On 9 December 1594, Gustav II Adolf was born. From the time of his birth until his coronation, his upbringing involved many lessons in politics, literature, military science, and physical development, making him physically and intellectually rounded. In 1611, his father, Charles IX of Sweden died, leaving the Swedish crown to the young Gustav who was sixteen at the time.

When Gustav was crowned king of Sweden, there was no celebration for the sixteen-year-old had inherited from his father three bloody wars against Denmark, Russia, and Poland, along with financial troubles. However, the boy king would not let these incredible challenges stop him from restoring stability to Sweden and leading his country towards military innovation and glory.

This is the recounting of the dramatic life of the “The Golden King” and “The Lion of the North” Gustav Adolf and the Swedish Empire during *stormaktstiden* – “the Great Power era”.

**Gustav Enters the War**

In 1629, the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II of Bohemia made a drastic move without consulting the electoral princes, his advisors, and the imperial diet as a whole when he announced the Edict of Restitution. This edict took 500 abbeys, two archbishoprics, and two bishoprics that had been “secularized” since 1552 by Germany princes and returned them back to the Catholic Church.
This not only threatened the Protestant princes who sized church land, but indicated how far the emperor would go with his authority at the expense of his own subjects. Ferdinand’s expanding sphere of influence not only threatened the Protestant authorities within his realm, but also Sweden, for they shared a presence on the Baltic, which eventually induced Gustav to invade Germany.

Before Gustav could set off for war against the Holy Roman Empire, he needed to calculate the costs of the war and the amount of supplies the army would need. Upon examination, the Swedish exchequer concluded that it would cost the taxpayer 2,800,000 silver dalers. While the money was being carefully calculated and banked, the spending started immediately to pay the producers to manufacture the supplies and an army to use them. To get an idea of the amount of supplies needed, an infantry regiment of 576 muskets would need 3,000 pounds of gunpowder, 2,400 pounds of lead, and 3,400 pounds of match each month while campaigning.

Early spring 1630, Gustav mustered 13,641 soldiers and placed them to a fleet consisting of 25 major warships along with 75 smaller units and transports. With troops assembled, they boarded the ships.
The Vasa, early 17th century warship, was ordered by King Adolphus and built at the Stockholm shipyard by Henrik Hybertsson – an experienced Dutch shipbuilder. Vasa was to be the mightiest warship in the world, armed with 64 guns on two gundecks. (Dennis Jarvis/CC BY-SA 2.0)

However, the winds were unfavorable, and it took the fleet a little longer than hoped to arrive. On June 25, the Swedish forces quickly disembarked at Peenemunde, which is located on the northern end of the island of Usedom, sent reconnaissance parties out, built field fortifications, and began sweeping the island clean of enemy forces. By July 4, the island was under Swedish control. With a base established, the Swedes could now receive supplies and troops and when news reached the German interior that Gustav had arrived, the Protestant powers of Europe, such as the elector Palatine and Landgrave (Duke) of Hesse-Cassel, saw opportunity arriving, as he had had much of his land stripped away by the emperor.

On July 18, Gustav mustered 8,723 men who boarded fifty-one ships suitable to sail up the Oder River. On July 19, the Swedish forces set sail down the Oder. By noon on July 20, the Swedish forces had arrived at Stettin. Gustav ordered that part of his troops land near the Oderburg castle where he took up position, and after some deliberation with the authorities, the city of Stettin surrendered. Gustav not only established a foothold in the interior of Germany, but also gained a major economical artery.

Before pushing any further south, Gustav decided to stay put in Pomerania to strengthen his
position. However, Protestant support was still lacking. Many began to view his arrival with suspicion instead of opportunity—except for one.

While Gustav remained in Stettin, the large prosperous city of Magdeburg on the Elbe River, in August 1630 rose up against imperial authority and joined Sweden. Not long after the city came under siege and asked Gustav to alleviate them. However, Gustav could do little to help. The reason for this is that if he were to rush to their assistance, he would have to lead his army though the neutral territories of Brandenburg and Saxony. Moreover, he would also have to pass through enemy territory. However, Gustav knew that Magdeburg was under siege by a small imperial force, which could hold out for some time. Of course, it could hold out for a considerable amount of time so long as Count Tilly and his powerful Catholic forces did not aid the besiegers. Magdeburg would have to wait. Gustav had other problems to deal with; the winter and supplies.

The winter of 1630-31 slowed not only the forces of Tilly but also the enemy forces stationed at Gartz and those east and west of Gustav along the coast. The reason for the stagnation of the imperial forces was due to not having the proper attire for the winter, thus causing them to stay put in their winter camps. The Swedish forces on the other hand had been equipped for the winter with fur-lined coats, boots, head covers, and gloves.

While the winter did not stop the Swedish troops, it did slow them down. The reason for their sluggish movement was due to logistical issues. However, logistical issues were not going to stop Gustav when he saw opportunity, as intelligence reports indicated that the imperial forces at Gartz were reduced from 6,000 men. Gustav mustered his forces and moved his troops by foot and flotilla on the unfrozen Oder River on Christmas Eve, and attacked the 4,000 imperial forces remaining at Gartz. The Swedes were victorious. However, victory came due to the garrison being undisciplined and most importantly, many had been out searching for food, thus leaving only a small force to resist.

*Kyller – It was worn by military men, mainly cavalry in the 1600s and 1700s under armor. (Livrustkammaren (The Royal Armoury)/CC BY-SA 3.0)*
With Gartz under Swedish control, Gustav now had a firm hold on Pomerania with the exception of a few smaller besieged garrisons. With success came issues in early 1631, for Gustav lacked the money needed to pay his troops. A man by the name of Armand Jean du Plessis, better known to us as Cardinal Richelieu, came forward and offered Gustav a proposal that would greatly help the Swedish forces continue the fight.

Cardinal Richelieu, French Money, Religion and Politics

The citizens of Sweden were poverty-stricken, and further war at their expense threatened the infrastructure of Gustav’s kingdom if the war became protracted. Furthermore, he had no allies. Denmark could have provided assistance but they remained neutral and were still viewed as untrustworthy by Gustav (even though King Christian publicly expressed friendship, it did not sway Gustav).

![Portrait of Cardinal Richelieu](Public Domain)

One would think that other Protestant kingdoms outside of Germany would have mustered their forces and pushed on into Germany. Unfortunately, many of them were already in war or coming out of a war against a powerful Catholic state. England could have helped but they had just signed a peace treaty with Spain. The Netherlands could have helped, but were busy fighting Spain. As mentioned, Denmark remained neutral; this was due to being beaten into submission and afterwards paid off to remain neutral. Inviting the Ottomans into the war was a possibility but was looked upon as an uncertainty. As for all the Protestant princes within Holy Roman Empire, they either stayed neutral, looking for ways to find peace, or sought outside help to fund their military endeavors. Because of this, the only two powers one could look to help their religious cause were France and Sweden.

France could have entered the war on the side of the Catholics. However, politics was thicker than religious similarities. Because of this, King Louis XIII of France’s chief minister Cardinal Richelieu proposed an entirely different approach. Instead of aiding the Catholic nations in their war, why not aid the Protestants? Richelieu’s thinking was politically strategic. Richelieu understood that if France were to support Emperor Ferdinand II, they would be helping to further politically and territorially suffocate themselves for the powerful House of Habsburg. The only nation and leader battle-hardened and strong enough to curtail the Catholics was King Gustav of Sweden.
Cardinal Richelieu at the Siege of La Rochelle, a result of a war between the French royal forces of Louis XIII the Huguenots of La Rochelle, at the height of the tensions between the Catholics and the Protestants in France. (Public Domain)

Richelieu approached Gustav with the proposal to enter the war with the aid of subsides. Gustav had no issue with this and greatly accepted. However, it came down to ‘name your price’. Gustav asked for six hundred thousand rixdollars (silver coinage used throughout the European continent) a year but Richelieu quickly declined, for it was too much. However, Richelieu concluded that money well spent is money well-earned and agreed to Gustav’s terms with the signing of the Treaty of Bärwalde 23 January 1631. After the parties agreed to the terms, Gustav had one more favor to ask, and that was to make the agreement public. Richelieu disagreed, but understood the circumstances at hand. By agreeing to make the treaty public, this was making a statement that showed Catholic France and Protestant Sweden were united and most importantly, the treaty itself was an invitation to the Protestant states to join the war against the Holy Roman Empire.

The Battle of Frankfurt an der Oder

Six days after signing the Treaty of Bärwalde, Gustav turned his forces back north and headed towards the fortified city of Demmin. In less than three weeks the Swedish forces had captured six towns including Demmin, which surrendered after a siege of two days. While Gustav moved with fluidity, Tilly had to turn west for a moment before swinging north. As Tilly’s forces continued pushing north, he decided to hit soft targets, like that of Swedish occupied Neu-Brandenburg, whose garrison lacked artillery and was secured by only 750 troops. Gustav was quick to respond by mustering 19,000 men to relieve the city but then refrained from doing so. Gustav had the men but his cavalry was largely unpaid German mercenaries who might have proved unreliable.

Therefore, Gustav decided on a far different strategy. He decided that to relieve the city. He would have to move his forces towards Frankfurt. This would distract Tilly and disrupt his communications with the forces besieging Magdeburg. However, when Tilly got word of Gustav’s army moving towards Frankfurt it was too late. Tilly had stormed Neu-Brandenburg and sacked the town. Afterwards, Tilly moved his forces to aid in the siege at Magdeburg in hopes to end it. Unfortunately for Tilly, his forces proved too small to make a difference. To make matters worse for Tilly, Gustav on March 27 had pushed south on the Ober with a force of 14,000 troops and 200 guns, to attack Frankfurt. Gustav also knew that the garrison of Frankfurt consisted of 6,000 soldiers and capable commanders, thus it was imperative to take Frankfurt quickly.
Swedish infantry and cavalry led by the Swedish king Gustav II Adolf march through Frankfurt, 17 November 1631. Cannons firing. (Public Domain)

On March 31, Tilly pulled his forces and headed to relive Frankfurt. However, when he arrived, it was too late. On April 3, the Swedish forces stormed the city, massacred the garrison and sacked the town. Seeing that Frankfurt was lost, Tilly returned to Magdeburg. Tilly’s return was a smart move, for he would have known that Gustav’s forces lay in wait for his arrival. Tilly’s about face from Frankfurt frustrated Gustav. Seeing that Tilly would not take the bait, Gustav tried to negotiate with the electorates of Saxony and Brandenburg that would allow his forces to pass through their neutral territorial in order to reach and relieve Magdeburg of the imperial forces. Finally, on April 20, Saxony and Brandenburg gave permission. Unfortunately, it came too late, for Tilly had assaulted the city and the imperial forces who happened to be unpaid and under-fed, torched the city and killed 20,000 inhabitants. Even though this campaign between Gustav and Tilly was purely defensive maneuvering, the end was clearly a Swedish victory.

The Sack of Magdeburg, 1631. (Public Domain)

The Battle of Werben

Three months later, at Werben, near the confluence of the Havel and Elbe, Gustav established his camp, while Tilly had moved into Hesse-Cassel. The reason for Gustav’s establishing himself at Werben was to keep Tilly away from that principality. Tilly chose Hesse-Cassel to provision his forces and attempted to convince the landgrave to join him. However, the langrave decided to put his support behind the Swedes and thus entered into an alliance with Gustav.
As Gustav waited in Werben, Tilly received a message from Field Marshall Pappenheim requesting that he come to Magdeburg and aid in its defense against the Swedes. After some time, Tilly decided to send three cavalry regiments on a recon mission towards Werben on July 27, 1631. After a few days, Gustav received word of the cavalry advance and quickly assembled 4,000 cavalry and led them towards the enemy force and surprised them at Burgstall and Angeren on August 1, 1631. The imperial forces suffered heavy casualties and lost their baggage.

During this engagement, Gustav himself almost became a casualty. Those who were captured provided the Swedish king with valuable information. He soon learned that Tilly was planning to attack his forces at Werben...

\[Image\]

King Gustavus II Adolphus statue, Stockholm (CC BY-SA 2.0)—

Top Image: The victory of Gustavus Adolphus at the Battle of Breitenfeld (1631) (Public Domain)

By Cam Rea

References


The Maiden of France: A Brief Overview of Joan of Arc and the Siege of Orléans

France, embroiled in a war with England in a struggle over the French throne during the Hundred Years’ War, would find a savior who in turn was a heretic to the English. This sinner and saint was a woman by the name of Joan of Arc. While most people know that the English burned her at the stake at Vieux Marche in Rouen, most have forgotten her military adventures against the English.

The Peasant Girl

In 1412, Joan of Arc (or Jeanne d’Arc) was born in the village of Domremy located in the
Duchy of Bar, France. She was the daughter of poor farmers by the names of Jacques d’Arc and his wife Isabelle. Like the upbringing on any farm, Joan learned primarily agricultural skills. She was said to have been a hardworking and religious child.

Jeanne d’Arc, by Eugène Thirion (1876). The portrait depicts Joan of Arc’s awe upon receiving a vision from the Archangel Michael. (Public Domain)

Joan’s fame came when she claimed to hear the voice of God, which instructed her to expel the English and to have the Dauphin, Charles Valois (Crown Prince of France) crowned king of France. Incredibly, Joan would get her chance to meet with the Dauphin Charles VII when the situation changed for the worse in 1429.

In 1429, the city of Orleans, loyal to the French crown, had been under siege by the English for over a year. With Orleans heavily under attack, the uncle of Henry VI, John, Duke of Bedford and the English regent, advanced with a force towards the Duchy of Bar, which at that time was under the rule of Rene, the brother-in-law of Charles Valois.
Divine Revelation

Seeing that the English advance seemed unstoppable, the young Joan in the village of Domremy, approached the garrison commander, Robert de Baudricourt, and informed him that voices told her to rescue Orleans. She demanded that he assemble some men, provide some resources, and take her to meet with the Dauphin at Chinon. The garrison commander scoffed at the idea of a peasant girl standing before the French Royal Court and sent her away. Not dissuaded, she petitioned Baudricourt’s soldiers, and making accurate predictions about the outcomes of battles (apparently proving divine revelation), was eventually escorted to the Royal Court.

Joan arrived at Chinon on 23 February 1429. Right before Joan arrived, Charles is said to have disguised himself to see if she would be able to identify him, and to test her ‘powers’ as a prophetess, but it was to no avail, because she bowed before him, and said, “God give you a happy life, sweet King!”

After a lengthy examination by the theologians, she was found not to be a heretic or insane. With no mental issues found, they advised Charles to let her do what the divine will had apparently commanded her to do. Charles agreed.
Before setting off to fight the English, Joan wrote a letter to English king and English Regent of France:

**JESUS, MARY**

King of England, render account to the King of Heaven of your royal blood. Return the keys of all the good cities which you have seized, to the Maid. She is sent by God to reclaim the royal blood, and is fully prepared to make peace, if you will give her satisfaction; that is, you must render justice, and pay back all that you have taken.

King of England, if you do not do these things, I am the commander of the military; and in whatever place I shall find your men in France, I will make them flee the country, whether they wish to or not; and if they will not obey, the Maid will have them all killed. She comes sent by the King of Heaven, body for body, to take you out of France, and the Maid promises and certifies to you that if you do not leave France she and her troops will raise a mighty outcry as has not been heard in France in a thousand years. And believe that the King of Heaven has sent her so much power that you will not be able to harm her or her brave army.

To you, archers, noble companions in arms, and all people who are before Orleans, I say to you in God's name, go home to your own country; if you do not do so, beware of the Maid, and of the damages you will suffer. Do not attempt to remain, for you have no rights in France from God, the King of Heaven, and the Son of the Virgin Mary. It is Charles, the rightful heir, to whom God has given France, who will shortly enter Paris in a grand company. If you do not believe the news written of God and the Maid, then in whatever place we may find you, we will soon see who has the better right, God or you.

**William de la Pole, Count of Suffolk, Sir John Talbot, and Thomas, Lord Scales, lieutenants of**
the Duke of Bedford, who calls himself regent of the King of France for the King of England, make a response, if you wish to make peace over the city of Orleans! If you do not do so, you will always recall the damages which will attend you.

*Duke of Bedford, who call yourself regent of France for the King of England, the Maid asks you not to make her destroy you. If you do not render her satisfaction, she and the French will perform the greatest feat ever done in the name of Christianity.*

*Done on the Tuesday of Holy Week (March 22, 1429). HEAR THE WORDS OF GOD AND THE MAID.*

One can definitely suspect that the king of England and the English Regent of France did not take it to be cordial.

**Religious War**

Joan of Arc, as a symbol of god’s will to the French, had turned a generational Anglo-French battle over thrones into a religious war.

*Joan of Arc (Public Domain)*

After convincing the theologians and future king of France that the divine had sent her, she was given armor to wear and a force of four thousand men were placed under her command.
She set off towards Orleans soon after, carrying a white banner depicting Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and two angels.

Fortifications around Orleans at the time of the siege. English forts are depicted red, French forts depicted in blue. (CC BY-SA 3.0)

On 29 April 1429, she entered Orleans. She there met with the commander of the garrison, John, the Bastard of Orleans. Upon meeting him, she demanded that he immediately attack the English. However, John was not ready. While John was preparing with the now additional four thousand troops who accompanied Joan, Joan decided to approach and shout at the English troops. She informed them that she was the one sent by God—the “maiden”—and said to them “Begone, or I will make you go” but the English upon hearing her message, hurled insults back.

On April 30 the Orleans militia, under the command of Etienne de Vignoles, assaulted the English at the Boulevard of Saint-Pouair, but the attack proved unsuccessful. Joan called out to Sir William Glasdale at Les Tourelles stating, “Yield to God’s command.” The English replied by calling her a “cowgirl”. They made it known to Joan that if they captured her they would surely burn her. But even in their anger, they were also cautious.

On May 1, Dunois and a small band of men, along with Joan and some soldiers, left to bring the army back to Blois. During this small mission, the English did not attempt to engage the French even though they knew she was among this small army. Interestingly, the reason for not engaging the French seems to have been due to fear, for the lower English ranks feared that she had some supernatural powers and to risk taking her dead or alive was detrimental to their own wellbeing.

On May 3, the main body of Joan’s relief force arrived. She made it clear to the French soldiers and officers that God had sent her, as she rode in at the head as a priest chanted from the book of Psalms.
With Joan and 4,000 men in Orleans, the Armagnacs (Prominent Orleanists in French politics) attacked the outlying English fort of Saint Loup on May 4 and captured it. Feeling confident after the capture of Saint Loup, the French were preparing to attack the weakest English bastions on the south bank of the Loire the next day. However, despite the win, Joan decided on a temporary one-day truce to honor the Feast of the Ascension on May 5. It was during this truce that Joan wrote a letter for the English stating, “You, men of England, who have no right to this Kingdom of France, the king of Heaven orders and notifies you through me, Joan the Maiden, to leave your country; or I will produce a clash of arms to be eternally remembered. And this is the third and last time I have written to you; I shall not write anything further.”

She gave this letter to a crossbowman and he shot the letter into the English fortress of Les Tourelles. In the fortress, an archer retrieved the message and said, “Read, here is the news!” The English commander replied, “Here is news from the Armagnac whore!” Joan is said to have wept after hearing their reply.
On May 6, the French set off and reached Fort Saint-Jean-le-Blanc. However, they found it empty. The Armagnacs continued to advance. The English appeared outside the fort and attempted a cavalry charge but were defeated and driven back into their stronghold.

With the English bottled up, the Armagnacs continued on capturing another English forts near the Les Augustins monastery. From here, the Aramagnacs held steady on the south bank of the river Loire before engaging the English fortress of Les Tourelles the following morning on May 7.

While Joan partook in many of the battles, she did so from a support role, encouraging the men, boosting morale and confidence, and she also helped many of the wounded before she was herself wounded above the breast by an arrow at Les Tourelles. She is said to have pulled the arrow out with her own hand and dressed the wound with oil. After treating her wound and getting some rest, she noticed French troops retreating from the fortress. She quickly grabbed her standard, and stormed towards the fortress. She stuck her banner into ground and shouted encouragement to the men to fight on.

Sir William Glasdale and his small English force, seeing that they could hold no longer in their earth-and-timber fortress, and after witnessing that Joan was not dead, fled the flimsy ill-constructed fort for the safer stone fortress of Les Tourelles. It was at this moment that Joan saw Glasdale fleeing and shouted to him. “Glasdale! Glasdale! Yield to the King of Heaven! You called me a whore, but I have great pity on your soul and the souls of your men!”

Whether Glasdale stopped or not is up for debate, but during the chaos around them, a French incendiary boat became wedged beneath the wooden drawbridge, causing it to catch fire. Glasdale and his men attempting to cross it to reach the safety of Les Tourelles, did not make it, for the bridge caught fire and soon weakened. The bridge could not hold the weight of the men and it disintegrated and gave way. Glasdale and the men with him went crashing into the river and drowned due to the weight of their armor.

Tables Turned

The seemingly unstoppable French advance caused the English to surrender the fortress, which resulted in a French victory that lifted the siege of Orleans. Nine days after Joan's
arrival at Orleans, the siege had collapsed. This military victory was a major turning point in the Hundred Years war.

Afterwards, more fortresses fell within the duchy causing the English to send forces to stop the advancement but they were in turn defeated. In just a few weeks, the English in the Loire valley were swept aside and Bedford, the English Regent of France, had lost much of his supplies, which greatly crippled any further English advancement for the time being.

Joan partook in many successful military operations until the English eventually captured her.

Joan of Arc and the French army marched toward the defense of Compiègne against the Burgundian army, led by John of Luxembourg, and arrived on 14 May 1430. However, on May 22, Joan went out during a sortie and surprised the Burgundians. While Joan’s attack was effective, the Burgundian forces refused defeat, rallied their forces, and defeated her men.

Joan retreated towards the gates and continued to fight, as she refused to admit defeat. This stubborn will allowed her to fall into the hands of her enemy, for the commander of the town left the gates open long enough for Joan and her forces to enter. However, seeing Joan refusing to disengage and the enemy ever so close to the entrance, the commander ordered the gate shut, sealing Joan’s fate.

Joan captured by the Burgundians at Compiègne. Mural in the Panthéon, Paris. (Public Domain)

After the Burgundians captured her, they imprisoned Joan at Beaulieu Castle at Rouen. After a lengthy imprisonment and trial, the Maiden of France was executed on 30 May 1431.
"Joan of Arc dies at the stake", painted in 1843 by German artist Hermann Anton Stilke (1803-1860). Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. (Public Domain)

Featured image: Detail; Joan of Arc at the Siege of Orléans by Jules Lenepveu [CC BY-SA 2.5]

By Cam Rea

References


Sir John Hawkwood was born into a life on the English countryside that was business and rebellion. From an early age, he sought power and influence outside of England’s borders. He showed off his battle skills in the Hundred Years War and won a knighthood from England's king.

Hawkwood the man was indeed an interesting character: a brilliant tactician, and an equally brilliant politician, but in his life, he would terrorize Italy with armies and bands of mercenaries, amass a great fortune, and cement his place in history as the most famous Anglo-Italian mercenary.
Beginnings of Business

Hawkwood was born around 1320, in the parish of Hinckford, Essex, which is located in the north-central region of the county. Essex County was known for its farming and sheep; it had a thriving business sector that produced cloth and exported raw wool. Essex also produced anti-authoritarianism. In 1381, the people revolted against the crown in a large social uprising. The county of Essex in the 14th century was indeed a business class society that did not take well to authority. This attitude harbored by the locals may have influenced the young Hawkwood early on in his life.

John was the youngest child of Gilbert de Hawkwood, but he shared the same name as his older brother. John’s social situation is contrary to what past historians claimed, said to have come from a low ranking family, and was himself a poor soldier later on in his life. This, however, is not true, for John grew up in a wealthy business family. His father was supposedly a tanner who owned land, and even had a maidservant to take care of the day-to-day chores around the house.

In 1340, John’s father died. The will Gilbert left behind divided the share each child of his received. The elder John got the largest of the share and stayed at home to run the business, while the younger John left home with his share.

Hawkwood The Military Man

The younger John Hawkwood took his share and moved to London. Once Hawkwood made
it to London, he worked as a tailor or a tailor in training, an apprentice. However true this story is about Hawkwood working and training to be a tailor remains in dispute. It is also said that tailors during this period were looked down upon in terms of serving in the military. However, it did not stop Hawkwood, for when Edward III began to recruit men for his army (which he planned on taking to France in order to claim the French throne), Hawkwood tossed the needle for the sword and joined the army along with his neighbors back home – one of whom happened to be John de Vere, his lord back in Essex, and wealthy families such as the Listons, Coggeshales and Bourchiers.

John de Vere assembled an army of 40 men-at-arms, 10 knights, 29 esquires and 30 mounted archers to serve Edward III. Wool was provided to the men as pay; a total 56 sacks of wool was to be brought with them. As for Hawkwood’s role in John de Vere’s army, this remains uncertain. However, it is said that he may have started in 1342 as an archer.

Hawkwood and the Hundred Years War

He may have had humble beginnings in the army, but Hawkwood's ambitious goal was to one day retire to these lands and that goal would start with the battle of Crecy in 1346.

Battle of Crécy between the English and French in the Hundred Years' War. 15th century. (Public Domain)

Hawkwood’s archery skills are said to have started when Edward banned games such as football, cricket, hockey, cockfighting and so on. King Edward wanted his men to focus on archery, particularly using the English longbow. Hawkwood must have been a good pupil when it came to master the bow, for at the battle of Crecy in 1346, he held the rank of captain on the battlefield and commanded a company of 250 archers led by de Vere. After the battle of Crecy in 1346, Hawkwood seems to have disappeared.
Between Crecy and the battle of Poitiers, Hawkwood appears to be only mentioned twice, but in a negative light, so it seems. The first known record tells us he and another beat a man almost to death in a place called Finchingfield in 1350, and then he committed theft a year later. Hawkwood's life outside the military seemed to be like that on the battlefield. In other words, Hawkwood was broke and in need of booty.

These two unflattering events are all that is known about Hawkwood outside the military, for he again disappears in the historical record and it is speculated that he returned to France and rejoined de Vere’s forces and maybe even married one of de Vere’s daughters. Nevertheless, Hawkwood’s case will always have speculation, but one can gather that he did return to France, was married, did have a daughter, and is recorded to have been at the battle of Poitiers in 1356.

In 1356, at the Battle of Poitiers, Hawkwood is said to have distinguished himself in the field of battle by winning his spurs. In other words, John Hawkwood was not just John Hawkwood anymore; he was Sir John Hawkwood, for the spurs he won made him a knight. The recommendation of knighthood that be awarded to Hawkwood was by the Earl of Oxford. After Poitiers, Hawkwood was involved in the raids on Gascony province, particularly raiding the city of Pau. Nevertheless, all well ends well or so we think, for in 1360, the treaty of Brétigny was signed between England and France, thus ending the Hundred Years War in theory.

A few historians mention Hawkwood’s status by the end of the war. The historian Philip Morant from Essex says that Hawkwood was “the poorest of knight,” while Froissart calls him “a poor knight.” Overall, Hawkwood was rich in title, but lacked the wealth to be noble.
This is where his life as a mercenary was about to begin.

Hawkwood the Mercenary

John Hawkwood had only two options in his life; return home as a commoner, or stay in France and become a mercenary. This second option was preferred, as he could make money that would help him climb the ladder of nobility and service.

In 1360, Hawkwood joined up as a freebooter or mercenary group that was called “Les Tart-Venus”, which means ‘Late-Comers’. Men in positions like John Hawkwood were allowed to stay in France and conduct war. The reason is that once Edward III signed the Brétigny Treaty, he gave the order for his men to pull out of France and return to English soil. However, Edward III allowed raids to take place in France unofficially. The reason Edward allowed this was to see if he could gain a much greater deal from the French king. So how did the English soldiers stay? According to medieval author Jean Froissart, King Edward had high-ranking men encourage those seeking to return home to stay in France and continue on their destructive path—and why not? If the English soldiers returned home, they returned to nothing, for they were at the moment unemployed. However, if they turned to face the French countryside, they would soon notice that money was abundant and opportunity for warfare never-ending. All these men had to do was claim no country, as was the case of Hawkwood.

The Great Company and Heaven over Money

In December 1360, Hawkwood and his men arrived at, and captured the French town of Pont-Saint-Esprit, along with the help of other mercenaries, and together they became known as “The Great Company.”

Hawkwood had a much bigger prize in mind, however: the town of Avignon. Avignon was the capital where the Pope, himself lived. Hawkwood saw Avignon as prime pickings, for if the Pope lived there then money was there, for the money that flowed to and from the Papacy was linked with all the major kingdoms of Christendom. Hawkwood and many others saw a great investment in harassing Pope Innocent.

The city of Avignon was surrounded and cut off by the various bands of mercenaries, including Hawkwood’s men. The city had no way of getting food, and the population was slowly beginning to starve, not to mention that the plague was back in France again. The Pope was all but powerless. He ordered the mercenaries to disperse and go home, but the mercenaries said no, so the Pope excommunicated them, but the mercenaries could care less. This left Pope Innocent with one last option. He announced a crusade to come and defeat the mercenaries that surround Avignon.

The Pope was able to summon seven thousand men to go and besiege Pont-Saint-Esprit in early February 1361. However, it failed, and Froissart mentions that the reason why the crusaders lifted the siege on Pont-Saint-Esprit was due to not being paid. The Pope had promised Heaven over money.

Despite the ‘heavenly’ offer, many of the crusaders packed up and returned home while others went over to the “Free or Great Company Side.” Because of this, the Pope and the cardinals debated as to what to do with the mercenaries. In the end, they summoned for a man by the name of Marquis of Monferrato. Monferrato was the Imperial Vicar of Piedmont as well as Lord of Turin. It was his job to hire the mercenaries and to take them back to Northern Italy to fight against Milan. Thus, the Pope paid Monferrato a huge sum of money to decontaminate the land around Avignon of plague, but also to fight Milan. Hawkwood signed up.

It is recorded that Hawkwood was sending money back home to his older brother John to
make the investments for him, which in turn made the family wealthy, even during the plague years, which seemingly did not hinder their economic growth. This could be true, for the Pope is said to have paid one hundred thousand florins to the companies; thirty thousand went to the men, while Monferrato paid the men sixty thousand more florins to hire them. This would have given each man 15 florins apiece, maybe more, for the men in charge of the bands, like Hawkwood, may have been paid more due to rank, but it is not known for certain.

White Company

Hawkwood returned to France in 1361 to fight the French as a part of the Great Company. Hawkwood finally returned and stayed permanently in Italy with a group of Anglo-German mercenaries called ‘condottieri’, effectively ‘contractors’.

Bartolomeo d’Alviano, a Condottieri.  [Public Domain]

A man named Albert Sterz led the condottieri until December 1363. Hawkwood took over the condottieri band of Pisa and reorganize them into the famous English mercenaries, called “White Company.” From then on Hawkwood’s fame grew ever-increasingly due to his men’s military professionalism as seasoned veterans.

In 1365, a man named Egidio Albornoz approached Hawkwood with a war chest of 200,000 florins provided by the Pope. The payment was intended for Hawkwood to attack the Visconti who had been molesting church lands in central Italy for some time. He took the battlefield and did well until he began to lose to Visconti, and Hawkwood made the decision to retreat to the castle of San Mariano.
Hawkwood and his men held out for some time, but due to thirst, they begged for peace. The besiegers led by Albert Sterz (who was once Hawkwood’s friend), knew that it was better to keep these men alive than to kill them, for they were worth money—not as prisoners, but rather as mercenaries. In the end, 2024 men surrendered and all their belongings they had with them was given over as booty to Albert Sterz.

Sterz had won the day and was showered with glory from the people of Perugia. However, Sterz was about to betray everything he had achieved with the Perugian’s. Hawkwood and his men were now in prison, but that was not going to last long. Hawkwood managed to escape along with many of his knights. How Hawkwood did it remains unknown, but when Sterz had found out, he pursued Hawkwood. Hawkwood and his men were on the run looking for money to pay for the men locked up in Perugian prisons. Sterz chased Hawkwood relentlessly until he had to give up. The only problem was that Hawkwood not only escaped Sterz’s grasp, he was now in the arms of the city of Genoa, which happened to seat the most powerful rulers in Italy.

Wealth and Prestige: Glory Days!

Sir John Hawkwood arrived in Milan with open arms to a man named Bernabo. He was the leader of Milan, or co-leader with his brother Galeazzo. Bernabo was a military man who led his men with the sword. So why did Bernabo want Hawkwood to lead his army? He needed an insurance policy.
Bernabò Visconti, lord of Milan. (Public Domain)

Bernabo was eyeing some lands to the south and he needed Hawkwood to lead an army as its general, unofficially, and at the same time mentor a person by the name of Telemachus. Both men rode out of Milan with the newly-created “Army of Saint George” numbering ten thousand in October of 1365.

Battle between condottieri. (Public Domain)

Their destination was the lands of Siena, where they burned and looted for over twenty miles. They also torched Santa Colomba, Marmoraia, Buonconvento, Roccastrada, Berardenga, and the abbey of San Galgano. In addition, Hawkwood defeated a militia raised by Siena, captured its leader, and ransomed him for 10,000 florins. Later Hawkwood changed his mind and brought the ransom down to 500 florins. Hawkwood left the company of Saint George in 1366.
Hawkwood served the duke of Milan again from 1368 to 1372 and then for the Pope from 1372-1377. Hawkwood’s service to the Pope was one of wealth and prestige, for the mercenary extorted a large sum of money from the raids he conducted on Tuscany, which resulted in about 130,000 florins in 1375.

An Ambassador by the name of Peruzzi wanted the people of Florence to rise up against this marauder, but they would not listen and instead gave Hawkwood an annual pension of 1,200 a year with no taxes attached. One can safely say that Hawkwood bled the bank nearly dry in Florence, sparking one of the most famous wars in Italian history, the “War of the Eight Saints.”

Hawkwood not only made more money and gained some lands in Romagna, but he was also unfortunately involved in the atrocity of killing civilian populations of Faenza and Cesena. Overall, the war allowed Hawkwood to take advantage of the Pope’s money. Florence had paid him an enormous amount of money and now the Pope had to pay up to show his support.

After the war, Hawkwood served the Republic of Florence in 1377, but not exclusively. His contract was to command an army of 800 lances and 500 archers for one year. Hawkwood and his men received a double payment each month, making Hawkwood’s share 3,200 florins every month, while each lance got 42 florins, and his archers received anywhere between 16 and 28 florins. Besides his annual pay, Hawkwood sold the entire city of Faenza for 50,000 or 60,000 florins. The mercenary from Essex was making money hand over fist.
With all the wealth and prestige gained by his mixed bag of adventures, Hawkwood was presented another prize—Donnina Visconti, the illegitimate daughter of Bernabo, Duke of Milan. Bernabo gave Hawkwood even more in estates and money as well as gifts of jewelry. The wedding was just more than the union of two peoples in holy matrimony; it was a political union, in which Bernabo now had the most powerful man in Italy in his hip pocket through marital ties. Hawkwood was beyond rich for he owned lands throughout Italy, received a huge pension, along with the money he made by raiding and extorting the various provinces in Italy, including the Vatican.

Hawkwood continued his bold ways throughout Italy, for after the wedding he extorted money out of the Bolognese. He then attacked Faenze, the city that he had sold two months earlier!

In 1381, Hawkwood got a request to be King Richard II of England’s ambassador to the Roman court. However, one of his biggest victories came at the battle of Castagnaro in 1387, in which he showed why the use of longbow and dismounted knights in English fighting tactics won the day, but more than that, it was a series of battles that made Sir John Hawkwood a name to be remembered. Nevertheless, all good things must end, and for Hawkwood, so did life. At the height of his power and wealth, he died of a stroke in 1394.

Sir John Hawkwood, however you take him, was a king among mercenaries.

References


Legendary Riches: Commercial Gains, Trade and Tragedy During the Reign of King Solomon

During the reign of King Solomon, it is said Israel for the first time was at peace with most of its neighbors, according to the Bible. Moreover, peace allowed the United Kingdom of Israel to flourish in commercial activity as well as exploration. This was attributed to Solomon’s nature. Unlike his father King David, who was a man of war, Solomon was believed to be the exact opposite; Solomon was a man of rest or peace, at least when it came to foreign policy. (I Chr 22:7-9)

He was all about building and enterprise, as well as building trustworthy relationships with those around him; such as with his father’s friend King Hiram of Tyre. (I Kings 5.1) King Hiram of Tyre was a Phoenician; the name ‘Phoenician’ was a term the Greeks would use to indicate the people dwelling in what is today the country of Lebanon. During the reigns of David and Solomon, the Phoenicians were known for their trade and the establishment of colonies throughout the Mediterranean Sea and possibly beyond.
The United Kingdom of Israel and the city-states of Phoenicia were not only allies but also joint allies in the realm of economics, from here on out and in greater magnitude than before.

**Wealthy Lands Unknown**

This relationship between the two peoples began after David captured Jerusalem, Hiram “sent envoys to David, along with cedar logs and carpenters and stonemasons, and they built a palace for David.” (2 Sam 5:11) This indicates that before David captured Jerusalem, he was already in a political and economic alliance with Hiram. From this moment, Israel and Phoenicia invested into each other.

The Israelites, along with the Phoenicians had already established trade routes in the Mediterranean Sea; Solomon wanted to expand the routes by building a naval port on the Red Sea at a place called Ezion-geber in the land of Edom. It was here at Ezion-geber that Hiram sent his shipbuilders to construct a merchant fleet for King Solomon, which would be manned by Phoenician sailors and most likely Hebrew ones as well.
Once established, they set off from Ezion-geber towards faraway lands looking to establish new trade routes and to procure new items of commercial interest from the locals. Among such faraway lands mentioned is a place called Ophir (the true location of which has never been determined). Once the ships returned from Ophir, items like gold, valuable almug trees, and precious stones were unloaded off the ships. (I Kings 9:26-28; 10:11) Another land mentioned in the Bible is a place called Tarshish.

Tarshish is of great interest, for it is said to have taken three years to go to and to come back from in total. The ships that went to Tarshish, were made at Ezion-geber, and most likely were launched from there, and made their way back to Ezion-geber or even to one of the cities along the coast of Israel or Phoenicia.

Once they came from Tarshish, such stock and items as gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks were delivered. As to where Tarshish is truly located, it is unknown, but the name is of interest, for the name, ‘Tarshish’ is also the name of a patriarch in the tribe of Benjamin. It could be possible that Tarshish is named after that clan, and it could be possible that portions of the clan were in charge of Tarshish hence the name. (I Kings 10:22; I Ch 7:10)

Rich Arabia

Trade with Arabia was said to be another moneymaker for Solomon. This trade route focused primarily to the south of Israel, and become more significant after the arrival of Queen Sheba.

The Bible makes it clear in the book of I Kings that Sheba wanted to meet this wise man named Solomon. So she sweetened the deal and arrived with a camel trade full of spices, gold, precious stones, and all that was in her heart. Because of this connection, many stories about the two have been speculated upon for generations, but have ultimately remained a mystery. But the meeting, according to the Bible, indicates another economical connection for Solomon’s kingdom.

Not only did Sheba bring in a new trade route to Solomon’s coffers, the word of the event most likely went out beyond the borders of Israel, for then the merchants of Arabia brought spices and even the kings of Arabia all beckoned for trade and wisdom. (I Kings 10:1-10, 13, 15) Moreover, it may well be possible that a connection with the Indian subcontinent was established.
The Copper King

The copper mines were another commodity that were used for building and trade as well. During the time of Solomon, copper was in great abundance, but no evidence of copper mines in use during the 10th century BCE have ever been found through archeological research. However, there may be an answer to this question as to why Solomon is sometimes referred to as the “copper king.”

Solomon was possessed of wealth and wisdom, according to the Bible. (Public Domain)

Solomon’s father, King David was said by biblical records to have hoarded vast amounts of copper through his conquest and possible trade with the Phoenicians. (I Ch 18:8; 22: 3, 14) The Phoenicians during the time of the reigns of David and Solomon mined vast amounts of various metals from their colonies during this period, particularly from the British Isles. So, to say Solomon had no mines is true to a certain extent, but the Bible and historical chronicles suggest that Solomon got his copper from the vast amount collected by David and from the trade with the Phoenicians and their various colonies throughout. Thus, it is partially correct in referring to Solomon as a “copper king”, but must be understood from what you have just read that such a title was due to the vast amounts that were used, especially and presumably for the building of a temple in Jerusalem among other things.

Horses and Chariots

Solomon is also said to have had a fancy for buying horses and chariots with all the wealth he had gained. Solomon bought an abundance of horses from a place called Cilicia as well as chariots from Egypt. (I King 10:28-29) The description from the verse suggests that Israel was not in the manufacturing business of chariots, and thus depended on others to build them for them at a hefty price.
In addition, the reason why Solomon spent money on horses from Cilicia is that they are considered the finest of the region. The same goes for Egypt when it came to the chariot. Why not have the best of both worlds, when you have the money to afford it—especially Solomon who had a vast amount of money, due to trade and commerce.

With such a massive amount of wealth built up, Solomon needed a fighting force that was well equipped, with only the best money could afford in order to protect all that he had gained, whether it was threatened by a foreign or domestic threat.

Because of the lucrative deals and military practicality of the chariot, Solomon continued to buy, and in doing so fortified Israel, for “He built up Lower Beth Horon, Baalath, and Tadmor in the desert, within his land, as well as all his store cities and the towns for his chariots and for his horses—whatever he desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon and throughout all the territory he ruled.” (1 Kings 9:17-19).

*Egyptian horses and chariots: Ramses II fighting in a chariot at the Battle of Kadesh with two archers, one with the reins tied around his waist to free both hands. Relief from Abu Simbel. (Public Domain)*

Solomon, who established Israel’s first charioteer corps, according to I Kings 9:22, greatly expanded it to include 1,400 chariots along with 12,000 horses, which were housed in 4,000 stalls stationed in chariot cities. (1 Kings 10:26).

While the Bible provides historians and scholars with information about how many chariots were under Solomon, it says little of the manufacturer. Many point to I Kings 10:29, which mentions Egypt as the manufacturer of Solomon’s war chariots. While this is true, it might also be considered somewhat false. Yes, Solomon did purchase chariots from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver, but they were not war chariots.

*When reading the verse, the Hebrew term used for chariot is merkaba. The merkaba was a*
luxury display chariot equipped with costly steeds, built for kings, princes, and nobility. The Bible also mentions Absalom and Adonijah as possessing this fine vehicle. (2 Sam 8:11; 1 Kings 1:5). So why was Solomon buying these luxury chariots? The answer is he was making money. What Solomon was probably doing was buying fabulous chariots from Egypt and selling them to the Hittite and Aramean elites.

Legendary Riches

With wealth acquired from foreign trade and good relations with their neighbors, so was created a standing fighting force that could protect the peace of Israel and its majesty. Not only was it believed that Solomon prospered, but also so did the people of Israel.

According to biblical accounts, Solomon had set up a large system of administration in order to execute his plan of action for the nation of Israel. Many heads were selected to look over trade and commerce as well as the spiritual side of things. One would need a large business body to make sure every shekel was accounted for, and to be given to those who labor, and a fraction taken from those who trade. (I Kings 4:1-19)

In addition, many military men were selected to look over the military operations in order to secure the borders of Israel, and with the advancement in prosperity, the army only got bigger. (I Kings 9:22-23) It is said even the common person felt good about the situation, and once again, in the book of I Kings, we notice that the Israelites as a whole were eating and drinking and being merry as one, with no problems or concerns. (I Kings 4:20, 25)

As time goes on, one notices later on the book of I Kings that Israel seemed to become even richer, with a greater magnitude on material goods and feasting. (I Kings 10:21, 27). Along with this prosperity, to the people of Israel came a population boom as well. Some suggest that maybe Israel doubled in size to about 800,000 people from the time of Saul due to the economic wealth showered unto them. With such wealth came more births due to increased income. Even foreigners may have contributed to the overall population boom of Israel during the time of Solomon. With so much money in hand and with a growing population one would think that security was needed during these times of economic expansion throughout the Holy Land.

Solomon’s Temple

Due to the expansion and trade with foreign relations that Solomon and his father beforehand had set up, the money that was accrued is believed to have led to the creation of the first Temple in Jerusalem. According to biblical accounts, this is the greatest creation Solomon had built during his reign.
The Hebrew Bible says that the First Temple was built in 957 BCE by King Solomon, but destroyed by Babylonians in 586 BCE. The above is Herod’s Temple (or the second temple said to be built atop the first) as imagined in the Holyland Model of Jerusalem. (Public Domain)
In an artistic representation, King Solomon dedicates the Temple at Jerusalem (painting by James Tissot or follower, c. 1896–1902) (Public Domain)

However, there was other public works created as well. The cities of Hazor, Jerusalem, Megiddo, and Gezer, were said to be all revised and updated. In addition, there were a number of new cities built throughout Israel, which functioned as military posts for both horse and chariot. Overall, Solomon had bought and built Israel up into an economic powerhouse.

Heavy Taxes, Slavery and the fall of Solomon and Israel

However, even Solomon with all his wealth and power was reputed to be burdened by money problems. The income gained could not keep up with the cost, and Solomon had to do something; that something was called heavy taxation.

Twelve districts were set up for taxation by oversight including the Canaanite city-states. (I Kings 4:7-19) Nevertheless, things got even worse, for now forced labor was upon the people—but not the Israelites, it was focused on non-Israelites (Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites), and these became corvée workers, conscripts and slaves.

Now due to amount of money owed to others by Solomon, he had to do something that would cut the costs, and forced labor was a sure way to get your men to work for only food. (I Kings 9:2-22) The next biggest blow to Solomon was the need for money so badly that he was forced to sell some of his own territory to make ends meet. Solomon sold a number of towns along the coast to the King of Tyre. It must have been the lowest point for Solomon.
In conclusion, it is believed that Solomon was born in a debt free family and society that his father created beforehand. Moreover, if there was any debt it seemingly did not burden the people. Solomon’s reputed wisdom brought traffic of great wealth and great adventure for his nation and those around him. His vast networks of trade, whether by sea-lanes that crisscross the Mediterranean or along the Via Maris and King’s Highway trade routes leading to Mesopotamia, allowed many building projects to commence and expansion of the military due to the influx of wealth.

However, due to the massive building projects and unpopular policies he is said to have undertaken came the burdening of debt and despair. Solomon, with all his wisdom, was not wise enough to stop his own self, once he started.

Solomon’s early reign may have been as described in 1 Kings 4:20-21:

The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy. And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. These countries brought tribute and were Solomon’s subjects all his life.

Once centralization began to kick in so did the needs of the state, such as taxes in monetary form or in the form of corvée labor or slavery to pay for the military and public works. This burden is indicated in 1 Kings 12:11 by Solomon’s son King Rehoboam when he stated, “My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.”

These continued unpopular policies caused Israel to go from prosperity to debt. If the civilian population suffered greatly and was placed in debt, it is without a doubt that corruption and abuse from the bureaucratic officials also added to the fire and weakness of the Solomonic state, which naturally would filter down to the military ranks.

Because of this, internal conflicts led to the fracturing of Israel’s sphere of influence and Israel itself, for when Solomon died, tribes revolted and the Kingdom of Israel split into two, with the Kingdom of Israel to the north and the Kingdom of Judah to the south. While this split seems beneficial in curtailing the powers that be, it did not. Instead, both Israelite kingdoms would continue the same old sins that caused the once united kingdom to fracture.

While it would be easy to blame the rise and fall of Israel wealth and power on Solomon, it would not be completely fair. If anyone might be also responsible for the fall of Israel, it was the Israelite chieftains seeking an authority to prosper from as Samuel had warned against, and as mentioned in 1 Samuel 8:10-18.
By Cam Rea

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