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Saladin's Chivary in Arabic 12th Century Poetry

CHEVALERIE DE SALADIN DANS LA POESIE ARABE DU 12EME SCIECLE

Aiman Sanad Al-Garrallah[1]

Abstract: The main purpose of this paper is to investigate the poetic celebration of Saladin's heroism in sharp contrast to the timidity of the Crusaders. It explores how Saladin is depicted as a saviour of Islam from the yoke of the Crusaders. In particular, the essay investigates how the most quintessential codes of Islamic chivalry, which he follows to the utmost flawlessness, are represented through in-depth analysis of the figures of speech. Through examining those codes, one can easily determine the characteristics of Saladin as a unique knight. Briefly put, his chivalry is filtered through the regulations of Islam, resulting in his spiritual inner inspiration, which accounts for all other features he is endowed with such as bravery, prowess, and generosity among many others. In addition this essay argues that contemporary poets carefully, not to say assertively, idealize Saladin's heroism as an epitome of salvation, during crucial moments of Islamic history where Islam triumphed over Christianity.
Key words: Saladin; the Crusaders; Codes of Chivalry; Piety; Bravery; Generosity; Fearlessness

Resumé: Le but principal de cet article est d'étudier la célébration poétique de l'héroïsme de Saladin en contraste avec la timidité des croisés. Il examine la manière dont Saladin est décrit comme un sauveur qui a délivré l'Islam du joug des croisés. L'essai étudie en particulier comment les codes les plus essenciels de la chevalerie islamique, ceux qu'il suit jusqu'à la perfection, sont représentés par une analyse en profondeur des figures de mots. Grâce à l'analyse de ces codes, on peut facilement déterminer les caractéristiques de Saladin comme un chevalier unique. En bref, sa chevalerie est influencée par les règlements de l'islam, qui pénètrent dans son inspiration spirituelle intérieure et qui représentent toutes les autres caractéristiques dont il est dotéparmi beaucoup d'autres, telles que la bravoure, la prouesse, la générosité. De plus, cet essai fait valoir que les poètes contemporains idéalisent avec soin, pour ne pas dire avec assurance, l'héroïsme de Saladin comme une incarnation

[1] Assistant Professor of Al-Hussein Bin Talal University, Jordan.
Email: Myaiman_2000@yahoo.com.
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du salut dans les moments cruciaux de l'histoire islamique, où l'islam a triomphé sur le christianisme.

Mots-clés : Saladin; croisés; codes de chevalerie; piété; bravoure; générosité; perfection

There have been two Arabic studies devoted to Saladin in Arabic 12th century poetry and prose, but it can be said that these two works are to a certain degree compilations of poetry and prose, that generally celebrate Saladin(Ahmed Badawi, 1960). This essay aims at bridging the scholarship lacuna in this field through investigating the poetic representation of Saladin as a warrior and a chivalric figure in Arabic 12th century poetry[2]. It suggests that poets are fascinated with him as a saviour of Islam from the yoke of the Crusaders. In particular, the essay investigates how the most quintessential codes of Islamic chivalry, which he follows to the utmost flawlessness, are represented through in-depth analysis of the figures of speech. Through examining those codes, one can easily determine the characteristics of Saladin as a unique knight. Briefly put, his chivalry is filtered through the regulations of Islam, resulting in his spiritual inner inspiration, which accounts for all other features he is endowed with such as bravery, prowess, and generosity among many others. In addition this essay argues that contemporary poets carefully, not to say assertively, idealize Saladin's heroism as an epitome of salvation, during crucial moments of Islamic history where Islam triumphed over Christianity, represented by the Crusades, a point that Keen emphasizes (Maurice Keen, 1984).

1.

More than fifty contemporary poets demonstrate that Saladin's strong faith in God is the most quintessential code of chivalry that he lives up to (Ahmed Badawi,1960: 39). Those poets celebrate his piety, fear of God, trust in Him and religious devotion. Further, he is repetitively depicted as submissively loyal to God, and a devoted believer of the doctrines of Islam. He observes and performs all the religious practices such as praying, fasting and paying both optional and obligatory alms to the needy. His life glows with love of God (Ibn Shaddad, 1964: 33-41). In one of his poems, Al-Qadi Al-Fadil presents Saladin as very virtuous and pious. He uses the sun as a metaphor for Saladin's spirituality in order to highlight Saladin's religious renown. He also likens Saladin's piety to a continuously flowing spring of water from which he drinks, troping his immortalized piety:

Saladin is like a huge mountain of serenity,
His virtue glows like the sun.
Since he always drinks from the sea of virtues,
He becomes a sea of goodness.
Its waters are wavy and have no coast.
There are only seven seas on earth,
Which your ten fingers surpass.
[….]
He drinks from the water of virtue,
For he always desires doing good (Abu Shama, 1992: 24-26).

As the verses quoted above reveal, in comparing Saladin's faith to the sun and the spring of water, the poet suggests that Saladin's religious devotion becomes an emblem of life in the way he takes on social responsibilities. He defends the weak, enjoins what is good and forbids what is evil, and thus undoubtedly becomes the champion of the Good against Evil. For instance, Fityan Al-Shaghori points to the interplay of Saladin's piety and his social benevolence. In this regard, it is no exaggeration to claim

[2] Translations of Arabic verses and transliteration of Arab names into English are mine.

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that this interplay results in what might be called courtesy in the way he treats and defends women. With this argument in mind, Al-Shaghori interprets these as signs of his pure submission to God:

Even Western Female captives are cheaply sold,
Muslims will not lose you [Saladin];
For you are very generous;
You have saved them and protected Muslim women;
You have kept the swords away from their backs.
In God's eyes, you enhance good
And deny evil.
You are very submissive to God,
So you have defeated the Crusaders (Ahmed Badawi, 1960: 99-100).

It becomes apparent that the social bond between the pious warrior and society becomes strong – a bond that pictures Saladin as a warrior, privileged by his society. In other words, Saladin's religious practices account for his fame as a very pious warrior - - a trope that is effectively, if not perfectly, conveyed by Ibn Al-Dahhan's personification of the morning as a human being, welcoming and admiring Saladin's piety (Abu Shama, 1992: 69).

Apart from the social dimension of Saladin's piety, it is of no less importance to scrutinize how the dynamics of Saladin's piety and the dynamics of his politics seem inextricably intertwined. For purposes of simplification, Saladin's' fear of God enhances his urge to improve the political, financial and educational circumstances of the country he has authority over. Many poets are fascinated with his political success in Egypt between 1164 and 1174. Poets, for instance, equate him with the Prophet Joseph in their attempt to underline the fact that Saladin's Islamic leadership is timelessly everlasting. Saladin and Joseph have many virtues in common. Saladin is as just and handsome as Joseph. In this regard, Ibn Sana' Al-mulk merits quoting: "You did not stop fighting because you (Saladin) were as beautiful as Joseph. (Na'imAl-Himsi, 1982)" Their submissiveness to God in one way or another helps them succeed in establishing the political and economic prosperity of Egypt. Al-Asfahani says that Saladin's and Joseph's submissiveness to God accounts for the political and economic prosperity of Egypt during their reigns:

Saladin saw the victory in piety and everyone
Who relies on his piety will achieve victory
{ ….}
When Egypt yearned for the Age of Joseph
God returned to her Joseph and the Age. (Abu Shama, 1997: 135)"

By implication, the lines quoted above indicate the apparent, if not perfect, reminiscences between these governors of Egypt. More to the point, Saladin and Joseph fight against political corruption in Egypt. Al-Arkalah links Saladin's cutting the hands of the ruffians in Egypt with Joseph's cutting hands of the women (Ahmed Badawi, 1960: 48). Therefore, their reigns mark the apogee of political and social stability and prosperity as is celebrated by Amarah (Ahmed Badawi, 1960: 65-66). Eventually, Al-Asfahani (Abu Shama, 1997: 146), Al-Jilyani (Ahmed Badawi, 1960: 66-67) and Amarah (Ahmed Badawi, 1960: 67)picture Egypt as a unique paradise in sharp contrast to the state of political turmoil, anarchy and corruption that prevails in Egypt before the advent of these two governors.

It is reasonable to underline that Saladin's submissiveness to God, and his political success in Egypt *de facto* enhance his desire to have authority over other states in defense of Islam. Therefore, in 1175 most parts of Syria were annexed to Egypt. Al-Asfahani identifies these states before the annexation with darkness so as to underline the political and economic turmoil they go through, a kind of anarchy, washed away by the coming of Saladin, whose piety acts as if it were the dawn that scatters the darkness of the night (Ahmed Badawi, 1960: 78). By the same token, Omarah Al-Yamani describes that annexation as heralding of political stability and economic prosperity. Before the coming of Saladin, Islam, identified with an endless night, is darkened by unsuccessful leaders, but Saladin's authority and

piety act as the sun that scatters the darkness of the night[3]. The dawn and the sun become recurrent symbols of Saladin's victories (Abu Shama, 1871: 163-164).

Saladin's unification of the Arab states as a result of his piety enables him to succeed in the real test of Saladin's piety: the purging the East of the Crusaders - - a test that he never fails and that accounts for his everlasting fame. According to Arab poets, the Crusaders are the real menace that threatens Islam. Saladin's strong faith in God culminates in his preparation to purge the East of the Crusaders, resulting eventually in the destruction of the Crusaders between 1187 and 1192. Al-Asfahani invites Saladin to restore Jerusalem since Saladin is armed with piety, which motivates him to wage wars against the Crusaders (Abu Shama, 1992: 32-33). Similarly, Abu Al-Hasan Al-Sa'ati distinguishes him as different from other kings:

> Kings fight for hypocritical reasons,
> But you fight enemies because of religion
> [….]
> You are really like Joseph
> To whom Stars were prostrating themselves. (Mahmood Ibrahim, 1987: 65)"

Once again, wars against the Crusaders are the true test of his heroism. After the restoration of Jerusalem, Al-Asfahani shows that Saladin's reliance on God makes him more inviolable, immaculate and invincible:

> Rely on God, whose guidance becomes your shield
> And His immunity is your gear.
> Do not forget the infidels in the East and the West
> Who drink the bloods of the necks by their swords.
> The East is pervaded by darkness
> So invade Khorasan, Iraq, Turkey and Persia (Ahmed Badawi, 1960: 86).

Abu Ali Al-Hassan Al-Juwaini underlines that Saladin relies heavily on his strong faith in God, so he is certain that God will help him defeat them by commanding angels to protect him: "Angles (as soldiers of heaven) support this king. / This conquest is undoubtedly a good proof (Mahmood Ibrahim, 1987: 66)." Similarly, Fityan Al-Shaghori emphasizes that Saladin, in his wars against the Crusaders, especially during the conquest of Jerusalem, is enforced by angels (Fityan Al-Shaghori, 1967). Thus, Al-Hakeem Abu Al-Fadl thinks that Saladin becomes an angel, who deserves to be the ruler of the earth (Ahmed Badawi, 1960: 87). Ibn Al-Mujawar says that Saladin's *jihad* (war against infidels) establishes the pillars of Islam, which he revives after a long period of weakness (Abu Shama,1992: 177-178).

2.

Saladin's piety plays another major role in constructing Saladin's own military culture in the sense it undoubtedly accounts for his privileged bravery, which corresponds to a network of Quranic, moral codes. Saladin's bravery does not mean the use of power to hurt, exploit and kill others, but rather it means protecting women and the weak, supporting right against wrong and evil. It means confronting evil fearlessly and then destroying it. It includes establishing the truth of Islam, protecting righteousness regardless of all calamities and hardships. It is Saladin who confronts all the hardships in Egypt when he calmly tries to get rid of the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt.

Saladin's sword recurs in poetry as a traditional metaphor for his manhood, his prowess, dignity, military honour, his chivalry and of course his double or second self. It is closely linked to his endless victories as a result of his bravery and strength. His white sword is associated with the light, which becomes a symbol of righteousness in that it apparently works against the blackness of the night, and

[3] Osamah Ibn Al-Munghidth uses the sun as a metaphor for Saladin, who scatters the darkness of Egypt. See Abu Shama's *The Book of the Two Gardens*, ed. Ibrahim Al-Zaibag (Al-Risalah Publishers, 1997) at page 127 (Vol II).

metaphorically speaking, the evil of the Crusaders. For instance, Ibn Al-Sa'ati celebrates Saladin's victory in Hittin, describing his white swords as musical instruments that produce sweet melodies while hitting the skulls of the Crusaders (Ahmed Badawi, 1960: 94). This kind of metaphor implies that Saladin enjoys performing the sacred task of destroying the Crusading kingdom. Similarly, Usamah Ibn Al-Munqidh uses the image of Saladin and the glimmer white swords that scare the Crusaders (Abu Shama,1871: 156). Similarly, Abu Al-Hasan Ibn Al-Sa'ati shows that Saladin's reputation spreads rapidly after his restoration of Jerusalem as a result of his swords, which glimmer at night and which onlookers cannot differentiate from fire or coal (Abd Al-Jalil Abd Al-Mahdi, 1988: 172). By the same token, Sa'adah Ibn Abd-Allah describes Saladin's sword as lightning; it becomes very flexible through swinging in the air because he has full control over it (Ahmed Badawi, 1960: 129). Depiction of the sword as white indicates that Saladin fights at night and the cause that Saladin defends is that of righteousness. Keeping the metaphor of the lion and its hunting at night in mind, as will be explained below, it can be suggested that the poets' metaphor of his glimmering white swords to a great extent reveals that Saladin's most appropriate timing of fighting is the night – as a strategy of camouflage.

That his sword indicates Saladin's courage furthermore suggests his dexterity in using it to fearlessly confront the Crusaders. He does not withdraw, but bravely (and patiently) fights until he defeats his enemies. It becomes apparent that the sword is positively destructive in that it defends Muslims and destroys injustice and infidelity, represented by the Crusaders. It is a weapon for beheading the enemies as Ibn Jubair Al-Andalusi puts it (Abd Al-Jalil Abd Al-Mahdi, 1988: 193). Poets furthermore relate the sword to some grammatical particles. Ali Ibn Al-Mubarak says "If the enemies are simple present/ Saladin's swords are the particles of jussive mood. (Ahmed Badawi, 1960: 45)" Saladin's swords are very destructive and always allow him to have full control over the Crusaders. In other words, the Crusaders are like the nominative/default case of the present tense imperfect verb, in which the verb takes a short /o/ at the end, and thus indicates dignity and arrogance. Saladin's swords become like particles of jussive mood that place the nominative present tense into the jussive mood without any vowel at the end of the verbs – those particles of the jussive mood regulate and control the verbs with vowels at the end in the same manner that his swords regulate and eradicate the Crusaders. In Arabic grammar, the nominative present tense is influenced by particles of jussive mood, which deletes the short vowel from the end of nominative verbs. By analogy, the grammatical process, as is explored above, echoes Saladin's swords which transform the East from a state of anarchy to one of serenity. Further, during fighting, white swords reasonably become red, imbued with the blood of the enemies as Arkalah celebrates (Abu Shama, 1871: 177).

In addition to the motive of the sword, the poems are awash with references to the image of the lion, which is a traditional and prominent motif in Arabic literature and culture. It traditionally represents dignity, loyalty, valor, bravery, deathless courage, fearlessness and, above all, a valiant warrior. The metaphor of the lion dominates most poems in an attempt to underline the noble and dignified status of Saladin. In like manner the lion is glorified as "the king of the jungle" or "the king of the beasts (Elizabeth Vogel, 2002)." It takes on its responsibility to defend its den and to prevent any animal from approaching it. Like the lion, Saladin defends Muslim lands. In this context, Ali Ibn Al-Sa'ati describes Saladin, when approaching Tabariya, as a ferocious lion, which approaches its den[4]. This gallantry links Saladin to the lion, which defends other lions (the pride's territory against intruders) and does not attack children or even women.

In addition, Saladin is identified with different names and different physiques of lions. These names and the huge sizes of lions on one hand create a strong sense of Saladin's immense strength, extreme valor and fearlessness and on the other create an impression of fear in the hearts of his enemies. In the battle of Hittin, Al-Jilyani describes Saladin as a ferocious and huge lion, who attacks the Crusaders fearlessly (Abu Shama, 1992: 140). Arkalah Al-Kalbi also describes Egypt as a bride and Saladin as her courageous and cautious bridegroom who is like a very ferocious and giant lion. Like such a lion, he is a very powerful hunter, who always hunts without being hunted by his enemies (Ahmed Badawi, 1960: 49). When Saladin invades Syria, Waheesh Al-Asadi celebrates his conquest of Syria after Egypt by

[4] Ahmed Badawi. (1960). *Saladin in Contemporary Poetry and Prose*. Damascus: Ministry of Culture and National Supervision: 92-93. Al-Asfahani also repeats the same metaphor. See Abu Shama's *The Book of the Two Gardens*, ed. Ibrahim Al-Zaibag (Al-Risalah Publishers, 1997), at pages 48-9 Vol. III.

depicting him as a very huge and jumping lion. The lion, though huge, jumps up to 36 feet, causing an atmosphere of fear (Ahmed Badawi, 1960: 69). Sa'adah Al-A'ama[5] in a long poem favors Saladin over the Crusaders, focusing on his face, resembling the face of the lion with large buccals (Ahmed Badawi, 1960: 41). The face, in this sense, is seen as a mirror of Saladin's brave personality.

It is universally acknowledged that the lion is the king of the jungle or the king of the beasts. Therefore it is self-evident that it is considered as undoubtedly privileged over other animals such as wolves, dogs, cats, elephants and the like. This kind of hierarchy attracts the attention of poets in their attempts to highlight Saladin's superiority to other kings and leaders. They create binary oppositions through equating privileged animals with Saladin on the one hand and inferior animals with Crusading kings and oriental rebels on the other hand. The lion, symbol of his bravery, is set against the dog and the cat, emblems of cowardice. Arkalah Al-Kalbi highlights that hierarchy between Saladin and Shawar. In so doing, he creates the dichotomy of the lion and the dog. He describes the first as a fearless lion and the second as a deceptive dog (Abu Shama, 1871: 157). Al-Asfahani depicts how Saladin defeats the Crusaders in Egypt:

> Children of Humphrey got weak and fled
> From Saladin like the dogs which escape from the lion.
> Whereas dogs were howling
> Lions were roaring.
> Despite his escape,
> Coward Philip was eventually caught.

As these lines suggest, Saladin becomes the negation of Humphrey and Philip. In so doing, Saladin is depicted a fearless lion, whereas his enemies are dogs[6]. The huge number of Crusaders does not scare him, but he instead scares the king of Crusaders, who is seen as a dog[7]. The Crusaders, who cannot escape death, are defeated like ostriches. Ibn Jubair Al-Andalusi (Ahmed Badawi, 1960: 106-107) describes Saladin as a great warrior, whose way of stabbing the Crusaders is like the valorous lion when attacking its prey.

As examined above, animal imagery is used to admirably celebrate Saladin's physical and moral prowess. By the same token, they are fascinated with Saladin's yellow banners, which are considered as a major code of Saladin's superior power. His permanent flying of banners during battles symbolizes his valor and bravery – a motif that many poets point to in their poems. His yellow banners are always attached to his swords and spears in order to indicate that victory can be achieved only through the force of the sword. Also they indicate that fighting endures until victory is achieved as a result of what might be called military stamina (Ahmed Badawi, 1960: 127). Flying banners and victory are entwined. Thus, after the restoration of Jerusalem, Ibn Rasheed Al-Nabulsi suggests that the green coastal areas are well prepared for the attachment of Saladin's yellow banners (Abu Shama, 1992: 175). One might suggest that describing Saladin's banners as yellow might stand for the sun. In this way, Islam, which Saladin defends, is the religion of light and life. Those yellow banners also reveal the defeat of the Crusaders according to Al-Shatani (Abu Shama,1992: 35), the breaking of the Cross in Abi Al-Hasan Al-Sa'ati's poem (Abu Shama,1992: 63) , and above all the destruction of all evil according to some wise people (Abu Shama,1992: 35). That is to say, although Saladin's yellow banners stand for victory, the yellow colour is considered as inferior in some other contexts. The Crusaders are inferiorly stigmatized as yellow as is celebrated by Fityan Al-Shaghori (Abd Al-Jalil Abd Al-Mahdi, 1988: 183).

[5] In English it means the blind.

[6] Abu Shama. (1997). *The Book of the Two Gardens, II*, 22. Ed. Ibrahim Al-Zaibag .Al-Risalah Publishers. These lines are also cited in Badawi's *Saladin in Contemporary Poetry and Prose*. (1960). Damascus: Ministry of Culture and National Supervision: 51-52.

[7] Fityan Al-Shaghori similarly describes Saladin as a strong lion, and the Roman king as the dog. See Abu Shama's *The Book of the Two Gardens*, ed. Ibrahim Al-Zaibag (Al-Risalah Publishers, 1997), at page 145, Vol II.

3.

Keeping in mind these positive associations of the sword and the lion with fearlessness, prowess, tenderness, tolerance and courtesy, it is of great significance to explore one of the most important social ideals that plays a major role in the Arabic, and especially Bedouin, culture of chivalry. This ideal is the code of generosity, which Gautier considers "the true chivalrous virtue. (Leon Gautier, 1989)" It is considered one of the great social codes of chivalry that a warrior must embrace in order to embody the true meaning of Arabic chivalry. A great warrior must be identified undoubtedly with altruism, gallantry, benevolence, largesse, and, above all, generosity[8]. Contemporary poets of Saladin are impressed by his giving without coercion. It is suggested that Saladin inherits his liberality from his noble ancestors[9] as Al-Asfahani implies in one of his poems. This historical allusion implies that his generosity is timeless. This being so, he becomes the most generous warrior on earth according to Al-Asfahani (Mahmood Ibrahim, 1987).

Saladin's largesse has social and military functions. A warrior needs his soldiers' admiration and love in order to lead them. Al-Jilyani celebrates Saladin's soldiers' fascination with his generosity, a fascination that protects them from the pangs of disappointment during hardships and battles:

> Saladin spent money on his fellows;
> Money he gave united their hearts
> Which claim that money sufficed.
> This is how kings reign longer
> They did not store but lavished
> Their soldiers are disappointed
> Unless their leaders are not stingy (Abu Shama, 1871: 164).

Saladin is very tolerant and generous to his enemies. Some Christians, dismissed from Jerusalem and disrespected in Syria and Tripoli, were treated with generosity and hospitality when they went to Muslim lands. It is further narrated that Saladin ordered his soldiers to return a captive girl unharmed to her mother, who was crying over her loss[10]. Also, he sent fruits and ices and his private doctor to his enemy King Richard I of England to treat him (Baha Al-Din Ibn Shadad, 1897). Saladin also did not force the weak Christians to embrace Islam. When restoring it, he did not kill the people, but granted them security and they left Jerusalem under the protection of Muslims. Usamah Ibn Munqidh points out that Saladin treats his captives tolerantly (Awni Jabir, 1990).

More importantly, nature imagery is traditionally employed in order to glorify Saladin's generosity. To begin with, the sea acts as a metaphor for his extreme largesse (Hussein Atwan, 1982). This is a recurrent motif in Arabic poetry[11]. The sea is full of water, different kinds of fish, birds, and reptiles; it is the source of jewelry such as pearls and corals[12]; it always gives without coercion and without expecting any return, and its giving is not based on sex, religion, identity or nationality. Saladin is like the sea in that he always gives all he possesses to anybody in need. Fityan Al-Shaghori identifies Saladin with

[8] For more details on Saladin's generosity, see Ibn Shaddad, *The Biography of Saladin*, ed. Jamal Al-Deen Al-Shayyal (Al-Ghanji Publisher: Cairo, 1964), especially at pages 47-49.

[9] In another poem, he lists most of their noble features as is quoted in Abu Shama's *The Book of the Two Gardens*, ed. Ibrahim Al-Zaibag (Al-Risalah Publishers, 1997), at pages 467, Vol II.

[10] For more details on this incident, see Ibn Shaddad, *The Biography of Saladin*, ed. Jamal Al-Deen Al-Shayyal (Al-Ghanji Publisher: Cairo, 1964), especially at page 240.

[11] Sa'adah Al-A'ma (The Blind) likens Saladin to the sky that rains. Saladin is the Sultan of Egypt whose hands are like the sky that rains throughout. (The poem is cited in Badawi's *Saladin in Contemporary Poetry and Prose* (Damascus: Ministry of Culture and National Supervision, 1960), at page 40.

[12] See Abu Shama's, *The Book of the Two Gardens*. ed. (Al-Risalah Publishers, 1997), at pages 457, Vol. II, and 22, Vol III. There Abu Al-Hasan Ibn Al-Dharwi belittles the corals and pearls of the sea when compared to the benevolence of Saladin.

lavish glory and unceasing goodness by comparing him to the sea[13], from which evaporation goes into clouds that rain, reviving all aspects of life on earth such as insects, animals, plants and humans; it also gives pearls and corals. Like the sea, Saladin's benevolence becomes a source of life for people (Abd Al-Jalil Abd Al-Mahdi, 1988: 182-183). More significantly, Saladin's hand becomes the microcosm of the seven seas on earth in Al-Rashid Al-Nabulsi's text (Abd Al-Jalil Abd Al-Mahdi, 1988: 176). Al-Asfahani excels in suggesting that Saladin's five fingers transcend the seven seas on earth. Therefore, he sees him the best, the noblest and the most generous: "We were told that there are seven seas on Earth/ But we cannot see other than his five fingers. (Mohammed Al-Hirfi, 1980)" Similarly, Al-Asfahani (Ahmed Badawi, 1960: 68) celebrates the prosperity of Egypt during Saladin's reign because his hand becomes the earth from which the seven seas flow. This flowing signifies Saladin's everlasting liberality, as is also implied by Saladin's hands' equation with the seven seas[14].

Saladin's generosity and fame transcend history. In Arabic history, permanent and high ideals of generosity permeate Arabic collective consciousness. Some poets allude to Saladin's superiority to other generous figures. For instance, Abu Shama compares Saladin to Hatim Al-Tai, renowned for his extreme generosity. Abu Shama explicitly states that Saladin's generosity transcends Hatim's, declaring that Saladin's generosity, unlike Hatim's, cannot be identified with a cloud, a symbol of what might be called limited generosity (Abd Al-Jalil Abd Al-Mahdi, 1988: 169). More to the point, Ibn Asa'ad Al-Musoli defines Saladin's generosity as giving everything he has. In this context, he transcends Haram Ibn Sinan, Ka'ab and Ibn Sa'ada in that they give some of what they have such as "yoghurt, goats and camels (Abu Shama, 1997: 58)" whereas Saladin gives all that he possesses.

By way of concluding, it can be said that Saladin's chivalry meets all the expectations of Islam. It is unique and very ideal. He is constructed in poetry as a holy hero, touched with an Islamic enthusiasm. This warrior is engrossed wholeheartedly in seeking God's satisfaction, and pleasure. What is significant is that poets have not celebrated Saladin as a sensual man, a man seeking to please his lady. The motif of courtly love is of no significance in their depictions of his chivalry, which is instead the product of his spiritual commitment and religious devotion. Saladin is inspired by God, the real motivation for all his heroic adventures and great deeds. He is not inspired by desire for a woman, for whose sake he will do anything, risking his faith and his fame, and even sacrificing himself (Richard Barber, 1974). He is guided by God, represented by angels, who always side with him. In his wars he desires God's pleasure and satisfaction rather than enduring fame. He lives up to every standard of the Islamic codes of chivalry and Arabic poets idealize him as the most chivalric of all literary knights.

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[13] See Abu Shama's *The Book of the Two Gardens*, ed. Ibrahim Al-Zaibag (Al-Risalah Publishers, 1997), at page 127, Vol. There Usamah Ibn Al-Munghith describes Saladin as a huge sea, which gives endlessly and in another poem he celebrates Saladin's happiness when he gives thousands of dinars to people with a smiling face.

[14] Ahmed Badawi, *Saladin in Contemporary Poetry and Prose* (Damascus: Ministry of Culture and National Supervision, 1960), at page 40. There Al-Asfahani considers Saladin as very generous in that his hand cannot control money.

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