

## Migration of a Cultural Concept: Arabian Knighthood and Saladin as a Model

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### ABSTRACT

This article is a cross-cultural approach that examines the historical and literary significance of the concept of Arabian knighthood during the Crusades (1095-1292 A.D.) and especially during the period of the Islamic leader Saladin who was famous in the West for his bravery and chivalry. The concept of Arabian knighthood for Saladin embodied characteristics of bravery, chivalry, and altruism which were present in Arabic poetry. As for the West, there was a distinct definition of knighthood; however, it changed after the Crusades and the physical encounter of western fighters with the legendary Saladin. The role of knightly values that Saladin embodied in changing the Western perception of knighthood is illustrated in both the historical and literary narratives of both Islamic and Western origins.

### INTRODUCTION

The Crusades launched in the period (1095-1292 A.D.) played an important role in a reciprocal cultural exchange between Moslems and Crusaders during the Middle Ages. The development in the concept of knighthood in the West is an example of the cultural influences of the Arabs on the West. The concept had an established notion for both Arabs and the West. However, the Crusaders were impressed by the Arabic and Islamic version and implemented it to suit their own culture. In Europe, there were several rites and traditions a prospective knight had to undergo before granted the position. On the other hand, knights did not have to belong to a certain class and were only required to have the attributes of bravery, chivalry and altruism among other traits to qualify as a knight. Historians emphasize that the concept of a knight for Arabs was a familiar one even before Islam and the notion evolved as a consequence of their long battles and wars (Dradkeh 1988, 5). One of the lengthy wars which lasted for about forty years and was accompanied by a series of acts of pillaging was known for many Arabs both in the past and present because it let a great impact on them. The war was known in Arabic folklore as "the war of the Basús" and it shaped the Arabic perception on the importance of life and

how individuals should live. The consequences of the war resulted in placing a value on the knight and the characteristics he should uphold. The notion of a knight evolved from questions of human interest, political effectiveness and a higher sense of heavenly justice that Arabs believed should be implemented in the world that we live in and not to be regarded as abstract religious ideas dealing with the kingdom of heaven.

There existed in many periods of Arabian history brutality and atrocities caused by war. At the same time, there was also a consensus by many people on the need of a system of value to lessen the effects of violence on people. Many enlightened individuals spurned by domestic calculations and a sense of a survival instinct decided that there should be a moral code that prohibits a non-humane conduct at times of conflict. Many knights agreed on a decree that aids in the early intervention to stop the escalation of violence and emphasized a moral code to adhere to in times of adversity. These traits were also emphasized in Arabic poetry because a lot of warriors and heroes used to sing in praise of their heroism and chivalry such as Antara bin Shaddad, Al-Zeir Salim or "Muhallhil," and Imru' al-Qais who among many other poets distinguished themselves in Islamic and Arabic history.

### ARABIAN KNIGHTHOOD BEFORE ISLAM

There are very few resources available that give a clear definition of the concept of Arabian knighthood before the coming of Islam and after because most of Arabic historical and literary tradition was mainly oral. This does not mean that the concept did not exist, but it evolved differently in Arabic literary history. In the West during the Middle Ages, knighthood had its own rules and systems that a knight had to pass in order to achieve this title. Historically, in the West, knights played an important role in the political, social and economic life, as well as of course, the military. Historians have pointed out that the feudal system of Europe played an important role in the emergence of this class (Hunt 1981, 1-22). The concept due to historical circumstances was different in the Arab world because it emerged from a group of traditions imposed by the ways of living in the Arabian Peninsula. For the concept of the knight or the hero was closely connected with bravery and courage and other positive qualities without regard to social status. Some knights did not belong to the upper class and it was a trait of courage or bravery that in effect helped raise a knight's individual status in the tribe. Jawad Ali (1978) in nine volumes shows numerous stories of knighthood in Arabic literature and history. In the fifth volume, Ali cites the famous literary and historical example of Antara who was a slave in the tribe of Abs but his courage and bravery in defending the tribe made him one of the important knights in the tribe (361-62). Eventually, Antara's bravery gained him freedom and his position as a knight earned Antara, a mere slave, a status that enabled him to marry his cousin, a woman far above his social status (Ali 1978, 387-88). As a knight, Antara sought to prove that he was altruistic in defending his own people and frightening his enemies. At the same time, Antara abstained from regarding war as a means of gaining wealth and in fact he declined to accept a share in the spoils of war and instead divided it among the lesser fortunate warriors.

Arabian knights seldom regarded war as a means of attaining wealth. Antara stated in his poetry that he refused to let others fight for him because he does not fear death. For Antara, the war for him and other knights, is a necessary evil and therefore, he did not have regrets concerning the aftermath of any battle. The knight in the case of many famous figures in Arabic poetry is considered a natural outcome of the type of living of the tribal era in Arabic history. In addition, knighthood was seen by many individuals as an opportunity to remove obstacles in the attainment of a social status that would have been impossible in an ordinary situation. However, the realization of the social status meant that the qualifications the knight should uphold have to be applicable to civilian society and the knight should have a charismatic appeal to have a huge influence on other men. The knight exercised supreme domestic authority in his community because he embodied the qualities that distinguish him from others.

There are other Arabic literary examples that demonstrate how Arabian culture helped shape the concept of a knight. Arabian tribes have constantly fought fierce battles among themselves because of the ever going daily strife over

livestock, grazing and water. These battles were called "The Days of the Arabs" out of which a lot of narratives about knights evolved. Pre-Islamic poetry was the historical vessel that preserved and transferred literary images of their life and wars. For these knights love and battle were often inseparable, and they often boasted of their success in front of their beloved woman or they would remember their beloved in the midst of battle. It was actually liberating since it allowed the fighter to escape an existence that proved to be miserable since one could not predict his future. The presence of death meant that the individual could not transcend his existence, and, therefore a person had to depend on values that tied him to the universe. Many famous fighters were also skillful poets who constructed their own version of living into two worlds; the one in which ongoing battles plagued their existence and the other is the imagined life of peace and stability. As an example, Antara remembering his adored cousin in the fiercest of battles recited a poem in which he is embracing swords with an opponent because their glitter reminded him of his beloved's smile (Qurashi, 488). The poet, therefore, had to embrace the paradox of his existence and immortalize in his poetry the concept that fate is not determined by utter submission to circumstances and that individuals can make the world a better place. Therefore, the individual is capable of extracting from a tragic doom a moral system that would help in sustaining a better existence for him and others.

One of the important characteristics that were closely associated with the Arabian knight was that of generosity. In Arabic culture, a person would be expected to offer the best of what he has to feed to an often exhausted guest traveling over stretches of open desert. Thus, a knight would be willing to sacrifice his mare, which is his most precious wealth to feed to his guest and the most famous example in Arabic literature is Hatim Tayyi'. These stories of excessive generosity are abundant especially in the Pre-Islamic era (Ali 1978, 66). Other characteristics of the knight included bravery, chivalry, forgiveness, and faithfulness. These traits were considered essential because they were a natural outcome of life in the desert plagued by its harsh living conditions, constant wars, and, therefore, there was a desperate need of a moral code. As a consequence of internal circumstances as well as external ones, being a knight was an ideal people cherished, sought to imitate and to reinforce as part of their culture.

### ARABIAN KNIGHTHOOD IN THE ISLAMIC ERA

When Islam was first preached in the Arabian Peninsula, its believers reinforced the already existing knightly qualities found in the culture of the tribal living of the people. Because Islam spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula and Syria mainly through battle, its supporters sought to reinforce humane laws during war. The first Caliph Abu Baker who ruled immediately after Prophet Mohamed (632-634 A.D./11-13 H.) started to launch several military campaigns and advised his military leader Usama Bin Zaid in one of those early battles after the death of the prophet with a speech that later became a landmark for Moslem soldiers on how to act on the battlefield. Abu Baker advised his soldiers by saying:

People hear my advice of ten that you must preserve: Do not betray, exaggerate and be unfaithful, do not disfigure. Do not kill small children, or old men, or women. Do not cut down trees, or burn, do not pick ripe harvest, do not slaughter an animal unless for food. You will also see people who have dedicated themselves to prayer, leave them alone. You might also come across people who will offer you a variety of food, say God's name on it (Al Tabari, 226-7).

This advisory moral code stresses knightly behavior and shows how Islam reinforced certain qualities in its supporters. Therefore, Islam as a religion embraced the concept of Arabian knighthood and added a religious component to an already existing perception upheld by many Arabs.

The concept of knighthood changed but not dramatically in the twelfth century took on a different turn in Arabic literature and Islamic society because Moslems were fighting a foreign Western enemy who were of a different culture and faith. Historically, the fiercest battles between Moslems and Crusaders were fought during those consecutive campaigns. This study sheds light on the most important figure in the Crusades, Saladin whose death in (1193A.D./589 H.) reinforced his image for the West as an Arabian and Islamic knight. In his holy battles against the Crusaders, Saladin was a brave and chivalrous knight who won praise from his enemies and earned their respect. His influence and legacy left its impact on Western literature and history until the present. Western attraction to Saladin in particular was mainly attributed to his knightly virtues which the West tried to emulate.

At the end of the eleventh century Moslems and Christians were engaged in a series of battle that continued on for two centuries. Military campaigns were launched by the West with the blessings of the church for the purpose of gaining control over the city of Jerusalem and Great Syria or as known in Arabic as "Bilad alsham." There are numerous historical sources both ancient and new, Arabic and Western, which discuss the different aspects of the Crusades. J. J. Saunders (1966) in *A History of Medieval Islam* states a powerful reason for the Franks' invasion was for "the establishment of a Christian regime in the Nile Valley" and its purpose "would deal a deadly blow to Islam and perhaps enable crusaders to open up connections with the isolated churches of Nubia and Abyssinia" (164). The reasons behind the Crusades are numerous, however, and religious zeal was the declared motivation for most of the Christian soldiers.

If defense of religion acted as the leading call for Christians of Europe, Islamic Jihad took on a religious aspect after the Crusades came and atrocities were committed in the name of religion. It is especially after the Battle of the Field of Blood (1119 A.D.) that Moslems began looking at the battle with the Crusaders as a holy war (Phillips, 35). Subsequently, all future battles with Crusaders were seen as holy wars and those who fought in them were regarded as defenders of faith and as martyrs. Although war remained as an important in the encounter between them, the fighters on both sides also engaged in other forms of communication which made it possible to have some cultural exchange.

## ARABIAN KNIGHTHOOD AND THE CRUSADES

The most famous Islamic knight for the West is Saladin (1138-1193A.D.). Many ancient and modern critics cite him as the "Arabic" hero and the answer their prayers during tumultuous and difficult times that faced and still faces the Arab and Islamic world (Man 2016, 13). He was an Islamic leader whose enemies testified to his fierceness in battle as well as a living embodiment for qualities expected of a knight. Saladin gained his status in the Middle Ages, a period of intense conflict with the West. As a historical and literary figure, Saladin continued to inspire Western writers until the present. The way the concept of the knight as it evolved for the West was greatly influenced by the behavior of Saladin and it needs further investigation since Arabic sources both literary and historical have a different approach from Western ones.

Both Arabic and Western sources agree that Saladin's military role centers on two important aspects. Arabic sources summarize his achievements in two major points (Ibn Shaddad 1994, 86). The first was his unification of Islamic forces under one banner to fight off the Crusader's army. The second was in his ability to successfully defend Moslems from foreign invasion. Western sources, however, focus on his ability to unify Islam by ending the Shiite rule in Egypt. Saunders states that Saladin was able to put down rebellions and basically end the Shiite rule over Egypt and the Arab world by implementing the Abbasid Caliph Mustadi (d.575 H.) instead of the Shiite rival Adid (d.567H.) who was very unpopular for most people (164). Similarly, Reynold Nicholson (1907) in *A Literary History of the Arabs* considers the Shiite Anti-Caliphs were the existent rulers of Egypt until "the famous" Saladin took over Egypt in 1171 A.D. and restored the Sunnite faith. Nicholson, who devoted an entry on Saladin, further adds that the command issued by Saladin to add Syria and the famous battle of the fall of Jerusalem were the reasons behind Europeans' decision to undertake the Third Crusade. Moreover, Nicholson considers the Ayyúbids historical decisions based on the fact that they were "orthodox, as behoved the champions of Islam against Christianity" (275). Therefore, as leaders, the Ayyúbids, were extremely popular. In Arabic history, the unification of Moslems was for the purpose of battling a foreign enemy and since Arabs and Moslems have a positive view of the role Saladin played in their history; these sources tended to see in him a leader who acted upon the general interest of the public.

Saladin early in his military career was a very important figure because of his success in warding off the Crusaders' threat. Born in Takrit, Iraq, Saladin gained his position by being associated with his Turkish lord, Nūr ad-Dīn. Saladin's military career enabled him to become the real governor of Egypt and after the death of Nūr ad-Dīn to extend his rule and launch campaigns against the Crusaders. In most of these battles, Saladin was able to achieve minor victories over the Crusaders. He also suffered from some setbacks. Also, in one particular battle, Saladin almost perished as a military leader. In the battle of Montgisard, near Ibelin, in 1177 A.D. was a deadly encounter between the two hostile forces. Saladin

met Baldwin IV of Jerusalem, Reynald of Chatillon and the Knights Templar and these combined forces were brutal and as a consequence only a fraction of his army was able to make it safely back (Phillips 2002, 125).

Most historical sources both Western and Arabic consider the victory that Saladin achieved in the battle of Hattin (1187 A.D./583 H.) as the reason behind his earning a celebrity status both among Moslems and Christians. In this battle, Saladin had to fight the combined forces of Guy of Lusignan, Reynald of Chatillon (or as known in Arabic as Arnat), and Raymond III of Tripoli among others. He ordered his Christian captives to be treated kindly and arranged all means of comfort for them. Saladin especially welcomed in his own private tent a number of high ranking military captives including the King Crusader (Guy de Lusignan), Reynald of Châtillon, and other high ranking officials. Saladin greeted them kindly and with a welcoming smile, which was interpreted differently in some Western sources. When Saladin saw the king suffering from thirst, fear, and exhaustion he offered cold water. As the anecdote is narrated by sources both Arabic and Western both state that when the king had his fill, he passed it on to Reynald. Saladin objected to the king's behavior because he made an oath to kill Reynald who was treacherous in dealing with Moslems (Ibn Shaddad 1994, 69-70). He told the translator to inform the king that he did not give Reynald a drink because Saladin had made a public pledge to kill Reynald ten years earlier if he ever fell as a captive (Ibn Shadda 1994, 130-31). This incident was narrated more than once by Ibn Shaddad and was also referred to by western historians throughout the ages as a memorable incident (Lyons 1982, 264). For it was known to all Moslems and Crusaders that Reynald, who had a fortress (in what is known as Keraq, Jordan) had raided, frequently looted and killed Moslem pilgrims on their way to Mecca. He also attacked merchants and was arrogant enough to want to launch a campaign to invade the holy sites in Medina (Lyons 1982, 264). The incident itself had been interpreted by Islamic historians as exemplary in dealing with captives because the king was afraid Saladin would kill him. Instead, Saladin told him "kings do not kill kings" (Ibn Shaddad 1994, 131). According to Islamic knighthood giving water and food to captives means their lives are spared and Saladin indicated he did not wish to do so and thus reminded the king that Reynald doesn't have amnesty (Ibn Shaddad 1994, 69-70). Therefore, Saladin's behavior was seen as commendable, just, and appropriate. The way an Arabian knight treats an enemy is unlike other fighters who did not grant any amnesty to their prisoners.

Western historiography and literature have built on the same historical material to praise and condemn Saladin's behavior. Some sources went as far as to consider some facts as a sign of the brutality of Saladin in war. The incident as in the Lyon d version of the *Eracles* states that Saladin ordered him to drink from the cup, and then he executed him (qtd. in Jubb 2000, 45). This version, though not widely, popular shows the different perspectives Europeans had of Saladin. The Arabic historians, on the other hand, praised Saladin in every single anecdote because understandably he is a national hero. However, the praise should also be interpreted as

a cultural appropriation of what should be done in a given circumstance and Arabic sources agreed that Saladin always acted with justice and piety.

Therefore, Arabic historiography focuses on anecdotes that demonstrate the chivalry practiced by Saladin towards knightly duties and family obligations. An example is the encounter between Saladin and the Crusader prince Balian II of Ibelin, the ruler of Ramla. This prince fled from Hattin while his wife was still in Jerusalem. After the victory in Hattin and the approach of Saladin to Jerusalem, Balian went to Saladin and asked for permission to leave to get his wife out of the city. Balian also promised Saladin not to fight with the Crusaders and that his stay would be for only one night. After he was granted his wish, the Crusaders asked Balian to stay and fight against Saladin. As a Christian knight, Balian knew that the customs of knight would be to keep his word and thus found himself in a difficult position. Therefore, he decided to speak to Saladin, who admired his knightly behavior and relieved him of the pledge. In fact, Saladin even went further to ensure his wife's safety while her husband was busy planning for defending the city against Saladin (Ibn al-Athir 1993, 211). In this instance, Saladin proved a knight because he admired the qualities of knighthood regardless of faith.

Saladin's chivalry was celebrated by Western historians in his treatment of the captives after the capture of Jerusalem. Saladin managed to capture Jerusalem through a treaty (1187 A.D./583 H.) and the Crusaders handed in the city without any fighting. The treaty allowed the Crusaders to leave Jerusalem in peace with all their belongings (Lane-Poole 1978, 218). Arabic sources indicated that the Crusaders had to pay in order to relieve themselves ten dinars for men, five for women, and one for children. The treaty also permitted the Crusaders a period of forty days to provide for the ransom. This allowed thousands of prisoners to be released, but after the time allowed had elapsed there were still a lot of prisoners who were poor Europeans and could not afford the ransom price. They went and asked Saladin to release them and he agreed to Balian's proposal that the prisoners pay a collective sum of thirty thousand dinars for seven thousand prisoners. Therefore, the ransom price dropped to only four per person. Saladin then agreed to his brother's proposal to release one thousand prisoners for free and then added an additional five hundred. Saladin further requested all elderly prisoners and all women who have male relatives in captivity to be released. Furthermore, he also gave widowed wives money for their return trips as mentioned by both Arabic sources (Ibn al-Athir 1993, 184-3) and Western sources on the Crusades (Lane-Poole 1978, 218).

This documented historical act that displays the of chivalry of Saladin is in stark contrast to how the Crusaders treated their adversaries when they were victorious. King Richard in Acre who achieved victory four years later decided to deal with Moslem captives differently. He ordered that all the men, women, and children slaughtered (Ibn al-Athir 1993, 262). Western sources also mention the massacre of innocent individuals (Archer 1989, 210-12). The brutality of dealing with captives by the Crusaders emphasizes the discrepancy between the Crusader's religious motives and

their atrocious actions. The historical fact often points to the western perception of knighthood which is intrinsically different because of the difference in the cultural background of the crusaders. The bloody history of Europe both past and present testify to the military nature of the struggle. The volunteers in the campaigns came for different reasons. In addition to the religious fervor, there were others who participated for economic, social and political reasons. The economic factor in particular played a great role because the European attempts continued in the Mediterranean for a long period of time and did not end until the focus shifted to the New World. The historical events did display an incongruity in the conduct of the Crusaders whose religious zeal for excommunication was inconsistent to their frequent pillaging and slaughter of innocent civilians.

Saladin, on the other hand, regarded belief and behavior as intertwined and followed Islamic conduct in his combat with people of other faiths. European scholars have supported the claim that Saladin had dealt kindly with the Crusaders when he entered Jerusalem and he forbade any of his men from attacking them. Moreover, Arabic sources cite Saladin's decision to formulate a group of guards that prevented any one from committing acts of violence against those left behind as exemplary. He also allowed Arab Christians, who were generally more sympathetic with Moslems to return home after the Crusaders persecuted and banished them from the city (Ibn al-Athir 1993, 184). Proving to friends and foes alike, Saladin always chose to be kind when he could have acted otherwise.

If people were his only concern, Saladin would have not been the great leader the West esteemed and admired. In addition to his respect for human life, Saladin also showed great respect for Christian holy places. For instance, when a group of Moslems asked Saladin to destroy the Church of Resurrection in Jerusalem in revenge for what Christians did to the Moslem holy places, Saladin refused their offer and instead increased security around the holy places. Researchers pointed out the disparity between the Christian's occupation of Jerusalem earlier when Christian princes boasted of their pillaging the city and killing people until blood reached up to their knees in the streets (Ibn Shaddad 1994, 140). Arabic sources dwell on the religious aspect of Saladin's knightly behavior to serve as a contrast to the Crusader's hypocrisy of its declared religious motivation and the executed immoral acts that were the norm in their behavior.

Saladin's respect towards religion also manifested itself in his treatment of the Crusader Patriarch of Jerusalem. When Saladin besieged the city, the Patriarch pleaded to free the Crusaders. Not only did Saladin agree to his proposal, he also allowed him to depart with all his wealth and sent guards to assist him out of the city and the Crusader only paid an insignificant ten-dinar ransom. Ibn al-Athir narrates in his famous book (*Alkamal fil Tarik*) about the amount of the wealth the patriarch took with him when he left the city. For Moslems, this proved to be a shocking discovery and one of Saladin's advisors said that the Patriarch should not have taken the belongings of the church with him. Saladin answered that he was honoring the treaty signed with the Crusaders and promises should be kept. Saladin, therefore, was only reinforcing his standpoint as a de-

fender of faith and not a man who pursues worldly pleasures in the name of religion (Ibn al-Athir 1993, 184).

Both Arab historians and Western historiography agree on regarding Saladin's chivalrous treatment towards women as befitting a knight. This manifested itself in the abundant stories of nobility towards women. He exemplified his chivalry towards wives of princes who were left behind or were caught in the middle of battles. After the battle of Hattin, he gave the princess of Galilee amnesty and granted her and her children permission to join her husband, Prince Raymond. When Saladin entered Jerusalem, he also released Guy De Lusignan's wife and allowed her to join her husband. Saladin also treated his arch enemy's widow Reynald of Châtillon kindly and released her imprisoned son when Saladin's brother conquered the forts of Al-kerak. Furthermore, Saladin also allowed Christian nuns to leave the city of Jerusalem (Ibn al-Athir 1993, 184). The Arabian knight through his humane treatment brought the conflict to the point which is what truly matters in human dealings. The interpretation of his act was to accept the paradox inherent in the concept of the freedom of the individual and the divine plan in the religiously declared war. It sheds light on the meaning of the captivating personality of Saladin and his ability to transcend the bloodshed of his time motivated by religious beliefs.

Saladin's chivalry was also extended to the elderly who were victims in battles. In one anecdote as mentioned in Arabic resources, Arab Moslems after they have captured in Beirut (1191 A.D./587 H.) around two hundred Christians sent them to Saladin who was fighting in Acre. Saladin saw an elderly man among the group and asked the translator to inquire of the man's original country and his purpose. The elderly man responded that he came from a place about ten months away and his reason for coming is for pilgrimage. Saladin asked to set the prisoner free and sent him back (Ibn Shaddad 1994, 236). Ibn Shaddad also narrates an anecdote about a Moslem who stole a baby from his mother's tent. When the mother realized her baby was missing, the other Crusaders encouraged her to go to Saladin for assistance. With the aid of a translator, she was able to tell her story. Others around Saladin saw him moved to tears by her account and ordered a search for the lost baby. When Saladin was told that the baby was sold, he paid for its return and gave the baby back to his/her mother (240). The kindness was immediately recognized by other Islamic fighters as a lesson to his followers that a war that has no principles is not a holy war and could not be won. Saladin in effect initiated a foreign policy initiative that emphasized the importance of the human subject in his diplomatic relationship with others.

In later battles Saladin continued to show his courtesy to Crusaders. Some of these memorable historical encounters cite Saladin's allowing the Crusaders to withdraw at times of peace and his eagerness to make a treaty in Ramla so as to grant them the chance to keep their men and supplies (Ibn Shaddad 1994, 324). Therefore, Saladin set an example for them as well as for other Moslems and established a new definition of religious war and its purposes and very unlike the Crusaders' behavior where the intention at times is to inflict destruction on both people and place. What appealed to many individuals both Arabian and western is that Saladin

was aware of the many expectations of others and sought to bring peace for the region.

Saladin represented Arabian knighthood at the time of the Crusades. He was an embodiment for the qualities praised in a knight for both Arabs and Westerners. In Western historiography and literature, the knight as a concept took on many perspectives, but it was later redefined after the encounter with Saladin. Margaret Jubb (2000) in the Preface to *The Legend of Saladin in Western Literature and Historiography* shows how the West's had a great admiration for his character. According to Jubb, Saladin proved to be a force to be reckoned with as the Second Crusade (1148-50 A.D.) was heating up and he became for Christians "an element of wish fulfillment[who]led Christian writers to imagine his conversion, covert or open, of Muslim commanders, who then participated in the defeat of their former co religionaries" (xi). Some of the earliest tales of Saladin started in the thirteenth century in the allegory of *Ordere de Chevalerie*. Tracing these stories in Western literature to the present, Jubb (2000) states that Saladin's stature is legendary because he appeared in many European literatures of diverse languages. There was also a paradoxical situation among the many European nations in how each regarded Saladin who was known to be a fierce enemy of Christendom and at the same time, embodied chivalric values towards them.

In Saladin's frequent encounter with the Crusaders, they were a lot of instances when the Crusaders themselves varied on the interpretation of Saladin's actions, especially, his chivalry towards them. The most interesting feature of their enemy was his embodiment of qualities they did not expect from someone who held a different faith. As an example, when Richard spent four terrible months at Ascalon with little supplies, Saladin did not attack them. Richard's followers assumed the motive to be his chivalry not to attack because they were so vulnerable. The real reason was Saladin's need to rest his army as he was waiting for reinforcements from Jezireh and Mosul (Runciman 1951, 62). As a tactic Saladin frequently used retrenching to gather more strength to fight and his prowess gained him a significant military and a leading status as a champion of Sunni Orthodoxy (Phillips 2002, 123). Therefore, many scholars have focused on his military engagements with the Crusaders to build an image of the famous martial leader. The accounts that contribute to the idealization of Saladin come from his humane actions towards his followers and his enemies. The complexity of the historical fact comes from the diverse viewpoints of writers who come from different national and cultural backgrounds and how they reacted to Saladin. Prior to the war, the Christian men who came to the Holy Land principally understood their religious aim was to battle with devils. The religious context shaped the nature of the cultural exchange and later such beliefs were challenged. The floodgate of many people from Europe over an extended period of time led to an integration into the new culture, and the diversity of the Crusaders consequently initiated a transformation in the change of the initial religious zeal and their motivation for staying.

While Western historians and literary writers varied in their interpretations, Arab and Muslims found in Saladin an exemplary figure of Arabian knighthood and an image to be

emulated in warfare and in defending the faith. In "A Eulogy of Saladin" the famous warrior and prince Usāma Ibn-Munqidh praises Saladin as a defender of Islam. He cites Saladin's achievements as a great tribute for the whole kingdom of Islam and illustrates the generosity of Saladin:

... our lord al-Malik al-Nāsir Salāh-al-Dunya w-al-Dīn, the Sultan [101] of Islam and the Moslems, the unifier of the creed of faith, the vanquisher of the worshipers of the cross, the raiser of the banner of justice and benevolence, the resuscitator of the dynasty of the commander of believers, abu-al-Muzaffar Yūsuf ibn-Ayyūb. May Allah embellish Islam and the Moslems by his long existence, and give them victory through his sharp swords and counsels, and spread wide around his protecting shadow, just as he[Allah] has rendered pure to them the sources of his [Saladin's] benefaction! May Allah render effective throughout the whole world his high orders and prohibitions and set up his swords in power over the neck of his enemies! For his mercy has searched for me throughout the land, as I was beyond the mountains and plains in a lost corner of the world, having no possessions and no family. (195-6).

As illustrated by the text, the writer expresses the Arab-Islamic sentiment towards the hero who was exemplary in every aspect. The knowledge that a ruler could have used his powers to become wealthy and yet declined to act in that manner was considered a model worthy of respect and admiration.

The development of the cultural concept of "knighthood" as term that originated in a distinct form in the Arab world evolved in the example of Saladin and the model that Saladin embodied was later implemented in a Western context. The concept of knighthood has specific cultural connotations and is highly influenced by its Islamic background. Saladin proved to be a model that western crusaders chose to admire and imitate in the evolvement of their concept of knighthood. The example of Saladin as a knight permeates the Arab and Islamic world in literature and history today as it did in the past. Places in various Arab and Islamic countries are named after him. In modern Iraq, for example, there is the governorate of Salah ad Din. More important is the legacy Saladin left for the Islamic world. As a knight, he proved that chivalry and knightly virtues should be part of one's character even when engaging in fierce battle and when foreign enemies do not show the same compassion. He became a Sultan of Egypt and Syria and founded the Ayyubid dynasty, which he founded and ruled over a great part of the Arab world including Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Hejaz, and Yemen. When Saladin died in Damascus in 1193, people found the Sultan's treasury empty because he had given most of his personal money to charity proving to friends and foes a knight worthy of his name and title.

## CONCLUSION

The model of Saladin still permeates Arabic culture. Many scholars emphasize his importance to Modern Arabic societies. Saladin became a myth as a talented politician and his example has infiltrated and influenced popular Arab culture and Arab leaders especially modern leaders regardless of

their political orientation. The names include many controversial rulers who often referred to the mythical figure of Saladin such as Abdul Nasser, Saddam Hussein and Hafez al-Assad. In the twentieth century, Saladin's example plays an important role in Arab political thought, historical fiction, film and permeates popular culture. (Sayfo 2017, 65-85). The figure of Saladin simply gestures towards a series of representative facts that govern Eastern and western relations both past and present. The study of Saladin and his influence on both Western and Arabic audiences has implications for postcolonial studies.

The admiration that Saladin received from both Islamic and western cultures both past and present show that as a figure he remains a mythical military hero who is difficult to follow. The mentality of most militants that supports violence and disregards the cultural background of the emergence of the concept would not be able to emulate the example of Saladin. The Crusaders relegated the concept of the knighthood to an unattainable ideal because they were concerned with supplying new recruiters, rich donations and revenue. Unfortunately, the legacy of Saladin did not exert much influence on the men who were stating that their purpose was to consolidate papal leadership over religious territories. Instead, the communities were often established to raise armies and assimilate them to a military culture. The results were that the behavior of the militants helped in creating a barrier to better relationships between people. The settlements in Jerusalem and other cities is, therefore, considered historically as an experiment in the establishment of the more modern form of colonization that took over in the twentieth century. Unfortunately, the example of Saladin did not extract a major change in the nature of the interaction between the West and the Islamic world and his figure remained as one to be admired as an exceptional one.

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