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Louis IX and the transition from Ayyubid to Mamluk sultanate – Part I*

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ABSTRACT


This article examines the role of Louis IX's defeat and captivity during the Seventh Crusade in the transition from Ayyubid to Mamluk sultanate. It focuses on the attempt of *amir* Fakhr al-Dīn ibn al-Shaykh (d. 647/1250), al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's (r. in Egypt 637/1240–647/1249) vizier and commander of his army during the crusade, to seize power and argues that following the death of the sultan, Louis IX's campaign tilted the balance among the various contenders for the Egyptian throne and decisively contributed to the assumption of power by the Mamluks. The article offers a new framework to explain this major political transition by comparing the failure of the Ayyubid traditional and hereditary military elites to repel Louis IX's invasion with the astounding successes of the Mamluks, all within the context of the structural and administrative changes instituted by al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb and his prevalent patterns of interaction with the Franks. It shows that Fakhr al-Dīn's endeavour to capture the Egyptian throne and to recreate the diplomatic conditions and political consequences of the Fifth and Sixth Crusades failed in the case of the Seventh since Louis IX did not intend to conclude any peace agreement with the Muslims. The article highlights how Louis IX's military and diplomatic defeats allowed the Mamluk regime to quickly consolidate its power and how the Mamluks succeeded where Fakhr al-Dīn failed: they ended the Ayyubid line, defeated Louis IX, forced the latter to surrender Damietta on their own terms, and garnered the necessary legitimacy and popular support.

KEYWORDS

Crusades; Louis IX; Ayyubid; Mamluk; Seventh Crusade; Egypt; Mansura; Fāraskur; Arabic Historiography

Introduction

The Seventh Crusade intersected with a major political transformation in the Eastern Mediterranean. When Louis IX (r. 1226–70) landed in Damietta in 647/1249, Egypt had been firmly under Ayyubid rule for the 77 years since Saladin (Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, 532/1138–589/1193) reclaimed it for the Abbasids in 567/1171, thereby toppling the

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debilitated Fatimid caliphate.¹ By the time the French king was released from his brief captivity on 2 Šafar 648/6 May 1250, Egypt was under Mamluk rule and would remain so for another 267 years.

Louis IX's first crusade, defeat and captivity all played key roles in this transition. This study argues that following the death of the last effective Ayyubid sultan of Egypt, al-Salih Ayyub (al-Malik al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb, r. in Egypt 637/1240–647/1249), Louis IX's campaign inadvertently filtered out competition and tilted the balance among the various contenders for the Egyptian throne, thus decisively contributing to the assumption of power by the Mamluks. This argument will be presented over two articles based on a micro-historical examination of the competition among three key figures of the traditional military elite in al-Salih Ayyub's entourage. The articles trace how Louis IX's adventure in the Eastern Mediterranean shaped both the three contestants' failed races to seize the throne and the eventual success of slave soldiers in ruling the Syro-Egyptian lands. The first part and present article focuses solely on the attempt of *amir* Fakhr al-Dīn ibn al-Shaykh (also referred to in the Arabic sources as Fakhr al-Dīn ibn Shaykh al-Shuyūkh, d. 647/1250), al-Salih Ayyub's vizier and commander of his army during the crusade, to seize power after the death of his sultan. The second part will cover the attempts of the two other contenders: *amir* Husam al-Dīn (Ḥusām al-Dīn ibn Abī 'Alī al-Hadhabānī, d. 658/1260), al-Salih Ayyub's close confidant and vice-regent in Cairo; and Turanshah (al-Malik al-Mu'azzam Tūrānshāh, d. 648/1250), Ayyubid heir-apparent and sultan for a very brief period. The two articles highlight a series of events and decisive military and diplomatic victories over Louis IX that allowed the Mamluk regime to quickly consolidate its power, in addition to securing for the incoming leadership a much-needed cash injection through the payment of the king's ransom.² They stress how Louis IX's defeat and captivity shaped viable legitimation strategies over the long term, providing the Mamluks with essential popular and elite support.

In the field of Ayyubid and Mamluk history, this transformation has been the subject of various studies that have rarely viewed Louis IX's crusade as a chief catalyst.³ R. Stephen Humphreys' comprehensive history of the Ayyubid dynasty, first published in 1977, still offers the most coherent framework to understand this shift.⁴ Far from being limited to the impact of the Chinggisid invasions and the chain of events surrounding the death of al-Salih Ayyub, Humphreys' inquiry extended to deep administrative, social, military and political changes in the Syro-Egyptian lands that contributed to this transformation. He traced its roots to the reign of Saladin, who created an unstable political system that was based on collective sovereignty and relied on Ayyubid princes

¹For more on the abolition of the Fatimid caliphate by Saladin, see Anne-Marie Eddé, *Saladin* (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 34–55; Jonathan Phillips, *The Life and Legend of the Sultan Saladin* (New Haven, CT, 2019), 104–26; Michael S. Fulton, *Contest for Egypt: The Collapse of the Fatimid Caliphate, the Ebb of Crusader Influence, and the Rise of Saladin*, History of Warfare 139 (Leiden, 2022), 112–46.

²For more on the Louis IX's captivity and ransom, see Cecilia Gaposchkin, 'The Captivity of Louis IX', *Quaestiones Medii Aevi Novae* 18 (2013): 85–114.

³Carl F. Petry stressed the 'Ayyubid origins of various Mamluk institutions' in his recent book, *The Mamluk Sultanate: A History* (Cambridge, 2022), 7–8, and, before him, David Ayalon highlighted the continuity between the two regimes in 'Aspects of the Mamlūk Phenomenon', *Der Islam* 53, no. 2 (1976): 224–5. Between the two, there is a large corpus of captivating studies that trace the survival – and flourishing – of various Ayyubid (and Zankid) institutions of warfare, charity, knowledge transmission, piety, Sufism, administration, trade, dispensation of justice and even shadow play theatre under the Mamluks. This is not the place for an exhaustive list or even an abridged selection of these studies.

⁴R. Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193–1260* (Albany, NY, 1977).

governing major cities in Syria as appanages. In the absence of an authoritative sultan such as Saladin or his brother al-ʿAdil I (al-Malik al-ʿĀdil, r. 596/1200–615/1218), the empire quickly turned into a confederation of principalities of varying sizes, governed by Ayyubid potentates who constantly clashed over land and power, eventually resulting in its disintegration. In the process, the backbone of the Ayyubid armies shifted from members of the hereditary military elites into purchased slave soldiers known as Mamluks.⁵ The present article proposes Louis IX’s crusade as an additional key factor that contributed to the end of the Ayyubid line in Egypt and, moreover, aims to complement Humphrey’s work by further explaining the Mamluks’ success against the failure of traditional military elites.

Patterns of Frankish-Ayyubid relations sketched by recent scholarship offer another useful framework to study the entangled histories of Louis IX’s crusade and the aforementioned three contestants. This entanglement is characteristic of the ‘full integration’ of Frankish polities of the East and crusading campaigns into intra-Ayyubid politics.⁶ As demonstrated by Konrad Hirschler, the period between the reigns of Saladin and al-Salih Ayyub was characterised by frequent Ayyubid peace initiatives and increased trade and diplomatic interactions that led to a deeper Muslim knowledge of Latin Europeans and their crusading campaigns. Frankish-Ayyubid relations in Egypt, Syria and northern Mesopotamia transcended religion and, instead, developed against the backdrop of intra-Ayyubid and regional tensions.⁷ One of the outcomes of this full integration was the rise of cross-religious ‘systems of Syrian alliances’, most notable among them a southern Syrian example that comprised Damascus, al-Karak, Homs, the Templars and the kingdom of Jerusalem.⁸ This alliance was defeated at the battle of Ḥarbiyya⁹ / La Forbie in 642/1244 by al-Salih Ayyub whose aim, it should be stressed, was to take Damascus rather than defeat the Franks.¹⁰ Likewise, crusading campaigns became integrated into the mesh of intra-Ayyubid politics of which the following are the two clearest manifestations: (1) a series of peace proposals offered by sultan al-Kamil (al-Malik al-Kāmil, r. 615/1218–635/1238) during the Fifth Crusade from as early as 616/1219 that were prompted primarily by the internal challenges he faced as the new sultan of Egypt;¹¹ and (2) the contradictory Ayyubid attitudes towards the surrender of Jerusalem to Frederick II in 626/1229, which essentially mirrored intra-Ayyubid dynamics rather than overarching religious considerations.¹² In all likelihood, such integration was the prevailing model through which Ayyubid statesmen and princes, such as Fakhr al-Din,

⁵See the last part of the first chapter in Robert Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate 1250–1382* (London, 1986), 18–23, for the events that led to the consolidation of Mamluk power.

⁶Konrad Hirschler, ‘Frankish-Muslim Relations in the Ayyubid Period, c.589/1193–c.648/1250’, in *The Cambridge History of the Crusades 2: Expansion, Impact and Decline*, ed. Jonathan Phillips and Andrew Jotischky (Cambridge, forthcoming).

⁷Hirschler, ‘Frankish-Muslim Relations’.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Mentioned sometimes as Hiribiyya. Another possible reading of this location is Hayr-Bayya.

¹⁰More on the battle of La Forbie below, p. 221.

¹¹Hirschler, ‘Frankish-Muslim Relations’. We know of at least ‘two “rounds” of peace proposals put forward by the sultan in late 1219 and mid-1221; see Guy Perry, *John of Brienne: King of Jerusalem, Emperor of Constantinople, c.1175–1237* (Cambridge, 2013), 94–5.

¹²One such case is the attitude of the Damascene preacher Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256) who denounced the surrender of Jerusalem to Frederick II in his sermons yet was silent when – fifteen years later – his own Ayyubid lord surrendered the city to the Franks ‘according to terms much worse than the treaty of 1229’: Suleiman A. Mourad, ‘A Critique of the Scholarly Outlook of the Crusades: The Case for Tolerance and Coexistence’, in *Syria in Crusader Times: Conflict and Co-Existence*, ed. Carole Hillenbrand (Edinburgh, 2020), 148–9.

Husam al-Din and Turanshah, understood the risks and rewards stemming from interacting with the Frankish polities in the East and crusading campaigns originating from the West. As will become clear in the present article, this model of interaction(s) helped to rationalise Fakhr al-Din's attitudes towards Louis IX's crusade which, in turn, played a role in shaping the Ayyubid to Mamluk transition.

The unstable Ayyubid political system and patterns of relations with the Franks are key threads of the transition of power to the Mamluks; the ethno-cultural aspect that some have argued is a key factor is less evident. Although not entirely absent from the sources, tracing ethnic solidarity among the Mamluks as a motivation for their coup is inconclusive and, in some cases, misleading. The present study departs from previous scholarship that attributed the political transformation to the Qipchaq/Turkic origins of the *Bahriyya* Mamluks.¹³ This scholarly opinion persists and the Mamluk coup was even linked to 'heterodox notions of kingship' and patterns of 'Altaic' legitimation drawn from the Qipchaq tradition.¹⁴ The Mamluks supposedly viewed al-Salih Ayyub as their *pater familias*, and, with his death, his function as head of the family was up for grabs, according to Altaic notions of shared sovereignty and open succession for all capable males.¹⁵ Such misinterpretations possibly emanate from later expressions of legitimacy that the Mamluks employed to link their emerging regime to al-Salih Ayyub. Sultans Aybak (r. 648/1250–655/1257), Baybars (r. 658/1260–676/1277) and Qalawun (al-Manşūr Qalāwūn, r. 678/1279–689/1290) were al-Salih Ayyub's *mamlūks* and it is only normal that they would strive to appear as his legitimate successors.¹⁶ Early Mamluks did, after all, derive their political and administrative traditions from al-Salih Ayyub's regime.¹⁷ Furthermore, the competition for the throne was 'not open to all' but only to a small inner circle of 'Royal Mamlūks';¹⁸ open succession to all capable, Turkic males is simply a myth. It follows that a more beneficial and all-encompassing framework to explain this transition would be to compare the failure of the traditional and hereditary military elites to repel Louis IX's invasion, as in the case of *amir* Fakhr al-Din, with the astounding successes of slave soldiers (Qipchaq or other), all

¹³My discussion here is limited to the attribution of the transition from Ayyubid to Mamluk sultanate to ethno-cultural factors and, as such, not related to the wider debate on the 'Turkish' nature of the Mamluk sultanate. For more on the latter debate, see Jo Van Steenberg, 'Nomen Est Omen: David Ayalon, the Mamluk Sultanate, and the Reign of the Turks', in *Egypt and Syria under Mamluk Rule*, ed. Amalia Levanoni (Brill, 2021), 119–37. Reflecting on the development of Ayalon's research, Van Steenberg cogently problematized the term 'Mamluk' as descriptor of the sultanate(s) of Cairo, especially given the continued use of *dawlat al-atrāk* in the medieval Syro-Egyptian lands to designate the reign of political elites perceived as Turks. For very useful and recent studies, see Koby Yosef, 'The Term *Mamlūk* and Slave Status during the Mamluk Sultanate', *Al-Qanṭara* 34 (2013): 7–34, and 'The Names of the Mamlūks: Ethnic Groups and Ethnic Solidarity in the Mamluk Sultanate (648–922/1250–1517)', in *Egypt and Syria under Mamluk Rule*, ed. Levanoni, 59–118.

¹⁴Willem Flinterman, 'Killing and Kinging: Altaic Notions of Kingship and the Legitimation of al-Zāhir Baybars' Usurpation of the Mamluk Sultanate, 1249–1260', *Leidschrift: Aan Het Hof* 27 (2012): 31–48, at 32.

¹⁵Flinterman, 'Killing and Kinging', 39.

¹⁶I refer here to the mention by early panegyric Mamluk source-material of the 'Law of the Turks' (*āsat* or the *yāsāt al-Turk*) which dictates that 'he who has killed the king becomes king'. It first appears with Baybars's assassination of Qutuz (r. 1259/657–658/1260) and I argue that it should be viewed as a legitimation strategy rather than an expression of ethno-cultural solidarity; see Shāfi' ibn 'Alī (d. 730/1330), *Husn al-manāqib al-sirriyya al-muntaz'a min al-sira al-Zāhiriyya*, ed. 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Khuwaytir (Riyadh, 1989), 67–8, and the main study on this topic, Ulrich Haarmann, 'Regicide and "The Law of the Turks"', in *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, ed. Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (Salt Lake City, 1990), 127–35.

¹⁷Peter M. Holt, 'The Position and Power of the Mamlūk Sultan', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 38 (1975): 237–49, at 238. See the discussion below on al-Salih Ayyub, pp. 220–1.

¹⁸Holt, 'The Position and Power', 240–1.

within the context of the structural and administrative changes instituted by al-Salih Ayyub, his rivalries with other Ayyubid and Syrian polities, and the prevalent patterns of interaction with the Franks.

Late Ayyubid and early Mamluk sources provide ample evidence to this end. This article relies predominantly on three sources, two contemporary and one near-contemporary, of Louis IX's crusade.¹⁹ The first is Ibn Wasil's (604/1208–697/1298) well-known *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār banī Ayyūb* (The Dissipater of Anxieties on the Reports of the Ayyubids).²⁰ Diplomat, judge, jurist and historian, Ibn Wasil is the chief eye-witness to Louis IX's campaign and the emergence of the Mamluk sultanate. He knew all three contenders to the throne and was a close friend of one, Husam al-Din. The second principal witness to the transition is Sa'd al-Din (Sa'd al-Dīn ibn Ḥamawiyya, d. 674 /1276) who, as Fakhr al-Din's cousin, provides valuable insights into events and rifts within the Muslim camp during the crusade.²¹ His autobiographical chronicle is lost, but passages of it are available through other authors including the contemporaneous Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzi (d. 654/1256) in his *Mir'āt al-zamān fī tāriḫ al-a'yān* (Mirror of Time on the Reports of the Notables).²² As Ibn Wasil and Sa'd al-Din benefited from two rival and high-placed informants, Husam al-Din and Fakhr al-Din respectively, their accounts provide a good balance of material and jointly strengthen our understanding of the transition. The third source is Ibn al-Khazraji's still unpublished and understudied *Tāriḫ dawlat al-Akrād wa-al-Atrāk* (History of the Reign of the Kurds and the Turks), which was compiled in the second half of the thirteenth century.²³ Ibn al-Khazraji offers a treasure trove of well-informed accounts based on his meetings in al-Mansura with eye-witnesses to Louis IX's campaign.²⁴ As the three selected sources rely on first-hand accounts, they

¹⁹Furthermore, I use Jean de Joinville, *Vie de Saint Louis*, ed. Jacques Monfrin (Paris, 1995) and Ibn Naẓīf al-Ḥamawī's (d. c.631/1234), *al-Tāriḫ al-Manṣūrī* (Damascus, 1981). The latter source has recently been translated into English by David Cook, *Ibn Naẓīf's World-History: Al-Tāriḫ al-Manṣūrī*, Crusade Texts in Translation (New York, 2021). Although I use my own translation for Arabic source material, I consider *The Seventh Crusade, 1244–1254: Sources and Documents*, ed. Peter Jackson (Farnham, 2009) as the essential starting point for any research on the Seventh Crusade. Jackson's seminal work makes available the bulk of the necessary source material that covers the important aspects of this campaign from both camps.

²⁰Muḥammad b. Sālim Ibn Wāsil, *Die Chronik des ibn Wasil: G'amāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Wāsil, mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Ayyūb: kritische Edition des letzten Teils (646/1248–659/1261) mit Kommentar: Untergang der Ayyubiden und Beginn der Mamlukenherrschaft*, ed. Mohamed Rahim, Arabische Studien vol. VI (Wiesbaden, 2010), and Ibn Wāsil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār banī Ayyūb (629–645 /1231–1248)*, eds. Ḥasanayn Muḥammad Rabī and Sa'id 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Ashūr, vol. 5 (Cairo, 1972) and occasionally vol. 4 (615–628). For more on Ibn Wasil, see Konrad Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors* (London, 2011), 18–27, and 'Ibn Wāsil: An Ayyūbid Perspective on Frankish Lordships and Crusades', in *Medieval Muslim Historians and the Franks in the Levant*, ed. Alex Mallett (Leiden, 2014), 136–60; and Donald P. Little, 'Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Epochs', in *The Cambridge History of Egypt I: Islamic Egypt: 640–1517*, ed. Carl F. Petry (New York, 1998), 417–20.

²¹Claude Cahen was the first to highlight the importance of this author and reconstruct passages of his lost work; see 'Une source pour l'histoire ayyūbide: Les mémoires de Sa'd al-Dīn ibn Ḥamawiyya Djuwaynī', in *Les peuples musulmans dans l'histoire médiévale* (Damascus, 1977), 457–82; first printed in the *Bulletin de la Faculté des Lettres de Strasbourg* 7 (1950): 320–37. See Anne-Marie Eddé, 'Claude Cahen et les sources arabes des croisades', *Arabica* 43 (1996): 89–97.

²²This is the above-mentioned Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzi who maligned the surrender of Jerusalem to Frederick II. I used the following edition, which was the only one that was available to me: Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzi, *Mir'āt al-zamān fī tāwāriḫ al-a'yān*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Zaybaq, vol. 22 (years 588–654 H.) (Damascus, 2013). Fragments of Sa'd al-Dīn ibn Ḥamawiyya's lost chronicle are also available through al-Dhahabī (d. 758/1348), *Tāriḫ al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa-al-a'lām*, ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmuri, vol. 47 (years 641–50 H.) and vol. 49 (years 661–70 H.), 52 vols. (Beirut, 1987).

²³Ibn al-Khazraji, *Tāriḫ dawlat al-Akrād wa-al-Atrāk* (MS Hekimoglu 695, Istanbul: Suleymaniyeh). I first considered translating the title to the 'History of the Kurdish and Turkish Sultanate' (singular); both options reflect Ibn al-Khazraji's possible conception of the Ayyubids and Mamluks as one continuous sultanate. See the discussion in note 13 above.

²⁴I have greatly benefited from Anne-Marie Eddé, 'Saint Louis et la Septième Croisade vus par les auteurs arabes', in *Les Relations des pays de l'islam avec le monde latin: Du milieu du Xe siècle au milieu du XIIIe siècle*, ed. Françoise Micheau

are more suitable than the embellished narratives of the crusade provided by later Mamluk authors.²⁵

Egypt on the eve of the crusade

When Louis IX started preparations for his first crusade, Egypt was under the rule of sultan al-Salih Ayyub, son of al-Kamil, son of al-ʿAdil I, brother of Saladin.²⁶ The last effective Ayyubid sultan of Egypt differed from other Ayyubid rulers in many respects and several features of the early Mamluk sultanate can be traced back to his reign. Al-Salih Ayyub was ambitious and displayed a total disregard for the prevalent Ayyubid dynastic structure and collective sovereignty model. His stern and overassertive character, and his instigation of a series of major political, military and administrative changes – reforms one might even say – only worsened the resentment of rival Ayyubid princes and other potentates in Syria and northern Mesopotamia.²⁷ Moreover, al-Salih Ayyub developed a profound wariness towards his family and grew very suspicious of his Ayyubid relatives including, it is said, his own son Turanshah.²⁸ Consequently, the sultan preferred the company of his military commanders and loyal *Bahriyya* Mamluks, who had great respect for but also feared him.²⁹ For the senior administrative posts of his regime, al-Salih Ayyub favoured members of his trusted military elite such as his confidant *amir* Husam al-Din over Ayyubid princes and religious or civilian figures. Critically, among the consequences of these personal preferences was that they drastically changed the composition of the elite regiments of the Ayyubid army, as the sultan increasingly purchased slave soldiers and relied on his *mamlūks* over the existing hereditary military elites holding land grants.

Al-Salih Ayyub was not content with the existing system of appanages and principalities. Like Saladin and al-ʿAdil I before him, and the Mamluks after him, the sultan aimed at unifying Syria and Egypt under one powerful and centralised sultanate based in Cairo. Indeed, al-Salih Ayyub's relentless attempts to achieve this unification continued as late as Ramadan 646/January 1249, when he lifted his siege of Homs in Syria as news of Louis IX's imminent attack on Damietta had reached him from Cyprus.³⁰ Likewise, his centralisation drive was evident in the administrative structure that was implemented to rule Damascus, which differed from the standard Ayyubid model and would later be

(Paris, 2000), 66. In this seminal article, Eddé translates the title of Ibn al-Khazrajī's chronicle as 'Histoire des Kurdes et des Turcs'.

²⁵ Later Mamluk sources include Abū al-Fidā' (d. 732/1331), Qarātāy al-'Izzī al-Khazāndārī (d. after 708/1308), Ibn al-Dawādārī (d. after 736/1335), al-Dhahabī (758/1348), Ibn al-Furāt (d. 807/1405), al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), al-'Aynī (d. 855/1451), and Ibn Taghrībirdī (d. 874/1470); for a survey of their portrayals of Louis IX, see Mohamad El-Merheb, 'Louis IX in Medieval Arabic Sources: The Saint, the King, and the Sicilian Connection', *Al-Masāq* 28 (2016): 282–301.

²⁶ For more on Louis IX's preparations, see Jean Richard, *Saint Louis: Crusader King of France*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge, 1992), 106–12; and Joseph Strayer, 'The Crusades of Louis IX', in *Medieval Statecraft and the Perspectives of History: Essays by Joseph R. Strayer*, ed. John F. Benton and Thomas N. Bisson (Princeton, 1971), 159–92.

²⁷ Fearing his son 'was a tyrannical governor', al-Kamil deposed al-Salih Ayyub as heir-apparent and replaced him with al-'Adil II; Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 222. See *ibid.*, 283–308, for a full discussion on al-Salih's reign, reforms and personal character. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī claims – on the authority of Sa'd al-Din – that al-Salih later killed his own brother (al-'Adil II) in prison; in *Mir'āt al-zamān*, 406–7.

²⁸ Husam al-Din relates that al-Salih did not wish Turanshah or any Ayyubid relative to take the throne after his death and wanted to arrange for the caliph to select a successor; Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 35 and 41. This will be further discussed in the second part of the present study. See Jackson, *Seventh Crusade*, 126.

²⁹ Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 20–1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

adopted by the Mamluks.³¹ After seizing Damascus and reuniting it with Egypt in 643/1245,³² the sultan turned the city into a provincial capital, a mere governorship with secondary status, while Cairo remained the seat of power. Damascus was no longer ruled by an Ayyubid prince as an appanage. The sultan appointed instead a *nā'ib al-ṣalṭana* (vice-regent) who enjoyed full authority and, unsurprisingly, came from the ranks of al-Salih Ayyub's military elite. Alongside the vice-regent, he appointed a vizier who was entrusted with the local administration of the city. Such 'innovations', as pointed out by Humphreys, set the region's political transformation from local and competing Ayyubid principalities to a centralised authority.³³ Al-Salih Ayyub can thus be credited with establishing institutions that would later become the basis for Mamluk political authority.

When it came to diplomacy in the Mediterranean and interactions with the crusader polities of the East, however, al-Salih Ayyub strongly adhered to Ayyubid existing practices. He maintained diplomatic relations with Frederick II based on a solid Ayyubid tradition, one that the emperor had himself preserved in his relations with the sons of his old ally, sultan al-Kamil. Frederick II had exchanged embassies with al-Salih Ayyub regularly and in early 647/1249, at the height of the imperial conflict with the papacy, had sent a senior envoy in disguise to warn the Muslims about Louis IX's intention to invade Egypt and subsequently kept the sultan informed about the advance of the crusade.³⁴ Closer to home, and similarly to other Ayyubid rulers, al-Salih Ayyub forged alliances and/or engaged in wars with the Latin lordships of the East as it suited his political and territorial interests, always within the aforementioned 'full integration' of Frankish polities and crusades into intra-Ayyubid politics.³⁵ Most notably in 642/1244 at the battle of Ḥarbiyya /La Forbie, as discussed above, the sultan inflicted a heavy defeat on the Muslim-Latin Christian coalition of Damascus, al-Karak and Homs with the Templars and the kingdom of Jerusalem. Furthermore, al-Salih Ayyub's army captured Tiberias and Ascalon in 645/1247.³⁶

Not long before the crusade, al-Salih Ayyub fell severely ill.³⁷ Egypt, the greatest prize among Ayyubid holdings, became again a target for the plots of the sultan's relatives in Syria and, additionally, the powerful individuals in his kingdom. In the latter group, the main contestants to the throne included Fakhr al-Din, Husam al-Din and Turanshah. Other players included the sultan's wife Shajar al-Durr and the leaders of the *Bahriyya* Mamluk regiment, but I will limit my discussion in this study to those players with no slave origin who had direct contact with Louis IX, were influenced directly by his

³¹Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 299.

³²As one of the main consequences of the previously mentioned battle of La Forbie.

³³Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 299.

³⁴Frederick II sent envoys to Cairo in 1241 and 1243; Peter Jackson, 'The Crusades of 1239–41 and Their Aftermath', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 50 (1987): 33–5. For the secret embassy sent to warn al-Salih Ayyub, see Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 4: 247, and Jackson, *Seventh Crusade*, 47; for another account of this mission, see Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 163v–164r, and Eddé, 'Saint Louis et la Septième Croisade', 68. For more on these warnings see Hiroshi Takayama, 'Frederick II's Crusade: An Example of Christian-Muslim Diplomacy', *Mediterranean Historical Review* 25 (2010): 176; El-Merhebe, 'Louis IX in Medieval Arabic Sources', 7, 9 and 11; and Gaposchkin, 'The Captivity of Louis IX', 91.

³⁵As discussed above, p. 217.

³⁶Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, 401; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5: 378; Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 161v–162r; and Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 293.

³⁷For the nature of the sultan's illness, see D. S. Richards, 'More on the Death of the Ayyubid Sultan al-Sālih Najm al-Din Ayyūb', in *The Balance of Truth: Essays in Honour of Professor Geoffrey Lewis*, ed. Çiğdem Balim-Harding and Colin Imber (Piscataway, NJ, 2010), 269–74.

campaign, and sought to benefit from his crusade and later his captivity in their race for the throne.

Fakhr al-Din's Ayyubid immersion

As the most powerful contestant for the throne and by far the most ambitious, Fakhr al-Din ibn al-Shaykh came very close to holding the reins of power.³⁸ In what follows I argue that, knowing that al-Salih Ayyub was on his deathbed, Fakhr al-Din attempted to delay any major military confrontation with the crusader army in the hope of securing a peace deal with Louis IX that would serve his plans to seize power. Such an agreement with the French king would have been modelled along the Treaty of Jaffa (Tall al-‘Ujūl or Tall al-‘Ajūl) of 626/ 1229, which Fakhr al-Din had himself played a leading role in concluding between his erstwhile master sultan al-Kamil and his friend, Emperor Frederick II.³⁹ The agreement may also have echoed some of the terms offered by the Muslims to John of Brienne (d. 1237) during the Fifth Crusade to cede Jerusalem to the crusaders and preserve Egypt. The designs Fakhr al-Din had never materialised, as he was killed during the Frankish army's attack on al-Mansura.

Fakhr al-Din was a member of the *Banū Ḥamawiyya*, the renowned Damascene family of Sufis, Shafi'i jurists and statesmen.⁴⁰ This family dominated the Chief Sufi (*shaykh al-shuyūkh*) position in Syria and subsequently Egypt, and quickly became embroiled in Zankid and Ayyubid dynastic politics.⁴¹ Brought in by sultan Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Zankī (d. 569/1174) to run the Sufi hospices of Syria, 'Imād al-Dīn 'Umar ibn Ḥamawiyya (d. 577/1181) was the first member of the family to become Chief Sufi.⁴² His son, Sadr al-Din (Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ḥamawiyya, d. 617/1220), was later appointed by Saladin as Chief Sufi in Damascus.⁴³ The *Banu Hamawiyya*'s fortunes were further intertwined with the Ayyubid dynasty when Sadr al-Din married the daughter of the Shafi'i Chief Judge in Damascus, who happened to be the wet-nurse of the future sultan al-Kamil. Moreover, al-‘Adil I, Saladin's brother, anchored the Hamawiyya family in Egypt by appointing Sadr al-Din as professor of Shafi'i jurisprudence and head of a prominent Sufi hospice in Cairo in 588/1192.⁴⁴ A scholar and statesman, Sadr al-Din acted as al-Kamil's diplomatic envoy on several occasions; he died while carrying out a mission to the caliph in Baghdad on the sultan's behalf.⁴⁵

³⁸Louis IX referred to Fakhr al-Din as 'Fachardin' in a letter that he sent from Outremer following his release; 'Louis IX to his subjects in France, [before 10] August 1250', in *Historiae Francorum scriptores ab ipsius gentis origine*, ed. André Du Chesne, 5 vols. (Paris, 1649), 5: 428–32 from Jackson, *Seventh Crusade*, 108. Joinville, on the other hand, referred to Fakhr al-Din as 'Secedin le filz Seic' or 'Secedinc (Secedic) le filz au Seic'; see Jean de Joinville, *Vie de Saint Louis*, ed. Monfrin, 263 [196], 265 [198] and 300 [261].

³⁹See the discussion above, p. 217.

⁴⁰The Shāfi'i school of jurisprudence is one of the four legal schools of Sunni Islam, prevalent in Egypt, Palestine, and many parts of Syria. For more on the *Banu Hamawiyya* see Nathan Hofer, 'The Origins and Development of the Office of the "Chief Sufi" in Egypt, 1173–1325', *Journal of Sufi Studies* 3 (2014): 1–37; Mohamad El-Merheb, *Political Thought in the Mamluk Period: The Unnecessary Caliphate*, Edinburgh Studies in Classical Islamic History and Culture (Edinburgh, 2022), 89–93; Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages*, 20.

⁴¹For more on the "Chief Sufi" post see Hofer, 'The Origins and Development', 1–7.

⁴²Ibid., 12–4.

⁴³Ibid., 16–7.

⁴⁴Ibid., 17.

⁴⁵Anne-Marie Eddé, 'Awlād Al-Shaykh', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd edition.

Sultan al-Kamil held Sadr al-Din's four sons in high esteem. After all, they were his milk-brothers and, unsurprisingly, all ended up in his 'close service'.⁴⁶ Fakhr al-Din and his younger brothers 'Imad al-Din (d. 636/1239), Kamal al-Din (d. 640/1242) and Mu'in al-Din (d. 643/1246) became known jointly as *Awlād al-Shaykh* (the Chief Sufi's sons).⁴⁷ Trained in Shafi'i jurisprudence and destined to become Chief Sufis, they all held this post with the exception of Fakhr al-Din, who never assumed a religious office.⁴⁸ As such, *Awlad al-Shaykh* dominated major Sufi hospices and different professorships of Shafi'i jurisprudence at prestigious *madrasas*.⁴⁹ Additionally, the brothers played a role in the sultan's personal sphere, partaking in Ayyubid private social life. On one such occasion, Kamal al-Din acted as the legal guardian to al-Kamil's daughter at her marriage to a relative Ayyubid prince, a role still preserved in present-day wedding functions for close male relatives as a sign of distinction.⁵⁰

Awlad al-Shaykh became a hallmark of the Ayyubid dynasty's politics. In addition to being at the forefront of the Syro-Egyptian lands' religious and elite social life, the brothers dominated senior functions of government under the reigns of sultan al-Kamil and his sons.⁵¹ Fakhr al-Din, Kamal al-Din and Mu'in al-Din assumed commanding posts in the armies and administration of al-Kamil. Following the sultan's death, *Awlad al-Shaykh* served his two sons: first al-'Adil II (al-Malik al-'Adil II, r. 635/1238–637/1240) and subsequently al-Salih Ayyub. Mu'in al-Din was appointed vizier by al-Salih Ayyub in 638/1240 and, according to Ibn Wasil, excelled at this role.⁵² In a key achievement, Mu'in al-Din was instrumental in recapturing Damascus in 643/1245 for al-Salih Ayyub from his uncle and arch-nemesis sultan al-Salih Isma'il (al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā'īl, d. 648/1251).⁵³ *Awlad al-Shaykh* thus dedicated their lives to the service of al-Kamil and his descendants, fighting for them, and brokering peace deals among them.

Meddling in the shifting sands of Ayyubid dynastic politics took its toll on *Awlad al-Shaykh*. They all suffered for serving al-Kamil's line, but the heaviest price they paid was the assassination of the second brother, 'Imad al-Din, in 636/1239. Sent by al-'Adil II to regain Damascus on his behalf, 'Imad al-Din was murdered by an Ayyubid prince who, additionally, delivered the city to al-Salih Ayyub.⁵⁴ Likewise the third brother, Kamal al-Din, had his share of misery: while leading an army for al-Salih Ayyub in 639/1241, he was defeated, captured and later released; shortly after, Kamal al-Din died in Gaza on his way back to Egypt in 640/1242, possibly poisoned.⁵⁵ As for Fakhr al-Din himself, he was imprisoned for three years in severe conditions after al-'Adil II accused him of inciting his brother al-Salih Ayyub to seize Egypt – a not unfounded accusation, according to Ibn Wasil.⁵⁶ He was finally released when al-Salih took Cairo in 637/1240.⁵⁷ Yet the

⁴⁶Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5: 169–70; idem, *Die Chronik*, 57.

⁴⁷Fakhr al-Dīn Yūsuf, 'Imād al-Dīn 'Umar, Kamāl al-Dīn Aḥmad, and Mu'in al-Dīn Hasan. See Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, 254–5, 391, and Anne-Marie Eddé, 'Awlād Al-Shaykh', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd edition.

⁴⁸Hofer, 'The Origins and Development', 21.

⁴⁹Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5: 170; see Hofer, 'The Origins and Development', 16–24.

⁵⁰Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5: 15.

⁵¹Anne-Marie Eddé, 'Awlād Al-Shaykh', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd edition.

⁵²Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5: 277.

⁵³Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, 387–8; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5: 348–50.

⁵⁴Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5: 198–202; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, 360–2, on the authority of Sa'd al-Din, Fakhr al-Din's cousin.

⁵⁵Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, 373–4; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5: 301; Ibn al-Khazrajī, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 152 r.

⁵⁶Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5: 215.

⁵⁷Fakhr al-Din could not sleep in prison because of lice; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, 390.

new sultan in Cairo grew suspicious of Fakhr al-Din's popularity and confined him to his home for another three years; it was not until 643/1246, that he regained al-Salih Ayyub's full favour.⁵⁸ So immersed was he in Ayyubid dynastic, political and social life, as well as having seen his family make considerable sacrifices in the service of sultan al-Kamil's line, that one can begin to see how Fakhr al-Din may have viewed himself as a worthy and legitimate successor to the Ayyubid throne.

The last of *Awlad al-Shaykh*

Fakhr al-Din was the most renowned of *Awlad al-Shaykh*. Initially destined to become Chief Sufi, like other members of the Hamawiyya family, he enjoyed instead the career of a statesman and military commander serving Ayyubid sultans al-Kamil, al-'Adil II and al-Salih Ayyub. Fakhr al-Din was particularly close to sultan al-Kamil, who steered his political and military career, trusting and promoting him. Under al-Kamil's reign, he served – among other appointments – as leading commander in the Ayyubid army, vice-regent in Mecca, and as the chief diplomat for missions to the caliph in Baghdad and, most prominently, to Emperor Frederick II.⁵⁹ Rumour had it that after becoming sultan al-Kamil's drinking companion, Fakhr al-Din exchanged his own religious scholar's turban for the triangular bonnet (*sharbūsh*) and honorary robe of a military commander.⁶⁰ Following al-Kamil's death, Fakhr al-Din became increasingly embroiled in Ayyubid succession politics, serving his sons al-'Adil II and al-Salih Ayyub.⁶¹ Some sources relate that, upon al-Kamil's death, Fakhr al-Din demonstrated his allegiance to al-Kamil's line by striving to secure the handover to al-'Adil II.⁶² Despite this loyalty, as mentioned above, al-'Adil II later accused Fakhr al-Din of encouraging his brother to invade Egypt and imprisoned him in the citadel of Cairo until al-Salih Ayyub finally seized the city and released him from jail.⁶³

Notwithstanding a start marred by suspicion, Fakhr al-Din enjoyed spectacular political and military careers under al-Salih Ayyub's reign. The new sultan of Egypt was initially alarmed by the grand procession and reception that the Cairene populace gave to Fakhr al-Din following his release from prison. Ibn Wasil, who is generally unsympathetic to Fakhr al-Din, admitted that the latter 'was loved for his generosity and good conduct'.⁶⁴ As if he could foretell the future, sultan al-Salih Ayyub grew suspicious and ordered the newly released Fakhr al-Din to confine himself at home. It was only after Mu'in al-Din died in 643/1246 that al-Salih Ayyub felt compelled to appoint Fakhr al-Din as vizier to replace his late brother. The last surviving member of *Awlad al-Shaykh* was thus handed his brother's inkwell at an official appointment ceremony in the presence of the caliph's envoy.⁶⁵ Moreover, he was also appointed as the effective commander

⁵⁸Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 40–1; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5: 276–7 and 352. For more on this, see below.

⁵⁹Useful here is the contemporary chronicle of fellow Ayyubid administrator Ibn Naẓif, *al-Ta'rikh al-Mansuri*, 73–5, 176–7, 183, 235, 250.

⁶⁰In Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 178r-v; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5: 169. See below, p. 227.

⁶¹'After the death of al-Kāmil, in 635/1238, 'Imād al-Din, along with his brother Fakhr al-Din, became a member of the conclave of *amirs* choosing who would succeed to the throne'; Anne-Marie Eddé, 'Awlad Al-Shaykh', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd edition.

⁶²Often based on Sa'd al-Din Ibn Hamawiyya; for instance, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zamān*, 349–50.

⁶³Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5: 215 and 276–7.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 5: 276–7.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 5: 352.

of al-Salih Ayyub's army. In addition to leading various successful expeditions against the sultan's adversaries in Syria, Fakhr al-Din defeated the remnants of the unruly Khwarazmians in 644/1246.⁶⁶ Later in the same year, he commanded a triumphant campaign in Palestine against a rival Ayyubid prince and captured Jerusalem and Nablus.⁶⁷ In a series of significant victories, he also recaptured important crusader holdings in Palestine, including Tiberias in Şafar/June and Ascalon in Jumādā II/October of 645/1247 following a joint land and maritime operation.⁶⁸

Prior to this military track record in al-Salih Ayyub's army and during his remarkable diplomatic career under al-Kamil, Fakhr al-Din had played a pivotal role in concluding the Treaty of Jaffa (Tall al-ʿUjūl) in 626/1229 between al-Kamil and Frederick II. After working together on the treaty, Fakhr al-Din and Frederick became close friends and it is said that 'many discussions used to take place between the two'.⁶⁹ The *Anbarur* (Emperor Frederick II, *al-Anbarūr* as the Arabic sources referred to him) may have even complained to Fakhr al-Din about the Christians' attachment to the pope.⁷⁰ They continued to exchange letters after the emperor's return from the Holy Land; we know of at least two such letters that reached Fakhr al-Din with one of the emperor's envoys to sultan al-Kamil, as recorded by the contemporary Ibn Nazif (died after 631/1233–4) in his *al-Taʾriḫ al-Manşuri* (the Mansuri Chronicle).⁷¹ In these letters, which are drafted in the flowery language of the Sicilian Arabic chancery, Frederick II kept his Muslim friend informed about the wars with the papacy.⁷² Interestingly, Fakhr al-Din's imperial connection is corroborated by Jean de Joinville (1225–1317), who noted that Secedin (Fakhr al-Din), commander of the Saracens during Louis IX's crusade, 'bore on his banners the arms of the emperor who had knighted him'.⁷³

Association with Frederick II was essential for Fakhr al-Din. His connection with the emperor was a source of great prestige in the Syro-Egyptian lands and, if well exploited, would greatly serve his ambitions. Even before Louis IX's crusade, Fakhr al-Din endeavoured to further Frederick II's interests in the Ayyubid Eastern Mediterranean. Fakhr al-Din's entourage disseminated a pro-Staufen propaganda aimed at portraying Louis IX as a fanatic king and pawn in the hands of the pope, while depicting Frederick II as a judicious ruler and friend of the Muslims.⁷⁴ Such propaganda was especially effective given the prevalent favourable Muslim attitude towards Frederick II and his descendants in the Ayyubid lands. This was best captured by Syrian historian and Ayyubid administrator Ibn Nazif's chronicle, which stops at 631/1233–4. It describes Frederick II as follows: 'There has been no Christian king like him since the time of Alexander until today, particularly when one considers his power, his shunning of their caliph –the Pope –and his

⁶⁶Sibt ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, 396.

⁶⁷Ibn Wāsil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5: 363–4

⁶⁸Sibt ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, 401; Ibn Wāsil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5: 378; Ibn al-Khazrajī, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 161v–162r; Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, 293.

⁶⁹Ibn Wāsil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb fi akhbār banī Ayyūb (615–628)*, eds. Ḥasanayn Muḥammad Rabī' and Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Ashūr, vol. 4 (Cairo, 1972), 242.

⁷⁰Ibn Wāsil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5: 242 and 251; El-Merheb, 'Louis IX in Medieval Arabic Sources', 4. See Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh, 1999), 320.

⁷¹Ibn Nazif al-Ḥamawī, *al-Taʾriḫ al-Manşuri*, 189–94. For his date of death, see the introduction of David Cook's translation: *Ibn Nazif's World-History*, 2.

⁷²Ibn Nazif, *al-Taʾriḫ al-Manşuri*, 191–3.

⁷³Translation from: *Joinville and Villehardouin: Chronicles of the Crusades*, trans. Caroline Smith (London, 2008), 194–5 [198]. Cf. Jean de Joinville, *Vie de Saint Louis*, ed. Monfrin, 263 [196] or 265 [198].

⁷⁴El-Merheb, 'Louis IX in Medieval Arabic Sources', 4.

audacity in attacking him and driving him out'.⁷⁵ Likewise, Ibn Wasil, another Syrian historian and Ayyubid administrator, praised Manfred's (d. 1266) erudition and his attitude towards Muslims following his trip to the court of the emperor's son in southern Italy in 659/1261 as the Mamluk sultan's envoy.⁷⁶ While these two historians reflected the view of administrative elites, the fascination with Frederick II and his line seems to have been a widespread sentiment in the Muslim eastern Mediterranean in the period between the reign of al-Kamil and the early Mamluk period. Evidence of this, once again, is offered by Joinville, whose own life was spared by his Muslim captors on the Nile when he claimed to be the emperor's relative.⁷⁷ For our purposes, what must be retained from this complex case of entanglement is that Fakhr al-Din's association with Frederick II and their joint diplomatic achievement are crucial to understanding the former's conduct during Louis IX's crusade.

There was another side to Fakhr al-Din that is, equally, prerequisite to understanding his actions. He displayed an insatiable appetite for power that did not go unnoticed and earned him verses in satirical poetry. These poems were preserved by contemporary historian and key witness Ibn Wasil, whose loyalty resided with his close friend and patron *amir* Husam al-Din, Fakhr al-Din's main competitor.⁷⁸ The following satirical verses claimed that Fakhr al-Din would stop at nothing to amass key appointments and land grants, even if it meant apostatising from Islam:

He changed his headgear from turban to *sharbush* for Minyat al-Sūdān

He drank wine in return for Shubrā

Had the Franks occupied Egypt and granted him Bābūs

He would have readily converted to Christianity⁷⁹

Both Ibn Wasil and subsequently Ibn al-Khazraji spared no effort to explain these verses in their chronicles. Fakhr al-Din, trained as a Muslim jurist and expected to assume the Chief Sufi post, exchanged his scholarly turban for the military *sharbush* as soon as al-Kamil granted him the village of Minyat al-Sudan; moreover, he agreed to become the sultan's drinking companion in exchange for the village of Shubra; and lastly, had the crusaders succeeded in conquering Egypt and offered him the village of Babus, he would have willingly converted to Christianity.⁸⁰ Fakhr al-Din, as such, is depicted as a potential traitor, driven by power and wealth.

These verses of poetry carried a serious accusation. They echoed a perception, held by some at the Ayyubid court, that Fakhr al-Din was not committed to and thus refrained from fighting the invaders, attempting instead to benefit from Louis IX's crusade to seize power in Egypt. As detailed below, contemporary, well-informed sources describe how the Ayyubid army's commander repeatedly avoided decisive engagement with the

⁷⁵Ibn Naẓīf, *al-Ta'rikh al-Manṣūrī*, 194.

⁷⁶Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 4: 248–9. Another full English translation of these passages is available in *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, ed. Francesco Gabrieli and E. J. Costello (Berkeley, 1984), 268 and 277. See Hirschler, 'Frankish-Muslim Relations'.

⁷⁷Joinville, *Vie de Saint Louis*, 337 [326].

⁷⁸The satire was aimed at all four brothers, but the discussion here is limited to Fakhr al-Din.

⁷⁹Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5: 58; Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 178v.

⁸⁰All three villages are near Qalyūb and adjacent to each other, as explained by Ibn al-Khazraji.

landing Frankish forces, even when they lay in their most vulnerable position at the beaches of Damietta. The chronology of events they provide indicate that Fakhr al-Din in fact acted against the directives of and defensive plans put in place by sultan al-Salih Ayyub to repel the crusaders.

The road to al-Mansura

Although debilitated by illness, the seasoned sultan was well prepared for Louis IX's invasion.⁸¹ A meticulous military planner, al-Salih Ayyub followed the enemy's movement across the Eastern Mediterranean and planned his defensive strategy accordingly, cognisant of the valuable lessons drawn from the Fifth Crusade. From the steady flow of information from Frederick II and other sources, the sultan knew in advance that Louis IX aimed to attack Egypt by sea.⁸² Carried on a stretcher, al-Salih Ayyub returned hurriedly to his camp in Ashmūn Ṭanāḥ, south of Damietta and east of al-Mansura, where he kept a residence.⁸³ The sultan was confident that Louis IX's objective was Damietta and not Alexandria, similar to John of Brienne before him, and hence re-arranged his camp to face northward, the direction from which the Frankish attack was expected. As soon as news arrived from Cyprus that Louis IX's fleet was preparing to sail for Damietta, peace was concluded with Aleppo and the siege of Homs was lifted to avoid two wars on different fronts.⁸⁴ Fakhr al-Din was then rushed back from Syria and stationed near the anticipated landing zone; he crossed to the west bank of the Damietta branch of the Nile with an Ayyubid army and camped at a locality north of Damietta known as Jizat Dimyāṭ, thus keeping the river between him and the city.⁸⁵ Supposedly, Fakhr al-Din was well-positioned, ready and waiting to crush any Frankish landing force. Furthermore, Damietta was reinforced and well-garrisoned with fighters and provisions, prepared to withstand a protracted siege such as that which took place between 615/1218 and 616/1219. Al-Salih Ayyub put the finishing touches to his plans with his army commanders and the leaders of the local Kināna clan, who were tasked with defending the city and its surroundings. Lastly, the sultan completed preparations with his vice-regent in Cairo, *amir* Husam al-Din, for the impending naval battle on the Nile, which later proved crucial in deciding the outcome of the war. Husam al-Din was, accordingly, entrusted with building and crewing galleys in Cairo and sending them downstream to the sultan's camp, and with provisioning the whole of the Ayyubid army.⁸⁶ The lessons from al-Kamil's victory in 618/1221 had been learnt; plans had been drawn up well and were ready to be executed.

And yet, from the very moment of Louis IX's attack, Fakhr al-Din disregarded sultan al-Salih Ayyub's defensive strategy. On Friday 20 Ṣafar 647/4 June 1249, Louis IX's fleet anchored at sea off Damietta. Early the next day his army started landing in the face of a feeble Muslim resistance, capturing the city on Sunday without a fight.⁸⁷ Ibn al-Khazraji describes how the Frankish fleet's high masts, their sails wrapped around them, filled the

⁸¹ Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 2. For more on his illness see note 37 above.

⁸² Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 166v; Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 5.

⁸³ Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 5 and 9; Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 166v.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1–5; Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād* 166 r - v. See above, p. 220.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 11; Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 166v.

sea, so numerous that they resembled the trees of the Ghūṭa of Damascus.⁸⁸ He also provides a detailed account of the naval skirmishes that resulted in a swift Frankish success in establishing a bridgehead and digging a defensive trench around it. Despite the vulnerability of the initial landing force, Fakhr al-Din refrained from launching a counterattack against the Frankish bridgehead, which must have been in very close proximity, north of his army's main camp.⁸⁹ Instead, he restricted the Muslim defensive response to fierce naval and land skirmishes. This successful crusader landing was shocking to the local population. Ibn al-Khazraji mentions that the Muslims were in disbelief that so many Franks had effortlessly succeeded in landing and holding the beach, and demoralised by Louis IX's strong resolve and the size of his army.⁹⁰

Fakhr al-Din's incomprehensible decisions on the evening of the same day led to the loss of Damietta. He crossed the river with his army to the east bank and retreated south towards the sultan's camp in Ashmun Tanah before any major engagement with Louis IX's initial landing force when still vulnerable. This sudden withdrawal left both the east and west banks defenceless and, to make things worse, the retreating Muslims failed to set light to the ships they had used as a bridge to cross the Nile.⁹¹ Fakhr al-Din's peculiar decision led to widespread chaos in the Muslim ranks in such a way that Ibn al-Khazraji described him as 'standing' like someone who was 'confused' and would not provide answers or issue directives to his *amirs*.⁹² At this point, rumours of the sultan's death spread among the Muslims, exacerbating the confusion, and the city's garrison soldiers decided to abandon their towers and leave Damietta along with the fleeing populace.⁹³ So great was the chaos that the city gates were left open. On Sunday, Damietta fell without resistance; the Franks took it intact along with most of its arms, ammunitions and provisions, except for parts of the arms depot (*silāḥkhāna*), which had been set alight.⁹⁴ As described by one source, Fakhr al-Din left the city from one gate while the Franks were entering it from another.⁹⁵ Damietta was thus abandoned to its fate and Louis IX achieved his first and only major victory without much of a fight.⁹⁶

Sultan al-Salih Ayyub was furious with Fakhr al-Din.⁹⁷ He had, nonetheless, to turn a blind eye to his army's powerful commander and concentrate instead on the looming Frankish threat. Despite his deteriorating health condition, al-Salih Ayyub promptly moved his camp from Ashmun Tanah to al-Mansura, now the last Muslim line of

⁸⁸The Ghūṭa is the fertile area surrounding Damascus, renowned for its orchards. Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 11; Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 166v–167r. Ibn al-Khazraji explains how the Frankish naval attack pushed the Egyptian flotilla back to the shore where it was protected, for a while, by Muslim archers positioned at the beach. He relates that as soon as the crusaders landed, they erected a church adorned with red crosses; Ibn Wāṣil mentions this was the king's red tent.

⁸⁹For an account that shows the proximity of the Muslim soldiers and the landing crusaders, see Joinville, *Vie de Saint Louis*, 243 [162].

⁹⁰Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 167v. This source provides novel information on the Frankish landing and maritime skirmishes.

⁹¹Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 11; Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 168r.

⁹²Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 168r for the quotation.

⁹³Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 12; Joinville, *Vie de Saint Louis*, 243 [163]. According to Joinville, the Muslims thought the sultan had died after sending him three messages by pigeon post to no avail.

⁹⁴Mentioned as *zardkhāna* in Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzi, *Mir'at al-zamān*, 408. For a detailed discussion, see Eddé, 'Saint Louis et la Septième Croisade', 70.

⁹⁵Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzi, *Mir'at al-zamān*, 408. Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 168r.

⁹⁶Ibn al-Khazraji relates that the Franks were unaware that Damietta had been evacuated and did not believe local informants who told them so until they saw the smoke coming out the city; in Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 168r.

⁹⁷Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 13.

defence before Cairo. There he met Fakhr al-Din and other retreating commanders and furiously reprimanded them: 'You couldn't resist the Franks for even a single hour?'⁹⁸ Sources agree that the sultan wanted to punish Fakhr al-Din for abandoning Damietta but abstained.⁹⁹ Although he had never trusted him, al-Salih Ayyub was wary of Fakhr al-Din's power and popularity among the *amirs* and soldiers and now, more than ever, depended on his commander's indispensable military and administrative experience, which he had amassed since al-Kamil's reign.¹⁰⁰ Consequently, the sultan decided to turn members of the Kināna clan into scapegoats and 'pretended that they were to be blamed' for the loss of Damietta.¹⁰¹ Their leaders were hanged, punished severely and unjustly by al-Salih Ayyub for the failure of Fakhr al-Din and his regular soldiers who, after all, were the first to retreat and abandon the city to Louis IX's army.¹⁰²

When it came to explaining the fall of Damietta, Ibn Wasil was more overt in his accusations. He described Fakhr al-Din's pathetic retreat as an 'appalling' (*qabīḥa*) act that led to 'a catastrophe of unprecedented proportions' (*muṣība 'adhīma lam yajrī mithlahā*).¹⁰³ Well informed by his friend Husam al-Din, who as vice-regent in Cairo was privy to regular and prompt battlefield reports sent via pigeon-post messaging (*bitāqa*), Ibn Wasil relates that the Franks captured the city along with all the armoury, ammunition, mangonels and provisions stored within its walls without having to fight. To him, the well-stocked and fortified Damietta should have been capable of withstanding a prolonged siege even longer than the previous one, which he believed had only ended in a Frankish victory because of 'hunger and disease'.¹⁰⁴ Ibn Wasil went as far as accusing Fakhr al-Din of grave 'negligence' (*tahāwun*) that had put the Franks in a position to seize 'the entirety of the Egyptian lands and maybe all of Islamdom, God forbid!'¹⁰⁵

The capture of Damietta exposed and even aggravated the fault-line within the Muslim camp. Not only was al-Salih Ayyub incapable of punishing his negligent commander but, worse still, a section of the army was now inciting Fakhr al-Din to rebel against the sultan. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzi related on the authority of Sa'd al-Din ibn Hamawiyya, that following al-Salih Ayyub's decisions to hang the Kināna *amirs*, whom he had blamed for abandoning Damietta to the Franks, the army grew restless and came close to rebellion. The soldiers demanded the sultan's life, but Fakhr al-Din calmed them down: 'be patient, he [al-Salih Ayyub] is dying. If he dies, your problem is solved; if not, he is yours [to kill]'.¹⁰⁶

The natural death of al-Salih Ayyub was imminent and would spare Fakhr al-Din any opprobrium for murdering his legitimate sultan and the son of his milk-brother and erstwhile master al-Kamil, to whom he owed his career as statesman. As soon as the sultan died, Fakhr al-Din could usurp power under the pretext of being indispensable to administer the realm in the absence of an effective Ayyubid heir, to lead the Muslim army

⁹⁸Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zamān*, 408.

⁹⁹Sibṭ was in no doubt that al-Salih Ayyub would have killed Fakhr al-Din had he survived his illness. See Jackson, *Seventh Crusade*, 126.

¹⁰⁰Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 37; idem, *Mufarrij al-kurūb*, 5: 215.

¹⁰¹Ibn al-Khazrajī, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 169r-v.

¹⁰²Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zamān*, 408. See Jackson, *Seventh Crusade*, 125.

¹⁰³Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 12.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 12.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 37.

¹⁰⁶Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zamān*, 408. Ibn Wasil, on the other hand, relates that the sultan could no longer control his *amirs* due to his worsening condition: Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 13.

against the Frankish invaders, and to protect Egypt and regain Damietta. Ruling Egypt could be achieved by either seizing power directly and extinguishing the Ayyubid line in Egypt or becoming *atabak* (guardian-tutor and effective commander of the army) and reigning on behalf of a young Ayyubid prince. As for regaining Damietta, it could be achieved through a peace deal with Louis IX following a protracted and inconclusive war with the Frankish army. Accordingly, Fakhr al-Din's opportune moment depended on awaiting the sultan's natural death, avoiding any major engagement with the crusaders while seeking a peace deal with the French king, and Turanshah perishing on the hazardous trip back to Cairo from Ḥiṣn Kayfā in the Syrian Jazīra.

Indeed Fakhr al-Din's ambitions and plans came close to realisation when the sultan finally succumbed to his illness on 14 Sha'bān 647/ 22 November 1249.¹⁰⁷ Shajar al-Durr, the sultan's resourceful widow, and his powerful *tawashi* Jamal al-Din Muhsin agreed that only a commanding figure like Fakhr al-Din was capable of uniting the army and executing the sultan's duties and therefore offered him the *atabak* role.¹⁰⁸ The three then transported his body from the Muslim camp determined to keep the sultan's death a secret, because they feared that the Franks would attack as soon as they became aware of al-Salih Ayyub's death. The trio subsequently made the *amirs* take new oaths of allegiance in the name of al-Salih Ayyub, his son Turanshah after him, and Fakhr al-Din as *atabak* of the soldiers who was additionally entrusted with administering the realm.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, they sent letters with the sultan's forged signature instructing all senior officials in Cairo and Damascus to take the new oath of allegiance in the presence of the chief judges. Fakhr al-Din wasted no time and started acting as de facto sultan: appointing senior officials, reversing previous decisions taken by al-Salih Ayyub, spending funds from the treasury to secure loyalties and consolidate power, and surrounding himself with a retinue of compliant *amirs*. Although coin-minting and sermons at Friday prayers were still carried out nominally in al-Salih Ayyub and Turanshah's names, Fakhr al-Din was the effective ruler; he convened and presided over the council of the sultanate, and even headed up his own sultan's table (*simāt*).¹¹⁰ For a while, all seemed to be working according to his scheme.

The end of the journey

Fakhr al-Din still had two major obstacles to overcome, the first of which was al-Salih Ayyub's only living son, Turanshah. As the sultan's death became an open secret, some influential commanders feared Fakhr al-Din's 'limitless ambitions' (*kānat nafsuḥu taṭma' ilā ma'ālī al-umūr*) and attempted to sabotage his plans by ensuring Turanshah's safe return to Egypt.¹¹¹ The first to act was Husam al-Din, vice-regent in Cairo, Fakhr al-Din's rival and a staunch loyalist to al-Salih Ayyub's line. He sent his personal *mamlūks* to hasten the return of Turanshah from Hisn Kayfa.¹¹² As a further preventive measure, Husam al-Din swiftly arrested Turanshah's cousin (son of al-ʿAdil II) in the

¹⁰⁷Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 39; Ibn al-Khazrajī, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 170r-v.

¹⁰⁸Jamāl al-Din Muḥsin, the influential *ṭawāshī* (eunuch) in al-Salih Ayyub's entourage. Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 37–8.

¹⁰⁹Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 38; Ibn al-Khazrajī, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 170v. See Jackson, *Seventh Crusade*, 125–6.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 43; *Ibid.*, 170v.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 42–3 and 44–5; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, 409–10.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 44–5.

Citadel of Cairo after rumours reached him that Fakhr al-Din was contemplating seizing power in the name of this young Ayyubid prince. Likewise, Shajar al-Durr and Jamal al-Din Muhsin became apprehensive about Fakhr al-Din's aspirations. They dispatched *amir* Aqtay (Fāris al-Dīn Aqtāy, d. 652/1254), the fearsome commander of the *Bahriyya* Mamluks, to escort Turanshah on the perilous journey from Hisn Kayfa, narrowly escaping the hostile patrols sent by Aleppo and Mosul to capture the future sultan of Egypt.¹¹³ As suggested by Ibn Wasil, Fakhr al-Din did not object to Aqtay's mission simply because he was confident that Turanshah would not survive the dangerous journey to Cairo.¹¹⁴ Perhaps he could not object to it: Fakhr al-Din was being accused by envious *amirs* of trying to usurp al-Salih Ayyub's throne and was forced to deny these charges by claiming that 'I have no desire to rule, I am merely preserving the house of my master until his son is back to reign these lands'.¹¹⁵ Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzi blamed *tawashi* Jamal al-Din Muhsin for spreading such rumours about Fakhr al-Din. He relates that, contrary to these suspicions, Fakhr al-Din was indeed offered the throne but declined it despite being 'generous, judicious, a good administrator (*mudabbiran*), worthy of ruling, and loved', perhaps not the ideal defence in the face of these accusations.¹¹⁶

Whatever schemes he may have hatched for Turanshah, Fakhr al-Din still had to confront a second and more pressing threat. His response to Louis IX's approaching army could no longer be limited to skirmishes, especially since no peace deal was in sight. The Franks were, very slowly but steadily, closing in on al-Mansura, after which the road to Cairo was open. Furthermore, a peace treaty was as elusive as ever: why would Louis IX consider an agreement with the Muslim infidels now that the Ayyubid sultan al-Salih Ayyub was dead and the Egyptian army in disarray? It was at this point that Fakhr al-Din must have realised that Louis IX's strategy and aims differed greatly from Frederick II's and rather resembled those of Pelagius (d. 1230), the papal legate to the Fifth Crusade. While the emperor collaborated closely and wholeheartedly with Fakhr al-Din to achieve a peace treaty with the Ayyubids that would secure him control over parts of Jerusalem, a similar diplomatic achievement with *Raydāfrans* (the king of France) seemed impossible as Louis IX was in no mood for diplomacy with the Muslims.¹¹⁷

It is difficult to establish how far south of Damietta Fakhr al-Din was willing to retreat before engaging in a full-scale battle with the Franks.¹¹⁸ We can only postulate that al-Mansura was his intended first and final line of defence. This conclusion rests on the

¹¹³Ibn al-Khazrajī, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 171r; Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 44. See Jackson, *Seventh Crusade*, 126.

¹¹⁴Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 44. See Jackson, *Seventh Crusade*, 125–6.

¹¹⁵Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, 410. Later sources unveil an interesting letter attributed to al-Salih Ayyub in which the sultan instructs his son Turanshah to be loyal to Fakhr al-Din; for more on this letter see Claude Cahen and Ibrahim Chabbouh, 'Le Testament d'al-Malik Aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb', *Bulletin d'études orientales* 29 (1977): 97–114. There is little doubt – in my opinion – that this letter is a forgery.

¹¹⁶Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, 410.

¹¹⁷Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 9: '*Raydāfrans* means the king of *Ifrans*, since *rayd* means king in their language'. Louis IX was additionally referred to as *al-Ifransī* or *al-Fransī/al-Firansī* (the French one); Mohamad El-Merheb 'Louis IX', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd edition. Cf. Jackson, *Seventh Crusade*, 129–30, 142, 144, and 148–9.

¹¹⁸This article does not claim to offer a new military narrative of the Seventh Crusade. Other than Eddé's 'Saint Louis et la Septième Croisade', the military history of this crusade depends on Joinville, while Arabic sources are still understudied. Yet, the overall conclusions that can be drawn from both are similar: (1) The Frankish army's movement from Damietta was extremely slow and went via Fāraskur, Sharmāsāh, Baramūn and finally Salamūn to the outskirts of al-Mansura, thus failing to learn from the lessons of the Fifth Crusade; (2) the Frankish attack was constantly slowed down by irregular Muslim combatants; (3) shelling and 'engineering' warfare steadily turned the tide in the Muslims' favour; (4) naval battles and knowledge of the Nile were key factors in this war.

fact that the Egyptian army's response was below expectations in the long months between the anchoring of Louis IX's flotilla at sea off Damietta on Ṣafar 20 647/4 June 1249 and Fakhr al-Din's own death on 4 Dhū al-Qa'da 647/8 February 1250 in a surprise Frankish attack on al-Mansura. As discussed above, Fakhr al-Din had refrained from counter-attacking the crusader beachhead, abandoned Damietta without resistance, and retreated first to Ashmun Tanah and subsequently to al-Mansura, after which all would have been lost. It follows that al-Mansura was Fakhr al-Din's last bastion of defence and any plans he may have drawn for a major engagement with the crusaders would have taken place around the city.

As the Egyptian army's commander waited in this stronghold, his troops' military action remained limited to skirmishes. Upon learning of the sultan's death, Louis IX started marching southward and began to close in on al-Mansura only to be met by irregular resistance. When the Frankish army reached Fāraskur on Thursday 24 Sha'bān 647/2 December 1249, Fakhr al-Din disseminated a fervent, rallying letter that was read the next day throughout Egypt from the pulpits of mosques during sermons at Friday prayer.¹¹⁹ Yet no major military response followed and combat action remained restricted to skirmishes carried out by cavalry scouts and groups of eager auxiliaries, volunteers and Bedouins. This irregular Muslim warfare inflicted heavy losses on the Franks and slowed down Louis IX's army, as was well chronicled by Ibn Wasil, who had access to the daily dispatches from the front and witnessed the columns of Frankish captives that were sent to his friend Husam al-Din, vice-regent in Cairo. Other attacks, however, ended up disastrously for the Muslim scouts and volunteers in the absence of any decisive support from the regular army, as we know from one such instance that Ibn al-Khazraji recorded in detail.¹²⁰ In a rare move, Fakhr al-Din ordered on Thursday 14 Shawwāl 647/20 January 1250 a major sortie of three-thousand cavalymen across the 'sea of Ashmun' (Baḥr Ashmūn), the canal that separated Louis IX's well-fortified camp from the Muslim camp in Jadīla on the outskirts of al-Mansura. Yet this successful hit-and-run attack, which resulted in the capture of several Frankish knights and leading Templars, seems to have been a continuation of a daring incursion that was started by Muslim volunteers earlier that same day.¹²¹ Be that as it may, suspicion prevailed of deliberate stalling, leading Ibn al-Khazraji to complain that, every day, 'Fakhr al-Din, armed to the teeth, would ride with his lieutenants, posture and observe the enemy, once in the morning and once the evening' and then return to camp, while fighting was left to the irregular combatants, volunteers and Bedouins.¹²²

The frequency and intensity of skirmishes increased on land and, most vigorously, on the Nile, pointing to a build-up towards a major battle, one that Fakhr al-Din had thus far managed to avoid. The long-anticipated confrontation finally began on Tuesday 4 Dhū al-Qa'da 647/8 Feb 1250 when Louis IX's army crossed the sea of Ashmun to the Muslim-held bank.¹²³ Having been led by some locals to a crossing at a nearby location called Salamūn, the Franks managed to capture the Muslim camp and al-Mansura by

¹¹⁹Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 47–8.

¹²⁰Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 171v–172r.

¹²¹Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 52; Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 172r–173r. Ibn Wasil mentions that on the next day of this encounter, sixty-seven prisoners reached Cairo including three commanders from the Templar Order.

¹²²Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 172r.

¹²³Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 54.

complete surprise. Fakhr al-Din was having his morning bath when he was alarmed by the commotion; without any hesitation, he rode his horse to meet the attackers and was killed instantly. Despite all his enmity towards Fakhr al-Din, Ibn Wasil conceded that he had ‘died a noble death’.¹²⁴ Fakhr al-Din’s body was later carried on a galley and buried next to his mother, near the mausoleum of Imam al-Shafi’i in Cairo.¹²⁵ The battle of al-Mansura waged on and Louis IX’s first major clash with the Egyptian army ended in a decisive Frankish defeat and the death of his brother Robert I, the count of Artois.

Ibn al-Khazraji offers a more colourful account of the events that led to this battle.¹²⁶ He relates that on the night before Tuesday 4 Dhū al-Qa‘da 647/8 Feb 1250 a ‘western Muslim’ (*maghribī* – possibly a Sicilian or an Andalusī) sailor manning the Frankish fleet warned an Egyptian counterpart of an imminent attack on al-Mansura. The Muslims dismissed the warning, as they were convinced that the enemy was incapable of crossing the sea of Ashmun. Additionally, Ibn al-Khazraji provides a description of the city of al-Mansura, which by that time had become a major hub comprising ‘residences, *ḥammāms*, markets and hostels’. The author claims that Fakhr al-Din spent the eve of the Frankish attack at his residence drinking with his guests and enjoying the company of singers and other ‘tools of pleasure’ (*ālat al-lahū*). As soon as the function was over and all visitors departed, Fakhr al-Din stayed in the *hammam* with one of his male servants. Both kept on drinking until they passed out after locking the door of the *hammam* from the inside, a detail that Ibn al-Khazraji seemed keen on emphasising.¹²⁷ The surprise crusader attack commenced shortly after morning prayer when four-thousand horsemen and a great many foot-soldiers crossed into the right flank of al-Mansura, led by Louis IX in person (according to Ibn al-Khazraji’s account) and his brother the ‘*kund* of Arṭāsh’ (count of Artois).¹²⁸ The Franks had been informed by a small group of ‘corrupt’ Bedouins of a non-muddy crossing that was suitable for their cavalry and, therefore, quickly reached the sultanic pavilion (*al-dahlīz al-sulṭānī*) and took the whole city by surprise. A group of Muslim soldiers rushed to alert Fakhr al-Din, but had to break the *hammam*’s locked door only to find their commander drunk. As soon as his majordomo woke him up, Fakhr al-Din – still not fully sober – washed, put on his armour, and immediately rode to meet the attackers with a company of five-hundred cavalymen. Although one of his *mamlūks* cautioned him that they were largely outnumbered by the Franks, Fakhr al-Din refused to retreat and insisted on attacking the Templars. Only one cavalryman followed his bold charge and the Muslim commander was summarily killed by the Templars. Soon after, the tide of the battle turned in favour of the Muslims and Ibn al-Khazraji provides a detailed account of the Egyptian cavalry’s counter-attack.¹²⁹ The Muslims kept on chasing the Franks eastwards out of al-Mansura until they stumbled on Fakhr al-Din’s corpse.

¹²⁴Ibid. Sibṭ in al-Jawzi relates that the Templars stumbled upon Fakhr al-Din by chance and killed him while he was organising defence against the Frankish attack; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir’āt al-zamān*, 410–1.

¹²⁵Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir’āt al-zamān*, 411.

¹²⁶Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 174r-v.

¹²⁷When one of his beloved *mamlūks* died, Fakhr al-Din composed the following verses: ‘I have no wish to live after your departure, your death brought mine closer, shame on me if I don’t die from sorrow, as you will remind me on the Day of Judgement’: Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir’āt al-zamān*, 412.

¹²⁸Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 174r.

¹²⁹Ibid., 175r-v. A new study on the battle of al-Mansura is much needed, as Ibn al-Khazraji’s account suggests much more than on foot, hand-to-hand fighting.

Having been unaware of their commander's death and distracted by this discovery, the Muslim soldiers halted their counter-attack while Louis IX retreated with his army to the site of the previous Muslim camp in Jadila, on the outskirts of al-Mansura, which they fortified.

Despite this courageous death, Turanshah lacked the magnanimity to overlook Fakhr al-Din's attempt to seize his throne. According to Ibn al-Khazraji and Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzi, the new Egyptian sultan confiscated the dead commander's possessions and *mamlūks* as soon as he arrived in al-Mansura, thereby depriving Fakhr al-Din's offspring and inheritors of his wealth.¹³⁰ This claim is confirmed by Ibn Wasil who mentions that he personally inspected letters from Fakhr al-Din's seized residence and possessions.¹³¹ Moreover, Sibṭ al-Jawzi relates on the authority of Sa'd al-Din ibn Hamawiyya that Fakhr al-Din's own *amirs* and *mamlūks* ransacked and pillaged their master's residence and belongings.¹³² Sa'd al-Din complained that even the door of his cousin's residence was removed and looted. Thus tragically ended the career of Fakhr al-Din ibn al-Shaykh, sultan al-Kamil's close companion and trusted aide, emperor Frederick II's friend and ally, al-'Adil II's leading statesman, al-Salih Ayyub's vizier and commander, the ephemeral de facto ruler of Egypt during Louis IX's crusade.

Conclusion

Fakhr al-Din employed every means available to seize power. He used the prestige of his friendship with Frederick II, the social and political capital he accumulated while serving al-Kamil, al-Salih Ayyub's fatal illness, Turanshah's presence in Hisn Kayfa, and most importantly Louis IX's crusade. It would have been beneficial for Fakhr al-Din to secure a peace agreement with Louis IX based on the perennial prescription of his erstwhile sultan al-Kamil: ceding Jerusalem in return for Frankish withdrawal. Such an imagined deal would spare Fakhr al-Din a major military engagement that would test the Egyptian army's loyalty to him, especially that of regiments that obeyed rival *amirs* like Husam al-Din and *tawashi* Jamal al-Din Mushin, and the *Bahriyya* Mamluk corps led by Aqtay. Furthermore, it would return Damietta to Muslim hands in a diplomatic victory that would greatly enhance Fakhr al-Din's chances of ruling Egypt, either directly by putting an end to the Ayyubid line or in the name of a puppet Ayyubid prince. Such a plan was possible to conceive only because sultan al-Salih Ayyub was on his deathbed and his only heir, Turanshah, was far away from Egypt and even further from the grace of his dying father.¹³³

The endeavour was unsuccessful for Louis IX was no Frederick II. Fakhr al-Din's attempt to recreate the diplomatic conditions and political consequences of the Fifth and Sixth Crusades failed in the case of the Seventh. His attempt was within the aforementioned framework of integrating the crusades into intra-Ayyubid politics, a model with which Fakhr al-Din was very familiar as an Ayyubid statesman who served al-Kamil. Shaped by his diplomatic experience with Frederick II and al-Kamil, Fakhr al-Din's

¹³⁰Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzi, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, 411. In Ibn al-Khazraji, *dawlat al-Akrād*, 176v.

¹³¹Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 24; he also relates that Fakhr al-Din left only one daughter behind him.

¹³²Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzi, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, 411. Sa'd al-Din claims that Fakhr al-Din had seventy *amirs* under his personal command.

¹³³This will be discussed further in part II of this study; Ibn Wāṣil, *Die Chronik*, 35 and 41. See note 27 above.

strategy towards Louis IX failed to acknowledge one critical detail: the French king did not sail to Outremer for the purpose of concluding peace agreements with the Muslims. If anything, retreating from Damietta to al-Mansura and delaying serious military engagements with the Franks further reduced the chances of reaching this elusive peace deal. Whatever Fakhr al-Din's real intentions might have been, the Frankish attack on al-Mansura eliminated him: the one person who was capable of conceding Jerusalem to Louis IX during the campaign.

There are further questions that must be addressed before we can fully appreciate the impact of Louis IX's crusade on the transition from Ayyubid to Mamluk sultanate. While Louis IX's campaign did indeed hasten the inevitable demise of the Ayyubid empire, additional work is required to explain how and why the transition ended, on the one hand, with the failure of the traditional, hereditary and 'free' military elites such as Fakhr al-Din, Husam al-Din and Turanshah and, on the other, with the triumph of the Mamluks.¹³⁴ Where prominent commanders like Fakhr al-Din failed, the Mamluks succeeded: they ended the Ayyubid line, defeated Louis IX, forced the latter to surrender Damietta on their own terms, and garnered the necessary legitimacy and popular support. Indeed, Arabic sources from the late Ayyubid and early Mamluk period described the Mamluks as *Dāwiyat al-Islām* (the Templars of Islam) and the 'Turkish lions (*usūd al-Turk*) who vanquished the dogs of polytheism'.¹³⁵ As will be discussed in the second part of this work, Louis IX's conduct during his captivity provided further legitimation to the emerging Mamluk regime.

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¹³⁴The second part of the present work examines Husam al-Din and Turanshah's attempts to exploit Louis IX's captivity to consolidate their power.

¹³⁵Ibn Wāsil, *Die Chronik*, 57 and 70 n. 2; Ibn Wāsil, *Mufarrij al-kurūb fi akhbār banī Ayyūb* (MS Arabe 1702, Paris: BnF), fol. 369 v. See Jackson, *Seventh Crusade*, 148 n. 93, and Gaposchkin, 'The Captivity of Louis IX', 93.