

AL-MALIK AL-[°]ĀDIL NŪR AL-DĪN MA[□]MŪD B. ZANKĪ: AN INTRODUCTION

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Abstract

*This paper attempts to illustrate the biographical background of al-Malik al-[°]Ādil Nūr al-Dīn Ma[□]mūd b. [°]Imād al-Dīn Zankī. It highlights the situation prevailing in Syria before the rise of Nūr al-Dīn in the course of the emergence of *jihad* and *tajdid* in the 6th century AH/ 12th century CE. The role that has been played by and the contribution of [°]Imād al-Dīn Zankī is described in such a way in which it represents the rise of Muslim power after the conquest of Edessa. As for the biographical background of Nūr al-Dīn, it looks at the depiction of Nūr al-Dīn in Muslim-Arab resources which includes his birth and early educational background. In addition, this article briefly describes the achievements and major contributions of Nūr al-Dīn as well as praises and criticisms given to him.*

Key words: Nūr al-Dīn Zankī, [°]Imād al-Dīn Zankī, *jihad*, *tajdid*, Bayt al-Maqdis, crusades

I. Introduction

Nūr al-Dīn Ma[□]mūd b. [°]Imād al-Dīn Zankī has been considered throughout the Islamic history as a king who had accomplished in uniting the Muslims in Syria under the [°]Abbāsīd Caliph in Baghdād. Succeeded his father, [°]Imād al-Dīn to be the governor of Aleppo in 541 AH/1146 CE¹, he emerged as a great Muslim leader who, after 28 years, had conquered a vast area which extends from the Persian boundary to the Libyan desert. This article consists of the biographical study of Nūr al-Dīn in which i will discuss in-depth the situation prevailing in Syria before the rise of Nūr al-Dīn, his birth and his early educational background, the development of his religious consciousness, political thought and military skills. In addition, i will briefly describe the achievements and major contributions of Nūr al-Dīn as well as praises and criticisms given to him. I will also touch upon the emergence of *jihad* and *tajdid* in the 6th century AH/ 12th century CE with special reference to the appearance of [°]Imād al-Dīn and his son, Nūr al-Dīn as the true Muslim leaders and *jihad* fighters at that moment.

II Situation prevailing in Syria before the rise of Nūr al-Dīn

Syria has a very long history especially in the rise and the fall of the Muslim power throughout the decades. In this section, i will discuss two major points: firstly; the emergence of *jihad* and *tajdid* in Syria shortly after the fall of Bayt al-Maqdis and secondly; the conquest of Edessa by [°]Imād al-Dīn Zankī in 539 AH/1144 CE. These two crucial events would be the key foundation of the emergence of Nūr al-Dīn as a great Muslim leader.

Jihad and *Tajdid* in the 6th century AH/ 12th century CE

The course of *jihad* and *tajdid* in the 6th AH/12th CE century was in its new appearance after it was ceased as a result of the fall of Bayt al-Maqdis to the hand of the First Crusade in 492 AH/1099 CE. The role of [°]Alī b. Tāhir al-Sulamī², a well-known Damascus jurist and philologist, who was the first to preach *jihad* against the Crusaders in the aftermath of the First Crusade was very significant.

¹ Ibn al-[°]Adīm (1996: 329) mentions that Nūr al-Dīn succeeded his father on Tuesday 10th of Rabī[°] al-Ākhir 541 AH/1146 CE.

² He is [°]Alī b. Tāhir b. Ja[°]far b. [°]Abdullah Abū al-Hasan al-Qaysī al-Sulamī al-Nahwī, born in 431 AH/ 1039 CE and died on 21st of Rabī[°] al-Awwal 500 AH/1106 CE. He is a trustworthy scholar and a religious man. See Yāqūt al-Hamawī, *Mu[°]jam al-Udaba[°]: Irshād al-Arīb ilā Ma[°]rifah al-Adīb*, 1999, Beirut: Muassasah al-Ma[°]arif, vol. 5, pp. 151-152, Ibn [°]Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnah Dimashq*, 1996, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, vol. 43, p. 4, al-Suyūṭī, *Bughyat al-Wu[°]āt fī Tabaqāt al-Lughawīyyīn wa al-Nuhāt*, n.d., Beirut: al-Maktabah al-[°]Asriyyah, vol. 2, p. 170.

In 499 AH/ 1105 CE, six or seven years after the fall of Bayt al-Maqdis, al-Sulamī published his treatise namely ‘*Kitāb al-Jihād*’ (The Book of *Jihād*) and widely preached the idea of *jihād* from the Great Mosque in Damascus. He recognised the menace from the western Christendom and saw their connection to the ongoing Christian reconquests of Sicily and Spain. In order to defeat the Crusaders, al-Sulamī suggests that the Muslims must practice the inner *jihād* so that they could successfully respond to the Crusaders in well-prepared manner spiritually and physically.

Al-Sulamī emphasizes that:³

‘Give precedence to *jihād* of yourselves over *jihād* against your enemies, for if yourselves are among your enemies, prevent them from being disobedient to their Creator. You will succeed in your hopes of victory over them. Make right what is between you and your Creator, and He will make right for you what is wrong...’

However, Hillenbrand (1999: 105-108) illustrates a very important role of al-Sulamī at that particular period of time in which she argues that al-Sulamī was an outstanding exception to the Muslim lethargy and lack of concern of *jihād*. He preached in the Umayyad mosque in Damascus in the early years after the fall of Bayt al-Maqdis that the Muslims should rally against the Crusaders and emphasized that their defeat was a punishment from Allah for the abandoning of their religious duties and for their neglect of *jihād*. Apart from the role of al-Sulamī, Muhammad Hāmid al-Nāsir (1998: 160-161) claims that Ibn al-Khayyāt⁴, the famous Syrian poet was among the earliest poet in Syria who had called for the *jihād* against the Crusaders and preached the spirit of *jihād* in his well-known collection ‘*Dīwān Ibn al-Khayyāt*’. Khalīl Mardam Bek in his edited version of *Dīwān Ibn al-Khayyāt* (1958: 29) mentions that Ibn al-Khayyāt had composed a poem about the Crusades in only a night⁵, after the news of the arrival of the First Crusade reached the public. He then, presented this particular poem⁶ to Amīr Majd al-Dīn ‘Adb al-Dawlah Abaq b. ‘Abd al-Razzāq, leader of the Muslim army in Damascus calling him to launch *jihād* against the Crusaders. However, I could not find in any written sources to demonstrate a direct and strong physical relationship between al-Sulamī and ‘Imād al-Dīn at that moment in terms of their engagement in *jihād*. Yet, I would suggest that the idea and spirit of *jihād* preached by al-Sulamī could simply inspire the heart and mind of ‘Imād al-Dīn to involve effectively in launching the *jihād* and initiating military expeditions against the Crusaders. It is worth noting that William of Tyre (2003: 686) claims that ‘Imād al-Dīn was a very opposing Muslim leader to the Crusades and the most durable enemy to the Christians. In addition, Hillenbrand (1999: 103) mentions that Emmanuel Sivan in his book *L’Islam et La Croisades* (Islam and The Crusades) argues that the serious mobilisation of *jihād* as an instrument in the war against the Crusaders began in the time of ‘Imād al-Dīn Zankī and this is undoubtedly true. Thus, it is considerable to argue that at the time of ‘Imād al-Dīn, some of the practical steps towards the *jihād* against the Crusaders had been put into effect, which later on resulted in the conquest of Edessa under the leadership of ‘Imād al-Dīn himself. However, I would further argue that several conquests in Syria and a number of attempts to conquer Damascus by ‘Imād al-Dīn were obviously not in the name of *jihād*. Rather, his movement were closely related to ancestral and territorial competition among several authorities in Syria in order to gain control over their local rivals and later on, was extended to the fight against the Crusaders.

‘Imād al-Dīn Zankī and the Conquest of Edessa

The fall of Edessa⁷ to the Muslim in 539 AH/ 1144 CE marked a very significant turning point in the Muslim history in Syria.

³ The Arabic text with a French translation may be found in Emmanuel Sivan’s article "Un traité Damasquin du début du XIIe siècle" in *Journal Asiatique* 254 (1966), pp. 206-22 and a translation of extracts into English by Niall Christie could be accessed via www.arts.cornell.edu/prh3/447/texts/Sulami.html.

⁴ He is Ahmad b. Muhammad b. ‘Alī b. Yahyā b. Sadaqah al-Taghlabī al-Dimashqī, born in Damascus in 450 AH and died over there on 11th Ramadān 517 AH for sixty seven years old.

⁵ He also suggests that it was the first poem ever to be composed regarding the Crusades;

(ولعلها أول قصيدة قيلت في الحروب الصليبية)

⁶ See Ibn al-Khayyāt, *Dīwān Ibn al-Khayyāt*, 1958, pp. 182-187.

⁷ According to al-Hamawī, al-Ruhā or al-Ruhā’ is a city situated in al-Jazīrah between Mosul and Syria and it was named after its founder al-Ruhā’ b. al-Balandī b. Mālīk b. Du‘ar (See al-Hamawī, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, vol. 3, p. 120). Its current name is Sanli Urfa (in Turkish Şanlıurfa) is a city in eastern Turkey, and the provincial capital of Sanli Urfa Province. The city has been known by many names. In Syriac it is ܐܘܪܗܝܐ, *Orhāy*. In 288

This is due to the fact that Edessa was the first of the Crusader states among the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem to be recaptured by the Muslims under the leadership of ʿImād al-Dīn Zankī. It could be fairly argued that the conquest of Edessa was part of the process of the unification of Syria and could be considered as an initial step towards the liberation of Bayt al-Maqdis from the Crusaders. Ibn al-Athīr (1963: 66-67) mentions clearly that ʿImād al-Dīn conquered Edessa in Jumādā al-Ākhir 539 AH from the Crusaders who were under the leadership of Joscelin II after besieging it for 28 days. Edessa was among the most important cities to the Crusaders besides Jerusalem, Antioch and Constantinople. For this, Ibn al-Athīr asserts that the conquest of Edessa was *'the conquest of the conquests'* in which he states:

"وكان هذا فتح الفتوح حقا وأشبهها ببدر حقا"

'This is definitely the conquest of the conquests and it is exactly similar to the *Badr* (at the time of the Prophet Muhammad).'

Accordingly, Ibn Kathīr (1997: 12/196) asserts that in 539 AH/1144 CE, ʿImād al-Dīn conquered Edessa and several other castles in al-Jazīrah⁸ from the hand of the Crusaders; he killed most of them, captured their women and gained huge booty. Interestingly, he also claims that with the conquest of Edessa, ʿImād al-Dīn had *'wiped out severe pains from the Muslims'* (وأزال عن المسلمين كربا شديدا). Moreover, Ihsān ʿAbbās (1998: 83-85) argues that the conquest of Edessa was in the mind of the Muslim leaders such as Mawdūd, Tughtekin and ʿImād al-Dīn in the early 6th century AH/ 12th century CE in which the spirit of *jihād* against the Crusaders emerged. In addition, Ibn al-Qalānīsī (1932: 266) further describes the consciousness of ʿImād al-Dīn to conquer Edessa. He claims that in 539 AH/1144 CE, reports were received from the north that ʿImād al-Dīn had captured the city of Edessa by sword, notwithstanding its strength and impregnability and its capacity to withstand and defend itself against the assaults and sieges of mighty armies. ʿImād al-Dīn had long been desirous of it, ambitious to possess himself of it, and on the watch to seize any opportunity against it. The thought of it never ceased to revolve within his mind and his ambition for it was ever present in his memory.

Lane-Poole (1985: 58-59) argues that Edessa, in the words of Arabic historians particularly Ibn al-Athīr, was *'the conquest of the conquests'* in which it was the stoutest prop of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem was uprooted. Then, Sarūj and the other satellites of the great city immediately surrendered; and the valley of the Euphrates was finally freed from the oppression of the Crusaders. Lane-Poole (1985: 61) also reveals that ʿImād al-Dīn had done a work that no princes in Christendom could undo, and he left in his son Nūr al-Dīn and his follower Salāh al-Dīn, leaders who knew how to accomplish the mission he had begun. Forty years after the death of ʿImād al-Dīn, the Holy Land belonged to Salāh al-Dīn and Bayt al-Maqdis had fallen again into the keeping of the Muslims.

Runciman (1995: 2/237-238) states that after the conquest of Edessa, the ʿAbbāsīd Caliph in Baghdād sent ʿImād al-Dīn an embassy laden with gifts in order to confer on him the honour of king and the conqueror. Runciman argues that to the Muslims, the conquest of Edessa brought a new hope. To the Crusaders, it brought despondency and alarm; and to the Christians of Western Europe it came as a terrible shock. They realised for the first time that things were not well in the East. Therefore, a new movement was set on foot to preach the Second Crusade. As a result, a famous papal bull namely *Quantum praedecessores*⁹ has been released in 540 AH/1145 CE by Pope Eugenius III calling for a Second Crusade.

Kurdish it is Riha. In Arabic it is الرها, *Ar-Ruha*. In Greek it was Oppa, *Orrha*. Although it is often best known by the name given it by the Seleucids, Εδεσσα, *Edessa*. The modern city of Urfa is situated about eighty kilometers east of the Euphrates River. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanli_Urfa, 1/7/2005.

⁸ Al-Jazīrah here means Jazīrah Aqūr which is situated between two rivers: Dajlah (Tigris) and al-Furāt (Euphrates). It includes Diyār Mudar and Diyār Bakr. It has several cities and castles such as Harrān, al-Ruhā (Edessa), al-Raqqah, Ra's ʿAyn, Nasībīn, Sinjār, al-Khābūr, Mārdīn, Āmid, Miyyā Fāriqīn, Mosul and others. See al-Hamawī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, vol. 2, pp. 157-158, al-Dhahabī, *al-Amsār dhawāt al-Āthār*, 1985, Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, pp. 57-58.

⁹ *Quantum praedecessores* is a papal bull issued on December 1, 1145 CE by Pope Eugenius III calling for a Second Crusade. It was the first papal bull issued with a crusade as its subject. This papal bull was issued in response to the fall of Edessa, in 539 AH/December of 1144 CE. Pilgrims from the east had brought news of the fall of Edessa to Europe throughout 540 AH/1145 CE and embassies from the Principality of Antioch, the Kingdom of Jerusalem, and the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia soon arrived directly at the papal court at Viterbo. Hugh, Bishop of Jabala, one of the

From the above discussion, it is clearly understandable that ʿImād al-Dīn Zankī had played a great role in the emergence of the spirit of *jihād* in 6th AH/12th CE century. The conquest of Edessa led by him marked a drastic change in the situation prevailing in Syria at that moment. It had manifested a big shock to both the Muslims and Christians.¹⁰ I would argue that the conquest of Edessa could be a practical example and a valuable lesson for Nūr al-Dīn and Salāh al-Dīn in the fact that the Crusaders can be defeated and the Muslims could resume their power in Syria and Bayt al-Maqdis in particular. Evidently, Nūr al-Dīn has continued the mission until the victory achieved at the time of Salāh al-Dīn in which Bayt al-Maqdis has been liberated from the hand of the Crusaders. The continuous efforts and constant exertions employed by Nūr al-Dīn after the death of his father made the liberation of Bayt al-Maqdis possible to his successor.

III Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Zankī: A Biography

In this section, I will illustrate a brief introduction to the biographical aspect of the life of Nūr al-Dīn concerning his life background, achievements, contributions, praises and criticism upon him throughout his life.

Nūr al-Dīn in Muslim-Arabs Sources

Abū Shāmah (1956: 5) in the preface of his book '*Kitāb al-Rawdatayn fī Akhbār al-Dawlatayn: Al-Nūriyyah wa Al-Salāhiyyah*' mentions a very significant statement with regard to the personality and character of Nūr al-Dīn and Salāh al-Dīn. He argues that:

"ومرّ بي فيه من الملوك المتأخرين ترجمة الملك العادل نور الدين، ثم وقفت بعد ذلك في غير هذا الكتاب على سيرة سيد الملوك بعده الملك الناصر صلاح الدين، فوجدتهما في المتأخرين كالعمرين رضي الله عنهما في المتقدمين، فإن كل ثان من الفريقين هذا حذو من تقدمه في العدل والجهاد واجتهاد في إعزاز دين الله أي اجتهاد."

'I read (about) the story of later kings (from *Tārīkh Dimashq* of Ibn ʿAsākir) where I came across the biography of Nūr al-Dīn, the Just King. Then, I read in another book about the story of Salāh al-Dīn, the King of the Kings after him (Nūr al-Dīn) and the Victorious King, I found both of them (Nūr al-Dīn and Salāh al-Dīn) in the later generation similar to the two ʿUmar (ʿUmar b. al-Khattāb and ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz) in the early generation. Indeed, the second man of each couple did follow his former man in (implementing) the justice and (struggling for) the *jihād*, and make every effort in upholding the religion of Allah.'

I would argue that Abū Shāmah's claim is based upon visible and noticeable similarities between both of the two pairs; Nūr al-Dīn and ʿUmar b. al-Khattāb, and Salāh al-Dīn and ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz.¹¹ It is worth mentioning that Abū Shāmah's statement is very interesting and convincing especially in examining the background life of Nūr al-Dīn and Salāh al-Dīn. It is also interesting to note that Abū Shāmah's description is the only account, which clearly put Nūr al-Dīn identical to ʿUmar b. al-Khattāb.

In the same line of argument, Ibn al-Athīr (1982: 403) asserts that:

وقد طالعت سير الملوك المتقدمين ، فلم أر فيها بعد الخلفاء الراشدين وعمر بن عبد العزيز أحسن من سيرته ، ولا أكثر تحريا منه للعدل.

'I have come across the history of the earlier kings, but I did not find a history of a single man (king) after the Righteous and Guided Caliphs and ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz better than the history of Nūr al-Dīn, and more concern than him about justice.' Thus, Nūr al-Dīn b. Zankī has been portrayed in such an impressive and splendid image by both 7thAH/13th CE century Muslim historians¹².

dioceses of Jerusalem, was among those who delivered the news. See

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantum_praedecessores.

¹⁰ Stevenson (1907: 153-155) argues that for nearly fifty years Edessa was the bulwark of the Latin states. A glance at the map shows the importance of its position. It stood like a rampart opposite Mosul and nearest the capital of the caliphs. It commanded the roads from Mosul to Aleppo and penetrated like a wedge between the Muslim in Syria and the emirates of Mesopotamia. The fall of Edessa should have warned the Latins of the danger of disunion and of the enemy they had most to fear. It might have been a salutary lesson although painful.

¹¹ Abū Shāmah states that their similarities rely mostly on two main principles; *al-ʿAdl* (Justice) and *al-Jihād* (Struggle) in which each of the four Muslim leaders implemented during their reign.

¹² According to Joseph Nasīm Yūsuf, Ibn al-Athīr and Abū Shāmah are among the 7th AH/13th CE century Muslim-Arabs historians. He listed down several other names such as Ibn Shaddād, Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn Khallikān and Ibn Wāsil. For 6th

This depiction emerged, I would argue, due to the fact that the Muslims in Syria had for so long been waiting for such a just and charismatic leader especially to counter the movement of the enemies throughout Syria and its neighbouring states.

Name and Entitlements

His name is Nūr al-Dīn Abū al-Qāsim Mahmūd b. ʿImād al-Dīn Abū Saʿīd Qasīm al-Dawlah Atābik¹³ Zankī b. Qasīm al-Dawlah Aq Sunqūr al-Turkī al-Saljūqī. He is also known as Ibn al-Qasīm. He is well known in most historical sources as *al-Malik al-ʿĀdil* (The Just King), *al-Malik al-Shahīd* (The Martyred King) and *al-Malik al-Saʿīd* (The Content King). (Ibn Kathīr 1997:12/247, Ibn al-Athīr 1963: 191, Abū Shāmah 1956: 1/9)

Date and Place of Birth

According to Ibn al-Athīr (1963: 162, 1982: 11/304) Nūr al-Dīn was born on 19th of Syawwāl 511 AH. However, there is some disagreement with accounts from Ibn Kathīr and Abū Shāmah. Ibn Kathīr (1997: 12/247) argues that the date was on Sunday 17th Syawwal 511 AH/ January or February 1118 CE and he was born in Aleppo. In addition, Abū Shāmah (1956: 2/583) mentions an account from Ibn ʿAsākir, which he narrated from Abū al-Yusr Shākir b. ʿAbdullah¹⁴ that is similar to Ibn Kathīr’s account. Obviously, Ibn Kathīr and Abū Shāmah’s accounts are taken from one source, which is Ibn ʿAsākir’s narration from Abū al-Yusr Shākir b. ʿAbdullah.¹⁵

Life Background

Nūr al-Dīn rose up under personal supervision of his father, ʿImād al-Dīn who was the governor of Aleppo, Mosul and several other cities in Syria. In the very early beginning of his life, Nūr al-Dīn learnt al-Qurʾān as well as skills in horse riding and archery. (Ibn Kathīr 1997: 12/247)

In spite of his involvement in several political and military campaigns in Syria from 511 AH to 521 AH, ʿImād al-Dīn gave strong concern of his son’s education. Therefore, he appointed ʿAlī b. Mansūr al-Sarūjī to teach and educate Nūr al-Dīn in several fields of knowledge including literature, poem and calligraphy. In most of the time, Nūr al-Dīn used to accompany his father in various occasions inside or outside his hometown. Nūr al-Dīn has three brothers: Sayf al-Dīn Ghāzī who is the eldest, Qutb al-Dīn Mawdūd and Nusrah al-Dīn. All of them inherited braveness, brilliance and good attributes from their father.

Nūr al-Dīn got married to ʿIsmat al-Dīn Khātūn, the daughter of Muʿīn al-Dīn Unur in Syawwāl 541 AH/ 1146 CE in Damascus. After his death, ʿIsmat al-Dīn Khātūn got married for the second time to Salāh al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī in 572 AH/ 1177 CE in Damascus. ʿIsmat al-Dīn Khātūn died in the month of Rajab 581 AH/ 1186 CE and she was buried in the cemetery, which was ordered to be built by her in Qāsiyūn near the river of Baradā in Damascus. (Ibn al-Taghrī Bardī nd: 6/78, 99). Nūr al-Dīn was a tall, swarthy man with a beard but no moustache, a fine forehead and a pleasant appearance enhanced by beautiful melting eyes. Among his virtues were austerity, piety and knowledge of theology. His food and clothing and all his personal expenditure came out of income from properties bought with his legal share of booty and money allocated for communal Muslim interests. (Ibn al-Athīr 1963: 162, 1982: 11/403)

AH/12th CE century, he put Ibn al-Qalānisī, Ibn Muḥiqdh and al-Asfihānī among the great historians at that period. See Joseph Nasīm Yūsuf, *Fī Tārīkh al-Harakah al-Salībiyyah*, 1991, Iskandariyyah: Dār al-Maʿrifah al-Jāmiʿiyyah, p. 17.

¹³ The word Atābik (أتابك) originated from (أطابك) which means the son of a king who will succeed him (الوليد الأمير). The first *wazīr* to be recognised as Atābik was Nizām al-Dawlah Wazīr Malikshāh b. Alib Arsalān al-Saljūqī when Malikshāh the King granted him the authority to administrate the kingdom in 465 AH. See al-Qalqashandī, *Subh al-Aʿshā fī Sinaʿat al-Insyā*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, vol. 4, p. 18.

¹⁴ He is the *kātib* (personal secretary) of Nūr al-Dīn. Ibn ʿAsākir states that:

(ومولده على ما ذكر لي كاتبه أبو اليسر شاکر بن عبدالله وقت طلوع الشمس من يوم الأحد سابع عشر شوال سنة إحدى عشرة وخمسمائة)

¹⁵ In dealing with this sort of disagreement, the researcher would rely on Ibn ʿAsākir’s narration rather than Ibn al-Athīr’s account. This is for the reason that Ibn ʿAsākir’s narration is taken directly from the formal source. This particular source could be credited as the most credible source as it was narrated from the *kātib* (personal secretary) of Nūr al-Dīn.¹⁵ One could argue that Ibn al-Athīr was the biographer of the Zankī’s family but the researcher would claim that his source depends largely on narrations from his father. In spite of that, most of the Muslim-Arabs historical sources as well as western sources do mention Ibn ʿAsākir’s account regarding the matter and it was widely accepted by later historians.

Nūr al-Dīn often got up to pray at night, and his vigils and meditations inspired praise. He has good knowledge of *fiqh* of the Hanafite school but he was not a fanatic one. He had heard *hadīth* being transmitted and had himself transmitted them. Ibn al-Athīr (1963: 164) and Ibn Kathīr (1997: 12/248) mention that Nūr al-Dīn often spent his time playing polo, riding horse and he always went out for hunting. Usāmah b. Munqidh (2000: 226-227) mentions that he had accompanied Nūr al-Dīn twice in hunting expeditions; once when he was in Hāmah and another was near Qarā Hisār in the region of Aleppo.

Major Contributions

Ibn al-Athīr (1982: 11/404-405) mentions that among Nūr al-Dīn's public works are building walls for all the cities and fortresses of Syria including that of Damascus, Hims, Hāmah, Aleppo, Shayzar and Ba'albek. He also initiated in erecting numerous Hanafite and Shāfi'ite *madrasas* (schools), the great mosque of Nūr al-Dīn in Mosul, *bīmāristāns* (hospitals), *khanqāhs* (centres) for *sufis* and orphanages in which he left a huge endowment for each of them. Ibn al-Athīr then reveals that he had heard that the monthly income of all his foundations amounted to 9,000 Tyrian *dinār*. I would suggest that the major contribution of Nūr al-Dīn could be sorted into four main categories as Ahmad Karzūn (1992: 33-40) and Ihsān 'Abbās (1998: 142-150) argue which are as follow:

a. Upholding the Teaching of Sunnī and Wiping out the Shi'ites Influence

Undoubtedly, the first mission of Nūr al-Dīn after being the successor of his father in Aleppo is to unite the Muslim under the Sunnī 'Abbāsīd Caliph in Baghdād. Therefore, he had to disseminate or even propagate the teachings of Sunnī among the Muslims who were at that time exposed widely to the doctrine and influence of the Shi'ites particularly from the Fātimids of Egypt. 'Imād al-Dīn al-Asfihānī (al-Bundārī: 16) affirms that Nūr al-Dīn had built several *madrasas* (schools) for promulgating the ideas of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* or the Sunnī.¹⁶ Abu Shāmah (1956: 1/148) quotes Abū Ya'lā al-Tamīmī in which he states that in the month of Rajab 543 AH, Nūr al-Dīn had abolished the call of (حي على خير العمل) in *adhān* and purged the practice of rebuking the *sahābah* (Companions of the Prophet) in Aleppo. This particular action had caused a great defiance from the Shi'ites and Ismā'ilites but with the support from the Sunnī-Muslims, Nūr al-Dīn had successfully diminished the uprising of them. I would argue that unlike his father, Nūr al-Dīn was very concern about disseminating the teachings of Sunnī in which he had eliminated the long and deep-rooted doctrine of Shi'ites in Aleppo¹⁷ within only two years after his succession. This could be a valid and strong argument in reclaiming the role and position of Nūr al-Dīn as *Nāsir al-Sunnah wa Qāmi' al-Bid'ah* (the Upholder of the Sunnah and the Demolisher of the Invention).

b. Strong concern in the development of education and erecting schools

Nūr al-Dīn realised that in order to disseminate the teachings of Sunnī and to revitalise the spirit of *jihād* among the Muslims, the most effective mode is through education. Therefore, several *madrasas* had been erected with the intention of cultivating the verve of resurgence and spreading the messages from *al-Qur'ān* and *al-Hadīth* publicly. Hillenbrand (1999: 119) asserts that the relationship between Nūr al-Dīn and the Muslim scholars has been an important aspect in achieving his aim. For instance, during the campaigns to Egypt in 1160's CE, two Hanbalite jurists, Muwaffaq al-Dīn b. Qudāmah and his cousin, 'Abd al-Ghānī became important propagandists and held readings of the profession of faith by Ibn Battah, an eloquent tract, which preaches a return to the pure teachings of Islam. Among the schools that had been built are in Aleppo, Damascus, Manbij, Hamāh, Hims and Ba'albek.¹⁸ It is also well known that Nūr al-Dīn had built *Dār al-Hadīth* (Centre for Learning *Hadīth*) in Damascus where the first *muhaddith* (*hadīth* scholar) who was appointed to teach there was Ibn 'Asākir.

¹⁶ Al-Asfihānī mentions that: (وينا لمذاهب السنة والجماعة المدارس)

¹⁷ Sayf al-Dawlah al-Hamadānī who was the ruler of Aleppo in 333 AH and the founder of *al-Dawlah al-Hamadāniyyah* (The Hamadānite State) inclined to the teachings of the Shi'ites. It was he who introduced the call of (حي على خير العمل) in *adhān* and this *bid'ah* (invention) last for more than two centuries when Nūr al-Dīn came to abolish this particular practice. See Ibn Kathīr (1997: 11/263).

¹⁸ In Aleppo, there are several *madrasas* such as *al-Madrasah al-'Asrūniyyah* and *Madrasah al-Nafarī* for the Shāfi'ite, *al-Madrasah al-Halāwiyyah* for the Hanafite. Others are *al-Madrasah al-Asadiyyah* and *al-Madrasah al-Shu'aybiyyah*. In Damascus, there are *al-Madrasah al-Sādiriyyah*, *al-Madrasah al-Tarkhāniyyah*, *al-Madrasah al-Nūriyyah* and *al-Madrasah al-Khātūniyyah*. See Ihsān cAbbās (1998: 148-149).

It could be argued that through education, Nūr al-Dīn had successfully united the Muslims in Syria under the Sunnī umbrella. Moreover, I may agree with Hillenbrand (1999: 131) in which she affirms that it is during his rule that the key element in Muslim *jihād* propaganda can be clearly identified.

c. Termination of taxes and revenues

Nūr al-Dīn was very concerned in implementing justice during his rule and pledging the Muslims their rights. Ibn al-Athīr (1963: 166) describes that among the implementation of justice during his reign was the termination of all taxes, revenues and *ushr*. He had ordered that all the taxes which were obligated upon the Muslims in Syria, al-Jazīrah, Mosul and Diyār Mīsr should be put to an end. For instance, in Egypt, from one hundred *dīnār*, twenty-five should be paid as tax at that period. Reasonably, Nūr al-Dīn had dealt successfully with the most important means of the development and growth of his state, which is the economical aspect. Should he decide to continue with the present policy of making taxes compulsory, the Muslims will go against him and probably his justice for the people would be questionable.

d. Erecting public buildings, religious monuments and several castles

Between 560 AH/ 1165 CE and 566 AH/ 1170 CE, Nūr al-Dīn sponsored the building of a number of minarets in Syria particularly in Damascus and al-Raqqah. Hillenbrand (1999: 129) argues that these monuments, towering over the cities and fortresses, had a strong propaganda message testifying to the triumph of Islam. Moreover, Ibn al-Athīr (1963: 168) affirms that Nūr al-Dīn was the first who had established *Dār al-ʿAdl* (the House of Justice) in Damascus. The hospital in Damascus is the largest, which had been erected during his reign. As far as religious buildings are concerned, Nūr al-Dīn had built several *jāmiʿ* (mosques) in Aleppo, Mosul and Hāmah with *al-Jāmiʿ al-Nūrī* in Mosul was the most attractive and gorgeous. Nūr al-Dīn had given generous sponsorship to the building of religious monuments as part of his aim towards the revitalisation of the teachings of Sunnī in his territories and to stimulate popular piety and *jihād*. Hillenbrand (1999: 122-123) mentions that these monuments have been studied very closely by Yasser Tabbaa who is in no doubt of their propagandistic significance in the *jihād* campaigns against the Crusaders. I would agree with Hillenbrand in the fact that Nūr al-Dīn had positively utilised the building of the monuments in publicising the *shīʿār* (symbols and icons) of Sunnī revival as well as the ongoing *jihād* at that moment.

Praises and Criticism

Nūr al-Dīn has been depicted with praises and honours by most of the Muslim historians particularly Ibn al-Athīr and ʿImād al-Dīn al-Asfihānī. The latter (al-Bundārī: 16) who arrived in Damascus and joined the service of Nūr al-Dīn in 562 AH/ 1166-7 CE illustrates his new master as the most chaste, pious, sagacious, pure and virtuous of kings and he praises him for restoring the splendour of Islam to the land of Syria. While Ibn al-Athīr (1982: 11/403) portrays his 'hero' as the king who possessed the best conduct and strong concern about the implementation of justice during his reign. Ibn al-ʿImād al-Hanbalī (1991: 6/378) describes that Nūr al-Dīn was the most outstanding king, just, religious, experienced in *jihād* and the most blissful in this world and hereafter.¹⁹ Stevenson (1907: 155) argues that Nūr al-Dīn's character contrasts considerably with that of his predecessor. He was not so much an imperialist or perhaps as great a soldier as his father. The influence of his political position and his personal piety were the main convincing factors of his personal development. Piety is a prominent feature in his character and appears in much that is related of him. Hillenbrand (1999: 132) claims that it is far more likely that Nūr al-Dīn began his career and continued it by playing the same game of power politics in the Near East as his ruthless father ʿImād al-Dīn had done. Yet, the Islamic sources give the activities of Nūr al-Dīn far more of an Islamic coating than those of his father and it is naturally difficult to determine how valid this interpretation is. Furthermore, she asserts that Nūr al-Dīn in Islamic sources is shown as changing from a military warlord to a pious Sunni-Muslim ruler. The same image is given of Salāh al-Dīn in which this process may well be stereotypical and a stock theme of Muslim historiography.

Date and Place of Death Nūr al-Dīn died on Wednesday 11th Syawwal 569 AH /15 May 1174 CE of quinsy²⁰.

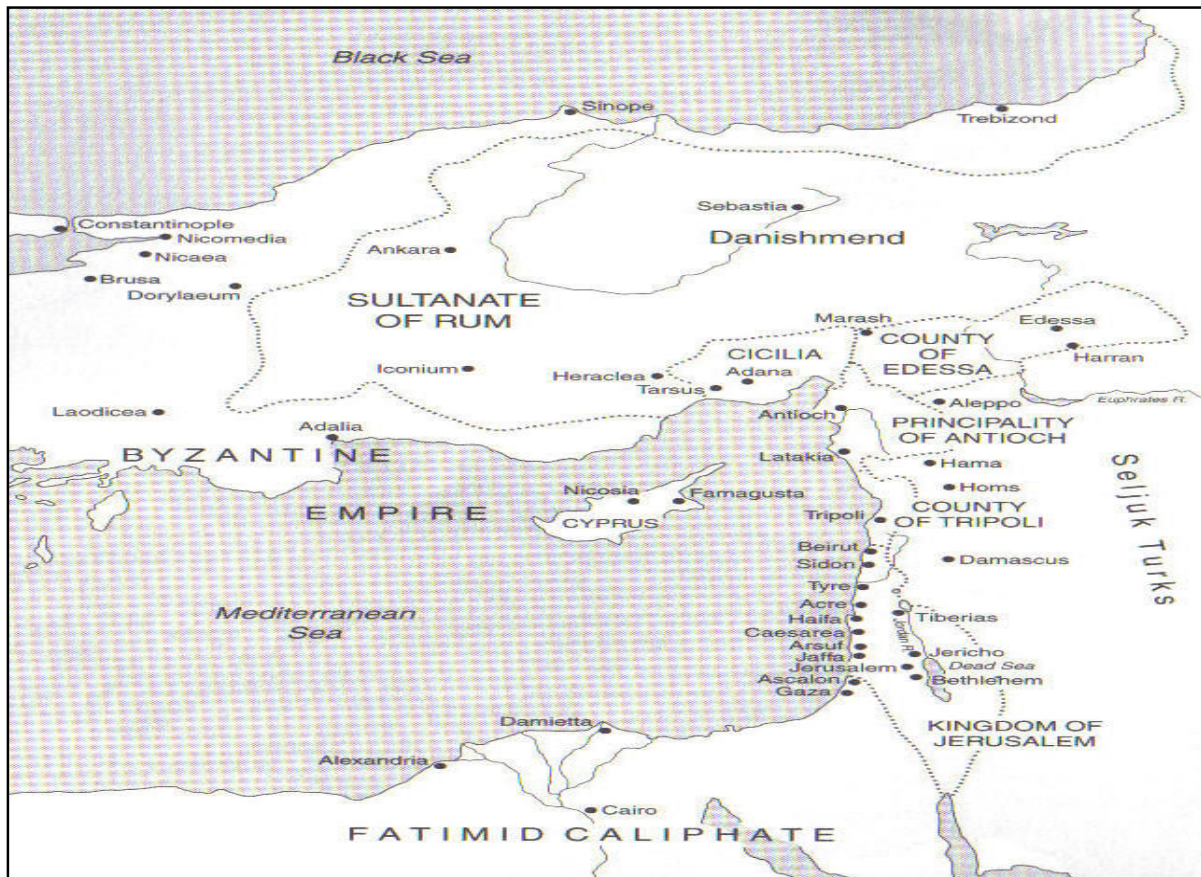
¹⁹ Ibn al-ʿImād al-Hanbalī states that: (وكان أجل ملوك زمانه وأعدلهم وأدبهم وأكثرهم جهادا وأسعدهم في دنياه وآخرته .)

²⁰ Quinsy in Arabic word is 'الخواتيق'. Runciman used to translate it as quinsy but E.J. Costello translated it as heart attack. The researcher finds that Costello might have understood it mistakenly because his translation is from an Italian version of translation to the original Arabic text in *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* by Ibn al-Athīr. See Francesco Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1969, p. 68.

(Ibn al-Athīr 1963: 191, 1982: 11/402) Abū Shāmah (1956: 2/579-580) quotes an account from Imād al-Dīn al-Asfihānī in which according to the latter, the first day of Syawwāl 511 AH was Sunday and the second day was Monday. *Al-Malik al-ʿĀdil* Nūr al-Dīn was buried in the castle of Damascus; and after that, his corpse was transferred to the soil near his *madrasah* by the door of *al-Khawwāsīn* at western road. (Ibn al-Athīr 1963: 191, 1982: 11/402) He died at 58 years of age, after 28 years and six month of his reign. (Ibn Kathīr 1997: 12/252, Abū Shāmah 1956: 2/583, Ibn al-Taghrībardī: 1992: 6/65-66).

IV. Conclusion

In this article, i had dealt with the historical background of the emergence of Nūr al-Dīn as a new Muslim leader in Syria after the death of his father. It is revealed that Nūr al-Dīn was a great Muslim leader, under the loyalty to the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad, who emerged to be the most effective *jihād* fighter against the Crusaders in Syria in the 6th century AH/ 12th century CE. From the discussion, the conquest of Edessa seems to be the best lesson for Nūr al-Dīn in undertaking his future *jihād* campaigns against the Crusaders in Syria. It marked a new situation in the Near East both for the Muslims and for the Crusaders of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. The Muslims, for the first time after the fall of Bayt al-Maqdis to the Crusaders in 492 AH/1099 CE believed that they could defeat their enemy on one side. While, the Crusaders, on the other side felt that their situation in North Syria was not very safe and they might face the emergence of the Muslim *jihād* against them. I also illustrates the biographical accounts of the life of Nūr al-Dīn in which a general idea about the factors behind the emergence of Nūr al-Dīn as a true *jihād* fighter has been discussed.



Map 1: The Crusader States 1099-1144 CE
(Source: *The Crusades: The Essential Readings* edited by Thomas F.Madden, 2002: xii)