

EESA AL-AWWAM - A MARINE COMMANDO HERO OF SALADIN'S ERA***EESA AL-AWWAM UM HERÓI DOS COMANDOS DA MARINHA DA ÉPOCA DE SALADINO***

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Abstract

This research paper deals with one of the marginalized figures of the Ayyubid era (1171 - 1250 A.D.), namely the figure of Eesa al-'Awwam (d.1190 A.D.), who played a role in shaping the events of that era, along with other thousands.

Keywords: Eesa al-Awwam. Saladin. Crusades.**Resumo**

Este artigo de pesquisa aborda uma das figuras marginalizadas da era ayubida (1171–1250 d.C.), a saber, a figura de Eesa al-'Awwam (m. 1190 d.C.), que desempenhou um papel na definição dos acontecimentos daquela época, juntamente com milhares de outras pessoas.

Palavras-chave: Eesa al-Awwam. Saladino. Cruzadas.**1 INTRODUCTION**

The researcher in the aforementioned subject faces some difficulties, including that our information about Eesa al-'Awwam relies primarily on what was mentioned by Baha' al-Din Ibn Shaddad ⁽¹⁾ (d. 1234 A.D.), the military judge and the historian of Saladin's biography, who accompanied him throughout the last six years of his life , in his book "Al-Nawadir al-Sultaniyya wa al-Mahasin al-Yusufiyya," from which the modern references have quoted . Therefore, we must analyse his text that he narrated

¹) **On Baha' al-Din Ibn Shaddad, see:**

Al-Maqrizi, Al-Suluk Li-Ma'rifaht Dowal al-Muluk, edited by: Muhammad Mustafa Ziyada, Cairo ,1934, p. 140.

Gamal Muhammad Salem, Foqahaa al-Sham Fi Muwajahat al-Ghazw al-Salibi,Cairo 2006, pp. 294-295.

Nazir Hassan Saadawi, al-Mu'arrekhoon al -M'aseroon Li Salah al-din, Cairo, 1962, pp. 14-19

Jamal Fawzi Ammar, al-Tareekh Wa al-Mo'arrekhoon Fi Bilad al-Sham Fi Asr al-Horoob al-Salibiyah ,521-600 A.H.,Cairo , 2001 , pp.271-272.

F. Gabrieli, Arab Historiography of the Crusades, trans. E.J. Costello, London, 1969, P.XXIX.

without framing or arbitrariness of rulings of our own side, but rather for the sake of the necessary historical objectivity.

Likewise, the scarcity of information about him in the aforementioned source necessitates an analytical assumption. We should, also, note here that the inclusion of a contemporary figure does not necessarily imply that history revolves around “a single hero”, as he is a product of his era, which witnessed the violent conflict between the worlds of Islam and Christianity in what became known as the Crusades (Croisades, Kreuzzuge), throughout the 12th and 13th centuries A.D.

Indeed, examining the text provided by the aforementioned contemporary historian, in our current research paper, is specially-important, for its analysis and for shedding light on Eesa al-Awwam and his own role.

Ibn Shaddad recounts the following:

"Among the rare and remarkable aspects of this battle was that a Muslim commoner named Eesa, used to enter the city at night with letters and supplies, concealed on his waist, taking the enemy by surprise. He would dive and emerge from the other side of the enemy ships. One night, he tied three bags to his waist, containing a thousand dinars and letters for the army, and swam at sea. He perished, and news of him was delayed. His custom was that when he entered the city, a bird would fly by, signalling his arrival. This time, the bird was delayed, and the people suspected his death.

After a few days, some people were standing on the shore of the sea in the town. Suddenly, the sea had cast up a body of a drowned man, so they examined it and found it was of Eesa al-‘Awwam. They found gold and sealed books and letters on his waist. The gold was an expense for the mujahedeen. Thus, it was seen that no one fulfilled the trust in his life as well as after his death, except for this man. That was happened in the last ten days of Rajab” (2).

²) Al-Nawadir al-Sultaniyya wa al-Mahasin al-Yusufiyya, edited by: Ahmad Ebish... Damascus 2009, p. 237. I would like to commend the excellent scholarly work done by the aforementioned Syrian editor, without denying the pioneering effort made by the late editor Jamal al-Din al-Shayyal.

2 THE THIRD CRUSADE (1189-2292 A.D.) AND THE SIEGE OF ACRE

This text cannot be understood without shedding light on the development of events in the Islamic - Crusader conflict during that stage; Saladin achieved the unity of Muslim front and guided the Muslims to a historic unprecedented victory at the decisive Battle of Hattin on July 4, 1187 A.D. ⁽³⁾, resulting in the collapse of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, the conquest of the Levantine coast, and the fall of the Crusader castles. The Sultan entered Jerusalem with his forces in October 1187 ⁽⁴⁾. These strategic shifts in the region led to the Third Crusade, described as the largest campaign in the 12th century.

The German Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa ⁽⁵⁾ (1152-1190 A.D.), who drowned in the Saleph River, which originated in Asia Minor's Cilicia River, participated in this

³) **On the Battle of Hattin, see:**

Ibn Shaddad, *Al-Nawadir al-Sultaniyya wa al-Mahasin al-Yusufiyya*, edited by Jamal al-Din al-Shayyal, Cairo 1964, pp. 75-79; Al-Imad al-Isfahani, *Al-Fath al-Qusi fi al-Fathh al-Qudsi*, edited by : Muhammad Mahmud Subayh, Cairo 1965, p. 81.

Eracles, I, *Estoire d'Eracle*, Occ., T.I, pp. 68-71.

N. Housely, "Saladin's Triumph Over the Crusader: The Battle of Hattin in, 1187", pp. 104-111.

B. Kedar (ed.) *The Horns of Hattin*, Jerusalem 1992.

D. Nicolle, *Hattin 1187. Saladin's Greatest Victory*, Oxford, 2005.

⁴) **On the liberation of Jerusalem, see:**

Anonymous, *Thail William al-Suri*, edited By : Hassan Habashi, *Silsilat "Tarikh al-Misriyyin"*, Cairo 2002, pp. 106-130.

Ibn al-Atheer, *Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, Beirut ed., n.d., vol. 11, p. 225

Al-Fath al-Bandari, *Sana al-Barq al-Shami*, edited By: Fathia al-Nabrawi, Cairo e, 1979, p. 385

⁵) **On Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa, see:**

Otto of St. Blasion, *The Third Crusade 1183-1196*, From *The Chronicle of Otto of St. Blasion*, in Thatcher, *Source Book of Medieval History*, New York 1902, pp. 529-535.

Otto of Freising, *The Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa*, trans. Charles Christopher Mierow, Toronto 1966.

Tariq Al-Bustani, *al-Ma'rek Bayna al- Muslimeen wa al-Salibiyyin Montho Sokoot Akka Htta Mu'atamar Solh al -Ramla (1191-1192 A.D./ 588-587 A.H.)*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Faculty of Arts, Alexandria University, 2009 A.D., p. (t) of the introduction.

Hamed Zeidan Khanum, *al- Emperator Frederick Barbarossa wa al-Hamla al-Salibiyya al-Thalitha*, Cairo, 1977 A.d.

Efram Eesa Youssef, *al-Hamalat al-Salibiyya Kama Yarweeha al-Moarrekhoon al-Siryani*, translated by : Fakhri al-Abbasi, Beirut, 2010 , p. 223.

Naim Farah, *Tarikh Orobba al-Siyasi fi al-Osoor al-Wusta*, Damascus, 1995 , p. 225.

P. Munz, *Frederick Barbarossa and The Holy Empire* J. R. I.I.,3. 1964. pp. 20-37. Id. *Frederick Barbarossa, A Study in Medieval Politics*, London 1969.

R. Chzan, *Frederick I. Barbarossa, The Third Crusade and The Jews*, Viator VIII, 1977. pp. 83-93.

Crusade, as well as King Philip II Augustus of France ⁽⁶⁾ and King Richard I Lionhearted ⁽⁷⁾ of England (1189-1199 A.D.) with his army and fleet.

One of the aims of this Crusade was to revive the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem and recapture the city of Jerusalem, as well as the Levantine coast, from the Muslims. This coast served as the lifeline for the Crusaders, connecting them to their homeland in Europe. They also sought to recapture Acre ⁽⁸⁾ (the jewel of the Levantine coast, whose port was suitable for year-round berthing), and which they had subdued in 1104 A.D. during the reign of King Baldwin I (1100-1118 A.D.). Many Land and sea trade roads were founded between Acre and other cities of the Levant, especially Damascus, the ancient historical capital, and Alexandria and Marseille ⁽⁹⁾, not to mention its natural and industrial fortifications.

⁶) On Philip Augustus, see:

Guillaume de Nangis, *Les Gestes de des grand Chroniquues de Frans*, R.H. Philip Augustus, Extraits W. H. Hutton, Philip Augustus, New York 1970. G. F., XVII, pp. 346-417.

Fatima al-Shinawi, Philip Augustus, Malek Faransa (1180-1223 A.D), Unpublished PhD, Faculty of Arts - Helwan University, 2003. (Best study in Arabic on its subject).

⁷) On Richard the Heart of Lion, see:

Richard of Devizes, *Crusade of Richard Coeur de Lion*, in : *Chronicles of the Crusades*, London 1908.

Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Crusade of Richard Coeur de Lion*, in: *Chronicles of the Crusades*, London 1908.

Ambroise, *The Crusade of Richard Heart of Lion*, trans. M.H. Hubert, New York 1943.

Benedict of Peterborough, *The Chronicle of the Reigns of Henry II Richard I*, R.S., London 1867, pp. 49.

J. Choffel, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, Paris 1985.

R. Pernoud, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, Paris 1988.

⁸) On Acre, see:

Al-Maqdisi, *Ajhsan al-Takaseem Fi ma'refat al-Aqaleem*, Leiden 1967, pp. 162- 163.

Nasir Khusraw, *Safarnama*, Translated by :Yahya al-Khashab, Cairo 1945, p. 163.

Ibn Jubayr, *Al-Rihla*, Beirut 1980, p. 35,

Ibn Battuta, *Al-Rihla*, Beirut 1962, p. 35,

Benjamin al-Totili, *Al-Rihla*, Abu Dhabi 2002, p. 239.

William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, trans. E.A. Babcock and A. Ckrey, New York 1943, Vol. I, pp. 454-456.

N. Makhoul and C.N. Johns, *Guide to Acre*, Jerusalem 1946.

Jalal Husni Salama, *Acre During the Third Crusade*, Nablus, Palestine 1998,

Ali Sultan Abbas, *The City of Acre Between Occupation and Liberation (497-690 AH / 1104-1291 AD)*, Baghdad, 2008

Marwan Al-Madi, *Acre Through History*, Beirut, 2014;

Abdul Rahman Al-Maghribi, *Acre and Its Region Under Frankish Control*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Faculty of Arts, An-Najah National University, Nablus, Palestine, 1996.

D. Little, *The Fall of Akka in 690/1291, The Muslim Version*, in : *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization in Honour of Professor David Ayalon*, Jerusalem 1986, pp. 159-181.

⁹) On the Siege of Acre during the Third Crusade, see:

Ibn Shaddad, *Al-Nawadir al-Sultaniyya*, pp. 199-297.

S. Lane-Pool, *Saladin and the Fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Kuala Lumpur 2007, pp. 231-275.

Ali Sultan Abbas, *Madinat Akka* , pp. 103-121.

Jalal Husni, *Akka Athnaa al-Hamla al-Salibiyya al-Thalitha*, pp. 103-121.

The Siege of Acre was the most prominent event during the aforementioned Crusade ⁽¹⁰⁾, and it lasted for two years, from August 25, 1189, to July 12, 1191, and not three years as Joshua Prawer ⁽¹¹⁾ thought.

That siege witnessed violent events, and the two sides struggled to keep it in the hands of the Muslims or to bring it down into the hands of the Crusaders. Ernest Barker described the events of that siege as similar to the siege of Troy ⁽¹²⁾ (the present-day Turkish village of Hisarlek), which was immortalized in the poems of the Greek poet Homer in the Iliad and the Odyssey. It is certain that the Battle of the Siege of Acre is considered the longest battle of the Crusades during the 12th and 13th centuries, which indicates its ferocity.

The Muslims, led by Saladin, exerted strenuous efforts to support the valiant city's resistance. Looking at the situation of the Crusader camp surrounding and besieging it, we find that the Crusaders suffered some defeats due to the Muslims burning Crusaders' towers and catapults, as well as the spread of disease and shortages of supplies. However, with the arrival of the kings of France and England, the situation changed in favour of the Crusaders. It should be noted that King Richard I the Lionheart of England arrived at the head of a large force, estimated at tens of thousands, with massive military equipment, which positively impacted the Crusaders' fighting position. They now had the resources to tighten the siege on Acre. As a result of these developments, the Muslim garrison inside was cut off from the Ayyubid camp by land and sea, except through a skilled and adventurous swimmer carrying a letter, verbal message, or money between the two sides ⁽¹³⁾. This demonstrates the importance of military coordination between the two sides during those hard circumstances.

Muhammad Mu'nis Awad, *al-Horoob al-Salibiyya. al-Elaqat Bayn al-Sjarq wa al-Gharb*, Cairo 1999-2000, pp. 232-233; *Tarikh al-Salibiyyat : al-Seraa al-Aalami fi al-Osoor al-Wusta*, Cairo 2010, pp. 254-255.

¹⁰) Jalal Hosni Salama, previous reference, p. 84.

¹¹) J. Prawer, *The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, European Colonialism in the Middle Ages*, London, 1972, p.29

Prof. Majid thought the same , see:

Abd al-Mun'im Majid, *al-Dawla al- Ayyubeyya fi Tarikh Misr al- Islamiyya*, Cairo 1997, pp. 112-114; *Saladin*, Cairo, 1999 , p.141.

¹²) E. Barker, *The Crusades*, London 1949, p. 62.

¹³) Mustafa al-Hayari, *Salah al-Deen .al-Qa'id wa Asroh*, Beirut 1994, p. 401.

Hence, the role of the one known as Eesa al-Awwam ⁽¹⁴⁾ emerged; that human frogman who carried out such tasks, which the Muslims desperately needed, whether those besieged inside the city or those outside it. His role can only be understood through this weapon of information, an integral part of the Ayyubid intelligence activity ⁽¹⁵⁾, which was known for its efficiency. The Ayyubid sultan was responsible for surveying the situation of the besieged garrison of Acre, and that sultan possessed a well-established network of eyes or spies who ensured the transmission of news of the Crusaders as it happened, as acknowledged by modern historians, such as Bernard Hamilton ⁽¹⁶⁾ and others.

3 ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT OF IBN SHADDAD ON EESA AL-AWWAM

In general, several implications can be deduced from the text cited by Baha' Al-Din Ibn Shaddad, the contemporary historian, as an eyewitness, in the following notes:

That historian was explicit when he pointed out that Eesa Al-Awwam was a Muslim- diver, in order to cut off those who imagine him to be a Christian. Therefore, what was stated in the 1963's film titled: "Al-Nasir Salah Al-Din "⁽¹⁷⁾, which was

¹⁴) On Eesa al-Awwam, see:

Ibn Shaddad, *Al-Nawadir al-Sultaniyya wa al-Mahasin al-Yusufiyya*, edited by: Jamal al-Din al-Shayyal, Cairo 1964, pp. 135-136.

al-Maqrizi, *Al-Suluk Li-Ma'rifaht Dowal al-Muluk*, Part 1, p. 131.

Wafa' Muhammad Ali, *Dirasat Fi Tarikh al-Dawla al-Ayyubeyya*, Cairo 1995, p. 63.

Jamal al-Din al-Shayyal, *al-Gasosiyya fi Horoob Bani Ayyub*, a chapter in the book : *Dirasat Fi al-Tarikh al-Islami*, Beirut, 1964, p. 75.

¹⁵) **On Ayyubid Intelligence, see:**

Ibn Shaddad, *Al-Nawadir Al-Sultaniyya*, edited by :Jamal al-Din al-Shayyal, p. 25.

Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij al-Kurub Fi Akhbar Bani Ayyub*, edited by : Jamal al-Din al-Shayyal, Cairo, 1957 A.D. Salah al-Din al-Bahiri, *al-Mukhabarat al-Islamiyya fi Muwajahat al-Salibiyyin*, Journal of the Faculty of Archaeology - Cairo University, Issue (3) 1989, pp. 9 -14.

Salama al-Balawi, *Nozom al-Istekhbarat al-Ayyubiyya fi Asr Salah al-din al-Ayyubi*, Mu'tah Likbohoot wa al-Dirasat, Issue (4) vol.(22) 2007, pp. 11 - p. 36.

B. Hamilton, *The Leper King and his heirs, Baldwin IV and The Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Cambridge 1987, p. 150.

We must not overlook that the conflict between both the Islamic and Crusader sides was, in part, an intelligence conflict.

Regarding this aspect among the Crusaders, see: Muhammad Mu'nis Awad, "Selah al-Maloomat wa dawroho fi Tarikh al-Salibiyyin Khila al-Marhala Min 1095 Ela 1187 A.D.," *Journal of Middle Eastern Research*, Issue (28), March 2011, pp. 11-45.

¹⁶) Ibn Shaddad, *Al-Nawadir al-Sultaniyya*, p. 237.

¹⁷) **Regarding that film, see:**

Mahmoud Qassem, *Mawso'at al-Aflam al-Riwaiyya Fi Misr wa al-Alam al-Arabi*, Cairo 2006, Vol. 2, pp. 93-94.

produced by the Egyptian lady of high movie - production, Asia Dagher, was incorrect when he was portrayed as an Arab Christian, and it would have been better for the screenwriters to consult specialized historians to avoid this error that is always repeated whenever the film is shown at the expense of historical truth. And this came in service of the Arab nationalist movement that witnessed a revival in the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century.

It is likely that Baha' al-Din Ibn Shaddad did not have a personal connection with 'Isa al-'Awwam. Otherwise, he would have written sufficient information about him—more than what he reported—he would have at least mentioned his name, which did not happen. We should also note here that the name "'Eesa al-'Awwam" became known after his death, and after he had passed away. The ease with which it was repeated was a factor in its spread and fame. His death during that incident made it even more common, and it became a name for the city of Acre, whose inhabitants took it upon themselves to spread the news of it, generally, among the people of the whole region.

We should not overlook here the observation of Muslims naming their children after Jesus (in Arabic: Eesa), peace be upon him, in an era that witnessed the conflict between the two religions, Christianity and Islam; this indicates the rarity of historical complexes in the Muslim perspective towards Christianity as a heavenly religion.

The phrase "It was his custom (¹⁸)" refers to his habit of swimming and diving at night and reaching the besieged Muslim garrison in Acre. Thus, it was not his first time, and it is assumed that his habit of doing so made the Muslims rely on him for news of their comrades there. Consequently, he gained particular popularity among his contemporaries, especially the relatives of the besieged, as expected.

It is conceivable that a swimmer like him possessed intimate knowledge of the Mediterranean Sea, especially its eastern part, regarding the best times for sailing and diving, as well as the occurrence of storms. We must understand the vicissitudes of that sea through a living witness to the horrors he encountered on his journey across it (¹⁹). A contemporary eyewitness is the Andalusian traveller Ibn Jubayr (1217 A.D.), who presented us with a vivid picture of the horrors he encountered on his journey through it.

Muhammad Mu'nis Awad, *Salah al-Deen Bayn al-Hakeeka wa al-Ostoor*, Cairo 2008, p. 25, footnote (1).

¹⁸) Ibn Shaddad, the aforementioned source, p. 237.

¹⁹) Ibn Jubayr, *al-Rihla*, Beirut 2007, pp. 223-224.

Eesa al-Awwam relied on carrier pigeons to inform the Muslims who sent him upon his safe arrival in Acre, it was the best means of communication. It is noteworthy that the use of this type of pigeon during the Crusades was initiated by Saladin (1171-1193 A.D.), during the reign of his teacher Nur al-Din Mahmud (1146-1174 A.D.), who used what was known in historical sources as "carrier pigeons" ⁽²⁰⁾. Thus, we can say that the history of that sultan is not written solely through the roles of humans, but also through the use of animals, especially horses, birds such as carrier pigeons, and inanimate objects such as weapons, particularly the famous Damascus sword, catapults, siege engines, and others.

From the context of the events themselves, it is logical to assume that Eesa met his death without being able to reach the garrison of Acre; because if that had happened, he could have delivered money and letters to the besieged garrison. Therefore, we assume his death before reaching to achieve his goal. Consequently, his mission was completely in vain, and he likely did not reach the land of Acre.

Baha' al-Din Ibn Shaddad's account specifies the timeframe; as he sets the incident occurred in the last ten days of Rajab in the year 586 A.H, which corresponds to the period i between August 20-30, 1190 A.D, that is, a year after the beginning of the Crusader siege imposed on Acre, approximately. This indicates that the historian's interest in that incident, and therefore he sought to document it chronologically so that the memory of that naval commando would not be lost to oblivion. This also confirms that the historian was recording events with their specific timely- details immediately, or shortly thereafter, to support their documentation.

The phrase "what befell him destroyed him" ⁽²¹⁾ indicates that the historian—who had close ties to the Ayyubid Sultan—was uncertain about the cause of his death, whether it was due to the high waves or the Crusaders' killing of him, although the first possibility is more likely because his account does not refer to any physical injury to Eesa al-Awwam.

²⁰) **On Carrier pigeons during the reign of Nur al-Din Mahmud, see:**

Ibn al-Atheer, *al-Tarikh al-Baher fi al-Dawla al-Atabikiyya bi al-Mosel* , edited by : Abdul-Qader Tulaymat ,Cairo 1963, p. 151.

Ibn Qadi Shahiya, *al-Kawakib al-Durriya fi al-Sirah al-Nuriyya* , edited by : Mahmud Zayid, Beirut 1971, pp. 38-67.

²¹) Ibn Shaddad, *Al-Nawadir al-Sultaniyya*, p. 237.

One of the major historians states: "The Franks noticed these swimmers and tried to disrupt the Muslims' route in gathering news of the city and eliminate these spies. They set up nets in the sea, so that whenever a swimmer went out, he would fall into them. Some were captured in this way, and others were afraid, and refrained from swimming" (22).

Thus, it is assumed that Eesa al-Awwam swam as far as Acre, but he collided with the aforementioned nets, which caused him to fall into them and prevented him from reaching his final destination. It is conceivable that the Crusaders discovered him at night. However, we cannot be certain of his death, given the aforementioned source's silence on providing the necessary details. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that he did not die by murder, as the text does not indicate this, and it is more likely that he drowned.

It is assumed that Eesa al-Awwam enjoyed good health and a sound physique, so that he could undertake the task of swimming and diving. It is conceivable that his age was between his twenties and forties, and the results were not guaranteed. Otherwise, swimming and diving would have become a difficult matter, especially under the circumstances of the war between Muslims and Crusaders, as it requires a nervous and psychological mobilization through carrying out a daring commando operation at sea surrounded by danger from all sides, and with unguaranteed results.

The phrase "a thousand dinars" indicates Baha' al-Din ibn Shaddad's knowledge of the background of the matter, and he would not have known that amount accurately unless he was connected to the Ayyubid Sultan, especially since he mentioned placing it in three bags. It is noted here that the close connection between that historian and that Sultan gives us this perception.

As for the dinars he referred to, they are the gold dinars minted during the reign of Saladin. It is noteworthy that he retained those minted during the Fatimid era. There are indications that the Ayyubids faced a real crisis in obtaining gold during the events of the conflict with the Crusaders. We must not overlook the fact that gold was being smuggled to Europe at that time.

²²) Jamal al-Din al-Shayyal, *al-Gasosiyya Fi Horoob Bni Ayyub*, within the book : *Dirasat Fi al-Tarikh al-Islami*, p. 75.

It is noted that the dinars which were circulated during Saladin's era , was including the Egyptian Dinar, which was minted in Egypt.

It was made of gold and bore the name of the founder of the Ayyubid dynasty, as well as the Abbasid Caliph al-Nasir li-Din Allah ⁽²³⁾. There were also the Tyrian dinars, which were struck in the city of Tyre, although other dinars were minted in the cities of Acre, Tripoli, and other cities of the Levant. These were also called Tyrian dinars ⁽²⁴⁾. In addition, there were "the military dinars/ Gaysheyya, in Arabic", which were used in the army's treasury to determine the income of the Ayyubid fiefdoms ⁽²⁵⁾. A dinar used by the Crusaders and Byzantines merchants was also found during that era ⁽²⁶⁾.

In fact, we cannot determine the type of dinars that Eesa al-Awwam had. It was assumed that they were "military dinars", given their use within the Ayyubid army, and it is impossible to ascertain this due to the silence of the sources.

We can deduce the qualities of Eesa al-Awwam; he possessed a strong will, accepted the challenge, and was a self-sacrificing warrior against the Crusaders. He also possessed selflessness, integrity, and dedication to the community, not to mention his courage, which is confirmed by the incident itself.

We, also, can deduce some of the qualities of Baha' al-Din ibn Shaddad himself as a historian. He is concerned with the marginalized through his own humanistic character. Thus, the historian of "al-Nawadir "did not aim to contribute to and revolve around the Ayyubid sultan without the ordinary people who were his partners in making his own famous historical glory.

He also enjoyed a refined literary sense, and there is no greater proof of this than his wonderful phrase: "...it was seen that no one fulfilled the trust in his life as well as after his death, except for this man." Nor should we overlook his possession of a storytelling talent within his historical narratives, which is not unexpected from a son of a historical era in which Al-Imad Al-Isfahani, Al-Qadi Al-Fadil, and dozens of prominent poets appeared, as you will find detailed in Yaqut Al-Hamawi's (d. 1228 A.D) Dictionary

²³) Ibn Ba'ra, *Kashf al-Asrar al-Ilmiyya bi-Dar al-Darb al-Misriyya*, edited by: Abd al-Rahman Fahmi, Cairo ,1966, p. 126.

²⁴) Raafat al-Nabrawi, *Al-Maskukat al-Salibiyya fi Misr wa-al-Sham*, Cairo , 1996, p. 30.

Ahmad al-Awtani, *Dimashq fi al-Asr al-Ayyubi*, *Dirasa Siyasiyya Iqtisadiyya Thaqafiyya*, Damascus ,2007, p. 283.

²⁵) Al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-A'sha fi Sina'at al-Insha'*, vol. 3, p. 443.

²⁶) *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 427.

of Writers" *Mu'jam al-Odabaa*" and Al-Imad Al-Isfahani's (d. 1201 A.D) *Pearl of the Palace* " *Khareedat al-Qasr*" , rather than his own literary formation, in a way that reflected necessarily in the style of that judge, historian, and writer.

The phrase: "After a few days, some people were standing on the shore of the sea in the town. Suddenly, the sea had cast up a body of a drowned man “indicates to an interval between the death of Eesa al-Awwam near the goal he sought and his arrival as a lifeless body to the Muslims who were waiting for him. Perhaps this was an evidence of the distance between the two places, and that the sea waves took time to bring him there, not neglecting to note that the sea water, with its salts, was a major factor in the body floating on its surface and reaching his people, unlike if he had been in a river body of water, such as the many rivers in the Levant, such as the Orontes, the Litani, the Zabadani, the Hasbani, the Khabur and others.

Eesa al-Awwam is a part of Saladin's maritime history and his era. Muslim historians – in general – paid attention to his land- history, as it is abundant, and the decisive Battle of Hattin is the best evidence of that. However, the Ayyubid maritime history did not receive the same degree of attention from them, and it is assumed that there were dozens of frogmen in the Ayyubid fleet (²⁷), but they were not highlighted, nor was that particular naval commando, due to the impactful end by which he met his demise. Rather, in my estimation, if al-Awwam had carried out his mission and returned safely, Baha' al-Din Ibn Shaddad would not have narrated his story in that way.

After the death of Isa al-Awwam, who became a martyr, considering his death by drowning, he became a popular hero, as the masses—as expected—repeated his story, and he became like previous popular heroes of the same era, such as al-Fandlawi and al-Halhuli (²⁸), who were martyred in 1148 A.D. during the events of what researchers call

²⁷) **On the Ayyubid fleet, see:**

Ibn Mamati, *Qawanin al-Dawawin*, edited by: Aziz Suryal Atiya, Cairo ,1948, p. 339.

Suad Maher, *Al-Bahriyya fi Misr al-Islamiyya wa-Atharuha al-Baqiya*, Cairo ,1967 , pp. 328-373.

A. Ehrenkreutz, *The Place of Saladin in the Naval History of the Mediterranean Sea in the Middle Ages*, J.A.O.S., 15, 1955, pp. 100-115.

L. Leiser ., *The Crusades Raid in The Red Sea 581-1182-1183*.J.A.R.C.E.,14,1977,pp.87-99.

Ahmed Nashati Al-Aqabawi, *al-Bahariyya al-Islamiyya Fi Misr wa al-Sham Fi al-Asr al- Ayyubi*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Faculty of Arts - Alexandria University, 1979.

²⁸) **On al-Fandalawi and al-Halhuli, see:**

Ibn Asakir, *Tarikh Madinat Dimashk*, edited by: Muhyi al-Din al-Umari, Damascus, 1995 A.D., Vol. 37, p. 342.

Usama Ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-I'tibar*, edited by : Qasim al-Samarrai, Riyadh, 1987, p. 117.

" the Second Crusade" ⁽²⁹⁾ (1147-1149 A.D.). Likewise, the author of "al-Nawadir" could not avoid taking an interest in him, and included him in his history book in a distinctive way, which confirmed that the aforementioned historian was—and rightly so—a very important source about the events of that era, especially during what is known as " the Third Crusade" (1189-1192 A.D.) and the Muslims' Jihad during it under the leadership of Saladin.

In general, the Muslim masses in the era of the Crusades needed a symbolic folk hero, and this was embodied in Eesa al-Awwam. Due to his belonging to the class of common people, his fame spread widely.

There is a noteworthy aspect to consider. Given our lack of information about this incident, we find ourselves unaware of the tidal movements in the eastern Mediterranean at that time, as well as the phase of the moon during the days of that incident specified by Baha' al-Din Ibn Shaddad.

Nevertheless, it is assumed that Eesa al-Awwam benefited from moonlight in swimming and diving to confront the Crusader ships and to reach the Muslim garrison of Acre, especially since we assume that the last ten days of the lunar month provide sufficient moonlight, even if we rule out the possibility of his operation occurring on a new moon day, i.e., when the moon is not visible.

A small point remains, was ignored by Baha' al-Din Ibn Shaddad, and it can be logically deduced; that marine commando used to wear a leather belt around his waist to keep the papers he carried with him in it, thus protecting them from getting wet. The American historian, James Reston Jr., decided that it was a belt made of silk ⁽³⁰⁾. That opinion is illogical and unlikely. It is assumed that this historian was keen to include the incident in its general essence without mentioning small partial details that made him overlook this indication, noting that that leather belt contained a personal bladed weapon for his protection, such as a dagger or the like, because fulfilling the task itself could not bear a weapon lighter than that so as not to hinder his movement through extra weight.

²⁹) Ode of Deul, De Professione Ludovici VII in Orientem, ed. V. Berry, New York ,1948 ,pp.7-143.
Bernard of Clairvaux, The Letters of Clairvaux, Trans. Bruno Scott James, Institute of European Cisterican Studies. Western Michigan University, 1948, p. 274, p. 288.
Philips and Hach(eds.), The Second Crusade, Scope and Consequences, Manchester, 2001.
Abd al-Salam Zaydan,al-Hamla al-Salibiyya al-Thaniya (1147-1149), Master's Thesis, Faculty of Arts - Damascus ,2025.

³⁰)James Reston (al-Ibn), Mukateloon Fi Sabeel Allah, p.237.

It is noteworthy that all these events took place within the Mediterranean Sea during the time of the aforementioned campaign. therefore, Eesa al-Awwam is considered the most famous popular naval hero. As for the Red Sea, we find the outstanding fame of the Ayyubid fleet commander Husam al-Din Lu'lu', who led that fleet against Arnat's(Renauld)naval campaign against the Hijaz ⁽³¹⁾in 1183 A.D, without neglecting other prominent figures in the Ayyubid naval jihad, such as Abd al-Salam al-Maghribi, Badran al-Farsi, Yaqub al-Halabi ⁽³²⁾, and others.

Thus, we find a frogman like Eesa al-Awwam and a naval commander like Husam al-Din Lu'lu'. If we compare between each other, we find that the first was marginalized and merely a small soldier, while the second was a prominent naval commander whose biography is mentioned in the annals. The first died by drowning ,while the second died a natural death, although both agreed that they lived during the 12th century A.D, and that Husam al-Din Lulu lived longer than Eesa al-Awwam.

An important question remains in our discussion of Eesa al-Awwam: Was his action a solitary one, or was there a unit in the Ayyubid fleet whose mission was to swim and dive to the besieged garrison of Acre? It is assumed that Eesa al-Awwam was a member of a group of skilled swimmers and divers who made attempts to contact with the garrison men in besieged Acre. These men were carefully selected and required to be skilled in swimming and diving, physically strong, and capable of acting wisely in any emergency caused by the Crusaders. Logic leads us to assume that their work was done at night, allowing them to use the night as cover for their daring commando marine missions.

In order to connect the past and the present, the people of Palestinian Acre, through the Acre Fishermen's Association, sought to celebrate the memory Eesa al-Awwam and to revive Palestinian national memory. They erected a monument in honour to him recounting his heroism, in order to counter the policy of Hebraization and the imposition of Hebrew names on places of Arabic origin. However, the brutal Israeli

³¹) **On Renaud de Châtillon's campaign against the Hijaz in 1183 AD, see:**

Ernoul, *Chronique d'Ernoul et Bernard le Trésorier*, ed., Mas Latrie, Paris 1971, pp. 69-70.

Al-Fath al-Bandari, *Sana al-Barq al-Shami*, edited by Fathiyya al-Bandari, Cairo, 1979, pp. 212-213.

Abu Shama, *Al-Rawdatayn fi Tarikh al-Dawlatayn*, Cairo, vol. 2, p. 37.

³²) Abu Shama, *Al-Rawdatayn fi Tarikh al-Dawlatayn*, Beirut, n.d., vol. 2, p. 162.

Abd al-Aziz Sayyid al-Ahl, *Ayyam Salah al-Din*, p. 175.

Ahmad Mukhtar al-Ayyadi, *fi Tarikh al-Ayyubiyyin wa al-Mamalik*, Beirut, 1995, p. 62.

occupation authorities issued orders to remove that monument ⁽³³⁾, confirming that even centuries after his death, Eesa al-Awwam continues to cause anxiety for the petty State of Israel, which is a merely nuclear state, from its head to its toe.

4 CONCLUSION

This research paper yielded several results, which can be summarized as follows:

First: Behind the renowned glory of Sultan Saladin stood tens of thousands of soldiers, largely overlooked by historical sources whose authors focused on him, except in rare instances. Therefore, Eesa al-Awwam is considered one of those who participated in that glory.

Second: The naval conflict between Muslims and Crusaders was no less important than the land conflict. Therefore, we must recognize that both forms (land and sea) were two sides of the same coin. It should be noted that the land battles consumed the attention of historians who addressed that period in their writings. Perhaps one of the reasons Muslim historians did not elaborate on the naval conflict was the imbalance of power between the Muslim navy and the Western European navy, particularly the English fleet.

Third: The era of the Crusades during the 12th and 13th centuries A.D. was a fertile ground for the emergence of a number of popular heroes who remained etched in the collective memory of the general Muslim public ⁽³⁴⁾, even though they were originally marginalized or common people, who received little attention from historians, so the history of that era is not written objectively and overlooks popular heroes.

Fourth: The judge and historian Baha' al-Din Ibn Shaddad was distinguished by an abundant human side in his writings, made him give his attention to the common people and the simple folk in a way that distinguished his interesting book, " al-Nawadir al-Sultaniyya wa al-Mahasin al-Yusufiyya" , in a way that indicates the brilliance of Saladin, who chose him , in particular , to be his personal advisor .

Fifth: The texts of historical sources that have reached us from the era of the Crusades always need careful re-reading, in order to elicit new meanings from them again

³³) Vb.arabsgate.com/Showthread-php P.27-506444.

³⁴) **The best specialized study on the common people in the Ayyubid era is:** Shalabi al-Jaidi, Al-Amma fi Misr fi al-Asr al-Ayyubi, Cairo, 2014. It demonstrates remarkable scholarly effort.

and again; for they are rich in their implications and give us the illusion that we have read and got used of them definitely, but with the second and renewed research into them, it is possible to come up with new implications that shed light on new aspects of the era of conflict between Islam and Christianity in the Middle Ages, in what is known as " the Crusades" , especially since, for the first time since the emergence of Islam in the seventh century A.D , we find a universal written - history in that era, as we have historical sources written by different nations and races from the East and the West, and therefore we must always follow them with scholar research, investigation, and rereading , in order to reach a closer approximation of the spirit of that tumultuous era.

This was a presentation about Eesa al-Awwam as a naval commando from the Ayyubid era through the account of " al-Nawadir al-Sultaniyya " .

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