize them into more effective units: militias of archers as well as veteran knights and

men-at-arms permanently stationed in his realm. Charles VII had effectively created the first

standing army in Europe since the time of the Roman Empire. Driving the English forces from

everywhere in France except Calais, the French won the Hundred Year's War, though no formal

peace was signed.

Yet the early success of the English and the later success of the French spelled the end

of knighthood in the long run. There is a common exaggeration that Knights became obsolete

when Europe began to use gunpowder, however anyone who has studied the history of

weapons knows that the earliest handguns were loud and nearly impractical, with the longbow

having greater range than the gun had till long after America was discovered. In truth, there

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[10] Joan of Arc is the only Catholic saint that was put to death by the Catholic Church.

were multiple factors, with gunpowder being only one of them, that lead to the end of the Knight.

The first factor that lead to the decline of the knights was certain advancements in weapons' technology. Perhaps the first and most important of the weapon advancements was that of the pike. Capable of being 3m (10 ft) in length, large rows of pikes several ranks deep had the potential to stop a knightly charge when they got too close, impaling rider and horse before they ever reached the pike men. While the pike men could deal with the knights when they came in close, the longbow was able to deal with them while they were farther away. With the capacity to release up to 12 arrows a minute, a militia of archers would be devastating to the Knight's mobility, as he would have to choose to either go on foot and spend greater amount of time under the volley-fire (as well as being slower in advancing or retreating), or to risk having his horse (usually not as well armored as the knight) underneath him shot and fall, which would pin the Knight down long enough to be killed. These two weapons led to a change in infantry tactics, making them much more capable of taking own cavalry units with fewer losses than before, removing the Knight's domination of the battlefield as a cavalry unit. Gunpowder also played a role in the shifting tactics, as cannons (when first introduced) would scare the knights' horses and cause disorder in the knightly ranks (SBS). Furthermore, the introduction of handguns like the (aptly named) handcannon made wars far more dangerous for knights, as while handguns had the shortest range of the medieval long-range weapons (roughly half that of a crossbow and far less than longbow), the handcannon could pierce plate armor far more easily than any other ranged weapon. Between the volleys of longbow arrows that robbed them of their mobility, the handcannons that cut through their armor, and the

tightly knitted together group of pikes that kept the option fight as individuals off the table, the

death toll of knights went from being few dozen at most to being in the thousands. The

importance of the Knight's role in war was not lost, but with the birth of new infantry weapons,

tactics and the standing army that they created, it had dropped down a great deal, perhaps

even to its origins.

The battlefield was not the only place where the role of the Knight had begun to wane.

Throughout most of the Middle Ages, society had been largely agrarian with the people being

divided (mostly) in three groups: those who prayed (the Church and any branch of their

affiliates), those who fought (Consisting of the nobility and the knights they adopted) and those

who worked (peasant farmers and craftsmen). As Europe began to urbanize, however, the

merchants and townspeople began to gain prominence, power, and freedom, to the point that

there was the development of city-states. As time progressed the cities that these people came

from began to rule themselves and were even willing and capable to take up arms against kings

and other nobility if they felt that their rights were being infringed upon. The city-states, usually

through the money of the trade that was happening within them, had also built walls around

themselves making it so that any knight that attempted to raid them would no longer have the

power and ease they had before, especially with addition of cannons which were ideal in siege

defense. Should the cities not have the means to fight for themselves on their own, the

wealthier ones could hire mercenary forces aid them in battle (Bouchard). As the wealth of

these towns grew, the nobility's desire to be warriors diminished, and with them the social

ranks of the knights. By the mid-fifteenth century, the only knights left were those that were

mercenaries, and they were not the sort who cared about the codes of honor of the earlier

knights (Bouchard). Where the Knight once stood socially was now a gentleman-courtier and a professional military officer. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Knight as a class was gone. And with them, the Middle Ages.

Yet back in the time of the Crusades, knights had formed large groups with one another, known as chivalric orders, and while the knights themselves are gone, some of the chivalric orders still stand to this day, either as a non-profit organization or as a medal that can be earned. Here are a few of the many chivalric orders:

1. The Order of the Holy Sepulchre: One the oldest monastic chivalric orders is the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. Founded 1099 and accepted by King Baldwin I (first crusader king of Jerusalem) in 1103, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre was charged by Baldwin I to defend the Holy Sepulchre and other holy places from Muslim attacks. They had declined as a military order after the Defeat of Acre in 1291 but survived because of priories in Europe. As of

1847, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre has upheld the works of the Latin

Patriarchate[11] of Jerusalem.

2. The Order of Saint George: Founded in 1325 by King Charles I of Hungary, the

Order of Saint George was among the first of the chivalric orders that were royal,

and military as opposed to being a monastic and military order like the ones that

came before it. This meant that the order was not bound to the Church though it

was considered religious confraternity who would work in service for the

common good. Though originally only Catholic, the Order accepted all Orthodox

Christians in 1956. For a few years the Order faded into obscurity until the fall of

communism in Hungary in the year 1989, when it re-emerged as the Knightly

Order Valiant of Saint George.

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[11] An Ecclesiological office and jurisdiction a ecclesiastical Patriarch

3. The Order of the Dragon: Unlike the Order of Saint George which worked for the common good, the Order of the Dragon was founded in 1418 and had a more specific goal: to stand against the Islamic incursions of the Ottoman Turks which was done with varying degrees of success. The Order of the Dragon's claim to infamy is through one of its members, a man known as Vlad the Impaler. If there is a horrible act that Vlad the Impaler did not do, then it did not exist in his time, for people of both faiths thought the Vlad was so evil that even Hell would not take him.

4. The Order of the Golden Fleece: founded during the marriage celebration of its

    founder Duke Philip the Good in 1430, the order combined the myth of Jason

    and the Argonauts with the bible story of Gideon to lay their spiritual

    foundation. Much like the dual stories, the Order of the Golden Fleece had two

    principal goals: to promote God's Glory and to defend the Christian Faith. This

    order was much more elaborate in ceremony and selective in recruitment at the

    beginning as only the highest-ranking nobles could hope to join.

5. The Order of the Tower and Sword: Originally called *The Order of the Sword*, the

    order was founded by Afonso V of Portugal in the year 1459. The members of

    this order all participated in the Portuguese conquest and battles of Africa. The

    Order of the Tower and Sword fell after the conquest of Tangier and Asilah.

6. The Order of Saint Michael: A much later founded chivalric orders, Louis XI of France established this order in response to Philip the Good's Order of the Golden Fleece. Unlike other chivalric orders that claimed some connection to Christianity or the goal of its country of origin, the main purpose of the Order of Saint Michael was to see which knights were loyal to the king. The Order was eventually abolished twice, first in 1790 and a second time in 1830.
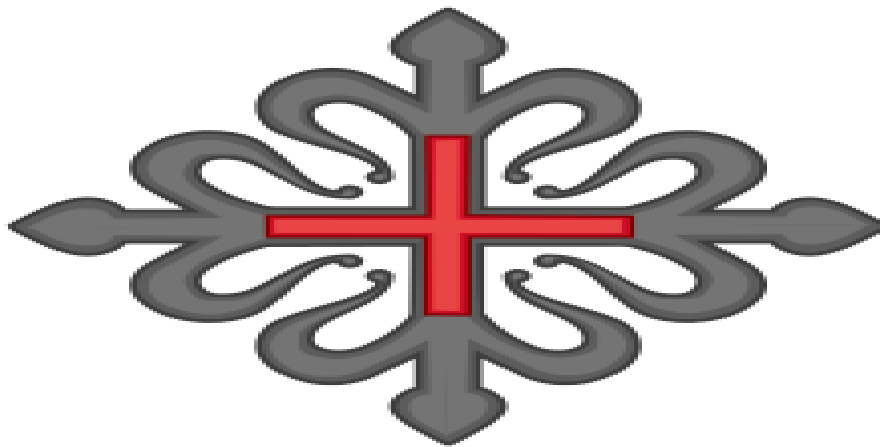
7. The Order of Montesa: With the Templars falling out of favor John II of Aragon created a replacement group stationed in Montesa in 1317. Similar to the Templars in many ways as far as dress in habit went, the Order of Montesa would later be united with the Crown of Aragon in 1587 by Philip II.

8. The Order of the Golden Spur: A chivalric order that is more honorific than a brotherhood like the other orders, was created in the fourteenth century as a way for those who had propagated the Catholic faith with distinguished service to be rewarded. It was absorbed into the Order of Saint Sylvester in 1841 but was restored by the Pope in 1905.

The Knight was born from the ashes of the Fall of Rome, a point in which there was a collapse of the urban world and the standing army that protected it. People desired for someone to fight for them, and the Knight answered the call. The Knight protected and shaped the world he lived in, to which it grew strong and returned to the things it had lost and beyond. Yet as the world the Knight made moved on, the Knight could not move with it, and was left behind. After four hundred years since its conception, Time had finally struck the Knight down.

Struck down, but not destroyed. For knights as a concept, and at times a practice, have embodied virtues and aspects that humans had admired. The Knight may never come back, but his actions shaped a continent, and at the heart of things, he never really left.

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[i] England was semi-excluded from this, as there was not as much land as there was on the continent so the nobles used a combination of land and gold.