MALCOLM CAMERON LYONS
& D.E.P. JACKSON

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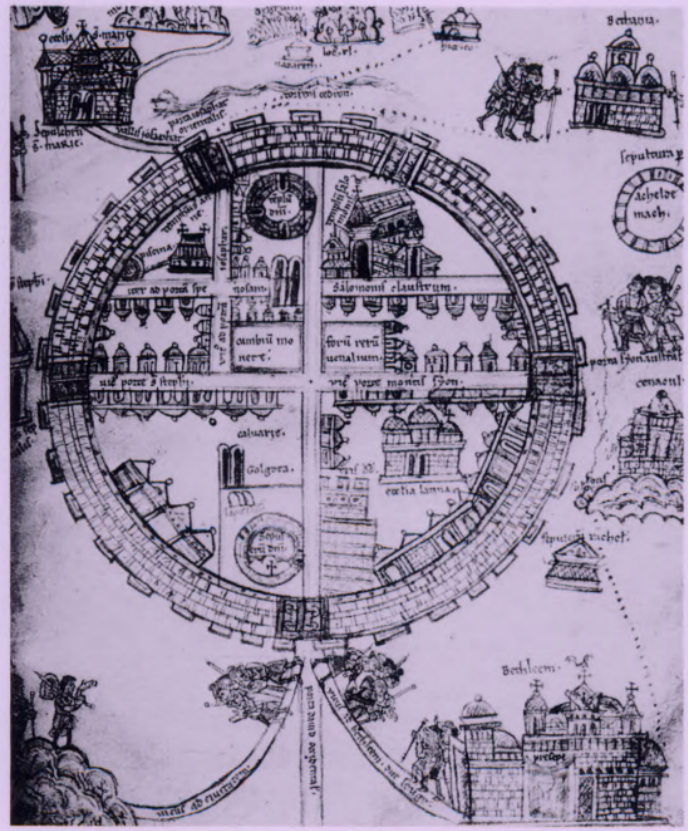
The politics of the Holy War



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FOREWORD

The object of this work is to re-examine and, where possible, to add to evidence for the career of Saladin in order to strengthen the frame of reference into which the judgements and conclusions of his modern biographers can be fitted. For this purpose, attention is concentrated on contemporary sources, and in particular on the extant correspondence, diplomatic and private, of the period. This adds little to our knowledge of Saladin's rise to power in Egypt or to the history of the Third Crusade, but it is of particular value for the central period of his career. The sources are, primarily, concerned with Saladin's own actions and their interpretation, but these, in turn, reflect the wider pattern of forces at work in his age.

It is hoped that this work may be of service to non-Arabists. In view of this, personal names have been arbitrarily distinguished for ease of identification. For instance, Saladin's brother al-Malik al-'Ādil Saif al-Dīn Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Ayyūb is referred to throughout as al-'Ādil, while another brother, al-Malik al-Mu'aẓẓam Shams al-Daula Tūrān-Shāh ibn Ayyūb is called Tūrān-Shāh. Extended forms, together with cross-references, are given in the Index. Place names are divided into three categories: (a) those which have common European forms, such as Acre and Jerusalem, which are retained; (b) less common names, transliterated from the Arabic sources; (c) names used for identification and derived not from the Arabic sources but from modern maps, etc., the forms of which have been left unaltered. In both personal and place names there are a number of variants of form and spelling. In some cases spellings have been taken from vocalised manuscripts but in general forms and transcriptions are based on a modification of the system used in the *Manuel de Généalogie et de Chronologie pour l'Histoire de l'Islam* of E. de Zambaur.

There are a number of problems of dating, including textual difficulties and variants in the identification of the first day of the

lunar month. It is possible, however, in spite of mistakes made by individual authorities, to construct a calendar of events during Saladin's lifetime based on dates and days of the week that can be confirmed from eastern and western sources which shows an average discrepancy of no more than one day over a period of twenty years. As a result, the margin of error to be allowed for in the establishment of any individual date is generally small.

We owe many debts of thanks, principally to the Publications Committee of the Oriental Faculty of Cambridge University for their help in arranging for the publication of this book. We wish to acknowledge with thanks the generous grant from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland. For both advice and encouragement we are deeply grateful to Professor Jonathan Riley-Smith. Mrs Ursula Lyons, of Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge, has helped at all stages of the writing of the book through her valuable work on both Arabic and European sources. We must also acknowledge with gratitude the kindness and help of Mr J. Sullivan and Dr Hugh Kennedy, both of St Andrews University, as well as that of the staff of the Cambridge University Press.

May 1977

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EARLY ADVENTURES

The history of mediaeval Islam and its civilisation provides a series of problems of definition and interpretation, but, in general, the materials necessary for their analysis are inadequate. In such a context, the career of Saladin is perhaps unique because of the volume of contemporary evidence.

Here, the narratives are, in the main, well-known.[1] Of Saladin's contemporary biographers, Ibn Shaddād's work has survived intact. Most of 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī's huge *Kitāb al-Barq al-Shāmī* has been lost, but its abridgement by al-Bundārī has recently been edited in part.[2] The manuscript on which this edition is based ends with the close of the year 583 A.H., where it overlaps with the start of the *Kitāb al-Faiḥ al-Quṣṣī fī l-Fatḥ al-Qudsī* and so provides a complete cover by 'Imād al-Dīn of Saladin's career. A less partisan view is given by another contemporary, Ibn al-Athīr,[3] and facts and attitudes can be checked by reference to William of Tyre and other western writers. The *Kitāb al-Rauḍatain*, with its quotations from the lost work of Ibn Abī Ṭayy, is of particular value and local histories, such as the *Zubdat al-ḥalab min tārīkh Ḥalab* by Ibn al-'Adīm, also have their points of interest.

With the principal exception of al-Bundārī's abridgement, these sources have been covered by recent writers, whereas a valuable collection of contemporary letters has not yet received its proper share of attention. In the main, these are attributed to Saladin's administrator, the Qāḍī al-Fāḍil,[4] and they comprise both personal letters sent by al-Fāḍil himself and others drafted for Saladin. Some are quoted by the narrative historians or are found in other works; twenty-six are included, complete or in part, in a Cairo edition,[5] but a large number are still unedited. This collection is supplemented by a manuscript of letters wrongly attributed to 'Imād al-Dīn[6] and by the

writings of another of Saladin's contemporaries, the North African al-Wahrānī.[7] The scope of their material is, of course, limited and they cannot compensate entirely for the dearth of official documents, but in addition to the details that they provide, many show the construction that Saladin himself wished to have placed on his actions, while others supply this with an unofficial commentary.

Gombrich, referring to "the old-fashioned biography of the 'Life and Letters' type", has pointed out in his *In Search of Cultural History*: "we know how little we know about human beings and how little of the evidence we have would satisfy a pyschologist interested in the man's character and motives".[8] It is certainly true that, in spite of the letters, Saladin's own personality can, at best, be seen in glimpses. The purpose of any new study must be to provide evidence for an analysis of his role in the context of his background. He can be seen as a hero of Islam, a dynastically-minded politician, a war-band leader or as a pawn manipulated by external forces, and it is for the insight that they give into these questions and, by extension, into the structure of mediaeval Islamic society, that the sources must be appraised.

Not surprisingly, there are no references to Saladin's birth and early boyhood in the letters and no evidence can be added to the well-known account.[9] According to this, two Kurdish brothers from Dvin near Tiflis, Ayyūb and Shīrkūh, moved to Iraq, where Ayyūb was appointed castellan of Takrīt. A report quoted by Abū Shāma says that he owed this position to the Seljuq Sultan Muḥammad ibn Malik-Shāh and that he was later confirmed in it by the powerful administrator, Bihrūz.[10] By this time, as Seljuq power weakened, the Crusaders' great opponent, Zangī, was establishing himself in virtual independence in Mosul and its adjoining territories. Ayyūb used his position at Takrīt, roughly halfway between Mosul and Baghdad (map 4), to help Zangī after his abortive expedition against Baghdad in 1132. This show of independence seems to have gone unchallenged at the time, but six years later, in 1138, Shīrkūh got his brother expelled from his post by killing a man in a private quarrel. The dead man was said to have been a Christian, which may have angered Bihrūz, "the Christians' friend".[11] At all events, Ayyūb and Shīrkūh were ordered to leave and Abū Shāma quotes the story that this coincided with the birth of Ayyūb's son Yūsuf,[12] whose title, Ṣalaḥ al-Dīn, was corrupted by western writers to Saladin.

The brothers now joined the service of Zangī, who put Ayyūb in

charge of the citadel of Baalbek. On Zangī's death in 1146 Shīrkūh remained in the service of one of his sons, Nūr al-Dīn, who took over Aleppo, while another son, Saif al-Dīn, became ruler of Mosul. Meanwhile Ayyūb found himself besieged in Baalbek by troops from Damascus, then held by the Burid Mujīr al-Dīn Abaq. As no relief force came to his rescue, he surrendered the place on favourable terms and later went with his family to Damascus. When Nūr al-Dīn moved against the city in 1154, Ayyūb was chiefly responsible for arranging its surrender, after which he joined the victors.

There is nothing surprising in the geographical span of the brothers' careers or in their changes of employment. Mercenaries, scholars and pilgrims were constantly on the move in the mediaeval Islamic world, with the result that the nucleus of an administration, civil as well as military, could quickly form around an ambitious paymaster.

Saladin was reported to have had a particular fondness for Damascus,[13] as being the home of his boyhood, but his early days are, for the most part, a blank. Adolescence was a period which contemporary society tried to shorten as much as possible by emphasising the need for early maturity. For this reason al-Fāḍil told his son not to show childishness;[14] elsewhere he praised a boy for "resembling a grey-beard in his gravity",[15] and gravity is associated with youth in a eulogy of Saladin's own children.[16]

Of the process of education, Saladin wrote: "children are brought up in the way in which their elders were brought up",[17] and the influence on Islamic society of this traditional approach cannot be overemphasised. In spite of the fragmentation of its sects, Islam was a great assimilative force not least because the Quran was at the heart of its education. Admittedly, al-Wahrānī pictured the educated man as being able to answer questions on Euclid, the *Almagest*, arithmetic and law,[18] but this was an academic ideal and most obviously it was study of the Quran and "the sciences of religion" that linked the young Saladin to his contemporaries. In addition, they shared a common cultural heritage based on specifically Arab traditions. Saladin is said to have had a knowledge of the genealogies, biographies and histories of the Arabs, as well as of the blood lines of their horses.[19] More significantly, he is credited with having learnt by heart the *Ḥamāsa* of Abū Tammām.[20] This anthology offers a ready-made set of values and attitudes, emotional and at times self-contradictory, based in the main on the tribal society and Arabian background of its poets. These do not necessarily coincide with the

not the most powerful of Nūr al-Dīn's subjects[31] and although Saladin could hope for a career as a commander in the Frankish wars, reasonably enough his early ambitions, as quoted by 'Imād al-Dīn, were modest in the extreme.[32]

This was the situation when, in the summer of 1163, Shāwar, the deposed vizier of Egypt, arrived in Damascus. Egypt was in decline.[33] The foundation of Cairo in 969 had marked the start of a period of Pharaonic expansion under the Fatimids, who challenged Sunnī Islam, claiming descent from the Prophet's daughter, but by Nūr al-Dīn's time their dynasty had dwindled to the "scheming old women and conceited child" of al-Wahrānī's description.[34] With the capture of Ascalon by Baldwin III in 1153 they had lost their last foothold in the Levant and, in their isolation, they had no longer any necessary involvement in the power struggles of their neighbours. Egypt's wealth, however, and its growing reputation for weakness were dangerously enticing.[35] It was "the beautiful bride, led out by her attendants",[36] waiting for the first bold suitor.

The author of the Latin *Continuation* of William of Tyre noted that the Egyptians credited the Nile flood to the power of the Fatimid Caliph,[37] but he went on to say of al-'Āḍid, who had become Caliph in 1160 at the age of eleven, that he left all the affairs of the kingdom to his vizier – a reflection of the old Egyptian division between the divine Pharaoh and his chief servant. The vizier, however, was in an exposed position in that he could expect no help from his nominal master. William of Tyre wrote that the Caliph was unconcerned in cases of rivalry for the vizierate[38] and Ibn Shaddād added with some justification that, according to Egyptian custom, whoever could kill the vizier would be confirmed as his successor.[39] The dangers inherent in such a system finally destroyed it. Shāwar, a former governor of Qūṣ, had taken the vizierate from the powerful Banū Ruzzaik in January/February 1163. Within six months he had been driven out by Ḍirghām, a protégé of the Banū Ruzzaik, and it was at this stage that he came to ask help from Nūr al-Dīn to recover his position by force.

Not unreasonably, Nūr al-Dīn took time to reach a decision. Success in Egypt would strengthen his position against the Franks and Shāwar is said to have made him large promises of money and land.[40] On the other hand, the main road to Egypt, the Via Maris, skirting the Mediterranean, was controlled by the Franks and the land road by the Gulf of 'Aqaba across Sinai was threatened by Frankish garrisons at Kerak, Shaubak and Eilat (map 7). Too small a

force would be ineffective and the failure of a large expedition would damage Syria. Shāwar's supplanter, Ḍirghām, sent an envoy to Damascus to urge, presumably with inducements, that Shāwar should be abandoned and Nūr al-Dīn appeared to agree to the proposal, "although secretly he was with Shāwar".[41]

In the event, he must have decided that the advantages to be gained outweighed the dangers and by the spring of 1164 he had abandoned secrecy and decided on an expedition. Shāwar is said to have hoped for sole command, but Nūr al-Dīn entrusted his men to Shīrkūh, whom "he had never sent on a mission in which he had not succeeded"[42] and who "paid no heed to danger"[43]. While Nūr al-Dīn watched the Frankish frontier, Shīrkūh and Shāwar moved off on 15 April 1164 to follow the line of the Rift Valley to the head of the Gulf of 'Aqaba and with them, according to Ibn Shaddād, went Saladin, who was now twenty-six years old.

Surprisingly, Saladin makes no separate mention of this expedition in an account of his career that he later sent to Baghdad.[44] Ibn al-Athīr goes so far as to quote an anecdote which, if genuine, would prove that he stayed behind[45] and, while Ibn Abī Ṭayy gives him a small part to play in the later stages of the campaign,[46] Ibn al-Athīr transfers this to anonymous "lieutenants".[47] Admittedly, Ibn al-Athīr's anecdote has the hallmark of invention, but more significantly there is no reference to Saladin in the brief account given in Bundārī's version of the *Barq*. It can reasonably be suggested, however, that Ibn Shaddād, who can be shown to have checked on points of doubt, is the best authority in this context and certainly in Shīrkūh's next campaign Saladin was thought experienced enough to have earned independent command, but there is a genuine problem here to which no firm answer can be given in the present state of the evidence.

Whatever Saladin's role may have been, for the Syrians the campaign was not entirely satisfactory.[48] They defeated an advanced force under the command of Ḍirghām's brother Mulham at Tell Basṭa, 11 miles (18 km) from Bilbais, and from then on Shāwar appears to have taken the initiative while Shīrkūh stayed in reserve. There was some skirmishing at Arḍ al-Ṭabbāla immediately to the north of Cairo (see plan of Cairo). Shāwar was forced to draw off and after marching around Cairo he camped to the south-east of Fusṭāṭ at Birkat al-Ḥabash. From there he moved to the hill of al-Raṣad overlooking Fusṭāṭ and then, apparently without any serious opposition, he took Fusṭāṭ itself. His attacking force next took up its

position at al-Lūq, on the north-west corner of Cairo, and he seems to have made probing attacks on the west, south and east sides. The quarter of al-Yānisīya outside Bāb Zuwaila, the great south gate of Cairo, held firm but al-Hilālīya on the east side was evacuated and houses were burnt on the west side from Bāb al-Sa'āda to Bāb al-Qanṭara. Ḍirghām's troops were badly mauled; the Caliph refused to help him and on 24 May Ḍirghām and his brothers were killed while attempting to flee.

On 25 May Shāwar was reinstated as vizier by the Caliph. In his letter of appointment there is only a passing reference to Shīrkūh's force – "those whom you have brought with you, hoping for vengeance"[49] – but Shīrkūh himself was not to be dismissed lightly. He is now reported to have sent Shāwar a message saying that he and his men were tired of tent life and of heat and dust, clearly implying that he had not entered Fusṭāṭ.[50] At this, Shāwar sent him 30,000 dinars, but asked him to leave the country. Shīrkūh refused, saying that Nūr al-Dīn had ordered him to stay, as by the terms of their agreement Nūr al-Dīn had been promised one-third of the grain revenues of Egypt. Shāwar refused to hold to this and followed the precedent of his rival, Ḍirghām, in writing to Amalric, King of Jerusalem, to ask for help. He pointed to the dangers that would threaten the Franks were Shīrkūh to establish himself in the country and he promised them 1000 dinars for each stage of their march, together with an allowance of barley for their horses and a special grant for the Hospitallers. Amalric marched from Ascalon to Fāqūs, 26 miles (42 km) north-east of Bilbais on the Syrian caravan route. By this time Shīrkūh, having heard of his move, had retired from Cairo to Bilbais where, according to Ibn Abī Ṭayy, he had ordered Saladin to collect stores.[51]

The siege of Bilbais began in the third week of July 1164. Shāwar had now advanced from Cairo to join Amalric and according to Ibn al-Athīr Shīrkūh had only a low wall and no fosse to shelter him from their combined attack.[52] This attack, however, was not pressed. Shāwar must have been hoping to play off Franks against Syrians and he is said to have told Shīrkūh that he was deliberately holding the Franks back.[53] At the same time he made offers of land to Shīrkūh himself and to his followers in the hope of recruiting some of them into his service.[54] For his part, Amalric seems to have made no serious attempt to take the initiative and he may have been content to extort subsidies from Shāwar rather than risk his men. Meanwhile, Nūr al-Dīn took advantage of his absence to capture the castle of

Ḥārim, midway between Aleppo and Antioch (map 3), and on 10 August he crushed Bohemond of Antioch who had been reinforced by Raymond of Tripoli and by Thoros of Armenia, as well as by a Byzantine detachment sent by the Emperor Manuel. By October, after three months of stalemate, it must have been clear that none of the armies involved wanted to stay at Bilbais any longer.

Shīrkūh could not maintain himself indefinitely in the face of superior numbers. The Franks had their own weakened frontiers to guard and Shāwar must merely have hoped to rid himself of both his sometime allies. The emir Shams al-Khilāfa, whom Shīrkūh and Shāwar had captured at Tell Basṭa now acted as an intermediary between them and an agreement was reached by which Shīrkūh was to leave Egypt in return for another 30,000 dinars and a safe-conduct. The Franks made their own arrangement and the only obvious beneficiary of the campaign was Shāwar. Even he, however, had bought his return to power at the price of showing his weakness to both the Franks and the Syrians.

It is perhaps appropriate that Saladin's own part in this is obscure as it underlines the fact that for the first twenty-six years of his life we have had no picture of him at all. His uncle, small and violent, seen mace in hand watching his garrison leave Bilbais,[55] and his taciturn father, the only man allowed to remain seated in Nūr al-Dīn's presence,[56] have discernible characters, but Saladin at this stage is nothing but a name. An elder brother, Shāhanshāh, had been killed in a Frankish raid on Damascus;[57] a quotation, not necessarily authentic, notes that he was expected to rise to serve another elder brother, Tūrān-Shāh,[58] but nothing else shows him in the context of his family. There are no references to his mother, his younger brothers, al-'Ādil, Būrī and Ṭughtekīn, his sisters, or to his relations with his cousins.[59] He was brought up against a confused background of power politics, involving Seljuqs, Zangids, Fatimids and Franks, but the narratives add no fresh evidence of importance for its interpretation. It was his good fortune to coincide with a period in the decline of the Fatimid Caliphate when it could be decisively influenced by the actions of individuals, such as Shāwar and Shīrkūh, but details of their Egyptian expedition throw no clear light on the underlying causes of this process.

None of this is surprising as it merely reflects Saladin's dependence at the start of his career on what lay outside his own control. He could only prepare himself for what opportunities might arise, and it

must be noted that it was presumably because of his competence that Shīrkūh chose him as an *aide-de-camp* in place of his own sons, while in 1165 Nūr al-Dīn gave him more administrative experience by appointing him to the post of *shiḥna*[60] (defined by Ibn Jubair as "police chief"[61]) of Damascus. It is here, perhaps, that he comes more nearly into focus as an individual. The poet al-'Arqala played on the Quranic story of Potiphar's wife and wrote: "go softly, thieves of Syria – this is my advice to you... The hands of women were cut because of that Joseph, but this one cuts off the hands of men".[62] On the other hand, it was presumably his Muslim enemies who supplied the Franks with the basis for the account that: "Under Noradin, sultan of Damascus, as a first omen of his power [Saladin] began by raising an infamous tribute for himself out of the venal courtezans of that city, for he would not allow them to exercise their profession until they had first purchased of him a licence".[63] He also found himself at loggerheads with the learned but difficult Kamāl al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī, the Qāḍī of Damascus, of whom al-Wahrānī pictures overworked angels complaining to God on the Last Day that he wanted a Day of Judgement for himself alone.[64] Saladin had taken over some of his functions and 'Imād al-Dīn wrote that he used to "upset Saladin's purposes through decisions based on Islamic law".[65]

These details perhaps sketch an identifiable outline of an individual, young enough to be compared to the handsome Joseph of the Quran and to be thought an upstart by his elders, in a position to command attention, favourable and unfavourable, in his own right. The picture, however, is an isolated one and almost immediately Saladin is relegated to the background while it is Shīrkūh who continues to lay the foundations for his career.

Shīrkūh had no intention of leaving Egypt to Shāwar and made preparations on a considerable scale for two years. The Franks heard that he had collected "an infinite number"[66] of men from the east and the north and that he had written to the Abbasid Caliph of Baghdad, who had instructed "all the leaders of his false doctrine"[67] to send help. According to Ibn Shaddād, Shāwar heard of these preparations and decided to counter them by again inviting the Franks to Egypt.[68] William of Tyre, however, reported that "he was found to be supine in the matter and crassly ignorant",[69] and it was said that he got his first news of Shīrkūh's move in a letter from Amalric.[70] In fact, he had been having troubles of his own at home. Firstly, there were old scores to be settled with his enemies. Then another rival, Yaḥyā ibn al-Khayyāṭ, made an unsuccessful attempt on the vizierate and the

living there incognito. There may well be some romantic elaboration in this, but the Alexandrians, either in their support of Sunnī Islam or through hopes of material advantages, were now prepared to throw in their lot with the Syrians.

Another, but unsuccessful, attempt at diplomacy is reported to have been an approach to Shāwar himself. Shīrkūh is said to have sent an envoy to suggest a joint attack on the Franks, promising that he would then leave Egypt for ever and allow no one else to attack it.[84] Shāwar could have hoped for no happier solution to his problems, but even if the account is correct and the approach was made he might well have doubted its sincerity. Instead of agreeing, he is said to have killed the envoy and then told the Franks of his message.

While Shīrkūh was trying the effects of diplomacy, the allies were slowly trying to come to grips with him. On the day after the Caliph had ratified the agreement with the Franks, they began to build a bridge of boats across the Nile from the island of Rauḍa (see plan of Cairo) to Giza. This got as far as mid-stream but then, according to William of Tyre, "fear of the enemy" prevented it from being completed.[85] The apparent folly of starting an operation which could not be carried out in the face of the enemy conceals the fact that this half-completed bridge was a threat to Shīrkūh's freedom of manoeuvre. He either had to leave enough men to guard against its completion, or else, if he moved from Giza, the bridge, when finished, would deny him its use as a base.

Frankish reinforcements now arrived with Humphrey of Toron and Philip of Nablus, and eventually Hugh of Ibelin was left to guard the bridge while the main force moved north. According to William of Tyre,[86] Shīrkūh moved down-stream to face them, but even if this is true, he had still not abandoned his camp at Giza. An eye-witness, the Sharīf al-Idrīsī, who had been sent from Alexandria with a message from Ibn Maṣāl, told of how he had been at Giza for two days when a messenger arrived with a warning that the Franks were coming.[87] Tents, cooking-pots and heavy baggage were precipitately abandoned and the Syrians made off up-river.

Shāwar now wrote an optimistic letter, noting his own services to the House of God and the House of the Prophecy;[88] from far and near men had risen up to help the family of the Prophet, whose glorious banners had been aided even by the Cross; one of his enemies had been used to fight the other and one disease was checked by another. Shīrkūh, he added, had now been driven off towards upper Egypt.

At this point the allies decided to split their forces. Hugh of Ibelin and Shāwar's son al-Kāmil were left to guard Cairo and the bridge. Another joint Egyptian–Frankish force was sent up the east bank of the Nile, while Amalric and Shāwar pursued Shīrkūh on the west bank. For the sake of speed, Amalric left his infantry behind. The pursuit continued for more than 185 miles (298 km) up the Nile until Shīrkūh reached Dilga on the west side of the Baḥr Yūsuf canal, and the allies camped some 12 miles (19 km) off to the east of it at Ashmūnain (map 6). Al-Idrīsī was still with Shīrkūh and he tells of how the Syrians had sacked Dilga and were feeding their horses in the evening when Shīrkūh ordered lamps to be lit and the march to continue. Then suddenly the order was countermanded; the men were called back and Shīrkūh camped.[89] This may reflect no more than the general confusion of a series of forced marches, a genuine change of plan on the part of the commander or even, perhaps, an attempt to mislead enemy scouts. What is clear is that, whatever the circumstances that led to the decision, Shīrkūh was now prepared to stand and fight.

The battle took place on 19 March. The ground that Shīrkūh had chosen is best described by William of Tyre, who got his information from a number of eye-witnesses.[90] It was on the border of the desert in broken country crossed by small valleys, getting its name, Bābain ("which is to be interpreted 'Gate' "), from the fact that the approach to it lay between two hills. Shīrkūh occupied the hills and William of Tyre notes that he stationed himself between them. This agrees with the account given by Sibṭ ibn al-Jauzī, which sets Saladin on the right wing, a force of Kurds on the left and Shīrkūh in the centre.[91] Ibn al-Athīr places Shīrkūh on the right wing with a picked force and he reports that Saladin was stationed by the baggage in the centre with orders to lure the Franks into a trap by a feigned retreat.[92] 'Imād al-Dīn agrees that the baggage was in the centre but does not make it clear whether the Muslims were in two divisions or three or where Saladin was posted.[93] Al-Idrīsī, although he joins Ibn al-Athīr in placing Shīrkūh on the flank, gives the Syrians two divisions, of which one, commanded by Saladin, was to attack the Franks from the rear, and he adds that "weakness entered through this".[94] According to a letter, written some years later: "Asad al-Dīn [Shīrkūh] drew up his own troops, the Ghuzz, by themselves and the Bedouin and those who were with him by themselves. He was facing the Egyptians while his Bedouin faced the Franks.".[95] This supports al-Idrīsī's battle-line, but it does not make clear to what extent, if at

all, the two divisions were subdivided and what ground they held. It can reasonably be assumed, however, that Shīrkūh's plan was to persuade the allies to charge at the gap between the hills.

When the battle was joined, the Franks duly attacked Shīrkūh's centre and according to al-Idrīsī many of his men were killed or routed.[96] The evidence of the letter suggests that this must refer to Bedouin, but Shīrkūh's own position is then not clear and pride may have prompted some alterations of fact. The Franks certainly had an initial success, but the flanking hills were too steep and sandy for their horses and Hugh of Caesarea, who was attacking what William of Tyre takes as Saladin's force there, was captured. There was scattered fighting in the little valleys to the south of the main position and the Muslim centre returned to the attack. Saladin joined in from the rear and there were enough men stationed on the hills to capture the Frankish baggage train, which must have been left to the north of them. According to 'Imād al-Dīn, Shāwar himself was with Amalric[97] but there are no detailed references to the performance of his men, except for a note that the Qāḍī al-Fāḍil hurt his back by falling off his horse.[98] It was left to Amalric to extricate the attacking force. He himself had moved to the south of the hills but had apparently not taken part in the pursuit of Shīrkūh's centre. When the confused fighting had made it clear that no victory was possible, he raised his standard on a crest to serve as a rallying point for his men. He had then to retire between the enemy-held hills and, according to 'Imād al-Dīn, he could have been captured had not the Syrians seen another group of Franks retreating and broken off to engage them. This allowed Amalric's force to reach the ford of the Baḥr Yūsuf canal and from there he drew off to Minyat Ibn al-Khaṣīb, 21 miles (34 km) north of the base at Ashmūnain from where he had advanced against Dilga.

To Ibn al-Athīr, this first major field action in which Saladin is known to have taken part gave Shīrkūh one of the most remarkable victories in recorded history – "that 2000 riders should have defeated the armies of Egypt and the Franks of the Coast".[99] William of Tyre, on the other hand, puts the Frankish losses at 100 and those of Shīrkūh at 1500.[100] He then pictures Shīrkūh as gathering together his survivors and making off across the desert to Alexandria before the Franks learnt what he was doing. There is some justification for both points of view. Shīrkūh had come to Egypt with an inferior force and had then out-manoeuvred Amalric and Shāwar and induced them to attack him in circumstances in which they were

lucky to escape destruction. In view of the odds against him at the start of the campaign this was a remarkable achievement, but it fell far short of total victory. In spite of their losses, Amalric and Shāwar were still in the field and they were joined by the east-bank force under al-Kāmil and Gerard de Pugi and by the Frankish infantry under Joscelin of Samosata. Shīrkūh had won himself time and prestige, but the neutral reporting of Sawīrus ibn al-Muqaffa' is perhaps the fairest comment on the battle itself: "many people of his [Shīrkūh's] army were slain and a great multitude of the Franks and the Muslims [i.e. the Egyptians] also were slain and each of them captured from the other prisoners".[101]

Shīrkūh now marched north. He made no demonstration against Cairo, where the Giza bridge was still guarded, but moved on to Alexandria. Here his earlier diplomacy proved its worth. Had Alexandria been held against him he could not have hoped to take it by storm and, with a superior force again gathering in his rear, he would have been left either to resume marching and counter-marching along the Nile or to go home. As it was, he was welcomed into the city, given money and arms and provided with a base which, if it could be held, would dramatically weaken Shāwar's position.

On hearing this news the Franks and Egyptians, who were re-grouping at Cairo, held a war council at which it was pointed out that Alexandria was dependent on river-borne supplies and could be starved out.[102] Amalric and Shāwar moved to Damanhūr, some 30 miles (48 km) south of Alexandria; patrols were sent out to enforce a land blockade and all traffic on the Nile was halted and the ships searched. It would take time before this process could be effective, but equally, if Shīrkūh did nothing to break the blockade, it would defeat him in the end. If he stayed to face a siege, he could not expect the Alexandrians to starve themselves indefinitely for his sake. He could come out to fight but this time the initiative would be with the allies and they could be expected to choose their own ground. On the other hand, if he abandoned Alexandria, his only tangible gain in Egypt, he could expect little further support. In the event, he took the bold decision to split his forces in the face of superior numbers. He himself moved out of Alexandria with the bulk of his force and marched south by a desert route to avoid the allied concentration. Such a move, in itself, would be of no more than nuisance value unless the city could be held, and this difficult and dangerous task was left to Saladin.

Amalric's first reaction was to return to Cairo, but when it

appeared that the city was not threatened, he left Shīrkūh to his own devices and turned back northwards. According to William of Tyre, he was now persuaded to convert his blockade into a siege by an Egyptian who claimed to be able to arrange for Alexandria's surrender,[103] but even without this, Shīrkūh's withdrawal was a clear invitation to an assault. At this point, the Franks no longer had any cause to complain of Shāwar's laxness. When it had been a question of using one enemy to fight another, he may have been prepared to keep in the background, but now that the recovery of one of his own cities was at stake, he shouldered the burdens of war, arranged and paid for the construction of siege engines and "applied himself to all matters".[104]

This determination presented Saladin with a formidable test. He had only a small Syrian garrison. His communications with Shīrkūh were cut and his supplies blocked. The townspeople had little to gain and very much to lose by supporting him, but his only hope lay in their co-operation. William of Tyre gives no figure for Shāwar's Egyptians but he puts the Frankish numbers at about 500 horse and 4000 to 5000 foot.[105] To set against this he estimates that more than 50,000 of the besieged could bear arms and he comments on the wonder felt that so small a force could hold such numbers in check behind their walls. In fact, how many Alexandrians could or would fight for Saladin is doubtful. According to Maqrīzī, they provided him with 20,000 horse,[106] but this is not confirmed by contemporary writers. It is clear that Saladin had to husband his resources. William of Tyre reports that the Syrians rarely went into action because of their lack of numbers and the fact that they had no great faith in their Alexandrian allies. When they did fight, "they showed no great spirit and did little to hearten the others".[107]

The besiegers cut down orchards to get wood for machines and built a tower "of remarkable height",[108] from which they could look down over the whole city, but their most effective weapons were hunger and subversion. Shāwar sent messages to the citizens offering them substantial remissions of taxes and by July, three months after the blockade had started, the city was short of food. According to Abū Shāma many Alexandrians had been killed[109] and William of Tyre notes a flow of refugees.[110] It had been a remarkable achievement, diplomatic as well as military, for Saladin to have maintained his position, but clearly he could not hold out indefinitely. It was the responsibility of Shīrkūh, as commander of the expedition, to rescue him.

his family. If Shīrkūh took Egypt, he would have a power base to rival that of the Zangids themselves and, although short-term gains could be expected, Nūr al-Dīn must certainly have been able to see possible dangers.

According to 'Imād al-Dīn, Nūr al-Dīn did not use his authority to give orders to Shīrkūh but tried to divert his attention by pointing out the difficulties – "you have exerted yourself twice but have not achieved what you sought" – and by putting him in charge of the frontier town of Homs.[124] There was obviously scope for mixed feelings. 'Imād al-Dīn had introduced himself to Saladin by writing a poem urging him to return victoriously to Egypt and to remove the Imamate from those who held it "by treachery".[125] Shīrkūh's views are not recorded but Saladin is quoted as saying: "I suffered such hardships at Alexandria as I shall never forget",[126] and he told Ibn Shaddād that he had had no wish to go back to Egypt.[127] In the winter of 1167/8 Nūr al-Dīn granted him two estates as *iqṭā's* (fiefs), one in the lands of Kafr Ṭāb, west of Aleppo, and one in the lands of Aleppo itself (map 3), and at this, according to 'Imād al-Dīn, "he thought that he had everything for which he could wish".[128]

In the event, it was neither Shīrkūh nor Nūr al-Dīn who opened the way for him. In the summer of 1168 an embassy came to Amalric from the Byzantine Emperor Manuel. According to William of Tyre, the envoys reported that it had come to the Emperor's notice that Egypt, up till then a country of moderate strength and great wealth, was now known to be ruled by weaklings.[129] It did not seem to him that this state of affairs could continue and, to prevent the country from falling into other hands, he suggested a joint attack which, he considered, would meet with an easy success. William of Tyre himself was sent to Constantinople to discuss this suggestion, but Manuel was detained by another campaign. When William returned to Palestine, he found that a decision had already been taken and that Amalric had left for Egypt.

No contemporary historian was certain of the immediate causes of this move. William of Tyre, who was in the best position to know, suggests that Amalric may have been alarmed by reports that Shāwar was in touch with Nūr al-Dīn[130] and later it appears that the Franks had heard a rumour that Saladin and Shāwar's son, al-Kāmil, were planning to marry each other's sisters in order, it was thought, to cement an anti-Frankish alliance.[131] William also suggests that Amalric may have been persuaded by the "magnanimous but unstable" Master of the Hospital, who had squandered the resources

of his Order and wanted to recoup his losses by taking Bilbais and its lands, which Amalric had promised him. Ibn al-Athīr claims that Amalric, "the most courageous and wily of their kings since they first came to the Coast",[132] had been urged to attack by Franks who had been left behind in Cairo after the second expedition. In his writings Ibn al-Athīr shows a fondness for Thucydidaean speeches used not for historical accuracy but to convey arguments which he thinks appropriate and he pictures Amalric as speaking against the plan on the grounds that Shāwar was already sending them substantial sums of money, whereas, if they attacked, the whole country would oppose them; the Egyptians would then call in Nūr al-Dīn, and if Egypt was put in the charge of a man like Shīrkūh, this would prove fatal. The counter-argument was that Eygpt would have fallen before Nūr al-Dīn could muster his men and he would then be glad to treat for peace.

As far as Syria was concerned, the moment for a Frankish attack on Egypt was well chosen. In the autumn of 1168 Nūr al-Dīn was looking eastwards. Bedouin had captured the Lord of Qal'at Ja'bar, a castle strategically placed by one of the northern Euphrates crossings (map 8). He had been brought to Nūr al-Dīn, who was then concerned to force the surrender of Qal'at Ja'bar itself. Also, the death had occurred of Zain al-Dīn 'Alī-Kuchuk ibn Bektekīn, who had acted as administrator for Nūr al-Dīn's brother, Quṭb al-Dīn of Mosul, and who had held a number of important towns and castles, including Irbil, Takrīt, Sinjār, Ḥarrān and the citadel of Mosul itself. Nūr al-Dīn is said by Ibn Shaddād to have been "moved to cupidity" by Zain al-Dīn's death[133] and according to Abū Shāma the Franks were well aware that he was pre-occupied in the north and that the remaining Syrian troops had scattered to garrison the frontier.[134]

According to 'Imād al-Dīn's dating, Amalric left Ascalon in the third week of October 1168 and on 4 November he attacked Bilbais.[135] His only real chance of success lay in speed in order to forestall reaction by Nūr al-Dīn, while Shāwar must have hoped to buy time by defending Bilbais, where the garrison was commanded by his own son, Ṭayy.[136] Ṭayy is said to have been confident enough to ask Amalric: "do you think that Bilbais is a piece of cheese for the eating?", to which Amalric replied: "yes, it is cheese and Cairo is butter".[137] For the moment, it was Amalric's confidence that was justified. The town that had held out for three months under Shīrkūh fell almost immediately to a Frankish attack. Most of its houses were burnt and the people killed or taken as slaves, to be replaced, the

Arab historians had heard, by "the common people from amongst the Franks of the Coast",[138] whom Amalric had invited to settle there. Abū Shāma reports that Amalric freed those of its inhabitants who fell to his lot as prisoners[139] but this is not confirmed by William of Tyre, and the harsh treatment of Bilbais is quoted by Ibn al-Athīr as the reason for the determination of the people of Cairo and Fusṭaṭ to resist.[140]

After a five-day wait at Bilbais, the Franks moved towards Cairo, where they camped on 13 November. William of Tyre criticises the slowness of the march and claims that they took ten days to cover what was scarcely a single day's journey.[141] This is exaggerated, as his ten days include the five days that Amalric took to regroup his army, but he may be right where he adds that "those who knew the secrets of this affair" explained the delay as being due to Shāwar's intrigues. Shāwar must certainly have done his best to slow the Frankish advance, but this was not his only move. During his own campaign against Ḍirghām, although his first attack on Cairo had been beaten off, he had been able to take Fusṭaṭ without resistance. If the Franks followed his example, the fall of Fusṭaṭ, with the supplies and shelter that it could provide, might again prove fatal to Cairo and on 12 November he took the desperate step of setting fire to it. It was reported that 20,000 phials of naphtha and 10,000 torches were used.[142] Men, women and children streamed out of the city, "as though leaving their graves for the Resurrection".[143] The hire of a donkey or a camel for the brief journey to Cairo was from 10 to 30 dinars, at a time when a monthly income of 20 dinars was reckoned as wealth.[144] Goods that had to be abandoned were looted by sailors from the Fatimid fleet, in whose ships the fire had started,[145] and by the Negroes who formed a large part of the Fatimid army.

For his part, Amalric skirted Cairo and camped by Birkat al-Ḥabash, where he was met by Shams al-Khilāfa, bringing terms for a settlement. When these were found to be unacceptable, he moved up to Bāb al-Barqīya on the east side of the city and, according to Maqrīzī, he attacked so fiercely that Cairo was almost taken by storm.[146] There is, however, little evidence for this attack and the shift of camp can best be seen as an attempt by Amalric to strengthen his hand in negotiations. Shams al-Khilāfa now came out again with an offer quoted variously at 400,000, 1,000,000 or 2,000,000 dinars.[147] Eastern and western sources agree that 100,000 dinars were paid over immediately and that Shāwar asked for time to allow him to collect the rest.[148] At this, Amalric released his son Ṭayy, who had

been captured at Bilbais, and drew off some 7 miles (11 km) north of Cairo to al-Maṭarīya. After eight days, during which there were "frequent but unprofitable embassies" from Shāwar,[149] he went even further north to Saryāqūs, some 20 miles (32 km) from Cairo on the road to Bilbais. His only military action was to send Humphrey of Toron to clear the Nile for the passage of a small fleet, estimated by Maqrīzī at twenty galleys,[150] which had been attacking Tanis, Ashmūn and Minyat 'Amr.

Shams al-Khilafa's son, Musā, told Ibn Abī Ṭayy that Shāwar refused to ask for help from Nūr al-Dīn[151] and that it was the Caliph al-'Āḍid who wrote, according to another account on two occasions, once after the burning of Fusṭaṭ and again after Shāwar's attempt to buy off Amalric.[152] This is almost certainly wrong, as 'Imād al-Dīn, who was employed in Nūr al-Dīn's chancellery at the time, reports the arrival of a stream of letters from Shāwar.[153] It is, of course, possible that Amalric, perhaps at Shams al-Khilāfa's prompting, discounted danger from Syria because he believed that Shāwar would not invite Shīrkūh back to Egypt. William of Tyre suggests that he was badly advised by Miles de Plancy, who told him to be content with a ransom that he could keep for himself rather than to press for the capture of Cairo, whose spoils would have to be shared with his army.[154] His retreat from Cairo can certainly be explained as part of a bargain by whose terms he was to wait for money to be collected by the Egyptians, but in itself this does not account for his reluctance to strengthen his position. There is no final solution to the problem and all that can fairly be said is that his dilatoriness was matched by speed on the part of Nūr al-Dīn.

Within a month of Amalric's attack on Bilbais, Nūr al-Dīn's army was in camp south of Damascus, ready to march. He himself had been in Aleppo when Shīrkūh, hearing of the Frankish move, had ridden from Homs to meet him. Ibn al-Athīr elaborates the story by making Nūr al-Dīn send Saladin to fetch Shīrkūh from Homs and having uncle and nephew meet 1 mile from Aleppo.[155] Nūr al-Dīn then gave Shīrkūh 200,000 dinars and ordered his treasurer to supply whatever else was needed. Saladin was reluctant to return to Egypt, but at Shīrkūh's prompting Nūr al-Dīn ordered him to join the expedition. 'Imād al-Dīn reports that at this point Nūr al-Dīn went to take over Qal'at Ja'bar, while Shīrkūh was left to collect a force of Turkmans.[156] Nūr al-Dīn reached Qal'at Ja'bar on 24 October and as Amalric's march from Ascalon can be dated to the third week of October, this shows that the Syrians made their

preparations on hearing of the Frankish muster without waiting for any appeal for help.

When Nūr al-Dīn returned to Damascus at the start of December, Shīrkūh was in camp to the south of it at Ra's al-Mā'. He had collected a force of over 5000 horse, to whom Nūr al-Dīn added another 2000, together with some emirs, "to share the cares with him", as William of Tyre put it.[157] Such numbers are not intended to represent the total size of the force, as they leave out of account servants and camp followers, and, in this case, Ibn al-Furāt, who only exaggerates Shīrkūh's cavalry by giving him 7000 men, not counting Nūr al-Dīn's contingent, makes the full expedition number 70,000 horse and foot.[158] This is certainly too large a figure, but the force was obviously a strong one. As a final act of generosity, Nūr al-Dīn gave each rider a bonus payment of 20 dinars and according to William of Tyre he also provided them with enough camels to carry their baggage to Egypt.

Amalric was still at Saryāqūs when word came that Shīrkūh was on the move "with an innumerable horde of Turks".[159] At this, he drew back to Bilbais, which he garrisoned to act as a base, and then in the fourth week of December, some forty days after he had first reached Cairo, he marched out to intercept the Syrians in the desert. The attempt failed and he was told by his scouts that Shīrkūh had reached the Nile. Shāwar is now said to have invited Shīrkūh to join him in an attack on the Franks, to which Shīrkūh replied that this had been his own plan on the second expedition, when the Frankish army could have been cut off west of the Nile.[160] As it was, Amalric was left with an open line of retreat and no further prospects of success. He collected his forces at Bilbais, then moved off to Fāqūs and finally left Egypt at the start of January 1169.

William of Tyre dates Amalric's retreat from Bilbais to 2 January 1169,[161] and Shīrkūh seems not to have entered Cairo until 8 January.[162] Shīrkūh may well have been reluctant to go too near Shāwar while there was still a chance that the Franks might be called back as allies and, although the picture is complicated in the Arabic sources by tales of intrigue and counter-intrigue, the logic of the position is clear. Shāwar wanted neither the Syrians nor the Franks in Egypt and he would ally himself with whichever side was less dangerous to him at any given moment. For his part, the Caliph al-'Āḍid was not concerned with changes in the vizierate and if Shīrkūh was willing to serve him, he was unlikely to object. Sunnīs had entered Fatimid service before, and they were certainly less

anxious to clear Cairo of the refugees from Fusṭāṭ, whom he ordered to return home. They asked, pertinently, what they were supposed to use for shelter, at which Shīrkūh "made them fair promises"[177] and gradually they were removed from Cairo. When Ibn Jubair visited Fusṭāṭ in April 1183 traces of the fire were still visible, but he wrote that "most of the city is newly constructed and the buildings there are continuous".[178]

When Nūr al-Dīn heard of "the conquest of Egypt",[179] he ordered the news to be proclaimed and all his towns to be decorated. There was a strong rumour, however, that he was not pleased to learn that Shīrkūh had accepted office as Fatimid vizier. The rumour was attributed to Shams al-Dīn 'Alī, whose brother, Majd al-Dīn, was Nūr al-Dīn's foster brother and, according to Shams al-Dīn, far from being glad, Nūr al-Dīn would have preferred Egypt not to have been taken; he schemed to destroy the power of Shīrkūh and of Saladin, but was unable to do so; "one often finds in his letters to al-'Āḍid hints that Shīrkūh should be sent away and had he been able to say this openly he would have done so". By way of confirmation a sentence is quoted in which Nūr al-Dīn wrote of the need that his army felt for Shīrkūh in Syria.[180] Rumours of this kind intensified towards the end of Nūr al-Dīn's life, when there was greater justification for them. At this early period, however, he could scarcely have expected Shīrkūh to challenge the power of the Caliph. He might have preferred Shāwar to have been left as a figure-head, but he could certainly not have wanted his men to return and leave Egypt to the Franks.

Even had Shīrkūh himself thought of unseating the Caliph, he was to have little opportunity, as he died in his third month of office, on 23 March, suddenly enough to allow reports to spread that he had been poisoned.[181] There were other, simpler, explanations. He had a fondness for what Ibn Shaddād called "coarse meats"[182] and Abū Shāma records that he had a gluttonous appetite and "liked eating meat, going on doing so day and night".[183] This led to a series of illnesses and finally he succumbed to Juvenal's recipe for sudden death, a hot bath after a meal. He left behind 500 of his own *mamlūks,* the Asadīya, together with a large quantity of money, horses and baggage animals, and he also bequeathed to whoever followed him in office an opportunity to change the pattern of power in Egypt.

Saladin, in a letter of condolence sent to Shīrkūh's surviving son, Nāṣir al-Dīn, told him that Amalric, on hearing the news, had

dismounted to give thanks to God and had said: "today I shall set out for Egypt".[184] In fact, the Franks were not ready to move again, but both they and the Egyptians must have been anxious to see how the Syrians would react to the death of their leader. The Syrian force was neither homogeneous nor rigidly organised with a single chain of command. The main racial groupings were those of Turks and Kurds. Of the soldiers some had been recruited by Shīrkūh, and had now lost their pay-master. Shīrkūh's own *mamlūks* were, in theory, part of his estate, but although the *mamlūk* system implied servitude it did not entail servility and they can be reckoned as watching over their own interests. In addition, there were the emirs provided by Nūr al-Dīn. They had been sent out under Shīrkūh's command, but there were no fixed rules of precedence to dictate what should happen on his death. At first sight, such a situation seems potentially disastrous, but its divisive factors were balanced by collective self-interest. The Syrians were on the brink of fortune and the profits were too large and too obvious to allow for the luxury of prolonged rivalry.

In theory, although Nūr al-Dīn's emirs might appoint an army commander of their own to replace Shīrkūh, the vizierate was a matter for the Caliph. In practice, no clear distinction was made by contemporary historians between the two positions.[185] The fall of Shāwar had made it clear that, for the moment, the Syrians were the dominant military force in Egypt and it was reasonable to assume that Shīrkūh's successor would fill both his roles, although there may have been grounds for dispute as to how and by whom he should be appointed. Ibn al-Athīr, again recording the arguments that he thought appropriate, reports that the Caliph himself picked Saladin, having been told by his advisers: "there is no one weaker or younger than Yūsuf".[186] He continues: "not one of the emirs who sought the position for themselves obeyed him or served him", but, according to this version, after some bargaining he was eventually accepted by the majority. Such an explanation might be credible if the premise is accepted that Saladin, in spite of Bābain and Alexandria, could reasonably be considered the weakest of the Syrian emirs. Not surprisingly, this is not put forward by his eulogists. Al-Wahrānī wrote: "after Shīrkūh's death the people agreed that the vizierate should be kept in his family because of the qualities of leadership and sound governance that they were known to possess and because of what had been experienced of their generosity and their military prowess".[187] 'Imād al-Dīn is less fulsome and more detailed. He wrote that after the three-day period of official mourning, during

which "opinions differed", the Syrian emirs decided on Saladin and "made the Lord of the Palace invest him as vizier".[188] There had been a number of other candidates for the post, led by Saladin's maternal uncle, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ḥārimī and the Turkish emir, 'Ain al-Daula al-Yārūqī, who was the senior with the largest train of followers. Saif al-Dīn al-Mashṭūb and Quṭb al-Dīn Khusrau, the two remaining candidates, were Kurds and according to Ibn al-Athīr, who agrees with 'Imād al-Dīn on the lists of names, the role of mediator was played by another Kurd, Ḍiyā' al-Dīn 'Īsā.

It is, of course, possible that al-'Āḍid's advisers may have pre-selected Saladin, in the hope of splitting the Syrian ranks. The evidence, however, can be no better than gossip and the identification of tenable arguments. It has to be accepted that, although the position was complicated by individual rivalries, the bulk of the Syrians must have wanted a competent leader who would further their cause. Here Saladin was an obvious compromise candidate. Thanks to his record in the second Egyptian expedition his military qualifications were impeccable. Shihāb al-Dīn and 'Ain al-Daula could be played off against one another. The Kurds, al-Mashṭūb and Khusrau, were junior to them and could be persuaded to support their fellow Kurd, Saladin, rather than 'Ain al-Daula, while Shihāb al-Dīn would naturally back his nephew if he could not have the post himself. As a result, whatever the Fatimid position, 'Imād al-Dīn cannot be far from the truth in suggesting that after the negotiations there was almost unanimous support for Saladin amongst the Syrians. The most prominent exception was 'Ain al-Daula, who left for Syria saying: "I shall never serve Yūsuf."[189]

2

VIZIER OF EGYPT

Saladin's appointment as vizier to a Fatimid Caliph in a country with which he had no connections by birth or upbringing sets off not inappropriately the combination of good fortune, intrigue and ability in his early career, to which it supplied the climax. Ayyūb and Nūr al-Dīn had been relegated to the background: Shīrkūh and Shāwar, as supporting actors, had played their introductory roles and left. This was Saladin's cue, but to the observer he is still little more than a silhouette. His qualities of leadership, his concern for his sick and for his allies, his professed reluctance to return to Egypt and the ruthlessness of his seizure of Shāwar can be juxtaposed but not composed into an integrated picture. There is no portrait of him as clear as that given by Hugh of Caesarea of the tall and swarthy al-'Āḍid, with his pleasant face and the first down of manhood on his cheeks,[1] and there is no picture at all of the men who surrounded him. To the Franks, the Egyptian emirs were "worthless and effeminate"[2] while the Syrians were mainly remembered for their violence. Even 'Imād al-Dīn later wrote of Saladin's "rough companions";[3] the Christian author, Sawīrus ibn al-Muqaffa' noted their depredations during Shīrkūh's first expedition,[4] and although they can be seen as realists, who accepted *force majeure* as a working principle and did not rebel against successful rulers, at this stage in his career Saladin must be seen as holding a wolf by the ear.

Whatever obscurities there were in the background, the immediate situation was clear enough. The complexity of the forces that affected Egypt in its position as an Islamic state, a Mediterranean power, a centre of population and a source of wealth, all operated on a level which Saladin had not yet reached. He had more power and apparent independence than ever before in his career, but his horizon was necessarily limited by his own problems. He was in the service

both of the Sunnī Nūr al-Dīn and of the Shī'ite al-'Āḍid, but, immediately, he was the protagonist of the Syrians. His own quoted remark – "while Shāwar holds power, we have no authority"[5] – may not be genuine but it underlines the fact that the Syrians were observably seeking a controlling position in Egypt. At its simplest this would merely involve the substitution of one set of emirs and *iqṭā'* -holders for another. It did not even necessarily require the destruction of the Fatimid caliphate, but with religious antagonism to focus hostility, it did require urgent action.

Saladin was invested as vizier on 26 March. According to the Arabic sources he now repented of "wine-drinking and turned from frivolity"[6] to "assume the dress of religion".[7] To western audiences the point was put more disparagingly: "that patron of prostitutes whose power was among stews, his campaigns in a tavern, his studies among dice and garlic, is suddenly lifted up; he sits among princes and is even greater than princes".[8] The document of his appointment was read out to the Egyptian and Syrian emirs when he took his seat in the vizier's palace. In an obvious attempt to reconcile these rivals a reference to the Egyptians had been added which ran: "these are the Caliph's helpers in the west as your troops are in the east and both form a single band in his service against those who resist them".[9] This can have deceived no one and it is no wonder that letters to Syria expressed homesickness. 'Imād al-Dīn wrote: "our companions have conquered... but they have come amongst a people whom they do not know.... and they see faces that frown at them".[10]

Saladin later gave a rhetorical account of his difficulties and his methods in a letter to Baghdad. The Egyptian people, he said, were well disposed to him because of his championship of true religion and of the fact that he had saved them from slavery, but the land contained numerous wealthy and united armies that were more dangerous to Muslims than to unbelievers; religious law had been distorted by "interpretation" and unbelief camouflaged under another name; there was a powerful force of Christian Armenians and more than one hundred thousand Negroes who recognised no God but the (Fatimid) Caliph; secrecy and cunning were better weapons against them than open resolution and they had to be dealt with gradually, as a sword blade is worn down by a file.[11]

Saladin was concerned here to paint his difficulties in the gloomiest colours but there is no doubt that he felt the need to act carefully and as a result the first few months of his vizierate held little drama. He tried to fix his favour with the Egyptian people, spending

eunuch Mu'tamin al-Khilāfa, one of the powerful civilian controllers of the Palace.[21] They are said to have been feeling the effect of Saladin's measures to transfer land to the Syrians, as a result of which they decided to call back the Franks. Saladin would have to march from Cairo to face an invading force and the conspirators could then destroy his garrison and take him in the rear. They wrote a letter to the Franks, but by Bilbais a vigilant Turkman, "one of Saladin's companions", noticed a man dressed in ragged clothes carrying a new pair of sandals. The man was arrested and the letter was found concealed in the sandals. Its handwriting led the investigators to a Jewish scribe, who then conveniently apostatised, embraced Islam and revealed the plot. Saladin concealed his knowledge in order to lull al-Mu'tamin's suspicions. For some time al-Mu'tamin kept to the shelter of the Palace, but he then lowered his guard, went to visit an estate that he owned some 10 miles (16 km) north of Cairo and was killed there by Saladin's men on 20 August.

There must be doubts as to the truth of this story. Now that Saladin had been reinforced by Tūrān-Shāh, he may have thought the time ripe to clear Cairo of his enemies. The sandals and the apostatising Jew have a touch of Arabian Nights story-telling, and Saladin's own reference to the cunning with which he had to act suggests that he was not above manufacturing evidence. As he showed later, however, he himself believed the main point, that if he had to march out of Cairo to meet an attack, his enemies would rise behind him.

Amongst the most formidable of these were the Negro regiments of the Fatimids. 'Imād al-Dīn, who halved Saladin's estimate of their numbers, putting them at over 50,000 men, referred to their long and uneasy history of trouble-making in Cairo.[22] He wrote that "whenever they rose against a vizier they killed him", and added, "they thought that all white men were pieces of fat and that all black men were coals".[23] They had taken advantage of the confused situation to spread their own brand of anarchy and according to the Armenian Christian, Abū Ṣāliḥ, they had grown "insolent and violent"; "their hands were stretched out until they stopped the roads and seized the money of travellers, or shed their blood".[24]

On the day after al-Mu'tamin's death they took up position in the great square of Cairo between the West and East Palaces. There they were said to have been joined by more of Saladin's enemies, including Egyptian emirs and common people.[25] Saladin had concentrated his force in the vizier's palace, to the north-east of the East Palace. He

was now faced with the prospect of fighting on ground not of his own choosing, overlooked on the flanks by buildings held by the Palace troops who might at any moment join in against him. He had no safe line of retreat and he was faced by large numbers. On the other hand, as he had precipitated the rising by killing al-Mu'tamin, he can be assumed to have made his preparations and he afterwards proved to have enough men both to maintain frontal pressure and to encircle his enemies. Perhaps in order to carry out this manoeuvre, he deliberately kept himself in reserve.

According to a later report, Tūrān-Shāh came to tell him that the Negroes were about to attack and Saladin angered him by waiting to see what the Caliph would do.[26] It must certainly be true that Saladin was watching the Palace, but presumably tactical appreciation and not dilatoriness made him leave Tūrān-Shāh, or, according to other reports, Abū'l-Haijā' the Gross, in charge of the fighting that now broke out in the square.[27] It went on for two days and towards the end of this time a number of the Caliph's Armenian archers are said to have shot at the Syrians from a vantage point in the Palace.[28] This must have been the crisis of the battle, as enfilading fire from the Palace walls could endanger the Syrian position. An order was given, either by Tūrān-Shāh or by Saladin, to burn out the Armenians with naphtha and at this one of the Caliph's officers came out to give Tūrān-Shāh a message that the Caliph wanted him to drive the Negroes away. This took the Negroes aback, as they had thought, not unreasonably, that the Caliph would be on their side, and it also freed the Syrians from the danger of a flank attack.[29] The Negroes could not now maintain themselves in the open and they were driven down the main thoroughfare of Cairo, the Qaṣabat al-Qāhira, which ran from the square down to Bāb Zuwaila (see plan of Cairo). Saladin's reserves held the heads of the side streets against them, to prevent them from out-flanking the pursuit. They made a stand at the Market of the Sword Sellers, some 600 yards (550 metres) short of Bāb Zuwaila, but this refuge was burnt down and they were driven to Bāb Zuwaila itself, which was shut against them. At some time during this fighting Saladin sent men to burn down the Manṣūrīya quarter where they lived. This completed their demoralisation and they now asked for quarter. The Arab historians agree that this was granted and it is difficult to see how they could otherwise have got clear of Cairo, but either some link is missing from the story, or else the Syrians acted unscrupulously. For when the Negroes retired from Cairo to Giza, Tūrān-Shāh followed them across the Nile and

destroyed them with such thoroughness that few escaped. This act, whatever its justification, was so successful that Saladin never again had to face a military challenge in Cairo.

The Negro revolt ended on 23 August,[30] but almost immediately Saladin had another threat to meet. As has been noted, the Emperor Manuel, moved, according to Nicetas, by an untimely thirst for glory,[31] had already suggested a joint Frankish–Byzantine invasion of Egypt. According to John Cinnamus, he sent an embassy to Egypt to demand tribute, and threatened war when this was refused.[32] By the end of summer of 1169 his fleet was at sea under the command of Andronicus Contostephanus. Sixty galleys were sent to Palestine, with money for "the knights of Jerusalem".[33] Andronicus with the rest of the fleet sailed to Cyprus, off which he met a patrolling squadron of six Egyptian ships. Two of these were captured, but the others escaped to bring back their news to Egypt. Amalric had refused an invitation to come to Cyprus, and after some delay the whole Byzantine fleet re-formed, moving first to Tyre, which it reached at the end of September, and then to Acre. Nicetas put its numbers at over 200 ships,[34] while William of Tyre counted it at 150 galleys, 60 ships "with doors in their sterns" for loading horses,[35] and some 12 dromons loaded with supplies and siege engines. Saladin exaggerated the numbers and wrote that 1000 ships arrived off Egypt.[36]

Amalric had decided to take the land route. Troops were left to watch Nūr al-Dīn, who was peacefully restoring a mosque outside Damascus,[37] and the rest of the army mustered at Ascalon, while the Byzantines sailed on ahead. The time was now midway through October and it was conventionally reckoned that the Mediterranean sailing season ended in the first week of December.[38] The expedition's first goal was Damietta, chosen, Ibn Shaddād supposed, because it could be attacked by land and sea.[39] To Amalric, at least, this was only a beginning, as already in September he had been promising the Pisans concessions in Cairo and Fusṭāṭ.[40] He arrived at al-Faramā on 25 October and two days later he reached Damietta, camping to the north, between the city and the sea (map 7). The Byzantines had outstripped him and the sourness of the alliance is reflected in Cinnamus' suggestion that he delayed deliberately in order to ensure that they had to bear the brunt of the fighting.[41]

Saladin must have been expecting an attack, but he could not have been sure where it would come. William of Tyre reported that

William of Tyre reported that there were secret conditions attached to the armistice[56] and according to Nicetas the Muslims now sent a peace-making embassy with gifts to the Emperor Manuel.[57] But no crumbs of consolation could make up for the total failure of the expedition, which had presented Saladin with exactly the success that he needed to confirm his position. He later wrote that he had met two enemies, one hidden and one open, the hypocrites and the unbelievers; he had defeated 200,000 horse and foot and "dashed the hopes of the Egyptians, the Franks, the Byzantine Emperor, the Genoese and the races of the Rūm" – presumably the Pisans and Venetians.[58] The Egyptians were the hidden enemy, the hypocrites, and this reference bears out Maqrīzī's report that Saladin took advantage of the siege to execute a number of Egyptian leaders on suspicion of treachery.[59] He was further strengthened by the reinforcements sent by Nūr al-Dīn. Al-'Āḍid is said earlier to have asked Nūr al-Dīn to recall his men, leaving only Saladin and his personal followers. Nūr al-Dīn now replied: "the arrows of the Turks are the only answer to the lances of the Franks",[60] and the Syrians had again taken on the role of saviours of Egypt.

Some months after the ending of the siege of Damietta, Saladin's father, Ayyūb, came to Egypt. According to Ibn al-Athīr, Saladin himself had asked for him.[61] Ibn Abī Ṭayy, on the other hand, reported that the Abbasid Caliph al-Mustanjid had criticised Nūr al-Dīn for his delay in ordering the deposition of his Fatimid rival and Nūr al-Dīn had sent Ayyūb to press this on Saladin as a matter of urgency.[62] Both stories may be true, but 'Imād al-Dīn, the most reliable source in this context, merely notes that in the spring of 1170 Ayyūb asked for permission to leave Syria, which Nūr al-Dīn granted, and as a mark of friendship Nūr al-Dīn himself left Damascus to accompany him as far as Ra's al-Mā'.[63] Ibn al-Athīr suggests that Nūr al-Dīn then went on to attack Kerak, to distract the attention of the Franks,[64] but in fact Ayyūb arrived in Cairo on 16 April, while Nūr al-Dīn's attack did not take place until after April 20. Meanwhile, as a mark of unusual respect, Ayyūb had been met outside the north gate of Cairo, the Gate of Victories, by the Caliph himself and had been lodged in the Pearl Palace.[65] Saladin, by way of welcome, had offered to resign the vizierate in his favour, but the offer was refused.

Saladin's family was now strongly concentrated in Egypt. His uncle, Shihāb al-Dīn, his brother, Tūrān-Shāh, and his nephew, Taqī

al-Dīn, were already there. Another brother, Ṭughtekīn, is said to have arrived with Tūrān-Shāh[66] and a third brother, al-'Ādil, together with a second nephew, Farrukh-Shāh, are found in Egypt soon afterwards, though the dates for their arrival are doubtful.[67] His brother-in-law, Zain al-Dīn 'Umar, apparently came to join him later in the year,[68] and to add to the family numbers, his eldest son was born on 17 June.

The first storms of his vizierate had successfully been weathered, but the safer he became, the more likely he was to attract Nūr al-Dīn's attention. Self-interest, if nothing more, would prompt Nūr al-Dīn to support his own men in Egypt in times of danger, but this did not mean that he had to allow Saladin free rein. As an extreme measure, Saladin could be ordered home, but short of this, Nūr al-Dīn might insist on measures, such as the overthrow of the Fatimid Caliphate, that went against Saladin's judgement or his wishes. For Saladin was still inclined to feel his way carefully, and it was part of the sequence of his good fortune that Nūr al-Dīn's attention was now diverted.

After his withdrawal from Kerak, Nūr al-Dīn had camped by Tell 'Ashtarā, 20 miles (32 km) north of Deraa (map 8) on the Damascus road. 'Imād al-Dīn, who was with him at the time, has described how, when he was sitting in his tent on the morning of 29 June, he suddenly felt the earth heaving beneath him like the sea in a storm wind.[69] The epicentre of the earthquake seems to have been in northern Syria. Damascus was not badly affected, but the citadel of Baalbek was in danger of collapse; Homs and Hama were severely damaged and half of Aleppo was said to be in ruins. The Aleppans moved to tents outside their city and corpses were still being recovered from the rubble a year later. In this Michael the Syrian saw divine punishment for the sufferings inflicted on Christian prisoners, who were not allowed to enter the churches of Aleppo except on Sundays,[70] while 'Imād al-Dīn in a letter to Baghdad wrote that the only consolation was that the Christians had suffered the most, as they were in their churches at the time to celebrate a feast day.[71] It was, in fact, the feast of St Peter and St Paul and William of Tyre wrote that no man could remember so severe an earthquake. "The greatest cities of Syria and Phoenicia, famous throughout the centuries, were razed to the ground."[72] Both Franks and Muslims had suffered and, as William put it, while each feared the anger of the Judge, they were afraid to hurt others and a brief truce was observed.

Nūr al-Dīn marched north from 'Ashtarā on the day after the earthquake and for some time he was busy with reconstruction work.

Saladin in the meanwhile had been strengthening his hold on Egypt and widening the basis of support of his regime. He gave his father the *iqṭā's* of Alexandria and Damietta and, in upper Egypt, Tūrān-Shāh was put in charge of the Red Sea port of 'Aidhāb, as well as of Aswān and Qūṣ (map 6), where he appointed as his deputy the emir Shams al-Khilāfa, a surprising survivor of Shāwar's intrigues.[79] In Cairo Saladin ordered the demolition of a site on which to build a college for the Mālikites, the oldest of the orthodox denominations in Egypt, and at the same time a prison in Fusṭāṭ was converted for use by the Shāfi'ites, his own denomination. These foundations must have had the immediate aim of weakening the Fatimid position, but it was an act of general prudence for Muslim rulers to win the favour of *faqīhs* and scholars. The organised power of the Christian church was not duplicated in Islam but careers based on education in religion and religious law attracted able and ambitious men. Their main function was to serve as judges and administrators, but they could, less tangibly, provide a link between their military masters and the ideal Islamic state.

In theory, Islam was a theocracy guided by the Prophet's successor, the Caliph, God's representative on earth, in whom Muslim historians saw a parallel to the Pope, but who was originally more closely akin to a Caesaro-Papist Byzantine emperor. All Muslims formed a single religious community, the *umma*, in whom the power of Islam was vested and the consensus of whose opinion was an infallible guide to action. As a concept, as a general stimulus and on a personal level this notion maintained some validity, but in political terms the *umma* was either utopian or irrelevant. The Caesaro-Papist view of the Caliphate scarcely outlasted the earliest days of Islam and as the Caliphate declined in importance and was fragmented, the powers necessary to maintain social organisation had to be channelled through smaller and more practical administrative units. Characteristically, these were provided by family or clan dynasties, but there were obvious grounds for challenging the theoretical *raison d'être* of such intermediaries in a theocracy, in which any or all of them could be regarded as parasites. To counter this challenge rulers needed the help of scholarship and religious propaganda. If, for instance, the basis of their rule could be linked to one of the fundamentals of Islam, then their position within the Islamic framework would need no further justification. This is a lesson that Nūr al-Dīn taught by example in that his own rule was joined in practice and propaganda to the Islamic concept of the Holy War.

Saladin now showed that he had taken this lesson to heart. He gathered his troops outside Cairo in November 1170, collecting, as the Franks heard, forces "from all Egypt and from the regions of Damascus and swelling their ranks with a number of plebeians and men of the lower classes".[80] According to a letter written by al-Fāḍil the army moved from its camp by Birkat al-Jubb, some 11 miles (18 km) from Cairo, on 26 November and on Tuesday 8 December it was in southern Palestine.[81] On the next day it attacked Dārūm, 9 miles (14 km) south of Gaza. A small fortress had been built here by Amalric and a number of settlers had been attracted to it, according to William of Tyre, because it was easier for men of limited means to make a living there than in the cities.[82] Their settlement fell on the first day of the Muslim attack and the Muslims then brought up a mangonel against the fortress itself, as well as using Aleppan sappers to bring down one of its towers. The attack had started on Wednesday 9 December and on Friday 11 December news came that Amalric was marching south from Gaza.

Saladin now moved north with a force estimated by William of Tyre at 40,000 horse, drawn up in 42 "cohorts".[83] The Muslims considered it necessary when fighting the Franks to adopt a flexible formation based on numbers of small self-contained units, so that when the Franks charged one of them, the others could move without confusion to attack their flanks and rear.[84] The tactical unit was the *ṭulb* (squadron) which was defined as a body of not more than 200 horse, commanded by an emir.[85] If William of Tyre's cohorts can be taken as 200-man *ṭulbs*, this would give a figure of 8400 horse, not including servants and retainers. William's figures are a flimsy basis for theorising, but at least it is clear that the Muslims dangerously outnumbered Amalric, who was credited by William with 250 horse and 2000 foot.

According to al-Fāḍil, the Muslims surrounded the advancing Franks and waited for the expected charge, which did not come.[86] William of Tyre explains that the Franks were alarmed by the enemy numbers and closed their formation. The Muslims attacked to try to split them, but they pressed even more tightly together and continued to move towards Dārūm. The Muslims harassed their march until Friday evening, but when Amalric did not offer battle, Saladin left him and moved on Saturday to attack Gaza. Here Miles de Plancy, whom William of Tyre had already blamed for giving bad advice in Egypt, was said to have refused to allow the citizens to take shelter in the citadel[87] and the Muslims captured or killed a number of them, as

well as seizing horses, cattle and stores and freeing a number of their own prisoners. Saladin returned to Dārūm on the same day, but as Amalric still made no move, he left for Egypt on Sunday. The army arrived in Cairo on 22 December and was welcomed home by the Caliph.

The Dārūm expedition was not Saladin's only effort during the winter campaigning season of 1170/1, and although the dating and details are not clear, it is known that he also attacked and captured the castle of Eilat. This was built on an island some 7½ miles (12 km) from the head of the Gulf of 'Aqaba, close to its western shore (map 7). The southern route from Syria to Egypt passed down through the eastern hills at the head of the gulf, crossed the flat land at its tip and then climbed through a low pass to the hinterland of Sinai. The castle, which relied for its water on cisterns and on a mainland spring, could not accommodate a large garrison and neither during Shīrkūh's expeditions nor at the time of Ayyūb's move to Egypt is it mentioned as being a threat to the Muslims' passage. Obviously, however, it could menace smaller parties and Saladin decided to clear it from his path.

Al-Fāḍil is quoted as saying that Saladin had ships made in sections, which were loaded on camels.[88] A large force escorted them from Cairo and the castle was attacked by land and sea. It is said to have fallen on 31 December, the garrison being killed or captured, and Saladin then occupied it with a garrison of his own. In part, this story is contradicted by a letter preserved by Qalqashandī, which notes that the castle was extremely strong and could only have been taken by a long siege, but when the Muslims camped by the sea-shore, its garrison asked for quarter and surrendered.[89] It must be doubtful if Saladin himself was there at the time. He could have left Cairo immediately after returning from Dārūm and arrived before 31 December, or he could have crossed Sinai from the coast road to Egypt without returning to Cairo at all. In both cases, however, some note would be expected in the Arabic sources. 'Imād al-Dīn does, in fact, credit him with two expeditions, but he confuses the issue by dating the end of the first to November[90] and connecting the second with the arrival of a caravan bringing more, unspecified, members of Saladin's family to Cairo, which is best dated to February 1171.[91] It has been suggested that Eilat was, in fact, Saladin's main objective,[92] but if his attack on the Coast was diversionary it is difficult to see why he then gave Amalric clear passage from Dārūm to Eilat before the castle had fallen. It may be agreed, however, that while he himself

been threatened by the proclamation of allegiance to the Abbasids by Nāṣir al-Daula ibn Ḥamdān in northern Egypt. In the event, it was the Caliph who survived and Nāṣir al-Daula who was killed. It was reasonable for Saladin to move with prudence to avoid making the same mistake.

According to 'Imād al-Dīn, Nūr al-Dīn wrote to Saladin in June 1171 telling him to establish the Abbasid *khuṭba* in Egypt, and Saladin waited for two months to co-ordinate his plans.[96] There are the usual stories of hesitancy and intrigue.[97] Saladin is said to have asked advice from his emirs, who were split on the question of changing the *khuṭba*, "but it was not possible to do anything except obey Nūr al-Dīn's orders".[98] He is also said to have asked for a decision about the legality of the position, and the Shāfi'ite *faqīh*, Najm al-Dīn al-Khābushānī, is credited with pressing the case against the Fatimids.[99] It is reported that a concerted attack was made on Egyptian emirs, whose houses were surrounded by Syrian troops. Al-'Āḍid was told: "the emirs whom we are killing are men who have rebelled against you".[100] Al-'Āḍid then fell ill. One account makes him take poison, while according to another he was injured in a fall.[101] In his illness he asked Saladin to visit him and one of his sons is quoted as saying that, when Saladin came, he asked him to look after his children, "who were all young".[102] The commonest story, however, is that Saladin, fearing treachery, refused to go and regretted it afterwards.[103]

It is difficult to disentangle what truth there is in these accounts. Saladin can be expected to have sounded the feelings both of his emirs and of the religious leaders. His relations with al-'Āḍid are variously reported. On the one hand, he is said to have acted in al-'Āḍid's lifetime to break his power by taking away all his possessions, including his horses, thus preventing him from showing himself to the people in the state processions,[104] while another report says that the two were on such friendly terms that Saladin would disappear into the Palace for days at a time, alone and without an escort.[105] Whatever Saladin's personal feelings, however, al-'Āḍid was a potential source of danger to himself, his family and his Syrian troops. The timing of his move may have been affected by al-'Āḍid's illness, but the logic of power politics had made it clear that the Fatimid Caliphate could no longer survive.

On the first Friday of the new year 567 A.H., 10 September 1171 A.D., the Abbasid *khuṭba* was introduced in Fusṭāṭ.[106] Ibn al-Athīr says that a Persian emir, whom he remembered seeing at Mosul, went

to the pulpit before the preacher and pronounced the prayer for al-Mustaḍī'[107]. Ibn Abī Ṭayy said that Saladin entrusted the task to his father for fear of what might happen and his father threatened to kill the preacher if he pronounced the *khuṭba* in al-'Āḍid's name. The preacher then left out all names from the prayer, excusing himself on the grounds that he did not know al-Mustaḍī's titles. Al-'Āḍid asked for whom the *khuṭba* had been pronounced and was told that no one had been named. "Next Friday", he said, "it will be for a named man."[108]

Here again, whatever the accuracy of these details, it appears that Saladin intended to move in two stages, taking his first step on 10 September and testing reaction to it, before introducing the Abbasid *khuṭba* into Cairo itself.[109] On 11 September he paraded 147 out of a total of 167 squadrons of his army through the Cairo streets in front of crowds that included Frankish and Byzantine envoys. Al-Fāḍil wrote: "those who saw this review thought that no king of Islam had ever possessed an army to match this".[110] Two days later, on Monday 13 September, al-'Āḍid died. Although he had held the Caliphate for some eleven-and-a-half years, he was said to have been ten days short of his twenty-first birthday at his death.

in itself was a simple reflection of the view that Shīrkūh had "conquered" Egypt. Now that at least some of the pressure had been removed his scope had widened and it can be argued that for the first time he now had the opportunity to impose his own pattern on events rather than merely react to external promptings.

His first action was to show himself in the role of champion of Islam. According to 'Imād al-Dīn, he had agreed with Nūr al-Dīn to launch a joint attack on Kerak and Shaubak to clear the eastern route between Syria and Egypt.[4] This agreement must, at best, have been tentative on Saladin's part as far as timing was concerned since he could not have been sure whether or not the Abbasid *khuṭba* would lead to trouble in Cairo. His success, however, allowed him to leave the city on 25 September and he marched by way of Bilbais on an expedition that lasted until halfway through November and that appears to have produced no results, except, according to Ibn al-Athīr, for a worsening of his relations with Nūr al-Dīn.[5] Ibn al-Athīr reported that when Saladin wrote to tell Nūr al-Dīn that he was leaving Cairo, Nūr al-Dīn himself moved south from Damascus. Saladin had been so successful in his attack on Shaubak that the garrison had asked for quarter, with a ten-day delay before the castle had to be surrendered. It was now pointed out to Saladin that if he attacked the Coast from one side while Nūr al-Dīn attacked from the other, the Frankish kingdom would fall and his own position in Egypt would be in danger. More immediately, if he were to meet Nūr al-Dīn at Shaubak, he could be refused permission to return to Egypt. As a result, Saladin marched back to Egypt, claiming to have heard news of Fatimid plots, "but Nūr al-Dīn did not accept the excuse".[5]

This story is certainly exaggerated. To assume that Saladin had to have the danger from Nūr al-Dīn pointed out to him is naive. William of Tyre, who has no hesitation in giving details of Frankish difficulties and losses, makes no reference to the proposed surrender of Shaubak but writes that Saladin wasted his time there for some days and then left after seeing that he was making no headway.[6] But the rumours cannot be dismissed entirely. Even the faithful 'Imād al-Dīn, who is always concerned to show Saladin in the best light, merely notes vaguely that "something happened" to prevent his meeting with Nūr al-Dīn and he adds that Saladin had lost horses and baggage animals on his journey.[7] These losses and the strength of Shaubak, which was never taken from the Franks by assault, may well have been reason enough for Saladin's withdrawal, but the fact

that he never met Nūr al-Dīn after December 1168 must have some significance and had Nūr al-Dīn wanted to replace him or curb his power, the fall of the Fatimids would have given him a convenient opportunity. It is to be assumed, however, that Saladin's move from Cairo, within a fortnight of al-'Āḍid's death, was primarily intended as a *beau geste* and, in view of the need to consolidate his position in Egypt, he cannot have been looking for a long siege. His decree cancelling taxes in Fusṭāṭ and Cairo had been published in his absence and he must have been anxious to investigate what rumour claimed to be the vast treasures of the Fatimid Palace.

The opulence of the Fatimid court, the splendour of their public processions and their magnificent gifts naturally led to a belief that they were endlessly wealthy. It seems that when Saladin took over the Palace, the reality proved something of a disappointment. There were treasures of various kinds, including a stone jar containing 700 jewels, a huge emerald, 100 chests of splendid clothes and 2 ribs of a "huge fish" which, when set upright, could conceal a mounted man. But these were interesting rarities rather than major contributions to Saladin's treasury. Ibn Abī Ṭayy notes that not much money was found because of the sums that Shāwar had given to the Franks[8] – and, he might have added, because of the million dinars given to Saladin during the siege of Damietta. That Saladin was disappointed seems to be confirmed by the persistent rumours of undiscovered secrets. According to a Shī'ite story, he tortured a man who was thought to know where the secret treasure was hidden by having beetles fixed to his skull – "no-one could endure this for an hour without the beetles working through to his brain".[9] In this case, the story goes, the torture failed because the victim had carried the head of the martyred Imām of the Shī'a, al-Ḥusain ibn 'Alī, when it had been brought from Ascalon to Egypt for re-burial and the beetles did not attack him. This is hostile fantasy, but the early existence of the rumours themselves is confirmed by 'Imād al-Dīn, who says of Ibn 'Abd al-Qawī, whom Saladin crucified in 1174, that he knew the secrets of the Palace and its hidden treasures, but died without revealing them.[10]

Treasure or no treasure, however, Saladin had already taken steps to buy popularity by cancelling the *mukūs* taxes in Fusṭāṭ and Cairo.[11] Taxation in early Islam was concentrated on persons and property but their expansion had brought the Arabs into contact with many long established service taxes (the *mukūs*) and, as these had no Islamic precedent, they had, strictly, to be considered illegal.

On the other hand, as they were usually intended to defray, if not cover, the cost of the services to which they were attached, after each periodic cancellation they were regularly reintroduced.

Saladin's decree of abolition[12] was read out on Friday 6 October. It covered "Cairo, Fusṭāṭ and all traders visiting there"; these men were to be allowed to come and go, leave money, bring it or lend it, and trade by land and water, by ship and on horseback, in secret and openly, without having to reveal what they had concealed, without being asked about what they were exporting or importing and without being stopped on the road. "All governors who read this or to whom it is read, men of the sword or the pen, overseers or inspectors, must obey it." The value of the cancelled taxes was put at 100,000 dinars a year. Although the timing can be questioned, it is clear that Saladin intended that similar taxes should be repealed throughout Egypt. In an undated letter to Ikhmīm in upper Egypt he is found writing:

> It has come to our notice that the various branches of *mukūs* taxes have not yet been abandoned in Ikhmīm... and that those who come and go, those who live there and those who travel, all have to share in their payment... and have not yet tasted the sweetness of our benefaction... The people of its lands have not shared in the concessions that we made at the start of our reign... The rich are hurt and the poor are crushed... Such taxes are a punishment for those who delay paying the *zakāt* [alms tax] and who follow their lusts.

The decree of repeal was to be read in the old mosque at Ikhmīm; all the people, inhabitants and travellers, were to be informed of it, lest any doubt should remain; no one was to open a register to cover such taxes in future "or to set up a balance" (to weigh payment). Saladin had agreed to compensate the *iqṭāʿ* holders, who had benefitted from the taxes, and they were to obey "both now and in the future".[13]

Qalqashandī wrote that Saladin replaced the *mukūs* taxes by spoils of war,[14] but at no period of his career was this true. Perhaps he had some hopes of balancing an initial loss against the treasures of the Palace and the fact that on his return to Cairo he is reported to have removed silver ornaments from mosques in Cairo and Fusṭāṭ may show that he was trying to make up for their inadequacy.[15] A reliance on windfalls, however, would obviously have been unsound policy and he had already taken steps to raise revenue from a tax with an impeccable Islamic pedigree. This was the *zakāt* or alms tax, an *ad valorem* levy on certain types of goods and property which according to Islamic law was obligatory on all Muslims, as opposed to the

Saladin's concern to associate himself with his Islamic background had a wider application to his administration of Egypt. It was popularly claimed that if a wall were to be built round Egypt, cutting it off from all other lands, its people would be self-sufficient[21], and in Saladin's time, apart from its need for certain strategic imports, notably timber for ship-building, Egypt could certainly exist with the minimum of dependence on the outside world. This meant that a strong ruler whose primary concern was with Egypt itself could establish a Pharaonic state whose external relationships would be subordinated to its own interests. On the other hand, if Egypt were merely regarded as a transit land or as a base for some wider enterprise, then its needs could be expected to take second place.

Although it has been claimed that an Egypt-first policy was, in fact, advocated,[22] Saladin, together with the Kurds and Turks who made up the bulk of his army, must naturally have thought of an Islamic centre of gravity as lying farther east. From the standpoint of religious propaganda Egypt was part of the patrimony of Islam, a base for the Holy War but not as convenient a one as Syria. Further, the immediate lesson of the fall of the Fatimids was that Egypt had proved too weak to stand alone. This might be explained as the accidental result of political disturbance, while to Ibn Khaldūn it could illlustrate inevitable degeneration following the dilution of *'aṣabīya*. In economic terms, however, it may suggest that, without growth, administration and defence were inevitably top-heavy at this period, or more widely, that in view of the sociological factors involved growth was needed to absorb energies which would otherwise be self-destructive or decline to apathy. To what extent any of these points can be justified in this context must be seen from Saladin's later career. It is immediately clear that, while Nūr al-Dīn held Syria, Saladin was forced to think in Egyptian terms, but he invariably based the justification for his actions on Islam and as soon as he found it practicable, he turned to expansion, linking this to the imperatives of an Islamic policy.

No coherent policy, however, was possible without power. Saladin had earlier been shown by Shāwar the disadvantages of wealth without military backing, but the converse also held good in that military power could not be maintained without wealth. This might be won by conquest, in which case the army could be considered as a producer and not merely as a consumer, but Saladin's history shows how comparatively unproductive conquest was, and for the most part state revenues relied on primary production.[23] The importance

of production was, of course, obvious enough in Egypt, whose revenue depended directly on the annual Nile flood, but Saladin had also to take account of the power structure that controlled it. Here economic factors and population statistics gave even the humblest primary producers a measure of importance. Préaux, writing of the flight of peasants from their villages in Lagid Egypt, noted that this succeeded as a method of exerting pressure in circumstances where "those who abandoned their tasks could not immediately be replaced".[24] In an account of the Fayyūm written some fifty years after Saladin's death al-Nābulsī mentioned the lack of cultivation caused by the withdrawal of labour and he referred to what could not be brought back into cultivation "without the fear of driving the inhabitants to have recourse to flight".[25] If there was quantifiable power at the lowest end of the scale of producers, it can be taken for granted that the full interrelationship of power and wealth was too complicated to be manipulated easily or arbitrarily by a leader exclusively for his own purposes.

An obvious expedient in such cases, where the ruler's main interests lay elsewhere, was for him to barter land, together with the responsibility for its administration, in return for support. Niẓām al-Mulk is credited by Muslim historians with introducing the idea of making grants of the usufruct of lands and villages in place of money, as he is said to have thought that this would ensure the better management of estates in a large empire. Saladin followed the same pattern in Egypt where, according to Maqrīzī, his reign marked the start of a period in which all lands were held as *iqṭā's* by the Sultan, his emirs and troops.[26] Maqrīzī also noted another change which he dated, by implication, to this period, where he wrote that neither in Fatimid times nor earlier did the army have the type of *iqṭā's* that were seen in his own day. Formerly the lands had been leased to any of the emirs, prominent men or soldiers who wanted them, in return for sureties and a guaranteed sum to be paid to the Treasury. In his own time, by contrast, the cultivators had become "slaves born in the house of the *iqṭā'* holders, except that they can never hope to be sold or freed"[27] – presumably because of the replacement of the leasing system by one of long-term or permanent grants. This passage, however, should not be taken as proof that Saladin himself made dramatic and uniform changes to Fatimid *iqṭā's*. Contemporary sources are, in the main, silent on this point and clearly there was no uniformity. Ibn Mammātī mentions land leased on surety and without survey on the west bank of the Nile, which he contrasts with

the appropriate government department had been notified. If the dead man had heirs, his estate would be released to them, but if it fell to the state itself, then the department would pay the funeral expenses.[33] Non-Muslim Egyptians were liable for a special tax and government clerks were told to enter in the register not merely their names but "what would not change with the days, such as tall, short, white or black".[34] It was noted in the Fayyūm in the Muslim year 641 that out of 1142 such non-Muslims, 849 were in residence, 139 were in the south and 154 in the north. Soldiers had their descriptions as well as their names entered in the army lists, as clerks had to keep track of them throughout their service to check on their pay and equipment. If they died or were discharged, the equipment provided by the state had to be returned, except where a man had fallen on active service. No claim was then made and a cross was entered against his name on the list.[35]

The proliferation of controls, however, does not obscure the fact that Saladin had taken over a mixed economy, and the type of poor relief financed by the *zakāt* shows that he was prepared not merely to endure but, at a low level, to encourage it by providing funds for private trade. State officials, such as al-Fāḍil, traded on their own account with North Africa and India. Land reclamation was undertaken by private enterprise and Ibn Mammātī noted that the state lost money by giving long-term leases of building land, on which developers could make a 300 per cent profit.[36]

The functions of the various *dīwāns* which administered these controls have been recorded and studied,[37] but the measure of their effectiveness is difficult to determine. The evidence of letters points to confusion caused by the duplication of private and public *dīwāns*. Bureaucrats tried to extend their own powers, acting independently of their masters, and had to be checked by an apparently erratic appeals procedure whereby complaints were forwarded to Saladin himself by members of his court. Thus a letter had to be sent to an official telling him not to act roughly or to use threats when measuring the land of a dead emir as the emir's son had not been "abandoned or ignored" by Saladin.[38] A deed of grant to another beneficiary warned "the hand of the *dīwān* not to oppose him", while "the tongues of its employees" were not to challenge his description of his land, presumably by insisting on a survey.[39] In the case of Ibn al-Ṣāliḥ b. Ruzzaik, officials in upper Egypt had seized a press that he owned there and had confiscated his written proofs of ownership, while the governor and overseers at Aswān had taken his dates,

cotton, wheat, barley and ships, all of which they were ordered to return.[40]

The difficulty that Saladin seems to have had in keeping his bureaucrats under effective control must have been increased by their relative scarcity. There were few Muslims to be employed. Al-Makhzūmī wrote that clerks in the *Dīwān al-Ḥarb* were usually Jews, while taxation clerks were Christian Copts. He added: "as Christians and Jews were unable to share rule with the Muslims, they shared with them in the general running of affairs, providing tax clerks, army clerks and doctors. I can only think that this is an affliction sent by Almighty God to test the Muslims." He noted that these non-Muslims passed on their professions from father to son, adding that young Muslims, having been brought up on the Quran and Arabic literature, naturally wanted to get some profit from what they had learnt and were unwilling then to study under non-Muslims. As a result, though they were constantly criticised, non-Muslim clerks could not adequately be replaced.[41]

The extent to which Saladin himself took an interest in civil administration can, perhaps, never fairly be assessed. He cannot be shown to have made any genuine efforts to tighten state control by strengthening the bureaucratic basis of a managed economy in Egypt. He was concerned with the shuffling of his dynastic cards, as he moved members of his family from one post to another, and also in the disposal of important *iqṭā's*. He was urgently interested in finance, as without money he could not maintain his forces, and he was also the final court of appeal. But at a lower level the efficient running of his administration must have depended largely on the calibre of the men whom he picked to control it.

The name that occurs most obviously in this context is that of the Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, who has some claim to be thought the most famous of all Saladin's Muslim contemporaries. He was a poet, a littérateur, an administrator and a statesman, and his letters form one of the most fruitful sources of information not only about Saladin's career but about the age in which he lived. 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī has left a description of him: "we came into the presence of al-Fāḍil and saw a frail old man, all head and heart. He was writing and dictating to two people, with all kinds of movements of the face and lips caused by his eagerness to get his words out. It is as though he was writing with his whole body."[42] He was some three years older than Saladin and had been sent to Egypt from Ascalon, where his father had been the Shāfi'ite Qāḍī, to enter the service of the Fatimids. He was first

employed in the *Dīwān al-Inshā'* in Cairo and then moved for a time to Alexandria. When he returned to Cairo, he served first in the *Dīwān al-Ḥarb* and then again in the *Dīwān al-Inshā'*. When Shīrkūh became vizier al-Fāḍil was seconded to his service, according to malicious report in the hope that he would be involved in his master's expected fall, and after Shīrkūh's death he passed into Saladin's service. The author of the *Sūq al-Fāḍil* wrote: "no scribe is known to have reached a position with regard to his master comparable to that achieved by al-Fāḍil with Saladin. It was said that the lands were not conquered by the armies of Saladin but by al-Fāḍil's pen."[43] According to Ibn Mammātī, the ideal scribe should take care not to give the impression that his employer is in need of him,[44] but al-Fāḍil is quoted as violating this canon and writing of the letters that he composed for Saladin: "other men send their messages to the Sultan, but the Sultan is my messenger in the letters that I send".[45]

Neither al-Fāḍil nor Saladin had roots in the country that they governed and the history of Saladin's vizierate has not made clear how important this is to an interpretation of their society. On the one hand there is the picture of Islam as a monolithic structure. At its simplest, this is reflected in the view of Saladin as the restorer of true religion and it can be refined by suggesting that thanks to the basic unity of its institutions the mediaeval Islamic world had roughly interchangeable parts. On this argument, Saladin's following of soldiers, administrators and religious leaders channelled the powers needed to control society and were as integral a part of the country as those whom they replaced. In contrast, however, Egypt can be seen as a cellular society in which racial groupings, such as those of the Turks, Kurds, Armenians, Negroes and Bedouin were uneasily juxtaposed. Religious differences provided their own divisions and sub-divisions of Christian, Muslim and Jewish sects, while the compromise between managed and mixed economy added its own administrative fragmentation. Saladin's Syrians could fit into this pattern as a war-band which, finding a country capable of supporting it, exercised only the measure of control needed to ensure its own advantage. Such a band might itself be a cell, united by *'aṣabīya*, or it could be seen as unit of a mobile professional class either serving or exploiting the country of its choice. Such questions can be multiplied at will; no simple answers are to be found nor would they necessarily be mutually exclusive. Saladin, however, now established as a major figure in his own right is at least well placed to provide some acceptable evidence through the details of his career as ruler of Egypt.

4

THE SHADOW OF SYRIA

After his return to Cairo in November 1171, Saladin had some time to concentrate on administrative problems without external distractions. He himself kept to his old quarters in the vizier's palace. His father still lived in the Pearl Palace and the North Palace was given over to a number of Syrian emirs. Now that the Fatimids had fallen, coins were minted in Egypt with the name of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mustaḍī' on one side and that of Nūr al-Dīn on the other. Nūr al-Dīn had sent Sharaf al-Dīn Ibn Abī 'Aṣrūn, described as a man who never made a mistake or took a bribe,[1] to bring the official news of the death of al-'Āḍid to Baghdad and he came back with robes of honour for both Nūr al-Dīn and Saladin. The envoys bringing them arrived at Cairo on 7 March and on 8 March a number of Cairene dignitaries visited their pavilion. The city streets were decorated and on 9 March Saladin put on the robes and rode across Cairo to Bāb Zuwaila.

There can have been little to celebrate for the rest of the year, which seems to have been marked by a continued persecution of Fatimid supporters. Ibn Abī Ṭayy wrote: "when a Turk saw an Egyptian, he took his clothes",[2] and "things went so far that any Turk who liked a house would drive out its owner and settle there".[3] Maqrīzī refers to a Nubian army on the southern frontier, a plague of mice in the sugar cane plantations and, in the spring of 1172, huge hail-stones that destroyed crops.[4] He adds that there was rioting in Cairo in the summer of 1172, while Abū Ṣāliḥ wrote of "the ruin brought upon the Armenians",[5] which led their Patriarch to leave Egypt for Jerusalem in November 1172. According to Maqrīzī, there was a flow of gold and silver from the country[6] and, in a letter to Baghdad, Saladin commented on unfavourable trading terms with European merchants.[7] In the spring of 1172 he discussed a plan to

expand westwards to Barqa because he had "too little money and too many men".

Riches and military power, as he had seen, were interdependent and any imbalance between them could be destructive. If he already had too many men, Egypt must have been acting as a magnet. Hopes of profit could at first be satisfied by local pillage, as described by Ibn Abī Ṭayy and confirmed by the Armenian Abū Ṣāliḥ together with the Christian Sawīrus ibn al-Muqaffa', but when they were translated into administrative policy, in a context of limited resources, there had to be external growth. This has also to be seen in relation to the Islamic system of polygamy and concubinage which, together with the ease of divorce, allowed for a measure of family planning in the sense that a man could readily increase the number of his children. Saladin himself had no children, recorded or acknowledged, until he was in his thirties. Then, after he had settled in Egypt, he fathered some four sons before the summer of 1173. Al-Fāḍil later wrote of them: "they have children [of their own] and the Sultan has spread out hopes for them... He has said to them: 'beget, and I shall dower the females and enrich the males'."[8] More generally he noted of Saladin's followers: "everyone who produces children and adds to the size of his family is trusting to the grace and generosity of our master".[9] This is a classic statement of the expansionist position and its application to Saladin in Egypt cannot have been obscure to his contemporaries. The more urgent his need for growth became, the more difficult it must have been to reconcile it to his nominal subservience to Nūr al-Dīn and not surprisingly for the next two years relations between Syria and Egypt were uneasy.

As has been noted, a Nubian army was reported on the Egyptian border in the summer of 1172 and al-Fāḍil wrote to tell Baghdad that the Nubians had been joined by Armenian refugees, as well as by other "disgraced soldiers" and by a number of common people.[10] According to Ibn Abī Ṭayy, this force decided to lay siege to Aswān.[11] The surrounding country, which was Bedouin territory, suffered from Nubian plundering expeditions, and the emir Kanz al-Daula, of the Bedouin tribe of Rabī'a, sent to Saladin for help. Saladin replied with reinforcements under al-Shujā' al-Ba'albakkī, and the Nubians then withdrew. The fighting that followed was indecisive and Tūrān-Shāh, who had already campaigned in the south in 1171, was sent out again in December 1172/January 1173. He advanced beyond Aswān and al-Fāḍil wrote of the enemy that "they were the ants whom Solomon has crushed".[12] Tūrān-Shāh gave

According to 'Imād al-Dīn, Nūr al-Dīn thanked Saladin, but said: "we did not need this money... He knows that we did not spend money on the conquest of Egypt out of a need for [more] money."[18] This remark, however, cannot be taken at face value. Elsewhere 'Imād al-Dīn wrote: "since the time when Egypt was taken Nūr al-Dīn had wanted an agreed sum of money to be contributed which would help him meet the expenses of the Holy War... He was waiting for Saladin to suggest this on his own account and did not ask him for it."[19] On the arrival of Saladin's gifts and before leaving himself for his northern frontier, he decided to call for an audit of the finances of Egypt. It is clear that he was not looking for presents, however exotic, but for regular payments which, from the point of view of the Egyptian economy, would amount to an annual Egyptian subsidy for Syria.

Saladin in the meanwhile, after seeing his caravans on their way, took the opportunity to attack Frankish territory. Amalric, who was wary of being outmanoeuvred so as to leave the Coast unguarded, camped to the south of Hebron at Carmel of Judaea overlooking the Dead Sea,[20] round whose southern end he could march to the relief of Kerak or Shaubak if they were in danger (map 7). But Saladin did not press an attack against the castles and contented himself with ravaging the countryside. One of his main aims, he told Nūr al-Dīn, was to drive away the Bedouin who lived in Frankish territory. He wrote: "the servant knows that the master wants to attack the unbelievers. One of the most helpful things in his opinion is that no Bedouin should remain in their lands... so that when they come up... they may not find before them any guide."[21]

The Bedouin scouted for the Franks and provided them with supplies, but their refusal to change their way of life to fit in with the wishes of settled government made them unpopular with both sides. Al-Fāḍil wrote: "the Bedouin are like colocynths; the more you give them sweet water, the bitterer are their fruits",[22] and William of Tyre commented on their treachery: "as long as the issue of a battle is in doubt, they watch from afar. Then they join the victors and pursue the vanquished as though they were enemies, to enrich themselves from their spoils".[23] In fact, the Bedouin were the supreme example of the independent cell, to whom external political patterns were largely irrelevant. Saladin's attempt to remove them from Kerak was one of a number that he made and it certainly had a valid military purpose. By this time, however, he must have heard of Nūr al-Dīn's reception of his gifts, together with the proposal to hold an Egyptian

At Alexandria itself the Muslims made a sally on Wednesday 31 July, during which they burnt the Sicilians' mangonels. The Sicilians were seen to be weakening and in the afternoon a messenger reached the city with the false but heartening news that Saladin himself was only 20 miles (32 km) away to the east. The Muslims then made a successful evening attack, killing or capturing a number of the enemy, including a force of 300 horsemen whom they had managed to cut off and surround. After this reverse the fleet put to sea again on Thursday 1 August. No one knew what its destination was, but Saladin in his letter claimed that it no longer had any fighting capacity.[21]

On the heels of the Sicilian attack there was more trouble in upper Egypt. Another army of Negroes, Bedouin and "the people of the lands" had gathered there and a leader named 'Abbās ibn Shādhī had attacked the districts of Qūṣ from a base at Ṭūd, some 12 miles (19 km) south of Luxor (map 6).[22] This in itself was no more than one of a number of sporadic movements by Fatimid supporters who took advantage of the remoteness of Cairo and the difficulties of the country to launch their raids. What does call for comment is the fact that this time the malcontents were joined by Kanz al-Daula, the governor of Aswān, who in 1172 had asked for Saladin's help against the Nubians. No explanation is given for this *volte-face*, which may, of course, be more apparent than real. Al-Kanz, a Muslim Bedouin, could well have been hostile to Nubian Christians, but not to the Fatimid supporters who had joined them, and although it is worth looking for some particular action that might have antagonised him, no evidence for this has been found.

In the event, the trouble was not serious. The rebels killed the brother of Abū' l-Haijā' the Gross and Abū' l-Haijā' himself moved south. He was supported by Saladin's cousin, 'Izz al-Dīn Mūsik, who was almost certainly governor of Qūṣ at this time, and by Saladin's brother al-'Ādil. Ibn Shaddād wrote of al-'Ādil's force that it comprised men who had already tasted the delights of possession in Egypt and were afraid of losing them.[23] In the face of their determined self-interest the rebellion failed and both 'Abbās and Kanz al-Daula were killed. The defeat of Kanz al-Daula is dated to 7 September and by the 28th al-'Ādil had returned to Cairo.[24]

By this time Saladin himself was on the point of leaving. External and internal dangers had allowed him to postpone for a time the crucial decision on whether or not he should march on Syria without invitation or clear excuse. In spite of the possible risk to his

Saladin is one of the best known figures of the Middle Ages. The West accepted him as a hero; Islam was indebted to him for the recovery of Jerusalem. Much of his life, however, was spent in fighting his fellow Muslims, and what unity he managed to impose on his dominions was shattered at his death. The history of his career is complicated by the fact that as well as being a military leader he was a diplomat, politician, and administrator, but the details of his manipulation of power in these several spheres shed important light on the structure of Islam, its unifying and divisive elements, and the society in which these operated.

This study makes use of hitherto neglected Arabic sources, including unpublished manuscript material – notably the correspondence, both private and official, of Saladin's own court. For example, such letters contain fresh information on the circumstances of the battle of Ḥaṭṭīn, as well as on the less public, diplomatic campaign that accompanied Saladin's efforts to be accepted by his contemporaries as their leader in the Holy War.

His recent biographers, Gibb and Ehrenkreutz, are sharply divided in their approach. Gibb accepts Saladin's own interpretation of his actions, while Ehrenkreutz breaks with tradition by sounding a note of scepticism. The factual basis of their judgements is significantly broadened by the use of the new source material, and a leading aim of this book is to help the reader to determine for himself how far the rival interpretations are justified – how far it is proper to consider that Saladin's main concern was with the Holy War against the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, rather than with the foundation of an empire of his own. In particular, the authors seek to set the whole of Saladin's career and achievements, civil and military, within the specific framework of his age.

'Lyons and Jackson have produced a distinguished and extremely well researched book which is likely to become a standard work in the field and become required reading for all students of Ayyubid history. It has the added merit of being accessible, as the authors themselves intend, to the non-Arabist historian: despite its wealth of documentation and factual description it reads easily and will be readily understood by the non-specialist.' *History Today*

'It is certainly the best book yet written about him in English.' *The Times Literary Supplement*

'Barring discovery of new evidence, Lyons and Jackson have written what is probably a definitive statement on Saladin's career.' *American Historical Review*

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