

# TOWARDS A GEOPOLITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAMICJERUSALEM DURING THE AYYŪBID PERIOD: A CRITICAL STUDY OF THREE CASES

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**ABSTRACT:** *The historical veneration and protection for the city of Islamicjerusalem has without end been the priority of Muslim states since its fatih in 16 AH/ 637 CE. The intricate foreign policy of the Ayyūbid rule of Islamicjerusalem (1187-1260) has however over shadowed this position, allowing contemporary research to interpret this very negatively. The objective of this article is namely to explore the geopolitical nature of Islamicjerusalem during the Ayyūbid dynasty specifically during periods of political disorder. It also seeks to explore and understand the foreign policy of the Ayyūbid state in relation to the Crusades and further investigate the reasons as to why Ayyūbid Sultans shaped a legacy of making the city of Islamicjerusalem expendable in times of political or military crisis. The article presented a critical analysis of three important historical cases in the Ayyūbid period which reflected such phenomena. The first case covers when Al-Kāmil, an Ayyūbid Sultan, handed over the city to Frederick II in 1229 CE. The second case study examines the second handover of the city of Islamicjerusalem by Al-Nāṣir Dāwoud to the Crusaders in 1243 CE. Finally, the third case is the advice given by Al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb to his son Tūrānshāh to relinquish the city (when needed) for the protection of Egypt. It was found out that the Egypt and Al-Sham share parallel measures to a political equilibrium of the region. The remarkable historical links between the two areas show profound similarities in the continual power struggle within the region. It is hoped that these case studies will highlight the Ayyūbid foreign policy in relation to the geopolitical significance of Islamicjerusalem.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Islamicjerusalem, Egypt, Al-Sham, geopolitics, Ayyūbid, Crusaders, political disorder.*

## Introduction

The historical veneration and protection for the city of IslamicJerusalem has without end been the priority of Muslim states since its *fatih* in 16 AH/ 637 CE, up until and including the Ottomans. The intricate foreign policy of the Ayyūbid rule of IslamicJerusalem (1187-1260) has however over shadowed this position, allowing contemporary research to interpret this very negatively. This period witnessed great dissension within the Ayyūbid family and often prolonged periods of peace with the Franks<sup>1</sup> (Hillenbrand 2006, 201). Furthermore, the early decades of the twelfth century were a period of great Muslim disunity; there was little military reaction to the ever more pressing danger of Frankish expansionism. The Muslim response to the coming of the Crusades was one of compromise within a framework of the Ayyūbid-Crusader collaboration. The Ayyūbids even at times handed the city of IslamicJerusalem to the Franks. Hence, is it true to say that the city of IslamicJerusalem was not central to the Ayyūbids, and that it was not essential to the security of Egypt and Al-Sham?

This article aims to explore the geopolitical nature of IslamicJerusalem during the Ayyūbid dynasty specifically during periods of political disorder. It also seeks to explore and understand the foreign policy of the Ayyūbid state in relation to the Crusades and further investigate the reasons as to why Ayyūbid Sultans shaped a legacy of making the city of IslamicJerusalem expendable in times of political or military crisis. The article will focus on analysing three historical cases of that period. The first case covers when Al-Kāmil, an Ayyūbid Sultan, handed over the city to Frederick II in 1229 CE. The second case study examines the second handover of the city of IslamicJerusalem by Al-Nāṣir Dāwoud to the Crusaders in 1243 CE. Finally, the third case is the advice given by Al-Ṣālīḥ Ayyūb to his son Tūrānshāh to relinquish the city (when needed) for the protection of Egypt. It is hoped that these case studies will highlight the Ayyubid foreign policy in relation to the geopolitical significance of IslamicJerusalem.

## Theoretical Framework of Geopolitics

Organised violent conflicts or wars are generally considered to be inescapable and hence they are considered an integral aspect of human culture. In conventional wars in history, it seems that the causes of conflict are the result of the struggle and competition for land i.e. the geographical space. Domination and hegemony over land and space is the supreme ambition that powerful states strive to pursue. In effect, competing over territory is exactly where the conflict over a volatile region like Islamicjerusalem seemingly lies.

The *Encyclopaedia of International Relations and Global Politics* defines geopolitics as “the study of the influence of geographical factors on state behaviour; how location, climate, natural resources, population, and physical terrain determine a state’s foreign policy options and its position in the hierarchy of states” (Griffiths 2005, 308). In essence the geographical perspective suggests, as Braden and Shelley outline, that the location, distance and distribution of natural resources have significant influences on international relations (Braden and Shelley 2000, 5).

Geography has in fact always played an important role in shaping a state’s social, political and economic development. Nicholas Spykman, a Dutch-American geo-strategist and a political scientist also known as the godfather of containment, argues that “the most fundamental factor in the foreign policy of states is geography because it is the most permanent” (Agnew and Corbridge 1995, 3). As for international relations, geography can either help or hinder in a state’s position among others. Essentially, for the researcher, geography poses the question where? and further asks why there and not somewhere else? When a geographical region such as Islamicjerusalem is examined, such questions are crucial.

### Mackinder’s Heartland Model

Sir Halford John Mackinder was determined to establish ‘geography’ as a respected discipline in the British educational system (Parker 1982, 28), hence he became a key figure in the institutionalisation of geography in the UK. Still, Mackinder became famous for his world renowned model of the *Heartland* in 1904. His startling doctrine was not only debated at the local level,

but was also argued to have been adopted and used by Karl Haushofer (1869-1946), a German general and geo-politician, so in turn it may have had its influence on the Nazis' expansionist strategies (Parker 1982, 158). However, the link between Haushofer's geopolitical ideas adopted from Mackinder and the Nazi party falls outside the scope of this article. Essentially, the *Heartland Model* proved to be the century's highlight following the First World War although initially it was sidelined, especially in Britain (O Tuathail 2006, 18). Colin Flint, a well-known political geographer, argues that the "kernel of his idea was used in justifying the nuclear policy of President Reagan" (Flint 2006, 17) and that even today, the merits of his model continue to be discussed.

The *Heartland Model*, originally published as "The geographical pivot of history", argued that the world could be divided into three regions that reflected their power potential: the pivot area or Eurasia (renamed in 1919 'the Heartland'); the inner crescent, and the outer or insular crescent resources (Figure 1) (Painter and Jeffrey 2009, 201). Mackinder first identified the Eurasian landmass as the 'geographical pivot'. He believed that the potential of the pivot's heartland lay in its resources (Painter and Jeffrey 2009, 201).

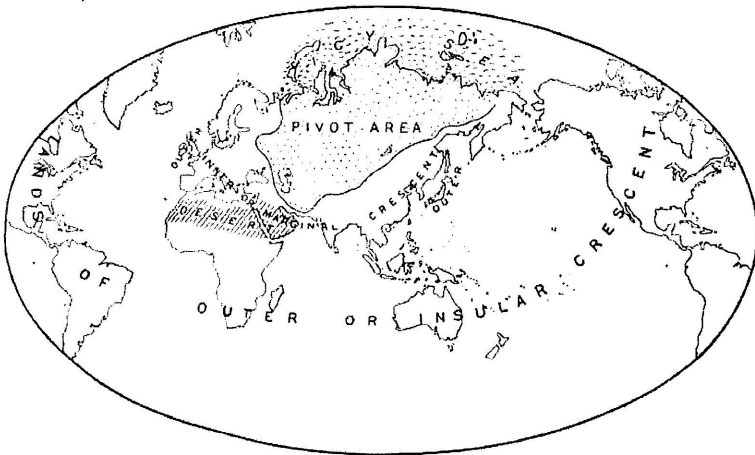


Figure 1 Sir Halford Mackinder's "Heartland Theory" (New World Encyclopaedia 2010)

Later in 1919 he refined his work and concluded with his famous dictum which warns states of the potentials and dangers that they can invoke as a result of their geographical location:

Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland:  
 Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island:  
 Who rules the World-Island commands the World (Mackinder 1919, 150).

The term 'World-Island' was Mackinder's term for the combined Eurasian and African landmasses. The prominent British-American political geographer, John Agnew, argues that the combination of "political purpose and simple formulae was important in publicising Mackinder's ideas" (Agnew 2002, 68). In essence, in Mackinder's view, control of the Heartland (the core of the Eurasian continent, including Germany, Eastern Europe and European Russia) implied control of the World-Island, and that implies world domination. Still, the question that raises itself here is the reason that led Mackinder to come to this conclusion and his aim behind this. Mackinder felt strongly about the role and effect of geographical knowledge in a relatively declining British empire (O Tuathail 2006, 18). He worried like many of his compatriots about the rising power of the German empire within the European continent. The geographical knowledge was thus essential in the state's struggle for power and hegemony. However, behind his famous dictum was a simple recommendation: to prevent German expansionism in Eastern Europe and the German alliance with what became the Soviet Union (O Tuathail 2006, 18). Mackinder argued presciently that Germany, "despite her defeat in World War I, could again rise into a world power through control of the continental resources of the Heartland" (Braden and Shelley 2000, 13).

The *Heartland Model* did in fact come under a great deal of scrutiny in later years and was nearly abandoned after the Second World War (O Tuathail 2006, 1). It did not receive acceptance by all academics. On the other hand, Mackinder's model is very useful as it outlines the different geopolitical players as well as the opportunities and drawbacks of states during the twentieth

century. The *Heartland Model* is a unique model of its time with a clear strategic plan for states. The researcher argues that nevertheless this model can only apply to that specific period of time and that there is a great need for researchers to build similar geopolitical models for different periods of time.

### **Ratzel's *Lebensraum* Theory**

Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904) was Professor of Geography at the University of Leipzig. His career initially started as a zoologist/biologist and it was later that he became a geographer. German geopolitics was defined and shaped by the work of two key individuals: Ratzel and Kjellen. Ratzel's writings served as welcome justification for imperial expansion (Wanklyn 1961, 96). He is considered the first one to have studied the impact of the geographical factor on the power of the state. Ratzel embarked on a scientific study of the state, developing an organic view which implied that states needed living space or *Lebensraum* from which to feed their growing populations (Parker 1982, 235).

Ratzel's work is unique in that he borrowed concepts from the evolutionary theories of Darwin and used them in describing the state. He does not believe in a static conception of borders to a state, but rather he believes in borders to a growing state. States are instead "organic and growing, with borders representing only a temporary stop in their movement" (Wanklyn 1961, 96). He acknowledges the role geography must play in state formation and expansion. In understanding the biological presence of his writings, Agnew states that Ratzel "conceived of the state as strictly analogous to a living organism, whose territory fluctuated over time depending upon its social and demographic vitality" (Agnew 2002, 64). In essence, the possibilities for the future of a state were "closely connected to its resources, space for growth, and climate" (Painter and Jeffrey 2009, 200).

Ratzel's vision of the state as an expanding organism conjoined naturalistic reasoning with German state building and imperial expansion (Agnew 2002, 65). Ratzel believed that seeing the state as an organism with a growing population was "subject to resource

exhaustion, and thus had to expand or die” (Agnew 2002, 65). He asserted that states follow similar laws to those of the development of biological units, hence when a state’s *Lebensraum* becomes insufficient as a result of population growth as an example, then the state needs to respond by annexing new territory and thus forming an enlarged *Lebensraum*. As such he posited seven laws for the spatial growth of states (Agnew 2002, 65).

In short, the researcher believes that early geopolitical thought was highly influenced by the situation of the early twentieth century. Key figures such as Mackinder and Ratzel have both come with new insights into the field of geopolitics from different perspectives. Each of the above models served their contemporary periods by providing an insight into the new political and sometimes biological realities. Nevertheless, realising the importance of the development of a state within its biological metaphors does not always apply to all states. Such *Lebensraum* needs to evolve around conditions that will not be taken at a later stage to justify the imperial expansionism of a state. However, the uniqueness of the *Heartland* model lies at how it identifies certain geographical territory which varies in their degree of powerfulness. Not all spatial territory poses the same significance in world political hegemony. From this point, this article will focus on a highly significant region of the world, namely Islamicjerusalem, which is considered as a distinctive geographical region. The aim of the following sections is to identify the geopolitical significance of this region and to discover whether its geographical location is the reason why it has always been a hotbed for conflict by exploring the most recent model of geopolitics on Islamicjerusalem namely the *Barakah Model*. This theoretical framework will certainly help to understand certain realities in the region during the Ayyūbid dynasty which will be discussed later.

## The Geopolitics of Islamicjerusalem

The geopolitical discourse of Islamicjerusalem is defined by a number of important elements: the location and geography of Islamicjerusalem and the political implications of the region. Two types of forces have long claimed to rule this region either as

religious or political power. In the following sections, the researcher explores the impact of the powerful geopolitical forces of the region in terms of its unique geography and the politics attached in the context of the region's position as the central hub of global geopolitical competition in the past. The researcher will provide an assessment of Islamic Jerusalem's sacred geography and examine what such impact means to Muslims in particular.

Anoushiravan Ehteshami's definition of geopolitics lays stress on the struggle of nations and states for life, "the key to which is control over 'spaces' into which the earth is divided" (Ehteshami 2007, 1). It has been argued that the region of Islamic Jerusalem is different and distinct from all other regions of the world. For example, Jimmy Carter; the former US president states "the Middle East is perhaps the most volatile region in the world, whose instability is a persistent threat to global peace" (Carter 2006, 11). Geographically, the city of Islamic Jerusalem lies at the heart of four mountain tops: Moriah, Zion, Akra, and Bizeta. Surrounding these four mountains are also several other hills and mountains including Mount of Olives (Al-Fanī 2003, 15). The entire city is surrounded by valleys and dry riverbeds. The topographical features add to the strength of the city's defence as it is built on a hill top and its walls rest on natural barriers (Al-Fanī 2003, 16).

Further, the region of Islamic Jerusalem lies at the "junction between the three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa, and connects to a fourth area, Arabia" (Duncan and Opatowski 1998, viii). Maḥmūd Khaṭṭāb states that "Historical Syria occupies a distinct status in world history" (Khaṭṭāb nd, 11). He further adds that it has contributed to the intellectual and spiritual civilisations of the world. In fact, the exceptional geographical location of Islamic Jerusalem manifestly has a global importance (Drysdale and Blake 1985, 8), hence, it is subject to competing global dominance. Certainly, this dynamic and relatively unstable region has attracted nations to aspire possessing power over it. This geographical distinctiveness along with its religious significance has made Islamic Jerusalem the most fought-over region in the world in both historical and contemporary eras.



Not only is IslamicJerusalem said to be the centre of the world, it is also central to the three monotheistic religions. Of all cities, Christians, Muslims and Jews all share holy places in IslamicJerusalem. This religious importance allows it to be further embedded within each faith. Again, this has mostly led to the different groups seeking to dominate this region which has historically resulted in the exclusion of 'others' from residing there (Wilkinson 1990, 102). It has thus become the hub of different faiths and cultures throughout history (Armstrong 1997, 5). Every space within the city is layered with historical significance and religious intensity (Goldhill 2008, 5). The researcher therefore argues that the geopolitical discourses interwoven with religious holiness are the driving forces behind this area.

### **El-Awaisi's *Barakah Circle Theory***

The final but most recent geopolitical model is Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi's innovative *Barakah Circle Theory for IslamicJerusalem* which is the most relevant. In view of the first verse of Chapter Al-Isra' (17:1)<sup>2</sup> as the basis to his theory, El-Awaisi's circle theory analyses the *Barakah* of Al-Aqsa Mosque to radiate into circles around the world as stated in the word *Hawlabu* (surrounded). El-Awaisi draws three main circles to which this *Barakah* radiates to. The first circle is the region of IslamicJerusalem with Al-Aqsa Mosque as its centre (El-Awaisi 2006, 37). The second circle includes the regions of Al-Sham and Egypt and finally the third circle rests in the entire Arab and Muslim worlds which includes much of today's Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iraq, parts of Egypt and Libya, small parts of Sudan, Kuwait, and parts of Iran (El-Awaisi 2011, 94).

El-Awaisi's main contribution to the models of geopolitics is in his argument that "whoever rules IslamicJerusalem (first circle) rules Al-Sham and Egypt (the second circle). And whoever rules Al-Sham and Egypt (the second circle) rules the Arab and Muslim worlds (third circle), and finally whoever rules the Arab and Muslim worlds (third circle) rules the world" (El-Awaisi 2011, 98). El-Awaisi adds that the *Barakah Circle theory* illustrates the international element of IslamicJerusalem and how it could not merely be an internal issue but a global one indirectly affecting the rest of the world (El-Awaisi 2006, 40).

This astounding conclusion explains many historical and contemporary events and why they unfold in a certain way. The *Barakah geopolitical Model for IslamicJerusalem* also reveals that IslamicJerusalem holds the key to war and peace in the region. El-Awaisi argues that “whenever it has been blessed with security and peace, the whole region has enjoyed peace, security, and stability” (El-Awaisi 2006, 146). El-Awaisi’s model for geopolitics highlights the significance of IslamicJerusalem not only in the surrounding region, but more importantly to the world. The model also highlights certain strategic and crucial regions that have played a significant role in the history making of the region. In short, El-Awaisi’s geopolitical model emphasises strongly the role and effect of this geographical knowledge. This knowledge is thus essential in any state’s struggle for power and hegemony. Understanding these geopolitical implications of IslamicJerusalem can become an important analytical tool in our understanding of the Ayyūbid foreign policy as they were largely conditioned by such factors.

### **The Ayyūbids: A Short Historical Overview**

The Ayyūbid dynasty which was centred in Damascus and Cairo ruled much of Historical Syria (Al-Sham) and Egypt during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The founder of the Ayyūbid state Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Al-Ayubī, a name that appears often in historical writings, established a unique legacy for the state. He united Egypt and Syria against the Crusaders and won victory in the famous battle of Hattin in 1187 CE, followed by the retaking of the city of IslamicJerusalem on 2 October 1187 CE (Hillenbrand 2006, 24). At the time of his death in 1193 CE, his kingdom was a powerful and expanding empire in the Muslim world. However, his great achievements and historic role in the region were subsequently sabotaged by the actions of his family members soon after his death. Stephen Humphreys states that “[Saladin] Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s legacy to his heirs was not merely a mass of territories brought together by force and diplomacy. It was a functioning political system... it gave his immediate successors a framework of attitudes and behaviour within which to define their own policies and goals” (Humphreys 1977, 15).

Şalāḥ al-Dīn created a loose confederation of states in the region (Hillenbrand 2006, 24), assigning to his eldest son Al-Afḍal the most important principality of Damascus and IslamicJerusalem. He also designated him his heir (Humphreys 1977, 75). The rest of the territories were ruled by members of the Ayyūbid family which lasted until the *coup d'état* by the Mamlūks in 1249 CE and finally ended in 1260 CE. The period from 1193 CE to 1260 CE witnessed, as Carole Hillenbrand argues, “great dissension within the Ayyūbid family and often prolonged periods of peace with the Franks” (Hillenbrand 2006, 201).

### The Ayyūbids and IslamicJerusalem

The Ayyūbids approach over IslamicJerusalem has been criticised negatively within historical sources for their absurd attitude in surrendering the city of IslamicJerusalem for political reasons, and for allowing the city to become a bargaining tool within their wider political ambitions. An American scholar Stephen Humphreys (1977) describes the relations between the Muslim rulers and the Crusader states after the death of Şalāḥ al-Dīn as “something of a puzzle” (Humphreys 1977, 7). The Ayyūbid rule witnessed times of conflict and some prolonged times of peace with the Franks. Ayyūbid Sultans traditionally sought peace rather than war because of the lasting presence of the Crusaders in the region. The puzzle in the Ayyūbid attitude towards the Franks is that it constantly changed from allies to foes. The apparently vacillating and shifting Muslim policies towards the Crusaders makes it extremely difficult to understand their strategy towards the city.

To embark on discussing this important shift in foreign policy that compelled IslamicJerusalem to become a bargaining region, the researcher starts by quoting Donald P Little (1990), who claims that “after Şalāḥ al-Dīn died in 1193 CE, the simple fact soon emerged that al-Quds was not essential to the security of an empire based in Egypt or Syria. Accordingly, in times of political or military crisis, the city proved to be expendable” (Little 1990, 181). The researcher refutes this argument and on the contrary corroborate in later sections of this paper how IslamicJerusalem lies at the heart of Egypt and Al-Sham’s security.

The following sections aim to explore and analyse the first handover of the city of IslamicJerusalem to the Crusades by Al-Kāmil (1218-1238) in 1229 CE. The researcher seeks to shed light on this crucial event in Ayyūbid foreign policy and to examine Al-Kāmil's reasons and motives. The question posed is whether this event is a clear Muslim failure towards their Holy city - or was it merely a temporary political accommodation?

### **The City of IslamicJerusalem as a bargaining tool**

Sultan Al-Kāmil was the first Ayyūbid Sultan to hand over the city of IslamicJerusalem in 1229 CE to Frederick II<sup>3</sup> of Sicily (1220-1250). This act which would have been unthinkable at the time of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was protested and condemned by Muslims around the empire. Sa'ed 'Ashūr (1969), a well-known Egyptian scholar specialising in the Crusader period, argues that family struggles between Al-Kāmil and his brother Al-Mu'zam 'Isā started at the end of their victory over the Fifth Crusade. 'Isā wanted to possess more territories, which were under the rule of other Ayyūbid princes. Thus 'Isā sought the help of the Khwarazmians (from Central Asia) while Al-Kāmil sought the military support of the Frankish emperor Frederick II. The contemporary chronicler Ibn Wāṣil (d.697 AH/1298 CE) states in *Mufrij al-Kurūb fī Akhbār banī Ayyūb* that in 1226 CE Al-Kāmil sent prince Fakhr al-Dīn to Sicily to ask the emperor to come to Acre, promising to give him the city of IslamicJerusalem and some other places which had been conquered by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, 206). In contrast, a slightly later source of 'Imad al-Dīn Abū al-Fidā' (d.732 AH/1331 CE) states that the son of King al-Afḍal did not point out the promise made by Al-Kāmil to Frederick II as mentioned by Ibn Wāṣil, yet he says "... when King Al-Kāmil did not find any other way except to compromise, he agreed to give the city of IslamicJerusalem to the emperor..." (Abū al-Fidā' 1997, 240). Similarly, Ibn Kathīr (d.774 AH/1372 CE) narrates that after Frederick II arrived in Acre, they later demanded back all that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had taken from them and that was agreed (Ibn Kathīr 1997, 104). Later historians such as Al-Ḥafiz al-Zahabī (d.748 AH/1347 CE) and Jamal al-Dīn bin Taghrī Bardī (d.874 AH/1469

CE) equally make no mention of the deal made prior to Frederick's visit to Acre.

Ibn Wāṣil as the earliest primary source on this is the only Muslim historian of the time who clearly mentions the deal between Al-Kāmil and Frederick II. Later Muslim historians include the same historical record used by Ibn Wāṣil as part of their historical narrative. The British historian known for his work on the Middle Ages, Steven Runciman (2002), also argues this clearly: "Al-Kāmil suggested, as he had done in the Fifth Crusade, that he was ready to restore Jerusalem to the Christians" (Runciman 2002, 184). However, as for the Muslim historians, the researcher considers that it may be the case that later historians concentrated on what happened rather than how or why, in order to keep Al-Kāmil's name as honourable and highly regarded as possible. This understanding can be extracted when critically reading these historical texts.

According to Ibn Wāṣil, "Al-Kāmil offered to hand the city of Islamic Jerusalem (which was under 'Isā's rule) and some other areas to the Franks in order to keep his brother 'Isā away and to give him a chance to submit under Al-Kāmil's authority" (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, 206). Furthermore, the situation soon changed when 'Isā died and the rules of the game changed. As 'Isā was the reason for Al-Kāmil asking Frederick to assist him, after his death Al-Kāmil became reluctant to give Frederick the Holy city. However, negotiations continued between them until, according to al-Zahabī, Ibn Wāṣil and others, Frederick sent Al-Kāmil a letter asking him to reconsider, stating:

I am your free slave, and you are aware that I am the chief of the Frankish kings. You were the one who wrote to me asking me to come... But if I return to them as a loser I will lose my prestige. This is Jerusalem, the root of the Christian faith, and you have destroyed it<sup>4</sup> and thus it has no protection. If you can permit to grant me the Walled city so that I could raise my head among the other kings, I would be committed to delivering its revenue to you... (al-Zahabī 1985, 195).<sup>5</sup>

Fredrick's plea shows the intensity of the situation and his final opportunity to reach an agreement. Fearful that Al-Kamil may withdraw the offer, he offered to pay the revenues of the city to Al-Kamil; and it seems likely that this is why Al-Kamil finally accepted it. This is because that although the city will be under the control of the Franks i.e. separate from the Ayyūbid state, it will nevertheless submit to the rule of Al-Kāmil. In a similar statement, Ibn Wāṣil states that:

It has come to my attention that the emperor told Prince Fakhr al-Dīn, 'If I did not fear losing my respect among the Franks I would not have burdened the Sultan with such. For myself personally, neither Jerusalem nor any other place is a goal worth struggling for ... however, I must preserve my standing among my people'" (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, 243).

Nevertheless, a number of historians clearly state that after 'Isā's death, Al-Kāmil was not willing to hand over the city but, due to Frederick's persistence, he at last agreed (al-Zahabī 1985, 195; Ibn al-Athīr 1998, 481). Al-Maqrīzī (d.845 AH/1442 CE) adds that Al-Kāmil was in a dilemma because "he could not turn him away nor fight him, and thus he wrote politely to him until they reached an agreement of handing over the city" (Al-Maqrīzī 1907, 229-230). Indeed, there is a clear consensus among historians of that period that Al-Kāmil's handover of the city was the last step of the negotiation. A number of them lay stress on the conditions set down by Al-Kāmil as part of the agreement which showed awareness of the position he was in. The conditions of the '*Jaffa peace treaty*' included: that IslamicJerusalem should be left in ruins and that there should be no reconstruction of the city walls. The city was to keep its Muslim identity with Al-Aqsa Mosque being left in the hands of Muslims <sup>6</sup>(Ibn Wāṣil 1953, 206; Al-Maqrīzī 1907, 230).

The researcher poses the question of whether the handover of the city was an underestimation of the city of IslamicJerusalem by Al-Kāmil. A unanimous agreement between historians who do not directly blame Al-Kāmil for the loss of the city blame the weak Ayyūbid state instead, since it was unable to assert its power over

the city. This is clear from the language style used by some historians, for example “Al-Kāmil faced a predicament” (Al-Maqrīzī 1907, 230). In addition, the internal conflicts between the Ayyūbid family contributed largely to weakening the state. Al-Kāmil did not have the power to defend the city of Islamic Jerusalem in 1229 CE so, fearful of losing more territory, he decided to bargain over it. Historians understand that Al-Kāmil weighed up the situation and note that if he did not end the quarrel with a peace treaty, he would have been voluntarily opening the door to war against the Franks.

An important aspect of Al-Kāmil’s handover of Islamic Jerusalem is in Ibn Wāṣil’s statement that Al-Kāmil “intended to get back the city whenever he wanted” (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, 242). Some writers mentioned below note that the bargain over the city was a short term solution that should not have lasted for long. The fact that the city was a defenceless one<sup>7</sup> meant that it would not be difficult to get it back to be once more under Muslims’ rule.

It is essential to point out that the information extracted from primary sources comes simply from the earliest chronicler, Ibn Wāṣil. Much of the information recorded in other primary history books by Al-Maqrīzī, al-Zahabī, and Taghūrī Bardī can also be traced back to Ibn Wāṣil. It is therefore vital to be aware of Ibn Wāṣil’s good relationship and allegiance to the Ayyūbid state which is clearly reflected in his writings (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, 8).

### **Historical Analysis of Al-Kāmil’s Handover**

The Ayyūbid family, who had united ‘to drive the Franks out of Egypt, had quarrelled more and more since 1221 CE’ (Mayer 1990, 235). The family power struggle overshadowed any unity within the state and thus made it vulnerable to foreign attacks. Moreover, according to Ibn Wāṣil, Al-Kāmil’s invitation to Frederick II was in the year 1226 CE, and less than a year later the reason for this invitation, i.e. his brother ‘Isā, died which in the researcher’s opinion should have theoretically freed Al-Kāmil from his obligations to Frederick. Similarly, Humphreys argues that the death of ‘Isā was at once an opportunity for Al-Kāmil, and that his

deal with Frederick had “now lost its whole reason for being” (Humphreys 1977, 193). On the other hand, scholars such as Hans Eberhard Mayer (1990) argue that “by then it was too late to stop the Crusade” (Mayer 1990, 235), and already the emperor’s advance forces had disembarked in Acre (Humphreys 1977, 193). Although Al-Kāmil could have possibly taken a different approach to the situation following ‘Isā’s death, the approach he took also reflect his diplomatic character and the Ayyūbid foreign policy towards the Crusaders that was in place at the time. Al-Khaṭīb explains that Al-Kāmil was always inclined to prevent unnecessary wars through peaceful means and negotiations (Al-Khaṭīb 2001, 308). Past events have shown that Al-Kāmil was mostly willing to negotiate and to even hand some territories to the Crusaders if that would prevent a war and sometimes even if he could prevent the Crusaders advancement militarily. Mayer claims that during the Ayyūbid period, the Crusaders were “never exposed to any menace serious enough to jeopardise their very existence” (Mayer 1990, 228). But again the main issue here is Al-Kāmil’s foreign policy- which was largely a reflection of his character and his assessment of the situation.

Al-Kāmil had always feared provoking the launch of yet another Crusade from Western Europe. Conciliation with the Franks was therefore preferable to confrontation (Hillenbrand 2006, 204). Humphreys argues convincingly that “the Ayyūbids were terrified of the Franks who just kept coming back” (Humphreys 1998, 9). In essence, this issue was at the height of Al-Kāmil’s worries and one that made him more inclined to peaceful negotiations with the Crusaders.

In fact, another seemingly clear reason for this approach was the continued weakness of the Ayyūbid state, underlined by internal struggles and conflict. Hostilities between the brothers and other family members meant that Al-Kāmil was exposed on both the domestic and foreign fronts. His treaty with Frederick was a way to avoid the danger of a war on two fronts (Mayer 1990, 235). Negotiating with the Crusaders allowed Al-Kāmil to minimise the



threat present at that time and concentrate on strengthening his domestic front and the ordering of his empire.

### **Geopolitical Analysis of Al-Kāmil's Handover**

The important issue here is the understanding of this historical event from its geopolitical perspective. Al-Kāmil's handover of the city of Islamic Jerusalem in 1229 CE thus needs to be analysed and assessed according to the geopolitical players and forces in the region and the implications of threats and opportunities facing the Ayyūbid state subsequent to the city's handover to Frederick. It is important to note that the first four Crusades were directed at the Holy Land. In effect, that has uncovered that Egypt was the Muslim seat of power, and thus subsequent expeditions were directed there (Medieval Sources 2006). From this discussion, the issue of the Ayyūbid Egyptian power base can indeed enlighten us onto some underlying elements regarding Al-Kāmil's handover of the city of Islamic Jerusalem.

In justifying Al-Kāmil's conduct in bargaining over the city with Frederick, Ibn Wāṣil on numerous occasions stated that Al-Kāmil 'would be able to take back the city of Islamic Jerusalem any time he wishes' (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, 242), and similarly he also states 'Al-Kāmil is able to purify this Holy city whenever he needed' (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, 243). But what does this mean and how could such statements assist in our understanding of the situation? In Humphreys' words, he argues that at that time "the Sultan could and did point out that the cession of Jerusalem was militarily meaningless - it was strategically untenable by itself and could be recovered without any effort when the truce lapsed a decade" (Humphreys 1977, 203).

Indeed, the seat of Al-Kāmil's kingdom was in Egypt (Little 1990, 183). For him, the city of Islamic Jerusalem was a defenceless and unfortified one, and thus would pose no threat to Egypt if under the Franks' authority. In his view such a vulnerable city could easily be reconquered for Islam later on (Hillenbrand 2006, 217). Hillenbrand argues that a city bereft of its defences would present no threat to him: "it could be handed over to the Franks who

desired it as part of a treaty ensuring that they would leave Egypt alone” (Hillenbrand 2006, 217). Similarly, Al-Khaṭīb argues that “we can note that Al-Kāmil would bargain over the city in times when he felt a threat to his kingdom in Egypt” (Al-Khaṭīb 2001, 296).

Hence, was IslamicJerusalem not essential to the security of an empire based in Egypt as Little claims? (Little 1990, 181). The researcher argues that the emergence of a new geopolitical reality of Egypt and IslamicJerusalem meant that the strategy and line of tactic of both parties changed accordingly. The Crusades were no more marching towards the Holy land and similarly, the Ayyūbids began to understand that without a strong base in Egypt they can lose the entire kingdom, and thus temporary concessions may at times be the mere solution.

In his book on Egypt and the Palestine Question *Māṣr wa al-Qaḍīyā al-Filīṣṭīniā* written in 1992, Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi draws together this geopolitical reality of Egypt and Palestine in general and IslamicJerusalem in particular. He argues that:

There has always been a strong biological bond between Egypt and Palestine throughout different eras which has developed and is still developing in the movement of history in the Arab region. The national security of Egypt and Palestine has always been the same. The destiny of either of these two countries is always connected with the other one. This fact is true when we know that the danger to either of these two countries mostly comes from the other one. Egypt’s key wars always took place in the region of Al-Sham in general and in Palestine in particular and vice versa (El-Awaisi 1992, 53).

The Crusaders’ strategic target was now Egypt, and thus by giving the same focuses and concern, Al-Kāmil was able to protect Egypt as the Ayyūbid centre of power. The fact that both countries share the same geographical location intrinsically makes them overlap in measures over national security. Abū ‘Lyān explains this geopolitical reality in that the Crusader campaigns were now

directed at Egypt as it acts as the gateway to IslamicJerusalem (Abū 'Lyān 1993, 190). Little clarifies that the “ostensible purpose of the Fifth Crusade was to facilitate the capture of the Holy city by attacking the seat of Muslim power in Egypt” (Little 1990, 182). To the Ayyūbid side, ceding the city of IslamicJerusalem to the Crusaders would always be a short term political accommodation that could serve a number of purposes. First of all, such an accommodation would suspend the Crusader campaigns at least temporarily. Secondly, a strong Ayyūbid kingdom in Egypt would mean even if the Crusaders in IslamicJerusalem were strong; they could be crushed by the Ayyūbid state if necessary. Furthermore, the Crusader state in IslamicJerusalem would always be surrounded by Ayyūbid provinces, and could therefore not increase its territory, since the Ayyūbids had control over the Crusader reinforcements from the North. The researcher therefore argues that the realisation of this geopolitical reality may show that the seemingly foolish act of Al-Kāmil was in fact an exceptionally clever act by him instead.

### **Al-Nāṣir Dāwoud: Strategist or Amateur?**

Following the handover of the city of IslamicJerusalem by Al-Kāmil to the Franks in a truce lasting ten years (1229-1239 CE), there was a time of peace between the Ayyūbids and the Crusaders. This section aims to analytically discuss the second handover of the city of IslamicJerusalem by Al-Nāṣir Dāwoud to the Crusaders in 1243 CE and further examine the political situation surrounding this event. The researcher also endeavours to explore whether this historical case is a clear Ayyūbid failure towards the Holy city or was it also merely another temporary political accommodation?

The agreed period of ten years was a true reflection of the drained situation of both sides and of the compromised position the Ayyūbids were willing to accept. The Ayyūbids as Donald P Little claims “made no effort to regain the city” during the truce. In fact, Sa'ed 'Ashūr (1969) argues that the Ayyūbids should instead have taken advantage of the weakened Crusaders and the current unfortified city. He also adds that the Ayyūbids made no attempt

to regain the city of IslamicJerusalem (‘Ashūr 1969, 119). Could this be understood to be negligence on the Ayyūbids’ part or was it merely an acceptance of the prevailing political situation? It is important to note that if the Ayyūbids had wanted to keep the city under their authority, they would not have compromised and accepted a ten year truce. Therefore, in essence, they were looking for an agreed peaceful situation. Moreover, during the truce, the threat of the Khwarazmians was still very much shaping the Ayyūbid foreign policy towards the Crusaders (‘Ashūr 1969, 119). Similarly another unceasing threat was on the Ayyūbid internal front; family divisions were a persistent threat to the survival of their own state. The incidence of members of the Ayyūbid family uniting against other members was becoming very common by this time. But the question that arises at this stage is: how could a second handover of the city of IslamicJerusalem to the Crusaders become politically acceptable?

The fortunes of the city of IslamicJerusalem went from bad to worse. The city remained in Frankish hands as stated by the *Jaffa Treaty* until after Al-Kāmil’s death in 1238 CE. It then reverted briefly to Ayyūbid control in 1239 CE under Al-Nāṣir Dāwoud, the ruler of Karak, but again “as a result of internal rivalries amongst the Ayyūbids it was handed back to the Franks in 1243CE in exchange for the promise of Frankish help to [Al-Nāṣir Dāwoud] and his allies against the Ayyūbid ruler in Egypt, al-Malik Al-Ṣāliḥ<sup>8</sup>” (Hillenbrand 2006, 222). Carol Hillenbrand argues that “truly Saladin and his propagandists must have turned in their graves at this betrayal” (Hillenbrand 2006, 222). Was this historical event in fact a betrayal or negligence towards the Holy city? Was the Ayyūbid bargaining policy towards the city in fact becoming the norm?

### **The Return of the City of IslamicJerusalem to Muslims**

The second case of the handover of the city by Dāwoud to the Crusaders in return for their help against Al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb is described in the major primary historical sources. The chronicler Ibn Wāṣil (d.697 AH/1298 CE) states that the deal between the Ayyūbids and the Crusaders when Al-Kāmil handed over the city

in 1229 CE was that “the city would stay in ruins, and no renovation or construction of buildings is to take place” (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, 246). However, he adds that when Al-Kāmil died, the Crusaders built in the western side of the city and added to the Tower of David<sup>9</sup>(Ibn Wāṣil 1953, 246).

Meanwhile, after Al-Kāmil’s death, his youngest son Al-‘Adil ruled Egypt for a short period, and later his brother, Al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb became the Sultan (Al-Maqrīzī 1907, v,1, 225). During the year 1239 CE, Al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb was imprisoned by Dāwoud in Karak. Dāwoud later headed to the city of Islamicjerusalem when he became aware that the Franks were constructing buildings and fortifying the city (Al-Maqrīzī 1907, v,1, 291). Ibn Wāṣil states that “he took down the tower they built ... and kept it under siege until it was handed over peacefully. When the city of Islamicjerusalem was handed over to him, he demolished what the Franks had built, along with the Tower of David” (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, v,5, 247). He further adds that subsequently, Dāwoud took control of the Holy city and ‘purified it’, leaving the Franks who inhabited it to return to Europe (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, v,5, 247). The Muslims perceived this as liberation of the Holy city. Dāwoud’s actions were highly welcomed by all, even to the extent that his liberation was compared to that of Šalāḥ al-Dīn back in 1187 CE (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, v,5, 247).

From the sources, it is clear that the Ayyūbids had no intention of claiming the city back during the ten year truce, and that the ostensible reason for capturing the city therefore was that the Franks were not abiding by the agreement in terms of its fortification. So could it have been that the Crusaders were aiming at fortifying the city so that when the truce lapsed, they could enforce their authority over it? Steven Runciman states that in preparation for the end of the treaty, Pope Gregory IX had preached for a Crusade in France and England. Following this, a group of notables headed by Tibald of Champagne, King of Navarre were ready to sail East (Runciman 2002, v,3, 212). Although this Crusade was, as Runciman argues, a “formidable one” with limited success (Runciman 2002, v,3, 212), it also

showed that the Crusader movement was to continue, and that their presence in the region would be maintained. Runciman also argues that the reason behind Dāwoud's capture of the city of Islamic Jerusalem could have been the Breton attack on the Muslim caravan (Runciman 2002, v.3, 213). Though Runciman later states however that the city was undefended "except for the section of wall by St Stephen's Gate, which Frederick had begun, and a citadel incorporating the Tower of David, which had recently been strengthened" (Runciman 2002, v.3, 215). Accordingly, Dāwoud destroyed the fortifications and then retired to Karak (Runciman 2002, v.3, 215).

### **The Second Muslim Humiliation<sup>10</sup>**

In the year 1239 CE, Dāwoud and his cousin Al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb agreed in the city of Islamic Jerusalem that Egypt would be under the authority of Al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb while Al-Sham and the East would be under Al-Nāṣir Dāwoud's control. The two new allies faced a number of Ayyūbid enemies including Ayyūb's brother Al-'Adil, 'Imad al-Dīn Ismā'īl of Damascus, and Al-Mansour Ibrāhīm of Homs. Subsequently, these new alliances ended with Egypt surrendering to the control of Al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, v.5, 266). Dāwoud was rewarded with the post of military governor of Palestine (Runciman 2002, v.3, 211). 'Imad al-Dīn Ismā'īl remained in control of Damascus, and for the next decade as Runciman argues the Ayyūbite world "was torn by the rivalry between uncle and nephew" (Runciman 2002, v.3, 211).

In the year 1243 CE, a catastrophic event was to overshadow the Ayyūbid state for years to come. Ismā'īl of Damascus, Al-Mansour Ibrāhīm of Homs, and Dāwoud under a new alliance agreed to wage war against Al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb. However, with the help of the Khwarazmians (on Ayyūb's side), Dāwoud and his new allies knew they needed stronger assistance to weaken Ayyūb. Hence they invited the Franks to join them in return for what is described by Ibn Wāṣil:

When their word united to wage war against Ayyūb, and knowing that he has allied with the Khwarazmians who will join forces with

the Egyptian forces, they soon realised that they cannot win such battle, hence they allied with the Franks and agreed to hand them the Holy city, including visiting the Muslim sanctuaries. Tiberius, Ascalon and Kawkab would also be handed to the Franks with no restrictions on their construction and fortification (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, v.5, 332).

The Franks entered the Holy city, and were in control of the Al-Aqsa Mosque including the Dome of the Rock and other Muslim Holy sites. It was also guaranteed for the Franks that, if they captured Egypt, they would be given their share (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, v.5, 332). The historian Ibn Wāṣil travelled to the city of Islamic Jerusalem at the end of that year, and described the situation in the city the way he had seen it:

I entered the Holy city and saw the priests and monks over the Holy Rock (inside the Dome of the Rock), and on it there were bottles of wine. I also entered Al-Jami' Al-Aqsa where they hung bells, the *Adhan* and *Iqamah* were banned in the Mosque. *Kufr* was announced in the Mosque (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, v.5, 333).

Little argues that at this point the city “reached its nadir under the Ayyūbids” (Little 1990, 185). The Christians were given possession of the Muslims’ Holy sites, including Al-Aqsa Mosque. Historical sources lay the responsibility of this outrage to one of the three (Ismā‘īl, Ibrāhīm, and Dāwoud) mentioned in Ibn Wāṣil. Hillenbrand describes the event as a betrayal of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. Moreover, the city of Islamic Jerusalem reached its lowest ebb in 1244 CE when the Khwarazmians called by Al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb ‘sacked the city and slaughtered the Christians’ and returned it to the rule of Al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb (Hillenbrand 2006, 222). Later Ayyūb succeeded in uniting Egypt, Damascus and the city of Islamic Jerusalem under his authority (‘Ashūr 1969, 137). So could the actions of Dāwoud and Ismā‘īl be considered similar to those of Al-Kāmil? Was the ceding of the city a strategic move or does it reflect a failure in Ayyūbid foreign policy?

### **A Strategic Move or Failure of Policy?**

This historical incident certainly shows that it was becoming common for Ayyūbid Sultans to bargain over the city of IslamicJerusalem in times of political disorder. As the researcher has argued in the previous section, despite Al-Kāmil's bargain over the city in 1229 CE, this had, nevertheless, other explanations from the geopolitical perspective. Therefore, due to the new emerging geopolitical reality, Al-Kāmil had stipulated conditions when he handed over the city. These conditions may seem to be rather insignificant until they are compared to the arrangements agreed by Dāwoud and Ismā'īl. While Al-Kāmil was eager to enforce that Al-Aqsa Mosque and all Muslim shrines would be left under the authority of Muslims, Dāwoud and Ismā'īl were in fact not concerned whether that same condition would be respected. Essentially, they agreed that Muslim Holy places would be under the control of the Franks. The researcher argues that it might be the case that both Dāwoud and Ismā'īl acted impulsively and this can only reflect their lack of assessment and negotiating skills.

While the treaty which ended between Al-Kāmil and Frederick in 1229 CE was subsequent to months of negotiations, the unconditional settlement of Dāwoud and Ismā'īl suggests an extremely weak and ill-advised position. Carol Hillenbrand argues that "once again the Muslim world suffered the humiliation of the Dome of the Rock being in the possession of the Franks" (Hillenbrand 2006, 222).

The particularly absurd attitude of Dāwoud poses some reservations. While Dāwoud was the prince who was so enraged by the fortification of the city of IslamicJerusalem in 1239 CE that he marched to the city and took it from the Crusaders; it was that same man who was ready to cede the city to the Crusaders in an alliance against another Ayyūbid Sultan. How could the prince who conquered the Holy city also be the one to give it away? Or perhaps, as could be argued, he was so desperate to find a powerful ally against his enemy that he was impelled to make this generous and unexpected offer. Hence, Dāwoud gave the Franks more than they wished to possess (compared with the treaty



between Al-Kāmil and Frederick). The major difference between the two treaties is that Al-Kāmil was in a powerful position which enabled him to assert his own terms on the treaty (as his war ended by the natural death of his enemy). Dāwoud on the other hand was in a weaker position as he was starting a war against his former ally and new enemy, Al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb. This enforced him to give the city away for a much cheaper price and the weakness of his position was clearly reflected in his whole attitude towards the region. Dāwoud's attitude towards the city of Islamic Jerusalem was one based on accidental and hasty decisions. He did not show the charisma and quick thinking of Al-Kāmil. The handing back of the city to the Franks was castigated at the time and was condemned as a betrayal of the achievement of Šalāḥ al-Dīn (Hillenbrand 2006, 224). In fact, the city was becoming, for later Ayyūbids, a "dispensable commodity: occasionally it could be the focus of displays of public piety on their part but more frequently it would fall victim to their hard-headed military realism" (Hillenbrand 2006, 224). As a result of the political instability of the region in that period, handing the city to the Crusaders was almost becoming the trend to secure the military ambitions of Ayyūbid leaders.

In short, the emergence of new geopolitical realities and forces in the region has challenged the perceived image of the Ayyūbid state as the protector of the Holy city. During this decade, the Ayyūbid Empire collapsed into turmoil of civil wars between brothers, uncle and nephew, cousins and so on. The death of Al-Kāmil initiated a power struggle in the Ayyūbid house whose main protagonists were Sultan Al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb of Egypt and 'Imad al-Dīn Ismā'īl of Damascus<sup>11</sup>. New alliances were made and some old alliances were renewed. This section has explored further evidence into how the Ayyūbids offered to negotiate over the city of Islamic Jerusalem once again, but this time it was a collective effort by the Syrian alliance with the Franks. The Crusades did indeed capitalise from the ongoing internal strife between these Ayyūbids of Syria and Egypt. Dāwoud and Ismā'īl, therefore, offered the city of Islamic Jerusalem to the Franks in order to overthrow Al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb of Egypt. Dāwoud's action can only as

the researcher argues show a failure in his policies. His act does most definitely show that he is not a strategist but an amateur. The fact that he did not stipulate any policy at the time of the handover regarding the sanctity of Al-Aqsa Mosque as his predecessor Al-Kāmil did, reflects his lack of understanding of the wider interest to his people. The political expediency of handing back the city to the Franks, which was an incident never to be repeated, was now becoming a trend in favour of collaboration and co-existence with the Franks.

Furthermore, an important issue emerging from this situation is the strategic relationship between Egypt and Al-Sham. It is beginning to become obvious that Egypt and Al-Sham were inter-dependent. Al-Sham could not be safe and stable if Egypt was under threat and difficulty and vice versa. The Sultans of Egypt had long aspired to control Al-Sham, not just to increase their territory but essentially because of the geopolitical reality that both regions share. This geopolitical reality can either be a strength or weakness to either state.

### **The Will of al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb on relinquishing the city to the Crusaders**

The widely accepted understanding that Ayyūbid rulers bitterly opposed the presence of the Crusaders in Al-Sham may seem somewhat far from the truth considering the attitude of Ayyūbid rulers up to now. The ongoing shift in Ayyūbid policies illustrated by the dishonourable act of the Ayyūbid rulers in 1243 CE as seen in the previous sections was later altered by Al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb. He was able with the help of the Khwarazmians to bring the city of IslamicJerusalem back under his rule. The researcher will examine the Will (*Waşīya*) of Al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb to his son Tūrānshāh in relation to offering the city of IslamicJerusalem to the Crusaders if there was a potential threat to Egypt and analyse the statement made by Al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb in the Will to relinquish the city of IslamicJerusalem to the Crusaders. The researcher uses this example to highlight whether Ayyūbid Sultans shaped a legacy of making the city of IslamicJerusalem expendable in times of political crisis.

The Will has not been analysed entirely prior to this study; however, the statement regarding relinquishing the city of Islamic Jerusalem within the Will has been used by a number of secondary sources such as Carol Hillenbrand and Donald P Little<sup>12</sup>. However, the researcher argues, as will be seen later, that such statement cannot be understood accurately if taken out of context and without evaluating it with the entire text of the Will.

The Will of Al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb is available as a manuscript in the National Archives of Egypt, though the document available to the researcher is an edited version by Claude Cahen<sup>13</sup> and Ibrahim Chabbouh. The researcher employed the historical methodology of examining historical sources of the Will. However, the researcher was not able to externally examine the manuscript as it was not available to her but included the observations of Cahen and Chabbouh on the authenticity of the manuscript. The researcher has conducted an internal examination of the Will, however due to the scope of this article it has not been included.

### Understanding the Will

The most important paragraph in this Will which is relevant to this research is the following statement:

And this defeated enemy (Crusaders), if they proceed from Damietta and head towards you, and you do not have the power to fight them, and assistance is delayed and they demand from you the coast and Islamic Jerusalem then give it to them and do not hesitate on one condition that they have no foothold in Egypt<sup>14</sup>

The statement under examination needs careful assessment as it could have major implications. The researcher thus seeks to examine the advice given by Ayyūb to his son Tūrānshāh from a geopolitical outlook. A first read shows that Ayyūb asks his son to relinquish the city of Islamic Jerusalem along with the coastal areas to the Crusaders; this is also an opinion held by some academics who argue that the Ayyūbids considered Egypt to be far more important than the city of Islamic Jerusalem. However, by looking at the statement once more, the researcher notes a number of conditions stipulated by Ayyūb before the surrender of the city.

Firstly, Ayyūb makes the surrender conditional upon a continuing occupation of Damietta; thus he says “if the Crusaders proceed from Damietta and head towards you (i.e. to al-Mansourah)...”. The second and third conditions specify “if you do not have the power to fight them, and assistance is delayed”. In other words, Ayyūb is therefore instructing that his son should fight if he has the power and support to do so. The final condition is that if all fails and “they demand from you the coast and Islamicjerusalem”, that is if his son has applied the first three conditions but the Crusaders still request the surrender of the Holy city to be under their authority in return to leaving Egypt and restoring peace, “then give it to them and do not hesitate”.

This powerful statement needs to be considered within the wider context of the Will, if its purpose is to be understood accurately. Ayyūb stresses throughout the Will that “Egypt is the seat and centre of power” (Cahen and Chabbouh 1977, 100). Accordingly, Ayyūb also adds “and if it is under your rule, the entire East will be under your power”. This is not particular to Ayyūb because Ayyūbid Sultans before him had also considered Egypt to be the centre of power. The loss of Egypt would therefore mean the loss of the entire East; on the other hand, a temporary loss of the Holy city did not necessarily imply the loss of the Ayyūbid kingdom. Thus, the researcher argues that in a weak political and military climate, the Muslim surrender of the city is not because it’s insignificant but is rather due to strategic implications.

Power is a crucial aspect to this equation as the fate of Islamicjerusalem rests on how powerful the Ayyūbids are. It is interesting to examine whether Tūrānshāh played according to his father’s rules and wishes in 1250 CE. Indeed, when he became the ruler after his father’s death, he followed the steps and conditions outlined by his father however, as he had the power to crush the Seventh Crusade in Egypt, there was no need to cede the city. In fact, Steven Runciman states that in the midst of this, Louis IX of France, the head of the Seventh Crusade, “sent to offer [Tūrānshāh] the exchange of Damietta for Jerusalem. It was too late. The Egyptians knew now how precarious was his position...

his offer was rejected” (Runciman 2002, 269; Al-Maqrīzī 1907, 354; Al-Asali 1988, 223). This ended in what Stephen Humphreys call “a superb victory against the Crusaders, consummated by the capture of Louis IX himself on 6 April 1250” (Humphreys 1977, 302).

So in essence, Ayyūb’s statement to his son was in fact a military preparation which highlighted the different tactics and strategies that Tūrānshāh should ensure in order to maintain a powerful state and thus the researcher refutes all those claims which suggest that Islamic Jerusalem was a negotiable tool as it was insignificant politically and thus indirectly insinuating that it was also religiously insignificant.

### **Karak: A Strategic Area**

The researcher also argues that the advice within the Will is essentially strategic measures of national security aiding the protection of the Ayyūbid state. In the final part of the Will, Ayyūb lays stress on the important strategic location of Karak<sup>15</sup>. He tells his son “to keep Karak under his authority” and adds:

This defeated enemy may (God forbid) proceed to Egypt, thus Karak will be your back ... as Egypt does not have protection. You can assemble the army in Karak and proceed from there to liberate Egypt; if you do not have a place like Karak your army will disintegrate<sup>16</sup> (Cahen and Chabbouh 1977, 104).

From 1193 CE, the Crusaders “focused much more attention on attacking Egypt, believing that it held the key to reconquering Jerusalem” (Hillenbrand 2006, 24). The Ayyūbid Sultans thus needed to protect Egypt usually by considering a political accommodation based on strategic interests and power within the region. Ayyūb laid down two broad lines of defence: the first was the bargain over the city of Islamic Jerusalem to keep Egypt. The second was if Egypt was lost, to re-establish the army in Karak and proceed to liberate Egypt. Egypt must not be under any threat at any time as it could destabilise the region.

Karak, a city situated on a hilltop about 1000 metres above sea level, is a strategic city housing the famous castle of Karak, one of the three largest castles in the region. Karak played a central role in the region's politics. Due to its strategic location, the town's fortification was generally strengthened. Karak's castle was built by the Crusaders during the twelfth century as a stronghold to protect their capture of the city of Islamic Jerusalem and also to serve as a strategic link between Karak and Shawbak. During the later period of the Mamlūk Sultanate, Karak even became the capital of the entire kingdom.

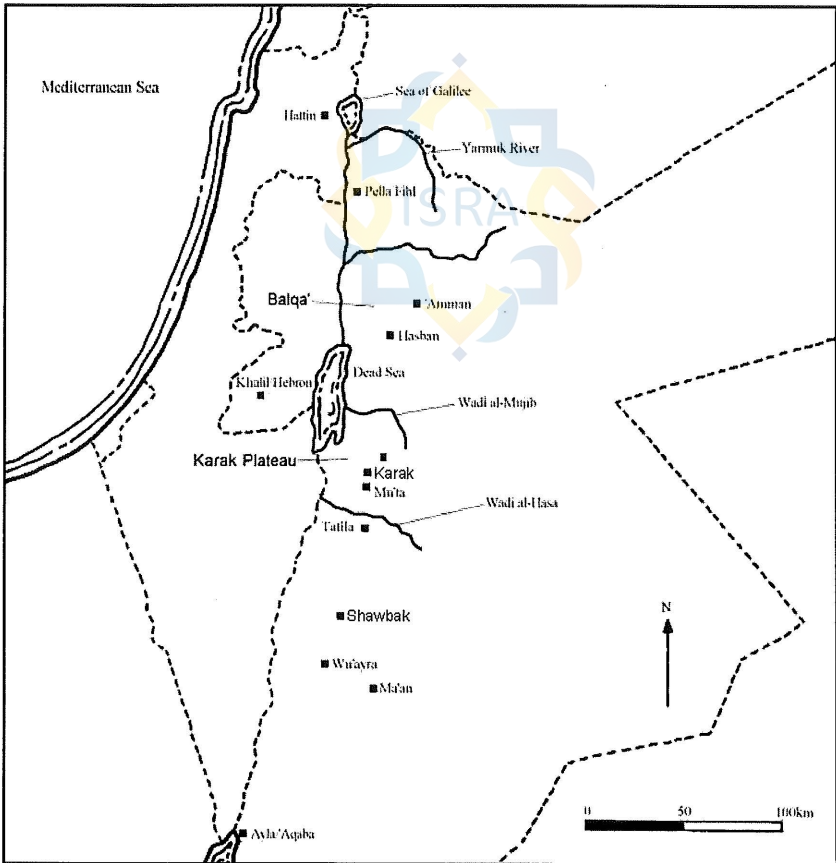


Figure 2: Map showing Karak and Shawbak.<sup>17</sup>

## Geopolitical Realities Outlined in the Will

How could the Will be understood in light of the above? Did the city of IslamicJerusalem mean less to the Ayyūbids than Egypt? The researcher hopes that these questions have been addressed and that the Will of Ayyūb is understood within the following geopolitical realities. First of all, it has become quite clear that a closer examination of the text reveals that Ayyūb stipulated a number of geopolitical measures to guide Tūrānshāh in ruling the Ayyūbid state following his death. The surrender of the city of IslamicJerusalem to the Crusaders would only be the final step if all other preventative measures which Ayyūb had put in place failed. Secondly, the handing over of the city did not reflect its significance or otherwise to the Ayyūbid rulers. This statement is based neither on religion nor economy, rather it is a political statement based on geopolitical players and the strategic forces of that period. It is also vital to note that the measures stipulated by Ayyūb evolved from the extent to which the Ayyūbid state was strong and powerful. Thus it is not absurd that Tūrānshāh did not need to follow these measures because he had the power to prevent the threat of the Crusaders proceeding further.

In short, El-Awaisi argues that Egypt and IslamicJerusalem share a unique geopolitical relationship which can be understood through their national security and hegemony over the region of Egypt and Al-Sham. He argues that “whoever controls IslamicJerusalem needs to be in control of Egypt and Al-Sham”. In other words, both these countries are in critical need to have a stable and secure IslamicJerusalem under their dominance “Without Egypt and Al-Sham, the power in IslamicJerusalem will inevitably be weak ready to collapse” inviting foreign powers to the region. Hence, “IslamicJerusalem acts as the heart, as it lies at the centre of any allegiance between Egypt and Al-Sham” (El-Awaisi 2011, 90)

The Will summarises the strong relationship between Egypt and Al-Sham. Al-Sham acted as a protective back that represented security to Egypt in times of any military defeat there. In short, this section has essentially provided a new insight into and interpretation of the Will of Ayyūb in relation to the city of

IslamicJerusalem. The Will contains clear blueprints of the geopolitical realities of the region, and, the previous two cases can therefore be understood in the context of that document. In other words, the Will explains why the Ayyūbid rulers examined in this dissertation resorted to bargaining over the Holy city of IslamicJerusalem. Claims that the city was not valued by the Ayyūbids are thus irrelevant in this discussion.

## Conclusion

During the period of the Ayyūbid rule, which lasted around seventy years, political and military unrest became the normal scene. The ambivalent attitude of Ayyūbid Sultans towards the city of IslamicJerusalem became in our time interpreted as devaluing to the status of the Holy city in the Muslim faith. This article analysed the foreign policy of the Ayyūbid state in relation to the Crusaders at the time when Ayyūbid Sultans were shaping a legacy of making the city of IslamicJerusalem expendable.

This article explored the geopolitical nature of the city of IslamicJerusalem during the Ayyūbid dynasty throughout periods of political disorder. It also analysed the foreign policy of the Ayyūbid state in relation to the Crusaders at the time when Ayyūbid Sultans were shaping a legacy of making the city of IslamicJerusalem expendable. Methodologically, the research began by aiming to develop a theoretical framework of geopolitics based on Mackinder, Ratzel, and El-Awaisi's theories of geopolitics. Following that, a framework in understanding the geopolitics of IslamicJerusalem was established based on its distinct geography and unique religious and political attachments. The research investigated the foreign policy of the Ayyūbid state, from which implications of geopolitical forces, players, and realities have been derived.

The researcher presented a critical analysis of three important historical cases in the Ayyūbid period which reflected such phenomena. The historical events of 1229, 1243, and 1250 CE were analytically examined from their geopolitical perspective. The researcher was inclined to ask, all through the discussion, whether



the three historical cases of this period were clear examples of Muslim failures towards the Holy city, or was it merely a temporary political accommodation?

Al-Kāmil's handover of the city of IslamicJerusalem in 1229 CE will always bring into question Al-Kāmil's compromised judgement of the situation. However, findings illustrate that the event took shape due to political and strategic pressures. It became apparent that Al-Kāmil did not have the power to maintain the city in the face of a new Crusade nor the power to defend the city from several threats. This led to concluding two prevailing geopolitical realities. Firstly, the city of IslamicJerusalem was an unfortified city, and secondly, Al-Kāmil realised that the city could in future be both guarded and managed from Egypt. In the light of such circumstances and with Al-Kāmil's awareness of the geopolitics of the region and the close relationship between Egypt and Al-Sham, he decided to bargain over the city in order to modify the intricate situation to a more stable one notwithstanding its transient phase. His exceptional awareness of this geopolitical reality allowed him to deal with this complex situation, turning it to a solution in this particular context.

The second example is the handover of the city of IslamicJerusalem by Al-Nāṣir Dāwoud to the Crusaders in return for their help against Al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb. Although it may be characterised as similar to that of Al-Kāmil's handover, it nevertheless encompassed different outcomes. The handover of the city by Dāwoud was a collective effort by the Syrian alliance rather than an individual one. Again this example highlighted the tension and division within the Ayyūbid family. Without hesitation, Dāwoud and Ismā'īl, therefore, offered the city of IslamicJerusalem to the Franks in order to overthrow Ayyūb. Dāwoud's actions can only, as the researcher argues show a failure of his policies. To relinquish the city without either a treaty or conditions reflects the distressed situation that Dāwoud found himself in. The political expediency of handing back the Holy city to the Franks was now becoming a trend in favour of collaboration and co-existence with the Franks.

On the other hand, the statement concerning relinquishing the city of IslamicJerusalem to the Crusaders in the Will of Al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb to his son Tūrānshāh was analysed from its geopolitical context. Ayyūb considered the security of Egypt would maintain the safety of the city of IslamicJerusalem, thus every effort is to be made to keep Egypt secure at all times and at all cost. The Will contains clear blueprints of the geopolitical realities of the region built on strategic measures of national security for the protection of the Ayyūbid state, which included Egypt as the seat and centre of power, and named Karak as a strategic city always needed to protect Egypt. Essentially, this summarises the strong relationship between Egypt and Al-Sham. Al-Sham acted as a protective back that represented security to Egypt in times of any military defeat there. Secondly, in a weak political and military climate, the Muslims might have been forced to surrender the city not because it was insignificant but because of strategic implications. Finally, power was a crucial aspect of this equilibrium and thus became the decisive measure in any outcome in the region.

The Will indirectly explains the reasons why Ayyūbid rulers resorted to bargaining over the city of IslamicJerusalem, by establishing the geopolitical reference of the region. The main statement examined in the Will also clarifies the fact that, although a number of Ayyūbid Sultans did bargain over the city of IslamicJerusalem, they were nonetheless conditionally aiming at its recapture when they had acquired the power needed.

Finally, there is sufficient evidence to argue that Egypt and Al-Sham share parallel measures to a political equilibrium of the region. The remarkable historical links between the two areas show profound similarities in the continual power struggle within the region. During the Ayyūbid period, Egypt's future was directly determined from IslamicJerusalem and vice versa. The city of IslamicJerusalem was also a necessary keystone to any coalition that might happen between Egypt and Al-Sham. It is not surprising to find that the incessant conflict between the Ayyūbids almost always took place between the two areas. The entire empire would thus be at peace when Egypt and Al-Sham were politically united.

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- 1 'Franks' is the Arabic term used in Arab sources referring to the Crusades or Crusaders.
- 2 "Glory to He Whom did take His worshipper, Muhammad, for a journey by night **from** Al-Haram Mosque (at Makkah) **to** Al-Aqsa Mosque (at IslamicJerusalem), which We have **surrounded** with Barakah" (Qur'an, 17:1)
- 3 However, the city had been offered to the Franks on a number of previous occasions as for example in 1221 CE in return for Damietta (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, 95).
- 4 Here referring to the Walls
- 5 "أنا عتيقك و تعلم أي أكبر ملوك الفرنج و أنت كاتبتي بالبحر... فان رجعت خائباً انكسرت حرمتي. و هذه القدس فهى أصل دين النصرانية, و أنتم قد خربتموها و ليس لها طائل. فان رأيت أن تنعم على بقية البلد ليرتفع رأسي بين الملوك وأنا ألتزم بحمل دخلها لك"
- English translation conducted by the researcher.
- 6 The conditions also included that villages from Acre to the city of IslamicJerusalem would be handed to the Crusaders (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, 206; Al-Maqrīzī 1907, 230).
- 7 'Isā destroyed the walls of the city in 1219 CE stating that "if the Crusaders take it and it is well built and secure, we will never be able to regain it again" (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, 32). Necessity demands its destruction (Hillenbrand 2006, 215).
- 8 It refers here to Al-Ṣālīḥ Ayyūb.
- 9 David's Tower was not destroyed by Al-Mu'ẓam 'Isā in 1219 CE when the city walls were destroyed (Ibn Wāṣil 1953, 246).
- 10 The event as described in Arab sources.
- 11 France 2005, 190
- 12 Both writers have used one statement from the Will to support their argument of the 'hard-headed attitude' of the Ayyūbids towards the city of IslamicJerusalem (Hillenbrand 2006, 222).
- 13 Claude Cahen (1909-1991) a French orientalist historian. He specialised in the Muslim sources on the Crusades.
- 14 "وهذا العدو المختول ان عجزت عنه و خرجوا من دمياط و قصدوك و لم يكن لك بهم طاقة و تأخرت عنك النجدة و طلبوا منك الساحل و بيت المقدس و غيرها من الساحل اعطيهم و لا تتوقف على أن لا يكون لهم في الديار المصرية قعر قصبة ..."
- English translation conducted by the researcher.
- 15 Karak lies in the south of modern day Jordan.
- 16 "هذا العدو المختول, لعله و العياذ بالله ان يتقدم الى مصر, تكون ظهره الكرك... فمصر ما لها حصن, و يجتمع عندك العسكر و تتقدم اليهم تردهم عن مصر وان لم يكن لك ظهر مثل الكرك تفرقت عنك المساك..."
- English translation conducted by the researcher.
- 17 Jordan in the Ayyubid Mamluk Periods,  
<http://www.vkrp.org/studies/historical/ayyubid-mamluk-periods/images/vkrp4-1.gif>