Is the Poetry of the Time of Saladin a Reliable Source of his Deeds?

Tarek M. Muhammad
Ain Shams University, Egypt

Saladin's (1137-1193 AD / 531-588 AH) conquest of Jerusalem, which came in the heels of his sweeping victory over the Crusaders in 1187 AD earned him a respectable reputation not only in the East but in the West as well. Fifty-six years ago H. Gibb said about Saladin: "the life and achievements of Saladin constitute one of the great moments in the history of the crusades. In literature, he appears most frequently as a conquering hero, who fought his enemies victoriously and in the end beat them to a standstill. But a closer examination of his actual life reveals him not only as a conqueror but as a man who struggled with enemies of his own side who finally joined him and fought along with him under his sole command."¹ But, recently, D. Nicolle had a mixed viewpoint when he says: "Saladin has traditionally been seen in Europe as a paragon of virtue and a hero. Recently, however, a critical view has portrayed him as an ambitious, ruthless, and devious politician, and less brilliant as a commander than once thought. As usual, the truth probably lies between these extremes, though all agree that Saladin was the greatest man in the history of the twelfth century Middle East".² So, his career became an important subject to both history and literature.

Although the details of the life of Saladin are obvious to the historians through the valuable studies of H. Gibb,³ M. C. Lyons and D. E. Jackson,⁴ the recent study of Y. Lev,⁵ and others,⁶ there are hardly

¹ I'd like to thank Prof. Qâsim A. Qâsim and Prof. Paul E. Szarmach for their useful remarks. Thanks also to Prof. Ahmad El-Khatib and Prof. Musa al-Halool for their valuable assistances.
⁶ Y. Lev, Saladin in Egypt (Brill, 1999).
any studies of the literary treatment of his deeds by his contemporary poets or poet statesmen. When these modern historians wrote about Saladin's deeds, they mainly depended on the chronicles of Saladin's biographers such as ibn Shaddâd,7 who was the judge of the army of Saladin,8 and had the prime influence in forming the view of Saladin held by the European historians;9 Abû Shâma,10 who glorified the exploits of the Zangids and Saladin respectively;11 al-Iṣfahâni,12 who was Saladin's private secretary,13 ibn al-Athîr14 who presented a counterblast to the writings of Saladin's admirers,15 and ibn ābî Tayyî,16 besides the other historical sources, whether Greek, Latin, Syriac or

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13 Gibb, The Life of Saladin, p. 2. ‘Imâd ed-Dîn Al-Iṣfahâni was surnamed ‘Imâd ed-Dîn al-Kâtîb Al-Iṣfahâni. He was born at Asbahân and came to Baghdad when he was a youth. In 562 A.H. he moved to Damascus at the time of Nûr ed-Dîn Mahâmûd. During this stage of his life ‘Imâd ed-Dîn Al-Iṣfahâni related with Saladin and their relation was very close and friendly. So, he was one of Saladin’s faithful propagandists. He left many important books such as al-Barq al-Shâmi, Al-Fath al-Qussî, a poetry collection in four volumes and others. For more details see: Ibn Khallikàn, Wâfiyyât al-Ayân wa-Aabâ’ al-Zamân, ed. Ėhsân ‘Abbâs, 8 vols (Beirut, 1968), 5:147-153; (henceforth Ibn Khallikàn, Wâfiyyât al-Ayân); Al-Iṣfahâni, Al-Fath al-Qussî, pp. 5-8. See also D. Richards, “‘Imâd ed-Dîn Al-Iṣfahâni Administrator, Littérature et Historien,” in Crusaders and Muslims in Twelfth-Century Syria, ed. M. Shatzmiller (Leiden, 1993), pp. 133-146; Holt, "Saladin and his Admirers," p. 236.
16 Ibn ābî Tayyî wrote a chronicle about the early life of Saladin. But it is lost except some quotations which are distributed in the Arabic sources. See Gibb, The Life of Saladin, pp. 1-2.
Arabic. They paid a little attention to the poetic sources which reflect clearly that most of the poets of the time of Saladin also played a vital role, besides the deeds of Saladin himself, in the construction of his reputation. These poets wrote several hundreds of poems in the praise of the achievements of Saladin and of course, they omitted his defeats. Some of them were propagandists and the others were truthful poets.

This article aims to show how the poets of the time of Saladin dealt with his deeds, i.e. whether the poetry of the time of Saladin is a reliable source of his deeds or not. This study will show that most of the poets of the time of Saladin had various aims from composing their poetry on Saladin. On the other hand, they presented some historical events and omitted others.

To answer the topic of this article, it will be useful to deal with the poets of the time of Saladin chronologically, one by one, according to their death years and try to explain their motives of the praise or satire.

The first one of the poets of the time of Saladin is ‘Arqala al-Kalbi\(^9\) (d. 567 AH / 1171 AD) who refers to the existence of the Franks in Palestine as \(\text{\textit{\text{état tambon}}}\) or a ‘wall’ between Egypt and Syria,\(^{20}\) because Saladin at that time was interested in the establishment of his new state in Egypt. And as for his struggle with the Crusaders, he fought them only during the events of the conflict between Shâwar and Dirghâm in Fatimid Egypt.

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\(^{18}\) We will use only the poems of the famous poets of Saladin, not all the poets who have many hundreds of poems about his feats. For the other poets of Saladin see Ahmad Hamza, The Literature of the Crusader Wars (Cairo, 1948), pp. 111-147. (in Arabic) (henceforth Hamza, The Literature)

\(^{19}\) Arqala al-Kalbi is Abû al-Nadâ Ḥassân bin Numayr al-Kalbi. He was born in 486 AH/1093 AD and died in 567 AH/1171 AD. He was an inhabitant of Damascus and connected with Saladin. See Muhammad Zaghluâl Sallâm, The Literature in the Time of Saladin (Cairo, 1959), pp. 333-340. (in Arabic) (henceforth Sallâm, The Literature)

Translation: Alas! There stands between me and you a Frankish siege that holds [to anyone approaching it] either death or capture.

As for Saladin as a founder of the Ayyubid state in Egypt and Syria, some poets showed their admiration of Saladin as a general of Nūr ed-Dīn Mahmūd. These poets hoped that Saladin would drive the Crusaders out of Syria by himself. ‘Arqala al-Kalbî in the following verses describes Saladin as a courageous military leader, not a Sultan, when he says that Saladin desires only to reach the heights, i.e. the Sultanate, not to others. He says that he was a courageous leader such as the lion not cowardly as the fox. (lines 13 - 14). This contrast between the lion and the fox in this verse represents one of the strong points in the poem. In this way, the poet described the Crusaders as a fox, i.e. cowards, and Saladin as a lion, i.e. brave and strong people. He refers to the readiness and courage of Saladin's soldiers whose lances will be lodged in the chests of every footman and horseman of the Crusaders if the cross was raised.(line 16) The poet in the last line described the military status of the soldiers of Saladin, i.e. they were ready to attack the Crusaders at any time.

13 وفيما سواها زاهداً غير راغبٍ
14 يظنَّ صلاح الدين فرسان حلقٍ
15 تطلبُ الشام الفنح يخليقٍ
16 رماحهُم في كل ماس وراكبٍ

Translation: Towards heights of glory did he set his heart; from everything else he set it away.

Saladin thinks the knights of Damascus are like his own; far be it they are as unlike as lions and foxes.

Tomorrow, Syria will send forth to the Franks a legion, whose heroes are toughened by calamities,

A legion who, upon the sight of the cross, lodge their lances solidly in the chests of every footman and horseman.

After Saladin became the Sultan of Egypt, ‘Arqala al-Kalbî praises him in many places of his poems. He says that Saladin, as a

king, the pulpits of the mosques were dignified with his name, whose virtues were well-nigh over the stars. It is known that the name of the Sultan was mentioned on the pulpits of the mosques as a symbol of his rule. The Sultanate of Saladin in Egypt arose after the fall of the Fatimid caliphate by Saladin and after the defeat of Amalric by Saladin and his uncle's army. So, 'Arqala attributed the victories of Saladin and his uncle Shirkuh over Amalric in Egypt to Saladin only and regarded these victories as high virtues. Then, he likens him to the Sun, which spreads its rays from the high spheres. (Lines 13-14)

He refers also to his victories over his enemies, probably the Crusaders when he says that when Saladin distributed his banners on the battlefield the enemy's army was defeated (line 15). He uses here the Arabic verb (*ṭawâ*, from the verb (*ṭawâ*, *yaṭawi*), which means to fold, to refer to the quick defeat of the army of the enemy. He questions who he fought the Frankish faith (i.e. Christianity) except Saladin. He adds that when he met them his horses were like torrential rains (line 16). In the second part of this verse, he likened the numerous horsemen of Saladin to the torrential rains, which overran everything during its march.

Translation: He was a king whose name dignified pulpits and whose virtues were well-nigh over the stars.
His visage radiated on homesteads like a sun shining from the highest sphere.
No sooner were his banners unfurled than those of his enemies were folded in defeat.
Who but he stemmed the tide of the Frankish faith? Which battle but his had horses as numerous as the torrential rains?

"Arqala al-Kalbi says generally that the heroes of the Franks fell in captivity or were killed by Saladin. He also refers to the conquest of Jerusalem by Saladin and says that the news spread in the world.

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24Al-Kalbi, Wāfat rasâ’il hadha al-Fath, line 1 ff.
In another poem25 ‘Arqala al-Kalbî asks Saladin to send him the sum of 1000 dinars which he promised and tells him that he is afraid if he goes to him in Egypt he will be captured by the Franks. In this case, Paradise, i.e. Egypt, will not benefit him if he fell in the Hell, i.e. the hands of the Crusaders.

Translation: I fear captivity if I were to journey to your land, yet the road to Paradise cannot be through Hell.

So, what is the story of the 1000 dinars, which was mentioned, in the latter verse? Saladin promised ‘Arqala to give him 1000 dinars if he became a Sultan of Egypt. After Saladin established the Ayyubid dynasty in Egypt and became a Sultan ‘Arqala wrote a poem and sent it to Saladin in Egypt reminding him of his promise. So, Saladin sent to him 2000 dinars. But ‘Arqala died suddenly before enjoying this money.26

‘Arqala also praised Saladin in one of his poems in which he thanked God for the victories of Saladin who destroyed the cross and the infidelity.27 The friendly relation between Saladin and ‘Arqala was the motive of ‘Arqala to praise the first, besides his wish to obtain the money from Saladin. Al-Šafadî says that ‘Arqala received at first 20 dinars from Saladin.28 These accounts, whether true or not, confirm the monetary motive of ‘Arqala and explains why he praised Saladin. This issue is confirmed too by ‘Arqala himself when he said to Saladin that he became rich in Egypt, while he was poor in Damascus:29

Translation: It is an irony of fate indeed that in Egypt you are a man of riches while in Damascus I am in rags.

As for this issue, al-Maqrîzî declares that when the Fatimid Caliph died Saladin entered his palace and took over all the treasures of it, such as many arms and their equipment, clothes, rare things, jewels,

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27Sallâm, The Literature, p. 336. He says:

الحمد لله السميع المجيب
قد هلك الشرك وضل الصليب
يأبوعواس والصلاح الخصيب
يا ساكنى أكتاف مصر أنا

29Al-Kalbî, Ilıkâ Şalâh ed-Dîn, line 4.
such as necklaces of emerald, corundum, and pearls, about 1.600,000 rare books, and other things.\(^{30}\)

Ibn al-Dahhān (d. 581 AH/1185 AD)\(^{31}\) wrote some poems about Saladin. It is useful to know the background of the relation between this poet and Saladin to see the influence of this relation on his poetry about Saladin. He met Saladin when the latter came to Ḥimṣ and encamped with his army outside it since ʿImād ed-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī introduced him to Saladin and told him that 'this is the poet who praised Țalāʾīr ibn Ruzâyk'. Then, Saladin ordered to give him some money, so that he doesn't say that "we left him". Then, ibn al-Dahhān praised Saladin in a poem, which was called al-Qaṣīyda al-ʿAyniyya.

In one of his poems on Saladin\(^{32}\) he refers to Saladin's invasion of Baisân on 9\(^{th}\) of Jumāda al-Thānî 579 AH/28\(^{th}\) of Sept. 1183 AD and the defeat of the Franks there. The poet in the following verse uses the Arabic verb (ṣâriba, yashrah), which means to drink, to refer to the continuity of the death for the Crusaders during Saladin's invasion of Baisân.

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\text{وْفِی يوم بیسَان سَقَیْتُهُم الردى}
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Translation: In the battlefield of Baisân you gave them the cup of death to drink from, and left their numerous hordes to be nursed by death.

It is known that in 579 AH/1183 AD Saladin invaded Amida, Till Khâlid, Aintâb, Aleppo, and the castle of Hârim. After these conquests, Saladin went to Damascus and stayed there for some time and accompanied his soldiers to attack the Crusaders in the Palestinian lands.\(^{33}\) So, he crossed the Jordan River on 8\(^{th}\) of Jumâda al-Thânî 579

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\(^{31}\)Ibn al-Dahhān is Abû al-Faraj ʿAbdullâh bin Assʿad bin ʿAli al-Moṣūlî, who was surnamed ibn al-Dahhān and al-Ḥimṣî too. He was born at al-Moṣūl in 521 AH/1127 AD and passed away in Ḥimṣ in 581 AH/1185 AD. He was a Shâfiʿî jurisprudent and poet. When his life became difficult there, he went to Țalāʾīr ibn Ruzâyk, the Fatimid minister of Egypt, and praised him in a poem, which was called al-Qaṣīyda al-Kâfiya. He returned to Ḥimṣ and lived there and worked in teaching. He has a small and good poetry collection. See Ibn Khallikân, Wafayyât al-Aʾyân, 3:57-60.


AH/27th of Sept. 1183 AD and entered a place called Cursat. On 9th of Jumâda al-Thâni 579 AH/28th of Sept. 1183 AD. He invaded Baisân where he found that its people had left the city and left there a lot of weavings, wheat, and other things. The soldiers of Saladin plundered Baisân and set it on fire. Then they met Frankish soldiers under the leadership of the son of Humphrey, where Saladin's soldiers attacked them and killed many of them, and captured one hundred of them.\textsuperscript{34}

Ibn al-Dahhân in the following poem\textsuperscript{35} refers to the battle of Ḥîṭṭîn and says that the Franks were subdued to Saladin because of the hard struggle of the Muslim soldiers. After their defeat in Ḥîṭṭîn, they asked Saladin to make peace not out of their own free accord but because of the pressure of the arms or fear of the lances. (L.8)

\begin{align*}
\text{وَمَا} & \text{كَحْمَدَّ الْفَرَّانَ} \text{لَكِ} \text{حَنَّى} \\
\text{وَلَكِنْ} & \text{تَحْتَ غَابَتِ الرَّمَاحِ} \\
\text{رَأَوْا} & \text{مَا لَا يَطَأَّقُ} \text{مِن} \text{الْقَفَاحِ} \\
\text{وَمَا} & \text{سَأَلْكَ} \text{عَدَّ} \text{الْصُّلْحِ} \text{وَدَاً}
\end{align*}

Translation: The Franks did not submit to you till they have seen your unbearable fight.

Nor did they ask for peace for the love of peace, but out of fear of your lances.

Usâma ibn Munqîdhd (d. 584 AH/1188 AD)\textsuperscript{36} refers in a poem to the struggle of Saladin against the Crusaders in Egypt. He says that Saladin stopped the tyrant of the Franks, i.e. Amalric I, who wished to

\textsuperscript{34} For more details see Al-Iṣfahānī, \textit{Al-Barq al-Shâmi}, 5:147-151; Abû Shâma, \textit{Kitâb al-Rauḍatayn}, 3:184-186; Ibn al-Athîr, \textit{Al-Kâmil fî al-Târikh}, 10:124. See also Baldwin, \textit{The Decline and Fall of Jerusalem}, p. 599.


\textsuperscript{36} Usâma ibn Munqîdhd al-Shayzarî is Abû al-Muẓaffar Usâma bin Morshid bin ‘Alî bin Maqlad bin Munqîdhd al-Shayzarî who was surnamed Mu‘ayyid al-Dawlah Majd ed-Dîn. He belonged to the tribe of Bânî Munqîdhd, the masters of the castle of Shayzâr in Syria, and was one of their scholars and courageous men. He stayed in Damascus and went to Egypt, and stayed there until the days of Ṭâlār‘ ibn Ruzâyîk, where he returned to Damascus. For some reasons, he transferred to the fortress of Kaifa until Saladin’s coming to Syria and taking of Damascus. He died in that city about 584 AH/1188 AD, i.e. after the battle of Ḥîṭṭîn. He has many literary and historical works, such as the book of \textit{al-Ṭībâr, Akhâr al-Nîsâ‘, al-Qîlâ‘ wa-l-Husûn}, and a poetry collection in two parts, and others. See, Ibn Khallikân, \textit{Wafâyât al-A’yân}, 1:195-196. See also, ‘Abdul-Râhman A. Badawi, \textit{The Literate Life in the time of the Crusades in Egypt and Syria} (Cairo, 1954), pp. 171-188. (in Arabic) (henceforth Badawi, \textit{The Literate Life}); Muhammad ‘Alî al-Harîfî, \textit{The Poetry of al-Jihâd of the Crusades in Syria} (Al-Iḥsâ‘, 1979), pp. 231-255. (in Arabic) (henceforth Al-Harîfî, \textit{The Poetry of al-Jihâd})
conquer Egypt. He mocks Amalric's hope and says that it was a dream.\textsuperscript{37}

\textcolor{red}{ورَدﱠ طﺎﻏﯾﺔَ اﻹﻓرﻧﺞ ﯾﺣﺳبُ ﻣﺎ ﺑِرﺟﺎﻩُ ﻣن ﻣﻠك ﻣﺻر ﻛﺎنَ ﻓﻲ اﻟﺣﻠم}

Translation: He forced the Tyrant of the Franks on his heels, making his hopes of conquering Egypt an idle dream.

He also praises Saladin, when the latter became the Sultan of Egypt and asks him to free his cousin from the captivity of the Franks and their injustice.\textsuperscript{38} It means that Usâma composed this poem before the victory of Saladin over the Crusaders at Ḥittîn in 1187 AD, and probably it was an invitation to Saladin to fight them.

\textcolor{red}{هذا اﺑن ﻋﻣـك ﻓﻲ أﺳرِ اﻟﻔـرﻧﺞ ﻟـﻪ ﻛﺎنَ ﻓﻲ اﻟﺣﻠم}

Translation: There is your cousin fettered for a year, a captive of the Franks, laboring in a dark jail.

It is obvious that after the establishment of the Ayyubid state in Egypt Saladin directed his efforts to unite the princes of Syria after the death of Nûr ed-Dîn Maḥmûd. So, he left Egypt in November 1174 AD/570 AH and went to Syria. Saladin arrived in Damascus at the same time, whereas ibn al-Moqaddim opened its gates before him and gave him the city.\textsuperscript{39} Usâma ibn Munqidh immortalized this occasion in his poetry. He says that Saladin revived Damascus such as Egypt and restored lost justice to it. He states Saladin made Islam victorious and insulted the disbelief and the cross, i.e. the Crusaders.\textsuperscript{40} Remarkably, the poet here turns to a polemic issue, when he mentioned that Saladin insulted Christianity, which he regarded disbelief and the cross too. Of course, the poet uses this polemic tune to make Saladin a protector of Islam and a destroyer of the other religions. This kind of polemic issues was usual in the writings of the Middle Ages, whether on the Islamic side or on the Christian side. For instance, when Charlamgne entered Sarcusa, according to \textit{la chanson de Roland}, he destroyed the mosques of

\textsuperscript{37}Abû Shâma, \textit{Kitâb al-Rawdâtayn}, 2:54. This meaning is repeated in another poem of another poet, whereas he says that Saladin changed the life of Amalric from the sweet life to the opposite by the fighting. The same poet asks Saladin also to drive Amalric out of Syria and to arrest Shâwar and kill him. See Abû Shâma, \textit{Kitâb al-Rawdâtayn}, 2:55.


\textsuperscript{39}Sa’îd A. ’Ashûr, \textit{The Ayyubids and Mamluks in Egypt and Syria} (Cairo, n.d.), pp. 39-40. (in Arabic)

\textsuperscript{40}Abû Shâma, \textit{Kitâb al-Rawdâtayn}, 2:345.
the Muslims and the Jewish temples too. The Muslim queen Bramimond abandoned Islam, was baptized in the Frankish capital, and adopted a Christian name, Juliana. On the other side, we can see in the Arabic epics the image of the Christian who abandoned his Christianity and converted to Islam for specific purposes and the Arabs' invasions of the Byzantine lands.

Translation: You revived her as you did Egypt, and restored justice to her.
This is what gave victory to Islam, illuminated its path, and humbled disbelief and cross-worshippers.

He refers also to Saladin's conquest of Ḥimṣ, which took place in December 1174 AD/570 AH and says that "every strong man of Ḥimṣ came to Saladin".

Translation: Emesa saw you as a capable defender, and so thronged to you her mighty strong men.

Usâma ibn Munqidh refers also to the defeat of the Crusaders by Saladin at Ḥiṭṭin when he says that Saladin protected the homelands by the sword and divided the Franks, by the invasion, into two divisions: the fighters who suffered from their pains, and the fighters who were killed in the battle. And he asks him to remain as a shelter for Muslims and a death to the Franks for generations to come.

Translation: You protected the land with your sword, strengthened her weakness, and gave dignity to the humble.
Your invasion left the Franks into two divisions: in pain or dead!
May you stay a shelter to Muslims and a death-giver to the Franks for generations to come.

In another long poem Usâma ibn Munqidh returns to the battle of Ḥiṭṭîn, when he says that although the Crusaders had numerous soldiers, Saladin conquered their lands and destroyed them by killing and captivity (line 12). Usâma ibn Munqidh showed that the Crusaders who were still alive either surrendered their arms or asked him for peace. (line 13)

Translation: You invaded them in their own land, while their armies were numerous.
Yet you annihilated them through death or captivity so that whoever survived either surrendered or sought peace.

M. al-Harîfî mentioned that this poem was written by ibn Munqidh to Ṭalâʾiʾ ibn Ruzâyk. But I think, according to the military activity of Saladin against the Crusaders, that this poem was written to Saladin, not to Ṭalâʾiʾ ibn Ruzâyk. On the other side, the poet in another verse mentions "O king" (yâ malikan) which means that he directed his speech to the Sultan himself. It is known that Saladin had the official title al-malik al-nâṣir.

He repeats this meaning in another poem where he addresses Saladin saying: you entered the enemy’s land and destroyed many of their countless braves. He also says that they didn’t see before any one of the kings conquer the Franks in their own lands, and asks him to march onto Syria, where the pious angels will meet and support him there.
وجست أرض العدو وأفنيت من أبطالهم ما يجاوز العدًا
وما رأيناه غزًا الفرنج من الملوك في عقر دارهم أحدًا
فسر إلى الشام فالمئاتة الأذى يلقاك جمعهم مدة

Translation: You landed among the enemies and annihilated countless braves among them.
No king before you ever dared to invade the Franks in their own lands.
So, lead the march to Syria, and the good angels will meet you and give you support.

Thus, the poetry of that time played an important role in the events between the Muslims and the Crusaders and reflected the Muslims' ideology towards them. After the victory of Ḥiṭṭîn Usâma ibn Munqidh records the events between Saladin and the Crusaders and "his getting rid of their injuries and darkness", and showed that Saladin moved from his fighting them on land into the sea by his navies. He likens his navies to the numerous waves of the sea (line 15). He also likens the naval knights of Saladin on their horses to the birds which are flying on the water without forelegs.

Translation: You attacked them at sea so that fleets looked as if they were tumultuous sea waves
With sea knights mounted on striped white horses that flew on the water like birds without forelegs.

He refers here to the naval activity of Saladin against the Crusaders. Usâma ibn Munqidh says, "Death led the ships of the Franks to Saladin's soldiers so that the blood of the Franks flowed on the sea and their heads were also cut on the land. None of the Frankish escapees could be hidden in any place of the land. No swimmer could be alive on the water of the sea". He tells us that Saladin returned from that naval

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51 Sallâm, The Literature, p. 263.
52 The contemporary historians point out Saladin's care of the navy before Ḥiṭṭîn, when they give the details of the events of the naval war between Renaud de Châtillon, i.e. Ernât, the governor of the fortress of al-Kerak, and Saladin's navy in the Red Sea. See, Al-Iṣfahâni, Al-Barq al-Shâmi, 3:84; 5:70-75; Abû Shâma, Kitâb al-Rawdatayn, 3:134-141.
53 Ibn Munqidh, Edhâ daqa bi-l-khaqâ, lines 14-16.
war with the captives and the ships of the Franks (lines 19-22).54 Usâma ibn Munqidh in the previous verses of his poetry collection gives some important historical details, especially the naval wars of Saladin against the Crusaders of the coastal cities of Syria. It is obvious that after Saladin's victory in Ḥiṭṭîn he directed his armies against the Crusaders in the Syrian cities and castles from 1187 AD to 1190 AD.55

Anyway, Usâma ibn Munqidh states that Saladin fought the enemy, probably the Crusaders, "not for money, in which he was uninterested, and his armies didn't care about booties".56

Now, what are the motives of Usâma ibn Munqidh to praise Saladin greatly? When Saladin was one of the members of the court of Nûr ed-Dîn Maḥmûd Usâma was close to him. Saladin was an admirer of the poetry collection of Usâma and he was a reader of his poetry collection too.57 When Saladin arrived in Damascus he invited Usâma ibn Munqidh, when he was 80 years old and over, to come to him and granted him a house. The relation between them became stronger.58 On the other hand, in 1188 AD when Usâma ibn Munqidh died, he was about ninety years old and Saladin was a young man, a brilliant leader and, Sultan of Egypt. According to this biographical background, it is expected that an old man like ibn Munqidh, who transferred between Nûr ed-Dîn Maḥmûd in Syria and the Fatimids in Egypt, praises Saladin. Finally, according to the military poetry of Usâma ibn Munqidh during the time of the Crusades, it seems that he complied with the events and the battles between the Muslims and the Crusaders through his poetry. He tried also to urge the Muslims and their leaders, such as Nûr ed-Dîn Maḥmûd, Ṭalâ‘î ibn Ruzâyk, and Saladin, to go forward and to fight the Crusaders, and restore their lands from their hands. Especially he participated in the battles between the Muslims

54 Ibn Munqidh, Edhâ daemon bi-l-khoṭâ, lines 19-22.
56 Ibn Munqidh, Edhâ daemon bi-l-khoṭâ, line 2.
under the commandment of Nūr ed-Dīn Mahmūd and Ṭalāiʿ ibn Ruzâyk, and the Crusaders.59 Maybe the love of Usâma ibn Munqidh and his admiration of the Muslims' leaders of that time stimulated him to praise them. So, he praised also many Muslim leaders and statesmen in Egypt and Syria not only Saladin.60

Anyway, Usâma ibn Munqidh did not satirize Saladin in his poems but he praised him greatly and left many poems to prove that he was one of the Muslim poets who played an important role in the mobilization of the Muslim mind against the Crusaders.

The greatest composer of many poems about Saladin is al-Iṣfahâni (d. 597 AH/1200 AD). He describes the conflict between Shâwar and Ḍirghâm in Fatimid Egypt.61 He refers to the communications between Shâwar and the Crusaders.62 He directed one of his poems to Asad ed-Dîn Shirkuh and saw that he saved the people from the worst of Shâwar.63 But, he likens the killing of Shâwar by Saladin64 to the killing of Goliath by David.65

Translation: The killing of Shawir by Yusuf has no match save that of Goliath by David.

Al-Iṣfahâni gives more details in his poetry about the struggle of Saladin against the Crusaders when he was a military leader with Shirkuh in Egypt, more than the other poets.66 Although he mentions historical facts in his verses, he uses some rhetorical devices such as the allusion to the superiority of Saladin over the Crusaders. He addresses Saladin: "The Frankish horde transgressed, but your valor quenched the thirst of your Indian sabers." He likens the bodies of the Crusader victims to the trees which were cultivated in the land of Egypt by Saladin and their heads to its fruits (lines 75-76). Again, he uses

62 Al-Iṣfahâni, The poem of kataba al-‘adharu, line 84.
63 Al-Iṣfahâni, The poem of bi-l-jide adrakta ma adrakta, line 15. (henceforth Al-Iṣfahâni, Bi-l-jide adrakta)
64 For the killing of Shâwar see Lev, Saladin in Egypt, pp. 46-49.
65 Al-Iṣfahâni, The poem of hani’an li-Miṣra, line 2. (henceforth Al-Iṣfahâni, Hani’an li-Miṣra)
66 Al-Iṣfahâni, Kataba al-‘adharu, lines 75-78.
hyperbole to allude to the great multitudes of the Crusader victims when he says that "Of their blood in Upper Egypt you made a stream that flowed from their valley to the Nile" (line 78). He likens the blood of the Crusaders on the land of the battle to the sea, and their much blood to the rains. (line 77)

Translation: The Frankish horde transgressed, but your valor quenched the thirst of your Indian sabers;
You sowed the land of Egypt with their bodies that produced heads for fruit.
A red sea flowed in the battlefield where clouds were of iron and the rain of blood;
Of their blood in Upper Egypt, you made a stream that flowed from their valley to the Nile.

Al-Iṣḥāḥānī refers to the combined attack of the Crusaders and the Byzantine fleet on Damietta 1169 AD / 565 AH where the Crusaders failed to achieve any success.67 In another poem, he attributes the failure of the Crusaders in this expedition to Saladin who got over them and had "broken their crosses," as he said.68 The combined attack of the Crusaders and the Byzantine fleet on Damietta 1169 AD/ 565 AH is confirmed by historians.69 William of Tyre recorded the details of the Byzantine fleet of this naval expedition on Egypt.70

As for the fall of the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt ʿImād ed-Dīn al-Iṣḥāḥānī gives some details and praises this event. According to his poems, it is obvious that he praises Saladin and is proud of him, for his restoration of the ʿAbbasid Caliphate's sovereignty in Egypt. He is

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67 Al-Iṣḥāḥānī, The poem of yâ Yusuf al-ḥusne, line 3.
68 Al-Iṣḥāḥānī, The poem of yaruqānī fī al-maha, lines 38-42. (henceforth Al-Iṣḥāḥānī, Yaruqānī fī al-maha)
70 William of Tyre, II, p. 361.
pleased for the return of *al-Sunnah* doctrine instead of *al-Shi‘ah* doctrine in Egypt. The *imams* of the mosques of Egypt returned to the speech for the ʿAbbasid Caliph, whom ʿImād ed-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī regards a successor of the Prophet Muḥammad (al-Mustafā in the poem). He says that the pulpits of the mosques were proud of the speech for al-Hashimi, i.e. the ʿAbbasid Caliph in Egypt, and the false *imām* of Cairo, i.e. the Fatimid Caliph, was relegated to utter negligence. (lines 360, 375)

Translation: A modern-day Joseph has rightfully taken possession of Egypt,
Where he revived the tradition of benevolence in city and desert alike.
In our sermons, we so hailed al-Mustaḍī’ as a successor of the Prophet and the Imam of our times,
That the Hashemite scion was exalted on every pulpit in every Egyptian mosque,
While the false imam of Cairo was relegated to utter negligence.

In another poem, al-Iṣfahānī repeats his impressions about the fall of the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt, which reflects his satisfaction. In this poem he says:

Translation: By al-Mustaḍī’ Abī Muḥammad al-Ḥassan the conditions of the Muslims returned right.
The orators, in the land of Egypt, prayed for him, and ʿAdan came to make the speech for him.

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72 Here the poet compares between Saladin (also known as Yūsuf = Joseph) and the Biblical Joseph who has formerly ruled over Egypt.
According to the sources, Saladin in 566 AH/1170 AD arrested the Egyptian princes of the Fatimid Caliph. When the latter asked Saladin why he killed them Saladin told the Caliph that they were disobedient men and that he had to kill them to save the Caliph. He also captured the palaces of Cairo and put them under the charge of his eunuch Bahâ’ ed-Dîn Qarâqûsh. In the same year, Saladin changed the Fatimid symbol and removed the name of the Fatimid Caliph from the sermons of Friday prayer.\(^{74}\)

The imâms of Egyptian mosques were afraid to return to the speech for the 'Abbasid Caliph at one time. So, Saladin brought someone who was called al-Yas’ ibn ‘îsa al-Andalusî, and ordered him to pray for the 'Abbasid Caliph.\(^{75}\) Al-Maqrizî states that in 567 AH / 1171 AH the imâm of the main mosque of Cairo, the mosque of ‘Amr ibn al-Âš, was ordered by Najm ed-Dîn Ayyub to pray for the ‘Abbasid Caliph. However, he neither prayed for the 'Abbasid Caliph nor the Fatimid Caliph, but prayed for Saladin and al-A’imma al-Mahdîn. Then, he was ordered again to mention the name and the titles of the 'Abbasid Caliph in the next Friday prayer. Thus, the prayer for the Fatimid Caliph in the mosques of Egypt was stopped.\(^{76}\) Al-Iṣfahânî\(^{77}\) likens Egypt after its liberation from the harm of Shâwar by Saladin to al-Haram, i.e. the Makkan sanctuary, in its security and coming of people to it. And al-Sunnah was re-established and the heresy smashed, i.e. al-Shî’ah. Egypt became again the state of benevolence and generosity. (lines 16-17)

\[\begin{align*}
15 & \text{مانها الله} \text{ في إطفاء جمر أذي} \text{ من شر شوار في الإسلام مضطرم} \\
16 & \text{وأصبحت} \text{ بك مصر بعد خيقتها} \text{ للأمن والعز والإقبال كباحرم} \\
17 & \text{السنة} \text{ استقت} \text{ والبدعة} \text{ امتحت} \text{ رعاى} \text{ دولة} \text{ الإحسان والكرم}
\end{align*}\]

Translation: God helped her extinguish the ravishing flames the evil Shâwar set in the lands of Islam, And thus the once-terrified Egypt became a sanctuary of security, glory, and prosperity, And thus the Sunnah was re-established, the heresy (i.e. al-Shî’ah) smashed, the state of benevolence and generosity returned.

\(^{77}\) \textit{The poem of bi-mulke Miṣr}, lines 15-22. (henceforth Al-Iṣfahânî, \textit{Bi-mulke Miṣr})
There are even some fine verses by al-Iṣfahānī in which he identifies Saladin with the Sun of the day, which comes after the full moon. He says, in a metaphoric style, that when Egypt yearned for the time of Joseph, i.e. the Prophet Joseph, Allah sent her Joseph, i.e. Saladin, and his time.\textsuperscript{78}

\begin{quote}
وقام صلاح الدين بالملك كافلاً
وكيف ترى شمس الضحى تخفف الأبدرا
ولما صيّبت مصر إلى عصر يوسف أعاد إليها الله يوسف والخصرا
\end{quote}

Translation: Saladin rose to his responsibilities as an able king just as the forenoon sun rises to eclipse the moon.

When Egypt longed for the time of Joseph, God sent her both Joseph and his time.

Al-Iṣfahānī refers to the conditions of Egypt under Saladin. He says that the latter ruled Egypt well, decreased taxes, and administered justice all over Egypt. He states that Saladin overcame his enemies and Egypt under his rule was a wondrous Paradise.\textsuperscript{79}

\begin{quote}
لملك الناصر الذي أبداً
لسلطانه يشرفها
نام بأحوالها يغففها
باللدى والجمل يكتبها
بعدله والصلاح يعمرها
من دنس الغادرين يضعها
ومن حبادالعدا تظفها
وإن مصرًا بملك يوسفها
جنة خير بروق زخرفها
\end{quote}

Translation: The Victorious King, whose rule will forever be an honour to Egypt,
Took it upon him to set aright her conditions and lighten her burdens.

With his justice and righteousness, she was raised, with generosity and fairness she was girdled.

He defended her against the desecration of the treacherous and purified her from the filth of her enemies.

Indeed, Egypt under the rule of her [new] Joseph is a paradise to be coveted.

The writing style of al-Iṣfahānī in his historical books is very literary and full of zeugmas and other rhetorical devices. We can say that it is not only a versified prose, but also pure historical accounts. Thus, we can imagine how his poetry will be.

\textsuperscript{78}Al-Iṣfahānī, \textit{Abā Yūsuf al-iḥsān}, lines 10-11.

\textsuperscript{79}Al-Iṣfahānī, \textit{Yaruqani fī al-maha}, lines 17-21. He repeats the same meaning in another poem, \textit{Yā Yūsuf al-ḥusne}, lines 4-5.
Anyway, there is a kind of literary hyperbole in his above-mentioned verses but they refer to some historical facts. For example, Saladin canceled all the taxes in Egypt in 566 AH/1170 AD, destroyed the prison of al-Maʿūnah, built a school to teach al-Shâfiʿi doctrine, and another for al-Mâlikî doctrine. Finally, al-İṣfahâni congratulates Egypt on her new monarch Saladin, and regards this event had as a divine dispensation:

هنيئاً لمصر، حوز يوسف ملكها بأمر من الرحمن قد كان موظئاً

Translation: Blessed be Egypt to be under Yûsuf whose rule there was a timely decree from the Merciful.

After the fall of the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt at the hands of Saladin, the people looked forward to the next step, that is, the liberation of Syrian and Palestinian lands from the Crusaders. This is obvious in the poetry of that time, where al-İṣfahâni urges Saladin to attack the Franks. He told him that "this is the time of invading them" and destroying their hordes. He asked him to purify Jerusalem from the filth of the Franks and to attack the enemy (lines 23-24).

Translation: Attack the Franks, this is the time, and smash their hordes with sword and fire.

Purify Jerusalem from the filth of the Franks and swoop down on those worthless birds like a brave eagle.

The tune of motivation in these verses is mentioned before al-İṣfahâni by al-Qâḍî al-Fâdîl (d. 596 AH/1199 AD), when he speaks
about Saladin, in a metaphoric style, "You had no Noah's ark to board, though the armies were like his floods, when the trumpet for the reconquest of Syria was sounded."  

Al-Iṣfahānī, who refers to the battle of Ḥīṭṭīn, says that Saladin disgraced the Crusader kings and wiped out their disbelieving hordes.85

Translation: At Ḥīṭṭīn you trampled on the honor of their kings, and wiped out their infidel races to the last man.

It is known that at Ḥīṭṭīn Saladin captured Guy of Lusignan, the Crusader king of Jerusalem, Renaud de Châtillon, the prince of al-Kerak, the grandmaster of the Templars, some Hospitallers, and others.86 D. Nicolle adds that the captive Hospitallers were given the choice of converting to Islam or execution. Two hundred and thirty of them were slaughtered and a few converted to Islam.87

The sources reflect the hatred of the Muslims to Renaud de Châtillon not only because he was a Crusader, but also because he raided the holy lands of Mecca and Medina in 1182 AD/578 AH after his capture of the ports of Ailah and ‘Aydhâb on the Red Sea.88 Saladin in the next year 1183 AD/579 AH besieged the fortress of al-Kerak, but he failed to capture it. Later in 1186 AD / 582 AH. Renaud de Châtillon attacked a large caravan that was going from Cairo to Damascus, in which Saladin’s sister was traveling, violating the truce between Saladin and the kingdom of Jerusalem.89

King Guy of Lusignan chastised

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Renauld in an attempt to appease Saladin, but Renauld replied that he was lord of his own lands and that he had made no peace with Saladin. Saladin swore that Renauld would be executed if he was ever taken prisoner.\(^{90}\) Abû Shâma\(^{91}\) adds another reason for Saladin's vow to kill Renauld. He claims that Renauld insulted the Prophet Muḥammad when he said to Saladin's legates: "Say to your Muḥammad to save you."

Al-Iṣfahānī in his long poem of *kataba al-ʿadharu ʿala al-khudūd,\(^{92}\) states these events, especially the issue of the execution of Renauld de Châtillon, prince of al-Kerak, and how Saladin's sword cut his head (lines 692,695,697). He also refers to Renauld de Châtillon's treachery to Saladin as the reason for his death (line 693). He addresses Saladin: "You sent the īmām of the hell-bound nation to it until Ernāt came to rest in that jail" (line 697).

692 ﺷْكَا ﺑِيِبْسَا ﺑَرْنَسِ ﺑِذَﻟَّٰكَ إِلَّا ﺑِيِبْسَا
693 ﻋِنْدِي ﻟَمْ تَحْمَلَ حَاسَمَ َذَٰٰكَ إِلَّا ﺑِيِبْسَا
694 ﻛَانَ ﻟَوْ ﻏَدَرُﻩُ ﺑِيِبْسَا
695 ﻓَأَطِهَرْ ﺳَيْفَ ﻣَعْدَمَٰ ﺑِرْجَإِ ﻷْمَٰنَ ﺑَرْنَسِ
696 ﻓَأَذِيَ ﺑَرْنَسِ إِنْ ﻓَأَذِيَ ﺑَرْنَسِ
697 ﻓَأَذِيَ ﻓَأَذِيَ ﺑَرْنَسِ إِنْ ﻓَأَذِيَ ﺑَرْنَسِ

Translation: The head of the prince became dry when the sword cut it and the blood flowed.

Because of his deeds and his treachery, the sword drank his blood.

His death was a gift from Allah, and this sword ended his evil.

By a strike, you destroyed the head of the prince, and his head became like the flying cotton and wool.


You sent the *imām* of the hell-bound nation to it until Ernāt came to rest in that jail.

When al-İşfahānī speaks of the Crusader captives of Ḥiṭṭīn,⁹³ he says that they were so countless that the countries of God were full of them. The Muslims bought these captives at a cheap price, i.e. with the fighting, and they presented them in the markets of slaves. He says because the Crusader captives were so many in the markets no one would like to buy them.⁹⁴

Translation: The Lord's lands are full of countless captives—cheaply purchased, sold as slaves.

They were too many no wonder they were shunned by buyers in over-flooded markets.

The accurate details of these verses of al-İşfahānī mean that he accompanied Saladin at the war. On the other hand, they agree with the account of Abu Shāma about the captives of Ḥiṭṭīn, where he says that the Frankish captives of Ḥiṭṭīn were countless. One day someone bought a Frankish man and his wife and three sons and two daughters for eighty *dinars*. The Crusader captives were so many so that one day a poor Muslim soldier sold a Frankish captive for a pair of sandals.⁹⁵ The so many Crusader men killed at Ḥiṭṭīn gave the impression that there were no captives and the countless Crusader captives at Ḥiṭṭīn gave the impression that none of their men was killed.⁹⁶

The period, which followed the victory of Ḥiṭṭīn in Arabic poetry, could be called 'the time of stimulation or the time of mobilization in the Muslim thought'. It is notable that in the poetry of that time the poets urged Saladin to invade the Syrian cities and restore them from the hands of the Crusaders.⁹⁷ For instance, al-İşfahānī asked Saladin in his

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⁹³About them see Pernoud, *The Crusades*, p. 168.
poems to re-conquer Jerusalem. He says: "Do not neglect holiest Jerusalem and resolve to re-conquer it as soon as possible." He informs Saladin that the difficult issues will be easy by Allah, should he ask him, and describes the conquest of Jerusalem as the "the great conquest" which quenches their thirst.

Translation: Up to Jerusalem! Only that would quench our thirst for the Great Conquest beside which all else is easy. Ask Allah to make easy the toughest of hardships, for He is indeed omnipotent.

Al-Iṣfahānī traces the conquests of Saladin in Syria after the battle of Ḥiṭṭīn and gives in his poems an account of the Syrian cities and castles, which were conquered by Saladin and his brother al-ʿĀdīl. He begins with Tberias, Acre, Sidon, Beirut, Tibnîn, Jaffa, Arsûf, Gaza, Ascalon, and the castle of Manbij (Hierapolis). He showed also that the conquest of Acre was badly needed to drive the Crusaders completely out of the coastal cities of Syria (line 666).

See, Bi-mulke Miṣr, lines 23-25; The poem of ʿafā Allâh ʿankum, lines 24-25.

Al-Iṣfahānī, Abâ Yûsuf al-iḥsān, lines 18-19.


Al-Iṣfahānī, Kataba al-ʿadharu, lines 314-315. See also Ḥammza, The Literature, p. 112.


Al-Iṣfahānī, Kataba al-ʿadharu, lines 665-669; idem, The poem of hum al-mulûk, line 3.

Al-Iṣfahānī, The poem of bushrâ al-mamâlik, line 1. As for these events see Al-Iṣfahānī, Al-Fâṭḥ al-Qussî, pp. 53-66. Al-Iṣfahānī mentioned these conquests in another poem too. See Ḥammza, The Literature, p.116.
And Acre, how about Acre! Its conquest made them leave all their coastal cities, and in Sidon, Beirut, and Tibnîn you defeated the enemy by your sword and made them miserable and humble, and Jaffa, Arsûf, Tubnâ, and Gaza your sword's blade cut their necks, and in Ascalon the disbelief became humble by your monarchy, its shape became black and dirty.

After Saladin's re-conquest of the Syrian cities and castles al-Iṣfahâni asks Saladin to re-conquer Tyre and destroy the remaining Crusaders completely. Ibn al-Athîr states that at this time most of the Franks went to Tyre to prepare themselves against Saladin's armies. Al-Iṣfahâni warns Saladin that there was a league of the Crusaders in Tyre watching his military activities. He also urges Saladin to push these Crusaders to fight (lines 670, 672). But he refers to unique information about the collapse of the Crusaders' economy after Ḥiṭṭîn, when he says that the value of the Crusader coinage dinar decreased and became like a fils in value (line 672).

These verses reflect the hope of the Muslims to reconquer Jerusalem and Tyre, which is shown in their historical writings too. Abû Shâma repeats the same idea and declares that Saladin conquered all the coastal cities except Jerusalem and Tyre. Al-Iṣfahâni also asks Saladin to march towards Tripoli, Neapolis, and Antioch. In

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105 Al-Iṣfahâni, Kataba al-‘adharu, lines 670 and 672.
108 Al-Iṣfahâni, Bushrâ al-mamâlik, line 8.
another poem, he urges Saladin to cross the Euphrates river to free Edessa from its Crusader captivity and to free Harran too.\textsuperscript{110}

Translation: Cross the Euphrates to the enemies to give them a salty taste of overflowing death
And wrest Edessa from their hands and give her light after the long dark night.
Seek salvation for Harran wherein many a burning heart pines for your help.

It seems that al-Iṣfahānī was so full of hope that he asked Saladin to march towards Mesopotamia and Khorāsān, and capture them with the Turks and Persians. He also asked Saladin to march towards Georgia after the Franks to fight the Georgians.\textsuperscript{111}

Translation: The countries of the Orient are dark, so capture Khurasān, Mesopotamia, the Turks, and Persians.
After the Franks, march towards the country of the Georgians by your intention and fill the grave with their blood.

The latter verses probably reflect the Muslims’ desire to re-conquer the lost lands and they hoped that Saladin will be the awaited champion who will restore and unite the Islamic World from Persia to Andalusia.

On the 2\textsuperscript{nd} of October 1187 AD/ 27\textsuperscript{th} of Rajab 583 AH. Saladin entered Jerusalem after his victory over the Crusaders, who withdrew from the war's land.\textsuperscript{112} This serious event in the history of relations between the Muslims and Crusaders caused a hard shock in Europe; on the other hand, it brought delight and pleasure to Muslims and restored their military confidence after the loss of Jerusalem in 1097 AD. So, it is

\textsuperscript{110}Al-Iṣfahānī, \textit{The poem of ya'wun ahabba}, lines 42-44. See also Ḥammza, \textit{The Literature}, p. 115.

\textsuperscript{111}Al-Iṣfahānī, \textit{Kataba al-ʻadhara}, lines 674-675.

no wonder to see the contemporary poets of Saladin praising him so much in their poems. Of course, one of them will be his faithful secretary al-Iṣfahānī, who addresses Saladin: "No one deserves Jerusalem except you, because you are the only one who conquered Jerusalem (line 657) and you purified it from their abomination with their blood (line 659). You discarded the garment of disbelief from its holy land and clothed it with belief again. The judgments of Islam returned to the house of Allah when you left neither patriarch nor bishop (line 661). Rejoice, it is known far and wide that the ḥān of Jerusalem has canceled all bell-ringing."\(^{113}\) (line 662).

The conquest of Jerusalem by Saladin made the poets, such as al-Iṣfahānī, ask him strongly to re-conquer Tyre, Tripoli, and Antioch and to drive the Crusaders out of all the Syrian coast.\(^{114}\)

Translation: After reconquering Jerusalem, there remains Tyre, and when that is reconquered, then march onto Tripoli.

Marshal to Antaradus an ear-deafening legion, and into the night of Antioch send your spies.

And clear the entire coast of Syria of all enemies and people of questionable faith.

So, Saladin began to raid the possessions of Tripoli and Antioch. By the end of 1188 AD/584 AH, Saladin captured the cities and castles of Tripoli and Antioch, such as the castle of Hunin, Safad, the fortress of Beavoir, Banyas, Gibellum, Laodicea (today is Lattakia), and the fortresses of Saone, Cursat, Baghrs, and Darbsak. Later, he captured also al-Kerak, al-Shobak (Krak de Montreal), and Shaqif Arnun.\(^{115}\) The Arab poets omitted the failure of Saladin to capture Tyre and the naval defeat of the Egyptian fleet before its coast by the Crusader fleet at 1187 AD, which seized five Egyptian ships and the Crusaders captured the grandmaster and the head of the Muslim navy.\(^{116}\) Ibn al-Athīr

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estimates the total number of the Egyptian ships at ten Shawâni, which came from Acre to support Saladin in his besiege of Tyre. The omission of this event leads us to the fact that the poets showed only the victories of Saladin and praised only his great achievements, omitting his defeats such as the defeat of al-Ramlah in 1177 AD/ 573 AH by the Crusaders under the leadership of Renauld de Châtillon, or unsuccessful endeavors such as the besiege of Tyre. Although the details of the defeat of al-Ramlah is obvious in the historical chronicles, al-Iṣfahâni composed a poem for al-Malik al-Mudhaffar Ṭaqqiy ed-Dîn of Ḥamâh, who came with his soldiers to support Saladin, and attacked the Crusaders, and killed many of them. This means that those poets were interested in the victories only or they were interested in the issues which elevate the rank of the Muslims and increase their enthusiasm against their enemies.

As for the motives of al-Iṣfahâni to praise Saladin we have to keep in mind that he belonged to the inner circle of Saladin's court officials. He was the personal secretary of Saladin since 1175. So, he accompanied Saladin almost without intermission from the summer of that year until his death. Besides these facts, al-Iṣfahâni dealt with Nûr ed-Dîn Maḥmûd before Saladin and had a good experience and he knew how to deal with the high leaders and statesmen. Thus, al-

117 Shanya was called Shûnî, Shîniyât and Shûnît. The plural is Shawâni. It was a big Galley. This term, Shânyah, was the origin of many other ships such as al Gharâb, al-Tarîdah, al-Harrâghah, and others. This galley was used in the Mediterranean and the Nile as well. (See, Darwish al-Nikhlî, Al-Ṣufûn al-Iskâmîya ‘alâ Ḥûrûf al-Mu’jâm (Alexandria, 1979), pp. 83-85.) Ibn Mâmûtî, Qawanîn al-Dawâmîn, ed. Azîz S. “Ayta (Cairo, 1991), pp. 339-334, mentions that this ship had 100-140 oars and was full of the fighters, sailors, and oarsmen. It was also full of foods, cistern of water, arms, and al-Nafî. (Badr ed-Dîn al-‘Aynî, ‘Īṣdu al-Jumûn fî Tarîkh Aḥl al-Zâmîn, ed. Muhammad M. Amin, 8 vols. (Cairo, n.d.), 4:186-187.
118 Ibn al-Athîr, Al-Kâmîl fî al-Târîkh, 10:159-160 and Al-Iṣfahânî, Al-Fâṭih al-Qussî, pp. 89-90, mention the reason of the fall of these five Egyptian ships in the hands of the Crusaders. They say that their soldiers and sailors were sleeping when the Crusaders attacked them.
120 As for this poem see Al-Iṣfahânî, Al-Barq al-Shâmî, 3:46-50.
121 Al-Iṣfahânî, Al-Barq al-Shâmî, 3:38 ff.
125 For the relation between Al-Iṣfahânî and Nûr ed-Dîn Maḥmûd see Richards, "Imâd al-Dîn Al-Iṣfahânî," pp. 135-140; Lev, Saladin in Egypt, pp. 27-28.
Iṣfahānī showed a deep admiration for Saladin126 both in his chronicles and his poetry, especially that his access to Saladin gave him personal prestige and opportunities for enrichment.127

ʿAbdul Monʿim al-Jilyânî (d. 602 AH/1205 AD)128 also persuaded Saladin to attack the Franks and to free Jerusalem and says to him, "if you didn't fight them, who would do it and destroy them?"129

ʿAbdul Monʿim al-Jilyânî shows the wonder of the Crusaders in the battle of Hiṭṭîn about the strength of Saladin.130

Translation: But the might and fury of Saladin left them stunned in the battle of al-Tall.

Probably, the words of al-Jilyânî didn't state the fact, because the Crusaders met Saladin several times before and the strength of Saladin was clear to them. Probably, it was Saladin's military plan not only his strength that surprised them.131

Al-Jilyânî also indicates the battle of Hiṭṭîn and likens the selling of the many captives of the Franks in the markets to the collections of birds in strings without feathers.132 The poets of the time of Saladin mentioned many times that the Crusader captives were so many.

Al-Jilyânî refers to the conquest of Jerusalem by Saladin133 and regards the fighting of Saladin against the Franks as an epic (line 8). His

126Gibb, "The Life of Saladin," p. 3.
131About the battle of Hiṭṭîn in the poetry of al-Jilyânî see Al-Jilyânî, The poem of taṣāʿir fahrin, lines 1-24; idem, The poem of fī bāṭīn al-ghayb, lines 2-12.
132Al-Jilyânî, Taṣāʿir fahrin, line 15.
poems about Saladin's reconquest of Jerusalem are called “al-Quddsiyyât.”

Besides this historical-poetic evidence of al-Jilyânî, he presents unique information about the third Crusade. Some of his verses about Saladin show that the Franks were outraged because of the defeat of the Crusaders at Hîtîn and the fall of Jerusalem by Saladin. So, they mobilized the European kings to participate in a new expedition against Saladin (line 4). Al-Jilyânî says that the Franks of Europe objected to abandoning Jerusalem (line 5); that many kings sailed to save the holy sepulcher from the Muslims (line 6); that they mobilized their people to go with them and prepared much money for the planned expedition (line 8):

Translation: When the Franks became weak, they were excited and they mobilized every strong [king]. For the capture of Jerusalem, they said how to leave it and the Lord is buried there. How many kings of them navigated at night to save the sepulcher, and the fate abandoned them. They stimulated {appealed to} their people, while the infection rends them, and collected the money which the war increased.

The motives of al-Jilyânî to praise Saladin in his poetry are not clear in the sources. But ibn abî Uṣaybi‘ah mentions that Saladin respected him so much and gave him so many benefactions. This short information answers why al-Jilyânî praised Saladin in his poetry and showed that the relations between them were so strong that he wrote a poetry collection, which is called “al-Mobashirât wa-l-Quddsiyyât, to describe the battles of Saladin against the Crusaders and

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134 Kilânî, The Crusades, p. 213.
to praise him. He wrote another book about him, too.\textsuperscript{137} Thus, the strong relations between Saladin and al-Jilyânî led the latter to praise Saladin in his poetry.

The poet ibn al-Sa‘âṭî (d. 604 AH/1207 AD)\textsuperscript{138} who contacted the Ayyubid statesmen, such as Saladin, al-Âdîl, and others, praised the courage, noble-mindedness, and morals of Saladin. He wrote many poems about the conquest of Tiberias\textsuperscript{139} and the conquest of Jerusalem by Saladin.\textsuperscript{140} He also referred to the third crusade of Richard the Lion Heart.\textsuperscript{141} It is remarkable that most of the poems of ibn al-Sa‘âṭî which he wrote about Saladin were panegyric. The motives of ibn al-Sa‘âṭî to do it are unclear. But, according to his biography, it is probable that he found that Egypt was the country where he liked to stay. So, when he was thirty years old he left Damascus and went to Egypt. His praising poetry of Egypt and its cities reflected this hypothesis. In this case, it will be acceptable to find someone like ibn al-Sa‘âṭî who praises Saladin, Sultan of Egypt. He stayed in Egypt until his death.\textsuperscript{142}

Ibn Rashîq al-Qayrawâni (d. 608 AH/1211 AD)\textsuperscript{143} in his poetry refers to the attack of Saladin on al-Kerâk where he says:\textsuperscript{144}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{46} فَهَيْنَ أَهْلَ تَلَّكَ الْقَلْعَةِ النَّدَّرَ إِذْ رَأَيْا
\textsuperscript{47} وَادِيَهَا كَالَّبَاسِقَاتِ ﻃَنِ بَنْ لَدْ أَرْتَ
\textsuperscript{48} عَدَا يَذُبْهَا الْإِبِرْنَسْ يَلْعَنْ عَوْسَ ﻷَن
\textsuperscript{49} لِشِيْخِ لِعِينٍ كَافِرٍ جَاهِلٍ رَتْلَلِ
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{137} Ibn abî Uṣaybi‘ah, ‘Uxn al-Annbâ’, p. 635.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibn al-Sa‘âṭî is Abû al-Hasan Ali bin Rustum. He was born in Damascus in 553 AH/1158 AD and died in Egypt in 604 AH/1207 AD. He had some poetry collections. See Al-Dhabîbî, Shadhârât al-Dhabîbî fi Akhdâr man Dhabîbî, 4 vols. (Beirut, n.d.), 3:13-14; Kilânî, The Crusades, p. 304.
\textsuperscript{139} Abû Shâma, Kitâb al-Raṣâdatñ, 3:305-307; Ibn Taghrî Berdî, Al-Nujûm al-Zâhîra, 6:34. See also Kilânî, The Crusades, pp. 305-306.
\textsuperscript{141} Badawî, The Literate Life, p. 195.
\textsuperscript{142} Badawî, The Literate Life, p. 189.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibn Rashîq al-Qayrawâni is Hebat Allâh bin Dja‘far al-Qâdî al-Sa‘îd ibn Sanâ‘ al-Mulk. He was born in Egypt in 550 AH/1155 AD and died there also in 608 AH/1212 AD. He was a poet of the Egyptian nobles. He worked in Diwân al-Inshâ’ and worked in Diwân al-Dja‘îsh under al-Malik al-Kâmîl in 606 AH/1210 AD he has many books and a poetry collection. See, Badawî, The Literate Life, pp. 196-203.
Translation: The inhabitants of that castle reaped evil when they saw its front walls high like palm-trees.
Its master, the prince, took to cursing his relation with it and continued to do so.
The catapults strafed it as they would pelt an old, accursed, ignorant, and evil disbeliever.

In 579 AH/1183 AD, Saladin and his brother al-‘Ādil attacked al-Kerak with many soldiers and besieged it with catapults for several weeks. The besiegers struck the wall of the fortress with stones and succeeded in destroying a part of it. But they failed to enter the fortress because of the deep and wide ditch which was like a wide valley. Although they tried to cross it they failed. Then, the month of fasting of the Muslims, i.e. Ramadan, was about to come. So, Saladin left al-Kerak and went to Damascus with his army.145 Although ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawānī refers to the conquest of Jerusalem,146 he determines the day of Saladin's entry to it as Friday (line 65).

Finally ibn ‘Anîn (d. 632 AH/1234 AD)147 was interested in showing Saladin as a protector of Islam and its lands, especially Egypt, Mecca, and al-Medina. He refers indirectly to the attempt of the Franks to attack Mecca and al-Medina.148 He declares that the bonds of Islam would have been destroyed, neglected, and replaced in Egypt had it not been for him. And the Franks controlled Egypt and their people left the chamber of the mosque of ‘Amr ibn al-‘Âṣ a temple.149

30 ﺜﯨﺍﺭ ﺍًﻌﻟﺍً ﻢﺤﺭﺍﺏ ﻮﺱﺭﻭ ﺡﻴﻜﻼً
31 ﻮDownloading.5

146 Al-Qayrawānī, Waṣṭuka wallaḥī yu’ānid, lines 56-66.
Translation: If it were not for you, the bonds of Islam would have been broken and Islam would have been neglected and replaced in Egypt:

The Franks would have been its absolute rulers; the priests would have turned the Mosque of Amr into a temple.

Ibn ‘Anîn refers not only to the combined attack of the Crusaders and the Byzantine fleet on Damietta in 1169 AD/565 AH but also to important information that the Franks transformed many of its mosques into churches. But he says that Saladin saved them from the Frankish plan of destruction which would have reduced these mosques to shambles.150

Translation: In the port of Damietta, how often the cross was worshipped in a church that was once a mosque,

Until you restored it to what it was and uplifted it from its erstwhile degradation.

The latter information of ibn ‘Anîn shows the continuity of the hostile policy of the Crusaders towards the conquered Muslims’ lands, which began with the First Crusade. It is known that they changed many mosques to churches after they entered the holy lands151 and after seventy-two years of the First Crusade, they maintained this policy and changed many mosques of Damietta to churches. Probably this policy forced the Crusaders to do it in Damietta or they wanted to intrigue the Muslims, especially when we know that the Crusader-Byzantine expedition against Damietta lasted a short time and they had no chance to stay there for a long time to establish a Crusader community such as that of Antioch, Edessa, Tripoli, or Jerusalem.

Ibn ‘Anîn refers also to the conquests of Saladin of some Syrian cities and says that the dust of the attack of Saladin on Caesarea hid the sun.152 This remark means that the troops of Saladin were too many.

The questionable point here is why ibn ‘Anîn praised Saladin although he was a satirist? Ibn ‘Anîn was one of the professional poets

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151The historians of the time of Saladin declare that the Crusaders removed the Islamic sights from Jerusalem and changed it to Christian places. They changed al-Aqâ mosque and Qubbat al-Ṣakhrah into temples. So, when Saladin entered Jerusalem he restored these places as Islamic places. See note 95.
152Ibn ‘Anîn, Yâ dahru wayhak, lines 30-32.
of the time of the Crusades. He had a great knowledge of poetry, Arabic, and culture. During the time of Nūr ed-Dīn Maḥmūd, when he was sixteen years old, he wrote poetry. After the death of Nūr ed-Dīn Maḥmūd, Damascus was captured by Saladin. Then ibn ‘Anīn showed his political trends against Saladin and his ministers. He satirized them many times in his poems. One day he satirized Saladin "Our Sultan is hobbled, his writer is bleary and his minister is back-hunched".153

Ibn ‘Anīn also satirized one of Saladin's men, Ass'ad ibn Elyâs al-Tabīb.154 So, Saladin ordered ibn ‘Anīn to leave Damascus. He left it and moved from one country to another, such as Iraq, Mesopotamia, Khwrasan, Khwarizm, India, and others.155 After his dispersion in many countries, he decided to contact the Ayyubid dynasty. But, while he couldn't go to Egypt because Saladin did not forgive him, he went to the brother of Saladin, who was the governor of Yemen. He praised him in many poems.156 It is probable that he praised Saladin too during his stay in Yemen to gain his cordiality and his forgiveness. I think that Saladin did not forgive ibn ‘Anīn because he did not return to Damascus during his life. He returned to Damascus only after the death of Saladin, when he took permission from al-Malik al-‘Ādil to enter it.157

Conclusion:

Thus, the contemporary Muslim poets who composed poetry about Saladin referred to all the stages of his life, beginning with the time of leadership under Asad ed-Dīn Shirkūh, the minister under the Fatimid Caliphate, and Sultanate of Egypt and Syria. The range of the praise in their poems was varied from one stage to another. It reached the top after he triumphed over the Crusaders at Hīṭṭīn and his conquest of Jerusalem.

It is obvious that, far from the historical events in their poems, most of the poets praised Saladin so much and gave him the characteristics of a mythical hero, even Fityān al-Shaghūrī regarded him as "the owner of hitherto unwritten epics",158 and he regarded him, rather hyperbolically, as the destroyer of Chosroes, the Persian king.

153Sallām, The Literature, p. 341.
and Caesar of al-Rûm, the Byzantine Emperor. But, he regarded the armies of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (r. 610-641 AD) and Alexander the Great (r. 356-323 BC) as nothing compared to Saladin's army.\footnote{Fityân al-Shaghûrî, \textit{The poem of tubna al-mamâlik}, lines 13-14.}

The abundant praise of Saladin by various contemporary poets is proportionate to the disappointment felt by Muslims after the First Crusade and their subsequent failures to restore their lands from the Crusaders for about ninety years. Thus, when Saladin restored most of the Muslim lands, save a few Crusader cities in Syria, the Muslims were naturally jubilant. Besides, Saladin's conquests and achievements were swift and successive. So, most of the contemporary poets of Saladin praised him so much and gave him all the ideal characteristics, which we have been unable to account for completely in their poetry, i.e. they were propagandists. Although their motives to praise Saladin were various, they played an important role to make Saladin's reputation in the Islamic world in the time of the Crusades by their poems and the tune of their poetry was zealous to mobilize the Muslims and their leaders against the Crusaders. And the deeds of Saladin later became a parable among the Muslim people, probably up to now. So, we find Sharaf ed-Dîn al-Ḥillî (d. 627 AH / 1229 AD)\footnote{Sharaf ed-Dîn al-Ḥillî is Abû al-Wafâ’ Râjeh bin Abî al-Qâsim. He was born in 572 AH/1176 AD in al-Ḥilla of Iraq and died in 627AH/1229 AD. He was a poet of the tribe of Banî Asad. He moved from al-Ḥilla to Baghdad under the caliphate of Abû al-‘Abbâs Ahmed al-Mustadî. But he did not stay there for long and went to Syria and Egypt. He has a poetry collection, which shows that he was a Shi‘î. See Ibn Khallikân, \textit{Wafiyyût al-A’yân}, 4:7, and 10.} speaks to al-Ẓâher Ghâzî, the son of Saladin, and reminding him of the triumphs and achievements of his father.\footnote{Sharaf ed-Dîn al-Ḥillî, \textit{"The poem of areh al-maṭiyya men al-wajîf,"} in \textit{Poetry Collection of Sharaf ed-Dîn al-Ḥillî}, ed. by Cultural Foundation of UAE, in \textit{The Poetic Encyclopedia} (Abû Dhabî, 2003), lines 15-18; idem, \textit{The poem of enna nufûsan balaghat}, lines 38-32; idem, \textit{The poem of qa‘lat laka al-bîyâda wa-l-qanâ}, lines 25-28.}

According to these conclusions, the poetry of the time of Saladin presented nothing new about the deeds of Saladin. It repeated briefly the events, which were recorded in the historical sources. However, it showed that most of the poets of his time were propagandists and played a vital role in the making of Saladin's reputation in the Islamic world. It also showed the psychological status of the Muslims before and after Ḥiṭṭîn.