

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SALADIN

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IN the effort to penetrate behind the external history of a person whose reputation rests upon some military achievement, the modern tendency is to analyse the complex of circumstances within which he acted, with the sometimes explicit suggestion that the individual is rather the creature than the creator of his circumstances, or, more justly, that his achievement is to be explained by a harmonious adjustment of his genius to the conditions within which it operated. That this is generally true calls for no argument. But history, especially the history of the Near East, is full of conquering kings, who seem to owe nothing to their circumstances except the possession of a powerful army and the weakness of their antagonists. The question posed by the career of Saladin is whether he was just another such conqueror, or whether it involved distinctive moral elements which gave his initial victory and subsequent struggle with the Third Crusade a quality of its own. That he fought in the cause of Islām against the Crusaders is not enough to justify an affirmative answer to the second question, and might even be irrelevant. To put the matter precisely: was Saladin one of those unscrupulous, but fortunate, generals whose motive was personal ambition and lust of conquest, and who merely exploited religious catchwords and sentiments to achieve their own ends?

The problem is thus one which involves a judgment upon interior questions of personality and motive. It is rarely indeed in medieval history that we have at our disposal authentic materials from which positive conclusions, that will stand up to rigorous historical criticism, can be drawn as to the motives of prominent historical figures. Before entering on the discussion at all, therefore, it is necessary to be assured that some at least of our sources are of a kind which offers some possibility of reaching an answer. For the life and achievements of Saladin we possess, by a fortunate conjunction, five contemporary sources in Arabic,

in whole or in part, besides casual references in the writings of travellers and others. Of these five, one has survived only in fragments. This is the history of Ibn Abī Ṭaiy, who, as a Shi'ite of Aleppo, one would expect to be hostile to Saladin (as he clearly was to his predecessor Nūr ad-Dīn), but in fact shows himself, in the quotations from his works by other writers, to be rather favourably disposed to him.

The three other historical sources were all written by Easterners, not Syrians. The most famous is the Mosul historian Ibn al-Athīr, who belonged to a feudal family in close relations with the Zangid princes of Mosul and wrote a panegyric history of their dynasty. His presentation of Saladin fairly reflects the original hostility and later wry admiration and grudging allegiance of the Zangid partisans. But except for this psychological attitude he is not a first-hand source. All, or almost all, his narratives relating to Saladin were taken from the works of Saladin's secretary 'Imād ad-Dīn and rewritten with an occasional twist or admixture of fiction.¹ Irrespective of his personal attitude, however, it is obvious that a chronicler, even if contemporary, cannot be relied upon to solve questions of interior personality and motive; if, therefore, we had nothing but Ibn Abī Ṭaiy's and Ibn al-Athīr's chronicles to go by, we should have no means at all of discovering the real quality of Saladin's achievement.

Equally well known is the biography of Saladin by his Judge of the Army, the qāḍī Bahā ad-Dīn Ibn Shaddād, also of Mosul. From 1188 Bahā ad-Dīn was the confidant and intimate friend of Saladin, and his history, written in a simple and straightforward style, portrays Saladin for us, as no ordinary chronicle can do, in his character as a man. Bahā ad-Dīn may perhaps be called uncritical, but he was no deluded hero-worshipper. His admiration is that of an upright and honest friend from whom nothing was concealed, and there can be no question of deliberate suppression or deflection of the truth in his narrative of the last five years of Saladin's life. To have one such source for the history of any medieval prince is rare indeed. The portrait it gives us,

¹ See 'Arabic Sources for the Life of Saladin' in *Speculum*, xxv. no. i, pp. 58-72 (Cambridge, Mass., 1950).

however, is that of Saladin at his climax of success and in the desperate conflict of the Third Crusade ; it supplies, therefore, little direct evidence on the long and hard struggle to build up his power.

In these circumstances it is a piece of incredibly good fortune that our fourth source, which covers (in the original text or in reliable summaries) the whole of his active career, is almost equally close and authoritative. This source is the works of 'the Secretary' (*al-Kātib*) 'Imād ad-Dīn, a native of Isfahān. He belonged to the relatively new class of college-trained civil servants, entered the employment first of the Seljuk Sultans and the Caliphs in 'Irāq, then rose to high rank at Damascus in the service of Nūr ad-Dīn, and finally became personal secretary to Saladin in 1175. In addition to his two-volume history of the campaigns of 1187-88 and the Third Crusade,¹ he wrote a large work in seven volumes, entitled *al-Barq al-Shāmī*, covering the period of his own career under Nūr ad-Dīn and Saladin. Of this work only two volumes of the original are known to have survived, but the whole was carefully summarized by Abū Shāma of Damascus (d. 1267).

'Imād ad-Dīn was one of the most famous stylists of his age, and his works are composed in the elaborate and florid rhyming prose cultivated by the secretarial class ; yet with all his display of verbal virtuosity, his actual narratives of events are invariably full, precise, and straightforward. He shows no sign of the twisting of facts, whether to cover up his own weaknesses or those of others or for the sake of a rhyme, nor of fanciful adulation, even of Saladin. To be sure he greatly admired Saladin, yet in his writings he criticizes at times his actions and judgment, and indeed seems to have done so to his face. He was on the best of terms with his official superior, the Chief Secretary al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, and he was clearly too conscious of his own merits and of the trust reposed in him to play the toady or to conceal the truth. His *Barq* is, one might say, almost as much an autobiography as it is a history of Saladin ; and its importance is that it presents Saladin to us from the angle of a trained administrator,

¹ *Conquête de la Syrie et de la Palestine*, ed. Carlo de Landberg, Leyden, 1888. This text has been little used so far by historians of the Crusades.

in close and daily contact with him, though on a less intimate footing than Bahā ad-Dīn.

The fifth of our sources is in some respects the most valuable of all. These are the despatches and letters of his most trusted adviser and Secretary of State, the Palestinian al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, preserved in full or in excerpts in the works of 'Imād ad-Dīn, Abū Shāma, and various collections of documents. The intimacy of the relation between them can be felt in the loyal and affectionate letters addressed by al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil to Saladin, especially during the Third Crusade, sustaining him in times of adversity and even admonishing him on occasions. While, therefore, the historian will treat with all necessary caution the more elaborate public despatches addressed by al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil on Saladin's behalf to the Caliphs and other potentates, yet the consistency with which certain themes and ideas are expressed in them must be taken to reflect some at least of Saladin's real purposes and ideals.

Saladin's fame, as has already been said, rests upon his military achievement in the battle of Ḥaṭṭīn in 1187 and subsequent recapture of Jerusalem. Consequently, he is regarded by historical writers, both Muslim and Christian, as, first and foremost, a general, and secondly as the founder of a dynasty. The first is, naturally enough, the view taken in the western sources for the Third Crusade, and it is encouraged by Ibn al-Athīr's presentation of him as a man who used his military talents to satisfy his dynastic ambitions and to build up a vast empire.

It is from the same angle that he is compared or contrasted with his predecessor Nūr ad-Dīn. Unfortunately, we do not possess for an estimation of Nūr ad-Dīn's personality anything comparable to the materials that exist for the study of Saladin. All the contemporary Muslim records (save for casual anecdotes) are chronicles, and their panegyric tone reflects the attitude of Sunnī circles to his services not only in organizing the defence of Syria against the Crusaders, but also (and perhaps even more) in propagating orthodoxy by the foundation and endowment of religious institutions (mosques, madrasas, oratories, sufi convents)¹ and by repression of the Shi'ites. Later chronicles,

¹ See N. Elisséeff, 'Les Monuments de Nūr ad-Dīn' in *Bulletin d'Études Orientales*, t. xiii, Damascus 1951, pp. 5-43.

except for the extracts preserved from the works of the Aleppo Shi'ite writer Ibn Abī Ṭaiy, are even more eulogistic. But when the judgment even of Christian writers like William of Tyre concords with their attitude, we can be sure that it is a faithful reflection of Nūr ad-Dīn's *public* life ; and it would be a gratuitous assumption, in the face of such evidence, that, inasmuch as these measures served the political interests of Nūr ad-Dīn, they were not motivated by sincere personal attachment to their objects and ideals.

There are, however, some essential differences between the circumstances in which Nūr ad-Dīn and Saladin carried out their tasks. Nūr ad-Dīn operated *from within* the structure of politics of his age. Since the break-up of the Seljuk sultanate at the end of the eleventh century, Western Asia had been parcelled out amongst a number of local dynasties, all of them (except a few remote baronies) founded by Turkish generals or Turcoman chiefs, and all of them characterized by two common features. One was the spirit of personal advantage and aggrandizement which determined their political actions and relationships. It seems well-nigh impossible to discover in the relations of the Turkish princes or the Turcoman chiefs with one another—even when they were members of the same family—any sense of loyalty or restraint in exploiting each other's weaknesses, let alone that solidarity shown, for example, by the Buwaihid brothers in Persia in the tenth century. The tale of plots, revolts, ephemeral alliances, treacheries, calculated perfidies, dethronements during the twelfth century is unending. In the general political demoralization even the most resolute and unscrupulous princes, a Zangī or a Takash, could scarcely keep their feet.

The other was the composition of their military forces. The foundation of each prince's power was a standing regiment of guards or *'askar* of Turkish *mamlūks*, consisting of Turkish slaves purchased in boyhood and trained as professional cavalymen, freed in due course, and maintained by the grant of military fiefs, from which they drew their revenues in money and kind. The continual warfare between the principalities was carried on by these professional troops, whose intensely personal loyalty was given to their immediate commander, and who therefore followed

him into rebellion or changes of allegiance with little regard to the interests of their prince. Being professional armies, they were expensive to maintain and therefore small in numbers ; one of the reasons for the constant efforts of princes to seize their neighbours' territories was precisely in order to gain the means of enlarging their forces. Furthermore, they could not and would not remain on campaign longer than a certain period at a time ; on the one hand, the prince could not afford a high rate of wastage, and on the other the troops themselves, as soon as their period of campaign service (called in Arabic *baikār*) was over, had no thought but to return to enjoy the proceeds of their fiefs.¹ The Turcoman troops, though nomadic irregulars, were little different ; they too went on campaign only for a limited time, for so long as they could subsist on plunder or were paid for their services in money and supplies.²

Nūr ad-Dīn, the son of a Turkish professional soldier, not only understood this system, but himself formed a part of it. Assuming his object to have been the creation of a centralized military power strong enough to deal with the Crusaders, rather than personal aggrandizement, nevertheless his military and political action conformed almost entirely to the practice of the time (even if at a higher moral level) ; while on the other hand his rivals and vassals accepted him as a natural representative of the system by reason of his family connections, and respected him because of the success with which he operated it, both as a diplomatist and as a commander of armies. Even his campaign of what we may call 'moral rearmament' by giving every support to the religious leaders and revivalists was not in any way unprecedented ; indeed, it was on the basis and example of what had already been accomplished in this way in the Seljuk empire that Nūr ad-Dīn founded his own policy, and the most that can be

¹ This practice was dictated not only by personal considerations but also by sound economic reasons. The regular forces had to maintain themselves and their retainers on campaign with supplies and forage out of their own revenues, and a prolonged campaign involved them in considerable expense and even debt (cf. 'Imād ad-Dīn in Abū Shāma, i. 271 foot, and *Fath* 392-3 ; Bahā ad-Dīn (ed. Schultens) 200, 221).

² Cf. Ibn al-Athīr (ed. Tornberg), x. 400 ; 'Imād ad-Dīn, *Barq*, iii. 139b.

claimed for him is greater honesty and deeper sincerity than some of his predecessors in adopting it.

Nūr ad-Dīn, in fine, both as general and administrator, displayed an insight and a capacity which rose above the average of his time but without conflicting with the established system. There can be little doubt that, had he lived, and the temporary rift between him and Saladin been closed, the counter-attack on the Crusaders would have been quicker and more vigorously pressed than it actually proved to be. The fact of the rift with Saladin cannot be denied, but the causes of it are clear enough to anyone who studies the sources without the bias induced by Ibn al-Athīr's malicious interpretations. To Nūr ad-Dīn the conquest of Egypt meant only an immediate and substantial accretion of military and financial resources for the war in Syria; whereas Saladin, faced with a dangerous situation in Egypt, felt that his first responsibility was to build up the local forces to hold Egypt against the threat of collusion between pro-Fāṭimid elements within and Frankish attacks from without. Presumably, after the failure of the Sicilian expedition to Alexandria in 1174 the general situation in Egypt would have been sufficiently stabilized to restore full understanding between Nūr ad-Dīn and Saladin, but even before it arrived Nūr ad-Dīn had died.

The immediate consequence of Nūr ad-Dīn's death was that the centralized military power which he had built up fell to pieces, under the normal operation of the politico-military system. His Mosul relations seized the Jazīra provinces, and his Syrian forces split up under the rivalries of the generals surrounding his minor son al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ. The whole task had to be begun again, and on a very different footing. Since there was no hope of finding a true successor to Nūr ad-Dīn among the members of the Zangid house, any attempt to revive Nūr ad-Dīn's structure, from whatever quarter it came, would have to begin by challenging the existing Zangid principalities; and while its leader, if he were of the right type, might eventually hope to gain the support of the 'moral rearmament' movement, he would certainly be opposed by its representatives in the first instance, out of loyalty to the memory of Nūr ad-Dīn.

As these circumstances, therefore, made the task of reconstructing a centralized military power in Syria a different, and in some respects harder, task than had been faced by Nūr ad-Dīn, so also the methods and qualities of the man who undertook it would have to be different from those of Nūr ad-Dīn. It might not have been done at all ; but if it was to be done, there were, so far as one can judge, only two alternative methods. One was the absorption of the whole Zangid structure into a powerful military empire from outside (such as, say, an expanded Seljuk Sultanate of Anatolia, or a new empire in the East, had either been possible at the time). The other was to build upon the foundations of moral unity laid by Nūr ad-Dīn, and so greatly strengthen them that the Zangid structure would be forced into the service of its ends. To purely outward appearances Saladin's way was the first ; in reality, the secret of his success was that he adopted and carried through the second. To be sure, this involved the building up of a vast empire extending from Kurdistan and Diyār Bakr to Nubia and the Yemen ; for whoso wills the end must will the means, and the circumstances of his task and time required nothing less than this. But Saladin's personal position and qualities, the spirit in which he approached his task, and the methods he employed were utterly different from those possessed and displayed by the founders of great military empires.

To begin with, Saladin was not a Turk but a Kurd. If the Turks, because of the sense of superiority bred in them by their military tradition and the all but universal monopolization of political power in Eastern Islam by Turkish princes, despised all the other Muslim races, those of Mosul and Northern Syria regarded their Kurdish neighbours with special contempt.¹ The Mosul troops, marching out against Saladin for the first time in 1175, had² abused and mocked him, calling him ' a dog that barks at his master ' . Seventeen years later, a Mosul officer, as he watched Saladin being assisted on to his horse during the

¹ This is expressed vividly and with typical elaboration even by 'Imād ad-Dīn, who devotes more than a page to disparaging the unmilitary qualities of the Kurds in the Artuqid armies in contrast to the virtues and sobriety of Saladin's troops : *Barq*, v. 57b sq.

² If Michael the Syrian is to be believed : ed. and trans. Chabot, iii. 365.

defence of Jerusalem, is reported as saying : ' Have a care, son of Ayyūb, what sort of end you will come to—you who are helped to mount by a Seljuk prince and a descendant of Atābeg Zangī ! ' ¹ The difference in tone between the two taunts may fairly enough represent the extent and the limits of the change of attitude towards him amongst the more race-conscious and the more resistant to the ideals for which he stood.

Secondly, although Saladin's father, uncle, brothers, and he himself were enrolled in Nūr ad-Dīn's feudal forces, he was far from outstanding as a general or a strategist. This may seem a paradox in the victor of Ḥaṭṭīn ; but Saladin was a good tactician. Ḥaṭṭīn, like his two early victories against the forces of Mosul, was won by good tactics, and these were his only successful battles in the open field. His most remarkable feat of arms was the capture of the reputedly impregnable fortress of Āmid (Diyārbakr) in 1183 after a siege of only three weeks, an episode generally overlooked in Western histories. It is remarkable how often lack of confidence in his generalship was expressed by the officers in his own armies, and not always without reason, even if valuable opportunities were sometimes lost during the Third Crusade by their opposition to his tactics and plans of campaign.

Nor was he a good administrator. He seems to have taken little personal interest in details of administration beyond trying to suppress abuses. In his own territories he leaned heavily on his brother al-'Ādil Saif ad-Dīn and his Secretary of State al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil ; the administration of the provinces was turned over entirely to their governors on two conditions, that they should follow his example in suppressing abuses and furnish him with troops (and if necessary with money) when he required them to do so for the Holy War.

The independent and concordant testimony furnished by the surviving documents of three of the men who stood closest to him, al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, 'Imād ad-Dīn and Bahā ad-Dīn, supply us with the real explanation of his success. Himself neither warrior nor governor by training or inclination, he it was who inspired and gathered round himself all the elements and forces making for

¹ Ibn al-Athīr, xii. 50.

the unity of Islām against the invaders. And this he did, not so much by the example of his personal courage and resolution—which were undeniable—as by his unselfishness, his humility and generosity, his moral vindication of Islām against both its enemies and its professed adherents. He was no simpleton, but for all that an utterly simple and transparently honest man. He baffled his enemies, internal and external, because they expected to find him animated by the same motives as they were, and playing the political game as they played it. Guileless himself, he never expected and seldom understood guile in others—a weakness of which his own family and others sometimes took advantage, but only (as a general rule) to come up at the end against his single-minded devotion, which nobody and nothing could bend, to the service of his ideals.

The true nature of those ideals has not yet (in my opinion) been appreciated. The immediate task to which he found himself called was to drive the Franks out of Palestine and Syria. This was the part that his contemporaries saw, and that later generations assumed to have been his whole purpose. It is natural, when a man accomplishes some great work, to imagine that this was what he had set as his goal. In reality, it is more often the case that what a man achieves is only a part of what he sets out to achieve; and perhaps it is only because his eyes are fixed on some more distant goal that he succeeds in doing as much as he does.

This was, in my view, eminently true of Saladin. His wider design was one which only a man of unbounded ambition or of unbounded simplicity would have entertained. In a certain sense, Saladin was both, but his ambition arose out of the simplicity of his character and the directness of his vision. He saw clearly that the weakness of the Muslim body-politic, which had permitted the establishment and continued to permit the survival of the Crusading states, was the result of political demoralization. It was against this that he revolted. There was only one way to end it: to restore and revive the political fabric of Islām as a single united empire, not under his own rule, but by restoring the rule of the Revealed Law, under the direction of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate. The theory of the Caliph's disposal

of provinces by diploma, to the other princes of the time a convenient fiction, was to him a positive and necessary reality. He saw himself as simply the adjutant and commander of the armies of the 'Abbāsids, as he had become for a brief time the wazīr and commander of the armies of the Fāṭimid Caliphs. That he was called *sultān* was simply the title he had inherited as wazīr of the Fāṭimids ; it had nothing to do with the theory or claims of the Seljuk sultanate, and it never appears in his protocol or on his coins. 'Imād ad-Dīn relates an incident during the siege of Acre, which is particularly instructive because it is one of the occasions on which the secretary reproaches Saladin for his simplicity.¹ At the request of an envoy from the Caliphate, he had consented to transfer the region of Shahrazūr in Kurdistan to the Caliph's possession ; when faced with the anger and scorn of his amirs at this decision, he replied : ' The Caliph is the lord of mankind and the repository of the True Faith ; if he were to join us here I should give him all these lands—so what of Shahrazūr ? '

But the argument does not rest on an incidental episode of this kind, however authentic it may be. This objective is the explicit theme of many of his despatches to Baghdād. ' These three aims—*jihād* on the Path of God, the restraining of actions hurtful to the servants of God, and submission to the Caliph of God—are the sole desire of this servitor from the territories in his occupation and his sole gain from the worldly power granted to him. God is his witness that . . . he has no desire beyond these things and no aim beyond this aim.' ² It reappears in his bewilderment at the failure of the Caliph and the Caliph's officers at Baghdād to understand his motives and to give him at least moral support : ' For let him consider, is there anyone else of the governors of Islām whose increase distresses the infidels ?' ³ in the punctiliousness with which he supplicates for the Caliph's diploma of investiture before operating in new territories, and his protests against the Zangids' claims to the Jazīra on grounds of ' inheritance ' in default of a diploma, and their seizure of

¹ *Fath* (ed. Landberg), 218-19.

² From Abū Shāma, ii. 48, after the occupation of Aleppo.

³ From Abū Shāma, ii. 41, after the capture of Āmid.

Aleppo ;¹ in his attribution of the speedy capture of Āmid to the influence of the Caliph's authority ;² and in his forthright message to sultan Qilij Arslān of Anatolia in 1178 that ' he would not permit mutual warfare among Muslim princes instead of their uniting in the *jihād* '.³

At the same time his idealism was yoked with a strong practical sense. The clarity with which he judged each step towards his objective and each situation as it arose supplies the clue to the steady expansion of his power. Knowing that the problem which he faced was not only political, but also or still more a moral and psychological one, and that to attack it merely on the political and military plane would fail to solve it, he realized that to gain effective results it was essential to cement political allegiance by moral and psychological stimulants and deterrents. The difficulty—even the apparent hopelessness—of this task in the circumstances of the time are evident, but Saladin found ways to meet it, often to the bewilderment or astonishment of his friends and counsellors.

In dealing with the princes, whether friends or enemies, his first principle was sincerity and absolute loyalty to his word. Even with the Crusaders a truce was a truce. There is no instance on record in which he broke faith with them, and to those who broke faith with him he was implacable, as Reginald of Chatillon and the Templars were to learn. Towards his Muslim rivals he supplemented loyalty with generosity. After the pact with al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ in 1176 (and the famous incident of the return of 'Azāz), he left Aleppo alone until aṣ-Ṣāliḥ's death, although he held the Caliph's diploma for it.⁴ The siege of Āmid was undertaken because he had promised it to the Artuqid prince of Ḥiṣn Kaifā as the price of his alliance, and after capturing it he turned over all its immense treasures to his ally as

¹ Cf. Abū Shāma, ii. 24, 31 n. It might be claimed, and with truth, that such passages could be paralleled in the artificial correspondence of other princes with the Caliphate. But it would be utterly inconsistent with all that we know of the character of Saladin to regard them as equally hypocritical ; and if it all meant nothing more to him than mere playing with words, why should he have kept up such a stream of entreaties and expostulations to Baghdād ?

² Abū Shāma, ii. 40-41.

³ *Barq*, iii. fol. 123a.

⁴ Abū Shāma, ii. 34.

they stood—an act of loyalty to his pledged word so unprecedented that it created a sensation.¹

To achieve his object, however, he had to reinforce his own actions and example by creating a moral and psychological current in his favour so strong that it could not be resisted. For this he needed allies, and especially the influential class of 'college-men' who were the leaders of public opinion. This was one of his most serious difficulties since, as already noted, these were precisely the sections which Nūr ad-Dīn had mobilized in his support. Since Saladin at first appeared to be a usurper who challenged the heirs of Nūr ad-Dīn, they, with the people of Syria generally, were in the beginning opposed, or at least reserved, towards him. The Arabic sources give us little indication of the gradual change in their attitude, but that his sincerity finally gained their respect and admiration is amply evident, both from the chronicles and from the reports of other contemporaries.² His patronage of the ṣūfīs, again following the example of Nūr ad-Dīn, was probably of particular importance for this 'missionary' work, if the term may be used, among the population of Syria. The most effective appeal to the general population, however, was probably made by his insistence upon the removal of wrongful dues and burdens in all territories under his government and suzerainty, even if it is by no means certain that his subordinates were always prompt to carry out his instructions on this point. Finally, it is remarkable that the turbulent Shi'ites of Aleppo and northern Syria, who had remained unreconciled to Nūr ad-Dīn, not only gave Saladin no trouble (after the early Assassin attempts on his life) but positively assisted him during the reconquest.³

The Secretary 'Imād ad-Dīn supplies a striking example of this aspect of Saladin's diplomacy,⁴ on an occasion when the

¹ So consistent was his conduct in this respect, and so frightening to his enemies, that it was necessary to invent an incident to offset it, which is duly recorded (with a great show of impartiality) by Ibn al-Athīr (xi. 341 ; see 'Arabic Sources', *Speculum*, xxv, 67-8).

² See Ibn Jubair, *Rihla*, pp. 297-8 ; 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī in Ibn Abī Usaibi'a, *Uyūn al-Anbā'*, ii. 206 (both translated in *R.H.C.Or.*, iii. 435 sqq.).

³ C. Cahen, *La Syrie du Nord à l'époque des croisades*, Paris 1940, pp. 428-9.

⁴ *Barq*, v. foll. 129 sqq.

Zangid atābek of Mosul and his advisors attempted to take advantage of his loyalty to the Caliphate, by requesting the Caliph's *diwān* to send the Shaikh ash-Shuyūkh of Baghdād to intercede with Saladin in 1184, 'because of their knowledge that we had no thought of anything but implicit obedience to the command that should be obeyed' (i.e. of the Caliphate). Although the conduct of the envoy from Mosul made an accommodation next to impossible, Saladin finally placed himself unreservedly in the hands of the Shaikh ash-Shuyūkh, only to be repulsed again by the envoy, who openly threatened an alliance between Mosul and the Caliph's enemy, the Seljuk sultan of Persia, Tughril II. It was this, adds 'Imād ad-Dīn, which determined Saladin, who had hitherto been lukewarm in prosecuting the conflict with Mosul, to deal with it firmly. That 'Imād ad-Dīn's account is not exaggerated is proved by the fact that Saladin's conduct on this occasion was the starting-point of his friendship with the qādī Bahā ad-Dīn, who was himself in the suite of the Mosul envoy and in his narrative confirms the main points of this statement.¹

Apart from the capture of Āmid (and perhaps even there as well), in fact, the extension of Saladin's empire in Asia between 1182 and 1186 was due far more to the influence of these factors than to military action. His campaigns before Mosul and Aleppo were demonstrations rather than sieges. The lesser princes of the Jazīra, confident in the character of the man, voluntarily placed themselves under his protection. The leaders of Nūr ad-Dīn's regiment at Aleppo, after little more than a show of battle,² came over *en masse* to give him the most loyal service. Even at Mosul, as Ibn al-Athīr himself conveys in his narrative,³ Saladin found supporters among the commanders, and it was they who eventually forced the Zangid atabek to yield in 1186. The extent of the influence exerted by the *fuqahā* over the troops should not perhaps be exaggerated; but there are several examples in our sources of their decisive intervention, and they

¹ Ed. Schultens, p. 57.

² 'Imād ad-Dīn, *Barq*, v. 79b sqq. (Abu Shāma, ii. 43-4).

³ Ed. Tornberg, xi. 338, 340. See also the significant incident of the garrison of Ḥarim (quoted by Grousset, ii. 720).

certainly counted as a contributory factor. The most remarkable case of all is that of the powerful Shāh-Arman of Khilāṭ, who had been among the most tenacious of Saladin's adversaries but who, just before the end of the Third Crusade, voluntarily offered Saladin his allegiance and his troops.¹

How much Saladin's reputation for absolute faithfulness to his word and generosity contributed to the recovery of Palestine and Inner Syria during the year and a half that followed Ḥaṭṭīn is well known. If it had been necessary to take every castle and fortified town by regular siege, not more than a tithe of them would have fallen before the opening of the Third Crusade, and the history of that Crusade would have been very different if the Crusaders had had the support of garrisons in Saladin's rear.

The stability of Saladin's structure was destined to be tried to the utmost limit by the Third Crusade. It was to prove a contest of a kind which he had never anticipated and for which he had made no preparations. Instead of pursuing his noble, if idealist, dream of restoring the reign of Law in the Islamic world he was involved in a struggle of the most painful actuality ; but because he had sought to realize the former by unselfishness, justice and loyalty, and only because of these moral foundations, he was able to sustain the unprecedented task now thrust upon him. No Muslim prince had for centuries been confronted with the problem of maintaining an army continuously in the field for three years against an active and enterprising enemy. The military feudal system was entirely inadequate to such a campaign, even if it was possible to organize a limited system of reliefs between the Egyptian and the Mesopotamian regiments.

The contest uncovered one by one the material and even moral weaknesses in Saladin's empire which had remained concealed during the era of victory. He had never cared for money or for prudent management of his revenues. He had ' spent the revenues of Egypt to gain Syria, the revenues of Syria to gain Mesopotamia, those of Mesopotamia to conquer Palestine ',² and now found himself without adequate resources to meet the cost of weapons, food, forage, equipment, and the pay of the auxiliary

¹ Bahā ad-Dīn, 260.

² Al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil in Abū Shāma, ii. 177.

troops. In consequence, he could do little to ease the difficulties of the feudal troops, who were either forced into debt or into pressing their cultivators.¹ Perhaps this, even more than the survival of old rancours, may explain the reluctance of some of the Eastern contingents to sustain their part in the campaign. In addition, all the military equipment from Egypt and Syria had been locked up in Acre,² which Saladin had refortified as his main base for future operations ; the siege and loss of Acre therefore seriously crippled the offensive power of the Muslim army.

Apart from this, however, the tactics and fighting traditions of the regular troops were baffled by the fortified trenches of the Crusading besiegers. In open fighting on the plain against the Western knights the Turkish regulars more than held their own, although Saladin's Kurdish guards proved less stable (as again at Arsūf). But when repeated success in the open field proved to be of no effect whatsoever in relieving the pressure on Acre, it was a natural reaction to slacken effort and to grumble against Saladin. Once it had started, grumbling became a habit and developed into criticism and opposition, especially in the later period of the campaign, when the fall of Acre seemed to have proved the weakness of Saladin's military leadership.

Yet this was after all a minor matter in comparison with the damage inflicted on Saladin and on the whole cause for which he stood by his own kinsmen. Here, if anywhere, was his most vulnerable point. The scarcely concealed appetites of several of his brothers and other relatives³ had caused him much trouble in the past, but had been brought more or less under control. But at the very climax of his struggle with the Crusaders his nephew Taqī ad-Dīn deliberately disobeyed his orders in Diyār Bakr, and by his disobedience opened up a series of conflicts and mutinies which grievously disabled Saladin during the campaign in Palestine after the fall of Acre. Not only did they involve the absence of Taqī ad-Dīn's own troops and those of Diyār Bakr during the rest of the active fighting, but they led to further rifts

¹ Abū Shāma, ii. 177, 178, 203 ; *Fath*, 207, 392-3, 443 ; Bahā ad-Dīn, 200, 221, etc.

² Bahā ad-Dīn, 174.

³ Vividly portrayed by al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil in a letter quoted by Abū Shāma, ii. 178.

within his family and to dissensions amongst his overstrained personal troops during the last crucial months.

These were the factors which robbed Saladin of the chance of complete victory in his struggle with Richard. But they only throw into stronger relief the most surprising and significant feature of the whole campaign—that year after year the Mosul contingents returned for active service, even if they sometimes lingered on the way. In the circumstances, there could have been no question of physical compulsion, nor could Saladin have restrained them (as the episode of *Taqī ad-Dīn* proves) from reoccupying the *Jazīra*, as in fact they attempted to do immediately after his death. There can be no explanation of this except that the feeling of personal loyalty to Saladin, even in Mosul, was strong enough to overcome the reluctance or resistance of individuals. His own modestly-phrased remark to *Bahā ad-Dīn* : ‘ If I were to die, it is very unlikely that these *‘askars* would ever come together again ’,¹ sums up the real nature of his achievement. For a brief but decisive moment, by sheer goodness and firmness of character, he raised *Islām* out of the rut of political demoralization. By standing out for a moral ideal, and expressing that ideal in his own life and action, he created around him an impulse to unity which, though never quite complete, sufficed to meet the unforeseen challenge flung down to him by destiny.

¹ *Bahā ad-Dīn*, 218.