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**Mythical vs forgotten image: comparison of medieval Christian and Muslim sources about
the image of Saladin**

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The Crusades, in the consciousness of the masses in most cases, are characterized by the Order of the Templars, Richard the Lionheart, and the capture of Jerusalem by Christian forces. Medieval Christian sources provide reliable data about the Christian world during the Crusades. But, if we consider Christian sources about the Muslim world, the prominent historical figure of the Crusades was Saladin or Salah ad-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub, founder of the Ayyub dynasty. Medieval Christian sources describe the Sultan as the main enemy of the Crusaders and uniquely describe him; for instance, Abbot Joachim showed Saladin as the sixth head of the great red dragon, the only one to wear a crown, and is labeled "Sdadinus."¹ Despite this, most Christian rulers respected Saladin for his courage, compassion, and intelligence. In medieval Christian sources, the capture of Jerusalem in 1187 is highlighted as the main feat of the Sultan. However, Professor Beben's, Gibb's, and Cobb's work presents a different image of Saladin illustrated in medieval Muslim sources. Investigating a large amount of medieval data, historians have concluded that the Crusades were perceived differently in the Middle Ages Christian and Muslim worlds, which depleted the scanty amount of data about Saladin's capture of Jerusalem in 1187 Muslim sources. It is also necessary to bear in mind the fragmented state of the Muslim Leveneath and Anatolia. Another, required to consider mutual antipathy between Sunni Syria, Shiite Iraq, and Fatmid Egypt, was ended by Saladin, as a consequence of which he was praised in Muslim sources. The unification of the Muslim world under one flag was a phenomenal achievement, so Muslim authors concentrated their attention on this rather than the wars that took place in the Western borders.² The primary purpose of my work is to demonstrate that one

¹ Bernard Hamilton, "Knowing the Enemy: Western Understanding of Islam at the Time of the Crusades," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 7, no. 3 (1997): 381. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25183408>.

² Hamilton A. R. Gibb, "The Arabic Sources for the Life of Saladin," *Speculum* 25, no. 1 (1950): 65, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2850004>.

of the main reasons for the differentiation of the historical image of Saladin in medieval Christian and Muslim sources was the difference in the education of the crusades by Muslim authors who focused on changes in the Muslim world and Christian authors who concentrate on the crusades.

First, to compare medieval Christian and Muslim sources, it is necessary to understand why the neighboring kingdoms of Christians and Muslims in Anatolia and the Levant had a radically different historical image of Saladin. To do this, it is necessary to consider the Mediterranean's social and political situation during the Crusades. Bernard Hamilton raises an interesting point: the extremely low enlightenment of Christians about the Islamic religion before and after the first crusades. For example, the remark of the Clunian historian Ralph Glaber, who wrote in 1030, can be cited as a common interpretation of the Christians in the pre-Crusade period about Islam: For the Saracens read the Hebrew prophets ... claiming that what they foretold of Jesus Christ, Lord of all, is now fulfilled in the person of Muhammad, one of their people. To support them in their error, they have in their possession a genealogy of their own, similar to that found in the Gospel of St. Matthew, which recounts the descent of Jesus from Abraham through Isaac ... But theirs says that "Ishmael begat Negajoth," and continues with an erroneous fiction, which, in deviating from the holy catholic account strays equally from the truth.³

Also, *The Song of Roland*, a medieval narrative, epic poem written during the first crusades based on the Frankish military leader Roland at the Battle of Roncevaux Pass in 778, illustrated Muslims as idolatries: Blancandrin held Count Ganelon by the hand, and he said to the king: "Greetings in the name of Mahomet and Apollin, whose holy laws we obey! We have accomplished your mission to Charles. He raised both his hands toward heaven and praised his

³ Hamilton, "Knowing the Enemy", 373

God but made no other reply.”⁴ Also, the song indicates that Muslims worship a trinity of gods called Mohammed, Tervagant, and Apolline. The absence of any reliable and correct information about Muslims among the Christian kingdoms of Europe played into the hands of Pope Urban II when he convened the righteous people of the Christians to go against the barbarians and idolaters. Also, the lack of reliable and correct information about Islam contributed to the creation of a negative image of Saladin during the Third Crusades.

But still, the image of Saladin in medieval Christian sources of the XIII and XIV centuries was closely associated with another popular figure among the Crusaders, Richard the Lionheart. When studying medieval literature about the Crusades, it is not an exaggeration to say that Richard the Lionheart was famous in medieval Europe. Many romantic legends grew rapidly and magnificently about his achievements during the Third Crusade. We have abundant evidence of Richard the Lionheart's prestige in England in the seven extant manuscripts of the Middle English romance *Richard the Lionheart* and three sixteenth-century printed editions.⁵ The work was based on Dr. Karl Brunner's critical edition of *Richard the Lionheart*, in which parts of the Middle English text are translations of the Anglo-Norman text.⁶ Found in the book of fabulous adventures attributed to Richard the Lionheart, most interesting for my work is his encounter with Saladin during the Third Crusade. The battle itself was described in detail in lines 5481–5797 of the novel. These lines say that when both commanders met on the plain, Saladin challenged Richard to a jousting match and offered him a horse as a gift as a sign of goodwill.

Richard the Lionheart, as a knight, accepts the challenge and sign of Saladin's goodwill. But,

⁴ Jessie Crosland, *The Song of Roland by Jessie Crosland* (Cambridge, UK: Old French Series, 1999), 10.

⁵ Roger Sherman Loomis, “Richard Cœur de Lion and the Pas Saladin in Medieval Art,” *PMLA* 30, no. 3 (1915): 509, <https://doi.org/10.2307/456947>.

⁶ Loomis, *Richard Cœur de Lion and the Pas Saladin in Medieval Art*, 510.

after Richard agrees with the challenge, Saladin, with the help of a necromancer, summons two air demons in the form of a mare and her foal. Air demons in the form of a foal will instinctively run to their mother's call. He will kneel next to the mare to suckle on the udder, disadvantaging the rider. The Sultan sends the foal to Richard as a gift, and he keeps the mare as a mount for himself. But the night before the knight's duel, an angel descended from heaven warns Richard about an impending trap. To avoid Saladin's trap, the angel orders him to find a forty-foot-long tree and tie it to the foal's mane. The angel also gives him a steel spearhead to attach to the tree tied to the foal's mane. He does everything the angel indicates and plugs the foal's ears with wax so he does not hear the mare's neighing. He also conjures the foal to obey him in the name of God. The next day, when the time for the duel comes, Richard comes out in full readiness and, among other weapons, carries a steel shield, "With pree lupardes wrought ffull weel."⁷ In turn, Saladin, expecting an easy victory due to the betrayal of Richard's horse, entered the duel carrying only a falchion as a weapon. But when the time comes, and the mare begins to neigh, the foal does not hear her due to Richard's actions. Taking advantage of the moment, Richard rushes towards Sowdan, the harness, and poitre; the girth and stirrups give in. The mare falls to the ground, and Sowdan shoots.⁸ The provided poem describes Saladin as a man who uses black magic and a man far from the honor and courage of a knight.

Also, a short poem, "Pas Saladin," which dates back to the end of the thirteenth century but was not the source of the trends of that time. A distinctive feature of the poem Pa-Saladin is that the central figure is not only Richard the Lionheart but all twelve knights, including Richard, and eleven other knights of great courage who are on their way to the Holy Land. These twelve warriors of the Christian army stand as a bulwark against the invading Saracen army. The knights

⁷ Loomis, *Richard Cœur de Lion and the Pas Saladin in Medieval Art*, 512.

⁸ Loomis, *Richard Cœur de Lion and the Pas Saladin in Medieval Art*, 512.

essentially slowed the advance of Saladin's armies and killed most of his leaders, affecting the integrity of the Saracen armies. After significant losses on the part of his armies, Saladin sends the spy Tornevent, familiar with the coat of arms of the Christian knights, to find the reason for the losses of his commanders. Tornevent, after studying the state of affairs in the skirmishes between the Crusaders and the Saracens, concentrates his attention on the shields of the twelve champions. Then he told Saladin the names of twelve knights of great valor. After another failed attempt to break out, the Saracens finally retreat, and the twelve knights return to their camp and celebrate their miraculous feat.⁹ In the image of the main characters, the poem "Pa Saladin" was depicted in paintings and tapestries distributed among the aristocracy. In addition, it was pointed out that Froissart had a detailed sketch of a theatrical performance prepared in honor of the arrival of Isabella of Bavaria in Paris in 1389, at which the story of Pas Saladin was played out. On the scaffold was affixed: "The march of King Salehadin was ordered, and all were composed of characters: Christians on one side and Saracens on the other, and there were characters of all the eminent lords who had formerly been on the march of Salhadin, and armed with their weapons, as and for the time being over, they arm themselves."¹⁰ Popular among the ordinary people and aristocracies of the first part of the 14th century, the poem "Pas Saladin" and the romance by Richard Coeur de Lion provide insight into the image of Saladin in the first half of the 13th-century medieval Christian world. During this period, all medieval Christian sources show Saladin as the enemy of Richard the Lionheart, the stronghold and protector of Christians during the invasion of the godless and idolatrous Saracens.

⁹ Loomis, *Richard Cœur de Lion and the Pas Saladin in Medieval Art*, 524.

¹⁰ Loomis, *Richard Cœur de Lion and the Pas Saladin in Medieval Art*, 525.

However, even though the earliest European stories about Saladin were naturally antagonistic, because of his actions in the third crusade, when he inflicted a defeat on the Christian Crusaders, from which the Crusaders never recovered. Over time, the attitude of the medieval Christian world towards the Sultan became more positive, and his justice towards enemies and his people, the valor of a knight, and generosity were promoted. Christians began to romanticize Saladin; noble and courageous deeds were attributed to him, as other Christian heroes. By the mid-fourteenth century, the romantic idealization of Saladin led to him being called a saint. For example, the medieval Dutch poem *The Book of Vengeance*, 1350, describes Saladin as *When Christians held the Holy Land*.

With wicked and sinful hand,
There came the saintly Saladin
And won it back from them¹¹

However, after creating a benevolent image of Saladin, the problem arose that Saladin was different from the standard image of the people about the Saracens. This is why the legend arose that Christian blood flowed in Saladin's veins. Subsequently, they said that his grandmother was a Christian or his mother was a Christian. As a result, this legend grew to the point that it was easy for such a wise person to understand the superiority of Christianity over Judaism and Mohammedanism. Accordingly, legends arose that before his death, Saladin found Christian dogmas to be the only true ones, and he was secretly baptized. Afterward, he died in the Christian faith in the righteous faith. In addition, various legends about the valor and wisdom of Saladin were spread. An example would be a short fourteenth-century poem that recounts the death of a sultan. A Middle Dutch poem talks about the wisdom of the Sultan and recounts the

¹¹ G. J. ten. Hoor, "Legends of Saladin in Medieval Dutch," *Monatshefte* 44, no. 6 (1952): 253, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30165845>.

words of Saladin before his death: it is stated as follows: “Your master, who was noble and ruler of the entire East, is now on the verge of death, and he will not be able to take all his wealth with himself; "To put with him in the coffin only this worthless rag with which his body will be covered"¹² The above examples from the 13th and 14th centuries demonstrate that the image of Saladin in medieval Christian sources changed over time due to qualities granted to Christians in the early 13th century that did not correspond to the image of the Muslim.

Although, if we consider the state of the Muslim world before the start of the Crusades, it becomes clear why there were many contradictory rumors about Saladin at the end of the 13th century. The first schism in Muslim society occurred after the prophet died in 632,¹³ because of the choice of the legal prophet's spiritual and political heir, who would become the ruler of the Arab Caliphate.¹⁴ The first group, Sunnis, supported the prophet's father-in-law, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, based on the teachings of the prophet. The second Shiites supported the son-in-law and nephew of the prophet Ali according to the traditions of the Quraish. According to Arab traditions, everything is passed on from father to son. Since the prophet had no male children left, the Shiites believed that the prophet conveyed sacred knowledge to Ali.¹⁵ But by the majority's decision, the next caliph was chosen, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq. Subsequently, during the reign of the Rashiddin Caliphate, the Umayyad Caliphate, and the Abbasid Caliphate, the state religion was Sunni Islam.

¹² Hoor, “Legends of Saladin in Medieval Dutch,” 254.

¹³ Amir-Moezzi and Jambet, *What is Shi'i Islam*, n.d

¹⁴ Cobb, “The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades”, 44.

¹⁵ Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi and Christian Jambet, *What is Shi'i Islam?: An Introduction*, (Routledge, 2018), n.d.

Although Sunnis believed that Shiism was a heretical approach to Islam and Bid'ah, “every unprecedented matter or act that is against the traditions (sunnah) of the Prophet, his companions, and their followers, and does not have its origins in the Islamic Law.”¹⁶ Since the 9th century, confrontations between the two branches of Islam have almost ceased due to the restraining influence of some community imams. Even though the Shia Imams did not rebel against the Abbasids even though the Shia community was indeed oppressed under their rule. Also minimizing the appearance of direct conflicts between the branches were Shia laws that allowed Shiites to hide their religious beliefs if openly following religious beliefs threatened the life of a believer. Due to such laws, large Shia communities flourished in Mesopotamia, especially in Kufa and Baghdad. And in the case of small communities, they were common in Syria and Iran.¹⁷ Some Shiites worked mingling with Sunnis in Baghdad at the court of the Abbasid caliphs, and some even rose to the post of vizier of the caliphs of the sultans and palace administrator. As a result of the consolidation of political power in the hands of the Shiites, dynasties arose that preached Shiism in the brotherhood of Sunni states, for example, the Hamdanids of northern Syria and Iraq, which arose as a result of the fragmentation of the Abbasid Caliphate.¹⁸

However, one of the political dominants of the 10th century, the Fatimids began their rise to power as a movement of the Ismaili branch of Shiism.¹⁹ The Ismailis considered Sunnis and

¹⁶ Muhammad Mustaqim Mohd Zarif, Mohd A. M. Nizah, Anita Ismail, and Adibah Mohamad. "Creating creative and innovative Muslim society: Bid'ah as an approach." *Asian Social Science* (2013).

¹⁷ Cobb, “The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades”, 44.

¹⁸ Cobb, “The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades”, 44.

¹⁹ Nadeem Khan, “The Caliphates between Imperial Rule and Imagined Suzerainty – A Case Study on Imperial Rituals during Saladin’s Rise to Power,” In *Transcultural Approaches to the*

Shiites to be heretics even if they were regarded as branches of the Shiites. As a result, there were several conflicts between branches, for instance, the massacre of the Ismailis at Damascus in 1129. The governor of Damask Taj al-Muluk, after learning about the conspiracy of Ismailities with Franks, proclaimed, “Kill the Batinis,” and 6,000 of them were put to death. That was in the middle of Ramadan, early September 1129.²⁰ The Ismailis did not support the quietism widespread among the “Twelvers” of the Shiite elite of Iraq. By the X century, held together by deft administrators and leaders and supported by Berber military officers, the Fatimids established their first settled state in the province of Ifriqiya, roughly modern Tunisia.²¹ Subsequently, by the end of the 10th century, three separate forces emerged in the Muslim world: the Ismailis in the Fatimid Caliphate, the Sunnis in the Arab Peninsula, Anatolia, Levant, and Central Asia, and the Shiites in Persia.

In addition to the disunity of Muslim forces in religious beliefs, before the Crusades, the political state of the Abbasid Caliphate left much to be desired. The delicate balance of power between the Ismaili Fatimids, the Christian Byzantium, and groups of local amirs throughout Syria was upset by the flood of Turkmen nomads and Seljuk troops into the Middle East in the mid-11th century. In 1064, during the Game of Thrones of the Mirasids, a small Arab dynasty, one of the contenders, Amir Atiya, his financial fortune allowed him to hire mercenaries for his small army. As a result, he called for help from the newly adopted nomads in the Middle East. But even though they were new to the region, their ferocity and reputation as military masters

Concept of Imperial Rule in the Middle Ages, edited by Christian Scholl, Torben R. Gebhardt, and Jan Clauß, (Peter Lang AG, 2017), 197, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv6zdbwx.10>.

²⁰ Donald Sidney Richards, “The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for The Crusading Period from al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh.” *Part 1: The Years 491–541/1097–1146: The Coming of the Franks and the Muslim Response*, (Routledge, 2017), 278.

²¹ Cobb, “The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades”, 45.

went far ahead of them: the Turks.²² The political situation in Anatolia was so unstable due to the clashes of minor Arab dynasties, such as the Mirasids and the Shia Fatimid Caliphate controlling northern Africa and the Levant neutrally attributed to what was happening in Anatolia and Syria. It was inevitable that the Great Seljuks, ruling Iran and observing the political situation, would come to Syria after the influx of different Turkmen nomads. The arrival of the Great Seljuks was not a migration in search of better conditions but a conquest to add to their already significant possessions.²³

However, the Great Seljuks did not lead to the political unification of the region under the rule of one Seljuk sultan. The political administration of the Saljuks was the family business of the ruling dynasty; one of the ruling family members was recognized as the Supreme Sultan. The sultan had absolute power only in words, and he was obliged to take care of his relatives, transferring his territories under the absolute control of one of his relatives.²⁴ The division and allocation of land under the control of relatives is identical to the appanage system that the great commander Genghis Khan himself used when he divided his possessions into four parts. Thus, the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum was a highly decentralized set of private fiefs of members of the ruling dynasty in which the Sultan's influence was minimal. The rulers of the allocated territories were given the title malik, "king," although modern historians tend to call them "princes."²⁵ In the Sultanate of Rum, during the succession to the Grand Sultan's position, the previous Sultan's brothers had the right to challenge the legitimacy of the appointed heir. When succession to the

²² Cobb, "The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades", 78.

²³ Cobb, "The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades", 78.

²⁴ Cobb, "The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades", 82.

²⁵ Cobb, "The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades", 82.

throne was contested, it took place with armies led by commanders called amirs.²⁶ As a result, the complete decentralization of power in the Sultanate of Rum led to the critical defeat of the sultanate during the First Crusade.

Because of the disastrous result of the political and religious fragmentation of the Muslim world in the 11th and 12th centuries, Professor Gibb's words about Saladin's actions make more sense. Saladin acted with a higher purpose: "to restore and revive the political structure of Islam as a single empire, not under its own rule, but by restoring the supremacy of revealed law under the leadership of the Abbasid Caliphate."²⁷ Just as Gibb viewed Saladin's unification of the Muslim world under one flag as a more significant achievement than the conquest of the sacred land, medieval Muslim authors also emphasized this. But the medieval Muslim authors I chose, Ibn Shaddad and Ibn al-Azir, focused attention and put forward as the main achievement of Saladin's occupation of the Fatimid Caliphate, followed by the deliverance of the Caliphate from the Ismaili dynasties and the establishment of the influence of the Abbasid Caliph in the region. Both authors did not say that Saladin "restored and revived the political structure of Islam as a single empire" because, before Saladin, the unification of the Muslim world was carried out by no less famous than Saladin in medieval Muslim sources, the Jangid Dynasty. It is necessary to consider several historical figures of the Jangid dynasties, such as the founder of the Imad Dzhangi and Nur ad-Din Dzhangi dynasties, who was the master of Saladin.

The works of two medieval Muslim authors, Ibn Shaddad and Ibn al-Azir, were chosen to explore and unravel the image of Saladin in the medieval Muslim world—"The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for The Crusading Period from al-Kamil fi-Ta'rikh" and "The rare and excellent history

²⁶ Cobb, "The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades", 82.

²⁷ Gibb, "The Arabic Sources for the Life of Saladin,"

of Saladin, or, Al-Nawadir al-sultaniyya wa'l-mahasin al-yusufiyya." Ibn al-Athir was born into a noble local family in Jazirat ibn Umar, north of Mosul, in 1160. Most family members occupied administrative positions in Mosul and worked for the Zangid ruler. Al-Azir, as a noble family member, received religious instruction in his capital city of Mosul, with a break to participate in the Hajj in 1181.²⁸ After the Hajj, he stopped in Baghdad to continue his studies received in Mosul. He was in Mosul during Salah ad-Din's siege of the city in 1185–1186. But Al-Azir joined the army of Salah ad-Din in 1188-89. He settled in Damascus in 1194 but returned to his hometown of Mosul in 1225. In the city, the Zengid rulers of the town became his patrons, and his work was written under their funding.²⁹

Baha ad-Din Abu-l-Mahasin Yusuf ibn Rafi ibn Tamim, better known as Ibn Shaddad, was born in Mosul on March 1145. After his father died at an early age, his maternal uncles became his guardians. He studied the Koran, hadith, and Islamic law in his hometown. Further, to continue his study of the Koran, he went to Baghdad and became a student at the Nizamiya madrasah. After a short stay at the madrasah, he was appointed assistant professor-muid in the modern equivalent. He remained in the position of associate professor-muid for about four years. Still, after receiving an invitation to the mudarris (professor) post of a madrasah in his hometown, he returned to Mosul in 1173–1174. After Saladin repeatedly invited him to the position of qadi during his visit to Jerusalem in 1188, Ibn Shaddad accepted the sultan's proposals. Saladin gave him the post of army judge (qadi al-Askar), but Ibn Shaddad received

²⁸ Alex Mallett, "Islamic Historians of the Ayyūbid Era and Muslim Rulers from the Early Crusading Period: A Study in the Use of History," *Al-Masāq* 24, no. 3 (December 2012): 241–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09503110.2012.727655>, 243.

²⁹ Mallett, "Islamic Historians of the Ayyūbid Era and Muslim Rulers from the Early Crusading Period," 243.

full judicial and administrative powers in Jerusalem as time passed.³⁰ Ibn Khallikan, in his work, reports that Ibn Shaddad was his close friend until the end of Saladin's life, and he participated in every campaign. In his old age, he spent most of his fortune on the construction of a madrasah, in which Shafi'i law was taught, and on the construction of a college for the study of hadith.³¹ Both authors were contemporaries of Saladin and participated in the Sultan's main historical battles. Therefore, the image of Saladin presented by these authors can be considered a typical image of the Sultan in medieval Muslim sources. Also, both sources provide information about the relationship between Saladin and Nur al-Din.

In medieval sources, the Zangi dynasty occupies a significant place. In 1127, Sultan Mahmud entrusted the post of prefect of Iraq to Imad ad-Din Zangi ibn Aksunkur. Before this, when the Sultan asked his entourage who he would appoint to the position, his advisers said: "We can neither correct this gap nor restore the prestige of this position." No one except Imad al-Din is capable of coping with this dangerous task.³² Furthermore, Imad al-Zangi Atabeg of Mosul and Aleppo founded the Turkoman Zangi dynasty and took under control Anatolia, Mesopotami, and Syria. He was also the first Muslim ruler who led the counter-crusades and, as a result of his victories against the crusaders, became famous in the Muslim world as a defender of the faith. The primary episode and achievement of Janga's counter-crusades was the conquest of the Frankish-held city of Edessa in 1144. After the conquest of Edessa, he was praised throughout the Muslim world as "the adornment of Islam, the victorious prince, the helper of the

³⁰ Donald Sidney Richards, "The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin or al-Nawadir al-Sultaniyya wa'l-Mahasin al-Yusufiyya by Baha'al-Din Ibn Shaddad," (Routledge, 2020), 2.

³¹ Richards, "The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin," 3.

³² Richards, "The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for The Crusading Period from al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh," 267.

believers.”³³ The distinctive action of Imad al-Din Zangi, who united the fragmented Muslim forces, was to use the concepts of Jihad to his advantage. During the conquest of Edessa, Zangi wrote to the various Turcoman tribes of the region and encouraged them to participate in his campaign, calling it a jihad against the Franks. Zangi's contemporaries described his troops surrounding the city and the significant number of archers and siege equipment in it as “even birds could hardly approach him.”³⁴ However, it was more popularized among the Christians and Muslims by the action of Zangi after the city's capture. At this moment, Zangi stopped the troops and gave orders to prevent robberies and murders among the city's population, to ease the tax burden of citizens, and to promise to establish the rule of law. What subsequently created the historical image of Imad al-Din Zangi in medieval Muslim sources as a guiding ruler who cared about the needs of his people more than his own and the central defender of Muslims at a time when even the caliphs were hesitant to commit jihad.

Nur ad-Din Mahmud, the son and political heir of the ideas of Imad ad-Din Zangi, was known for using the same tactics as his father, using the concept of jihad for his desires. However, despite the objective assessment of Nur ad-Din's actions by modern historians as the use of the concepts of jihad for their purposes, in medieval Muslim sources, the atabek was described as a warrior of jihad. As an example of jihad against the Franks, the action of the atabeg after the victory in Damascus, Nur ad-Din Zangi launched an offensive against the Crusaders and, as a result, recaptured the territory occupied by the Franks in the coastal region of the Levant. After he reconquered Tall Bashir in 1154³⁵ and the port of Tartus in 1152. He

³³ Cobb, “The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades”, 136.

³⁴ Cobb, “The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades”, 135.

³⁵ Richards, “The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 2,” 72-73.

reconquered all the territories of the Sultanate of Rum that the Crusaders had occupied during the First Crusade.³⁶ For his accomplished feats, Nur ad-Din received from the sultan of the Sultanate of Rum the title al-Mulik al-Adil, “the just king,” and from the Muslim population the title Mujihid “warrior of jihad.”³⁷ Still, the main historical feat of Nur ad-Din is considered to be the repulse of the unified army of the Crusaders from the gates of Domascus, which marked the complete defeat of the Crusaders in the Second Crusade. Chronologists and historians focus their attention on this historical episode because the city was besieged by the unified army of three kings - Louis of France, Conrad of Germany, and the young Baldwin III of Jerusalem.³⁸ As mentioned above, the repulsion of the forces of the crusaders by Nur ad-Din in the alliance of his brother Seifeddin Ghazi Zangi, the atabeg of Mosul, and Unur, the ruler of Domascus, in 1148 led to a chain reaction as a result of which the crusaders essentially lost their influence in Anatolia and the Levant.³⁹ Even though the Abbasid Caliph himself gave Nur ad-Din power over Egypt. In the records of Nur ad-Din's contemporaries, he was described as a man who tirelessly declared jihad against the Franks and was ready to “immediately attack the accursed enemies of God and raid those infidel opponents who were against him, sowers of disorder in the lands and violators of their solemn vows to maintain friendly and peaceful relations.”⁴⁰ As a result, the man

³⁶ Ibn al-Qalanisi, Abu Ya`la Hamzah ibn Asad and Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb. *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades: Extracted and Translated from the Chronicle of Ibn Al-Qalanisi*. (Courier Corporation, 1932).

³⁷ Cobb, “The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades”, 143.

³⁸ Cobb, “The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades”, 140.

³⁹ Richards, “The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 2,” 21-22.

⁴⁰ Cobb, “The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades”, 145.

who declared jihad against the Franks and carried out the retribution demanded by the Muslims received political authority and the general favor of the Muslim world.

Also, Nur ad-Din Zangi supported Sunni's teachings and distributed them throughout his land. In Aleppo, where he banned the Shia formula of the call to prayer, which was then used in the city's main mosque. In addition, in the town, he financed the renovation and construction of many madrasahs and ribats, as a result of which he ensured the career of a new generation of Sunni ulema, who commented on the action of Nur ad-Din as “and ensured that justice and impartiality took a prominent place there.”⁴¹ Moreover, after the capture of Damascus in 1154,⁴² his titles began to emphasize his role not as a warrior but as al-Malik al-Adil, the “Just King.”⁴³ The strict separation of responsibilities between ruler and warrior was a model of government much more consistent with the long-standing religious traditions of Islamic society. Moreover, as a result of supporting the Sunni teachings, he found a valuable ally in the Sunni scientific community, and chief among them was Ali ibn Asakir, the most eminent Syrian scholar of his time. After the capture of Damascus in 1154, Ibn Asakir ensured Nur ad-Din's entry into the legitimate world of the Syrian ulema, a seal of approval that the sultan in his new guise as an al-Malik al-Adil would crave.⁴⁴ Also, Ibn Asakir, in his work “History of Damascus,” dedicated a chapter to Nur ad-Din where he mentions Nur ad-Din’s victories over the Franks before and after the capture of Damascus. But Ibn Asakir, in his work, praises Nur Ad-Din's efforts against the Shiites and for social programs in the city. He funded repairing old and building new madrasahs,

⁴¹ Cobb, “The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades”, 143.

⁴² Richards, “The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 2,” 71.

⁴³ Cobb, “The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades”, 143.

⁴⁴ Cobb, “The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades”, 144.

houses of worship, mosques, bridges, and road repairs where necessary. In addition, social programs to help widows and the poor, and religious education for Muslim orphans. As well as funding hospitals for the mentally ill and the blind and donations for copyists of the Qur'an and other books.⁴⁵ Ibn Asaqr also focuses on Nur ad-Din's public pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina in 1161, presenting him as a righteous Muslim. He also notes that he left a similar imprint of pious and just rule in every Muslim city under his protection. According to the work of Ibn Asaqr, jihad in the actions of Nur ad-Din was only one part of a much broader platform.⁴⁶

Even leaders of the Crusaders also respected the Nur al-Din atabeg because of his conduct, bravery, and courage. For instance, William of Tyre, after the death of Nur al-Din in 1174, the atabeg of Aleppo with whom he fought for a quarter of a century, said: "Nur al-Din, the greatest persecutor of the Christian faith and cause, and yet a righteous prince, subtle and farsighted, and devout in the observance of the faith of his people, died in May, in the twenty-ninth year of his reign."⁴⁷ Also, Andronicus, the last of the Komnenos, and Isaac Angelus, his successor, the rulers of Byzantium, changed the policy of engagement with the Crusaders during the Crusades, which continued from the first Crusade, united with the most potent enemy of the crusaders, Saladin, and even sought to destroy Latin power in the East, which questioned sovereignty Byzantine emperors. The initial rapprochement of ancient enemies in the person of the Muslim world of Saladin and the person of Byzantium Andronicus was facilitated by recent personal relationships and dictated by mutual political benefit. Once, while in exile, Andronicus fled to Damascus,

⁴⁵ Cobb, "The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades", 145.

⁴⁶ Cobb, "The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades", 145.

⁴⁷ Hamilton, "Knowing the Enemy", 380.

where Nur ad-Din Zangi, Saladin's master, befriended him.⁴⁸ Nur al-Din, a man who had impressive political influence in Anatolia, Levant, and Syria and a man who had authority among the Muslim world.

The achievement attributed by medieval Muslim authors to the overthrow of the Ismaili dynasties of the Fatimid Caliphate by Saladin in 1171 began with the conquest of Egypt by Nur al-Din in 1164. In 1163, the Fatimid governor Shawar marched on Cairo, removed the vizier from power by force and received all power. But Shawar's power lasted only a few months, and was overthrown by an ambitious judicial official named Dirgham. After the overthrow, Shawar fled to Syria and turned to Nur ad-Din Zangi for help.⁴⁹ The overthrow of the Fatimid Shiite dynasty could strengthen Nur ad-Din's image as a fighter against heretics and infidels. To bring much-needed lands and wealth under our rule, ensuring our dominance in the region and uniting all Muslim territories under the flag of Nur ad-Din Zangi will finally eclipse the legacy of his father, the “martyr” Zangi.⁵⁰ To conquer Egypt, Nur ad-Din sent the Kurdish emir Shirkuh, one of his most trusted men. Ibn Al-Azir wrote about this episode in his work: “In April 1164, Nur ad-Din Mahmud ibn Zanki sent the Zangid contingent to Egypt and entrusted the command to Asad ad-Din Shirkuh ibn Shadi, the commander of his army, the bravest and greatest emir of his state.”⁵¹ Shirkuh captured Cairo in April 1164 and executed the self-proclaimed ruler of Dirgham, and the vizier Shawar was appointed to rule Egypt, but Shawar handed over Nur ad-Din by

⁴⁸ Charles M. Brand, “The Byzantines and Saladin, 1185-1192: Opponents of the Third Crusade,” *Speculum* 37, no. 2 (1962): 167. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2849946>.

⁴⁹ Cobb, “The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades”, 162.

⁵⁰ Cobb, “The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades”, 162.

⁵¹ Richards, “The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 2,” 144.

signing an agreement with the Franks.⁵² In 1168, the Fatimid caliph immediately turned to Nur ad-Din and his commander to request help. Despite the treaty, Amalric, the heir to the king of Jerusalem, Baldwin III, invaded Egypt. The Franks took the city of Bilbeis in November 1168, and the entire population of the town was exterminated, and they then camped near Cairo. Having learned the news, Nur ad-Din sent Shirkuh a withdrawal of Franks from the walls of Cairo. After the destruction of the city and the execution of Shawar by order of the caliph, Shirkuh himself was then appointed vizier of Egypt.⁵³ But the old commander died on 22 March 1169, and his nephew, who had previously served as governor of Alexandria, was chosen as his successor, Salah ad-Din Yusuf.⁵⁴

Then, difficulties began in Saladin's communication with his master, Nur ad-Din. From the beginning, disagreements arose in the ranks of the Zangid army, collected from different nations and accompanied by Shirkuh to Egypt. The Turkmen amirs considered the acquisition of the post of Shirkuh by his nephew Saladin as a Kurdish coup d'etat.⁵⁵ Most of the amirs dissatisfied with Saladin's appointment to the post of vizier simply left the regular troops sent to Egypt and returned to the command of Nur ad-Din Zangi. The catastrophic reduction of armies in 1169 led to the almost successful overthrow of Saladin from the post of vizier with the Fatimid army. This meant that Saladin's forces, already dwarfed by the Fatimid army, were significantly reduced, so it is unsurprising that 1169 unrest among the Fatimid army almost overthrew him. The reason for

⁵² Richards, "The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 2," 144.

⁵³ Richards, "The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 2," 171.

⁵⁴ Richards, "The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 2," 164.

⁵⁵ Cobb, "The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades", 163.

the revolts of the Fatimid armies was that Saladin used the iqta of the Fatimid black African corps to develop his army.⁵⁶ As a result of Saladin's victory over the Fatimid army, the rebel army was routed and replaced by Saladin's Zangid contingents.

Furthermore, in Egypt, Saladin, after the consolidation of his power, began the campaign for the reformation of Fatimid's naval army. Saladin put an enormous amount of money and energy into constructing a solid naval army because he experienced the bitter taste of defeat on the sea during the siege of Alexandria in 1167.⁵⁷ When capturing the city of Saladin on his own, the biggest obstacle was the blockade of the harbor by the Crusader fleet. Even after taking the city, Saladin needed to use the ships of his Christian opponents to reorganize his armies in Syria. In the wake of these events, once Saladin had stabilized his control in Egypt, it was evident that a decisive naval force was required to resist the Crusaders. As the virtual head of the Egyptian state and the lands under his control in Syria, Saladin was granted by Nur ad-Din, which made it possible to combine the military and economic resources of Egypt and Syria. What worried the Crusaders, as an example, can be cited in the words of William of Tire: "Our most violent enemy, Noradinus, is able to stop our kingdom by sending numerous ships from Egypt. . . . Moreover, he can impede, or even entirely prevent the pilgrims from reaching us."⁵⁸

Egypt's reformation process began after the complete disbandment of the Fatimid Shiite dynasty armies. Since Saladin was formally installed as the vizier of the Fatimid caliph al-Adid by the forces of Nur ad-Din Zangi, it follows that Saladin was considered an agent of the

⁵⁶ Cobb, "The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades", 163.

⁵⁷ A. S. Ehrenkreutz, "The Place of Saladin in the Naval History of the Mediterranean Sea in the Middle Ages," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 75, no. 2 (1955): 103.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/595012>.

⁵⁸ Ehrenkreutz, "The Place of Saladin in the Naval History of the Mediterranean Sea in the Middle Ages," 103.

Abbasid caliph of the Sunni world in Baghdad. In the aftermath, in the spring of 1171, the dismantling of the Fatimid caliphate began with critical positions in the administrative hierarchy where Saladin placed his people. By the fall of 1171, al-Adid, the Fatimid caliph of the Shiite world, became mortally ill and died due to illness on September 13 of the same year. After the death of al-Adid, the pillar of the Shiites, Egypt became part of the Sunni fold, united by Nur ad-Din and his father atabeg Zangi. "The following Friday, when in sermons in mosques, the name of al-Adid was replaced by the name of the "Abbasid caliph al-Mustadi," the first caliph of Baghdad proclaimed in Egypt in more than two hundred years."⁵⁹

Despite the advantages created by Saladin for the Muslim world, there were also some disadvantages on the part of the great commander from whom he was criticized. One of the reasons for criticism of Saladin may be the data given in the chronicle of Ibn al-Aziz, which states that Saladin, after the death of al-Adid, appropriated all his property. Before the caliph's death, Saladin's appointee, Baha ad-Din Qaraqush, took over the management of the property and handed it over to Saladin. For example, all materially significant and precious things were sold as the "Ruby Mountain," which weighed seventeen dirhams or seventeen mithqals. An even more substantial number of books are in the caliph's library. Everything was put up for sale. Next, his family was taken to the palace and handed over to the care of the guards. Each enslaved person was taken from the palace, some were sold, and some were freed.⁶⁰ The confiscation of all property of the deceased and the confiscation of property transferred to a trustee for further provision of the deceased's family caused criticism of Saladin's actions. Another omission that is the reason for the criticism expressed in the book is the last wish of the dying master. When

⁵⁹ Cobb, "The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades", 164.

⁶⁰ Richards, "The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 2," 197.

al-Adid's condition became critical, he sent a messenger for Saladin to come to the caliph's palace, but fearing it might be a trap, he ignored the messenger. But after the death of the caliph, when Saladin learned of this news, he realized that his master was sincere and was upset that he did not visit him when he sent for him.⁶¹ Furthermore, after the reformation of the armies of Egypt, Saladin began to accumulate building materials for the fleet. To do this, he concluded trade agreements with Italian trade guilds, which Saladin granted traders various privileges and concessions to attract. Saladin granted multiple privileges to Italian traders on the condition that they would supply him with wax, wood, and iron. The extreme need for the provided materials for the construction of the fleet is understandable, but at the same time, we must realize that Saladin's most privileged customers were the Pisans. The Pisans, who, during the Crusader invasion of Egypt before Saladin came to power, committed the most severe abuses of the Egyptian population.⁶² For the ordinary people who did not understand the complex patterns of international trade, it was difficult to understand the action of the Sultan when he entered into agreements with people who had previously carried out bloody massacres and taken away large numbers of Muslim lives.

However, the work of Saladin's contemporary Bah ad-Din Abu-l-Mahasin Yusuf ibn Rafi ibn Tamim, better known as Ibn Shaddad, provides a different interpretation of this episode. The portrait of Saladin presented to us by Ibn Shaddad may be idealized, vivid, and personal due to the state of affairs between Ibn Shaddad and Saladin. However, the reliability of the data presented about Sultan's life can be questioned since the proposed data is almost identical to the

⁶¹ Richards, "The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 2," 197.

⁶² Ehrenkreutz, "The Place of Saladin in the Naval History of the Mediterranean Sea in the Middle Ages," 105.

works of other authors of Saladin's contemporaries. comes from the name of the ancestor of maternal relatives. After the early death of his father, Ibn Shaddad's maternal uncles became his guardians. From 1188, Ibn Shaddad worked for Saladin, initially as an army judge (qadi al-Askar), and then received administrative and judicial powers in Jerusalem. He was always happy to document Saladin's every action. Ibn Shaddada describes this episode: "Al-Adid died on September 13, 1171, and all secular power passed to Sultan Saladin. He performed the khutbah on behalf of the Abbasids towards the end of al-Adid's reign while still alive. The Khutbah was performed for the first time in the name of al-Mustadi bi-Amr Allah, and the formalities continued in due form. But every time the Sultan took possession of the treasury, he gave it to those in need. And when he gained access to state reserves, he donated everything to the treasury and did not leave himself a single coin."⁶³ In medieval Muslim sources, differences in the episodes described by different authors are the norm. Ibn Shaddad was Saladin's man and, therefore, exaggerated Saladin's image by embellishing some of the actions of historical figures. In turn, Ibn al-Azir wrote about the Jangid dynasty, which lost the power of its controlled lands due to the actions of Saladin after the death of Nur ad-Din, becoming the only ruler of this region. Therefore, it is expected to denigrate Saladin's actions and decisions in such biased medieval Muslim works.

News of Saladin's crushing victories over the Fatmids and the subsequent reformation of the caliphate was received ambiguously by his master, Nur ad-Din. On the one hand, Nur ad-Din himself wanted to unite the Muslim territories of the Levant, Mesopotamia, and Egypt under one flag. In addition, he established a single Sunni regime over all his territories. With these actions alone, Nur ad-Din fulfilled the dream of the Abbasid caliphs about a unified Sunni Muslim

⁶³ Richards, "The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin," 46-47.

world. Vast territories under the rule of Nur ad-Din surrounded the Frankish states in the area. The political unity of the Muslim world under the authority of Nur ad-Din and Saladin, who had gathered all power into his own hands in Egypt, took full advantage of the emerging situation and carried out several joint campaigns against the Frankish states. For example, in 1171 and 1173, there were attempts to besiege the great crusader castles of al-Shawbak and al-Karak located in Transjordan.⁶⁴ In the period 1171-1173, Saladin and Nur ad-Din could fight in an alliance against the forces of the Crusaders because, at this time, the Christian world was similar to the Muslim world before the first Crusade. One of the main forces of the Christian world, which played a significant role in the Crusaders' victory in the First Crusade, the Byzantine Empire during this period, had protracted relations with the Papal States. As a result, the Crusader kingdoms continuously raided the Byzantine Empire.⁶⁵ Saladin and Nur ad-Din successfully used the opportunity to recapture the Crusader fortresses.

However, at the same time, Nur ad-Din clearly understood that he could not limit Saladin's power over Egypt. Since he had previously tried to limit his power in Egypt by withdrawing most of the Zangid contingent from Egypt. In addition, Nur ad-Din confiscated Saladin's ikta in Syria, which significantly contributed to the regular work of his armies.⁶⁶ But his brothers and his father Ayub, the family's patriarch, came out towards Saladin. But Ayyub's passing worsened the precarious situation between Saladin and Nur ad-Din since Ayyub was one of Nur ad-Din's most respected and reliable allies. After receiving support from his relatives, Saladin moved to expand the borders of Egypt. First, he sent his brother Turanshah to Nubia to suppress the

⁶⁴ Cobb, "The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades", 164.

⁶⁵ Ehrenkreutz, "The Place of Saladin in the Naval History of the Mediterranean Sea in the Middle Ages," 103.

⁶⁶ Cobb, "The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades", 164.

resistance. And in 1174, Yemen came under the rule of the Ayyubids.⁶⁷ But despite the continued expansion, the income sent to his master in Damascus was much lower than Nur ad-Din wanted. Subsequently, Nur ad-Din sent tax officials to study this issue in detail and, just in case, suspecting Saladin of hiding part of his income, he began to gather troops.⁶⁸

From Nur ad-Din's point of view, the current situation was a disappointment since he gave Saladin almost everything he has now. Nur ad-Din chose and extended high office to his family, who had previously been one of the little-known Kurdish minions of his father, Imadeddin Zangi.⁶⁹ In addition, he was granted the post of grand vizier of the Fatmid caliph and also allowed to collect iqta from his territories, with the help of which Saladin financed his troops in Egypt. He allowed them to participate in his greatest conquest of Syria and Egypt. As a consequence, in May 1174, when the troops of the Zangids and Ayyubids gathered for war and resolution of the issue. But when the parties took positions and were ready to start a war, Nur ad-Din left the world, ending the war without starting it.⁷⁰ As mentioned above, Nur ad-Din had enormous influence in the Sunni Muslim world; therefore, Saladin's disobedience to Nur ad-Din's demands was criticized in the chronicles of contemporaries of these events. The transition of Saladin's father, Ayub, one of the prominent supporters of Nur ad-Din, was regarded as a betrayal. Saladin was considered a traitor who betrayed Nur ad-Din because of his greed for wealth and power. In some sources, Saladin was accused of the imminent death of Nur ad-Din; we will examine this suspicion later. Considering all of the above, we can say that the reason for

⁶⁷ Cobb, "The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades", 164.

⁶⁸ Cobb, "The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades", 164.

⁶⁹ Richards, "The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 2," 176.

⁷⁰ Cobb, "The Race for Paradise: An Islamic history of the Crusades", 165.

the negative image of Saladin in medieval Muslim chronicles, which focuses on the period before the Crusades, was Nur ad-Din.

Part of the chronicle of Ibn Shaddad and Al-Azir is about the death of Nur ad-Din and presents us with the complexity of the relationship between Saladin and Nur ad-Din. Al-Azir talks about the death of the great atabeg by Nur ad-Din: On May 15, 1174, Nur ad-Din Mahmud ibn Zanki ibn Aksunkur, ruler of Syria, Jazira and Egypt, died of a sore throat.⁷¹ Before his death, Nur ad-Din began preparations for the reconquest of Egypt from Saladin. He was dissatisfied with the sluggishness in the administration of Saladin's war with the Franks. Still, at the same time, he understood that behind Saladin's indecision was that he wanted the Franks to become a buffer against the colossal armies of Nur ad-Din. The Great Atabek sent Diyar Bakr and Jazira to his nephew, lord of Mosul, to demand troops for the expedition against Saladin. He intended to leave the collected troops in the hands of his nephew Saif ad-Din Ghazi as a reserve and go with his forces after Saladin.⁷² This shows that Nur ad-Din considered Saladin an enemy rather than his vassal or ally whom he went on campaigns against. Crusaders between 1171-1174.

Ibn Shaddad, in his chronicle of the death of Nur ad-Din, speaks briefly. Just like Al-Azir, Ibn Shaddad says that the cause of the atabeg's death was a sore throat that struck him. His physicians could not cure him, and he died on May 15, 1174, in his stronghold at Damascus. It also provides what Saladin said after Nur ad-Din's death: "We heard that Nir ad-Din might attack us in Egypt. Some of our comrades advised him to openly resist, reject his authority, and meet his army in battle to rebuff her if his hostile step became a reality. I alone disagreed with them, arguing that nothing like that could be said. Our disagreements continued until the news of his

⁷¹ Richards, "The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 2," 221.

⁷² Richards, "The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 2," 221.

death arrived.”⁷³ From Saladin's words, we can conclude that despite the words of his commanders, Saladin ultimately wanted to believe that he and Nur ad-Din were allies.

Saladin had a good reputation in Egypt for his achievements. In the period from 1171 to 1187, due to Saladin's reformist actions in various sectors of Egypt, the following advantages arose in terms of naval development:

- 1) Saladin increased the presence of Egyptian military force in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, which increased the security zone on the Mediterranean coast for Muslims from the Crusaders and the West.
- 2) Expanding the safe zone along the Mediterranean coast gave Egypt direct access to the rich deposits of North African forests, facilitating the supply of timber so crucial for the construction of ships. As a result, the naval power of Egypt increased
- 3) Saladin's troops' successes must have attracted many experienced North African sailors to the ranks of the Egyptian fleet.
- 4) Finally, it is reasonable to assume that Saladin's expeditionary forces requisitioned all the ships they captured in the captured ports of the North African coast.⁷⁴

Another advantage of Great Vizir was the reformation of Egypt's naval army. In 1179, Saladin doubled the number of ships in the Egyptian fleet. Afterward, the Egyptian fleet numbered eighty ships, of which sixty were galleys (*sin*) and twenty were transports (*tarrida*). Since previously the fleet of the Fatimid Caliphate rarely exceeded 75 units, in 1179, Saladin restored the previous combat strength of the Egyptian fleet. Saladin divided the fleet into two fleets, one consisting of

⁷³ Richards, “The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin,” 49.

⁷⁴ Ehrenkreutz, “The Place of Saladin in the Naval History of the Mediterranean Sea in the Middle Ages,” 105.

fifty ships and the other of thirty ships. The first raft was formed to protect the Egyptian coast, and the second fleet was intended to attack the Crusaders.⁷⁵

Another military achievement that elevated Saladin's position among Muslims as a defender of the faith and a great commander occurred in 1187 when Saladin took Jerusalem, the third major Muslim city after Mecca and Medina. In their chronicles, Ibn Shaddad and Ibn al-Azir reliably show the sacred significance of Saladin's capture of Jerusalem in 1187, and both authors praise Saladin's merit to the faith. Ibn al-Azir describes the capture of Jerusalem as follows:

When Saladin advanced on Jerusalem, there was a church patriarch, revered by the Franks, and Balian, ruler of Ramla, whose position in the eyes of the Franks was equal to that of a king. Also present in the city were their knights, who had fled after a crushing defeat in the Battle of Hattin. Residents of the bordering regions, such as Ascalon and others, gathered in the city, and a large army gathered there. The Franks believed that it was easier to endure death than the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem, which was holy for Christians, and were ready to sacrifice their lives, their money, and their children.⁷⁶ On September 25, 1187, Saladin set up camp on the north side of the Damascus Gate and the Church of Zion. The next day, a confrontation between the two sides began, and both sides lost a large number of troops.⁷⁷ Considering the hopelessness of their situation, the Frankish leaders agreed to request conditions and surrender Jerusalem to Saladin. When they sent a messenger with this request to the Sultan, he rejected their request and said: "I will only treat you as you treated the inhabitants when you conquered it in 491, killing,

⁷⁵ Ehrenkreutz, "The Place of Saladin in the Naval History of the Mediterranean Sea in the Middle Ages," 106.

⁷⁶ Richards, "The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 2," 330.

⁷⁷ Richards, "The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 2," 331.

enslaving, and repaying evil with evil.”⁷⁸ Thus, Ibn al-Azir wanted to show that Saladin was very strict with the enemies of his faith and was relentless with people who harmed Muslims.

But Balian, the ruler of Ramla, did not give up and tried to discuss and settle this matter with Saladin. When Balian despaired, he said to Saladin: “O Sultan, understand that in this city, we are a great army that only God can comprehend. They moderate their struggle only in the hope of conditions, thinking that you will provide them with the same conditions as others. They avoid death and desire life. However, if they see that death is inevitable, then, by Allah, we will kill our sons and women, burn our goods and property, and will not allow you to extract a single dinar or dirham from it, and will not take any man or woman captive. When we finish this, we will destroy the Dome of the Rock, Al-Aqsa Mosque, and other sites and then kill the 5,000 Muslim prisoners we have. We will not leave you a single horse or animal without killing it. Then we will all come against you and fight with you like desperate people fighting for their lives. No one of us will be killed until he kills many more of you. We will die nobly or achieve a glorious victory.”⁷⁹ After hearing that the Franks were going to kill 5,000 Muslims and destroy the Dome of the Rock, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and other objects of sacred importance to the Muslims, Saladin agreed to the Franks' terms, and the city was surrendered on October 2, 1187. The vast cross was torn from the top of the Dome of the Rock. As a result, Muslims shouted, “God is great!” with joy, and the Franks screamed with grief and pain.⁸⁰ The following Friday, 9 October 1187, the Qutbah was recited at the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

⁷⁸ Richards, “The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 2,” 332.

⁷⁹ Richards, “The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 2,” 332.

⁸⁰ Richards, “The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 2,” 334.

Also, Ibn al-Azir, as a person financed by the Jangids, provides the following episode: After the appointment of an imam in the mosque, Saladin ordered the construction of a pulpit. But he was told that Nur ad-Din Mahmud had already made an excellent pulpit decorated with all the valuables in Aleppo. Previously, this was the first time anyone had done this in Islam, and Saladin ordered it to be brought and installed in Jerusalem. More than twenty years have passed since its production and transportation. This was one of Nur ad-Din's inspired actions and an example of the perfection of his goals.⁸¹

Ibn Shaddad, in turn, talks about the capture of Jerusalem by Saladin in the same vein: Saladin, after the capture of Ascalon, moved towards Jerusalem, relying only on God and entrusting his troops and himself to Him to open the door to success, which must be grabbed when it opens, in the words of Muhammad (peace be upon him): "If the door to any advantage is open to anyone, then let him seize it, for he does not know when it may be closed to him."⁸² Saladin arrived in the city with his troops on September 20, 1187. Initially, he took a position on the western side with his army, which, according to experienced sources, amounted to more than 60,000 people. Later, on September 25, 1187, he took a position on the northern side after finding a more successful position. Using trebuchets, Saladin blew up the city wall in the north corner of the Gehenna Valley⁸³. The enemy commanders realized that they were in a desperate situation in which their fate was inevitable and that they would be killed by the sword with which their brothers were killed. The signs also showed them that our true religion would defeat the false one. As a result, humbled, they were inclined to seek terms and sent a messenger to

⁸¹ Richards, "The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta'rikh. Part 2," 334.

⁸² Richards, "The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin," 77.

⁸³ Richards, "The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin," 77.

Saladin with terms of a truce several times. The agreement was reached through an exchange of messages between the two parties.

The Sultan took the city on October 2, 1187, and this eve was the date of the Prophetic Ascension, written in the Noble Koran. It is necessary to pay attention to this remarkable coincidence: how the Almighty prescribed his return with the forces of Saladin into the hands of the Muslims on the anniversary of the night journey of their Prophet. This is a sign that God has accepted the obedience offered.⁸⁴ The capture of Jerusalem was Saladin's excellent service to the faith, witnessed by many religious figures, mystics, and Sufis. The reason for the presence of a vast number of religious figures at the time of the capture of Jerusalem by Saladin was that when the news spread among the Muslims that Saladin, with divine help, had conquered the coastal lands and planned a campaign, the ulema from Egypt and Syria went to him. At the moment the city was captured, shouts and prayers were heard among the Muslims, shouts: "There is no god but God" and "God is great." The following Friday in Jerusalem, a khutbah was held in the central mosque, and Friday prayers were held. Also, the vast cross above the Dome of the Rock was lowered. God gave victory to Islam by His power and strength.⁸⁵ The chronicles of both authors provide the reader with an idea of Jerusalem's sacred meaning for Muslims in the Middle Ages. Subsequently, after Saladin captured Jerusalem, all religious leaders began to perceive the Sultan as a defender of the faith. Due to this, medieval Muslim sources most often depicted and introduced the great commander with this feat.

If you look at part of the chronicles of Ibn Shaddad and Ibn al-Azir about the period of the Third Crusade, it becomes clear that medieval Christian and Muslim authors perceived the

⁸⁴ Richards, "The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin," 77-78.

⁸⁵ Richards, "The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin," 78.

Crusades differently. According to medieval Christian sources, the third Crusade began in 1189, and a single army of Crusaders tried to conquer Jerusalem. According to Ibn Shaddad, before the arrival of the German Emperor in 1190, Muslims perceived the confrontation with the Franks as another war with the crusader kingdoms. Only on October 14, 1189, when the Sultan received a letter from his son al-Zahir, which stated that the German emperor had gone to Constantinople with a vast army, rumored to be 200,000 or 260,000 people, to recapture Jerusalem from Muslims.⁸⁶ As a result of this, Saladin decided to rouse the population to jihad against the Franks. Ibn Shaddad writes: “he entrusted me with this assignment and ordered me personally to go and call for jihad with their troops to the lord of Jazirat, the lord of Sinjar, the lord of Erbil, and the lord of Mosul. He also instructed me to go to Baghdad to inform the Caliph -Nasir li-Din Allah Abil-Abbas and ask for his help. Imad ad-Din Zanki, the ruler of Sinjar, and Sanjar Shah, the ruler of Jazirat, responded to the Sultan’s call, leading his troops with the Lord of Mosul Izzad-Din sent his son Ala ad-Din Khurramshah in his place with most of his forces.⁸⁷

Ibn Shaddad, in his chronicle, does not try to embellish Saladin’s action and does not try to say that only the Sultan was involved in the Muslim victory and provides reports when the great commander made strategic retreats—for example, a report on the demolition of Ascalon. Knowing that he could not hold Ascalon from advancing Franks, Saladin understood that the best solution would be to demolish the city. According to this 1191, he summoned the governor of Qaysar, one of his senior Mamluks and one of the wisest, and ordered the city walls to be demolished. With its inhabitants’ help, the city’s demolition occurred at dawn on September 12, 1191.⁸⁸ Ibn Shaddad’s reports on Saladin’s actions during the Third Crusades occupy a

⁸⁶ Richards, “The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin,” 106.

⁸⁷ Richards, “The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin,” 106-107.

⁸⁸ Richards, “The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin,” 178.

significant part of the chronicle. But from the reports, we understand that Ibn Shaddad does not highlight the victory in the Third Crusade as the merit of Saladin but presents us with a large number of historical figures from the Muslim world who made their significant contribution to the victory over the forces of the crusaders. It is also the last year of the Third Crusades in the chronicle, ending with Sultan Saladin's death on March 3, 1193.⁸⁹ Ibn Shaddad ends his chronicle with the words: Then, these years and their players passed away,

As if it were all just a dream.

“These are the notes of al-Malik an-Nasir Abt'l-Muzaffar Yusuf ibn Ayit. I completed their collection on the day of his death. Through this, he planned to win the favor of God, calling on people to bless his name and remember his excellent qualities. May God guide his successors who come after him to the right path and give him the reward he deserves.”⁹⁰

Since Ibn Shaddad personally participated in all his campaigns against the Franks and his enemies in the Muslim world, he left a very detailed account of Saladin's campaigns during the Third Crusades. In turn, Ibn al-Azir quoted the works of other authors; despite this, one can see with the naked eye in the chronicle of Ibn al-Azir that the Third Crusades were perceived as a more large-scale version of the conflicts between the Muslim atabegs and the cities of the crusaders, which often happened in the Levant and Anatoly. The second part of Ibn al-Azir's chronicle ends in 1193. In March 1193, Salah ad-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub ibn Shazi, ruler of Egypt, Syria, Jazira, and other lands, died in Damascus. But the most exciting thing is that earlier in the chronicle, Ibn al-Azir focused on confiscating the property of al-Adid, the last caliph of the Fatmid Caliphate, entrusted to another person. But at the end of the chronicle, he says, “As for Saladin's generosity, he gave all his property in the name of Allah. As evidence of Sultano's

⁸⁹ Richards, “The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin,” 244.

⁹⁰ Richards, “The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin,” 245.

generosity, one can cite that after his death, he left only one Tyrian dinar and forty Nashiri dirhams in his treasury. I also heard that in Acre, he gave away 18,000 riding animals, horses, or mules, not counting camels, in actions against the Franks. When the Alid dynasty ended in Egypt after the death of al-Adid, he confiscated all the things in their storage but distributed them all.”⁹¹

However, Professor Beben provided Carole Hillandbrand’s idea that the Muslim Middle East only rediscovered Saladin in the nineteenth century.⁹² The Muslim world learned about the great hero of the twelfth century from Christian Arabs who translated European writings about the Crusades and the exploits of Saladin. What raises an interesting point is that the disappearance of Saladin from the Middle East shows a deliberate attempt to erase Saladin from history, but in that case, we would have found some documents preserved in personal collections. In the case of Saladin in the Middle East, the history and merits of Saladin were rewritten; some merits were shown, and others were hidden, which changed the image of a hero. He raised the importance of the Mongol conquest's impact on subsequent Muslim memory of the Crusades. Andrew Ehrenkreutz, in his work, raises the importance of looking at the issue from different angles. Although the story of Saladin's war against the Crusaders has always been famous, it represents only one aspect of his political and military career as a great sultan. To get a complete picture of Saladin's life and varied career, it is necessary to consider both his role as the founder of the Ayyubid dynasties, the reform of Egypt, and his commitment to the fight against the Crusaders.⁹³

⁹¹ Richards, “The Chronicle of Ibn Al-Athir for the Crusading Period from Al-Kamil Fi'l-Ta’rikh. Part 2,” 409.

⁹² Daniel Beben, “Remembering Saladin: The Crusades and the Politics of Heresy in Persian Historiography,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 28, no. 2 (2018): 232, doi:10.1017/S1356186317000529.

⁹³ Beben, “Remembering Saladin,” 234.

Persian sources provide more detailed information about the crusades in the Muslim world than pro-Mongol authors who focused only on whitewashing the actions of the Mongols during the Mongol conquests. But if we proceed from Persian historiography, when it comes to the fight against heretical elements, Saladin is primarily represented for the overthrow of the Fatimid about the Ismaili dynasty in Egypt, but in post-Mongol historiography, he is universally remembered mainly for the recapture of Jerusalem from the Crusaders, what can be used to depreciate the changes in the image of Saladin in the historical annals of the Muslim world. As an example of an essential geographical text of the Seljuk era in pro-Mongolian Persian, one can cite *Ajaib-namah*, written by Muhammad Hamadani. The main point of interest to us is the section dedicated to Egypt, which provides information about Saladin's overthrow of the Fatimid dynasty led by the Ismailis in 1171. Subsequently, Abbasid power was restored in Egypt. The text begins: "Until 1171, Egypt was under Ismaili control. But the Ismailis accepted their defeat, and Saladin took Egypt under his rule. But Saladin acted honorably and did not consider the jihad until the full destruction of the Ismailis." After the beginning of Saladin's reign under his name, it was announced that "Egypt submitted to him, and the slogan of Islam became explicit Shi'ar-i Islam Ashkara Shud," which means the restoration of the spiritual power of the Abbasid Caliphate in Egypt.⁹⁴ After the Mongol conquests, Saladin's image was rewritten as the conqueror of Jerusalem, and the Mongols took over the unification of the Muslim world to whitewashing the actions of the Mongols during the Mongol conquests. Since the Crusades were a less exciting topic for the Muslim world, what subsequently led to oblivion was the memory of the great commander.

In conclusion, the main reason for the difference in the historical image of Saladin in Christian and Muslim sources was that the two warring blocs viewed the Crusades differently.

⁹⁴ Beben, "Remembering Saladin," 239.

For the "Christians," it was a holy war against the barbarians, and all attention was focused on the Crusades, in which the Crusaders tried to retake Jerusalem from the barbarians. Moreover, Christian sources from the 13th and 14th centuries demonstrate that the image of Saladin changed over time due to qualities granted to Christians in the early 13th century that did not correspond to the image of a Muslim. The Muslim world was a state fragmented into parts and sectarian differences between countries, because of which states did not help each other. Subsequently, Saladin's most remarkable feat was the unification of the disparate parts of this Muslim world. Also, the chronicles of Ibn Shaddad and Ibn al-Azir present as outstanding achievements of Saladin's conquest of Jerusalem, which has sacred significance for Muslims and is considered the third hanging place after Mecca and Madina. But at the same time, medieval Muslim authors make it clear that for medieval Muslim authors, the Crusades were perceived as a larger-scale conflict between Muslim leaders and the kingdoms of the Crusaders, which continuously continued with the jihads of Atabeg Jangi and nothing more. As a result, the medieval Muslim chronicles of the Third Crusade contained many historical figures who played critical roles in the conflict with the Franks. However, after the Mongol conquests, Saladin's history was rewritten, and he was left with his achievements of the capture of Jerusalem in 1187 and his victory in the Third Crusade. The Mongols took his achievements in unifying the medieval Muslim world under one Abbasid Caliph flag to present themselves as the unifiers of the fragmented Muslim world. Since the Crusades were a less exciting topic for the Muslim world, what subsequently led to oblivion was the memory of the great commander.

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