

Spring 2017

# Inventing Saladin: The role of the Saladin legend in European culture and identity

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Inventing Saladin: The Role of the Saladin Legend in European Culture and Identity

Brian Christopher David

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of the Arts in History

Department of History

May 2017

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## Dedication

Above all, this thesis is dedicated to my mother. Without your constant belief in me I never could have made it this far. Losing you in the middle of the process was the hardest thing I have ever dealt with, but your adamancy that I finish is what drove me.

This thesis is also dedicated to my father, sister and the rest of my family. Without your support this task and my continued education would have been impossible.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I must acknowledge and thank my advisor and mentor Dr. Timothy Fitzgerald. His insights into the Islamic and medieval world were invaluable and helped me to refine and clarify my arguments. Without his knowledge, understanding, and supreme patience this project would not have been possible. My committee members Dr. John Butt and Dr. Christian Davis were similarly supportive, and I appreciate their comments and efforts on my behalf. Their advice as members of my committee was incredibly helpful and made for a superior end product. I would also like to thank Dr. Gabrielle Lanier for her weekly guidance in the 673 Seminar, where this thesis was born. Mention should also be made of Dr. David Dillard. Thank you for giving an old grocery manager a chance to live out this dream. I would also like to acknowledge the inter-library loan department in the Carrier Library at James Madison University. Not only the amount but rarity of several of the pieces they needed to find to make this project happen is a testament to their skill and dedication. Finally, I would like to thank the following people for various efforts, conversations, and help that they have given me throughout this process: Rachel Carey, Dr. Susanne Fox, Frank Gregory, and Dr. Stephanie Holyfield.

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## Abstract

This thesis seeks to uncover and understand the strange historical journey of the Muslim Sultan Yusuf ibn Ayyub, known to the West as Saladin. The historic Saladin was a ruler famous for his successful campaigns against the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, his victory at the Battle of Hattin, and his holding action against the Third Crusade. Upon Saladin's death in 1193, he became the subject of numerous legends, most of which describe him as a merciful, chivalric, and ideal leader of men. The epitome of what a thirteenth century European noble was supposed to be. This thesis seek to explain how these legends helped form cultural identities, it will also show how the legends of Saladin evolved over time, through a direct comparison between the legend's role in the thirteenth century and the twentieth century. Further, this thesis will show how these legends, rather than being simple justifications for Saladin's success and behavior, are in fact a vehicle which historians and writers can use to better understand English and French medieval culture, and how those two cultural groups defined themselves as societies. Despite vast cultural changes to England and France over those seven hundred years, the legends would again be used to help define the identity of those two nations. Not only is this thesis trying to justify Saladin's success and behavior, these later legends are deeply intertwined with justifications for imperialism and scientific racism. The unpacking of these legends will not only help the reader to better understand who Saladin truly was, but understand the culture of Europe as well.

## Introduction

“Is it possible to invent a person?” This question has plagued historians for millennia as legend and memory have always had a deep impact on recorded as well as oral history and historical memory. Legends can forge cultural identities, yet they can also be the bane of historians. All too frequently legend is mixed with enough fact that it misleads historians and laymen alike. It is through other methods, such as archeology, and studying competing works that historians can see through legend, and get to the “facts” as they are seen. This is not to completely negate legends in comparison to historical fact, as legends can be powerful, entire cultural identities can be built around their deeper meanings. This makes them difficult to dislodge. Legends can reveal the mentalities of the civilizations that those that create them. Famed writer Salman Rushdie summed this up eloquently with the line “Sometimes legends make reality, and become more useful than the facts.”<sup>1</sup> Such was the case of the legends of one of the most famous men of the crusading period, Yusuf Ibn Ayyub (d. 1193), known to the west as Saladin.<sup>2</sup> Historically, Saladin was the unifier and ruler of the Muslim sultanate that recaptured the city of Jerusalem (1187) and subsequently defeated the Third Crusade (1192). His victory at the Battle of Hattin (1187) was the beginning of the end of the European occupation of the Levant. The dynasty he created, the Ayyubids, ruled the Levant and Egypt for over a

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<sup>1</sup> Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (London: Modern Library, 2014), 47.

<sup>2</sup> A note on transliteration: Many of the primary sources for this thesis, as well as a few of the secondary sources, were translated from Arabic to French or German, and then into English. As a result of this process, the spelling of nouns varies widely. For example, Saladin has appeared as Salah-din, Saladino, Saleh al-din, etc. Saladin is not alone in this as others such as Nur al-Din and Zengi also have had their names rendered in many different ways, such as Noradin, Nuradin, Chengi, Zanki and so forth. This phenomenon is common when studying Arab histories. In this thesis for clarity and conciseness, the most common English spellings will be used.



half century after his death. Throughout Saladin's life time and after his death he was known by many names and sobriquets such as; Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Yusuf ibn Ayyūb, Salah al-Dunya wa'l-Din, and Salah al-din; al-Malik al-Nasis Salah al-Din Abdu'l-Muzaffer Yusuf ibn Ayyub ibn Shadi.<sup>3</sup> The English settled on "Saladin." In the Arab world after his death Saladin became a minor, almost forgotten figure. He was remembered as just another sultan who had taken power, in a long line of those who had struggled for it. His histories would be repeated and reprinted, but no special onus was placed on them. This view changed, however, in the modern period. A surge in focus on his achievements has occurred in Arab nations in the last century. This surge was triggered by years of Western interference in Middle Eastern affairs, with Saladin representing the ideal model of native resistance. In medieval England and France, however, Saladin remained a popular and well-known figure. Factual histories were soon replaced by numerous legends that grew to surround Saladin after his death. These legends grew virtually overnight, and would continue to evolve throughout the thirteenth century.

### **The Legends of Saladin**

These legends have some basis in history, as all legends tend to, and follow three distinct types. The most popular and famous of these types revolved around Saladin as a chivalric, merciful figure, and focused on his sparing of Jerusalem as well as his conduct towards his adversaries. These legends frequently repeat accounts of Saladin sparing and freeing European captives, witnessing and rewarding courage in European and Turkish

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<sup>3</sup> Anne-Marie Edde, *Saladin*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 7; Baha al-Din (Ibn Shaddad), *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin; Sources in Translation*, trans. D.S. Richards (Burlington: Ashgate, 2001), 13; Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 84. Yusuf Ibn Ayyub (Joseph, son of Job) was his birth name.

fighters, sending gifts and doctors to European leaders, and so on. These acts of generosity and mercy were in keeping with the chivalric code's system of honor between enemies. While there may have been historical basis for the chivalric legends, the two other types of legends tended toward pure fantasy. The second type involves Saladin as a doubter of the Muslim faith. These legends sometimes go further in claiming that Saladin was in fact the bastard grandson of a French royal house. Almost all the primary Arabic sources speak of his dedication to Islam, yet legends of his favoring Christians and even his outright conversion to Christianity sprang up all over England and France. The third and final type focuses on Saladin's relations with Europeans themselves. These legends are known as the amorous adventures. The most famous of these revolve around Saladin as the lover and fantasy man of Eleanor of Aquitaine (d. 1204), and feature Saladin traveling throughout Europe. These combined legends spread throughout Western Europe during the thirteenth century, becoming entwined in the very historical memory of the man. They lasted well into the twentieth century, affecting not only the histories of that time, but also the times in which they were created.

The reasons for these legends being created are many. Mostly they evolve around European Christians attempting to justify not only Saladin's conduct, but his victories as well. European Christian society at the time believed that the Judeo-Christian God chose the winner of such engagements. Thus, the Christian loss was difficult for them to understand. It is also important to remember that during the medieval period and long before, much of the purpose of writing, particularly historical writing, was didactic.<sup>4</sup> These writers were promoting ideals they held dear, and wished to see these ideals

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<sup>4</sup> Alan Munslow, *A History of History* (London: Routledge, 2012), 2-4.

adopted and espoused. Further, these legends were created to help define a French and English identity, and were used to this purpose throughout the history of the legends.

The first chapter of this thesis will begin with a detailed history of Saladin, giving the reader a solid basis from which to better understand the legends. It will then explain what will be referred to as the “Genesis” period of the legends, giving a brief overview and analysis of how Saladin was viewed during and directly after the Third Crusade (1189-1192) in England and France. After establishing this, a brief overview of the early legends of Saladin will be provided, divided between the chivalric legends and the Christianized legends. This analysis will help the reader to better understand how the legends evolved during the thirteenth century. Analysis of the chivalric and Christian legends will focus on what these say about the self-image of English and French knights of the times, and what that says about the culture and identity of the two regions. These sections will also help the reader to understand why the legends of Saladin are so closely tied to Richard the Lionheart of England (d. 1199). This chapter will also analyze why Richard was more than just a king, he was a symbol of identity in both England and France, throughout the thirteenth century and beyond, and thus influenced why Saladin was Christianized and Europeanized. Further, it will be explained how many of these authors use Saladin to teach moralistic behaviors they wished to see exhibited in England and France. All of this will be summed up in the next section focusing on Richard and Saladin together as a unified legend that helped to define a European identity. The chapter will conclude with the amorous legends and how they also use Saladin to fashion an identity. Unlike with Richard the Lionheart, however, they are used by these authors to show disdain for Eleanor of Aquitaine, illustrating the didactic, moralizing impulse in

the legends.

The second chapter will concentrate on what this thesis will call the “Survival” period. The focus here is on how the legends of Saladin evolved and survived the many centuries into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Give the amount of space, emphasis will be placed on the legends of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, as well as show how new histories. These new histories, written in the eighteenth century, all dealt with the legends in some way, specifically concentrating on the chivalric legends. This survival era will lead to the third chapter, which deals with the final era, or what this thesis will call the “Romance” period. This period witnessed a renewed interest in the legends as they again helped confirm English and French identities in the time of imperialism. This renewal, begun by famed romantic writer Sir Walter Scott (d. 1832), led to the further use of the legends to define a Western identity.

The first section will analyze Scott’s writings, their importance, what exactly he knew about the factual history of Saladin, and how much the legends directly affected him. The argument will then be made that these writings deeply affected the historians of the early twentieth century. The historians that this chapter will focus on are Stanley Lane-Poole (d. 1931), Hamilton Gibb (d. 1971), René Grousset (d. 1952), Steven Runciman (d. 2000) and Charles Rosebault (d. 1965). Each of these historian’s works will be evaluated, and will show how they were written to help aid a European identity steeped in imperialism, racism, and Orientalism. The thesis will conclude by showing how Saladin’s history time and again is subverted by English and French culture to confirm a superior cultural identity. The overarching theme is how England and France used the legends of Saladin to help define their cultural identities —through the literature

of chivalry and justification— in two separate time periods, almost a thousand years apart.

Why England and France? The most obvious reason is that it is from these two kingdoms that the legends originated. Most scholars agree that the legends themselves were initially told by returning crusaders.<sup>5</sup> Many of the authors of the documents that have been preserved tend to be anonymous, but many of the details they get right, specifically geographic details, heavily imply they either were there themselves, or had a source that had been. Thus, these two kingdom's participation in the Third Crusade means they are heavily involved in the life of Saladin, and had thousands of witnesses to his deeds. This is not the only reason for a comparison between the two. In modern times, England and France have very different cultures, speak different languages, and are separated by not only by the English Channel, but by hundreds of years of continuous warfare. However, during the thirteenth century, they had much more in common. While there were scores of vernacular languages spoken throughout England and France in the thirteenth century, French was the preferred language of the nobility of both nations.<sup>6</sup> In fact, French was the preferred language of the English court well into the fourteenth century, making the elite cultures of the French and English difficult to separate.<sup>7</sup> This state of affairs lasted until well after the end of the Hundred Years War and the defining

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<sup>5</sup> This theory of a crusader origin for the legends is supported by Saladin legend historians such as Tolan and Hillenbrand, as well as crusade historians such as Edde, Newby, Jackson, and Lyons. The evidence exists in three forms. First, the oldest forms of the legends are found in England and France. Secondly, the positive views of Saladin this thesis will analyze in chapter one do not begin until after many of these two kingdom's crusaders return home. Further this theory explains why the legends exist simultaneously in France, Italy, Germany, and England, all major participants in the failed Third Crusade.

<sup>6</sup> Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "What's in a Name: the 'French' of 'England,'" in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain* (York: York Medieval Press, 2009), 1-5.

<sup>7</sup> This originates from the time of the Norman invasion of England.

of England and France as independent nations, rather than as interconnected feudal kingdoms.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Richard the Lionheart, a key part of the Saladin legend, is a national hero to both cultures. His relationship with Saladin helped define the identities of both nations, and thus both needed to be included in this study.<sup>9</sup>

Further complicating any attempts to separate the cultures is the reality that the Kingdom of England ruled over large sections of modern day France throughout the thirteenth century, referred to by modern scholars as the Angevin Empire.<sup>10</sup> This empire was formed by the marriage of Richard's mother Eleanor of Aquitaine to the King of England, Henry II. Eleanor's hereditary right to the duchy of Aquitaine brought it under the control of England, and Richard would not only be born there, but would spend most of his life in that region.<sup>11</sup> Feudal society made for very fluid borders, and also made for confusing relationships as through controlling Aquitaine, the King of England was technically a vassal to the King of France, though in reality the two kingdoms did not function in the capacity. This should help the reader to better understand the blooming of not only "national" boundaries throughout the thirteenth century and beyond, but cultural ones as well. The modern national boundaries would not truly be determined until after the Hundred Years War.<sup>12</sup>

By the twentieth century, while the cultures may have separated and the languages are no longer shared, these nations shared interests in empire and aversions to

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<sup>8</sup> Christopher Allmand, *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War c.1300-c.1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Introduction.

<sup>9</sup> John Gillingham, *Richard Coeur De Lion: Kingship Chivalry and War in the Twelfth Century* (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), 15.

<sup>10</sup> Gillingham, *Richard Coeur De Lion*, 11-20.

<sup>11</sup> Gillingham, *Richard Coeur De Lion*, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Allmand, *Hundred Years War*, Introduction.

the same adversaries will again give them similar motives for identity building. Thus, the two nations can and must be analyzed together to fully comprehend and appreciate the legends of Saladin. It is also important for the reader to understand the context in which terms like “England” and “Britain” will be used. Throughout the medieval period, England, Scotland, and Wales had fluctuating relations. While England and English law had controlled Wales to varying degrees since almost the time of the Norman Invasion, It was not until 1707 and the official Act of Union that the modern nation of “Great Britain” was formed.<sup>13</sup> Thus any reference to England is from before that time, any reference to Britain is after it. Now that some necessary scaffolding has been erected, What have other historians said about Saladin and his legends?

### **Historiography of Saladin and His Legends**

The first historical biography of Saladin to appear in the West is the French historian L.F.C. Marin’s *Historie de Saladin* (1752).<sup>14</sup> It is also the first biography to feature a combination of Latin and Arabic sources. This work accepted a chivalric, romanticized image of Saladin, but rejected many of the more outlandish legends such as his conversion to Christianity and European travels. The same can be seen in the later work of J.F. Michaud, also a French historian, in his landmark comprehensive history on the Crusades, *Histoire des Croisades* (1812-22).<sup>15</sup> Michaud also relied heavily on Baha al-Din and other primary sources as they became available, as well as rejected the more bizarre legends that developed over the centuries. More importantly, through their joint

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Tombs, *The English and Their History* (London: Knopf, 2015).

<sup>14</sup> L.F.C. Marin, *Historie des Saladin*, 1752, (Accessed: Google Books).

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Michaud, *The History of the Crusades*, trans. W. Robson (New York: A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1882).

analysis of these sources they helped create a stereotype that was repeated for centuries. The historical image they created was of the bold and brave Lionheart and the pious and “ambitionless” Saladin that comes directly from the literature and the legends. While not a historian, Sir Walter Scott also had a deep effect on the historiography by publishing several stories on the crusades and the medieval era, the most important to Saladin being *The Talisman* (1825).<sup>16</sup> These stories captured the imagination of not only the reading public, but historians as well. Scott’s romantic image of Saladin, coupled with the histories of Marin and Michaud, set a tone for the depictions of Saladin for over a hundred years.

By the turn of the twentieth century, this romantic image had taken root and it is what historians like Stanly Lane-Poole in his *Saladin and the Fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem* (1906), René Grousset’s *Historie des Croisades* (1939), and H.A.R. Gibb’s *Life of Saladin* (1949) would use as the basis of their works. These historians also shifted the focus from who he was to why he was so different from the rest of the Arab world, and they found their answer in his factual Kurdish ancestry.<sup>17</sup> Poole, Gibb, and Grousset, avowed Orientalists and well-known admirers of Scott’s works, all identified Saladin’s Kurdish ancestry as the reason he could unite the Arab peoples under his banner. They argued that this infusion of Saladin’s “new blood” in a stagnant society gave it new life.

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<sup>16</sup> Walter Scott, “The Talisman,” in *The Works of Sir Walter Scott Including the Waverly Novels and the Poems in Fifty Volumes: Volume XXXVI* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913). Walter Scott created not only a fascination with Saladin, but with the Arab world in general, helping to set off a huge literary movement that lasted for years. This movement spread all over the world, including America, leading the famous American writer Mark Twain to write his travel narrative *Imocents Abroad*.

<sup>17</sup> Sir Hamilton Gibb, *The Life of Saladin: From the Works of Imad al-Din and Baha al-Din* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973); René Grousset, *The Epic of the Crusades*, trans. Noel Lindsay (New York: Orion Press, 1939); Stanley Lane-Poole, *Saladin and the Fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem* (London: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1914). It should be mentioned at this time that it is considered historical fact that Saladin was of Kurdish descent. This is supported not only by primary sources such as his biographers accounts, but by corroborating first hand accounts about his family members as well.



This idea of the Kurd in an Arab world fit nicely with the pious and chivalrous description given to him by Michaud and Marin. Deeply intertwined with this new focus on Kurdish ancestry is the premise that the Kurds are an “Indo-European” tribe, and therefore not Arabs or Turks. Thus, to these English and French imperialist and Orientalist writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Europeans were in fact defeated by one of their own, making the failure of the crusades more “palatable,” and offered further proof of European superiority. This argument that only a European could govern the Middle East would be a key assumption in the propagating of the legends. All of these authors would help bring to what this thesis will call the “Romance” period of Saladin’s legends.<sup>18</sup>

The historiography described above will in fact form a major part of the third chapter of this thesis. The romantic period these historians, along with Scott, created lasted for over half a century, with the last gasp being Steven Runciman’s *A History of the Crusades* (1951-54).<sup>19</sup> This study has been described by modern crusade historians as more popular than academic.<sup>20</sup> This is mainly due to Runciman’s taking up of Michaud’s and Poole’s ideas as they were being torn apart by then current research. His work, however, popularized the Crusades and is still one of the best-selling works on the subject. This is highlighted by the comments of Thomas Madden, a well-known crusade historian, who wrote of the work that “it is no exaggeration to say that Runciman single-

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<sup>18</sup> Charles L. Rosebault, *Saladin, Prince of Chivalry* (New York: Kissinger Legacy Reprints, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades; Volume I: The First Crusade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951); Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades; Volume II: The Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952) and Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades; Volume III: The Kingdom of Acre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954).

<sup>20</sup> Christopher Tyerman, *The Debate on the Crusades, 1099-2010* (Oxford: Oxford Journal Press, 2011), 191.

handedly crafted the current popular concept of the crusades.”<sup>21</sup>

The critical historiography of the *legends* of Saladin began around the time of Stanley Lane-Poole, with that author, along with his fellow romantic writers, at least recognizing the legends. Lane-Poole in fact devoted an entire chapter in his monograph to the romantic aspects of the legends. Gaston Paris was one of the first authors to deal with the legends in a single work, publishing an article in 1893 entitled “La Legende De Saladin.”<sup>22</sup> Articles and single chapters have continued to be most common forms of dealing with the subject of the legends, spanning the twentieth century and featuring many different authors. Many of the writers of these articles, such as John Tolan and his article “Mirror of Chivalry: Salah Al-Din in the Medieval European Imagination,” do not even attempt to analyze the reasons for the creation of the legends.<sup>23</sup> Rather Tolan’s goal seems to have been the gathering and cataloging of all the disparate legends of Saladin, and to remark on how strange this evolution of the Saladin legends is.

Margaret Jubb’s monograph *The Legend of Saladin in Western Literature and Historiography* (2000) epitomized these projects.<sup>24</sup> Jubb’s work was pioneering in its scope, with every known instance of the Saladin legend recorded in her monograph. However, this work has flaws. Jubb specifically does not do enough to explain why the legends evolve the way they do, and draws what I believe to be an incomplete conclusion about the nature of the legends. Jubb states in her conclusion that they were created and

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas Madden, *The New Concise History of the Crusades* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 216. Madden also said of Runciman in a *Crisis Magazine* interview in 2008 that Runciman’s work is “terrible history yet wonderfully entertaining.”

<sup>22</sup> Gaston Paris, “La Legende De Saladin” (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1893).

<sup>23</sup> John Tolan, “Mirror of Chivalry: Salah Al-Din in the Medieval European Imagination” in *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

<sup>24</sup> Margaret Jubb, *The Legend of Saladin in Western Literature and Historiography* (London: Edward Mellon Press, 1995).

evolved because of a European need to explain away the historical actions of Saladin. The examples of this she gives tend to be of the chivalric variety, and focus on Saladin's mercy and behavior. Following Jubb's work have been more articles by historians such as Carole Hillenbrand.<sup>25</sup> Hillenbrand's conclusion is very similar to Jubb's, in that the legends were created to explain the actions of Saladin, and to justify them. This thesis does not believe that this conclusion is incorrect, as that is certainly a part of what was going on. However, this argument leaves out what the larger analysis of the legends in this thesis reveals, that the legends also serve an identity defining and didactic role in society. They certainly were meant to answer difficult questions, and they reinforce shifting cultural values.

A popular general history on the crusades by Zoe Oldenbourg, called *The Crusades* (1966), was one of the first histories to truly break the cycle of legend and romanticism.<sup>26</sup> For a work that does not receive much attention by the historical community, Oldenbourg's theories were almost two decades before their time. Her treatment of Saladin as a complex figure proved to be revolutionary. A. S. Ehrenkreutz wrote the first historical monograph by an academic historian to attack the romanticized image of Saladin, with his biography *Saladin* (1975).<sup>27</sup> Ehrenkreutz, however, has been accused of doing the opposite of Lane-Poole and his fellow romantics. Rather than romanticizing Saladin, Ehrenkreutz viciously attacks him for his ambition and lust for power. He claims that what drove Saladin was his "ruthless persecution and executing of political opponents and dissenters, [and] his vindictive belligerence and calculating

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<sup>25</sup> Carole Hillenbrand, "The Evolution of the Saladin Legend in the West" (Accessed: University of Edinburgh Online Catalog).

<sup>26</sup> Zoe Oldenbourg, *The Crusades* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966).

<sup>27</sup> Andrew S. Ehrenkreutz, *Saladin* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001).

opportunism.”<sup>28</sup> While certainly a move to end the romanticism, few historians support Ehrenkreutz’s views, as he went too far in his revision. Later biographers Malcolm Lyons and David Jackson in their seminal work *Saladin and the Politics of Holy War* (1983) were the first academics to break this model and not only avoid the legends, but acknowledge them and further dispel them.<sup>29</sup> They present Saladin as a pragmatic politician, one who had religious and merciful tendencies but understood his world, how to accomplish his goals, and when mercy had to be tempered by political expediency.<sup>30</sup> This historical view of Saladin, one that avoids judging or romanticizing his actions, is still the accepted view within academic circles, and the view of this thesis.

Following Jackson and Lyons over the next thirty years was a series of modern biographies by a slew of historians from multiple countries. Geoffrey Hindley, (*Saladin*, 1976), P. H. Newby (*Saladin: In His Time*, 1991), Hannes Mohring (*Saladin, The Sultan and His Time*, 2005), Anne-Marie Edde (*Saladin*, 2011) and John Mann (*Saladin*, 2015) have all published works that at some point have acknowledged the legends, just as the articles did.<sup>31</sup> Edde especially deals with the legends of Saladin in her biography, with the last few chapters of her work dedicated to the study of them. The main conclusion she drew was that the very history of Saladin is intertwined with the legends, and that one cannot understand one without the other. However, while academic historians have continued to discredit the legends, some modern popular histories, like James Reston’s

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<sup>28</sup> Ehrenkreutz, *Saladin*, 238.

<sup>29</sup> David Jackson and Malcolm Lyons, *Saladin and the Politics of Holy War* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1983).

<sup>30</sup> Jackson and Lyons, *Saladin*, 115.

<sup>31</sup> Geoffrey Hindley, *Saladin* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1976), 4-10; P.H. Newby, *Saladin: In His Time* (New York: Dorset Press, 1991), 13; Hannes Mohring, *Saladin: The Sultan and his Times 1138-1193*, trans, David S. Bachrach (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 1; John Mann, *Saladin* (London: Bantam Press, 2015), 1; Edde, *Saladin*, 249.

*Warriors of God* (2005), sometimes fell into the same tropes as those in the romantic period.<sup>32</sup> Saladin has also been the subject of many movies and television shows, the most famous of which is Ridley Scott's 2005 Hollywood blockbuster *Kingdom of Heaven*. Saladin's depiction in this film is as a brilliant, secular leader, which borrows from many of the chivalric and romantic legends. More recently in 2010, an animated television show that depicts a young Saladin was created in Malaysia and entitled "Saladin: The Hero who Became a Legend." This fictitious show has little basis in factual history. The conclusion of most of these modern biographers, such as Edde, Mann, Lyons and Jackson, is the conclusion that this thesis draws as well: Saladin was a complex figure with flaws and ambitions, a man of immense charity and mercy, and still a pragmatic individual who like many men understood how to accomplish his goals in his attempts to unite the lands of Islam and rid the Levant of the crusaders.

### **The Image of Islam in European Society**

When writing a work of this scope, it is important for the reader to understand what the English and the French knew, or rather thought they knew, about Islam, and when. Much work has been done on the subject of the knowledge that Europeans had about Islam throughout the medieval period, well into the modern one.<sup>33</sup> Frankly, this kind of question has filled volumes of historical work on the subject, and will only be expounded upon here briefly. From their earliest encounters, warfare and trade, coupled

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<sup>32</sup> James Reston, *Warriors of God: Richard the Lionheart and Saladin in the Third Crusade*, (New York: Anchor Books, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> For further reading see Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), Maxime Rodinson, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam*, (London: L.B. Tauris, 2002), John Tolan, et al, *Europe and the Islamic World: A History*, Trans Jane Marie Todd, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013) and Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

with pilgrimage and missionary work, were the most common avenues of interaction between Europe and the Levant. One of the most important views English and French people of the thirteenth century held is that the Arabs and Turks were different, with separate prejudices assigned to each group.<sup>34</sup> In medieval England and France, Arabs tended to be depicted as decadent and corrupt, and the Turks as barbarous and savage. While their images were fluid, much of what medieval France and England knew of the Levant and Islam came from returning crusaders, as well as Spanish and Italian traders.<sup>35</sup> These warriors and traders spread these prejudices and misunderstandings throughout Europe, where they simmered for a few hundred years. A more romantic view emerged over time courtesy of writers such as Walter Scott, though no less negative. These new understandings were highlighted by the view that the oriental ruler as despotic.<sup>36</sup> The rise of new ideas, such as scientific racism, as well as the emerging dominance of Europe in the nineteenth century heavily influenced this new image.<sup>37</sup> All of this is framed by another theory, modern Orientalism.

Orientalist studies began long before the nineteenth century, however, and the early focus tended to be on language studies.<sup>38</sup> These histories divided the world between the Orient (the East) and the Occident (the West), and focused on diverse academic pursuits, from history, to literature, and artistic interpretation. Modern Orientalism is defined as a way of understanding and portraying the differences between these two in a

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<sup>34</sup> Rodinson, *Mystique*, 2-10.

<sup>35</sup> Siobhain Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity: The Auchinleck Manuscript* (New York: Routledge, 2005). This view is also espoused by crusade scholars such as Madden and Asbridge.

<sup>36</sup> Daniel, *Islam and the West*, 317-330.

<sup>37</sup> Edward Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race: New Racisms and the Problem of Grouping in the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2010); Charles Darwin, *The Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection* (New York: Signet Classics, 2003).

<sup>38</sup> Rodinson, *Mystique*, 40.

manner that distorts the East, usually depicting the East as backward, barbarous, exotic, and treacherous. It applies not only specifically to Orientalists, or those who study the East, but all those who distort the Orient to further a cause. Further, Orientalism is systemic in that it is used by Western imperialists to not only justify imperialism and colonialism, but also cultural superiority and values. Modern orientalism does not even have to be an active attempt to distort, even something as simple as dividing the world into East and West is a form of Orientalism, as it implies that the organizer has the power to do so.<sup>39</sup>

This new theory of orientalism was popularized by Edward Said in his influential work *Orientalism* (1978), and further expanded upon in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993).<sup>40</sup> By using specific examples, Said attempted to show how in the modern era the West used a distorted view of the East as a justification for colonialism, and how modern orientalism still affects cultural studies and foreign policy to this day. Said's thesis relied heavily on the idea that knowledge is a major source of power within the world, something other philosophers have argued.<sup>41</sup> Said also argued that only those who were from the East were qualified to study it, something that runs counter to most historical

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<sup>39</sup> Though as many critics rightly point out, categorization is a common and necessary evil in historical studies.

<sup>40</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1993). Much work has been done on the subject of Orientalism since Said. While few works endorse the theory without any criticism there are many works in agreement, such as A.L. Macfie, *Orientalism*, (London: Longman, 2002); Maxime Rodinson, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam*, (London: L.B. Tauris, 2002) and Pallavi Pandit Laisram, *Viewing the Islamic Orient: British Travel Writers of the Nineteenth Century*, (London: Routledge, 2006). There are far more works of detraction, however such as Bernard Lewis, *From Babel to Dragomans: Interpreting the Middle East*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004); Ibn Warraq, *Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism*, (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2007); Daniel Martin Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007); Francois Pouillon, Jean-Claude Vatin, *After Orientalism: Critical Perspectives on Western Agency and Eastern Re-appropriations*, (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

<sup>41</sup> See Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (New York, Vintage Books, 1982).

studies. It is important to know that Said focused heavily on literature, but his work also spoke to other fields, such as various forms of art and popular culture. Said's work is not without flaws and serious detractors. Many intellectuals and academics accused Said of painting with far too wide a brush, claiming that though he had given evidence that the subjects of his book had participated in a form of orientalism, to blanket the entire field of cultural studies and foreign policy with such a label was both irresponsible and dangerous. One of the most important of these was Bernard Lewis.<sup>42</sup>

One of most important counters to modern Orientalism is Bernard Lewis's 1993 article "The Question of Orientalism" in his influential work *Islam and the West* (1993).<sup>43</sup> In this article, Lewis lays out many of the problems of this theory, through clever anecdotes and what he calls "common sense thinking."<sup>44</sup> His review of the theory mainly focuses on the notion that only the people of the East can study themselves, and that any other groups attempting to do so cannot fully understand or appreciate what they are studying. Lewis also argued that the field of oriental studies had begun dealing with many of the issues Said had pointed out, with many of Said's sources being orientalist critics of their own field. Lewis's anger at Said comes from his perception that Said had set the field of Oriental studies back by making his claims, well as a clear indication he felt personally attacked by Said. Lewis is not the only critic of Said, as a more methodical critique of his work was penned by Ibn Warraq in 2007.<sup>45</sup> This work, painstakingly

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<sup>42</sup> It must be noted that Said viewed Lewis as a classic Orientalist, and mentioned him several times in his writings on the subject.

<sup>43</sup> Bernard Lewis, "The Question of Orientalism," in *Islam and the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>44</sup> Lewis, *Orientalism*, 99-102.

<sup>45</sup> Ibn Warraq, *Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2007).



studied and argued, discovered hundreds of artists and thinkers who were not guilty of the “crime” that they had been accused of. In fact, many had been sympathetic to the plight of the East, and sought to aid them in their struggles against imperialism. Even Said admitted that many historians and intellectuals had in fact been correct in their descriptive works on the East, though almost all were guilty of aiding imperialism simply through defining the East as such.<sup>46</sup> The anger this work caused in the historical and cultural studies community can only be described as vitriolic, given reactions to its mere mention in some historical works.<sup>47</sup> The upheaval caused by Said’s work produced problems for the traditional Orientalist historian’s, though important works tend to have that kind of effect. These historians also accused Said of severe bias claiming that to him, virtually any critique of the East would now be labeled Orientalism and racist.<sup>48</sup>

Despite these flaws, the main ideas of Orientalism live on. Writers such as A.L. Macfie have written in support of them. Macfie claim that while not all cultural studies and art is guilty, several areas of intellectualism, such as history, can be drawn to imperialist and Orientalist motives.<sup>49</sup> Macfie is not alone as Maxime Rodinson, in her work *Europe and the Mystique of Islam* (2002), also wrote in support of Orientalism.<sup>50</sup> Rodinson argued that twisting and misunderstandings existed, but had a more nuanced view toward the evolution of these ideas. Rodinson goes on to argue that the more the study of the East becomes intertwined with the study of the West, in a world history context, the less space there will be for modern orientalism to exist. All of these

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<sup>46</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 52.

<sup>47</sup> This anger can be seen in Said’s unofficial nickname: the “Professor of terror.” Warraq, *Defending The West*, 1.

<sup>48</sup> Warraq, *Defending the West*, 1-2.

<sup>49</sup> A.L. Macfie, *Orientalism* (London: Longman, 2002).

<sup>50</sup> Rodinson, *Mystique*, 54.

supporters tend to hold Said at arms-length, just as this author is doing, due to the extremity of his argument. Many agree that the attempts of the West to categorize the East were natural outcomes of cultural tension. Another supporter of these ideas is Pallavi Laisram, who explains that modern Orientalism was “the natural outcome of contact between technologically superior nations, and alien cultures which are technologically inferior.”<sup>51</sup>

While this work is not intended to be a direct support of the theory of Orientalism, it does seek to show that though the critics of Said may be correct in chastising him for painting so broadly, there are examples of this theory that do exist. It of course helps that Walter Scott, Hamilton Gibb, René Grousset and Stanley Lane-Poole, the very subjects of the third chapter of this thesis, all feature in Said’s work, with Scott and Gibb being especially highlighted. While there may be hundreds of historians and other creators of culture from this time not guilty of using history to promote imperialist and racist ideas, it is the opinion of this thesis that these historians are doing just that. Orientalism and the image of Islam in Europe are not the only important topics that need to be unpacked before proceeding. We must also consider the role of legend in society.

### **The Role of Legend in Human society**

Myth and legend are two words that are commonly used in vernacular English, and are frequently used interchangeably. There is, however, a difference between the two, though diverse sources will give different definitions to both. Many famous authors on the subject, such as Thomas Bulfinch, never sought to define the difference, pushing both

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<sup>51</sup> Pallavi Pandit Laisram, *Viewing the Islamic Orient: British Travel Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2006), 2.

into the category of “Mythology.”<sup>52</sup> Even Joseph Campbell, the so called “king” of myth interpretation, saw few differences between the two, with Campbell also believing that regardless of definition, the origin was the same.<sup>53</sup> Richard Barber, another famous compiler of myth and legend, did in fact see a difference between the two.<sup>54</sup> Barber described this difference as “the usual distinction between myth and legend is the presence of a supernatural element in the former, and a historical basis for the later.”<sup>55</sup> The problem with this interpretation of myth and legend is it is far too simplistic. Take, for example, the anthropological findings that the ancient Greeks created myths to explain natural calamities that they could not otherwise have explained given their rudimentary knowledge of geology and metrology. The most famous example of this was the battle between Zeus and Typhon, and its use to explain the explosion of Mt. Thera on Santorini, one of the largest volcanic eruptions in human history. This was described as “myth” by Barber’s definition, given the supernatural presence, yet there is a clear historical event associated. Does that not make it a legend by the same definition? How can this be, as it is the same story at its core, after all? Why do legends and myths exist in the first place?

The famed writer Joseph Campbell once wrote that “There is no final system for the interpretation of myths and there never will be any such thing,” despite trying to create just such a system in his most famous work on the subject, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.<sup>56</sup> While this work is most remembered for creating the idea of the

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<sup>52</sup> Thomas Bulfinch, *Bulfinch’s Mythology*, ed. Richard Martin (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).

<sup>53</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Novato: New World Library, 2008), 2.

<sup>54</sup> Richard Barber, *Myths and Legends of the British Isles* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2000), ix.

<sup>55</sup> Barber, *Myth*, ix.

<sup>56</sup> Campbell, *Myth*, 329.

monomyth, also known as “the hero’s journey,” it also makes points about the psychological and historical reasons for the creation of myth and legend, and goes on to accept them all:

Mythology has been interpreted by the modern intellect as a primitive, fumbling effort to explain the world of nature (Frazier); as a product of poetical fantasy from prehistoric times, misunderstood by succeeding ages (Muller); as a repository of allegorical instruction, to shape an individual and his group (Durkheim);.....and as God’s revelation to his children (The Church). Mythology is all of these.<sup>57</sup>

To Campbell, myth and legend is whatever one interprets it to be. He came to this conclusion after years of studying myths and deciding that each culture valued and created its legends differently. However, he claimed that in most cases, almost all myths seemed to fill some sort of breach in understanding. Whether it is an origin story, the hero’s journey, or any other trope invented to describe myth and legend.<sup>58</sup> Campbell’s work, while interesting, has problems. His ideas about myth and legend tend to be reductive. One of the most important arguments of this thesis is that the Saladin legends helped the English and French define their culture, and those legends and that process are anything but simple. His work was designed to appeal to the masses, and one of his didactic lessons was that people should follow their passions and interests, just as Campbell did with mythology and travel. Thus, he is doing the same thing that the historical writers of the early twentieth century that this thesis is analyzing were also doing, using his work to impart a moral lesson. The monomyth and heroes journey are in essence his idealized version of a hero, and thus his work needs to be taken with the same

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<sup>57</sup> Campbell, *Myth*, 330.

<sup>58</sup> Campbell, *Myth*, 243.

grain of salt as the historians of the time.

Any extended research into the subject of the inventing of legend ultimately leads to psychology and arguably two of the most famous psychologists of all time, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Both Freud and Jung were fascinated by legend, and what it said about human characteristics. While many of the ideas of both men have been discredited, they still remain some of the most popular sources for understanding the role of myth and legend in human psychology. Freud defined myth and legend as purveyors of “obscure information...from the primeval ages of human society.”<sup>59</sup> In essence, he believed that myth and legend carried the ideals of culture forward, without having to create a complex system to enshrine them, such as with religion. Jung disagreed, not surprisingly as the two were life-long competitors, though not as much as those two tended to do. Jung identified myths and legends as one of his archetypes of the human experience, placing them along with other universal forces such as libido, neuroses, and complexes.<sup>60</sup> Jung agreed with Freud that legend and myth were a transporter of ideas, he just believed it was far more ingrained in the human psyche, rather than as the periphery, as Freud suggested. They also disagreed on the formation of legends and myths in the human mind, with Freud believing they were illusions and Jung believing they exhibited a psychic reality.<sup>61</sup>

While they may have had disagreements, they agree on one thing that will be argued heavily by this thesis. Myths and legends are attempted answers to the great

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<sup>59</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Freud Encyclopedia: Theory, Therapy, and Culture*, ed. Edward Erwin (New York, Routledge, 2002), 353.

<sup>60</sup> Carl Jung, *The Jung Reader*, ed. David Tacey (London: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>61</sup> Robert Steele, *Freud and Jung: Conflicts of Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1982), 325.

unknowable questions in society and culture.<sup>62</sup> When a society is grappling with a problem it cannot resolve, it will rely on legend to help provide an answer. It is this theory that the previous historiographical argument for the legends existence are found. That in the medieval times, the legends of Saladin helped the Christians of France and England justify and understand the loss of the Third Crusade, something that was culturally and religiously unacceptable to them, and thus a question they could not answer. Campbell would, of course, support this theory because he agreed with everyone! While this is an obvious oversimplification, Campbell did agree specifically with Jung's archetype theory, pushing it forward in his work, and agreeing with him about the role of the hero in the human psyche.<sup>63</sup> And yet this thesis argues that the legends represent something more than that, a cultural touchstone used by the English and French to describe their cultural identities through literature and history. Thus, the definitions of legend cannot be that simple, and it is clear a specific definition will need to be crafted for the purpose of this thesis.

For the purpose of this thesis, Barber's definition will be adhered to, with one provision, that myths too are based on history, and that both are key to helping a society to define itself through story telling. It is the presence or absence of the supernatural that will be the only deciding factor in whether or not Saladin's stories will be considered myth or legend. Obviously, this thesis has already classified them as legends due to an absence of supernatural elements in the Saladin stories.<sup>64</sup> While these legends are certainly fantastic and despite many having only the smallest basis in historical fact, the

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<sup>62</sup> Steele, *Freud and Jung*, 326.

<sup>63</sup> Campbell, *Myth*, 13.

<sup>64</sup> For further reading on the study of myth, see Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013), in which Barthes describes the multiple layers of myth making and its role in society.

stories explained in the introduction are all quite possible human achievements. This absence of supernatural interference, save the possible inclusion of the wrathful Christian God, make them legends. Rather than trying to turn Saladin into a superhuman, they are attempting to quite literally turn him into a European, a facet that both the medieval and modern legends share.

All of this theory of legend is well and good in the abstract, but this thesis intends to take legend from the abstract and show how the legends of Saladin, formed for various reasons, played a part in the cultural evolution of England and France. Saladin's real world success over England and France threatened the budding cultural identity that was being formed in the thirteenth century. Thus, the legends were invented to co-opt and explain Saladin's success, even to the point of his cultural "adoption" by the legend makers. This happened again in the nineteenth century, as new ideas about the superiority of Europe became ingrained in that society. While groups of all times were certainly using the legends to justify events, that is only a small part of what is occurring with the creation of these legends. The actions of Saladin certainly had to be explained, and though the methods were different, the French and English adapted and changed the narrative and history of Saladin to help him fit and define their identity.

# Genesis

## Chapter Overview

This first chapter will explore and establish a number of important bases which are needed for this thesis's argument. This chapter will begin by establishing as close a factual history of Saladin as possible, as well as helping the reader to understand what sources are used to establish this "factual" history. Doing so is an obvious necessity. How can the reader be expected to understand the legends without understanding the man and how to identify the legends? The chapter will then turn to explaining the genesis period and answer the question of how and why did a man who began the thirteenth century as one of the greatest villains to the English and the French end it in a much more positive view, surrounded by stories of his mercy, chivalry and piety. Despite a deep hatred of Saladin that had developed after his conquest of Jerusalem by the 1250s, a more positive view had emerged, and by the close of the century the stories grew to heights that can only be described as fantastic. This chapter will attempt to better understand this turn of events. It will show how each of the three types of legends came into being. Finally, it will answer the question of what roles English and French national identity, as well as Richard the Lionheart, played in this saga. It will also help the reader to better understand the didactic nature of thirteenth century writing. To understand the legends, one must first understand the history.

## The History of Saladin

The historical Saladin is remembered for being the founder and ruler of the Ayyubid dynasty that recaptured the holy city of Jerusalem. His subsequent victory over



the Third Crusade, launched to recapture the city in 1189, cemented his legacy.<sup>65</sup> The dynasty he created ruled the Levant for the next hundred years.<sup>66</sup> Saladin's birth date remains a mystery as chief biographer Baha al-Din (d. 1234) described it as sometime between September of 1137 and September of 1138. He was descended from a prominent Kurdish military family. His grandfather Shadhi ibn Marwan (d. 1155), father Ayyub ibn Shadhi (d. 1173) and uncle Asad al-Din Shirkuh (d. 1169) were all prominent commanders under either the Seljuk Turk Bihruz (d. 1155) or later Zengi, the atabeg of Mosul (d. 1146).<sup>67</sup> Nothing is known about Saladin's mother, not even her name, except that she also gave birth to Saladin's older brother Shahanshah.<sup>68</sup> Ayyub, while in the service of the Turk Bihruz as his appointed governor of Tikrit, provided shelter to Zengi after the atabeg had been forced away from Mosul for a time.<sup>69</sup> After aiding Zengi in this manner, the Turks banished Ayyub for his actions. Saladin's father and family fled to Mosul to seek shelter under Zengi, and Ayyub and Shirkuh soon become favorites in the atabeg's court.<sup>70</sup> The very day that Ayyub learned of his banishment from Tikrit and began his flight to Mosul is the day that his son, Yusuf ibn Ayyub, forever known to Europe as Saladin, was born.

After a successful military campaign to take the city of Baalbek, Zengi named Ayyub his governor of the city, a role he filled for both Zengi and Zengi's son and future

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<sup>65</sup> While Saladin may have failed militarily to defeat the crusade, his retaining of most of the lands he had conquered, must lead to the crusade being labeled a failure.

<sup>66</sup> *Encyclopedia of Islam* 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, s.v. "Salah al-Din" (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 910. This empire, though established by Saladin, has historically been named after his father, Ayyub.

<sup>67</sup> Baha al-Din Ibn Shaddad, *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin; Sources in Translation*, trans. D.S. Richards (Burlington: Ashgate, 2001), 17-18.

<sup>68</sup> Edde, 23. Baha al-Din makes no mention of Saladin's mother in his work, which was not uncommon for the era or the culture.

<sup>69</sup> Baha al-Din, 17; Ibn Al-Athir, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period from "al-Kamil fi'l Ta'rikh. Vols I, II, III*, trans. D.S. Richards (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 301.

<sup>70</sup> Baha al-Din, 17.

ruler of Syria, Nur al-din (d. 1174).<sup>71</sup> Baha al-Din claimed Saladin spent his youth in Mosul, with Nur al-din personally helping to advance Saladin's career as a young man. This after Zengi had been assassinated by a Frankish slave which left Nur al-Din as ruler of Mosul.<sup>72</sup> Saladin's family resided in Baalbek for many years, and after spending his youth in Mosul, it is here that Baha al-Din claims Saladin received his education in morality, religion and leadership from his father.<sup>73</sup> Many of the Arabic sources that mention his father speak of him in glowing terms. Baha al-Din notably referred to him as a "noble, generous man, mild and of excellent character."<sup>74</sup> Shirkuh, the future vizier of Egypt and prominent general under Nur al-Din, is of course the most well-known figure of all of Saladin's relatives, and it is through his relationship with his uncle that Saladin rose to power.

This account of Saladin's birth and childhood is covered briefly by Baha al-Din in his famous history of Saladin's life, *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*, but is absent from the other major works of the era by William of Tyre (d.1186) and Ibn al-Athir (d.1233). In the case of the latter, al-Athir gives an excellent history of Zengi and Nur al-Din in his work on the crusade period. He also confirms many of the details included in Baha al-Din's work, including Saladin's father as governor of Baalbek and Shirkuh's generalship under Nur al-Din.<sup>75</sup> William makes no mention of this, rather Saladin is introduced as a vassal and wing commander of his then more famous uncle,

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<sup>71</sup> Baha al-Din, 17.

<sup>72</sup> Baha al-Din, 17; Ibn al-Athir, 7. Al-Athir also implies that Nur al-Din helped advance Saladin's career, something he used to judge Saladin during his recounting of Saladin and Nur al-Din's times of tension before the latter's death.

<sup>73</sup> Baha al-Din, 17.

<sup>74</sup> Baha al-Din, 17.

<sup>75</sup> Ibn al-Athir is frequently interpreted as a devotee of Nur al-Din, and looked at Saladin's overthrow of that dynasty in a negative light. This has been argued by historians such as D.S Richards and Peter Edbury.

Shirkuh. William in fact incorrectly believed that both Shirkuh and Saladin were Turks, claiming this several times in his works.<sup>76</sup> Given the family's origins in Tikrit, this is not an unreasonable assumption for William to have made, as the Seljuks had ruled the area for several generations. It does however highlight William's, and later Europe's, lack of concrete knowledge on Saladin's upbringing. This is important to remember moving forward as Baha al-Din's work was not translated until the middle of the eighteenth century by the Dutch Orientalist Albert Schultens (d.1750).<sup>77</sup> Consequently, many of the legends encountered in the medieval period sought to fill this gap in understanding. With these translations done by the middle of the eighteenth century, these accounts of the family and upbringing of Saladin could be assembled and analyzed, and the legends finally seemed preposterous. Through these multiple sources, there is a consistent and well documented upbringing under Ayyub, and later Shirkuh, without much room in the history for the legends that followed.

Saladin left the service of his father at the age of fifteen. He journeyed to Aleppo where he quickly rose in the ranks of the Zangid Sultanate under its new ruler, the aforementioned Nur ad-Din, following the lead of Shirkuh.<sup>78</sup> Shirkuh conquered Egypt from its sultan, Shawar, and wrested it from the ruling Fatimid caliphate. This conquest ended, at least for a time, the schism between the Shi'i Fatimid caliphate and the Zengid controlled Sunni region. Saladin found himself thrust onto the very throne he helped create after the untimely death of his uncle, as well as the death of the Caliph al-Adid

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<sup>76</sup> William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, Vol. I and II*, trans. Babcock, Emily Atwater and A.G. Krey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 359.

<sup>77</sup> Edde, 612-615. Many other translations were done at this time as well.

<sup>78</sup> Baha al-Din, 17 and 41.

Abu Muhammad.<sup>79</sup> Tensions quickly arose between Nur al-Din and Saladin, with Saladin, supposed to be a “mamluk” to the elder Arab, having more ambition than feudal servitude.<sup>80</sup> Nur al-Din’s death in 1174 averted open warfare temporarily. Upon the death of his “overlord,” Saladin moved quickly to unite Syria and Egypt under one banner and overthrew the rule of Nur al-Din’s young child, Al-Salih Isma‘il al-Malik (d.1181).<sup>81</sup> This created one of the largest united regions the Levant had seen in over two centuries. Saladin soon had a larger prize to capture, as after many years of stalemate, raiding, and a shaky truce between the Crusader Kingdom of the Outremer and Saladin’s new united sultanate, open warfare broke out after the death of the king of Jerusalem, Baldwin IV (d.1185).<sup>82</sup>

After several skirmishes between Saladin’s forces and the forces of the new king of Jerusalem, Guy D’Lusignan (d.1194), Saladin won a decisive victory over the Crusaders in 1187 at the Battle of Hattin. After first attacking and isolating many of the crusader strongholds and port cities, Saladin made his move on Jerusalem. After a brief struggle, he accepted the surrender of the city by Balian of Ibelin (d.1193), allowing most of the city’s occupants to go free after negotiating a ransom for the inhabitants.<sup>83</sup> Though

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<sup>79</sup> Baha al-Din, 45-55; Ibn al-Athir, 175. William paints this scene in a very different light than the Islamic sources, claiming that after Shirkuh died, Saladin murdered the caliph, as well as his children, with his own hands, and confiscated their throne and their riches. This is not confirmed by Baha al-Din, and many historians believe William confused Shawar and al-Aid, with William claiming Shirkuh personally murdered the former, though Baha al-Din claims he had Saladin carry out the grisly task as a show of loyalty. Most historians simply believe William got it backwards and al-Aid died a natural death. William also mentions this as the period of Hugh of Caesarea’s captivity, something important to the later legends. William, 339 and 359. There is also a story told by Baha al-Din that after taking the throne, Saladin called his father to join him in Egypt, where he offered him the crown of Egypt. The older Ayyub refused it, though, saying he would not supplant the deeds of his son.

<sup>80</sup> Ibn al-Athir, 224. Ibn al-Athir did not mean mamluk as “slave” in this context, but “vassal.”

<sup>81</sup> Baha al-Din, 49; Ibn al-Athir, 221.

<sup>82</sup> Baha al-Din, 72; Ibn al-Athir, 264. William died before the death of Baldwin; thus his history grows silent after this point.

<sup>83</sup> Baha al-Din, 25 and 72-76; Ibn al-Athir, 322-324. This story would be famously adapted into Ridley Scott’s Hollywood blockbuster *Kingdom of Heaven* in 2005.

many thousand were still enslaved as they could not pay the ransom, this act is where many of the legends originate. This “mercy” was supposedly difficult to understand by Europeans. While the act is indeed merciful by the standard of the day, it is the opinion of this thesis that the motive for this act was far more pragmatic.<sup>84</sup> Saladin was taking casualties he could not afford. There were still several major crusader strongholds and ports left, and sacrificing his army to take Jerusalem, only to lose it again to an army landed at one of those port cities made little sense.

This victory could not be enjoyed for long, however, as the re-conquest of Jerusalem touched off the Third Crusade, later known as the “King’s Crusade,” in 1189, led by Richard the Lionheart of England (d.1199), Phillip II of France (d.1223), and Frederick Barbarossa of the Holy Roman Empire (d.1190). The four years of struggle and warfare that followed this invasion depleted most of the treasury and resources that Saladin had gained in his conquests.<sup>85</sup> While he successfully fought off the crusade and held the city of Jerusalem, he failed to conquer many of the port cities lost to the crusaders, such as Acre and Tyre. Saladin did not decisively defeat the crusade, forcing him to make several concessions to Richard and the Christians.<sup>86</sup> Fighting the crusaders took a toll on Saladin’s health as well, and he died just two years after the end of the Crusade in 1193.

Another important historical basis to establish is that Saladin strove to be a

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<sup>84</sup> The Christian crusaders who took the city in 1098 slaughtered every inhabitant of the city, as opposed to Saladin who spared the inhabitants. This “immoral” act would be a key didactic lesson that future legend makers would stress in their writings.

<sup>85</sup> Baha al-Din, 237-243, Ibn al-Athir, 408-409.

<sup>86</sup> Baha al-Din, 231, Ibn al-Athir, 402-403. It should be mentioned that while Saladin did control Acre for a time, Richard quickly recaptured the city during the Third Crusade. The truce they signed was only for three years as Richard had planned on returning, but circumstances such as his imprisonment by the Holy Roman emperor prevented this.

faithful Muslim throughout his life, a public image he certainly sought to maintain throughout his life. Baha al-Din detailed this to great extent in the introduction of his work, showing Saladin's adherence to the Five Pillars of Islam. Baha al-Din's work does not appear to be highly biased in this respect, as he highlights Saladin's failure to complete some of these pillars, with Saladin never undertaking the hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca), and frequent illnesses during Ramadan that prevented fasting.<sup>87</sup> This is important to note as several of the eventual legends claimed at least a hesitancy in his faith in Islam, with some claiming his outright conversion to Catholicism. Many Arab historians besides Baha al-Din also recorded Saladin's adherence to his religion, with Ibn al-Athir commenting on his devotion to Islamic law (Sharia), and that he "possessed religious learning and understanding."<sup>88</sup>

The sources most often used to study the life of Saladin, which have been cited heavily in the above biography, were written by his contemporaries, Baha al-Din Ibn Shaddad, a member of his personal court, as well as his enemy William, the Archbishop of Tyre. Another Arab historian who wrote extensively on the crusade period, and was a contemporary of Saladin, named Izz al-Din Abu'l Hasan Ali al-Jazari Ibn al-Athir, is also a primary source. These writings of his contemporaries are the foundation of what modern historians use to understand the factual Saladin, especially given the current knowledge of the prevalence of the legends.<sup>89</sup> Baha al-Din's *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin* is the most important of these works. Baha al-Din crafts an image of Saladin as the ideal Muslim ruler, with Saladin's best qualities emphasized, and though

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<sup>87</sup> Baha al-Din, 18-22.

<sup>88</sup> Ibn al-Athir, 409.

<sup>89</sup> Hamilton Gibb gives a great account of the usefulness of these works in his *The Life and Achievements of Saladin*, pp 1-10.

his flaws are not ignored, they are certainly downplayed. As Saladin's personal scribe, Baha al-Din was certainly seeking patronage not only from him, but from the sultan's sons, and this undoubtedly colored his appraisal.

Ibn al-Athir, while not openly hostile to Saladin, described the fallen Zengid Dynasty with admiration and judged Saladin harshly for causing its fall.<sup>90</sup> Saladin's depiction in Ibn al-Athir's great history of the Islamic world, *al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh*, is considered a much harsher version of the events of Saladin's life. Al-Athir was also a scribe to Saladin as Baha al-Din had been, enlisting with Saladin as a 25-year-old man, though he came away from the experience with a very different opinion.<sup>91</sup> Unlike Baha al-Din, Ibn al-Athir harbored a subtle anger towards Saladin, and his version is not as rose-tinted as the patronage-seeking Baha al-Din. These two works have frequently been analyzed together by historians, and most believe that when looked at together they paint a relatively factual account of Saladin's life, especially when combined with the work of William of Tyre.<sup>92</sup> William's work, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, while respectful of Saladin's accomplishments, believed him to be a scourge upon the Earth and the Christian's Kingdom of Jerusalem.<sup>93</sup>

William, born in Jerusalem around 1130, rose high in the Catholic Church to the position of Archbishop of Tyre and watched Saladin's rise to power from his seat of power in the city. William wrote pragmatically of Saladin, describing him as a "man of

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<sup>90</sup> Ibn al-Athir described Nur al-Din as a leader who should be used as the example for the rest of the Muslim world, writing "We shall give here a brief account in the hope that those who wield authority will peruse it and him as their model." He goes on to list what he considered to be the sterling qualities of Nur al-Din, hoping other Muslims would emulate him, and by contrast, ignore Saladin. Ibn al-Athir, 222.

<sup>91</sup> *Encyclopedia of Islam*, s.v. "Ibn al-Athir," 723.

<sup>92</sup> James W. Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing*, Vol I (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1967), 351.

<sup>93</sup> It must be made clear that William believed all Islam a scourge, not strictly Saladin.

sharp mind, active in war, and generous beyond proper measure.”<sup>94</sup> While he may have been impressed by Saladin’s accomplishments, his writings drip with fear and loathing of the sultan, believing him to be the greatest threat to Christendom the world had ever seen.<sup>95</sup> William brings Saladin to task for his behavior during his early life and lambasts Saladin for his endless ambition, though his history is silent about the crusade as he died before the breakout of open war with Saladin.<sup>96</sup> While a thorough reading of William’s history reveals both positive and negative views of Saladin, it seems that the legends that spread afterward in England and France appeared to only focus on the positives, while dismissing the negatives. William tends to describe that “fortune” played a large role in Saladin’s rise to power and success, often retuning to the motif.<sup>97</sup> This mix of positive and negative has been helpful to modern historians, and give William an important place in the history of the Crusades.<sup>98</sup> Three different writers, three different opinions. There is an important facet of the writing at this time that needs to be remembered. When histories were written as this time they were usually written with moral lessons, as well as social and political commentary, in mind. Not only were facts being recorded, but they were spun in this didactic fashion to teach people, usually nobles, the ideals the authors espoused. These facets of historical writing can be shown no better than in a direct comparison of how each writer dealt with Saladin’s actions after the death of Nur al-Din.

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<sup>94</sup> William of Tyre, xii.

<sup>95</sup> William also makes it clear that he believed Nur al-Din to be the model of a good Islamic leader, emphasizing the didactic nature of the writing.

<sup>96</sup> There is little known about William’s upbringing and ancestry. There has been a long debate on the origins of William of Tyre and his family, and remains mysterious. William of Tyre, 4-10.

<sup>97</sup> Many other accounts mirror this theory and are the reason that Helen J. Nicholson’s *Chronicle of the Third Crusade: Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001) is believed to be a Latin continuation of William’s work; Jubb, *Legend of Saladin*, 30-31.

<sup>98</sup> Many European writers attempted to finish, or rather continue, William’s history. The most famous of these being the so called “French Continuations,” gathered by M.R. Morgan and called *La Continuation de Guillaume de Tyr* (1982).



Baha al-Din states, “When the sultan received confirmation of Nur ad-Din’s death, aware his son was a child unable to shoulder the burdens of Kingship and incapable of taking on the defense of the lands against God’s enemies, he made preparations to march to Syria.”<sup>99</sup> That is one of the more agreeable ways one could explain how Saladin overthrew the child of his former overlord and took the reins of power for himself. It also certainly shows how Baha al-Din depicts the more “questionable” actions of Saladin with a rose tint. Ibn al-Athir is much harsher on Saladin for this, claiming that despite Saladin’s feigned obedience he “seized and took away all the money within” the city.<sup>100</sup> William is even harsher on Saladin, claiming “Saladin, in defiance of the laws of humanity, wholly regardless of his lowly condition, and ungrateful for the benefits that had been showered upon by the father of that boy king, had risen against his rightful lord.”<sup>101</sup>

These three quotes all describe the same event, yet the depictions vary greatly, and help show the didactic nature of the writing. William, influenced by medieval European feudalism and the chivalric idea that loyalty to one’s lord was absolute, uses this story to depict such an act as morally abhorrent. Ibn al-Athir on the other hand, detested the period of civil war in Islam that this episode encapsulated. Thus, he portrayed the greedy taking of the money from the city as the real motivation for the war, not Islamic unity, attempting to shame his contemporaries into ending the factional disputes that plagued the region. Baha al-Din, on the other hand, viewed Saladin as a unifying figure and thus covered up some of the more unsavory aspects of his behavior.

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<sup>99</sup> Baha al-Din, 51.

<sup>100</sup> Ibn al-Athir, 232-233.

<sup>101</sup> William of Tyre, 408.

All of the authors writing throughout this chapter will have this didactic motivation, as it was a key facet of the literature of the time.<sup>102</sup> It is from these disparate views that modern historians draw their opinions on Saladin, with most attempting to find a middle ground among all three. With this background established, let us begin to look at how England and France viewed Saladin before and during the Third Crusade.

## **First Impressions**

While the legends of Saladin have existed in many forms over the past 800 years, they do not reflect the views of the English and French directly after the period of the Third Crusade. The original view taken by Europeans on Saladin is best described as stereotypical, with Saladin cast as either a treacherous villain who had stolen the Holy Land from its rightful owners, or as a punishment from God. Much of the literature available between the Third Crusade in 1187, and the early 1220s speak of Saladin as a villain and a punishment from the Christian God. This thesis will provide two Latin examples of this form of writing, and it is important to note now that the purpose of this thesis is not to attempt to analyze every known example of the Saladin legend, rather it is to analyze the best known and most pertinent.<sup>103</sup> Both of these examples are known to have been circulated in England and France, and they have a very different opinion of Saladin than later legends would espouse, as they are best characterized as hostile accounts of Saladin's rise to power and reign. However, they are not the only early writings about Saladin, as another example, circulated in French rather than Latin, will

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<sup>102</sup> Munslow, *History*, 5-25.

<sup>103</sup> For a complete gathering of the Saladin legends see Margaret Jubb, *The Legend of Saladin in Western Literature and Historiography* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000).

also be analyzed. The difference in language will be a key part of the analysis.

Latin was the language of the Catholic Church as well as the scholars and most nobility, but was not as common among the other social classes.<sup>104</sup> As stated in the introduction, there were scores of vernacular languages throughout England and France in the thirteenth century, but French was the preferred language of the nobility of both nations. The difference between the French language legends and the Latin writings of the Church would be influential in the future of the legends. The first of the examples, an anonymous Latin poem, takes the view of Saladin as a tyrant and a betrayer, certainly not characteristics Europeans of later generations would attribute to Saladin.

One of the earliest sources on the opinion of people in England and France during the crusade itself was an anonymous Latin poem, first circulated around 1185-1187.<sup>105</sup> The authorship has long been lost to historians, as was the work itself, before it was rediscovered by Saladin historian Gaston Paris in 1893, and Paris would use this work to great effect in his aforementioned short study of Saladin.<sup>106</sup> Paris believed this work to have been circulated before the crusade, as it does not mention the fall of Jerusalem and mainly focuses on Saladin's rise to power as a tyrant and supposedly bastard offspring and slave of Nur ad-Din. Of Saladin's birth and stature, the author writes that Saladin was "born from the twisted stock of Nur al-Din" and was low class as "the king who had held the condition of a slave."<sup>107</sup> This clear condemnation of the man was common at the

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<sup>104</sup> Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, *A New History of French Medieval Literature*, trans. Sara Preisig (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 5.

<sup>105</sup> Jubb, *Legend of Saladin*, 6; *Itinerarium*, 8.

<sup>106</sup> As stated in the historiography, Paris is widely credited with the first summation and exposition of the legends of Saladin, Paris, 393.

<sup>107</sup> Jubb, *Legend of Saladin*, 6; "Natus ab obliquo de stirpe fuit Noradini," and "Rex est qui Fuerat servilis condicionis."

time, as other songs and poems, most lost to history, recorded the deep hatred the English and French felt towards Saladin. This blasphemer had dared to reconquer what had been rightfully the possession of Christianity. It further claims that Saladin seduced Nur al-Din's wife to cuckold him, and eventually had him murdered as he took power. The lack of history in this work is obvious, but it is its attitude that is important to note. The tone of the work, one of derision and contempt, place it in stark contrast with the legends that would come. What about after the crusade had ended?

The second example, the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi I*, was circulated in the years after the end of the crusade between 1200 and 1220. It is another example of Latin contempt, describing Saladin, not only as a moral degenerate and tyrant, but also as a scourge unleashed by a wrathful God on the sinful inhabitants of the Holy Land.<sup>108</sup> In this medieval work, several anonymous Latin authors echo William of Tyre's attacks on Saladin's motives, his methods for attaining his throne, and his character. Unlike in William's writings, the respect that William clearly had for Saladin's abilities is absent. Instead, the authors of the *Itinerarium* painted him as a greedy tyrant: "He alone claimed the governments of many Kings! Still yet the Tyrant's greed is not content with this" show quite clearly how the authors felt about Saladin as a ruler.<sup>109</sup> They do, however, also attribute fortune to his rise to power as William did, claiming "It was the caprice of fortune that wished for these rapid changes. She rises up rich men from a pauper the lofty from the humble, a ruler from a slave."<sup>110</sup> This clear link to William's work, particularly through the reference to Fortune, has led scholars to believe that parts

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<sup>108</sup> *Itinerarium*, 1-4.

<sup>109</sup> *Itinerarium*, 29.

<sup>110</sup> *Itinerarium*, 29.

of the *Itinerarium* are taken directly from the *Latin Continuations* of that author's incomplete work.<sup>111</sup>

As stated before, however, the *Itinerarium* has almost none of the grudging respect for Saladin that William had, instead claiming that Saladin began his career as a pimp:

His origins: Saladin received his first auspices of future power under Nuradin, sultan of Damascus. Saladin collected ill-gotten gains for himself from a levy on the girls of Damascus: they were not allowed to practice as prostitutes unless they had obtained, at a price, a license from him for carrying on the profession of lust. However, whatever gained by pimping like this he paid by generously funding plays. So through lavish giving to all their desires he won the mercenary favor of the common people.<sup>112</sup>

This was a brutally damning statement as in medieval English and French culture, the lowest rungs of society were held for actors and prostitutes.<sup>113</sup> This is not the only claim the *Itinerarium* makes as to Saladin being a pimp. It refers to Saladin being named ruler of Egypt as “That pimp, who had a kingdom of brothels, an army in taverns, who studied dice and rice is suddenly raised up on high.”<sup>114</sup> Historically speaking one struggles to understand where this claim originated, other than being an outright fabrication. Though with chapter titles such as “How an emir’s genitals were burnt up by Greek fire with which he planned to burn our siege machines,” one can understand why crusade historians tend to discount this work.<sup>115</sup> Well-known historian and translator of the work

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<sup>111</sup> After the death of William of Tyre, many anonymous authors attempted to finish his history of the time. These works are divided by language and where they are produced, thus the Latin continuations were produced in Rome and written in Latin. Many other works have also been produced that will be dealt with by this work, such as the French continuations, but most tend to have different language and writing styles than those of the original author. *Itinerarium*, 1-20.

<sup>112</sup> *Itinerarium*, 27.

<sup>113</sup> Bede Jarrett, *Social Theories of the Middle Ages: 1200-1500* (Westminster: Newman Books, 1962), 236-250.

<sup>114</sup> *Itinerarium*, 28.

<sup>115</sup> *Itinerarium*, 14 and 109.

Helen Nicholson believed that the value of the *Itinerarium* was only in its uses in comparison to other sources, as corroboration, rather than as an independent source.<sup>116</sup> One can also again see the didactic purpose of both, using Saladin as an example of a greedy extractive tyrant, making it clear that such a path as a leader was immoral and mistaken.

This contempt is not the only facet of the early legends that is significant. What is equally important to understand is that in the minds of the English and French Saladin was viewed as a punishment from their God on the “sinful” denizens of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. The text opens as follows: “The Lord saw that the land of His Nativity, the place of His Passion, had fallen into filthy abyss. Therefore, He spurned His Inheritance permitting the rod of His Fury, Saladin, to rage and exterminate the obstinate people.”<sup>117</sup> The author also records that the earth shook violently from storms, foretelling the coming of this scourge of God, Saladin.<sup>118</sup> Continuing this theme, the author states that God abandoned the crusaders at Hattin creating a Judas in Raymond Count of Tripoli who abandoned the host at Hattin, “so the Lord’s people were left bewildered in the moment of crisis. Then the Lord ‘gave His people the sword’ [Psalm 78 v. 62] and –as the sins of humanity demanded– He gave up His inheritance to slaughter and pillage.”<sup>119</sup> “His inheritance” in this case refers to Jesus and his dominion over the holy land of the Levant.

This theme of punishment rings out in the negotiated settlement reached at the

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<sup>116</sup> *Itinerarium*, 14 and 109.

<sup>117</sup> *Itinerarium*, 23.

<sup>118</sup> This image of a storm foretelling Saladin’s rise would be present in virtually all mentions of Saladin’s birth during the Genesis period of the legends.

<sup>119</sup> *Itinerarium*, 32.

gates of Jerusalem between Balian of Ibelin and Saladin. Of that confrontation, the author writes of Saladin: “The sacrilegious man besieged the city, constructed siege machines and irreverently invaded the holy places.”<sup>120</sup> But surprisingly it seems the surrender of the city is what truly aggrieved the author, saying “yet the treaty they made was more to be regretted than commended. Each person was to pay the price of their own head.”<sup>121</sup> There is no mention of the mercy and chivalry that will feature heavily in the legends, just a condemnation of the Christian inhabitants of Jerusalem for their cowardice. The French Continuations of William of Tyre, *La Coninuation de Guillaume de Tyr*, took a different approach.

Many French and Latin writers attempted to finish (or continue) William’s history, the most famous being the so called “French Continuations,” gathered by M.R. Morgan and edited in a work he called *La Coninuation de Guillaume de Tyr* (1982).<sup>122</sup> Many of these were simply placed at the end of different copies of William’s manuscripts, and these combined documents, called the *Eracles*, have similar tones to William’s writing, but were different in several ways. The manuscripts gathered by Morgan and translated by Peter Edbury are referred to as the Lyon *Eracles*. Not only are there multiple copies of the French manuscripts, but there are several different continuations in different languages, another of the more famous being the *Latin Continuations*. While with both of the aforementioned documents exact authorship is unknown, many of the *French Continuations* take their narrative from a now lost document called the *Chronique d’Ernoul*, or the chronicle of the squire of Balian of

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<sup>120</sup> *Itinerarium*, 38.

<sup>121</sup> *Itinerarium*, 38.

<sup>122</sup> Peter Edbury, *The Conquest of Jerusalem and the Third Crusade: Sources in Translation* (London: Ashgate, 1999), vii.

Ibelin, Ernoul.<sup>123</sup> Balian, as one of the few survivors of the Battle of Hattin, took charge of the defense of the city of Jerusalem and managed to force a settlement with Saladin.<sup>124</sup> This scene, condemned by the *Itinerarium* as a cowardly surrender, is depicted completely differently in the *French Continuations*, with Saladin portrayed as merciful, sparing the people of Jerusalem with the line “I shall have mercy on them in a manner that will save my oath.”<sup>125</sup> This clear difference in these two scenes highlights perfectly the different tones of both works. This is also another example of the didactic nature of the writing, with the *French Continuations* hoping to influence leaders into giving the same mercy to towns they lay siege to in Europe.

The *French Continuations* included many other acts of charity by Saladin, such as his giving food to the drought ridden County of Tripoli, “the Saracens brought the Christians as many supplies as they would normally have had in good times. If there had been no truce they would all have died of Hunger.”<sup>126</sup> Most historians would agree that the legends that surround Saladin in later centuries must have come from crusaders returning after the end of the Third Crusade, spreading the news of the fall of Jerusalem, and the failure of the crusade. The crusaders, such as the aforementioned Squire of Balian, were the ones telling the stories that formed the basis of the legends, as they spread the strange tales of the merciful and chivalric Saladin. It is thus not surprising that the first French language text available has a different narrative and opinion than the ones written in the language of the Catholic Church. It is also important as the more positive

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<sup>123</sup> Edbury, *Continuations*, 2 and 33; *Itinerarium*, 2-10.

<sup>124</sup> Thomas Asbridge, *The Crusades: The Authoritative History of the War for the Holy Lands* (New York, CCCO, 2010), 340-365.

<sup>125</sup> Edbury, *Continuations*, 59.

<sup>126</sup> Edbury, *Continuations*, 17.



view was being spread in the vernacular, making it much more well known.

While the *French Continuations* may have been the “patient zero” of the legends, they do seem to get the “facts” of his life correct. One of the most important things that must be remembered about the *Continuations* is that they in no way doubted Saladin’s devotion to Islam. His deference to his religion is clear in passages such as:

If you will do my command you will live, and I shall give you lands that I have conquered just like the lands I have granted my own men. They asked what he wanted them to do. He told them that they should renounce their law and the cross and the faith of Jesus Christ and turn to the law of Mohammed. They replied together in one voice that if it pleased God they would never forsake the law of Jesus Christ, he whom the Jews had crucified in Jerusalem. When Saladin heard this answer he was out raged. He immediately ordered the Templars to be killed.<sup>127</sup>

This document, and the others from the early thirteenth century all viewed Saladin as a zealous Muslim, though to varying degrees of hostility and disrespect. This is the first time the idea of Saladin as a virtuous pagan, appeared. As a virtuous pagan, Saladin somehow fit the ideals of French and English society, despite his Muslim faith. This became a cornerstone of the future chivalric legends. Thus, the change from enemy to venerated figure becomes even more bizarre as history moves forward. It is clear that Saladin was viewed harshly by the English and French during and directly after the fall of Jerusalem and the Third Crusade. Through the stories of returning crusaders, as well as attempts to finish histories, a new narrative was being formed, and legends were being created. The most important of the legends can be divided into two groups; the chivalric legends and the Christian legends.

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<sup>127</sup> Edbury, *Continuations*, 78.

## The Chivalric Saladin

By far the most common of the legends of Saladin invoked an image of him that is best described as the chivalric ideal. Simply explained, chivalry was a medieval European code of conduct that dictated the actions of the noble and soldiering classes. This code, with detailed instructions on how to conduct oneself in manners of court, warfare, decorum, peace, and even romance, changed throughout the medieval period, and even changed depending on the recorder of the work.<sup>128</sup> Chivalry was then and is still an abstract construct. It has shifting meanings and importance, making a fixed definition difficult at best.<sup>129</sup> However, what is important is that throughout France and England during the thirteenth century, the authors creating the legends had a concept of chivalry. Even if it was not uniform, this “chivalric ideal” could be interpreted as a societal ideal, a “nobility of humanity.” They believed that “chivalry” dictated a correct way of doing things. Consequently Saladin, though his depictions do vary, meets each author’s separate view of chivalry. Thus, because the authors used the same language to describe Saladin as they did the chivalric knights he combated in each story, the infinite differing definitions of chivalry do not matter, only that the authors viewed him through a chivalric lens does. It is in understanding these concepts that this thesis can move forward with Saladin and his chivalric image.

These differing definitions of chivalry are not the only thing to keep in mind, equally important is how chivalry is described by modern historians such as Maurice

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<sup>128</sup> Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 3-10.

<sup>129</sup> For further readings on chivalry see Maurice Keen, *Origins of the English Gentlemen: Heraldry, Chivalry, and Gentility in Medieval England, 1300-1500* (London: Tempus Pub, 2002); Geoffroi de Charny, *A Knights Own Book of Chivalry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); and James Branch Cabell, *Chivalry* (Middletown: Amazon Publishing, 2012).

Keen. Chivalry was an ideal and not necessarily the reality. This ideal versus reality permeates the literature on chivalry, with Keen arguing in his seminal text on the subject, *Chivalry* (1984), that the chivalric code was much less a standard and more a faux ideal propped up by literature and histories, with little emphasis placed on chivalry in the lives of the noble class of Europe.<sup>130</sup> This argument has become the standard for chivalry; that while the literature of the day proclaimed its importance, its role in the day to day lives of the people who supposedly followed it was minimal, and nonexistent in the lower classes. This is important because this thesis is not trying to argue that chivalry was more important than Keen suggests. The fact that chivalry's role in the lives of the people of France and England tends not matter, just as popular culture does not always reflect societies perfectly. It is the focus on chivalry in the story-telling and self-image of the people of France and England that is important. Also, these chivalric legends tend to treat Saladin as a noble blasphemer since most of them acknowledge his Islamic ideals and upbringing, yet focus on him as a shining figure, as the *French Continuations* of William had.

The first and arguably most important example advocating the chivalric tendencies of Saladin is a medieval French poem entitled *L'Ordene de Chevalerie*, written around 1220.<sup>131</sup> It is important again to reiterate that while this poem has been found in French, the nobles and literate of England would also have been familiar with it, given the prevalence of the French language in both countries in the thirteenth century. Not only is this work vital to understanding the chivalric legends, it has importance to

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<sup>130</sup> Keen, *Chivalry*, 18-21.

<sup>131</sup> Roy Temple House, *L'Ordene de Chevalerie; An Old French Poem* (Chicago: University of Chicago Libraries, 1918).

historians of chivalry as well. Keen, in fact, relies heavily on the *Chevalerie* in the opening pages of his work on the subject. This document is meant to show the ultimate morality and role of the knighted and chivalric in society, propping those figures up as the ideal. The *Chevalerie* tells a story of how Saladin, during his time in Egypt, was knighted by Hugh of Tabarie (Tiberius), at Saladin's request, with Saladin pleading "Hugh, by the faith ye owe unto the God whose law ye know, Now make me wise: for sore I crave the right road straight away to have, and I have will to learn aright in what wise one is made a knight."<sup>132</sup> This event is not mentioned by his contemporaries, but has become ingrained in the image of Saladin.<sup>133</sup> The overall tone of the poem is complimentary of Saladin, but it highlights this idea of him as a noble blasphemer. This legend clearly acknowledges Saladin's Islamic heritage with the line "The holy order of Knighthood, In thee will nowise turn to good; For evil law thou holdest now, Nor faith no Baptism has thou."<sup>134</sup> Later in the century as the legends continue to evolve, this devotion to Islam will be converted to a secret admiration and even conversion to Christianity, but that would take another few decades. But this clear promotion of chivalry and knighthood as the pinnacle of society was certainly a tactic in the writing of the piece.

Another major work that medieval scholars depend on for a view of the time period is a 1260s bardic tale authored by the "Minstrel of Reims."<sup>135</sup> The Minstrel's identity is unknown, and his work is famous for being a poor history as factual errors are

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<sup>132</sup> *L'Ordene de Chevalerie*, 2.

<sup>133</sup> All Saladin historians have to deal with this legend in their work as while there is historical evidence that Hugh of Tiberius was indeed Saladin's prisoner, the first reporting of the supposed knighting doesn't appear for at least fifty years.

<sup>134</sup> *L'Ordene de Chevalerie*, 2.

<sup>135</sup> Minstrel of Reims, *Recits d'un menestrel de Reims*, (Lewiston: Mellon Press, 1999).

apparent to even a lay-reader. The poem itself is a retelling of the history from the failure of the Second Crusade through the end of the Fourth Crusade. Saladin plays a small but meaningful role in the first few chapters of the poem. When he is mentioned the author takes great pains to present Saladin in a positive light, such as “Saladin, a wise and generous man,” or some similar form.<sup>136</sup> This work is a prime example of the idea of chivalric comparison. It is in an exchange between Saladin and King Guy of Jerusalem, that the chivalric Saladin is revealed:

Here let us turn from King Guy, the fine, who was in prison in Babylon, in great distress, and speak of Saladin, then whom no better Saracen ever put a foot in the stirrup. One day he was in Babylon, and he commanded King Guy be brought before him and he said to him “King, now I have you, and I am going to have your head cut off.” “Of course,” said the King, “It is your right and I have deserved it, because it is my fault that the land beyond the seas has been lost, and Christianity dishonored.” “By Mahomet,” said Saladin, “that is not true. It is the Fault of your barons who betrayed you and took my gold and my silver. I know very well you are a fine, brave knight and I shall be generous with you; I shall give you twenty knights, together with their horses, with arms and food, and you may do the best you can.” Saladin then had all the prisoners brought before him, and he said to the king: “Now take the twenty that you want.”<sup>137</sup>

Clearly, Saladin is being used as both a foil and a chivalric equal to Guy. Yet how does this prove the comparison point? Guy D’Lusignan does not have the best reputation among medieval scholars, yet the Minstrel frequently refers to Guy in a positive fashion. Specifically, he is described by the author as “a fine and chivalric man.”<sup>138</sup> While the Minstrel may be kind, Guy would receive a terrible reputation from other historians. William of Tyre refers to him as “not equal to the burden of so great a responsibility, and

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<sup>136</sup> Minstrel of Reims, 7.

<sup>137</sup> Minstrel of Reims, 8-9.

<sup>138</sup> Minstrel of Reims, 6.

was not competent to administer the affairs of the realm.”<sup>139</sup> Stories of how Sibylla should have divorced him and married a more worthy man fill volumes of histories and legends. Yet the Minstrel is of a different opinion, honoring Guy, and through this honor, Saladin is pulled up. While historians and writers of the time may have disagreed on what made a knight, be it Hugh or Guy, Saladin is always portrayed as their pseudo equal despite his Islamic outsider status, and this chivalric behavior continued in other works. Even though each work is promoting a different morality, it is important for the reader to see that each one is didactic in its own way. The message and parties may change—simply look at the differing opinions on Guy D’Lusignan— but the role of the stories does not.

The *Estoires d’ Outremer et de la naissance Salehadin* was gathered by Margaret Jubb and features many of the old French and English legends in the combined work.<sup>140</sup> This is deeply important to legends as one finds some of the best examples of not only the chivalric legends, but the others as well. Given that the stories span in age from 1250 to 1300, this makes it an excellent source to show the evolution of the legends. As it was a collection of stories, the *Estoires* have many authors and almost all are anonymous, but the themes of the earlier works of the Minstrel and *L’Ordene* are continued and expanded. In fact, elements of each story appear in the *Estoires*. Most importantly to this point, the *Estoires* include this story of Hugh, though told a bit differently. Rather than having to be convinced, Hugh is so overcome by Saladin’s greatness and piety that he cannot control himself and knights Saladin on the spot.<sup>141</sup> Though in some versions of the

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<sup>139</sup> William of Tyre, 493.

<sup>140</sup> Margaret Jubb, *Estoires d’ Outremer* (London: University of London, 1990).

<sup>141</sup> *Estoires*, 72

legend, Saladin demands to be knighted.<sup>142</sup> The *Estoires* clearly evolved from the earlier works, though as will be seen in the next section, they have little to do with factual history. The telling of the sparing of Jerusalem in *Estoires* is a perfect example of the evolutions of the legends. Many of the stories in the *Estoires* tell of Saladin seeking any reason he could to spare a life while taking that city.<sup>143</sup> Even after his “merciful victory, given to him through Gods own graces” is shown, he trades away slaves to his captains, who he knows will free them.<sup>144</sup> He frees the woman and children, all in order to be as merciful as he could. This image of the merciful Saladin from the *Estoires* completely supplants the attempts of the previous Latin authors to cover that event in shame. Rather than focusing on the Christians shame in surrendering, story tellers instead focused on the good of Saladin in sparing the city. This is one of the most important didactic messages of the legends of Saladin, championed over and over again throughout the thirteenth century, that his mercy at Jerusalem is the shame of the Christian conquered that came before him.

Why were these chivalric legends created? Many of the previous scholars on the Saladin legends, such as Hillenbrand and Jubb, believe that it was Saladin’s actions in sparing the city of Jerusalem and freeing prisons, as well as a hundred other acts of mercy and generosity, that helped develop the chivalric legends. There is some truth to this but this explanation does not go far enough to explain why they were so pervasive. Many of these stories promote the idea of Saladin as an “other,” but as an “other” that is a excellent moral example by which British and French readers of the stories should live

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<sup>142</sup> *Estoires*, 59-70.

<sup>143</sup> Jubb, *Legend of Saladin*, 10.

<sup>144</sup> Jubb, *Legend of Saladin*, 11.

their lives. There is no doubt that to the Christian English and French, Saladin was outside their society. Yet despite his birth and religion, Saladin led a virtuous life worth recording. On top of this didactic mission, woven throughout the previous section was the idea of justification, that the English and French had to justify either Saladin's acts or his success itself. As one better understands the role of religion in French and English culture, one can better understand the need for justification. Similarly, this justification has to do with the English and the French beginning to define an identity through the "other." As these societies start defining themselves by their opponents, Saladin continues to adopt more and more Christian traits. It can be argued that his outsider status is intentionally removed over the course of the thirteenth century, as the legends have him adopting more facets of European society and culture. This shows not only how the English and French defined themselves, but how they defined the "other" as well. This can only be understood by seeing the next evolution; the legends of Saladin as a Christian European.

### **The Christian Saladin**

While the chivalric legends may be the most common, less well-known are the legends that describe Saladin as a reluctant Muslim, or even a converted Christian. These legends abandon the idea of the virtuous outsider and embrace a theory of Saladin not as the other, but as a closeted member of English and French society. As these legends evolve Saladin adopts more and more of a European pedigree, and not just religiously. Related to this are legends that date to this time that claim Saladin was not in fact of Arab stock, but rather was the bastard descendant of the French house of Pontieu, and



frequently traveled throughout Europe.<sup>145</sup> While there is some basis in history for the chivalric legends, as Saladin did act in that “noble” fashion and some comparison is justified, these legends have virtually no basis in history and in most cases are pure fantasy. It is also important for the reader to understand that these legends come later than the chivalric ones, generally in the late thirteenth century, showing a clear evolution from the historic to the invented, and from Saladin being an outsider to a pseudo-European. To understand these fantastic legends, one must understand the role of the church in the lives of the English and the French.

The Catholic Church was the most important institution in the day to day lives of the people in English and French societies.<sup>146</sup> Effectively every village had a church or a monastery, even if it did not have a tavern or a town hall.<sup>147</sup> The Catholic Church was so powerful at this time it even had its own pseudo-military in religious orders, specifically for use in the Kingdom of Jerusalem and the Levant.<sup>148</sup> Further, one of the most important roles the Catholic Church filled was in law.<sup>149</sup> The medieval society that emerged from the fall of Rome lacked political cohesion and or codified law, and in the time before the forging of nation-states, the Church filled that void. The Fourth Lateran Council, held in the 1215, codified this fact with a series of tenets and canons that acknowledged the superiority of church law over secular law.<sup>150</sup> The Fifth though the Tenth canons of the Council’s creed all directly described the church’s role in

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<sup>145</sup> See Appendix 1a and 2a.

<sup>146</sup> F. Donald Logan, *A History of the Church in the Middle Ages 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed* (London: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>147</sup> Logan, *Church*, 135.

<sup>148</sup> Logan, *Church*, 130.

<sup>149</sup> Jarrett, *Social Theories of the Middle Ages*, 1-30.

<sup>150</sup> Fordham, “Medieval Sourcebook: Twelfth Ecumenical Council, Lateran IV (1215),” [www.fordham.edu/sourcebook](http://www.fordham.edu/sourcebook).

maintaining law and order in the regions it controlled. These canons also declared the primacy of the pope over secular rulers and made it clear that Church law was supreme.<sup>151</sup> The Thirty-Fourth and Thirty-Fifth canons deal with courts of appeal and further show just how codified and rigid and orderly Church law attempted to be. It would not be until the French Revolution and the start of Protestant Reformation in England that those nations would begin to fully divest their codified laws from the laws of the Catholic Church.<sup>152</sup> While it is important to acknowledge the idealization versus normative argument when it comes to law, remember that this thesis is focused on idealizations. Even plainer than this confusing set of laws is an ideal that most Christians of the time believed; that God influenced the outcomes of all contests, with the more “godly” or pious chosen victor.<sup>153</sup>

One can clearly detect further didactic motives in this vein by the medieval authors. By using God’s punishment as a vehicle to highlight the moral failures of those who “displease God,” these medieval European authors are advocating the behaviors they wish to see in their leaders and fellow men. This idea especially is represented in crusading literature. As our own Minstrel of Reims makes clear, if the First Crusade succeeded on God’s will, the others must have failed due to God’s abandonment.<sup>154</sup> The Minstrel makes it plain what he believes condemns these crusades and even the Levant itself, and that is the unholy deals crusader nobility make with local Muslim lords.<sup>155</sup> Many Europeans viewed these deals, so necessary to the survival of the Kingdom of

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<sup>151</sup> Lateran, Fifth through Tenth Canon.

<sup>152</sup> Robert Tombs, *The English and their History* (London: Knopf, 2015), 450-460.

<sup>153</sup> Logan, *Church*, 135.

<sup>154</sup> The minstrel gives many reasons for this, including the sinfulness and cowardice of the French king Phillip costing pious ones like Richard his victory in the Crusade.

<sup>155</sup> Minstrel of Reims, 1.

Jerusalem, as blasphemous, and the Minstrel is using his writing to show this. The chivalric stories were not the only ones included in the *Estories*, as it is also a major source for the Christianized legends as well, and the most important of these legends linking Saladin to Christianity is the “Parable of the Three Rings.”

This legend involving the faith of Saladin is also featured in *Estoires d’Outremer*, but is believed to have been based on an older tale and a common parable of the times. This “Parable of the Three Rings” was much older than any of those about Saladin, believed to have originated around the ninth or tenth centuries in Europe.<sup>156</sup> In its simplest form it was recorded in the fifteenth century in the *Gesta Romanorum*, a compilation of Latin and Roman stories and fables:

A certain knight had three sons, and on his deathbed he bequeathed the inheritance to his firstborn; to the second, his treasury; and to the third, a very valuable ring, of more worth indeed than all he had left to the others. But the two former had also rings, and they were all apparently the same. After their father's death the first son said, "I possess that precious ring of my father." The second said, "You have it not -- I have." To this the third son answered, "That is not true. The elder of us has the estate, the second the treasure, and therefore it is but meet that I should have the most valuable ring." The first son answered, "Let us prove, then, whose claims to it have the preeminence." They agreed, and several sick men were made to resort to them for the purpose. The two first rings had no effect, but the last cured all their infirmities.<sup>157</sup>

The knight in the story is Christ, and his three sons are the three great religions, Christianity (the third son), Judaism (the second son), and Islam (the first son).<sup>158</sup> The third son’s ring represents true faith, and thus is the most powerful over land and wealth.

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<sup>156</sup> Charles Swan, *Gesta Romanorum*, (London: George Bell and Sons, 1877), x.

<sup>157</sup> Swan, *Gesta Romanorum*, 161-162.

<sup>158</sup> This is also a reference I believe to the differing sons of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael.

In the Saladin version of that older parable, Saladin, while on his death bed, calls the most famous religious leaders in the Near East to his bedside and has them debate the merits of their religion.<sup>159</sup> The writers of the *Estoires d'Outremer* simply adapted this ancient fable to their needs, and it would not be the last time. All that changes in the *Estoires* is the added details such as: "When Saladin died, he sent for the caliph of Baghdad and the patriarch of Jerusalem and the wisest Jews one could find in the whole Jerusalem area, for he wished to find out which law was the best."<sup>160</sup> The outcome of the choice in the *Estoires* is also Christianity, and Christians are supposedly awarded great wealth in Saladin's will, with less wealth awarded to the Jews and Muslims respectively. In the legend it is only through the intervention of Saladin's sons that the Christians do not receive what they have been granted. While the *Estoires* are the oldest form of this Christian legend, it would be passed all over the world, and would be dealt with by some of the most famous writers in history.<sup>161</sup>

Supposed Christian leanings are fantastic on their own, but several legends also claimed Saladin was descended from Europeans as well. While there may be some basis for the claims made about Saladin's chivalric nature, subsequent accounts truly take a flight of fantasy when these now lost authors claim in later passages that Saladin was in fact a bastard descendant of the French royal house of Pontieu; or that Saladin secretly traveled to Europe in his youth.<sup>162</sup> The *Estoires* are so specific about this descent that a Pontieu family table featuring Saladin is easily replicated and is located in the

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<sup>159</sup> *Estoires*, 133-139.

<sup>160</sup> *Estoires*, 235.

<sup>161</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>162</sup> *Estoires*, 64-71.

Appendix.<sup>163</sup> These tables show just how much thought and effort was placed into creating a European pedigree for Saladin. This emphasizes the belief that such an outsider showing the ideal traits of English and French society could not have in fact been an outsider. He must have been a European.

Another old French story, the *Pas Saladin*, tells the tale of Saladin's journeys to Europe. Claiming he traveled to Europe with Hugh of Tiberius after the latter knighted him, these stories highlight Saladin's eagerness to learn more of Christian life saying "I wish to learn all of Christendom, and soak the knowledge of the lands beyond the sea."<sup>164</sup> In many ways this was the natural conclusion of these legends as well as the justification theory for them. To the Christian English and French, the only explanation of the stories they heard about Saladin from the returning crusaders is that he was in fact a European all along, therefore the chivalric and Christian nature was quite literally in his blood. These stories of Saladin's travels frequently have him, as the outsider, judging Christian society. Saladin is again used as a vehicle to tell a moral tale, continuing his didactic function in European legend telling, well into the late thirteenth century.

Many of these legends go much further than claiming that Saladin had an appreciation for Christianity and Christian values. Some actually claim at some point in his life Saladin secretly converted to Christianity. Again, as before, the theory for this is quite simply a justification for Saladin's victory over the crusader armies. The stories of Saladin's conversion to Christianity feature in the last stories of the *Estoires*, as well as the Minstrel of Reim's tale, and both feature a death bed confession, usually covered up

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<sup>163</sup> Figure 1a and 2a (appendix).

<sup>164</sup> Jubb, *Saladin Legend*, 115.

by a wicked attendant.<sup>165</sup> Further, these stories play off a supposed meeting between a sultan who was not Saladin –many sultans have filled this role- and St. Francis of Assisi, who according to the *French Continuations* journeyed to the holy land long after Saladin’s reign.<sup>166</sup> The *Estoires* recorded that upon his meeting with Saint Francis, Saladin threw himself to the ground in front of “god’s own messenger” and received his baptism on that very spot.<sup>167</sup> The *Minstrel of Reims* also includes a baptism story in his work, claiming that Saladin:

When learned he was going to die, he asked for a basin of water. A servant ran quickly to bring him a silver basin, and he put it in his left hand. Saladin had himself propped up, made the sign of the cross over the basin with his right hand, touched the four corners of the basin, and said ‘there is as much from here as from here to here.’ He said this because no one was observing him. Then he poured the water over his head and over his body and said, under his breath, three words in French that we didn’t understand. As well as I could make it out, he seemed to be baptizing himself.<sup>168</sup>

These stories appeared in many of the texts of the later thirteenth century, clearly trying to remove Saladin from the common “rabble” of his fellow Muslims, and elevate him into the ranks of the Christians.

Not only were the legends recording the crusaders as sinful, but Saladin was now viewed as a Christian. This added another layer in the minds of the English and French that explained why the Christian God allowed the fall of Jerusalem, and told a moral lesson about society.<sup>169</sup> In a society that viewed justice as a physical struggle between two parties, one sinful and one not, with the victor being chosen by God, this was the

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<sup>165</sup> *Estoires*, 325-330; *Minstrel of Reims*, 34.

<sup>166</sup> Edbury, *Continuations*, 348.

<sup>167</sup> Jubb, *Saladin Legend*, 101-103.

<sup>168</sup> *Minstrel of Reims*, 31.

<sup>169</sup> Edbury, *Continuations*, 162.

only answer that was understandable. Not only had they built him up as a chivalric knight and bastard European, but Saladin was truly one of them now. This is a time when crusader historian John of Joinville referred to Richard as “the greatest Christian monarch the world saw before Louis,” an attitude shared by many contemporaries.<sup>170</sup> This quote helps explain the many parts of the *Estoires d’Outremer* and the Minstrel’s tale that stress a supposed Christian conversion. Because Richard was so revered as a Christian king, God would not allow for his defeat except in a fair fight with another Christian.

Before this new evolution, the justifications for earlier crusade failure in Saladin legends came in the form of cowardice, such as when the Minstrel of Reims wrote of the French King “Keep in mind the fact that king Philip never participated in the assault.”<sup>171</sup> These subtle hints of cowardice were soon replaced with the outright invention of Saladin’s Christianity, as well as a claimed European ancestry. More specifically than just defeating Christians, the authors had to explain how Saladin defeated one of the great Christian monarchs of the twelfth century, Richard the Lionheart. The past two sections have gone back and forth explaining that it was a justification, morality tales, and an exercise in identity-making that created these legends, and the next section will show more of how this transpired.

## **Richard, Saladin, and Identity**

Why Saladin? This question has been pondered and throughout this theory of justification keeps coming through, frequently paired with identity. Most of the stories that are used as sources, such as the Minstrel of Reims, or the *Itinerarium*, are stories that

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<sup>170</sup> Joinville and Villehardouin, *Chronicles of the Crusades* (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), 285.

<sup>171</sup> Minstrel of Reims, 10.

are not in fact about Saladin specifically. He is only a small part of them. Most of where these legends come from are stories that are in fact about Richard the Lionheart.

Renowned Richard scholar John Gillingham once claimed that “no other king of England has retained so strong a hold over the imagination of ordinary English men and women.”<sup>172</sup> Further, because of Richard’s place as the “great Christian monarch” he became a symbol not only of England, as the king, but of France as well. Both the French and English claim him as their own, and there are good reasons for this. The French claim is through his birth and upbringing in Aquitaine, which many historians believe Richard viewed as his home. The English claim is through Richard being a renowned King of England and a national hero for his victories over the French.<sup>173</sup> There is of course no correct answer to this as cultures may adopt anyone they wish. The fact that both did adopt him only strengthens the arguments that the two countries shared a “Angevin” culture. Further, Richard has developed a similar chivalric image to Saladin with his reputation as a noble Christian monarch. Saladin’s fame is intertwined with Richard’s, as he is the well-remembered foil to the much-loved monarch. But where does this view of Richard as an ideal Christian monarch come from?

This idea of Richard as the ideal Christian monarch is backed by writings of the times, with John of Joinville telling several anecdotes involving both Richard and Saladin in his historic work, *The Life of Saint Louis (1309)*.<sup>174</sup> Joinville’s writings have an

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<sup>172</sup> Gillingham, *Coeur de Lion*, 180-183.

<sup>173</sup> John Gillingham, *Richard the Lionheart* (New York: Times Books, 1978).

<sup>174</sup> Joinville, 227. Joinville is also a later proponent of the chivalric legends, writing in 1309, he said “This struck me as a wicked thing to do, since it was contrary to the teachings of Saladin who said that one must not kill any man who has been offered bread and salt to eat.” Joinville is tying Saladin to the European codes of chivalry with this statement, especially those that giving food to a captive is guaranteeing them their life.



anecdote about Richard the Lionheart in which the stature of Saladin in his society is revealed. This anecdote addresses a problem Richard sought to solve and concludes with Joinville writing “Richard, the greatest Christian monarch the world saw before Louis.”<sup>175</sup> As Saladin is the defeater of Richard, it places him in a special place in European society. The depth and length at which these legends were intertwined should be very clear. The point of Joinville’s work is to use Richard as a measuring stick by which to show how great Louis was, and by extension how the rulers of the day should conduct themselves. This means that Saladin was quite literally brought up with him. Richards’s failure to definitively defeat Saladin means that Saladin must have been special, as God stayed out of the fight. Joinville is also further proof of the French refusal to surrender Richard as a French icon.

Saladin, by being Richard’s foil, ensured himself a place in the national histories of both England and France. When the sources analyzed in this work wrote down their histories, it was Richard they were recording and Saladin was there by proxy. Through the reverence that Richard held, Saladin’s noble traits had to be highlighted. All of this is just more of the same of what has been already explained, that the English and French Christians created these stories to explain what they themselves could not explain, and further to protect their own identities. Bly Calkin argued that the English define themselves against the Saracens, especially with Richard, through manuscripts like the fourteenth century *Auchinleck* document.<sup>176</sup> This document portrays Richard as the ultimate English king, fighting the Saracens for English glory and chivalry, with no

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<sup>175</sup> Joinville, *Crusades*, 285.

<sup>176</sup> G.R. Riggs “The Legend of Saladin from Book to Screen: How Saladin is Transformed from the Auchinleck MS to the Silver Screen” (PhD diss, Florida State University, 2008), 30; Calkin, *Auchinleck*, various.

mention of Saladin. This is true of this time, but the English and French historically have always defined themselves by the “other.” Saladin was a problem as his victory punctured the English and the French confidence. How could Richard be as great as they thought if he lost to this “other?” How could Christianity be the dominant religion if it lost the Holy Land to this “other?” Thus the image of Saladin had to change, to protect, preserve and define English and French identity. It is not enough to claim, as Jubb and others have done, that the legends were created to explain his behavior to Europe, even if that is a part of what is going on.<sup>177</sup> This makes little sense in the context of the early negative portrayal. Even with the shift in tone and context as the Crusaders returned from war, negative views like the Latin and French continuations still existed. The legends emerge in spite of those views, not because of them. Thus, it is not enough to say that the authors of the legends were explaining away Saladin’s deeds. There must be something more going on, and that more is the preservation of national identities. Thus, it should come as no surprise to the reader given this model that Saladin could not remain the outsider.

It is important to mention that this thesis is not claiming that without Richard being so popular and important to identity there would not have been legends. Many of the chivalric legends would probably exist without this. They would have existed as Saladin’s behavior would still have needed to be explained, as well as used as moral examples. This thesis will frequently make references to the “other” in European society. This idea is simply that to Europeans, the “other” was anyone who did not conform to

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<sup>177</sup> Jubb, *Legend of Saladin*, 222-225.

European ideals.<sup>178</sup> Further it is through this “other” that Europeans judged their own society. It is the popularity of Richard that makes Saladin an icon, and helps along his journey from a didactic “other” to a virtual member of English and French society. To prove this, it must be remembered that Richard was not the only English monarch that helped bring Saladin out of the darkness and into the light. Though with this next monarch, rather than protecting her image, they were intentionally trying to destroy it. That monarch was Eleanor of Aquitaine, Richard’s mother.

### **The Amorous Legends**

The last of the types of legends that appear to have formed during the Genesis period also involved Richard, though indirectly, through his mother Eleanor of Aquitaine. Supposedly during her stay in the Latin Kingdom during the Second Crusade, Eleanor engaged in an adulteress affair with a young Saladin. Eleanor’s scholars noted that this is just one of many supposed affairs in which Eleanor partook, with alleged lovers/companions including troubadours, minstrels and even her own uncle Raymond.<sup>179</sup> Eleanor is the victim of a number of negative legends, known as the Black Legends — almost a reverse Saladin— in which her character is attacked through her involvement with Saladin. There have been several explanations that have been made for why these accusations exist. Many historians of Eleanor, such as Ralph Turner, believe it was in response to Eleanor’s apparent agency in her own life. Her actions of divorce and remarriage, let alone between the kings of France and England, was a rare and

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<sup>178</sup> Rodinson, *Mystique*, 5-25.

<sup>179</sup> Ralph Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

condemned act for women in the medieval period.<sup>180</sup> Yet when viewed through the lens of the Saladin legend, does it take on a new dimension?

If the conclusions that Saladin was used as an “other” by writers of the period to help define an English and French identity as well as tell didactic moral tales, then is it reasonable to also assume the same was going on with Eleanor? The motives for doing this are the same as above, defining an identity. Rather than portraying the traits that are to be revered in Richard, they instead show the traits that are to be reviled in Eleanor. Eleanor, through her actions as the queen of two kings, is painted as a morally abhorrent woman. It should not come as a surprise that a woman with such agency would be viewed as a moral degenerate by the patriarchal feudal system. Eleanor shows what Europeans believe they should not be, rather than Saladin and Richard who are to be revered and emulated.

One of the main sources of the affair between Eleanor and Saladin is again that document authored by the Minstrel of Reims, mentioned earlier.<sup>181</sup> In this tawdry tale, Saladin, portrayed as a noble and chivalrous pagan, has an attempted tryst with Eleanor, and this is meant to darken her name far more than it is meant to affect Saladin's. Eleanor, described by the Minstrel as a “very evil woman,” is a victim of history, as her divorce from Louis VII and marriage to Henry II transferred almost a quarter of what is now modern France from French control to English control.<sup>182</sup> For this act, she was reviled in France, believed to have damaged the kingdom beyond repair, but her

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<sup>180</sup> Turner, *Eleanor*, 313.

<sup>181</sup> Minstrel of Reims, 3-5.

<sup>182</sup> Minstrel of Reims, 3.

reputation was no better in England, where she was viewed as a traitor and conspirer.<sup>183</sup>

The story is a complete fabrication. While it is recorded history that Eleanor was in the Latin Kingdom during the second crusade, Saladin was a child of ten at the time.<sup>184</sup>

Through impugning her name, the Minstrel, as well as other tellers of the legends, looked to paint Eleanor as a major reason for the French failure during the second crusade. In describing the affair, the Minstrel states:

When Saladin perceived he (the King of France) was weak and hesitant, he offered battle several times, but the King would not engage in a fight. When Queen Eleanor saw the King's weakness, and she heard the men speak of the goodness and strength and understanding and generosity of Saladin, she conceived a great passion for him in her heart, and sent him greetings through one of her interpreters.<sup>185</sup>

This infatuation with Saladin would have dire consequences. When Louis VII learns of it, he is forced to abduct his own wife back from the Saracens and flees the Levant: "The king quickly departed, leaving Eleanor heavily guarded, and decided to return to France, for his money was running out and in the east he had acquired only dishonor."<sup>186</sup> The failure of crusade is placed on Eleanor's shoulders. Other historians have viewed these stories as helping to justify French failures in the crusades, as the aforementioned religious problems made those disasters difficult to understand.<sup>187</sup> Either with Richard and his fellow crusaders usually as the ideal, or Eleanor and her evil ways as the epitome of English and French ideals, Saladin is the common thread. Saladin, though technically an "other," has become something more, he has been adopted by Europe over the course

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<sup>183</sup> Turner, *Eleanor*, 5-20.

<sup>184</sup> Second Crusade began in 1147, Saladin was born around 1137

<sup>185</sup> Minstrel of Reims, 3.

<sup>186</sup> Minstrel of Reims, 4.

<sup>187</sup> James Naus, *Constructing Kingship: The Capetian Monarchs of France and the Early Crusades* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

of the century, so much so he is not even the “other” anymore.

## **Conclusion**

Through this chapter, the basis for Saladin’s “historical” life has been unpacked and analyzed. Further, the legends themselves have been unpacked and a clear evolution has been established. To go from a pimp and actor trainer to the ultimate chivalric and Christian figure is quite a leap. Yet there is a thread that has run through all of this that is the very backbone as to why all of this is happening. The English and French Christians identity valued their religion and their way of life as superior, and the success of the First Crusade was the ultimate proof of this. Despite modern knowledge about the state of affairs in that region, the Christians saw their almost impossible victories at Antioch and Jerusalem as proof of God’s grace and favor, as well as moral lessons to be learned from. Through legends involving Richard and Eleanor, Saladin helped define an identity for the English and French. In the third chapter, we will see how this case of an identity needing to be preserved will lead to the same patterns of legend and show themselves again during the height of European imperialism, 1800 to 1950. But to understand this, we must first understand how the legends survived from the thirteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century.

## Survival

### Chapter Overview

The legends of Saladin continued to evolve in the West throughout the centuries that followed their creation. Just as the image of Saladin did not remain static, the image of Islam itself evolved as well, with changing attitudes and ideals ensuring that few views remained fixed. To attempt to give a transitional history of England and France from 1300 to 1800 is difficult under the best circumstances, and in a single chapter of a thesis all but impossible. The important cultural details will be discussed, but only in a cursory way. What is important and will be showcased throughout this chapter is the ideal of Islam as the “other” that continues to help the English and French define themselves. For example, the idea of the Turk, viewed as the most savage of Islamic races throughout the medieval period, shifts from that of an individual race to representing all of Islam. Further one must see that the masses of Islam and its political leaders were viewed differently. The view of Turkish rulers shifted from that of an outright tyrant to that of a despot, especially as the Ottoman empire gains prominence.<sup>188</sup> The key part of this shift was that while both are corrupt, tyrants had some redeeming features. Tyrants at least wielded power to accomplish goals. Despotism had few positive features in the minds of enlightened Europeans.<sup>189</sup> The masses were tended to be viewed as backward fanatics, gone is the image of the East as a decadent advanced society.<sup>190</sup> While this shift in itself

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<sup>188</sup> Asli Cirakman, “From Tyranny to Despotism: The Enlightenment’s Unenlightened Image of the Turks,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (Feb, 2001) pages 49-68; and Chen Tzoref-Ashkenzi, “Romantic Attitude towards Oriental Despotism,” *Journal of Modern History* 85 (June 2013, Accessed online).

<sup>189</sup> Cirakman, “Tyranny to Despotism,” 49.

<sup>190</sup> Rodinson, *Mystique*, 70-90.

is titanic, what does not change is that Europeans are still using these images to define themselves. Through that basis, the legends of Saladin, while ever evolving, retain the same role in society throughout the high Middle Ages, the early modern and the modern period. The main point of this is to show how the medieval legends are linked to the modern ones, and show how the ideas of chapter one survive until chapter three. This chapter will begin with the legends during the Renaissance.

## **Renaissance**

The first major area that the legends spread to after the thirteenth century “Genesis” period was the Italian peninsula. The writers of the Italian Renaissance would be a major reason why the legends of Saladin would survive so long, and be as well-known as they were. The importance of the Italian Renaissance in European history has been clearly defined in many works, and its role in European culture cannot be understated. Thus, any feature of the Saladin legend that can be found in literature of the Renaissance had a deep impact in not only preserving them, but spreading them as well. The writings of the Renaissance spread throughout Europe and the world, and would be the perfect vehicle for further spreading the Saladin legends. Not only are the legends mentioned in Renaissance writing, the three most famous writers of the Italian Renaissance all wrote about Saladin. All three are house hold names, and they wrote about Saladin in a way that should now be very familiar to the reader. What was the Renaissance?<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> For the overall history of the Italian Renaissance, see Brian S. Pullan, *A History of Early Renaissance Italy* (London: Allen Lane, 1978); J.H. Plumb, *Italian Renaissance: A Concise Survey of its History and Culture* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001); Peter Burke’s *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014) and *Culture and Society in Renaissance Italy, 1420-*



The idea that the Renaissance was a rebirth of Western civilization that occurred throughout Europe during the fourteenth, fifteenth and, sixteenth centuries, has been slowly disproven in the historiography. Civilization had continued despite the fall of Rome, with art and learning continuing. The Renaissance instead was a re-focusing of these efforts into rediscovering the past of Europe, specifically Rome and Greece. Through the re-discovery of numerous works of Roman and Greek art, techniques, literature, and law, European culture changed dramatically over the course of a few hundred years. This emphasis on antiquity, known as the study of the “classics,” would define European culture well into the nineteenth century. The Renaissance is typically divided into two geographic areas and several different time periods. The two areas of focus are the Italian Renaissance and the Northern Renaissance. The Italian Renaissance tends to be focused into three time periods and areas, the Early Renaissance spanning the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Florence; the High Renaissance of fifteenth century Rome; and the Late Renaissance of sixteenth century Venice.<sup>192</sup> The Northern Renaissance is typically divided by country and tends to follow the Italian in time period.

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1540 (London: Scribner's and Sons, 1972); Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of Renaissance Italy* (New York: Penguin, 1990); Robert S. Lopez, *The Three Ages of the Italian Renaissance* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1984). For Humanism and the Renaissance see Charles G. Nauert *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Charles Trinkaus *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984); Thomas Cohen, *Love and Death in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). Though somewhat antiquated, Douglas Bush's *The Renaissance and English Humanism* (New York: Macmillan, 1939) was helpful, as was Fritz Caspary, *Humanism and the Social order of Tudor England* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1954). For in-depth research on the Humanist scholars see John Larner, *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch 1216-1380* (New York: Longman, 1980). For a history of the Northern Renaissance see Alistair Smart, *The Renaissance in Northern Europe and Spain* (London: Harcourt, 1995); Margaret Phillips, *Erasmus and the Northern Renaissance* (New York Harcourt, 1995). For historical literature of the Renaissance, see Gary Ianziti, *Writing History in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2012). For everyday life during the Renaissance see Sandra Sider, *Handbook to Life in Renaissance Europe* (New York: Facts on File, 2005); John J. Martin, *The Renaissance World* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Sarah Ross, *Everyday Renaissances: The Quest for Cultural Legitimacy in Venice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>192</sup> Sarah Ross, *Everyday Renaissances: The Quest for Cultural Legitimacy in Venice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 1.

The scope of work done on this subject makes it hard to summarize. This time is also important for an elaboration of secular ideas.

This secularization focused on the individual life, and the ways of corporeal world, rather than Eternity and the after life. This new movement, known as humanism, extended well into the next period of this chapter, the Enlightenment, and had deep effects on the legends. Humanism itself would evolve over the centuries, but its key feature is its focus on human achievement, human ability, and the possibility of advancing humanity beyond its most basic instincts. Humanists believed that people, and not gods, had to solve the problems of their lives. It is within the scope of humanism that much of the analysis of the legends of Saladin during this time period will lie. This is not to say that the people involved in the Renaissance and humanism were not religious, they were. The key is in the shift from a complete reliance on God, to a greater reliance on self. More rhetorically put, these people believed god helps those who help themselves, rather than just through prayer. Humanism would continue to grow over the centuries and have effects on other movements, such as the Enlightenment. Where does this idea of the renaissance as rebirth come from?

The idea of the Renaissance as a rebirth goes back to the time period itself.<sup>193</sup> The people of the time were look to explain the explosion of classical learning around them, and the historiography grew around that idea. This interest in classical learning certainly has a transformative effect on all of Europe, but “rebirth” is not the correct way to describe it. Take for instance the legends of Saladin themselves, if there was nothing to be gained from the medieval period, why then do the writers of the Renaissance repeat

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<sup>193</sup> The term literally means re-birth.

and retell these legends? The Renaissance was a defining moment in the culture of all of Europe, not just Italy. The first author who will be analyzed from this is arguably the most famous of the Renaissance writers, Dante. Dante is a perfect example of this humanist yet religious writing. Dante's subject matter, Hell, shows his devotion to the canon of the Christian church, yet his descriptions of the punishments reveal humanistic beliefs.

In his most famous work, the *Divine Comedy* (1308-1320), Dante wrote of Saladin saying "There all alone I saw the Saladin."<sup>194</sup> The *Divine Comedy* was a who's-who of famous people, and a clearly defined morality tale, as Dante uses the different layers of Hell and their punishments to show the severity of sins. While Saladin was indeed in Hell, he was in the part of Hell reserved for unbaptized heroes, or those who lived noble lives yet could not be in the presence of God as they were unbaptized. What makes this interesting is the company Saladin keeps, "there Socrates and Plato I marked."<sup>195</sup> Dante placed Saladin on the same level and in the same area of his Hell with two of the greatest thinkers in the history of the West. Though it is not by accident he was kept alone. Dante was making a clear point that while Saladin was special, he alone from the Muslim world deserved this respect, that while he was a model of chivalry, he was the exception, not the rule. Dante was espousing again this idea of Saladin as the outsider, though this time from the point of Islam. By placing him alone as the representative of his people, he is clearly placing him on a pedestal, and separating him from them in the process.

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<sup>194</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia* (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1933), 44. All translations done by the author.

<sup>195</sup> Dante, *Divina Commedia*, 45.

This “outsider” image is even clearer when Saladin is contrasted with Muhammad’s place in Hell. According to Dante, Muhammad was in the eighth circle of Hell, out of nine. His stanza clearly defines his crimes in Dante’s eyes:

Between his legs his guts spilled out with the heart  
 And other vital parts, and the dirty sack  
 That turns to shit whatever the mouth gulps down  
 While I stood staring at his misery,  
 He looked at me and with both hands he opened  
 his chest and said: “see how I tear myself!  
 See how Mahomet is deformed and torn!  
 In front of me, and weeping, Ali walks  
 His face cleft from his chin up to the crown.  
 The souls that you see passing in this ditch  
 Were all sowers of scandal and schism in life,  
 And so in death you see them torn asunder.<sup>196</sup>

As Muhammed himself makes clear in the passage, he is in Hell for causing schism between Christianity and Islam. His punishment stands in stark contrast with Saladin, whose deeds in life separated him from the “crime” of Islam. Muhammed’s treatment is cruel, with his body mangled and flayed, torn apart just as he supposedly tore apart Christendom. This highlights the belief many Renaissance writers had that Muhammed was a former Christian cardinal who created Islam in response to being denied the papacy.<sup>197</sup> The *Divine Comedy* in its most basic form is not only a morality tale, but social and political commentary as well. The sins that Dante viewed as most egregious are punished the worst. Thus, in the eighth circle, Muhammad receives one of the worst punishments for, as Dante views it, dividing and deceiving Christianity. The didactic nature of this work should be obvious as Dante is quite literally laying out the sins for which people are punished in the afterlife. This is not the only time Dante mentions

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<sup>196</sup> Dante, *Divina Commedia*, 252.

<sup>197</sup> Dante, *Divina Commedia*, 252.

Saladin, as he was also given a place in book four of his *Il Convivio* (*The Banquet*, 1304).

The *Convivio* was an encyclopedia of sorts that Dante compiled, and the fourth book of the work was on Nobility. This work was also a morality tale, though with much less of a narrative than the *Divine Comedy* has. Specifically, in this section, he noted how nobility is not necessarily a hereditary trait, but rather a learned one. To this point, Dante writes:

Who does not still keep a place in his heart for Alexander due to his royal acts of benevolence? Who does not keep a place for the good King of Castile, or Saladin, or the good Marquis of Monferrato, or the good Count of Toulouse, or Bertran de Born, or Galeazzo of Montefeltro?<sup>198</sup>

In this passage, Dante is specifically referring to the mercy of these men, Alexander being the model of merciful and benevolent action, with his legendary mercy shown to Persian cities that surrendered to him, and also his wrath for those who did not. For his act of mercy in sparing Jerusalem, Saladin, in Dante's eyes, held the same place as Alexander. Again, we see this comparison of chivalric ideals, just as with Guy D'Lusignan. Dante as a writer is clearly not trying to hide the moral lessons of his writings, in fact he is blatantly telling his reader how to live a noble life, and Saladin to him is an example of this noble life. Dante was not the only Italian writer to use Saladin in this way. Petrarch, one of the fathers of both humanism and the Italian Renaissance, follows this same model.

Petrarch mentions Saladin in his poem "Triumph of Fame," (mid 1300s) saying, "First, mighty Saladin, alone his country's boast, the scourge and terror of the baptized

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<sup>198</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Il Convivio* (Bologna: Casa Editrice Prof. Riccardo Patron, 1966), 163. All translations done by the author.

host.”<sup>199</sup> Again the appearance of this theme of singularity, highlighting his special status in the eyes of Europeans. The fact that these two authors included Saladin and put him on this pedestal shows how important he was in the literary mind of Europe by this time. It is also vital to notice that Petrarch specifically refers to his unbaptized status, a clear denunciation of the Christian conversion legend. Saladin’s relation to other figures mentioned is also key with Petrarch as it was with Dante. That Saladin is among other European heroes is more telling than the words themselves. Saladin is with some of the great figures of the West, such as Arthur and Caesar, and again is the great noble blasphemer. Petrarch was important as one of the foremost architects of the Renaissance helping to uncover hundreds of documents.<sup>200</sup> That Saladin was included with these great figures of the West that Petrarch was reintroducing is deeply symbolic of his place in the minds of Europeans of the time. While there is certainly a growing focus on the chivalric legends, this is not to say that all Italian writers rejected the Christian legends of the previous century. Boccaccio, author of the famed *Decameron*, and included the Christian legends, though with a new humanistic twist.

Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (1353) is one of the most famous works of the medieval period and features Saladin several times. The *Decameron* is broken up into many individual stories and two of them have Saladin star as a main character, the First Day, Story Three and the Tenth Day, Story Nine. The First Day, Story Three is a retelling of one of the most famous Saladin legends, the Parable of the Three Rings. With Boccaccio, the rings represent a challenge from Saladin to a rich Jew, named Melchizedek, and

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<sup>199</sup> Petrarch, *The Triumph of Fame*, trans. B. Boyd (Accessed 1/26/2016, [http://www.poetrysoup.com/famous/poem/23031/the\\_triumph\\_of\\_fame](http://www.poetrysoup.com/famous/poem/23031/the_triumph_of_fame))

<sup>200</sup> Ross, *Everyday Renaissances*, 25.

further cements the tie between the French and Italian writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Saladin in the story is faced with a monetary crisis and needs to extract money from Melchizedek, who obviously is in no hurry to grant his request. So Saladin attempts to trick Melchizedek through reason, by forcing him to favor one religion over another, a supposed crime in Saladin's Egypt. Saladin asks him

O man of excellent worth, many men have told me of our great wisdom and your superior knowledge of the ways of God. Hence I would be glad if you would tell me which of three laws, whether the Jewish, the Saracen, or the Christian, you deem to be truly authentic.<sup>201</sup>

Melchizedek, sensing a trap, answers with the Parable of the Three Rings. Unlike the one seen in the *Gesta Romanorum*, Boccaccio's is different. Instead of claiming Christianity is the bearer of the true ring, Melchizedek states that each religion feels entitled to bear the ring answering: "and I say to you my lord, that the same applies to the three laws which god the father granted to his three peoples, and which formed the subject of your inquiry. Each of them considered themselves the legitimate heir to his estate."<sup>202</sup> The story ends with Saladin being impressed by the Jew's sidestep, and rather than taking the money by force which he did not want to do he asks for a loan, which was repaid in full. This is the new humanism, clearly changing the legends in the writings of the Renaissance. Rather than a rash emotional response, Boccaccio is espousing a measured, reasoned answer to religious question. This humanist reaction again shows that while the Renaissance authors were deeply religious, they viewed humans themselves as the solvers of worldly problems. Thus, they themselves had to fix the damaged relationship

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<sup>201</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 37. All translations done by the author.

<sup>202</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 37.

among the major religions. This story not only works with the parable but the chivalric legends as well, as Boccaccio's description of Saladin follows how those legends spoke of Saladin. Boccaccio wrote "Saladin, whose value and mercy was so great that it rose him from humble beginnings to become the sultan of Egypt, and brought him many victories over the Saracen and Christian Kings."<sup>203</sup>

It is in his second story that one can see even more connections between the French writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and the Italian Renaissance writers like Boccaccio. In his Tenth Day, Story Nine, Boccaccio describes a journey Saladin took through Europe, touching on many of the legends previously discussed.

Saladin an outstandingly able ruler who as sultan of Babylon at the period, having heard about this crusade sometime in advance, resolved to see for himself what preparations the Christian princes were making, to better defend himself against them. So he settled all his outstanding affairs in Egypt, and, giving the impression he was going on pilgrimage, set forth in the guise of a merchant<sup>204</sup>

This story takes Saladin throughout the Christian lands of Italy and France as "their tour of inspection took them through many Christian countries."<sup>205</sup> These adventures eventually land them in Lombardy, in Italy, where the travelers have contests with the locals. Saladin in the tales is not impressed with what he sees, believing the Christians to be a dull uninteresting people, and not worthy of his presence or his attention. One can see again this growing tension between secular humanism and organized religion in the writings of Boccaccio. This is undoubtedly the legend of Saladin's European travels retold again. Despite the fantastic nature of that legend, these writings preserved it for the

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<sup>203</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 37.

<sup>204</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 600.

<sup>205</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 601.



future. However, in those tales, Saladin was impressed with what he saw in Christian lands. The change in reaction paints a vibrant picture of how Boccaccio viewed Europe's current state at the time of his writings.

So why does it matter that these Renaissance writers specifically preserved the legends of Saladin? The chief pillar of a Western education for most of the early modern period was an education in the classics, especially Greek and Roman work. The Renaissance not only inspired this type of education, but becomes one of the most important parts of it over time, with readings in Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch standard in the West for hundreds of years. Dante's influence is wide spread, not only in the stories he told, but in popularizing the Tuscan language.<sup>206</sup> This is a writer who is felt across the generations, and studied the world over. Boccaccio is no different, as most world literature anthologies include at least one story from the *Decameron* to this day. Petrarch, though not as well known, is considered the father of humanism, and his influence is clearly seen in the above changes in the legends. The humanistic ideas portrayed by these men in their writings continued into the Enlightenment, changing how Saladin was used by writers of the time. Thus, it is their repeating of the legends of Saladin, specifically those involving his questionable attitude towards his own Muslim faith and his chivalric nature, that ensures their resurgence in the nineteenth century, specifically with Walter Scott. Scott was a known admirer of these works, and incorporated many of their ideas into his own writings.

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<sup>206</sup> Diane Hales, *La Bella Lingua* (New York: Broadway Books, 2009), 10. Dante's importance helped Tuscan to be proclaimed the official Italian language, in 1922. It should also be mentioned of course that Tuscan was also the language spoken by the Italian fascist dictator Mussolini, and though he used Dante as an excuse, it was also a case of a dictator choosing his own language.

While not specifically a part of the Italian Renaissance, it is also around this time that we see that the legends have spread to Germany. Germany had its own version of the Parable of the Three Rings, with the medieval writer Jans Enikel writing a similar tale in the fifteenth century during the early North Renaissance.<sup>207</sup> In this version of the parable, which is told to Saladin by a traveling bard, the ring again is split among all three religions, as Boccaccio had, because the owner did not trust any of the religions: “If I entrust it to the Mohammed, the Christians will mock; they say their Lord God is stronger than Mohammed; that’s how all the Christians talk. And I know full well that the Jews are quick to say that their God is Stronger.”<sup>208</sup> Thus, the solution is to break up the ring, or the power, and give it to all.

This one story makes it very easy to trace a direct evolution of the legends, and can be seen all the way into the literature of the nineteenth century. The Parable of the Three Rings began as a Latin moral story in France and spread throughout Europe. This not only shows the popularity of the legends, but the cultural links between England, France and the rest of Europe. This spread of the legends is what kept them alive throughout the late medieval and early modern period, and allowed for their rebirth in the nineteenth century. In addition, the cultural importance of the Renaissance was one of the most significant reasons why the legends survive and are well known at the dawn of the twentieth century to Orientalist writers. The Renaissance was not the only important cultural shift in the life of Europe that would help spread and preserve the legends. Another was the Enlightenment.

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<sup>207</sup> R. Graeme Dunphy, *History as Literature: German World Chronicles of the Thirteenth Century in Verse* (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Press, 2003), 121.

<sup>208</sup> Dunphy, *History as Literature*, 125.

## Enlightenment

As with the Renaissance, there is a wide range of literature on the importance of the Enlightenment in European culture. It would be a defining moment in terms of new cultural and governmental ideals. The Enlightenment, at its core, was an intellectual movement that held human reason could solve any problems or mystery that faced humanity.<sup>209</sup> While there would be huge disagreements about what society needed, or even what the problems were, this humanistic focus would spread throughout Europe in the eighteenth century. The Enlightenment, though, was highlighted by an opposition to absolute authority of all kind, however it tended to be focused on government or religion. Enlightenment thinkers began striving towards reform in those bodies focused on eliminating abuses of power and promoting individual freedom. This time period saw a further shift towards humanism, and that is reflected in the new interpretations of the Saladin legends. For example, Lessing and Voltaire, were frequent foes of Christianity and used Saladin as a weapon against that religion and its ideals. Thus, not only was the Enlightenment important for spreading the Saladin legend, that legend was important to the Enlightenment. The most important facet of the Enlightenment that most affects this thesis, is this overall rejection of Christian chivalric ideals. Famous works such as *Don*

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<sup>209</sup> For further reading on the Enlightenment see Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991); Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); and Harold Nicolson, *The Age of Reason 1700-1799* (London: Constable, 1960). For humanism and the Enlightenment see Aram Vartanian and Lester G. Crocker, *Science and Humanism in the French Enlightenment* (New York: Rockwood Press, 1999); John O. Lyons, *The Invention of the Self: The Hinge of Consciousness in the Eighteenth Century* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978). For the Enlightenment and religion see Donald Mell, Theodore E. D. Braun, and Lucia M. Palmer, *Man, God and Nature in the Enlightenment* (East Lansing Michigan: Colleagues Press, 1988). For Enlightenment and the twentieth century, see Alfred Cobban, *In Search of Humanity: The Role of the Enlightenment in Modern History* (London: Braziller, 1960). For further reading on the Enlightenment and how it affected historical thought, See Hugh Trevor-Roper, *History and the Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

*Quixote* (1605) had begun to highlight what a relic of the past chivalry was becoming long before the Enlightenment, but that movement focused on this rejection.<sup>210</sup>

Regardless of chivalry's place in the reality of governing and the everyday life of Europe, its role in the literature of the day was what fueled this backlash. Yet Enlightenment writers too write in a didactic style, attempting to show their new secular morality. Chivalry was an example of a failed culture to these new intellectuals, given its adherence to a religious code and its focus on prostration before authority.

Gotthold Lessing, the famous German dramatist and Enlightenment thinker, included Saladin as a major character in his play *Nathan der Weise* (1779).<sup>211</sup> *Nathan der Weise* at its core is yet another version of the Parable of the Rings, in which the most famous line of the play is Nathan being asked by Saladin "which of the faiths are the true law?"<sup>212</sup> Just as with Boccaccio's Melchizedek, Nathan was fearful, and changed the ending and had the ring that held "the secret power of God" copied, with a copy given to each of the three sons as "he consequently all loved the same."<sup>213</sup> The story ends with the father not knowing which is which and very pleased about it:

Two others were ordered, and spared no costs  
No matter what the trouble, this is equal to that  
To make perfect, all the same. The jeweler,  
Succeeds. He brings the father the rings,  
Even the father cannot tell the  
differing ones. Glad and happy he cries,  
his sons, each joyous at his gift  
and joyous at his blessing  
And his ring – and thus he dies.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Keen, *Chivalry*, 238-242.

<sup>211</sup> Gotthold Lessing, *Nathan Der Weise* (Berlin: Verlag, Moritz, Diesterweg, 1970). All translations done by the author.

<sup>212</sup> Lessing, *Nathan*, 34.

<sup>213</sup> Lessing, *Nathan*, 35.

<sup>214</sup> Lessing, *Nathan*, 37.

In Lessing's tale, as before, the father is God, though instead of favoring one, he forever favors all. After all of these centuries, here is yet another example of the Parable. Across 500 years, the same legends continued to be repeated in works of history and culture. However, Enlightenment ideals caused an evolution of this old legend. Rather than attempting to establish a tie between Saladin and Christianity, as the medieval legend did, Lessing used the parable and the figure of Saladin to air his grievances with the problems plaguing religious establishment, specifically in the disunity it tended to cause. Rather than one ring being more important than the other, Nathan uses the tale to convince Saladin that all of the rings are in fact the same, highlighting the similarities and shared roots of the three major religions. As with Boccaccio and Dante, Lessing is telling a moral, didactic tale, and in this one it is trying to remind Christians, Jews, and Muslims they have more in common than they think. This is as clear an example of the shift in European culture between the medieval period and the Renaissance and the Enlightenment as one can find. Lessing also used Saladin because Christians could not discount his virtues as that was the only way they could justify his success during the Third Crusade. This tactic was brilliant, as using a figure who had been so highly trumpeted for so long in this manner presented a difficult challenge to detractors. Lessing was not the only Enlightenment thinker to use Saladin in this way.

Voltaire, an Enlightenment icon, built a reputation for hostility to the Church. The two most famous examples of Saladin in his work appear in his play *Zaire* (1754) and his *Essays on Morals* (1756).<sup>215</sup> Voltaire's *Essays on Morals* was a vitriolic attack on what

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<sup>215</sup> Newby, *Saladin*, 175.

he saw as the corruption of Christianity, and he used the great Muslim Sultan Saladin as his example of the perfect anti-Christian ruler. After describing Saladin's unification of his empire, he writes that Saladin "allowed religious freedom" while the "Christians grew more divided and hostile than ever."<sup>216</sup> Voltaire believed that religion caused many of the ills of society, thus every time Voltaire brings up the Christians, it is to describe them as bumbling. Contrast this image of the bumbling Christians with Saladin, as a noble and merciful figure. This prescriptive message of how French leaders should comport themselves is clear in the line "few of our princes display such magnificence."<sup>217</sup> Voltaire specifically mentions Saladin sparing King Guy D'Lusignan after the battle of Hattin. Guy is depicted as a cruel trickster attempting to make a fool of Saladin by offering the famous rosewater chalice to Reynald, trying to force Saladin to spare both his life and Reynalds. This story, told in legend and history alike, takes on new meaning at the tip of Voltaire's quill, showing the inherent cruelty and guile he believe existed in professed Christians, and was absent in non-Christians like Saladin. This is literally a 180 degree turn from the Christian legends of the medieval period, yet the same purpose is served. Saladin as the vehicle to describe an ideal of society, with medieval Christians it was their morality, for Voltaire it was a rejection of religious ideals. The religious were not the only target of the *Essay on Morals*. Voltaire, in his enlightenment-style hatred of the monarchy, also goes after the "corrupt" nobility.

Voltaire brings up the amorous adventures, specifically to embarrass the nobility and what he viewed as a decadent lifestyle, writing that the "Queen Eleanor his wife,

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<sup>216</sup> Voltaire, *An Essay on Universal History, the Manners and Spirit of Nations from the Reign of Charlemagne to the Age of Louis XIV* (London: Brill and Sons, 1759), 368.

<sup>217</sup> Voltaire, *Essay on Morals*, 350.

forgot all the figures of a painful journey in the arms of Saladin, A handsome young Turk.”<sup>218</sup> Voltaire viewed the noble class as inherently corrupt, and through the amours adventures, he painted a picture of the failed example of that class. Continuing to mold the legends to his advantage as Lessing did, Voltaire used Saladin in his play *Zaire*, when he wrote “And Syria fell beneath Bouillon, but heaven, to chastise this impious foe, upraised the arm of mighty Saladin, and wrath followed.”<sup>219</sup> To Voltaire, as well as Lessing, Saladin was a sword used to attack the corrupt Christian establishment by using their own beliefs, as well as their own God’s judgment against them. Consequently, it is clear that Saladin and his legend became a tool that Enlightenment thinkers used to convey this message to a reading public who was familiar with Saladin through the many stories of him that had been passed down. Although most of the examples that have been given ultimately appeared in published writings, many of these legends originated from oral traditions and popular culture.<sup>220</sup> Saladin was not only a literary figure, but one that held a strong place in the oral story telling traditions of Medieval Europe. This oral tradition treated him as this moral paragon, used as an example of the rightness of moral action, regardless of the shifting morals of both the times and the authors themselves.

Whether or not they had access to these works, Europeans were aware of these legends in many different forms. Humanism had transformed the legends of Saladin from stories used to explain the Christian failure to retake Jerusalem into legends about how the religions were more similar than different. Thus, the Renaissance and the

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<sup>218</sup> Voltaire, *Essay on Morals*, 369.

<sup>219</sup> Voltaire, *The Dramatic Works of Voltaire*, Vol X- Part 1, trans. William Fleming (New York: Saint Hubert Group, 1901), 30. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2240> 1/24/16 This is a reference to Godfrey of Bouillon, one of the leaders of the First Crusade who is crowned king of Jerusalem after his assault was the first to break the gates of the city.

<sup>220</sup> Edde, *Saladin*, 5-10.

Enlightenment extended its influence on the next generation of writings on the subject. This attempted secularization of Saladin would take two paths, the historical and the romantic. The latter will be empathized in the third chapter of this thesis; the former will make up the “new histories” of Saladin.

## **The New Histories**

Some of the first modern writings that dealt with Saladin emerged as histories written in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. French Crusade epics like L.F.C. Marin’s *Historie de Saladin* (1754) and J.F. Michaud’s *Histoire des Croisades* (1812-22) found wide readership, as did the famous English history by Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1779).<sup>221</sup> These historical works thoroughly rejected the conversion/ancestry theories of the early French and English writers. They also rejected the “travels of Saladin” to the West as well as his amorous adventures.<sup>222</sup> However, his image as the ultimate chivalric figure, full of mercy and generosity, continued as it had for the past few hundred years. This selective use of the legends characterized the next two hundred years of historical writing on Saladin. It is clear, however, that these historians were influenced by the humanists, and their writings reflect this version of Saladin. This version is one that is not used to explain the Christian failure in the Levant, but rather as a chivalric figure in his own right. In summation this shift of emphasis was seismic, but not entirely new.

The first works by French historians that studied Saladin were also the first works in a few centuries to have the benefit of both Arabic and Latin sources. Thus, they proved

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<sup>221</sup> Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol 3 (New York: Modern Library, 1990).

<sup>222</sup> Both of the French works acknowledge this common knowledge and strive to repudiate it.



to be much better history than various French and Latin continuations were; yet, as stated in the historiography, they still had problems. Saladin was described by Michaud as having “a grave character, and one especially more suited to conducting an honorable holy war.”<sup>223</sup> This gravity of character was also tempered by an ambitionless streak. Saladin only sought the glory of Islam, with Michaud writing “Whenever a kingdom or the glory of the prophet was not in question, when neither his ambitions nor his belief were thwarted, the son of Ayyub displayed only moderation.”<sup>224</sup> See the key word moderation. He was moderate in his personal ambition, and only advanced the cause of his God. These histories helped perpetuate the stereotype that had been repeated for centuries: That of the conservative, merciful, and ambitionless Saladin.

Gibbon’s *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1779) is one of the most important works of history of the eighteenth century, and is just as guilty as the French histories of continuing the stereotypes. While explaining the slow decline of the Eastern Roman Empire, Gibbon gave much attention to the crusades and Saladin himself. He, unlike his French contemporaries, buys into not only the chivalric legends, but also several of the outlandish ones, claiming “[Saladin] solicited and obtained from the Christian general the profane honours of knighthood.”<sup>225</sup> Gibbon’s confirmation of some of the more unusual legends had a profound effect on Saladin in Europe, especially in England where the histories took a back seat, to romantic literature in the nineteenth century. Though it must be said again that this particular legend still gives historians problems to this day. But, when a history as old and important as the *Decline and Fall*

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<sup>223</sup> Michaud, *Historie* Vol. II, 526.

<sup>224</sup> Michaud, *Historie* Vol. II, 526.

<sup>225</sup> Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, 484.

was affected by these legends, it becomes clear just how insidious and ingrained these legends, especially the chivalric ones, truly were. The works created during this time deeply affected the writings that will feature in the following chapter of this work, with both being affected by changing views of Islam in the West.

This, aforementioned “oriental despotism,” was one of the new ways that histories like Gibbon, Miran and Michaud viewed the East. This was a time in which European governments became less openly hostile towards Eastern governments, such as the Ottomans, and even used them in their political machinations and helping to maintain the balance of power in Europe.<sup>226</sup> The idea that those governments were tyrannical yet effective was long gone, replaced by the view that Oriental governments only served themselves.<sup>227</sup> There is certainly a didactic message in this, especially given the Enlightenment shift in ideas about the roles and function of government throughout Europe. Further, this view had much to do with the origins of modern imperialism, and was reflected in the histories of this time. The histories looked to Oriental culture with new views, and developed new biases that would last into the next chapter. This idea that the Turks were no longer to be envied helped refashion again this idea of the “other” in European society, a mirror by which to look at themselves.<sup>228</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This Saladin’s legends were preserved in the European mind for over five centuries. While the Saladin of history bore little resemblance to the character that had

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<sup>226</sup> Ashkenazi, “Oriental Despotism,” 2.

<sup>227</sup> Cirakman, “Tyranny to Despotism,” 50.

<sup>228</sup> M.E. Yapp, “Europe In the Turkish Mirror,” *Past and Present*, (Spring, 1992, accessed online, Oxford Journals).

been invented by European writers of the thirteenth century, it is clear how both versions of Saladin survived over half a millennium. Whether it was large strains of legend, like the mercy and chivalry of Saladin, or the smaller ones, such as the Parable of the Three Rings, the legends these men created served a purpose. Not only was that purpose didactic, but they helped evolve and change the legends, through their own self-criticisms and social commentaries. It was the Italian Renaissance writers and Enlightenment humanists who preserved and evolved these legends over hundreds of years. The next chapter will show how the British and French again use Saladin as a justification for the superiority of their cultures and nations, as well as a definer of identity.

## Romance

### Chapter Overview

In this third and final chapter, the arguments made in the first chapter —namely that Saladin was used by French and English writers of the thirteenth century to help define a cultural identity and shift Saladin from an “other” to a member of European society— will be extended to the early twentieth century. This chapter will show this transition through how historians and writers between 1800 and 1950 used Saladin to help support imperialistic, racist, and Orientalist ideals. Underscoring this argument will be how the cultures of the regions have changed, though the underlying motives for espousing the legends in France and England remained the same. The five historians that will be highlighted are Stanley Lane-Poole, René Grousset, Charles Rosebault, Hamilton Gibb, and Steven Runciman. These five historians all had different ideals that they advocated, but all shared this similar motive. This is not the first time this charge has been leveled at these men as literary critics and historians from Edward Said to Anne Marie Edde have accused these specific historians. This chapter will begin by showing how a romantic writer, Walter Scott, brought Saladin back into the minds of the English and French, and helped enshrine the legends of Saladin in the thoughts of the historians of the early twentieth century.

### Romanticism, Imperialism, and Walter Scott

Romanticism is a very loaded term, with disparate meanings in both literature and history. In the case of Walter Scott and later English and French writers and historians, Romanticism was a creative movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that in

its simplest form rejected the Enlightenment reliance on reason.<sup>229</sup> Romantics focused their writings and art on human emotion and its importance to the human experience.<sup>230</sup> Romantics also tended to rejected the optimism of the Enlightenment thinkers in regard to human problems, though they did not necessarily reject the secular aspect of the movement. Romanticism's focus on chivalry and the morality of the past is a key facet of this form of literature and a reflection of these beliefs. This emphasis on morality rather than religion would be important, as the later imperialists used morality in formulating the literature of the civilizing mission. The romantic movement also tended towards the nostalgic remembrance of the ideals and events of the past, particularly the medieval period, before the influence of Enlightenment thought. This emphasis on an age dominated by faith highlights a shift in the direction of creative energy. This movement was vast, and much of it focused on the Crusades, from tawdry romances by writers like Louisa Stanhope to travel narratives by writers like Mark Twain.<sup>231</sup> Romanticism itself is an important literary movement, but to this thesis its role in imperialist literature is much more important. Romanticism ultimately led to a great revival of historical work on the

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<sup>229</sup> For overall histories of the Romantic period, see Michel Lebris, *Romantics and Romanticism* (New York: International Books, 1981); Tim Banning, *The Romantic Revolution: A History* (Boston: Modern Library, 2011); Robert Ryan, *The Romantic Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); C.M. Bowra, *The Romantic Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949). For individual centurion histories of the time period, while slightly antiquated, see Henry A. Beers, *A History of the English Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1901) and *A History of the English Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1898). For regional comparisons of the Romantic Era, see Lilian R. Furst, *Romanticism in Perspective: A Comparative Study of Aspects of the Romantic Movement in England, France, and Germany*, 3<sup>RD</sup> ed (New York: Macmillan, 1995). For Romanticism and its role in European politics, see J.L. Almon, *Romanticism and Revolt: Europe 1815-1848* (New York: Harcourt, 1976). For Romanticism and humanism see Marilyn Gaull, *English Romanticism: The Human Context* (New York: Norton and Co, 1998); and Harold Bloom, *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism* (New York: Norton and Co, 1970). For Romanticism and religion see Stephan Prickett, *Romanticism and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

<sup>230</sup> Beers, *Romanticism*, 5-20; Birdsall S. Viault, *Modern European History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990), 219.

<sup>231</sup> Louisa Stanhope, *The Crusaders: An Historical Romance of the Twelfth Century* (London: Times, 1840); Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

subject of the Crusades and Saladin, specifically through the influence of Walter Scott. The historians to be analyzed, such as Lane-Poole and Gibb, were heavily influenced not only by Scott, but by an imperialist worldview as well. So if there is a link between modern imperialism and romantic literature, what is imperialism?

Imperialism is defined as the extension of power and influence that one entity exerts on another.<sup>232</sup> Modern imperialism, specifically deals with the domination of the world by European nations during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While this domination most obviously done through military force, European imperialism employed multiple methods, from economic to social controls, to dominate huge sections of the world throughout the modern period. A major part of imperialism, and where the legends of Saladin become important, is the literature of imperialism. Literary imperialism is a grouping of ideals, attributed to Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that favor European conquest and domination of non-European nations and peoples.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> For more information about Imperialism, and its related subject Colonialism, see Philip D. Curtin, *Imperialism*, (New York, Walker and Company, 1971), H.L. Wesseling, *The European Colonial Empires, 1815-1919*, Trans Diane Webb, (New York: Pearson Longman, 2004), Norrie MacQueen, *Colonialism*, (New York: Pearson-Longman, 2007), Barbara Bush, *Imperialism and Postcolonialism*, (London: Pearson Longman, 2006) Emanuele Saccarelli and Latha Varadarajan, *Imperialism Past and Present*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). For imperialist diplomacy and new politics, see William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism*, New York: Alfred Knopf, 1965), and *European Alliances and Alignments, 1871-1890*, (Alfred Knopf, 1956); Patricia Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); A.J.P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848-1918*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970). For the psychology of colonialism see Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. (New York: Grove Press Inc, 1963). For the Culture of imperialism see Fredrick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997), John M. Mackenzie, *European Empires and the People: Popular Response to Imperialism in France, Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, German, and Italy*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011). For pro-imperialist works see Deepak Lal, *In Defense of Empires*, Washington D.C: AEI Press, 2000) and *In Praise of Empires*, (New York: Palgrave, 2004). For harsher views of Imperialism and it effect on democracies see James Laxer, *The Perils of Empire*, (Montreal: Viking, 2010), and Herman Lebovics *Imperialism and the Corruption of Democracies*, (Durham, Duke University Press, 2006). For imperialism's relationship with literature, see Daniel Bivona, *British Imperial Literature: Writing and the Administration of an Empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Robert Giddings, *Literature and Imperialism*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991); Elleke Boehmer *Empire, The National, and the Postcolonial 1890-1920: Resistance in Interaction*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>233</sup> Curtin, *Imperialism*, xi.

Specifically when talking about the history of modern imperialism in the Middle East, one can clearly see this domination as not just militarily and economically, but culturally as well. British and French imperialist had little respect for any of the cultures that dominated the Levant, and did not believe them incapable of governing themselves. Thus during the 1920s, they had the League of Nations create the system of mandates, not only to draw up borders for the region, but established imperialists powers to govern those territories as well.<sup>234</sup> This patronizing form of domination was common, it was done in Africa and Southeast Asia as well, and shows how little imperial governments viewed the native peoples of the regions they dominated. It is in the writings of imperialists that one finds the justification for this conquest and domination, and this is the link between imperialism and literature.<sup>235</sup> This act of justification does not necessarily have to be a conscious one; rather it is the result of education and knowledge of the day reflected in the writings of those who lived in the empire. This truth about imperialism is what Phillip Curtin discussed in his seminal work on the subject, *Imperialism* (1971): That imperialism was the means by which Europeans justified the empires they conquered through new industrialized technological means. Britain and France, the subject of this thesis, had the two largest empires during the zenith of modern imperialism, and thus both benefited the most from such writings.

The link between France and Britain in the modern era is different from that of the medieval era.<sup>236</sup> In the medieval era, France and England were linked through language and shared territory, such as the Angevin Empire. These links do not exist in the

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<sup>234</sup> Curtin, *Imperialism*, 64-70.

<sup>235</sup> Robert Giddings, *Literature and Imperialism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

<sup>236</sup> P.M.H. Bell, *France and Britain 1900-1940: Entente and Estrangement* (London: Longman, 1996).

nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Instead, the British and the French had links through the shared experience of empire building and maintenance. The World War Era also played a key role in aligning France and Britain.<sup>237</sup> Long before the outbreak of the wars, a shared fear of an ever-powerful Germany united France and Britain in mutual shared defense. Despite centuries of warfare and hostility, expedience became the rule of the day, and it was expedient to unite against growing German power at the turn of the twentieth century. This unity, coupled with similar interests, made them more alike than different. Despite being different culturally, this link through imperialism and imperialistic ideals is as important as the language link of the medieval period. The British and French both heavily used literature in their imperialist societies, with one of the most obvious examples being writers like Rudyard Kipling and his poetry and novels.<sup>238</sup> However not all imperialist writing had to be as obvious as this, with many of the examples provided in the next section proving that it was much more subtle. Thus, imperialist writers of both countries shared similar goals, despite differing cultures, and as with the Angevin Empire, France and Britain can be compared in conjunction with one another.<sup>239</sup>

This is not to say that this link between France and Britain is without counter examples. In France, specifically, the literature of the civilizing mission was based far more around the Catholic Church and religion than it was in England, which valued a more secular morality and humanistic society.<sup>240</sup> The similar language of the historians to

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<sup>237</sup> Bell, *France and Britain*, 20-25.

<sup>238</sup> Daniel Bivona, *British Imperial Literature, 1870-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>239</sup> Bell, *France and Britain*, 4.

<sup>240</sup> Alice Conklin, Sarah Fishman and Robert Zaretsky, *France and its Empire since 1870*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).



follow will further show that this link is valid. Even after a few hundred years, writers were again using facets of Saladin, be it legends or facts, to justify a cultural identity they had created for themselves. In the twentieth century, it was the British and French identity as world conquerors through their assumed cultural superiority. To understand imperialism and how Saladin's Kurdish ancestry could aid its arguments, one must understand one of the most important facets of how it imperialism was justified: Scientific racism.

Scientific racism is best described as the act of justifying inequalities between groups of humanity through the use of sciences, including but not limited to the fields of biology, anthropology, medicine and eugenics.<sup>241</sup> This new form of bigotry, based on invented races of humanity, rather than cultural differences, was a backbone of imperialist literature.<sup>242</sup> Empire and racism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were inescapably linked, with European racial domination being the justification of the conquests.<sup>243</sup> It is important to remember that Europeans conquered the world through many factors, such as dominance of technology, and that racism and imperialism were invented to justify these conquests, as well as to confirm pre-conceived worldviews held by Europeans. They were also invented to validate a "civilizing mission" and was used as their justification for remaining in conquered territory. People need no excuse to conquer, yet they frequently search for justifications for it. Simply put, this racism is doing the same thing that religious hatred did during the medieval period. The British and French

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<sup>241</sup> John Hartwell Moore, *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism*, Vol III (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2008), 1.

<sup>242</sup> Edward Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race: New Racisms and the Problem of Grouping in the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>243</sup> Harald Fischer-Tine and Susanne Gehrman. *Empires and Boundaries: Rethinking Race, Class, and Gender in Colonial Settings* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

used race to create the “other” and helped to describe themselves through their definitions of those others.<sup>244</sup> While it may be a different way of inventing the other, it is still showing the importance of that other in British and French society.

Whether one calls it scientific racism, Social Darwinism or anything else, it was a concept that heavily influenced the imperialist historians who wrote about Saladin during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>245</sup> The aforementioned historians all included a specific reference to Saladin’s Kurdish ancestry in their writings, and frequently identified it as the reason he was able to unite the Arab peoples under his banner.<sup>246</sup> They argued that this infusion of Saladin’s “new blood” in a stagnant society gave it new life. This idea of the Kurd in an Arab world also fit nicely with the pious and chivalrous description given to him by Michaud and Miran. Intertwined with this new focus on Kurdish ancestry is that the Kurds are, as described by imperialist literature, an “Indo-European” tribe and thus biologically related to Europeans.<sup>247</sup> To the imperialist and polygenic-influenced writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Europeans were in fact defeated in the Third Crusade, not by a decadent Arab, but by one of their own.<sup>248</sup> So who is this Walter Scott that has been mentioned so many times, and why did he have so much influence on the historians of the early twentieth century?

Sir Walter Scott was an incredibly popular British writer who was active during the early nineteenth century. He was a great influence on many writers who followed

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<sup>244</sup> Martin S. Staum, *Labeling People French Scholars on Society, Race and Empire 1815-1848* (London: McGill-Queen University Press, 2003), 158-170.

<sup>245</sup> Curtain, *Imperialism*, introduction.

<sup>246</sup> Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, 484; Gibb, *The Life of Saladin*, 2; Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, xiii.

<sup>247</sup> Beasley, *Racism*, 100.

<sup>248</sup> Polygenism was a popular theory at the time that claimed the different races of humankind had evolved from different sources, and some races were further along in evolution.

him, both in fiction and historical writing. Scott is certainly a contentious writer in history, as well as literature, and is an excellent bridging figure between the legends and the histories of the early twentieth century. Blessed with a unique historical imagination and a gifted ability to draw his readers in, Scott's writings circulated throughout the world.<sup>249</sup> Additionally, Scott was one of the most important writers during a time when romantic epics on the Crusades became popular once again.<sup>250</sup> From the historical epics of Miran or Michaud to the travel narratives like those of Mark Twain, the people of the nineteenth century were interested in crusade writings. Scott wrote several books about the medieval and crusading periods, including the famous *Ivanhoe* (1820) and *Saladin* was Scott's focus in *The Talisman* (1832).

Scott's blend of the old legends of the Italians, English and French, as well as his use of the ultimate chivalric knight model, is one of the high-water marks of the legends of Saladin, and brought them all to new audiences. Scott uses chivalric image portrayals of Saladin such as "the manners of the eastern warrior were grave, graceful and decorous."<sup>251</sup> Note the flowery language of him being both grave and graceful, a hefty compliment as that balance is hard to achieve. Further notice the clear definition as Saladin being from "The East." This is exactly what Said was describing earlier, that from his very first mention, though clearly complimentary, Saladin is already cast as an Easterner, or a distant other.<sup>252</sup> This was the power of Orientalism to even affect those it complimented, through the domination of forcing constructs. Further referring to Saladin

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<sup>249</sup> Beers, *Romanticism*, 25-50.

<sup>250</sup> In fact, many historians believe he was responsible for their becoming as popular as they were. Jerome Mitchell, *Scott, Chaucer and Medieval Romance: A study in Sir Walter Scott's Indebtedness to the Literature of the Middle Ages* (Louisville: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), 25.

<sup>251</sup> Scott, *The Talisman*, 35.

<sup>252</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 43.

as the “chivalric sultan of the east,” Scott gave passionate descriptions of Saladin, and bites hard on the chivalric legends, even as he establishes his cultural dominance.<sup>253</sup> Scott used Saladin as a foil for the hot-tempered knight Kenneth, Saladin’s Christian antagonist. In what was meant to be a blatant reversal, he has Kenneth attempt to drive Saladin to brutal anger with phrases like “if thou darest name in the same breath the camel driver of mecca with the Christ.”<sup>254</sup> By insulting Muhammed in this way, Kenneth hopes to provoke Saladin to anger, but he is disappointed as the sultan does not give in. This didactic message about the upright way of handling oneself was as common in romantic writing as it was in the previous generations, and again Saladin finds himself in the center of it.

This romantic Saladin is supposed to be different, to highlight the variances between East and West, and to force his reader to better understand their own identities, and emotions. Scott’s refusal to understand or appreciate the ever-growing historical literature on the subject that rejected most of these legends shows in his rehashing of them.<sup>255</sup> However, he also was a storyteller, and the legends made great stories, as they had for the past 500 years. Scott’s romanticizing of Saladin would have a deep impact on the later histories, but he most assuredly read Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch, and it is he who would bring the stories of Saladin back to the forefront of European culture. Scott’s role in modern orientalism is clearly laid out by Said, as Scott re-popularized the field unlike anyone else.<sup>256</sup> His literary definitions of East and West dominated the historical

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<sup>253</sup> Scott, *The Talisman*, 36.

<sup>254</sup> Scott, *The Talisman*, 42.

<sup>255</sup> Mitchell, *Walter Scott*, 25.

<sup>256</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 43; Mitchell, *Walter Scott*, 20-30. While there is certainly backlash against Said for his theories, it does tend to be personal. “Edward Said died in 2003, this book buries him,” is written on the flyleaf of one of the many books attempting to discredit Said and his work. While Said may have gone too

literature for over a hundred years to follow. Said specifically saw Scott as an Orientalist, despite there being levels of subtlety in his work. Speaking of this subtlety, Said stated that this did not excuse the definitions created, nor the right to create those divisions. Further, Said made it clear that characters like Saladin “cannot escape from the fences placed around him as the other,” and could never reach above his construct.<sup>257</sup>

If this all sounds familiar, it should, as it quite simply is a re-hashing of the secret Christian ancestry myth from centuries before, to justify identity and shift Saladin from “other” to European. The only difference that must be stressed is that the Kurdish ancestry claims are true, were as the Christians of the medieval period were simply inventing legends. The truth of his ancestry is not the problem, however, as we will see, it was the way the authors used it to justify racist imperialist views. This idea that Saladin was at the forefront of European thinking is supported by several anecdotes, usually told in a way that implies Europeans have much more of an interest in Saladin than his own people. There is no better example of this than when the German Kaiser Wilhelm II traveled the Levant in the late nineteenth century and discovered Saladin’s tomb in a state of total disrepair. Wilhelm II chose to personally fund a reconstruction of the tomb, citing Saladin’s importance to western culture saying Saladin was “one of the most chivalrous sovereigns of all time, a fearless knight above reproach, who often had to teach his enemies true chivalry.”<sup>258</sup> His motives for saying this were certainly diplomatic, the German-Ottoman alliance was a key part of the Balance of Power, yet one can see the

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far in his arguments about Orientalism, the following sections will show clearly that these historical writers had motives beyond simple history telling, whether they were aware of them or not. They were writers of their times, and educated by similar imperialist writers.

<sup>257</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 45.

<sup>258</sup> William Yale, *The Near East: A Modern History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958), 187; Hourani, *Arab History*, 270.

influence of the legends in what the Kaiser was saying. Wilhelm is attempting to use Saladin as a bridge between himself and his Ottoman hosts, trying to find some common ground. By all accounts it was successful as Ottomans officials deeply appreciated the gesture.<sup>259</sup>

Another popular anecdote is when French General Henri Gourarud took Damascus in 1920, he famously went to the tomb of Saladin and announced, “Mr. Sultan, we have returned.”<sup>260</sup> This, on the heels of the allies defeating the Ottomans during World War I very much smells of a kind of cultural revenge. Despite being almost 800 years later, Gourarud seems to be referencing the defeat of the crusaders states and the third crusade at the hands of Saladin. These stories highlight Saladin’s role in the mindset of the imperialist, and while it was certainly not on the forefront, it is yet another way imperialists justified their conquests. By the turn of the twentieth century, a new generation of historians who grew up on Scott’s work and were educated at the height of imperialism and scientific racism, began writing histories. The first we will deal with is Stanley Lane-Poole.

### **Stanley Lane-Poole**

Stanly Lane-Poole, born in 1854, was the chair of Arabic studies at Dublin University, and was one of the major voices of the Orientalist movement at the turn of the twentieth century, as well as a well-respected historian.<sup>261</sup> He was one of the leading scholars on the topic of Saladin in Britain, authoring the biography *Saladin* in 1906. By

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<sup>259</sup> Edde, *Saladin*, 495.

<sup>260</sup> Edde, *Saladin*. 1.

<sup>261</sup> Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, iv. Keep in mind that these historians described themselves as orientalists, which literally means students of, or experts on, the Orient, and is not to be confused with Said’s orientalism.

this time, historians had followed the views of the eighteenth century historians and completely rejected most of the fantastic legends, and Lane-Poole does have a strong historical grasp on the subject of Saladin. Lane-Poole, unlike previous scholars espousing the success of Christianity in the First Crusade, instead recorded that the Europeans invaded at the best moment for them to take the Levant.<sup>262</sup> As one of the first historians to do this, he deserves recognition for this insight. Despite these flashes of modern historical analysis, Lane-Poole was heavily influenced by Walter Scott and the romantic movement.<sup>263</sup> This is not through indirect allusions, as Lane-Poole himself says of Scott early in his work, “Saladin is one of the few oriental personages who need no introduction to English readers. Sir Walter Scott has performed that friendly office with the warmth and insight of the appreciative genius.”<sup>264</sup> Lane-Poole further states that “it was Saladin’s good fortune to attract the notice of not only the great romancer, but also of King Richard.”<sup>265</sup> The great romancer Lane-Poole is referencing is, of course, Scott. This praise is not the only proof of Lane-Poole’s deference to Scott. He even uses Scott’s physical description of Saladin as his own. He justifies this through couched language of Scott’s ability to describe being superior to his own.<sup>266</sup>

Lane-Poole is not above using the chivalric imagery of Saladin as well, describing Saladin on his opening page as literally the “perfect gentleman” and “an example of the values of chivalry.”<sup>267</sup> This is a clear reference to Scott and the other romantics, as it is

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<sup>262</sup> Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, 5-10.

<sup>263</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 101. We will see with many of these historians that the lined between literature and history was blurred, a common phenomenon in this time period.

<sup>264</sup> Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, 21.

<sup>265</sup> Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, 25.

<sup>266</sup> Lane Poole, *Saladin*, 3-5.

<sup>267</sup> Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, 1.

snubbing centuries of Enlightenment rejection of chivalry and accepting a romantic version of events. Lane-Poole is not shy about this opinion either and repeats it often, using quotes from Baha al-Din on his cover page:

Mine eyes have seen the days of his majesty, King strong to aid; the sum of piety, Bane of the Crucifix-Idolatry, Banneret of right and generosity SALEH-ED-DIN, lord of Islam and Muslimin, SAVING Gods house from the Nazarene, serving the holy places twin, victorious Yusuf, son of Ayyub, of Shadhy's kin. God water his grave with showers of clemency and grant him in mercy's name the weed of constancy.<sup>268</sup>

This adherence to the chivalric image can be understood, however, as this image can be gleamed from the history itself and to a certain extent lasts to this very day. Further following the literary movements of one's day is common, and also can be excused. However, Lane-Poole was also one of the first writers to use Saladin's Kurdish ancestry as a mechanism for his English imperialist identity. Of the Kurds Lane-Poole writes:

Ayyub (in English plain Job), surnamed after the fashion of the Saracens Nejm-ed-din, or "Star of the Faith," the fortunate commandant at this critical moment, although an oriental and a Mohammedan, belonged to the same great Aryan stock as ourselves, being neither Arab, nor Turk, but a Kurd of the Rawadiya clan, born at their village of Ajdanakan near Dawin in Armenia. From time immemorial the Kurds have led the same wild pastoral life in the mountain tracts between Persia and Asia Minor. In their clannishness, their love of thieving, their fine chivalrous sense of honour and hospitality, and their unquestioned courage, they resemble the Arabs of the "Days of Ignorance" before Islam, or the Highland Scots before the reforms of Marshal Wade.<sup>269</sup>

Though certainly couched language, not trying to promote the Kurds too much, one can see a Eurocentric bent to the description. Chivalry, honour, courage, all of these positive

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<sup>268</sup> Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, I.

<sup>269</sup> Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, 31-32.



traits stand out. Further, Lane-Poole implies that the Arabs in their days of ignorance were a superior people, through the comparisons, and it was their adopting of Muhammad that damaged them. Focus most of all on the line; “the same Aryan stock as ourselves” implying a European link to the Kurds. Keep in mind, however, that Saladin’s Kurdishness is a historical fact, and not a legend. It is the way these historians are using it that equates with the legends of the thirteenth century. Frequent allusions to “Saladin’s organized rule,” brought to Egypt and Syria, imply that the Egyptians, Turks, and Arabs could not govern themselves, and needed European intervention.<sup>270</sup> Doing so in a couched language helps to hide the motive of what he is doing. By constantly referencing the infighting and turmoil, even during the attack of the crusaders, he is highlighting Arab and Turkish racial inferiority without having to directly say it.<sup>271</sup> His separation of Saladin from his fellow Muslims, making him the outsider in his own society is a clear imperialistic maneuver. So even the historical analysis he does that holds weight in today’s historiography is tainted by this manipulation of Saladin as a Kurd.

Lane-Poole’s history is further tainted by his acceptance of the Christian knighthood claim; “It is even probable that this was the occasion when Saladin received Christian Knighthood at Humphrey’s hands.”<sup>272</sup> Historians today still have trouble with this episode as it was a difficult event to prove or disprove.<sup>273</sup> It is not that he mentions this episode that is a problem. Rather it is his frequent references to and emphasis of this ancestry that makes it a problem.<sup>274</sup> When taken with the words about Saladin’s Kurdish

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<sup>270</sup> Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, 38.

<sup>271</sup> Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, 43.

<sup>272</sup> Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, 83.

<sup>273</sup> Edde, *Saladin*, 23.

<sup>274</sup> Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, 117 and 123.

ancestry, they paint a picture of a racist and an Orientalist. Lane-Poole frequently invoked the language of race. When speaking of Saladin's war in the Sudan, he "reduced the blacks to submission."<sup>275</sup> While it may have been the "language of the day" it is clear that Lane-Poole was using Saladin's Kurdish ancestry to depict the failure of the other races to govern the Levant, and thus the "Indo-European" Kurds had to step in.

Like many of the historians that follow, Lane-Poole does have his defenders and this racist and Orientalist assessment is challenged by other historians such as David Nicolle. Nicolle states clearly that "Lane-Poole, like so many other historians, simply over-emphasized Saladin's Kurdish origins."<sup>276</sup> So it was a mistake. But Nicolle fails to understand that the focus on the Kurdish roots has deep implications for imperialistic beliefs. Though they might not be the only motives for the writing, they would have been deeply ingrained in British and French culture that they cannot be removed from the equation. Nicolle cannot bring himself to completely deny these theories, writing:

Even then, the Kurdish connection has probably been unduly stressed by some historians who seem bent on denying the Arabs of the fertile crescent a significant role in their own twelfth century history.<sup>277</sup>

In the context of imperialism and Orientalism, denying the Arabs this agency in their own lives means more than a simple academic misstep. Lane-Poole was just the first to stress this Kurdish ancestry strain. Another historian, the Frenchman René Grousset, put it even more plainly in a later text on the subject, removing the couched language with which Lane-Poole wrote.

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<sup>275</sup> Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, 45.

<sup>276</sup> Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, Preface. Nicolle wrote the preface to the most recent release of Lane-Poole's work.

<sup>277</sup> Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, 12.

## René Grousset

René Grousset, born in France in 1885, was a historian who specialized in Asia, producing multi-volume works on both Asian and Steppe history.<sup>278</sup> Grousset did not create a Saladin-specific biography, but he did produce two very important works in which Saladin played an immense part; a French multi-volume history of the Crusades entitled *Histoire des Croisades* (1930), and a later condensed work, entitled *The Epic of the Crusades* (1939).<sup>279</sup> The earlier of these two works laid out his agreement with the imperialist and Orientalist views of the day, justifying European domination through the passage, “After so many Arab and Turkish Dynasties, the accession of Saladin therefore marked that of a new race. With him the Kurdish, that is, the Indo-European, element seized hegemony over the Muslim World.”<sup>280</sup> Grousset as we will see is not afraid to put his particular views on full display. Not couching the comparisons as “Aryan” as Lane-Poole did, Grousset specifically refers to the Kurds as Indo-Europeans. He goes on to thoroughly push the point home, asking a question that highlights the racial aspects of his thinking:

Yet behind that apparent Arab uniformity, what is more distinctive than the decadent shrewdness of the Arab caliphal dynasty (the Abbasids in Baghdad and the Fatimid’s in Cairo); the belligerent coarseness of the first generation of Turkish adventurers such as Zengi; and the spontaneity, the intellectual, and moral richness of the Kurdish dynasty of the Ayyubids?<sup>281</sup>

In this passage, Grousset sums up the European Orientalist view of the East quite well.

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<sup>278</sup> Donald F. Lach, “René Grousset” in *Some 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Historians*, Ed. S. William Halperin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

<sup>279</sup> René Grousset, *Histoire des Croisades*, trans. Anne Marie Edde (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1930).

<sup>280</sup> Grousset, *Histoire des Croisades*, 535.

<sup>281</sup> Grousset, *Histoire des Croisades*, 535.

The ancient bigotries are on display as the “decadent” Arab and the “coarseness” of the Turks are promoted in concise language. Grousset’s answer to this question is as good an example of the scientific racist theory of Saladin’s Kurdish ancestry as this thesis could ever hope to provide:

From the beginning, the Ayyubids proved to be superior to their environment. The freshness of new blood, the vigor of that mountain-dwelling race of Kurds who had not been touched by Arab decadence, brought to Islam of the Later Empire a store of energy and, as it were, a youthful vitality, without the savagery of the Turkish element. That advent of an Indo-European dynasty, as the mythologist of ethnicity would say, or, as well will say more simply, a family of highlanders, would reform the face of Syro-Egyptian Islam.<sup>282</sup>

Yet again, one sees the familiar language spelling out the “savage” Turk the “decadent” Arab. This repetition makes it difficult to claim it was in error. The statement sends a message that the “New-Blood” of the Kurds, a European tribe, was the only thing that could have reformed the system, and thus the only way they could have defeated the European Kingdom of Jerusalem. It is clear that Grousset is also heavily implying the same was true of his time. Lane-Poole may have spoken in metaphor and in English romantic language, but the ideas are the same. Grousset is creating Saladin the European, and separating him from his own people to further his imperialistic worldview that the Arabs and Turks cannot govern themselves. The parallels between this process and what was occurring in the medieval period is too similar to be a coincidence. Despite almost a thousand years of history, British and French identity was still tied to the legends of Saladin.

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<sup>282</sup> Grousset, *Histoire des Croisades*, 536.

This process was not an aberration by any stretch of the imagination as ten years later in the English reprint of his work, *The Epic of the Crusades*, his opinions had not wavered:

History must bow before the lofty and chivalrous figure of the great Kurdish Sultan, so different from the pitiless Turkish Atabegs his predecessors, as well as from the brutal Mamelukes who were one day to succeed his dynasty. But wherever Saladin was not present in person, his Turkish lieutenants reduced the whole Christian population to slavery.<sup>283</sup>

Here, we can see a English influence in the translation. This work was intended for English audiences, so again you see the added words of “chivalry.” Yet these are the same racist and imperialistic claims as before, just with a slightly more romantic bent. Grousset’s own words plainly do more to advance the argument of this thesis than any of the authors can, and shows that by the 1930s Lane-Poole was out of style.

This is not the only similarity with Lane-Poole’s writing, as Grousset also probes the outskirts of modern historiography with lines like “It was indeed important for him to cut the Franks off from their naval bases and to deny ports for landing any future crusades.”<sup>284</sup> A clear claim that Saladin was practical enough to go for the port cities first. Yet this pragmatic sentiment was not pushed by Grousset as a fully pragmatic Saladin. Rather he focuses his attention on the romantic idealization done by Walter Scott, writing “Saladin, in contrast, kept his word with a loyalty, sense of humanity, and chivalrous good grace which won the admiration of the Latin chroniclers.”<sup>285</sup> This consistent language of romantic idealization would continue for the next twenty years, with

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<sup>283</sup> Grousset, *Epic of the Crusades*, 170.

<sup>284</sup> Grousset, *Epic of the Crusades*, 170.

<sup>285</sup> Grousset, *Epic of the Crusades*, 173.

Saladin's role unchanged.

Grousset, as with Lane-Poole, is also defended by other historians. In Grousset's case, that historian is Donald Lach. However, just as with Nicolle's defense of Lane-Poole, the defense is centered around an argument that basically amounts to it was okay to say these things at this time.<sup>286</sup> While the author of this thesis understands that argument, and does not necessarily disagree with it, as moral standards shift constantly, it does not make the language any less imperialistic or racist. Further, it does damage to the image of Saladin in the eyes of the people reading the work, and that this author cannot abide. It is clear how the writings of the last two authors fit together in the argument, but what happens when religion is added to the mix?

### **Charles Rosebault**

Scholars should be aware of another modern writer from this time, Charles L. Rosebault and his work *Saladin, Prince of Chivalry* (1930). Rosebault was as a prolific author, historian, and journalist at the beginning of the twentieth century who was born and raised in England, but lived most of his later life in America.<sup>287</sup> Rosebault authored many other works of history, but his specialty seems to be the history of American journalism, as his most famous work is a biography of American journalist Charles Dana, called *When Dana was the Sun* (1933).<sup>288</sup> Through his writings, Rosebault is clearly motivated by a religious zeal to tell the story of Saladin. This zeal comes across in his references to religious articles, such as the Holy Lance, being real. Saying of the lance

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<sup>286</sup> Lach, *Historians*, 245.

<sup>287</sup> Rosebault, *Saladin*, xi.

<sup>288</sup> Charles J. Rosebault, *When Dana was the Sun: A Story of Personal Journalism* (New York: Literary Licensing, Llc., 2012).

which rallied the Christians at Antioch, “strangely enough there were doubters even then, men of so little faith that they would not believe Peter Bartholomew’s report of the vision which had led him to the finding of the Lance, nor subsequent visions equally marvelous and moving.”<sup>289</sup> This religious zeal harkens back to the first chapter of this thesis and Rosebault’s portrayal of Saladin follows many of the conclusions that chapter made about identity. There is nothing wrong with religion and zeal in day to day life, but the lack of objectivity in phrases like “strangely enough there were doubters even then” is troubling in a historical work. Rosebault’s work is best described as a more religious version of Lane-Poole’s, and he owes much credit to that other author.<sup>290</sup> Other than a distinct religious take on the modern legends, Rosebault does a lot of “borrowing” from Lane-Poole.

Rosebault takes Lane-Poole’s ideas about Saladin’s Kurdishness and regurgitates them, even using similar anecdotes saying;

Saladin was a Kurd, one of that aloof, proud, independent, warring race of mountaineers, who occupied the highlands beyond Armenia, and who resembled not a little the Highland Scots in their clannishness and readiness to possess themselves of the goods of others.<sup>291</sup>

Notice the same reference to the “clannishness” and other tendencies of the Scots in particular. Rosebault continues the description and records the Kurds were “noted for their sense of honor and their hospitality.”<sup>292</sup> This line again is eerily similar to Lane-

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<sup>289</sup> Rosebault, *Saladin*, 15.

<sup>290</sup> While rules about academic fair use were different then, some might say that Rosebault owes Lane-Poole some “credit” for his work. It has been almost a hundred years, but plagiarism is plagiarism, and it should be acknowledged when it is seen. Rosebault passed himself off as a historian, and while the rules may have been different then, his use of Lane-Poole would be deemed unacceptable toady.

<sup>291</sup> Rosebault, *Saladin*, 56-57.

<sup>292</sup> Rosebault, *Saladin*, 56-57.

Poole's, and this is not the only similarity between the two works.

Rosebault continues this use of Lane-Poole by following his ideas about the Kurds with remarks about the Arab's and Turk's inability to govern themselves. When speaking about civil war between Muslims, Rosebault claimed that Saladin "possessed by neither pride nor blood lust, the occasional rebuff meant little to him" and he wished to "preserve Muslim lands and men."<sup>293</sup> He goes on to further describe the Levant itself as a subverted place, saying the Arabs had been affected by "The languorous air of the Orient and its reposeful spirit were not to be resisted. An attitude of laissez-faire, or tolerance and indulgence, even brotherly good will showed itself in the making."<sup>294</sup> This repeat of the implied undertone of Lane-Poole is setting the Arabs up as inferior to Saladin and his Kurdish family, without having to outright say it. Saladin was the new blood that invigorated the region and stabilized it. This, according to Rosebault, allowed for the re-conquest of Jerusalem and the failures of the subsequent crusades.

Rosebault also used the romantic notions of Saladin from Scott, and refers to sultan as "ever-charming" claiming that Saladin did not want the throne of Egypt, "it is alleged that at the last moment Saladin resisted the Caliphs wish to make him the successor of Shirkuh, and had to be coaxed and persuaded by ingenious arguments," taking up Scott's opinions of the ambitionless Saladin.<sup>295</sup> Note the language that only "igneous agreements" could sway him, implying that he himself had some genius about him. Rosebault, by basically copying Lane-Poole's arguments, mirrors his use of Saladin as a European bringing order to the Levant, something imperialists would have believed

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<sup>293</sup> Rosebault, *Saladin*, 96.

<sup>294</sup> Rosebault, *Saladin*, 42-43

<sup>295</sup> Rosebault, *Saladin*, 81.



was necessary. Rosebault specifically refers to Scott, when creating a physical depiction of Saladin saying that Scott used so many sources that this description, while pure imagination, was probably the best one available. Using Scott as a source again when talking about how Saladin behaved in court and in warfare, Rosebault wrote;

So it was that when the combined forces of Mosul and Aleppo came seeking him near the Horns of Hamah, he suggested a compromise, even offering to surrender some of his conquests. But his opponents, having a larger force and feeling confident of victory, rejected his proposals with scorn. They did not reckon with his superior military talents.<sup>296</sup>

Saladin in this passage is shown to be “superior” to the forces of Mosul and Aleppo, or plainer stated the Turks and the Arabs. This use of the romantic legends culminates in an entire chapter dedicated to his mercy entitled “Saladin the Munificent.”<sup>297</sup> This section is filled with endless praise too numerous to mention in this thesis, but it continues the romantic and religious themes.

Rosebault’s mix of Lane Poole and religion gave a new perspective of the imperial motives, especially of the civilizing mission and its desire to spread Judeo-Christian values and laws across the globe. The differences between Grousset and Rosebault, who wrote at the same time, are interesting. Grousset was not afraid of speaking plainly about his ideas surrounding the Kurds and the racial aspects of the argument. Rosebault takes much more from Lane-Poole and adds little, he merely restates them in a more religious context. However, what the reader should continue to see is this use of Saladin as an outsider among his own people, supporting an imperialistic worldview. Comparing these authors shows how imperialists continued to use direct and

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<sup>296</sup> Rosebault, *Saladin*, 96.

<sup>297</sup> Rosebault, *Saladin*, 160-179.

indirect language in their historical writing. It was another twenty years before more works on Saladin appeared, and those were the final episodes in the saga of the romantic Saladin.

### **Steven Runciman and Hamilton Gibb**

The final two historians this chapter will analyze are Sir Steven Runciman and Sir Hamilton Gibb. As with the authors that preceded them, both were well-known scholars of the Orient. Gibb in fact would be influential as one of the authors of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*. Runciman was one of the last historians to espouse the romantic legends of Saladin in his works of history. Many historians considered Runciman's *A History of the Crusades* (1951-1953) to be over twenty years out of date when it was published.<sup>298</sup> Hamilton Gibb authored two books on Saladin, *The Achievement of Saladin* (1950) and *The Life of Saladin* (1965).<sup>299</sup> Writing around the exact same time, these two take similar paths in their depictions of Saladin, with both favoring the romantic view of him, yet hiding it well. The major difference is in the tone of the writings, with Runciman's meant for wide audiences and Gibb's meant for fellow academics.

Beginning with Runciman, his first depiction of Saladin is in comparison to the men of the First Crusade, writing that "His mercy and kindness were in strange contrast to the deeds of the Christian conquerors of the First Crusade."<sup>300</sup> This line implies that Runciman's popular history had didactic overtones, as does much of Runciman's work. His three-volume history of the crusades was famous for being very anti-crusader,

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<sup>298</sup> Edde, *Saladin*, 618.

<sup>299</sup> Hamilton Gibb, *The Achievement of Saladin* (London: Penguin Reprints, 2000).

<sup>300</sup> Runciman, *Kingdom of Jerusalem*, 380.

portraying them as rabid conquerors who attempted to destroy a superior and flourishing Arab civilization. While this depiction may not necessarily be completely false, it clearly is showing a moral lesson and political viewpoint. Again, the reader can also see this romantic language of “mercy” and “kindness.” Of course, Saladin may very well have had these traits, but by focusing on them, without espousing any negative traits, makes it apart of the romantic legends. It is a few chapters later, when Runciman is describing Saladin’s death that the romantic language and imperialistic thoughts creep in. He begins this section with a few lines that on their surface attempt to bring Saladin back down to earth:

Of all the great figures of the crusading era Saladin is the most attractive. He had his faults. In his rise to power he showed a cunning and a ruthlessness that fitted ill with his later reputation. In the interests of policy he never shrank from bloodshed; he slew Reynald of Chatillon, whom he hated, with his own hand. But when he was severe it was for the sake of his people and his faith.<sup>301</sup>

This line fits in a modern history of Saladin. The idea that he “never shrank from bloodshed,” and was both “cunning” and “ruthless” implies a pragmatism in Saladin’s behavior. It implies that he chose the fact that he showed the world. Runciman soon turns to pure praise, however, writing “For all his fervor, he was always courteous and generous, merciful as a conqueror and a judge, and a master of the considerate and tolerant.”<sup>302</sup> One could consider this tempering the statement before it, which makes sense. His treatment of Saladin as better than the Crusaders continues:

He was a devout Moslem. However kindly he felt towards his Christian friends, he knew their souls were doomed to perdition. Yet he respected their ways and thought of them as fellow men. Unlike the Crusader

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<sup>301</sup> Runciman, *Kingdom of Acre*, 65.

<sup>302</sup> Runciman, *Kingdom of Acre*, 65.

potentates, he never broke his word when it was pledged to anyone, whatever his religion. Though some of his emirs might resent him as a Kurdish parvenu and though preachers in the West might call him Antichrist, there were few of his subjects that did not feel for him a respect and devotion, and few of his enemies could withhold admiration from him.<sup>303</sup>

This is where the tempering seems to stop and the romantic aspects are returning. The last line claims that even his enemies could not on “withhold admiration.” When combined with the aforementioned “merciful” and “considerate and tolerant,” an image is being crafted, one that words like cunning do not seem to affect. It is with the final lines of this speech that Runciman truly relates to Scott and Lane-Poole, “He was a Kurd of no great family who commanded the obedience of the Moslems world only by the force of his personality. His sons lacked his personality, their blood tainted by decadence.”<sup>304</sup> After this stirring speech about the greatness of Saladin, Runciman went into great detail about how under the influence of the Arabs, Saladin’s sons tore his empire apart. The frequent references to his Kurdishness, followed by this condemnation of the Arabs, was a much subtler way of pushing the previous theories, yet it is still removing Saladin from Arab society. Runciman was still pushing these ideas while showering Saladin with praise. Gibb did the same, though without the “popular” touch of Runciman.

Gibb was also one of the last of the Romance writers. His works, however, were much more academic histories than Runciman’s. Though Gibb may have been more focused on history, there is still much evidence of his love for Scott’s works.<sup>305</sup> This romantic image was best shown by his earlier work, *The Achievement of Saladin* (1950),

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<sup>303</sup> Runciman, *Kingdom of Acre*, 65.

<sup>304</sup> Runciman, *Kingdom of Acre*, 66.

<sup>305</sup> Edde, *Saladin*, 618.

in which he says of Saladin:

He was no simpleton, but for all that an utterly simple and transparently honest man. He baffled his enemies, internal and external, because they expected to find him animated by the same motives they were, and playing the political game as they played it. Guileless himself, he never expected and seldom understood guile in others.<sup>306</sup>

These words “guileless” and “honest” denote a strong character that the Europeans wanted to promote in themselves. By attaching them to Saladin, Gibb is again perpetuating this European image of the Kurdish Saladin, and highlighting the morals and ideals he wished to see in society. This romantic image of the ambitionless and guileless Saladin is textbook Scott and Lane-Poole, and fifty years on they are still highlighted, just as with Runciman. These romantic ideas about Saladin transferred to his later work, when Gibb describes Saladin as “an upright honest man from whom nothing could be concealed.”<sup>307</sup> This romantic image is best shown in his analysis of the sparing of Jerusalem, that touchstone of the previous chapters, with Gibb writing; “Finally reuniting his armies, Saladin advanced to the goal of his faith, the capture of Jerusalem. After a siege of less than a fortnight the city surrendered on 2 October, on terms which confirmed, -if confirmation were needed- his reputation for limitless courtesy and generosity.”<sup>308</sup> Gibb is clearly as enamored with Saladin as Lane-Poole, Rosebault, and Grousset, but he reverts back to the couched language of Lane-Poole when dealing with Saladin’s Kurdish roots, writing of Saladin’s dominance of Nur al-din’s son:

It was not only that a prince of the Zengid House was reduced virtually to a vassal of one of his father’s creatures. What was still more disagreeable was that the creature was a Kurd, who challenged the Turkish monopoly

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<sup>306</sup> Gibb, *Achievement of Saladin*, 53.

<sup>307</sup> Gibb, *Achievement of Saladin*, 2.

<sup>308</sup> Gibb, *Achievement of Saladin*, 54-55.

of sovereignty, now established for a century and a half, and bestowed his conquests upon his own kinsman. Indeed the hardest task with which Saladin was faced was to overcome the professional jealousy and savageness of the Turkish officers.<sup>309</sup>

Again we see this putdown of the “other” races of the Levant, the “savageness of the Turkish officers,” all while zeroing-in on Saladin’s Kurdish ancestry. Gibb’s choice of Saladin in this way is not a surprise, as Said made it clear in *Orientalism*, Gibb wanted people studying the East.<sup>310</sup> However his focus on subjects like Saladin, especially given all that has been said, shows a clear motive for defining what parts of the East he wanted emphasis placed on, and what values he wanted to convey. Further he partook, just as Runciman did, in the attempted removal of Saladin from Arab society and placed on a pedestal as a European who saved that area from the “decadent” Arabs and the “savage” Turks.<sup>311</sup>

Despite having some of the remnants of romanticism, Gibb’s writing attempts to divorce itself from opinion in a pure academic exercise. Runciman’s is explicitly more popular than academic. Many modern historians, as well as his contemporaries, turned their noses up at Runciman’s work as “bad history” due to his adoption of Scott’s and Lane-Poole’s ideas as they were being torn apart in the articles of the day.<sup>312</sup> Their work were, however, the last of these works of history utilizing Saladin in a racist fashion. World War II had come and gone and the British and the French were losing their empires slowly. Within twenty years they had all but disappeared. Also, the ideas of

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<sup>309</sup> Gibb, *The Life of Saladin*, 16.

<sup>310</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 11.

<sup>311</sup> Gibb, *Life of Saladin*, 1.

<sup>312</sup> Edde, *Saladin*, 618; and Newby, *Saladin*, xii.

scientific racism were wildly out of fashion following that great conflict, due to the Holocaust.<sup>313</sup> Runciman and Gibb were the last hurrah for the legends and the imperialistic ideas they espoused.

## **Conclusion**

Following Runciman and Gibb, the historiography moved on, with the aforementioned Oldenbourg and Ehrenkretz pushing new ideas about Saladin. While these later authors attempted to redefine the man against his chivalric reputation, they did so in very different ways, and to varying degrees of success. Saladin belonged to a new generation of writers, one that formed the modern view of Saladin. Lane-Poole, Grousset, Rosebault, Gibb, and Runciman all used Saladin as a vehicle to help promote a British and French imperialist worldview, helping to define those national identities again with the help of Saladin, though this time with focusing on the fact that Saladin's Indo-European roots were the actual reason for his success. It was again a justification for the loss of the Levant, but with new metrics and motives. It was also a way to justify the identity of the imperialist, through showing that Europe had always dominated these regions, and thus always should. While the legends and uses surrounding Saladin may have changed, his use as a vehicle did not

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<sup>313</sup> Viault, *Modern European History*, 540-550.

## Conclusion

Why does it matter? This is a question historians must answer and with this topic it is difficult. This thesis makes it clear that the historiography of Saladin has corrected the flaws of the early twentieth century, that all modern biographies acknowledge the legends and no credible historians speak of Saladin's Kurdish roots with the imperialistic language of the past. The legends, however, live on. Saladin to this very day is still being subverted to fill needs and define identities. The best example of this came in the late 1980s when Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein attempted to invoke comparison between Saladin and himself.<sup>314</sup> Through the altering of his birthdate, frequent references in speeches and even taking the name Saladin II Saddam Hussein, Hussein attempted to attach himself to the great sultan however he could.<sup>315</sup> During his frequent wars with his neighbors, Saddam referred to himself as the modern Saladin in attempting to unite all Islam, as well as to repel Western invaders such as the United States. He espoused these views while he was using poisonous gas to attack the Kurds, Saladin's own people. Hussein too was attempting to create an identity, as well as political legitimacy and justifications for his actions, through Saladin, just as the French and British had before him. This fundamental misunderstanding of who Saladin was is more common today than historians would want to believe, though it does not always have to be as negative as with Saddam.

Ridley Scott's portrayal of Saladin in his 2005 blockbuster *Kingdom of Heaven* is

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<sup>314</sup> Edde, Saladin, 497-499.

<sup>315</sup> Paul Cobb, *The Race for Paradise: An Islamic History of the Crusades* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2-10.



another example of this. Scott uses the movie to rail against fanatics of all races and religions, painting Saladin and Baldwin as more secular rulers, creating a kingdom of conscience. While this portrayal is in a positive light, as many of the chivalric legends were too, it is still attempting to fashion an identity for the historical Saladin. Rather than chivalry, though, it was through modern ideas of secular nonviolence. He was not non-violent, and he was not secular. Saladin himself may have been claimed from these legends in historical works, but in popular culture the legends remain. I do not claim to have a solution to the problems of Saladin's portrayal today, but I do believe it is only through education that the historical Saladin can finally be brought to the forefront. Saladin was an important man. He is someone worth studying, for many different reasons, and thus does not need to be exaggerated to be great.

The historical Saladin was certainly a figure that was at times merciful, and chivalrous in his way, but his was an Islamic culture that valued these traits as well. He was a deeply religious man who rose to power in the midst of chaos in the Levant, and was the master of controlling that chaos. He did this above all because he was pragmatic and ambitious. Saladin attacked and isolated the port cities of the Levant before he moved on to Jerusalem, because while taking that holy city was certainly a major goal, the permanent expulsion of the crusaders was his overall goal. Saladin knew that victory depended on preventing the landings of possible future crusades. Even his mercy at Jerusalem can be attributed to this pragmatism, as he needed his army in one piece to secure Acre and capture Tyre and other port cities he had yet to conquer. All of this, Saladin knew, was the key to protecting the Levant from another invasion as well as securing his own power. This defense of the Levant and the taking of Jerusalem was

certainly a part of his religious faith. This is a part of the Islamic ideal of Jihad. Jihad is a word that is thrown around a lot today, but in essence Jihad is a struggle against the unholy. This struggle has many battlefields, from the most obvious wars against Christianity and other religious groups, to the internal struggle in all religious people about their own faith. Saladin's Jihad was just as complicated. He was a religious man whose goal was the return of the entire Levant under the control of Islam, and he was ruthless in securing that goal. His treatment of the religious orders show this, as he frequently had members of the Templars and Hospitlers executed on capture. It is not that these facts negate his mercy and goodness, it is that history is complicated and it is a misconduct of history to use Saladin as he has been used. This complicated, interesting man is who needs to be championed, not a legend from a thousand years ago. We as historians must strive to ensure that image is the correct one, and not a legendary creation.

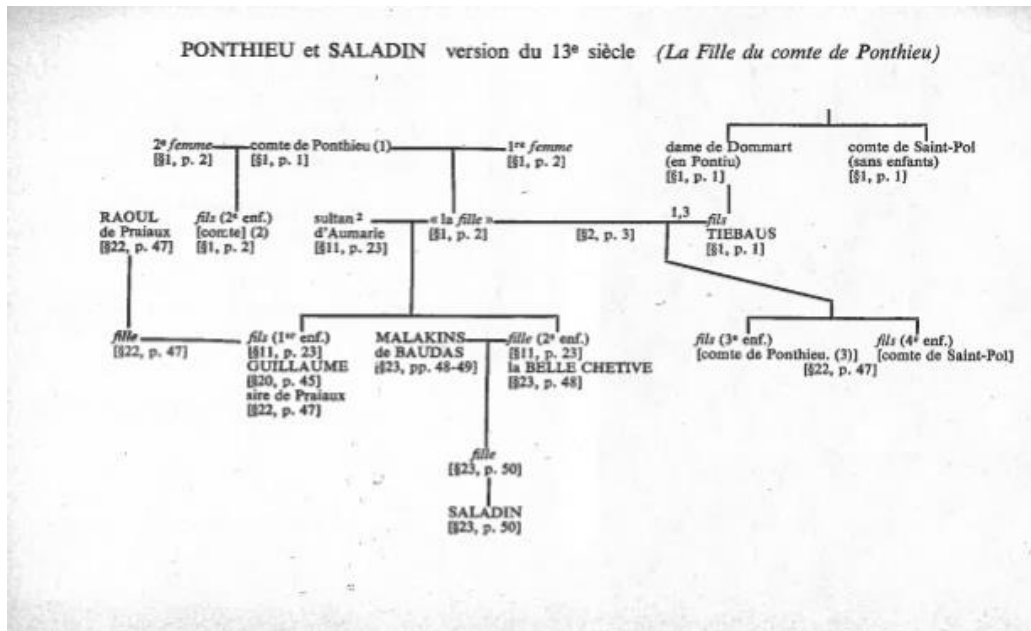
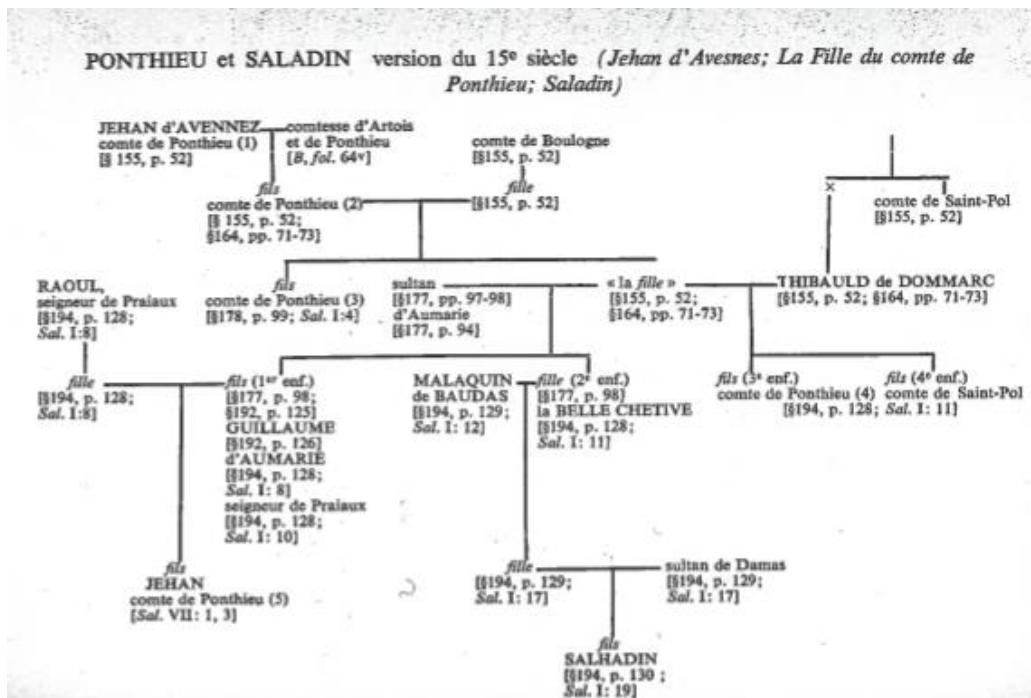
From the Anonymous Latin poem circulated during Saladin's wars to the works of Steven Runciman and today, Saladin is a well-recorded figure. The differences in all of the works that come between is how each one confirms, supports, challenges, or creates an identity, and in what morality they seem to be promoting. Europe has always defined itself by the idea of the "other." And Saladin was the worst kind of other in European history. Not only is this the case in the medieval period because he was so like his foes, such as Richard the Lionheart, but also because his success against them challenged their identities and worldviews. Thus, the legends turned him into a Christian and a European. When moving into modern times, Saladin is found to supposedly confirm many imperialist and racist world views, and thus this narrative is heavily emphasized.

Regardless of the times, Saladin is a vehicle used to define and confirm identity, not just to justify his actions. This new explanation of the legends, that has not been posited before. This is a new and important contribution to the historiography of Saladin. His history has been twisted, not only to explain and justify his success but to help both England and France showcase national cultural ideals and identities. Saladin was such a unique figure in history that he was the perfect character for the French and English to use in identity defining literature. Saladin is, of course, not the only way in which these people created identities; he is just a small piece in a huge puzzle. But for cultures that shift and change as much as any culture does over almost a thousand years, to use the same stories to define themselves is a strange occurrence, and something that is important to take notice of and study. Even more so when the main character is an enemy of the people.

Another final point that must be drawn is that despite problems with Orientalism, as historians move forward, there is something to Said's arguments, notwithstanding how incorrect and anger inducing many of his conclusions were. This thesis has clearly shown how Europeans subverted and misunderstood Eastern culture for their own ends, and this is one of many other examples. Further it shows how even in the most basic construct, that of creating East and West, this creates an "other" by default, and is pure modern Orientalism, regardless of motive. Even historians such as Gibb, who pushed the study of the East his entire life, had his own motives for doing so. Edward Said had his faults, but Orientalism, with its long history, is not quite buried yet. Historians must grow past the vitriolic anger directed at Said and see that the points he made are still valid in historical study.

Upon reading this thesis one wonders in what way I myself have contributed to the legend of Saladin. Through my own bias and spin, I too have used Saladin to a purpose, and defined my own identity in a way. I clearly am a historian who rejects didactic, romantic, and imperialistic worldviews, and supports a more pragmatic interpretation of Saladin. The Saladin in this thesis fits well into my own version of the “facts” of history, my own interpretations, and I wonder if a hundred years from now someone will see the same problems in my work that I see in the imperialist writings of the early twentieth century. I wonder if I have contributed yet again to the subversion of the founder of the Ayyubid dynasty, conqueror of Jerusalem and defeater of the Third Crusade, Saladin. Only time can tell.

## Appendix

Fig. 1a<sup>316</sup>Fig. 2a<sup>317</sup>

<sup>316</sup> Larry S. Crist, *Saladin: Suite et fin du Deuxieme Cycle de la Croisade*, (Paris: Minard, 1972), 201.

<sup>317</sup> Crist, *Cycle de la Croisade*, 202.

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