1174: A Letter of Condolence from Saladin to Baldwin IV of Jerusalem

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Abstract: The article analyses a letter of condolence from Saladin to King Baldwin IV of Jerusalem, on the death of King Amalric of Jerusalem in July 1174, which has been preserved in al-Qalqašandī. The article follows two approaches: first, it explains the content of the letter by reference to twelfth-century forms and conventions of Muslim–Christian diplomacy; second, it places the letter in its historical context and deliberates whether it points to a Frankish-Aiyyūbid alliance in the period between 1171 and 1174.

Source

al-Qalqašandī: *Kitāb Ṣubḥ al-aʿšā fī ṣināʿat al-inšāʾ*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Rasūl Ibrāhīm, 14 vols, Cairo: Maṭbaʿa al-amīriyya, 1913–1922, vol. 7, pp. 115–116, trans. Eric Böhme.

أما بعد– خصَّ الله الملك المعظَّم حافظ بيت المقدس بالجدِّ الصاعد، والسَّعد الساعد، والحظِّ الزائد، والتوفيق الوارد، وهنَأه من ملك قومه ما وُرِّثة، وأحسن من هداه فيما أتى به الدهرُ وأحدثه،

As for the following – may God grant the praised king, the protector of Jerusalem (*ḥāfiẓ bayt al-maqdis*), with ever-increasing happiness, joyful bliss, lavish prosperity, and lasting success. May He make him happy with the inherited rule over his people (*mulk qawmihi mā wurriṯa*). May He who guides him lead him to the good that time brings and brings about.

فإن كتابنا صادرٌ إليه عند ورود الخبر بما ساء قلوبَ الأصادق، النَّعْيِ الذى وَدِدْنا أنَّ قائله غيرُ صادق، بالملِك العادل الأعزِّ الذى لقَّاه الله خيْرَ ماَ لقَّى مثله، وبَلَّغ الأرضَ سعادته كما بلَّغه محلَّه، مُعَزٍّ بما يجب فيه العَزاء، ومتأسِّفٌ لفَقده الذى عظُمت به الأُرزاء،

Our letter was sent to him after receipt of that news which has burdened the hearts of the sincere, the death notice from the herald who we wished was insincere in his speech concerning the righteous and most revered king (*al-malik al-ʿādil al-aʿazz*), to whom God has bestowed good like to no other of his kind. He bestowed his bliss upon the earth, just as He has bestowed his place upon it. May it [our letter] express the necessary measure of consolation as well as regret for his loss, through which the blows of fate are magnified.

إلا أنَّ الله سبحانه قد هوّت الحادث، بأنْ جعل ولَدَهُ الوارث، وأنسىَ المصاب، بأن حفِظَ به

Yet God, blessed be He, has mitigated the calamity by making His Son the heir (*al-wāriṯ*). He has made the misfortune forgotten by preserving his very origin

النِّصاب، ووهَبَه النعمتين: المُلكَ والشَّبَاب، فهنيئًا له ما حاز، وسَقْيًا لقبر والده الذى حَقَّ له الفداء لو جاز،

through him. He has granted him the two favours: kingship (*mulk*) and youth (*šabāb*). May He make pleasant to him what he has obtained and rain it on his father's grave, to whom – if possible – redemption would be due.

ورسولُنا الرئيسُ العميدُ مختار الدين أدام الله سلامته قائمٌ عنا بإقامة العَزَاء من لسانه، ووَصْفِ ما نالنا من الوَحْشة لفِراق ذلك الصديق وخُلُوّ مكانِه، وكيف لا يستَوْحشُ ربُّ الدار لفُرْقة جِيرانه.

It is incumbent upon the envoy (*rasūl*), the guiding leader (*al-raʾīs al-ʿamīd*) Muḫtār al-Dīn – may God perpetuate his prosperity – to offer consolation from his tongue in our stead and to describe the sadness that has seized us at the passing away of that friend and the emptiness in his place. How could the master of a house not feel saddened at the departure of his neighbours?

وقد ٱستفتحنا الملك بكتابنا وارتيادنا، ووُدِّنا، الذى هو ميراثُهُ عن والده من وِدَادنا، فلْيَلْقَ التحيَّةَ بمثلها، ولْيأتِ الحسنةَ ليكون من أهلها، وليَعْلَمْ أنَّا له كما كنا لأبيه: مودّةٌ صافيه، وعَقِيدةٌ وافيه، ومحبَّةٌ ثبت عَقْدُها فى الحياة والوَفَاه، وسريرةٌ حَكمتْ في الدنيا بالمُوافه، مع ما فى الدّين من المخالَفَات. فليستَرْسِلْ إلينا ٱسترسالَ الواثِق الذى لا يَخْجَل، ولْيعتمِد علينا ٱعتمادَ الولد الذى [لا][1] يحمِل عن والده ما تحمَّل, والله يُدِيم تعميره، ويحرُسُ تأميره، ويقضى له بموافقة التوفيق، ويُلْهِمُه تصديقَ ظنِّ الصديق.

We address the king with our letter, our request, and our affection, which is his inheritance deriving from our affection for his father. May he return the greeting in like manner. May he do good works to be among their followers [i.e. the righteous]. May he know that we are to him what we were to his father: unclouded affection, true profession of faith, love whose bond is firm in life and death, and a mind that judges with openness in this world, regardless of what contrasts (*muḫālafāt*) exist in religion (*dīn*). Let him be completely at ease with us, confident and unafraid. Let him rely on us with the confidence of the son who took over from his father [not] the burdens that the latter had to bear. May God perpetuate his longevity, watch over his rule, make him succeed with benevolence and inspire him to trust the intentions of the Friend (*ṣadīq*).

Authorship & Work

[§1] This letter of condolence is preserved in fragments in the "Book of the Dawn of the Night Blind Concerning the Production of Official Documents" (*Kitāb Ṣubḥ al-aʿšā fī ṣināʿat al-inšāʾ*) of al-Qalqašandī (756–821/1355–1418). Born into a family of Egyptian scholars, he was educated in law and literature in Alexandria, obtained a licence in 778/1376–1377 to prepare and teach legal opinions according to Šāfiʿī law, and took up a post in the chancery (*dīwān al-inšāʾ*) of the Mamlūk Sultanate in Cairo in 791/1389. He has been identified as the author of numerous works, primarily in the fields of law, literary education and culture (*adab*), genealogy and history, as well as chancery practice (*kitāba*). The latter is also the subject of the *Ṣubḥ al-aʿšā,* completed in 814/1412 and considered his most important work. Conceived as a seven-volume encyclopaedia for the production of administrative and diplomatic documents, it was intended to serve as a guide for readers working in this field. The author illustrated his

[1] Contrary to the cited edition, al-Bayyūmī, *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, p. 217 and Harvey, Saladin, p. 33 n. 3 interpret the bracketed particle as an erroneous scribal repetition (dittography).

explanations with practical examples taken from documents produced in earlier decades and centuries, whose thematically relevant sections he integrated into his work. Since the vast majority of these documents – like the one discussed here – are no longer preserved in extant originals, al-Qalqašandī's work is one of the most important reservoirs of information for the history of Islamic diplomacy and administration.[2]

[§2] Al-Qalqašandī names al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil (529–596/1135–1200), born in ʿAsqalān (today Ashkelon, Israel), as the author of the letter of condolence, and notes that he was writing on behalf of Saladin, the Sultan of Egypt (r. 567–589/1171–1193). Al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil also underwent training in Cairo's dīwān al-inšāʾ, which drew him into the service of the viziers of the Fāṭimid caliphs of Egypt in 556–557/1161–1162. In 566/1171, Saladin, in his capacity as the last vizier of the Fāṭimid dynasty, appointed him head of the dīwān al-inšāʾ and, after his seizure of power, made him chief adviser on matters of military and financial administration in the same year. As a close confidant, he accompanied the Sultan on almost all his campaigns in the following years and, thus, witnessed the expansion of Ayyūbid rule into Syria and Mesopotamia as well as the struggle against the Latin Christian armies of the Third Crusade (1189–1192). After the death of his patron, he served for some time as an advisor to his sons but withdrew from the service of the Ayyūbid rulers in 1195. His literary work consists mainly of a large number of official writings that he formulated in his function as chancellor of the sultan.[3]

[§3] Al-Qalqašandī names "Bardawīl, one of the kings of the Franks who at that time occupied Jerusalem and its environs" as the recipient of the letter.[4] Although his version of the letter does not name a specific addressee nor does it give dates, scholars have unanimously identified Bardawīl with Baldwin IV of Jerusalem (r. 1174–1185). If Saladin's and his chancellor's life dates are compared with the information given in the letter, he remains the only candidate, given that he ascended the throne shortly after the death of his father Amalric (r. 1163–1174) at the age of about 13. It is not possible to precisely date the letter, but the *terminus post quem* is probably not the death of Amalric (11 July 1174), but rather the coronation of Baldwin IV (15 July 1174), since the letter already addresses him as king.[5]

[§4] Despite its problematic transmission, research has seldom questioned the authenticity of the letter. This is hardly surprising, for on the one hand, al-Qāḍī l-Fāḍil's typical writing style can be easily compared with other documents from his pen, and on the other hand, as will be shown, the information contained in the letter can be easily localised within the political developments of 1174.[6]

Content & Source Context

[§5] As al-Qalqašandī aptly puts it, the purpose of the letter is to offer sympathy with the addressee "regarding [the death of] his father, and to congratulate him on ascending the throne

[2] Bosworth, al-Ḳalḳashandī; Björkman, *Beiträge*.
[3] Brockelmann and Cahen, al-Ḳāḍī al-Fāḍil; al-Ḥafsī, *Correspondance*; Dağānī Šakīl, *al-Qāḍī l-Fāḍil*.
[4] al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿšā*, ed. Ibrāhīm, vol. 7, p. 115: "(…) Bardawīl, aḥad mulūk al-Faranǧ, wa-huwa yawmaʾiḏ mustawlin ʿalā bayt al-maqdis wa-mā maʿahu (…)".
[5] Cf. on this Lyons and Jackson, *Saladin*, p. 75; Möhring, Heiliger Krieg, p. 433; Möhring, *Saladin*, p. 59; Köhler, *Allianzen*, p. 272; Eddé, *Saladin*, p. 325; Harvey, Saladin, pp. 27–28, and Böhme, *Außenbeziehungen*, pp. 135–136.
[6] For questions concerning its authenticity, Möhring, Heiliger Krieg, p. 433. For a sceptical view (albeit without clear reasoning), see Mayer, *Geschichte*, p. 153 n. 75.

after him".[7] To this end, al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil uses a style of writing that is typical for him: he artfully uses alliteration, ambivalent formulations, rhyme, and unusual sentence constructions in the tradition of *sağʿ*, a form of Arabic rhyming prose.[8] This style can only be translated into other languages analogously, as can be seen from the sometimes very different (partial) translations in the research literature.[9]

[§6] Nonetheless, the most important parts of its content can be clearly identified: first, the sultan expresses his good wishes for the future reign of "the praised king, the protector of Jerusalem". The second section identifies the occasion on which the letter was sent – the news concerning the previous king's death. He had been an outstanding ruler, favoured by God, and his son was now to be consoled in view of the painful loss. After all, God himself had mitigated the misfortune by making the son the heir of his father and blessing him with two graces – kingship and youthfulness. It is further hoped that rain may fall on his father's grave as a symbol of godly fertility.[10] In another section, the letter accredits a certain Muḫtār al-Dīn as an envoy who should convey verbal condolences on behalf of the sultan. Finally, the known part of the text concludes with an appeal to the new king to continue to maintain the friendly and trusting relationship that already existed between his father and the sultan, regardless of the differences between their two religions.

[§7] Whether the original document contained other parts of text cannot be determined. The beginning of the text appears to have been reproduced in its entirety, since al-Qalqašandī wants to use this example to illustrate how the phrase *ammā baʿd* ("as for the following") can be used as an introduction even before the usual blessings and greetings. On the other hand, it is not possible to assess with any degree of certainty whether he has omitted information at other points – for example, concerning the dating or the addressee. The same applies to the external features of the document, which do not seem to have interested the chancery expert.[11]

[§8] In order to better understand the content of the letter, the document should be placed in the context of Frankish–Egyptian relations in the second half of the twelfth century. The reign of King Amalric of Jerusalem was dominated by his aspirations to expand the Frankish sphere of influence into Egypt. The Shiite Fāṭimid caliphs, who had ruled there since 358/969 and had been a threat to Frankish rule in the Levant since the First Crusade, were increasingly preoccupied with internal power struggles from the 1150s onwards and were hardly in a position to defend themselves militarily without external allies. As a result, the rich country on the Nile became the target of the expansionist interests of two other great powers in the region: the Kingdom of Jerusalem and the Turkish Zengid Emirate around Aleppo and Damascus, whose ruler Nūr al-Din (r. 541–569/1146–1174) recognised the Sunni ʿAbbāsid caliph in Baghdad as the supreme religious authority.[12] Both Amalric and Nūr al-Dīn were able to reinvigorate older plans for the subjugation of Egypt. They were largely guided by the idea that the future conqueror of Egypt would become the dominant power in the region and would eventually

[7] al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿšā*, ed. Ibrāhīm, vol. 7, p. 115: "(…), muʿazziyan lahu fī abīhi wa-muhanniʾan lahu bi-ğulūsihi fī l-mulk baʿdahu, (…)".
[8] Fahd, Heinrichs, Ben Abdesselem, Sa̲d̲jʿ.
[9] For example, Lindsay and Mourad (eds/trans.), *Muslim Sources*, pp. 191–193; Harvey, Saladin, pp. 32–33; also Lyons and Jackson, *Saladin*, p. 75; Möhring, Heiliger Krieg, pp. 433–434; Möhring, *Saladin*, p. 59; Köhler, *Allianzen*, pp. 272–273; Eddé, *Saladin*, p. 325; Böhme, *Außenbeziehungen*, pp. 135–136.
[10] On this motif, cf. Diem and Schöller, *The Living and the Dead*, vol. 2, pp. 50–53, 87–88; Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety*, pp. 151–178, 182.
[11] al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿšā*, ed. Ibrāhīm, vol. 7, p. 115; see also Harvey, Saladin, p. 32 n. 1.
[12] Elisséeff, *Nūr ad-Dīn*.

displace all the smaller ruling dynasties.[13] The rivals engaged in a race for supremacy on the Nile, which found expression in five major military campaigns in the years 1163, 1164, 1167, 1168–1169, and 1169. Depending on the political situation, both sides acted as supposed allies of the Fāṭimid caliphs against designs of the other. Frankish influence reached its short-lived peak after the third campaign in 1167, in the wake of which Egypt became a de facto protectorate of the Kingdom of Jerusalem.[14]

[§9] Saladin's political rise can likewise be contextualised within this framework. Born in 532/1137–1138 as the son of a governor, he began a military career in the service of Nūr al-Dīn in the 1150s, following the example of older family members. In 1164, he joined the campaign of his uncle, Nūr al-Dīn's military leader Asad al-Dīn Šīrkūh (d. 564/1169), to Egypt, where he led the successful defence of Bilbays against the Frankish attackers. He also took part in the campaign of 1167 and commanded Alexandria's defence – the city being Amalric's main target. He became personally acquainted with the latter when, in August of that year, both sides agreed to peacefully withdraw from Egypt and the Frankish king treated the once-besieged Syrians with benevolence and honour. At the beginning of 1169, Saladin again moved south with Šīrkūh and was among the masterminds of a coup d'état, which brought about the execution of the sultan-vizier Šāwar (r. 557–558, 559–564/1162–1163, 1164–1169), and led to Šīrkūh's appointment as his successor with the caliph's consent. When Šīrkūh died in around March 1169, the office fell to Saladin. Through his skilful use of administrative structures and his own personal networks, he not only succeeded over the following years in preventing several attempts to overthrow his vizierate. Indeed, he also repelled another invasion by King Amalric at the end of 1169, who had now allied with the Byzantines in in order to tip the already lost race for control over Egypt in his favour. Thanks to these successes, Saladin was able to cement his political position to such an extent that from 1170 he gradually ousted the representatives of Shiite Islam in Egypt from their positions of political and religious leadership. When the Fāṭimid Caliph al-ʿĀḍid (r. 555–567/1160–1171), who had become increasingly powerless, finally died in 567/1171, Saladin did not have a successor proclaimed, so that the supreme authority remained solely in the hands of the sultan-vizier. Thus, Fāṭimid rule on the Nile was effectively ended after 262 years.[15]

[§10] The actual victor of the race for the Nile was neither the King of Jerusalem, nor the Emir of Aleppo and Damascus. Instead, with Saladin, an equally self-confident and politically and militarily capable actor had established himself in Egypt. Since 1169, the Frankish rulers had already envisaged themselves being encircled by a bloc of Sunni ruling complexes, but the new ruler pursued his own plans. As a ruler acting in his own interests, he was not prepared to serve as a simple governor of the Zengids. Thus, the relationship between the three sides became complicated: Saladin, partly on the orders of Nūr al-Dīn, undertook several smaller campaigns against Frankish southern Palestine, raiding Dārūm and Gaza in 1170 and conquering Ayla (al-ʿAqaba), the only Frankish access to the Red Sea. However, he broke off the sieges of the Transjordanian fortresses of Kerak and Montreal (which he had planned together with the Zengids) in 1171 after a few days. In the spring of 1173, another invasion of this area ended just as quickly. The Kingdom of Jerusalem reacted to these attacks in a largely defensively manner and did not embark on any counterattacks. An attempted coup – which enjoyed Frankish support – with the aim of re-establishing the Fāṭimid caliphate, was thwarted by the

[13] Köhler, *Allianzen* has called this political concept the "no place" (*lā maqām*) doctrine; see his reprise in Böhme, *Außenbeziehungen*, pp. 52, 65, 77, 85, 98, 103–105, 133–134, 136–137, 144–145, 592–593.
[14] Böhme, *Außenbeziehungen*, pp. 72–141; Böhme, Ägyptenzug; Böhme, Legitimising.
[15] For Saladin's career see Ehrenkreutz, *Saladin*; Gibb, *Saladin*; Lyons und Jackson, *Saladin*; Eddé, *Saladin*; Lev, *Saladin*; Möhring, *Saladin*, and recently Phillips, *Life*.

Ayyūbid authorities in the spring of 1174, without Saladin initiating any punitive military action. Research has largely explained the sultan's restraint by suggesting that Frankish rule over southern Palestine and Transjordan effectively constituted a protective wedge between the Ayyūbid and Zengid jurisdictions, which Saladin and his advisors considered worth preserving for strategic reasons. Although the sultan never openly challenged the Zengids' supremacy and repeatedly tried to justify his military restraint with credible excuses, the relationship swiftly deteriorated: in the spring of 1174, Nūr al-Dīn even prepared an intervention on the Nile to depose his governor before the latter would openly oppose him.[16]

[§11] However, this escalation was prevented by the death of Nūr al-Dīn in mid-May 1174. Already in July of that year, King Amalric had also unexpectedly died after a short, but serious illness. Both rulers left behind successors who were still in their minority: under the eleven-year-old Zengid al-Ṣāliḥ (r. 569–577/1174–1181), Nūr al-Dīn's empire began to disintegrate rapidly, while the succession of the thirteen-year-old and chronically ill Balduin IV of Jerusalem provided various Frankish interest groups with an opportunity to expand their influence at court. These developments put Saladin, who sent his condolences to both successors, in an extraordinarily favourable position starting from the summer of 1174. He took advantage of this to begin the expansion of his rule to Syria, where he was able to occupy Damascus as early as October of that year without major resistance.[17]

Contextualisation, Analysis & Interpretation

[§12] Against the background of these political developments, Saladin's letter to Baldwin IV will now be examined in greater detail. In doing so, the letter will be analysed by reference to diplomatic forms of the twelfth century. Thereafter, it will be considered to what extent the document can be regarded as an indication of a Frankish-Aiyyūbid alliance, the existence of which researchers have sometimes assumed for the period between 1171 and1174.

[§13] Although the letter discussed here is the only known extant example of such a form of address for the history of the twelfth-century Kingdom of Jerusalem, it can be assumed that the exchange of condolences was a common diplomatic practice between Christian and Muslim rulers. The Jerusalem court chronicler and later chancellor of the kingdom, Archbishop William of Tyre (sed. 1175 – c. 1186), notes that Nūr al-Dīn also mourned the death of Baldwin III in 1163.[18] On the occasion of the Zengid leader's death in 1174, William described him as "the greatest persecutor of the Christian name and faith, and yet a just, cunning and prudent prince, as well as pious according to the customs of his people".[19] Saladin himself stated in a letter to an unknown Syrian emir that he had learned of Nūr al-Dīn's death through "a message from

[16] Böhme, *Außenbeziehungen*, pp. 105–106, 117–119, 123–124, 126–132, 138–139; Khan, Caliphates, pp. 207–215; Eddé, *Saladin*, pp. 56–64; Köhler, *Allianzen*, pp. 269–281; Lyons and Jackson, *Saladin*, pp. 47–69.

[17] Böhme, *Außenbeziehungen*, pp. 41–45, 132–134, 141–143; Hamilton, *Leper King*, pp. 31–42, 82–98; Khan, Caliphates, pp. 215–217; Eddé, *Saladin*, pp. 67–71; Köhler, *Allianzen*, pp. 283–292; Lyons and Jackson, *Saladin*, pp. 71–85.

[18] William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, ed. Huygens, vol. 2, lib. 18, cap. 34, pp. 860–861: "Dicuntur nichilominus et hostes de eius morte doluisse, ita ut quibusdam suggerentibus Noradino quod fines nostros ingrediens interim, dum exequiis operam daremus, terram depopularetur, dicatur respondisse: Compatiendum est et humane indulgendum iusto eorum dolori, eo quod principem amiserint qualem reliquus hodie non habet orbis".

[19] William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, ed. Huygens, vol. 2, lib. 20, cap. 31, p. 956: "(…) maximus nominis et fidei christiane persequutor, princeps tamen iustus, vafer et providus et secundum gentis sue traditiones religiosus (…)". On the chronicler's view of Nūr al-Dīn, see Möhring, Heiliger Krieg, pp. 450–455; Brandt, *Gute Ritter*, pp. 232, 234, 240, 274–275.

the side of the accursed enemy" – i.e. through the Franks of Outremer.[20] While we have no evidence for the exchange of letters of condolence in these cases, more than a century after the end of the Crusader rulerships, al-Qalqašandī apparently found nothing unusual about the existence of such documents.

[§14] The titles used in the letter also testify to a standard practice. Baldwin IV, for example, is addressed as the "protector of Jerusalem" (*ḥāfiẓ bayt al-maqdis*) – a designation that cannot be found in this form for any other king of Jerusalem, but which has parallels in titles such as "protector of the seas and gulfs" (*ḥāfiẓ al-biḥār wa-l-ḫulǧān*) for the Pope[21], or "Protector of the Southern Lands" (*ḥāfiẓ al-bilād al-ǧanūbiyya*) for the Emperor of Ethiopia.[22] Although al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil's choice of words is remarkable in view of the importance of Jerusalem in Islam (in contrast to Rome or Ethiopia), other twelfth-century Muslim authors also granted the Frankish rulers similar, albeit more neutral, titles such as "Lord of Jerusalem" (*ṣāḥib bayt al-maqdis*).[23] In the fifteenth century, al-Qalqašandī recommended using the term "glorifier of Jerusalem" (*muʿaẓẓim al-bayt al-muqaddas*), as it took into account Frankish ideas regarding the glory, holiness and spiritual purity of Jerusalem.[24] The recognition of factual power relations and the way in which non-Muslim rulers both styled and constructed themselves, was thus a common practice in Islamic diplomacy. However, this was by no means tantamount to unlimited recognition. As such, it is hardly surprising that the letter refers to the hereditary nature of Baldwin IV's kingship and the "rule over his people", but did not explicitly link this to the kingship over Jerusalem.[25] That Baldwin referred to himself as the protector of Jerusalem is conceivable but cannot be proven.[26]

[§15] Baldwin's father Amalric is described by al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil as the "most just and revered king" (*al-malik al-ʿādil al-aʿazz*). This title was certainly not chosen arbitrarily as it had also been borne by Nūr al-Dīn.[27] Whether, like Elon Harvey assumes, this can be taken as an indication of Saladin's waning loyalty to the Zengid dynasty,[28] or whether Amalric – as Michael A. Köhler has suggested – adorned himself with this title like the Norman kings of Sicily, is unclear.[29]

[§16] The reason for the reference to "contrasts" (*muḫālafāt*) in "religion" (*dīn*) also remains open. Despite his expansionist efforts against neighbouring Muslims, Amalric was known by both Christian and Muslim observers to seek diplomatic solutions, or even alliances, with Muslim actors when it served his interests. He seems to have used typical crusading rhetoric only when corresponding with potential allies in Latin Europe. It is possible that al-Qāḍī al-

[20] The letter, also drawn up by al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, is preserved in excerpts in Abū Šāma's *Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn*, ed. Šams al-Dīn, vol. 2, p. 209: "(…) warada ḫabar min ǧānib al-ʿaduww al-laʿīn, (…)"; see also Böhme, *Außenbeziehungen*, p. 132 n. 227; Lyons and Jackson, *Saladin*, pp. 73–74.

[21] al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿšā*, ed. Ibrāhīm, vol. 6, p. 173.

[22] al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿšā*, ed. Ibrāhīm, vol. 6, p. 86.

[23] See e.g. Ibn al-Qalānisī, *Taʾrīḫ Dimašq*, ed. Zakkar, pp. 224, 232 for Godfrey of Bouillon (r. 1099–1100) and Baldwin I (r. 1100–1118), or Usāma b. Munqiḏ, *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār*, ed. Hitti, pp. 118–119 for Baldwin II (r. 1118–1131).

[24] al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿšā*, ed. Ibrāhīm, vol. 6, p. 93.

[25] See the above source text: "(…), wa-hannaʾahu min mulk qawmihi mā wurriṯa, (…)".

[26] There are no indications of this in the surviving royal charters: *Urkunden*, ed. Mayer (MGH Diplomata Regum Latinorum Hierosolymitanorum), vol. 2, pp. 653–757, no. 381–446. For the comparative examples mentioned above, see also Harvey, Saladin, pp. 30–31 and Bosworth, Christian and Jewish Religious Dignitaries.

[27] Elisséeff, Titulature, pp. 157–166, 170–171, 195.

[28] Harvey, Saladin, p. 31.

[29] Köhler, *Allianzen*, p. 274; for the titles of the Norman kings, Johns, Titoli. In Amalric's charters, too, there is no evidence for the use of such titles: *Urkunden*, ed. Mayer (MGH Diplomata Regum Latinorum Hierosolymitanorum), vol. 2, pp. 501–644, no. 272–374.

Fāḍil alluded to this when urging Baldwin IV to do the same as his father, and not give in to the pressure of religious hardliners who repeatedly called for action against the Muslims with the support of crusaders from Latin Europe.[30]

[§17] In any case, it seems appropriate that the wording of the letter is not taken literally, but rather understood as an expression of diplomatic forms. In marked contrast to its cordial tone is a letter that the sultan had his chancellor write to his nephew Farrūḫ Šāh shortly after Amalric's death. In this letter, he informed him that he had learned from an informant in the border fortress of Dārūm that the king had died and the Franks had not yet agreed on a successor. Amalric (Arabic: *Murrī*) was given an almost cynical pun: "(...) may God curse and forsake him and lead him to torments as bitter [*murr*] as his name (...)". God is to be thanked for his hoped-for death.[31]

[§18] The letter of condolence exhibits striking structural and stylistic parallels to Saladin's letter to another, unknown Syrian emir, which was written by Qāḍī al-Fāḍil shortly after the death of Nūr al-Dīn – i.e. a few weeks before the letter to Baldwin IV discussed here. Here, expressions relating to mourning also formed the opening, and this is followed by the antithetical reference to al-Ṣāliḥs' succession mitigating the calamity. Like to his father, the sultan promised him unqualified loyalty and hoped to continue to be endowed with the blessing of the Zengid leader. While Saladin appears in this letter as a governor who is subordinate to the dynasty (rather than as an equal ruler as in the letter to the Frankish king), it is clear that both documents follow a similar structure.[32]

[§19] Finally, it should be pointed out that we know nothing about the letter's accredited envoy, Muḫtār al-Dīn. There is no evidence of him in the sultan's entourage, and despite his designation as "the guiding leader" (*al-raʾīs al-ʿamīd*), he was certainly not one of the highest-ranking representatives in his circle – an indication that diplomatic contacts with Jerusalem were not among Saladin's leading priorities at the time. On behalf of the Sultan, he was to convey the message of mourning with "his tongue" (*min lisānihi*), i.e. act as a mouthpiece for his master. Whether he was also to address other topics is unknown; we know nothing more about his journey.[33]

[§20] Some scholars have seen in the letter to Baldwin IV not only an expression of customary diplomatic manners but also as an indication of a Frankish-Aiyyūbid alliance against the Zengids in Syria that may have existed between 1171–1174. A basic overview of this controversial thesis will be presented below.

[§21] Lyons and Jackson refer briefly to the document but assess it in the context of the dynamic political situation in 1174 as an expression of the usual diplomatic procedures.[34] Hannes Möhring criticised this explanation as insufficient and considered the letter in the context of a possible alliance. In his estimation, Amalric and Saladin had already been on good terms when they met in Alexandria in 1167. In the course of the latter's gradual assumption of power in Egypt from 1169 onwards, the Frankish ruler had recognised Saladin as a sovereign ruler capable of forming an alliance against the Zengids. The sultan's indecisive attacks on

[30] Böhme, *Außenbeziehungen*; Böhme, Ägyptenzug; Böhme, Legitimising.

[31] The unedited letter quoted according to Lyons and Jackson, *Saladin*, p. 75. See very similar Abū Šāma, *Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn*, ed. Šams al-Dīn, vol. 2, p. 217: "(…) warada kitāb min al-Dārūm yaḏkur annahu (…) halaka Murrī malik al-Faranǧ – laʿanahu Allāh – wa-naqalahu ilā ʿiḏāb ka-ismihi muštaqan, wa-aqdamahu ʿalā nār talaṭṭā (…)"; translated in: Abū Šāma, Livre des deux jardins, vol. 4, p. 163.

[32] al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿšā*, ed. Ibrāhīm, vol. 7, p. 29; see also Harvey, Saladin, p. 28.

[33] Harvey, Saladin, p. 31. On the possible tasks of Muslim envoys to Christian rulers' courts, see also Böhme, 1250: Letter.

[34] Lyons und Jackson, *Saladin*, pp. 75–76, 370.

Transjordan in 1171 and 1173 would, thus, have already been in the context of a defensive alliance which had been entered into at an unknown time, of which Nūr al-Dīn had no knowledge. Within the framework of this alliance, Saladin committed himself not to undertake any decisive attacks against Frankish fortresses, while in return Amalric promised him support in the event of a Zengid intervention on the Nile. Although the Latins would have broken this possible alliance when they supported the pro-Fāṭimid conspiracy in 1173–1174, Saladin largely overlooked it after its failure and the king's death. As such, he called on Amalric's successor to stick to his part of the agreement. The alliance was then continued and, among other things, prevented Jerusalem from joining an attack by the Norman fleet on Alexandria in July 1174. In the spring of 1175, Count Raymond III of Tripoli (r. 1152–1187), the first official regent for Baldwin IV, initiated a change in external relations, started supporting the Zengids in Aleppo against Saladin, and thus terminated the alliance.[35]

[§22] Michael A. Köhler has taken up Möhring's thesis and added further evidence: the alliance may have been discussed with a legation from Jerusalem that visited Cairo in September 1171 during a mission that was not explicitly defined.[36] The Frankish delegation involved in the conspiracy of 1173–1174 could also have "officially" negotiated on this issue. Another indication is Saladin's claim to have been informed by the Franks about the death of Nūr al-Dīn. For Köhler, as for Möhring, the central piece of evidence is the sultan's letter of condolence to Baldwin IV.[37]

[§23] Hans E. Mayer was the first to criticise this thesis and suggested that Möhring misinterpreted Saladin's intentions concerning the second attack on Transjordan in 1173: Rather than adhering to a secret alliance, Saladin wanted to protect the caravan trade between Egypt and Syria and saw the conquest of Kerak as a way to achieve this goal. Moreover, Frankish participation in the pro-Fāṭimid conspiracy of 1173–1174 would make the whole idea of an alliance seem absurd. Mayer also fundamentally doubted the authenticity of the surviving letter of condolence although he did not elucidate on his scepticism.[38] Anne-Marie Eddé was also doubtful on Möhring's thesis as the letter of condolence did not contain any clear evidence for a bilateral alliance.[39] More recently, she has been followed by Elon Harvey, who sees the sultan's diplomatic gesture as an attempt to ensure the Kingdom of Jerusalem's restraint during his planned attack on the Syrian Zengids.[40]

[§24] In sum, it can be stated that the Möhring and Köhler thesis, which holds that the letter speaks for a Frankish-Aiyyūbid alliance directed against the Zengids in the period 1171–1174, cannot be proven. In this context, as Mayer notes, the participation of Jerusalem in the conspiracy of 1173–1174 can be seen as a weighty counter-argument. Köhler's suggestion that the Frankish legation involved in the conspiracy could have "officially" negotiated the alliance might, thus, be dismissed in view of the events. His second argument based on the alleged Frankish news of Nūr al-Dīn's death is also doubtful since the way the news was transmitted is completely unknown. Indeed, it did not necessarily originate from a report from Jerusalem's royal court. The news could also have been transmitted by Ayyūbid informants within the Frankish dominions. Finally, the formulations with which al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil expressed the

[35] Möhring, Heiliger Krieg, pp. 434–439, 448; Möhring, Saladins Politik, p. 324; Möhring, *Saladin*, pp. 59–60.
[36] al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʿiẓ*, ed. Sayyid, vol. 1, p. 232; translation: al-Maqrīzī, *Description*, ed./trans. Bouriant, vol. 1, p. 247.
[37] Köhler, *Allianzen*, pp. 271–275.
[38] Mayer, *Kreuzfahrerherrschaft Montréal*, p. 221 n. 38; Mayer, *Geschichte*, p. 153 n. 75.
[39] Eddé, *Saladin*, pp. 63, 522–523 n. 27, 51, 325, 572.
[40] Harvey, Saladin, p. 30.

sultan's condolences to Baldwin IV appear too vague and too ambivalent to be regarded as reliable evidence of a once, or still existing, alliance.

[§25] Regardless of these issues, it can hardly be denied that in the years following his seizure of sole power in 1171, Saladin behaved in a comparatively restrained manner towards the neighbouring Kingdom of Jerusalem. Here, his refusal to cooperate with Nūr al-Dīn prevented both Islamic ruling complexes from taking decisive action against Latin rule. It is very possible that the sultan and his advisors actually preferred this policy because, in the face of the ever-worsening conflict with the Zengid leader, they benefited from the Frankish-controlled southern Palestine acting as a kind of "buffer zone" between Egypt and Syria. Against this background, it is by no means impossible that there could have been some form of collusion between the Ayyūbid and Frankish sides. As can be shown by the example of Frankish–Egyptian relations in the years 1163–1174, King Amalric's court was largely well informed about the internal conflicts of the neighbouring rulers and, with a high degree of political opportunism, was ready to use them to their own advantage. That the few contemporary Frankish sources – besides William of Tyre[41] and a number of extant letters from Latin dignitaries[42] – provide almost no unequivocal indications of an alliance with Saladin may come as little surprise. They were invariably addressed to the Latin–Christian contacts at the papal curia or the courts of France, England, and the Hohenstaufen Empire. As such, in order to persuade them to provide financial and military support for the supposedly threatened *terra sancta*, the new ruler on the Nile had to be presented as a force every bit as threatening as Nūr al-Dīn, and not as a temporary ally.[43] Saladin and his advisers were also quite prepared to establish diplomatic relations with Latin Christian rulers, as the establishment of contact with the Hohenstaufen Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa (r. 1152–1190) between the years 1171 and 1173 shows. In this case, the aim was probably an alliance against Byzantium. However, nothing is known about the further course of these negotiations although the imperial envoy Burchard of Strasbourg travelled to the sultan's court in Damascus as late as 1175–1176. He returned via the Kingdom of Jerusalem, which was also in contact with the emperor at the time. However, it is not known whether he conducted further negotiations at Baldwin IV's court.[44] In this respect, Möhring's and Köhler's arguments cannot provide indisputable evidence for an alliance between Jerusalem and Cairo, but they do offer circumstantial evidence that makes possible agreements between the two sides appear conceivable.[45]

[§26] Whether the letter of condolences' invocation of friendship between the sultan and the king was based on an alliance or not, it was certainly over by the spring of 1175. Contrary to Saladin's demands, Baldwin's first regent Raymond III of Tripoli began a change of political direction by providing military support for the Zengids, who were under pressure from the sultan – temporarily putting an end to his Syrian advances.[46] The reign of Baldwin IV was characterised by changeable relations with Saladin, which repeatedly oscillated between

[41] For example, he depicted Saladin's encroachment on Syria in 1174 as a reprehensible usurpation of the ruling rights of the Zengid al-Ṣāliḥ, and the sultan himself as both a capable ruler and opponent: William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, ed. Huygens, vol. 2, lib. 21, cap. 6–7, pp. 968–971. See also Möhring, Heiliger Krieg, pp. 428, 434, 455–466; Brandt, *Gute Ritter*, pp. 232, 244–245, 273–275, 298–299.

[42] For example, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem wrote to the Archbishop of Reims in 1173: "Prævaluerunt enim adversus nos exterminatores veritatis, et potissimum radix illa peccati et perditionis filius Salahad, qui singulis annis in manu potenti et valida nostros fines semel aut bis per mare atque terram invadit". Epistolae Henrici Remensis Archiepiscopi Monitum, ed. Brial (RHGF 16), pp. 198–199, no. 198 = *Regesta regni Hierosolymitani*, ed. Röhricht, vol. 1, p. 131, no. 498.

[43] On contacts with Latin Europe, Böhme, *Außenbeziehungen*, pp. 400–580.

[44] Thomsen, *Burchards Bericht*, esp. pp. 346–383; Böhme, *Außenbeziehungen*, pp. 152, 449–453.

[45] Cf. also Böhme, *Außenbeziehungen*, pp. 139–141.

[46] Böhme, *Außenbeziehungen*, pp. 144–149.

strategic truces and open warfare. Amalric's plans to subjugate Egypt given its role as the sultan's main power base were revived by his son and his advisors in 1176–1177, yet the projected Franko-Byzantine campaign did not go beyond the planning phase. The later Ayyūbid expansion into Syria and Mesopotamia could only be inadequately countered by the Frankish rulers: Jerusalem's leaders were preoccupied with internal conflicts in the 1170s and 1180s, and their requests for help from Latin Europe had largely failed. These developments finally reached their climax in 1187: the Sultan and his advisors were now in the military-strategic position to be able to fulfil their religious-political duty by making good on the promises of their *ǧihād* propaganda to crush Latin rule in the Middle East. After the decisive defeat of the Frankish army in July of that year at the Battle of Ḥaṭṭīn, the Ayyūbids succeeded in reconquering not only Jerusalem itself but also much of the Frankish-ruled territories in only a matter of months. News of the fall of the holy city was met with horror in the ruling courts of Latin Europe and brought about the Third Crusade, which began in 1189.[47]

[§27] Regardless of the aforementioned controversies in scholarly debate, Saladin's letter of condolence to Baldwin IV in 1174 finds its historical context at a turning point in the political situation in the Middle East. With the deaths of King Amalric and Nūr al-Dīn shortly after each other, bringing about precarious successions both in the Kingdom of Jerusalem and Zengid Syria, the "race" for control over Egypt was over for the time being. Sultan Saladin, who ruled in place of the weak and alliance-dependent Fāṭimid caliphs, had not only led Egypt to new political strength, but now started to gradually replace the other two great powers as the dominant force in the Middle East. The Ayyūbid dynasty he established was to be able to maintain this status until the middle of the thirteenth century.

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[47] Böhme, *Außenbeziehungen*, pp. 141–237; France, *Hattin*.

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