

THE HISTORY OF LIONHEART AND THE DISJUNCTION



A HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY

DATE	EVENT
1095–1101	First Crusade
1119	Formation of the Knights Templar
1145–1147	Second Crusade, led by King Louis VII
1189–1192	Third Crusade, Led by King Richard the Lionhearted
1192–1220	The Disjunction: Ramifications in the kingdoms of England and France
1194–1244	Fourth Crusade, against the Storm Dragons
1204	The last known tremor settles. Ireland and Brittany are gone and England has broken into 15 separate islands.
1215	English nobles force King John to sign the Magna Carta.
1231	The Inquisition is formed.
1241	The Great Khan Ogedei cheats death and binds with the Fell Spirit Weichi, allowing Batu Kahn to continue his Eastern European campaign.
1243	After completing the Fourth Crusade, western forces engage the Mongols.
1249	The Mongols reach Italy, forcing the Holy See to move to Spain.
1250	A coalition of eastern and western forces finally forces the Mongols to retreat.
1251	Assassination of the Great Khan Ogedei. Batu Kahn is recalled from his European campaign.
1269–1275	Reconquista against rogue Wielders.
1316	Famine strikes Europe.
1347	The Black Death takes root in Italy and, by 1351, spreads throughout Europe.
1336–1389	Fifth Crusade, against the Necromancers.
1429	Emergence of Jehanne D'Arc (Joan of Arc). She reunites France.
1433	Jehanne D'Arc is killed in southern France.
1449	Lord Amonsil, the last of the Necromancers, is destroyed in Cairo, putting a definitive end to the Fifth Crusade.
1461–1464	Sixth Crusade, against the Fell Spirits.

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| 1492–1493 | Columbus's first expedition to the New World is followed by his second, which is utterly destroyed. |
| 1521 | Cortés is defeated at Tenochtitlan, ending the age of the conquistador. |
| 1555 | Nostradamus completes his "Centuries" and is branded a heretic. |
| 1586 | Assassination of King Phillip II. |
| 1587 | Galileo is imprisoned by the Inquisition for his heretical use of magic. |
| 1588 | The Spanish Armada prepares to invade England. |

1192: The Third Crusade

In the year 1192, Richard the Lionhearted, King of England, ventured across Europe in the Third Crusade. At the height of this aggression, the fabric of reality was torn, allowing a short but devastating influx of magic and spiritkind to be unleashed across the Earth. Now, 400 years later, an alternate yet familiar history has evolved.

When Saladin's forces failed to pay the tribute the crusaders demanded, Richard's adviser whispered to his king that the Muslims should be punished and their threat ended. The adviser told Richard to gather several holy artifacts so that a ritual could be initiated to bless Richard's forces and curse their foes.

Trusting his counsel, Richard unwittingly brought together several creation relics possessed of such power that they began to undo reality by virtue of their congregation. Earth's material fabric tore, freeing spiritkind and magic to fill the world. Demons and strange beings of power sprang up in hordes in the streets of Acre, surrounding Richard's army.

After suffering heavy losses, Richard and Saladin joined forces to wade through the surrounding hordes. The two heroes wounded the adviser, now revealed to be a powerful mage. The adviser fled, along with a host of the evil creatures, allowing Richard and Saladin to seal the breach. The battle lasted a few hours, but the Disjunction changed history by unleashing unearthly forces across the planet.

Convinced that the ritual must never be done again, Richard and Saladin swore to divide the relics and secure them in their respective lands. The Knights Templar agreed to protect relics in the west; the Order of Saladin secured several relics in the east. These two noble orders banded together over the centuries for a series of Dark Crusades against the evil forces that escaped the Disjunction.

1192–1220 Disjunction: Ramifications in the Kingdoms of England and France

King Richard the Lionhearted was more a warrior than a politician. He assumed the throne after defeating his father in 1189 and embarked upon his crusade in 1190. He left two justiciars to control English affairs and sent his younger brother, John, south to their holdings in Brittany (what would become northwestern France).

After Richard's departure, one of the justiciars, William Longchamp, came into power as the Chancellor of England.

But William Longchamp was not to control England long. Seizing an opportunity, John wrested control from the chancellor and assumed the throne in 1191. Months later, the Disjunction changed everything.

Within hours of the Disjunction, tremors were felt in the lands surrounding the English Channel.

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These earthquakes in Brittany and the English islands terrorized the common populace, but they were minor compared to the great tremor that occurred several days later. England was broken into two islands and, within a month, Scotland became a separate island.

The tremors caused great damage, but even more devastating were the floods caused by a massive rush of seawater onto newly lowered lands.

Ireland suffered little at first, experiencing no tremors or loss of land as its sister islands had. But by 1193, the Irish realized with horror that their island was sinking, slowly slipping beneath the surface of the Atlantic.

Brittany's coasts were also dissolving slowly with each quake. By the end of 1194, Brittany was all but gone. What was once the shore of the Seine River was now a beach stretching to Paris. The ocean slowly moved south, consuming acre after acre of countryside as it approached the Leone River. The lands of England, already broken into eight islands, dissolved at a steady pace.

The Irish fled their island, and Irish refugees began to populate every port city in the region. Within four years of the Disjunction, what remained of the deserted Irish landmass slipped beneath the waves.

Through all this, John ruled England even though his economic power dwindled as his holdings in both England and Brittany vanished into the ocean. With the throne shifted to London, he united the barons in the common goal of protecting their lands and holdings. Titles and lands shifted not with war but with changing geography.

Then, in late 1194, Richard contacted John and forgave him his past treacheries. Richard and John struck a deal whereby Richard would remain King in name, but John would control England as High Chancellor, as long as he continued to fund Richard's ongoing war against the tides of darkness.

It was also during this time that the devastated English first used the new magic unleashed in the world. Not only did magic find use in communication and in the repair and defense of the nation, but it also begat the re-formation of a centuries-gone power group—the Druids. Although originally few in number, Druidic orders began slowly to coalesce and gain power in remote parts of England.

The tremors plaguing the lands occurred less frequently as the century came to a close. Slowly, England emerged as a nation made of many small kingdomlike islands. To tighten his grip over the islands, John formed a pact with the emerging Druidic powers. The secretive Druids became John's greatest ally, and by 1204—the year of the last recorded tremor in England—John had an ironclad rule over his baronies.

But the Druids also demanded much from the throne, and it was rumored that John was their puppet king. Whether the rumors were valid or not, the Church indicted John in 1206 for heretical practices and excommunicated him in 1210.

Problems with the Church meant little to John at the time. His island nation had stopped splintering and now consisted of 15 primary islands. His barons were vying for independence, and he was struggling with his Druidic allies. His woes were compounded in 1208 by the Storm Dragons' invasion of northern England.

They were aware of the threat, but English forces were unprepared for the dragon invasion. In 1208, they lost control of four islands. After the initial onslaught, the English armies were able to slow the advance of the serpent armies. But by 1215, it was obvious the English were losing the fight—almost half their country lay in the hands of the Storm Dragons.

Frustrated, the remaining nobility in England forced John to sign a document called the Magna Carta. The document was intended to increase the nobles' ability to determine England's direction in the war effort, but it would have consequences even more far-reaching. It has been speculated that John signed the pact without the consent of the Druidic powers, which may have been the reason for his disappearance in 1216.

In that same year, King Henry III, a boy of 9, was crowned, and the war against the dragons stagnated into a stalemate that remained until Richard and his armies returned in 1219. United under Richard, England's armies drove the dragons from their islands in 1220.

Henry III remained on the throne for many years, although the Druids directed his actions from behind the scenes. Some suspect that the secret Druidic order controls the throne even in the 16th Century, but little evidence exists to support this.

The English in the 16th century are more open in their view of magic. In many parts of Europe, they are despised as heretics and hated by the Inquisition-controlled nations. But they are among the world's best seafarers, and London remains a center of trade and a haven for those in whose veins runs the taint of magic.

The sinking of Brittany ended in 1197. The land was devastated, but its loss had little effect on France. Continually worn down by invasion and war, France would not be re-established as a major European power until the middle of the 13th century.

1194–1244: The Fourth Crusade, Against the Storm Dragons

After the Disjunction, hordes of magical creatures scattered across Earth. The most powerful were the Storm Dragons, immense reptilian beasts capable of destruction with their claws, breath, and magic spells that could control the weather and summon natural disasters.

Storm Dragons are territorial, so they spread across the planet to carve the landmasses according to their elements. The Frost Drakes flew to northern Europe's icy reaches; the Inferno Drakes plagued the hot deserts of Africa and the Middle East. Thunder Wyrms soared to the Americas. The Kraken controlled the Pacific.

For two years after the Disjunction, King Richard remained in the Middle East to help his ally, Saladin, battle the creatures the cataclysm unleashed. Near the end of 1194, Richard was preparing to march his forces to the west when the Inferno Drakes, led by the terrible desert dragon Hassachrid, swarmed over the Middle East.

Richard stayed to help Saladin deal with the fierce attacks against the holy cities. By 1196, the crusaders had lost half of their forces fighting the dragons with antiquated methods of warfare. Conventional arrows, bolts, and ballistae were ineffective against the thick hides of the dragons.

Near the end of the 12th century, Wielders—humans who had become hosts for alien spirits—started to comprehend the extent of their new powers. They became the first human wizards, shaping a new form of energy channeled through their spirits. The Wielders were invaluable against the dragons.

Their defensive magic could protect troops against the scorching dragonfires and their offensive spells could pierce tough dragon hides. By 1201, Richard and Saladin employed War Wielders to complement their forces.

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As the crusaders turned the tide of the war with magic, the Frost Drakes conquered Sweden and launched a series of attacks against the Nordic territories. For several years, the Frost Drakes raided human settlements, wearing down the defenses of the depleted European armies.

In 1205, the Frost Drakes captured Norway and forced King Inge II into the first dragon-human alliance. Inge's fearsome dragonriders conquered the remaining Nordic territories, then turned their fury south.

By 1210, word reached a war-weary King Richard that Europe was in dire straits. Without the Knights Templar guarding the homeland, the Frost Drakes tore through Europe's defenses, conquering the Germanic territories and large parts of England and France.

Richard turned to the Wielders for a rapid means of transporting his army west. The Wielders, still novices, told Richard of a hazardous transportation magic involving the use of raw earth magic. Desperate to prevent the fall of European kingdoms, Richard ordered the Wielders to invoke a spell that would create a magical route through the Earth.

The Wielders combined their power and summoned magical crystals from the ground—a reckless spell that resulted in the sprouting of many such crystals randomly across the Earth. The crystals were empowered with various effects and some proved to be hazardous, but the Wielders were able to form a few stable bridges between Europe and the Middle East, saving the crusaders months of travel time.

When Richard's forces arrived through the portals, the Knights Templar and the Order of Saladin who accompanied them engaged the Frost Drakes, starting the long campaign to push the dragons out of continental Europe.

By the year 1218, Germany and France had been liberated, and in 1220, England was also free of the dragons. In 1222, the crusaders marshaled a navy to sail against the dragons in Norway and attack the heart of the dragon's empire, the glacial fortress of Icingspire.

The sea invasion proved disastrous, as the Frost Drakes summoned their water brethren, the Kraken, to aid them. Tidal waves and monsoons summoned by the sea-dwelling dragons sank the crusaders' navy. The largest of the Kraken capsized and tore apart the fleet's flagship, the vessel of King Richard the Lionhearted, and it was presumed that the crusader perished in the churning waters.

Richard's loss proved so disastrous that the crusaders could not muster another fleet for eight years, but by 1230, the crusaders landed in Denmark and slowly captured Nordic territory.

As the crusaders continued to rout the dragons, the enslaved Nordic warriors broke free and battled against their captors. In 1239, the crusaders liberated Norway with the help of King Hákon IV and drove the dragons into the sea. For the next several years, the last of the dragons gathered within their near impregnable glacial fortress, Icingspire.

The final battle of the Fourth Crusade took place in Iceland in 1244 at Húnaflói, in The Bay Battle. The crusaders brought ships from every coastal province to siege Icingspire. Armed with magical ballistae forged by the Wielders, and enchanted siegecraft designed to hunt dragons, the fleet assaulted the fortress in a siege that lasted two months and resulted in the extermination of dragonkind.

1231: The Inquisition

The Disjunction caused pervasive changes to many societies around the world. Monstrous creatures roamed the wilderness, and even in the safest streets of the western capitals some humans possessed of spirits cast dark spells against innocents. While the Knights Templar waged war against the organized forces of evil, the taint of dark magic threatened the security of the western cities.

Alarmed by the spread of magic across the world, the European people looked to their rulers and clergy and demanded protection. In 1231, the western kings and the papacy agreed to the formation of the first Inquisition, an organization of disciplined holy investigators trained to seek out and deal with the evils wrought by the Disjunction.

In the first few years of its existence, the Inquisition focused its efforts on exorcising dark spirits and tracking the monsters plaguing the outskirts of the western cities. To this end, the Inquisition worked with the Knights Templar.

Using their combined forces, the Inquisition and the Templars drove organized tribes of monsters away from the cities and into the shadows. But as the Knights Templar expanded their influence outward for greater security, the Inquisition turned its attention inward to root out evils that had infiltrated society. The Inquisition targeted not only evil beasts, but also any "inappropriate" magic-touched beings.

For the Knights Templar, the situation was delicate. The War Wielders had proved valuable in the struggle against the Templars' enemies. But they understood that not all Wielders used their power for good.

As early as the beginning of the Fourth Crusade, the magic-using Wielders had learned that their magical powers allowed them great influence among the general population. Although some Wielders could temper their magic with compassion and humility, others could not resist the urge to seize control, using their magic to subjugate and control people.

In 1249, the rampage of the Mongols devastated parts of Italy, the stronghold of the Inquisition and the Holy See. Eventually, the crusaders pushed back the overextended Mongol army, but not before it had done significant damage. Although they fought valiantly, many Inquisitors died battling the Mongol Horde. Those few who survived fled west to Spain to regroup, but the order would not recover its influence for many years.

After the Inquisitors defeated the Mongols, some of the Wielders became even more brazen, especially with the Inquisition weakened. Children of the first Wielders had already started to manifest their magical heritage's physical traits.

Those descended from magic-users with powerful fire and earth spirits became known as Sylvants, a sub-race of tainted humans with elemental features. The children of Wielders with bestial spirits became known as Feralkins, larger and more powerful physically than normal humans. Demokins, children of Wielders with fiendish spirits, walked in the streets of Europe. Many of these new races exhibited abilities beyond those of normal humans, causing a disruptive rift between the pure and "tainted" races.

By 1260, an alliance of ambitious Wielders consolidated their influence. Some of the more powerful and audacious Wielders proclaimed themselves to be dukes or governors and established minor duchies or provinces within the western kingdoms. Using their magical abilities to expand their influences, these Wielders ruled nearly a quarter of Spain and parts of France by 1263.

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In 1268, the rulers of the western nations and the surviving leaders of the Inquisition convinced the Knights Templar of the need to contain the Wielders, to ensure the hegemony of the pureblood race. The Inquisition passed a series of edicts to protect citizens against magic abuses and to punish those who illegally used magic. The Inquisition used these edicts as pretense to move against Wielders entrenched in the European governments.

While some of the good War Wielders loyal to the Knights Templar accepted and understood the Inquisition's edicts, many other Wielders did not, and attacked Inquisitors attempting to reclaim their lands.

In 1269, the Spanish Inquisition formed to reclaim the lands of Spain taken by the Wielders. The Inquisitors launched the Reconquista, or Reconquest, a series of magical battles that engulfed Spain and France in civil war. The rogue Wielders summoned terrible elemental forces while the Inquisitors invoked Divine Magic against the rebels. The loss of life, both pureblood and tainted, was staggering.

The Reconquista lasted six years. By 1275, the Inquisition had vanquished the rogue Wielders. The War Wielders still loyal to the Templars distanced themselves from the evil wizards who had controlled parts of Europe. The Inquisition still regarded wizards with deep suspicion, however, and would never allow them to gain influence over the public again.

Many years of continuous scrutiny of Wielders followed, and more edicts restricted the movements of wizards and the tainted races. In 1343, the Spanish Inquisition decreed a union with any non-divine spirit to be a heretical offence. To escape persecution, some Wielders once loyal to the Knights Templar fled to England, where restrictions against magic use were less severe.

The Inquisition created a clear distinction between magic generated by divine spirits and other magic, and deemed only Divine Magic acceptable. Wielders who openly used magic soon found themselves in the Inquisition's dreaded chambers with little hope of escape. Other Wielders used magic to conceal themselves, yet the Inquisition tracked them down despite such sorcery.

Conditions never improved for those born with visible marks of sorcery. The tainted races were subjected to nighttime raids of their homes by the Inquisition, and to countless trials and interrogations. Many Sylvants, Feralkins, and Demokins eventually integrated into society, but those visibly tainted by magic were treated as second-class citizens.

In 1421, after the crusade against the Fell Spirits further polarized public opinion against spiritkind and the tainted races, Grand Inquisitor Tomas de Torquemada launched a campaign to purge Spain, France, and Italy of magic-users. Torquemada brought thousands of suspected wizards before the Inquisition to stand trial on using heretical magic. Some of the accused were Wielders, but many wrongfully accused innocents suffered or perished as a result of the interrogations.

Now, more than a century later, the Inquisition has driven the practice of magic underground. Few foolish wizards openly cast spells, for fear of never being seen again. Rumors abound that some clever wizards have managed to form secret havens in the larger cities where Wielders can gather safely, although the Inquisition's constant vigilance makes such shelters unlikely.

1241: Invasion of the Golden Horde

The Great Khan Ogedei cheated death by binding with the Fell Spirit Weichi. Because Ogedei did not die, Batu Khan would not be recalled from his European campaign as in conventional history. For a year, Batu's forces surged west, destroying enemy armies that were ill-equipped against the Mongol cavalry.

While continuing west, Batu gathered a vanguard force of monstrous warriors—hideous and cruel goblins formed by the union of dark spirits and humans. These creatures adapted to the Mongol style of warfare, mastering the use of crafted short bows while riding swift beast-mounts into battle.

Batu's Golden Horde swelled with goblinoid forces as he cut a swath through the Eastern European territories. Batu's progress alarmed the western nations, already weary from their war against the Storm Dragons. In 1243, the Fourth Crusade against the Storm Dragons ended, allowing the Knights Templar and the western forces to join the eastern forces against the Mongol Horde.

The coalition succeeded in slowing the Golden Horde's advances for several years, yet Batu's forces continued to gain ground. In 1249, the coalition halted Batu's advance in Italy, but not before many Italian provinces felt the savagery of the Mongol Horde. The situation appeared so desperate that the Holy See fled west to Spain, where it has remained.

In 1250, the European armies defeated the Mongol forces through attrition—both sides suffered heavy casualties. Batu dispersed his goblin tribes against the Europeans, sending the monsters through the ranks of the westerners to cover his escape. The Mongols retreated, but a few of the goblin tribes broke through the European forces to race toward the western lands.

As Batu's army retreated, he ravaged more cities, descending upon any nation that had aided the European armies. The furious march erased several powerful forces from history, including Byzantium and the Teutonic Knights.

1316: Famine in Europe

The decade after the Disjunction was a time of suffering in Europe. Cities were destroyed, continents underwent upheavals, and the swarming monsters the Disjunction released pillaged Europe's population. Agrarian communities were laid waste, which led to food shortages and starvation. As Europe entered the 13th century, however, the use of Divine Magic and a smaller population balanced out the Disjunction's destruction. In many places, humans prospered.

In most areas, towns and cities were fewer and less densely populated. In rural areas, farmers grouped together and paid local mercenaries for protection—a farmer working his fields alone often never returned home.

Still, farmers had to work less suitable land, out of necessity. This increased the cost of food across Europe and resulted in occasional food shortages. Europeans used magic to offset these difficulties, and over the course of the 13th century, there was a population boom across Europe.

In 1316, the Inquisition declared the practice of magic to be heresy—even when it was used to offset national food shortages. This edict, combined with an increasing population, caused a famine. By the winter of 1316, almost the entire population of Europe was starving.

The price of grain fluctuated and many farmers switched to more dependable crops, worsening an already bad situation. After a poor winter in 1317, the Inquisition reversed its edict and allowed the practice of clergy-supervised magic to increase the harvest.

But the damage was done. And while some parts of Europe were sufficiently fed, the region as a whole would suffer from a food shortage for more than a hundred years.

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1336: The Fifth Crusade—Rise of the Necromancers

After the Disjunction in 1192, several long-buried pharaohs returned from the afterlife to re-establish their rule over Egypt. In a brief period of civil war, the newly risen god-kings of the Nile battled each other for control of their ancient lands. Many of the pharaohs who arose were returned to the afterlife. A few retreated into Southern Africa to create new empires.

After three decades of war, Egypt came to peace and Ramses II assumed control of the Nile region. The tendrils of Egyptian rule expanded their influence over Africa. This rule would continue peacefully for more than a hundred years.

In 1390, however, a group of powerful dark wizards stole from the pharaohs a Magic Tome containing the secrets of life and death. The Book of Death detailed the art of necromancy, the magic of the afterlife, and death. After studying the book, these Necromancers twisted the ancient rituals and bound dark spirits to dead bodies, creating a powerful army of mindless undead warriors.

Beginning with an attack on the populous capital of Alexandria, the Necromancers decimated the Egyptian forces. As the city burned, the bodies of fallen warriors and citizens swelled the ranks of the undead armies. Alexandria became a city of the undead and the capital of the Necromancers' nation. Within a year, the surrounding African nations had also fallen and the Necromancers and their ever-growing army of undead controlled Northern Africa.

With the Necromancers' advance into Southern Europe and the Middle East inevitable, the Ottoman Empire and the Order of Saladin gathered their forces to wage war. The first attacks came in the winter of 1418. For several years, the Ottoman Empire and the Order of Saladin slowly lost ground to the advancing undead horde.

By early 1428, the Necromancers expanded their terror campaign by sending their bone barges across the Mediterranean and directly attacking European nations. While the undead armies attacked human forces in Asia, Africa, and Europe, the Necromancers sent their most powerful undead creatures to find the hidden artifacts guarded by the Knights Templar and Order of Saladin.

In 1431, one of the undead armies nearly succeeded in wresting one of the holy relics from a secret crypt in southern France. The Knights Templar and the Order of Saladin battled bravely, but the undead marched into the crypt's underground halls.

When all hope seemed lost, the remaining knights allowed a mystic Order of Saladin to invoke a warding-off charm. The spell sealed the crypt—with the knights inside—with a lasting magic to prevent the undead from leaving with the holy relic. Soon after, reinforcements arrived to relieve the knights, but the crypt had already been sealed.

Many years later, all but the Knights Templar forgot the crypt's location, although the valor of the trapped knights was never forgotten.

By the year 1435, the Inquisition turned the tide of the war by embracing Divine Magic's use, a power derived from the spirits of holy ancestors. The Inquisitors discovered that this divine power could drive back or destroy undead creatures, and they secretly ordered magic weapons forged—each imbued with this Divine Magic to help eradicate the undead.

The combined forces of the Inquisition and the western and eastern nations drove the Necromancers into Northern Africa and cleared the Mediterranean of the undead naval presence.

The Inquisition and the Knights Templar hunted and destroyed every Necromancer, to ensure the black arts would never be practiced. In 1449, the knights killed the last Necromancer, Lord Amonsil. Although the exiled pharaohs were innocent of the crimes perpetrated by the Necromancers, the Inquisition viewed them as abominations and dispatched them, allowing the Ottoman Empire to control Northern Africa.

Some remnants of the undead army lurk in dark forests, old graveyards, and tombs throughout the world, but few dare to practice the forbidden art of necromancy.

1347: The Black Death

The plague came to Europe from Asia via the Mongol invasion in 1346. Plague-ridden Mongol invaders laid siege to Kaffa. To make the best of a bad situation, they catapulted their disease-ridden dead over the walls. The Genoese traders panicked and fled to Sicily, taking the Black Death with them.

Famine and overcrowding in the population centers made a perfect breeding ground for the plague. It spread across the continent, killing a third of the human population.

Still, the Inquisition held fast to its 1343 decree forbidding the practice of magic. Many Wielders appealed to the courts to allow them to cure the diseased population, but were answered with imprisonment or worse. The divine Wielders within the Inquisition were too busy ferreting out rogue Wielders to assist the population. Many commoners died.

Ironically, many of the tainted were more resistant to plague. While purebloods died around them, the population of the tainted grew.

Between 1347 and the end of the 14th century, the plague struck Europe many times. Tainted births previously accounted for only a small percentage of the population, but by the beginning of the 15th century, tainted births were numerous enough that the variations in human bloodlines had taken on their vernacular names of Feralkin, Demokin, and Sylvant.

1429–1433: The Campaign of Jehanne D'Arc (Joan of Arc)

The sinking of Normandy and Brittany into the Atlantic Ocean had little effect on France. The country was a collection of feudal territories answering to the king, and much of the lost land was not in possession of the French crown. Disputes between England, Burgundy, and Spain, and encroachments by various hordes throughout the 13th and 14th centuries, shrank the royal domain.

France was able to expand its control occasionally, but by the time the Hundred Years War started in the early 1400s, much of northern France was under English control. Lower France was separated into various duchies with scant alliance to the king.

Famine and the plague had taken a greater toll on the kingdom than on its neighbors, and the continuing wars left the populace burdened. When Charles VII took the throne in 1422, France was in turmoil. The situation worsened as the threat of the Necromantic armies to the south and east began to threaten Europe.

In 1429, when it seemed as if France might lose any remaining European authority, a young woman of 17 named Jehanne D'Arc (Joan of Arc) gained audience with Charles. She persuaded the King to allow her titular command over one of his armies.

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This would have been no easy task for any man or woman, but it was rumored that Jehanne was infused with an immensely powerful divine spirit. Various records state that Jehanne claimed this spirit often spoke to her, and through its power, she may have been able to enthrall others.

Jehanne soon assumed control. Sword in one hand and a banner in the other, she led her army in a sweep across France. Her abilities as a strategist and a leader were remarkable, and within a year her soldiers and most of the populace believed she was a saint. Her army grew in size as she returned area after area to the crown—although most regions were easily captured because of the extended Fifth Crusade.

By 1431, she had reclaimed lands across northern and southern France and had recaptured Paris. France's royal authority stretched from the Mediterranean to Guienne and north to Flanders.

In late 1431, the Inquisition caught Jehanne and put her on trial. The trial was notable for the fact that Jehanne proposed no defense and yet was acquitted. All members of the court of inquiry went insane within a year of the trial's completion.

Jehanne and her armies shifted focus in 1432 and joined with the Fifth Crusade against the Necromancers about the time the Necromancers' forces were plundering France in search of relics.

Jehanne and a vanguard of her men clashed with a massive undead force at a relic's resting place in a series of caverns in southern France. The amassed army and the magic-wielding undead forces caused the caves to collapse, killing her and the rest of her men.

In death, Jehanne became a martyr to the French people, and their support buoyed the French armies. The French forces played a pivotal role in the defeat of the Necromancers, and consolidated French holdings. France returned to the world theater and the French people united under their king for the first time in history.

1461–1464: The Crusade Against the Fell Spirits

Over the course of several long crusades, the European people turned to the Inquisition's leadership for stability. The kings of continental Europe maintained their titles, but discovered to their consternation that true power, the faith and influence of the people, rested with the Inquisitors. Italy, fractionalized and divided since the devastating Mongol invasion, found unity in the Inquisition and became a theocracy ruled by Inquisitors in the early 1400s.

With the threat of the Necromancers neutralized, the Knight Orders returned to their home territories to help rebuild the cities, while the Inquisition moved to establish its power. Those who spoke out against the Inquisition risked being charged with heresy.

In 1461, a respected official of the Spanish government was accused of practicing magic and was brought before the Inquisition as a prisoner. The prisoner confounded the four Inquisitors, however, by resisting their attempts at exorcism, demonstrating inhuman endurance, and speaking in ancient languages to confuse his interrogators.

After days of arduous proceedings, two of the four Inquisitors collapsed from exhaustion. The third Inquisitor fell prey to a strange malady after the prisoner asked to speak with him privately so that he could confess his sins. When other Inquisitors returned, they found the interrogator babbling about the Fell Spirits while the prisoner laughed beside him.

Learned bishops and high-ranking Inquisitors came to examine the man and were frustrated by his openly hostile and resilient attitude. Though these Inquisitors were no closer to exorcising the prisoner's demon, he spoke proudly of ages past, when the Fell Spirits were known as demons to many of the old religions. To the Hindus, they were known as the terrible Daityas, to the Persians, the Daevas. Buddhists knew them as the hungry Pretas, the Hebrews called one of the Fell Spirits Asmodeous, and the Christians feared Lucifer above all else.

Although the official record of the final interrogation with the first Fell Spirit has never been released, it is believed that the Grand Inquisitor visited the Fell Spirit and concluded the interrogation. Torquemada summoned and bound a divine spirit, one who opposed the Fell Spirit on many occasions in the past. According to these historians, Torquemada did not emerge from the Chambers for several days, but succeeded with the exorcism. Torquemada imprisoned the Fell Spirit within the Chambers of the Inquisition, so that its evil could not corrupt others.

Weeks after the Spanish incident, word of the incident with the Fell Spirit spread. It was believed that other such demonic forces had infiltrated governments of other kingdoms.

The Inquisition initiated a campaign to ferret out any other people in positions of power that could be possessed by the Fell Spirits. The resulting hysteria crippled the European capitals, as the Inquisition restricted travel and trade between the cities. Communities turned on each other, and thousands of innocents faced the harsh interrogations of the Inquisition.

In 1463, the Inquisition sent representatives to London to ensure the sanctity of English monarchy. When the Inquisitors requested an audience with Queen Elizabeth, they were allowed to meet her in the presence of her honor guard. The Inquisitors attempted to perform a perfunctory interrogation on the Queen. Offended, Elizabeth had the Inquisitors put to death. The incident damaged relations between England and the Inquisition, and the two forces nearly went to war. However, in 1464, diplomats prevailed and a truce ensued.

By this time, the Inquisition had also curtailed the search for more Fell Spirits. Though many dark creatures were found hiding in the shadows of cities, they could find no evidence of any other dreaded Fell Spirits infiltrating the European governments. This crusade's success was measured only by the hysteria it induced and the number of innocents who suffered through it.

Though the crusade against the Fell Spirits ended, the relations between England the Inquisition suffered irreparable damage. Both the English and Spanish nations built up their navies to protect their trade routes and overseas interests. Over the years, occasional skirmishes flared up, fueling the fires of discontent on both sides.

In 1587, a naval engagement between Spanish and English forces resulted in the loss of many Spanish lives, including several influential Inquisitors and Spanish nobles.

A year later, in the current time of 1588, it is known that the Inquisition has spent many months preparing for a conflict, which stems from the miserable Sixth Crusade. As the Inquisition prepares articles detailing heretical charges against England, the Spanish Armada grows, becoming one of the largest naval fleets in history.

1492: Expeditions to the New World

As the crusaders waged war against darkness, the Western kings sought to rebuild civilization. Others, ambitious rulers, even sought to expand their influence across the world. In the 15th century, Spain sent out navigators to explore the seas and search for new trade routes.

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One such explorer, Christopher Columbus, set sail in August 1492 and barely survived a harrowing voyage over the Atlantic Ocean. He sailed along the north coast of Hispaniola and returned to Spain in 1493, telling the King about the wealthy and powerful New World tribes.

Impressed with his discovery, King Ferdinand funded Columbus for a second voyage in 1493, granting him a small army to establish a New World settlement. Having been knocked off course by terrible storms, Columbus's fleet landed in North America. Columbus ordered his army to clear a swath of overgrown jungle terrain and create a settlement for Spain, La Isabela. Two weeks later, the indigenous tribes, riding monstrous reptilian mounts, attacked and butchered the colonists, killing Columbus and most of his troops. The few survivors of this expedition sailed to Spain in 1494, and spoke of the horrors.

Determined to tame these savage new lands, King Phillip funded several conquistadors to explore and claim these new lands for Spain. One such conquistador was Hernán Cortés. Cortés was given a fleet of ships to conquer the New World. In his first expedition, Cortés established a foothold in southern Mexico and learned of a powerful tribe, the Aztecs, who possessed vast riches.

Cortés returned to Spain with treasures from the New World and requested more troops and resources to attack the Aztecs. In 1521, Cortés received a larger fleet and sailed to join his forces in the New World.

Joined by other tribes, enemies of the Aztecs, Cortés marched his army against Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital. When Cortés laid siege to the city, the Aztecs unleashed a host of terrors never before seen by western eyes. Massive feathered serpents swept down from the city and destroyed the Spanish siege weapons as old Aztec gods walked among the fierce warriors, devouring the invaders. Cortés was wounded in the battle, and retreated to Spain with a single damaged vessel.

The defeat of Cortés's army was the last recorded attempt by European forces to gain a stronghold in the New World.

Today, Hernán Cortés, maimed and coinless, attempts to find funding for another expedition to the New World, but must settle his crushing debts first.

1555: The Prophet Nostradamus

In 1534, a spirit joined with Michel de Notredame, or Nostradamus, a physician from southern France. Nostradamus began to experience strange and frequent visions, dreams of past and current events, and premonitions of things to come. The dreams and visions increased over the years, and Nostradamus saw some of the near-future visions come to pass. Word spread throughout France that Nostradamus was a holy seer, a prophet who could foretell the future.

In 1550, Nostradamus moved to Salon-de-Provence and began writing a series of prophecies. Five years later, he completed the Centuries, a book containing more than 900 predictions. Only a few copies of the book circulated in France, but rumors spread among the populace that the prophet detailed a coming catastrophe that would threaten civilization—a catastrophe rivaling the destruction caused by the Disjunction.

Moving swiftly to prevent a panic, the Inquisition branded Nostradamus a dangerous heretic and destroyed all known copies of the Centuries. Inquisitors scoured France in vain for years to find the prophet.

The Inquisition believes that Nostradamus might have perished in 1587. In one of the seer's most cryptic prophecies, Nostradamus predicted that he would fade from the mortal world and join the spirit world, which most sages have interpreted as a prediction of his death.