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Zengi and the Muslim Response to the Crusades

The politics of Jihad

Taef El-Azhari



Zengi and the Muslim Response to the Crusades

Zengi gained his legacy as the precursor to Saladin. While Zengi captured Edessa, Saladin would capture Jerusalem, and both leaders fought to establish their own realms. However, Zengi cannot be fully understood without an examination of his other policies and warfare and an appreciation of his Turkmen background, all of which influenced his fight against the Crusades.

Zengi and the Muslim Response to the Crusades: The Politics of Jihad provides a full and rich picture of Zengi's career: his personality and motives; his power and ambition; his background and his foundation of a dynasty and its contribution, along with other dynasties, to a wider, deeper Turkification of the Middle East; his tools and methods; his vision, calamities and achievements; and how he was perceived by his contemporaries and modern scholars. Examining primary Muslim and non-Muslim sources, this book's extensive translations of original source material provide new insight into the complexities of Zengi's rule, and the politics of jihad that he led and orchestrated during the Crusades.

Providing deeper understanding of Islamic history through a close examination of one of its key figures, this book will be a valuable resource for students and scholars interested in Muslim history and the Crusades in general.

Taef El-Azhari is Professor of Islamic and Middle Eastern History at Qatar University.

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To the memories of David Roberts, Professor K. A. Cresswell and my late professor, Clifford Edmund Bosworth. Their great works have inspired and guided generations to love and study the history of the Muslim Middle East.

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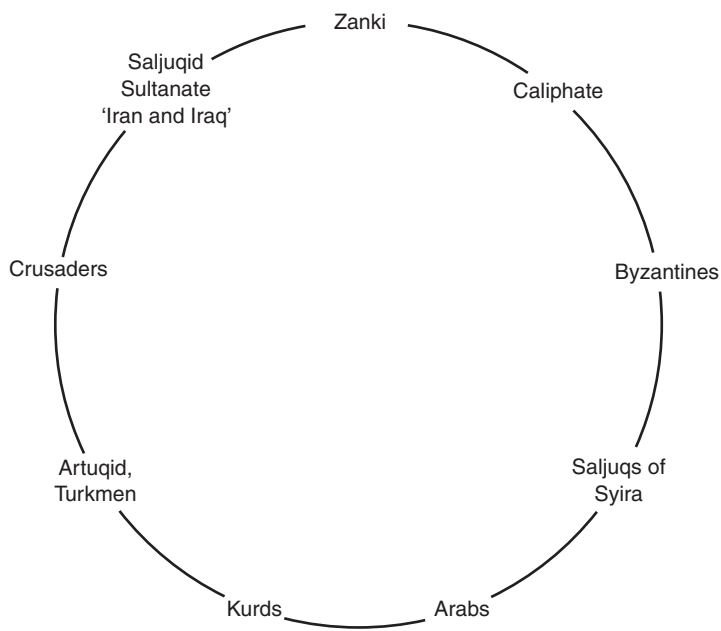


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Series editor note

I am glad to welcome Dr El-Azhari's monograph on Zengi into my series. It is a most useful addition to the somewhat meagre tally of monographs on the Turkish warlords of the twelfth century who opposed the Crusaders.

I am also most grateful to Lel Gillingwater for her excellent and comprehensive copy-editing of the main text of the book.

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Introduction

The victory of Edessa had outshone all victories
By the deeds of Zengi, Islam is awakened
If justice is done, he should be called the caliph
Tomorrow he will invade Jerusalem.¹

These lines were written by the poet Ibn Munir al-Tarabulsi (d. 1153), who was living in Zengid Aleppo when Crusader Edessa was invaded by the Seljuq Turkmen lord 'Imad al-Din Zengi I in 1144. It clearly reflects how pleased he was about the Muslim victory and wished that Crusader Jerusalem would be invaded afterwards. As a historian, one is astonished that in the twenty-first century the legacy and popularity of the history, heritage and culture of the Crusades continues to gain momentum, not only in academia, but also in the media and arts. This has been greatly influenced by the political–military developments in North Africa and the Middle East since 2011.

A large number of ordinary Muslims and intellectuals aspire to emulate the Muslim victories during the age of the Crusades, and some see Western intervention in Middle Eastern countries as a new Crusade.

When I submitted my entries for *The Crusades, An Encyclopedia* in 2005 to my colleague Professor Alan Murray, the editor of this significant work, he kindly suggested to me that I should write a book on Zengi I. I thought there was not much to add, as most of what we knew as researchers about him had already been written. I was mistaken. It is true that Zengi is a very prominent figure in medieval Islamic history; however, the only book written about him was Coskun Alptekin's *The Reign of Zangi 1127–46*, published in Erzurum in 1978. It is based on his Ph.D. from the University of London in 1972. It is a very good work, but it does not cover the age of Zengi in depth. There are also unexplored materials in the sources to be unravelled and examined in order to have a better understanding of the period. If one conducts a quick survey of studies on the subject, one will find few in English.

The leading authority on Seljuq–Turkmen history during the period of the Crusades, Professor Carole Hillenbrand, has written an excellent chapter entitled ““Abominable Acts”: The Career of Zengi” in *The Second Crusade: Scope and consequences*, ed. J. Phillips (New York, 2001). In addition, there is the recent

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Master's thesis by Nicholas Belotto, 'The Career of 'Imad al-Din Zengi, 1085–1146', Florida Atlantic University, December 2014. Although a short thesis, the researcher tries to cover some areas of Zengi's policy but does not understand the age, since he has failed to use *al-Bahir* by Ibn al-Athir, which is dedicated to the Zengid house and a work that no researcher can afford to ignore. Furthermore, the works of Ibn al-'Adim and other Arabic sources are vital to providing a better understanding of the historiography of the age. Belotto relies only on the few sources translated from Arabic into English. The other study which focuses only on Zengi and Edessa is the classical study used by almost all scholars and researchers over the decades, H. A. R. Gibb's 'Zengi and the Fall of Edessa', in *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 1, ed. K. Setton (Pennsylvania, 1958).

There is an article in Turkish, not on Zengi, but on the coins of the Zengid house after his death and how it was influenced by the Greek mint, by Ramazan Uykur, 'Musul Zengi Atabegi II. Seyfeddin Gazi'nin (565–576/1170–1180), Athena Betimli Sikkeleri', in *International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, Vol. 9/10 (autumn 2014), Ankara.

Zengi has not enjoyed a full dedicated study covering his whole life, such as the pioneering one written (in French) by Nikita Elisséeff in 1967 on Zengi's son Nur al-Din; this book attempts to rectify this.

Looking at the Arabic language, one will find a few studies on the Zengid house, which give the impression that they cover 'Imad al-Din Zengi I, but unfortunately most of them cover his descendants and not the man himself; for example, Esam al-Fiqi's unpublished Ph.D. thesis entitled 'al-Haya al-Siyasiyya wa'l-tanzimat al-idariyya wa'l-maliyya fi duwal atabekiyat al-Mosul wa'l-Jazirah' (Cairo University, 1971). It examines the administrative, political and financial system of the Zengid house up until the Mongol invasion of their dominions in 1261 to 1262, but with very limited references to Zengi as the founder.

There is a Master's thesis on Zengi, written by 'Imad Khalil of Baghdad University in 1965, entitled 'Imad al-Din Zengi', which portrays Zengi as a *mujahid*, and interprets and describes almost all of Zengi's deeds as the acts of a just dictator. Hamid Zayyan wrote a Master's thesis entitled 'Halab fi 'asr al-Zanki, 1095–1183' on Aleppo under Zengid rule, which focuses more on Nur al-Din than on his father, and does not question the sources. In 1968 Rashid al-Jumaily of Alexandria University wrote a Master's thesis on the *Atabegate* of Mosul after Zengi.

Moving to non-thesis research, one will find few studies. M. al-Naqib published an article on Zengi and his jihad against the Crusaders in Arabic, in *al-Mawrid*, Vol. 4 (1987), Baghdad. A. al-Ghamidi wrote a similar article in 1993 in *Silsilat al-buhuth al-Dirasat al-Islamiyya*, Mecca. Both studies add very little to pro-Zengi medieval Muslim sources which view Zengi as the champion of Islam in his fight with the Crusaders, and who dare not criticise his pragmatic policies against other Muslim powers and his bloody civil wars against them, both before and after the capture of Edessa. Finally, I. al-Muzaini wrote a book entitled *al-Hayat al-Ilmiyya fi l-'ahd al-Zanki* in 2003, based on his 1990 Ph.D. from Riyadh University. He examines the education system under the Zengids.

He really starts his research after Zengi himself and covers the Zengid dynasty, but one cannot fail to see how he tries to attribute everything to the teaching of Islam and Islamic civilisation, listing *madrasa* and other religious buildings as they are mentioned in the original sources. It is useful as a database more than anything else.

Other than these works, Zengi is studied in general within the framework of the history of the Crusades and Muslim history in studies produced during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. He is Arabised in some studies, or counted as a Muslim lord, without an examination of his Turkmen background.

I aspire in this book to provide a full and rich picture of Zengi's career: his personality and motives; his power and ambition; his background and his foundation of a dynasty and its contribution, along with other dynasties, to a wider, deeper Turkification of the Middle East; his tools and methods; his vision, calamities and achievements; and how he was perceived by his contemporaries and modern scholars.

Zengi gained his legacy as the precursor to Saladin. He captured Edessa, and Saladin captured Jerusalem. Both leaders fought and rebelled against their lords in a very pragmatic fashion to establish their own realms: Zengi against the Seljuq sultan, and Saladin against Zengi's son and grandson in Syria. However, Zengi cannot be fully understood and evaluated without examining his other policies and warfare, which influenced his policy against the Crusaders.

Zengi confronted seven other powers during his twenty years of rule. He waged wars against different Seljuq sultans in Iraq and Iran, Turkmen Artuqid lords in the Jazira, various Kurdish lords in Iraq and the Jazira, a number of Arab lords in Syria and Iraq, the Seljuq Kingdom of Damascus, the Byzantine Empire, the leader of the Sunni Muslims, and the 'Abbasid caliphate. Due to that, he had very complicated relationships with many of these fronts at the same time. In order to understand his ambitious coordination of, and his interaction with, all these fronts, one has to look deeper and examine the uninterrupted Turkmen upbringing of Zengi in Mosul by a chain of governors who made a military genius out of him between 1095 and 1122, when he was allocated his first *iqta'*, or fief, in Iraq at the age of thirty-eight. As early as 1110 he campaigned with the forces of Mosul against Crusader Edessa, and then against Crusader Jerusalem in 1113.

One also has to look at the manipulative political marriages in his career; he married five women at various points, which helped finance some of his military activity or gain political legitimacy. Even Zengi's name and its meaning, which has received no attention from historians, was passed on to two others in his dynasty and was used by the Salghurid Turkmen *atabegate* in Iran.

The book examines the politics of jihad that Zengi led and orchestrated. For example, as soon as he took Aleppo in 1128, he called for jihad against the Crusaders and urged Buri, King of Damascus, to join him. When Buri sent one of his sons with a large force to join Zengi, we see Zengi arrest the Seljuq prince and besiege and capture his city, Hama, in 1129.

In 1138, when the Byzantine emperor invaded Syria and the Crusaders in the Levant allied with him, we see Zengi send an urgent request to the Seljuq sultan

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for military help. When Zengi knew that the sultan had swiftly and unexpectedly provided 20,000 knights to march to Syria, he asked the sultan to withdraw them before they had left Iraq and could form an imminent threat to Zengid dominions.

Why did Edessa come so late in Zengi's career, and why did he never attempt to unite forces, even with other Turkmen Sunni Muslims like himself? He was attacking Damascus for a decade instead of coordinating with the Seljuqs there. In 1138, when the Artuqids of Hisn Kayfa sent Zengi 50,000 horse-mounted warriors led by Qara Arslan to perform jihad against the Crusaders, we see Zengi reject them, wasting an opportunity for Muslim solidarity. Why did he not form a pact with the Turkmen?

After gaining an honorary title (formed of eleven lines) from the 'Abbasid caliph as a result of capturing Edessa in 1144, again we see him wasting an opportunity to become the hero of Islam. Instead of capturing Crusader Tell Bashir, Saruj, Daluk and Sumaysat during the following season, he attacked the Kurdish dominions of the Bashnawiyya tribe in northern Iraq, then moved to besiege Arab Qal'at Ja'bar, which cost him six precious months in 1146, for no clear reason or strategic importance.

Zengi had several opportunities to fight the Crusaders early in his career, but declined to do so, despite his strength and ability. By 1130 he had taken Mosul, Aleppo, Hama and many of the dominions in the Jazira, yet he did not seize the opportunity to confront Bohemond II, Prince of Antioch, and take advantage of the political vacuum that followed his death. In 1134 he sent a message to Crusader Edessa assuring them that he would not attack any of their dominions as he came close to them while fighting local Artuqids and Arab lords in the vicinities. This was because Zengi was over-ambitious and expanded on many fronts at the same time. As a result, his warfare and political engagement in Iraq and the East was always at the top of his agenda, surpassing any other activities in Syria or the Jazira. For example, in 1133 Zengi was fighting the 'Abbasid caliph, while the Seljuqs of Damascus were attacking his central Syrian dominions and King Fulk of Jerusalem was attacking his Aleppan dominions. Due to these multiple activities, confusion has occurred in the sources, both past and present, and one has to carefully distinguish between Zengi's presence during his campaigns, and Zengid campaigns dispatched by him, or started by his presence and completed by one of his commanders.

Zengi played an important role in the Turkification of the Middle East by greatly militarising the administration, as the Seljuqs had done, and it continued in this way to the end of the Mamluks. Although it is widely believed that his *atabegate* was the first to be established with the Seljuqs in 1127, this is not correct – Turkmen Tughtegin of Damascus in 1115 was the first. Yet Zengi paved the way for many *atabegate* to gain de facto independence until the fifteenth century. Although the Seljuqs had introduced the *madrasa* and other religious educational institutions to Iraq and Syria from Khurasan in Iran, one sees Zengi paying attention solely to the military buildings and fortifications. He did not attempt to renovate one single window in a mosque or commission a hospital

in his dominions. Having said that, he created a realm that was stable enough to produce its own after him and to influence other dynasties on a large scale.

The twelfth-century poetry at the start of this Introduction surprisingly still forms part of the mentality and captures the attention of a large population in the Middle East and other parts of the Muslim world. This was boosted with the rise of Islamists to power in Tunisia and Egypt in 2012/13, as well as the invasion of the enigmatic 'Islamic State of Iraq and Syria' (ISIS) of Mosul in June 2014, and the declaration of the caliphate there. The first military brigade formed in Syria against the Assad rule, in 2011, was called Nur al-Din Zengi. Later, in February 2015, a local television station in Aleppo was named Zengi.

Those Islamists, with their different levels of radicalism, agree on two clear issues, the first being that the caliphate has to be revived again, like the golden, early Muslim period, and the second being that they will fight the Crusaders in the West and will perform the duty of jihad – ignoring the fact that there are two kinds of jihad: the 'greater jihad' (the personal struggle of every Muslim to follow the teachings of Allah) and the 'lesser jihad', which is the military one. They draw on or recall historical figures like Zengi, his son Nur al-Din, and Saladin for that reason. Sadly enough, ISIS, which ironically controls almost the same dominions that Zengi governed, with Mosul as its capital (also Zengi's capital), has criminally and systematically destroyed nearly all of the antiquities in Mosul and northern Iraq under its control. ISIS embarked on this destruction as soon as it took Mosul in June 2014 by pulverising the tomb of Ibn al-Athir, the grand Arab Sunni Muslim historian (d. 1233), who gave us not only his meticulous encyclopedic work *al-Kamil*, but also his book on the Zengid dynasty, *al-Bahir*.

If this crime, among others, is carried out on Sunni heritage by those who claim to be Sunni, what does one expect from ISIS against Shi'a Muslims, Christians and other religious groups, which have all suffered killing, rape, ethnic cleansing and the literal enslavement of women? At the same time, the spokesman of ISIS, Shaykh Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, responded angrily in November 2014 to the call of Pope Francis who asked the international community to 'stop the killing'. Al-Adnani said to the pontiff: 'We promise you Crusaders that we will conquer Rome, break your crosses and enslave your women by the permission of Allah.' One has to say that the recall of jihad against 'the Crusaders' saturates the various types of media. Yes, we have computer games for children produced by some Western companies, called 'Crusader Kings', and 'Stronghold: Crusader', among others, which are not totally innocent, yet they remain a game.

It never crossed my mind when I started my research on Middle Eastern history nearly thirty years ago that the heritage and antiquities, which had survived the Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century, would be demolished or stolen by ISIS in the twenty-first century, and that our memory and knowledge of that age would be greatly damaged. One has to recall the words of Michel Foucault in his book *Madness and Civilization*, when he says, 'The religious beliefs prepare a kind of landscape of images, an illusory milieu favorable to every hallucination.'

Overview of selected primary sources

Contemporary and post-contemporary Muslim sources

There are around seven major works written by contemporaries of Zengi, and four others during the following century that are of immense importance to the period. They vary between those who were supporters of Zengi and his critics, depending on their political or ethnic backgrounds. They were from Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Jazira, but nearly all of what they produced was in Arabic.

Usama b. Munqidh (1095–1188), Arab lord of Shayzar in Syria, who wrote the book *al-I'tibar*, was not just a contemporary of Zengi; he was in Zengi's company on a number of occasions, and witnessed with Zengi the Crusader–Byzantine attack on Shayzar. In addition to Usama's rich and contradictory career serving the Fatimids, the Seljuqs and Zengi, he had an amicable relationship with the Crusaders of Antioch and Jerusalem. As a result, one can have an insight into the few but very important materials written by him, which allow us a panoramic picture of the period. Usama may be the only historian and warrior who interacted with Zengi, and went in his company hunting in Mosul, the Jazira and Syria.

Ibn al-Qalanisi (d. 1160) was the chief of the Seljuq *diwan*, or civil administration, in Damascus when Zengi launched his hostile policy against Damascus. Although his book is entitled *Dhail Ta'rikh Dimashq* (Continuation of the Chronicle of Damascus), it covers a wider and deeper history of the Middle East during that period. Ibn al-Qalanisi is a vital historian for researchers when balancing the stories written by the pro-Zengid historian Ibn al-Athir. He was inside Damascus when Zengi besieged the city several times and attacked its dominions in central Syria, and when the Seljuqs there allied with King Fulk of Jerusalem against Zengi. He also provided very illuminating details about the fall of Edessa to Zengi, and the full title bestowed upon Zengi by the 'Abbasid caliph, containing Arabic, Persian and Turkmen words. As a result, Ibn al-Qalanisi surpasses Ibn 'Asakir (d. 1175) of Damascus, who wrote *Tahdhib ta'rikh Dimashq al-kabir*, especially given that the latter was a religious scholar in addition to being a historian, and thus prioritised religious studies. Perhaps when the editing of the work of Ibn 'Asakir, which amounts to eighty volumes, is completed, we may have access to new data on the age.

Regarding the history of the Jazira, one looks to Ibn al-Azraq al-Fariqi (d. 1168), who wrote about his city Mayyafariqin, or modern-day Diyar Bakr, in Anatolia. His book, *Ta'rikh Mayyafariqin wa-Amid*, the only book dedicated to the history of that area, focuses on the political–military relations between diverse Turkmen elements and powers in this geographically and ethnically complex area; Zengi was part of that. What gives his book more value is that Ibn al-Azraq travelled extensively within the area covered in this study and he had a close relationship with the Artuqids. One would also add that he was an official in the administration of Mayyafariqin, and was thus able to collect data for his work in addition to what he saw and heard during his travels.

The book *al-Muntazam fi ta'rikh al-muluk wa'l-umam*, written by Abu al-Faraj b. al-Jawzi of Iraq (d. 1201) is of great importance with regard to Zengi's political and military affairs with the Seljuqs of Iraq and Iran, in addition to his relationship with the 'Abbasid caliphs. Using the details provided by this late contemporary, one has been able to examine the geopolitical influence of the East on Zengi's dominions.

One also looks to the Persian historian 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, and his book *Ta'rikh dawlat al-Seljuq*. This anti-Zengi historian, who was born in Isfahan and died in 1201, criticised the behaviour of some Seljuq sultans but was in general supportive of their state, yet he revealed many unusual details about the sexuality of Zengi and his tyrannical personality towards his commanders and assistants – an opinion shared by non-Muslim sources, including William of Tyre.

Finally, there is the essential poetry of Ibn al-Qaysarani (d. 1153) and Ibn Munir al-Tarabulsi (d. 1153). Both of them lived for many years in Zengid Aleppo, and produced poetry praising their lord, who was portrayed as a champion of jihad for Islam. Yet, it is important to see the reflection of the mood and mentality of some intellectuals of that age within the framework of Islam and the Crusades. Most of their poetry was compiled by the historian Abu Shama (d. 1267).

The post-contemporary works

There are many books written after Zengi's age until to the fifteenth century quoting and adding to earlier influential books, such as the following.

Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali 'Izz al-Din Ibn al-Athir of Mosul (d. 1233): his peerless *al-Kamil fi'l ta'rikh*, or universal history, covers, in huge detail and with great insight, the Muslim history in the East to India and the West to Spain. His other work, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir fi'l dawla al-atabekiyya*, was dedicated to King al-Qahir 'Izz al-Din Mas'ud II b. Arslan Shah of Mosul (r. 1211–18). Although Ibn al-Athir was a post-contemporary and a pro-Zengid historian with semi-fanatic idealism of Zengi, this work is one of the pillars of my study. Ibn al-Athir, through his father who was a high-ranking official in the Zengid realm of Mosul, and through his father's friends and colleagues, managed to write a dynastic history of the Zengid house up until the Mongol invasion. Ibn al-Athir's high level of enthusiasm about Zengi is reflected in his proud and frank writing about his master's deeds, which on many occasions were against Islamic law and were evidence of his pragmatism and disloyalty to his Seljuq sultans. For example, Ibn al-Athir enthuses about the cunning ability of Zengi in contacting and collaborating with the non-Muslim Turkmen in Central Asia, inviting them to attack the eastern dominions of the Seljuq sultanate in order that he could have a free hand in extending his frontiers against fellow Muslims in the west of Iraq and Syria. Furthermore, Ibn al-Athir never criticises Zengi in his writing for fighting the 'Abbasid caliph, or hijacking the caliphate to Mosul. Ibn al-Athir contradicts himself between *al-Kamil* and *al-Bahir* on many occasions, as one will see in this book. He furnishes us with detailed accounts of the geography of Iraq and the Jazira, and also the ethnic tribal elements of the area. That contributes a great

deal to our understanding of the age. Only in *al-Bahir* does he provide details of Zengid economic and social history, as well as precious details of Zengi's personality and biographies of many of his men.

Ibn al-Athir is the only historian in the history of Islam who refused to join or accept any posts such as those of his two brothers, and he dedicated his life to collecting, translating and investigating eyewitness accounts for the purpose of writing his history books.

The second major post-contemporary historian is Kamal al-Din Ibn al-ʿAdim (d. 1261), chief *qadi* of Aleppo, and adviser and ambassador to the Ayyubid Queen of Aleppo from 1263 to 1242. He compiled the huge work *Bughyat al-talab fi ta'rikh Halab*, which has a long biography on Zengi, translated in Appendix 1 (this volume). The same historian summarised his book in *Zubdat al-Halab*. Although the title is about Aleppo, it in fact covers the history of Syria and the Jazira, as well as the confrontation with the Crusaders, in great detail. Ibn al-ʿAdim relied on previous historians and quotes them extensively, such as al-Azimi (d. 1161), most of whose work has been lost apart from the part edited by Cahen. In addition, the work of the Shi'i scholar of Aleppo, Ibn Abi Tayy (d. 1232), enriches significantly the books of Ibn al-ʿAdim. One has to say that, although we consider Ibn al-ʿAdim as a somewhat impartial historian as regards Zengi's deeds, when he discusses events affecting his Ayyubid lords one discovers how his loyalty blinded him to any criticism.

Apart from these two major historians, there is a large group of historians, from Abu Shama (d. 1267) and Ibn Wasil (d. 1297), to al-Qalqashandi (d. 1418) and Ibn Taghribirdi (d. 1470), who were influenced by the works mentioned above, yet have provided their own accounts of history. Regarding all of the sources mentioned here, one has to ask the question of Stephen Humphreys in his work *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* when he writes:

Can we devise any reliable strategies through which the information in these texts can be disengaged from its original matrix and turned to our purposes? Bound as we are to such sources, to what extent can we achieve an independent description of events? Can we in fact escape the role of critic, but are ultimately confined within the boundaries which they have established?
(p. 129)

Contemporary non-Muslim sources

There is one major Latin source, in addition to two Armenian works. There are also Syriac chronicles of the age. William of Tyre (d. 1186/7) was Archbishop of Tyre in the Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem and was entrusted with the responsibility of educating the future King of Jerusalem, Baldwin IV. He wrote *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*. He depended on the early years of the Crusading movement and on the works of Fulcher of Chartres among others, but he was contemporary to Sanguin (Latin for Zengi), and reported on almost all warfare that took place between the two sides. Although William attributes

almost every defeat of the Franks by the Muslims as a punishment from God for their sins, one does not see him criticise the collaboration of King Fulk and the Seljuqs of Damascus against Zengi in 1139, for example. William's work reflects a great deal of understanding of the different Muslim powers and the motives behind their policies.

On the Armenian side there was Matthew of Edessa (d. 1136), although his work on the history of Edessa up until 1162 was continued by others. As a native of Edessa, Matthew was able to narrate a detailed account of the Turkmen side of Zengi and the Seljuqs, their backgrounds, and some of their inner relations, as well as the confrontation between Zengi and the Crusaders. Of course, his description of the attack and capture of Edessa contains the most details about the calamity that affected the city.

The other Armenian contemporary was Nerses of Shnorhali (d. 1166), who lamented the capture of Edessa and reflected the nightmare and pain which the Christians had felt as a result of the Turkish Muslim invasion.

The Syriac chronicles are led by Michael the Syrian (d. 1199) from Malatya in the Jazira. He wrote a very detailed account similar to some Muslim annals, due to his high standard of education and his wide travels in the Middle East. His friendship with Byzantine emperors and Crusader kings enabled him to write an excellent history of the era and area, understanding the political anatomy of the age. He was a fierce enemy of Zengi and saw the Turks as alien to the Middle East. Michael influenced other Syriac chroniclers, such as Ibn al-'Ibri (d. 1286).

One cannot ignore the account of the Spanish Jewish traveller, Benjamin of Tudela (d. 1173). He travelled to Mosul and the Jazira after Zengi's time, in addition to Syria under Zengi's son, Nur al-Din. Yes, his prime interest was the condition of the Jewish communities in the places he visited, but it is useful to have a closer picture of the Jewish minorities and their buildings at that time.

One wishes that this book will be useful to students, researchers, and those who are interested in Muslim history and the Crusades in general.

Note

- 1 Abu Shama, *al-Rawdatayn fi akhbar al-dawlatayn*, vol. 1, Cairo, 1899, p. 39.

1 The early career of Zengi, 1084 to 1127

The Turkmen influence

Al-Bursuqi contacted Zengi, who was then at Basra, to inform him of the situation, and to summon him to march together to Mosul. My father told me some of his companions reported Zengi as saying: 'We are discontented with the conditions and military situation in Basra. Another time, we are fighting and making pacts with Mosul. A third time we regroup at the Jazira. A fourth time we are dispatched to Sham. What is your opinion?' Ibn Begtegin, his closest companion and friend, said: 'Oh our lord, the Turkmen had an old saying: if someone wished to put a stone on his head, it is better to have it from a huge mountain.'¹

These lines were written by the pro-Zengid Arab historian Ibn al-Athir (d. 1233), who is an essential source for the study of the Zengid dynasty, despite his loyalty towards his Mosuli lords. Most modern studies written on Zengid history focus on their leading role in countering the Crusading movement or on the Zengid dynasty after the death of 'Imad al-Din. These include Zayyan's 'Halab fi 'asr al-Zanki', al-Jumaili's *The Atabeg state of Mosul*, Khalil's *Imad al-Din Zanki* and Alptekin's *The Reign of Zangi, 1127–1146*. These studies view Zengi as a true *mujahid* and a just dictator who served the Muslim *umma*. There is scope for further studies to be undertaken on this subject.²

This chapter is concerned with Zengi's early career and upbringing, and his Turkmen background, which had a significant influence on him. Furthermore, it discusses his diverse relations with the 'Abbasid Caliphate and the Seljuqs of Iraq, as well as several Arab, Turkmen, Kurdish and Artuqid lords of Iraq and the Jazira. A re-examination of the medieval sources will hopefully shed light on how and why certain events took place. This will provide historians with a deeper understanding of Islamic history and will challenge certain convictions.

According to Heidemann, Zengi was born in Aleppo in 1087/8, although Christie gives the date as 1084.³ This difference of opinion calls for some discussion here. Ibn al-Athir mentions that, 'When Aq Sunqur was killed, he left one son, Zengi, who was a young boy of about ten years old'. This took place in 1094,⁴ which means that Zengi was born around 1084, some four years earlier than widely believed. Yet, most modern studies have consistently supported Heidemann's view.

Zengi was the only son of Aq Sunqur ('White Falcon'), who ruled Aleppo from 1086 until his murder by Tutush in 1094, during a struggle for the Seljuq sultanate. Zengi's father had enjoyed unusual trust from the sultan Malik Shah (d. 1092), who gave him the unique title, *Qasim al-Dawla* ('partner of the state'). Aq Sunqur was from the Turkmen tribe of Sabyo.⁵ Zengi's grandmother had been a tutor to Malik Shah.

When Malik Shah died in 1092, his brother and lord of Sham, Tutush ('Who held fast'), had the ambition of replacing him as sultan. He swiftly marched to Aleppo and forced Aq Sunqur to march with him, despite the latter's loyalty to Mahmud b. Malik Shah,⁶ who was considered the legitimate candidate to the throne. In 1094, Tutush marched against Barkyaruk for the sultanate. Aq Sunqur sided with Turkmen lords and their support for Barkyaruk led to Tutush's defeat. In May 1094, Tutush confronted Aq Sunqur near Aleppo; Aq Sunqur received military help from several Turkmen lords, including Kerbogha ('Frog'), who were probably sent by Barkyaruk.⁷

Zengi became orphaned when Aq Sunqur was killed in the battle against Tutush. Kerbogha was taken captive and imprisoned in central Syria for several months. Zengi's mother had died earlier in a hunting trip outside Aleppo with his father.⁸

In 1095 Kerbogha was released from prison in Hims and managed to return to Iraq, taking with him the young son of his murdered friend. In the same year Kerbogha managed to seize Mosul and establish a Turkmen principality for himself, with Zengi under his supervision. Kerbogha said to his commanders, 'Zengi is like my nephew, and I am the closest to him to undertake the responsibility of raising him'.

From the evidence implicit in the sources, Kerbogha created a total Turkmen principality based around Zengi. He called upon Aq Sunqur's commanders in his service in Mosul, and asked them to obey Zengi,⁹ in a rare act of sincerity not often evident in Turkmen tribal behaviour. According to Ibn al-Athir, Zengi was not separated from Kerbogha, and he probably undertook his early military training with him during Sultan Barkyaruk's civil war against Sultan Muhammad in 1100 near Rayy in Iran. In addition, Zengi was part of the Mosul army siege against the Artuqids of Amid.

In 1101 Kerbogha died, and the rule of Mosul transferred to Jekirmish, the Turkmen Mamluk, lord of Jazirat b. Umar in northern Iraq. For nearly six years, until his death in 1107, Jekirmish took care of the young Zengi in Mosul, due to the status of his late father in the principality.¹⁰ Arguably, under the care and authority of Jekirmish, Zengi came to understand the jihad against the Crusaders, who had just arrived in the East. In 1104, Jekirmish, together with Artuqids of Mardin, defeated Bohemond, Joscelin, Tancred and Baldwin of Edessa near Harran in the Jazira, inflicting a heavy and humiliating defeat on the Crusaders.¹¹ Zengi, who was twenty years of age, was probably in the service of Jekirmish and fought for the first time against the Crusaders in Harran. This battle had devastating effects on the Crusaders. Joscelin and Baldwin were taken captive and forces in Aleppo had a free hand to attack the

12 *Zengi's early career: Turkmen influence*

principality of Antioch. At this time, Zengi learned first-hand about the Franks and how to confront them.

According to Alptekin, Zengi did not forget the care he received from Jekirmish, and after he became lord of Mosul in 1127 he granted an *iqta'* (Islamic land grant) to Jekirmish's son in return.¹²

The Turkmen influence remained in Mosul, despite the change of its lords, as all of them came from diverse Turkmen tribes and all continued to support Zengi, namely Qilij Arslan and Jawali Saqao, who together ruled Mosul for a short period (1106–8). During this time Zengi was favoured by Jawali, who was drawn to Seljuq Aleppo and wanted to dominate it. However, when Jawali rebelled against Sultan Muhammad (d. 1108), Zengi wisely distanced himself from Mosul for the first time, and deserted his lord for the sake of the Seljuq sultan.¹³

According to Abu Shama, Zengi matured politically and militarily during this time – he was twenty-four years of age by then. Only when the Seljuq sultan Muhammad had allocated the famous Turkmen commander, Mawdud b. al-Tuntakin, the *iqta'* of Mosul, did Zengi return to his city and ask Mawdud to join his service, which the latter welcomed.¹⁴

Why was Zengi so attached to Mosul that he did not join other Turkmen lords in Iran or Asia Minor, or at least in the Jazira, not to mention Aleppo, his home town? One cannot give a clear answer, as the habit of the Turkmen warlords was to join forces with other powers in the area.

It was under Mawdud (d. 1113) that Zengi earned an envious reputation. In 1110, Mawdud of Mosul, together with Zengi and other Turkmen lords of Iran, marched to fight the Crusaders. Zengi took part in the siege of Edessa for forty-five days; then, with his lord, he confronted and defeated Tancred of Antioch and King Baldwin I of Jerusalem (d. 1118) at the Euphrates.¹⁵ Arguably, this campaign aided Zengi later on in his fight against the Franks, by making him familiar with the geography of the area and, in particular, the position of Edessa, the place that marked the beginning and the end of his career.

Edessa appeared again on Zengi's agenda when he marched with his lord, Mawdud, in 1111, upon the Sultan's order for jihad. In July 1111, Mawdud besieged Edessa twice, then Tell Bashir, all without success.¹⁶ According to Gibb and Afaf Sabra, the withdrawal of all Turkmen commanders from the 1111 campaign to Syria, with the exception of Mawdud and his troops, must have added to Zengi's understanding of the nature of the Muslim powers in Sham, as well as the topography of that huge province, which helped him from 1129 onward.¹⁷

In 1113 Zengi participated in the third campaign of Mawdud against the Crusaders. In this campaign, according to the majority of Muslim sources, Zengi displayed rare valour in his fight at the Sinnabra, al-Uqhuwana battle near Tabariyya. In this battle the Mosul–Damascus army unleashed its power and defeated Baldwin I of Jerusalem and, according to William of Tyre, many Muslim Turkmen battalions sacked Palestine, as far west as Jaffa and Acre.¹⁸ It was during this battle that Zengi left his mark on military activity for all the commanders of

the combined armies to see clearly, as well as the Crusaders, who remembered well his rare military reputation. Ibn al-Athir wrote:

Atabeg Zengi, may the blessing of Allah be upon him, had revealed extraordinary and unheard-of courage. He went out marching in a small battalion to confront the Franks at Tabariyya. He attacked them with his companions, believing that his troops were following him. In fact, they retreated and he alone went ahead. The Franks rushed to seek refuge inside the town. Zengi's lance was rested on the gate of the town, and he waited there for his followers to join him in his fight, but they did not. Zengi went back and was praised by everyone for his agility and courage. Such a story was widespread in Syria, especially amongst the Franks.¹⁹

Ibn al-ʿAdim mentions in *Bughyat* that Zengi had entered Damascus in the company of Prince Mawdud, lord of Mosul. He was one of his *khawass* – close companions.²⁰

Mawdud of Mosul was murdered by the Assassins in Damascus shortly after this victory, and Zengi went back to Mosul. Sultan Muhammad had allocated Mosul to al-Bursuqi, who continued to make good use of Zengi's abilities. Here, interestingly, Ibn al-Athir contradicts himself between his writings in *al-Bahir* and *al-Kamil*. In the first, he mentions that Mosul was given by the sultan to Juyush Beg, one of the Turkmen commanders of the sultan, who made him *atabeg* ('military guardian', literally: 'father prince') to his son Masʿud. In *al-Kamil* we are given a totally different story, as the sultan appointed al-Bursuqi to Mosul and ordered him to march for jihad.²¹ The former account, as it stands, is unconvincing, since all the other sources mention that al-Bursuqi was the new lord of Mosul. Our concern here is that the new Turkmen lord continued the increasingly Turkmen culture and administration in Mosul and northern Iraq when Zengi was living close to him.

Zengi took part in al-Bursuqi's campaigns in 1114 in Syria and the Jazira, and they besieged Edessa without success due to Frankish resistance. There, Zengi had seen some nine Muslim troops taken by the Crusaders of Edessa and crucified on the walls of the city. The Mosul army was defeated by the Turkmen Artuqid leader, Il-Ghazi (d. 1122). Despite that, the sources mention the rigidity and military ability of Zengi as a military commander, which added to his reputation in Iraq. He remained in Mosul until 1119,²² in the service of King Masʿud b. Muhammad the Seljuq.

This would be a suitable time to depart from a chronological narrative. In 1118, the grand Seljuq sultan Muhammad died, and he named his eldest son Mahmud as his successor. However, in accordance with the Turkmen tribal tradition, Sanjar, uncle of Mahmud, challenged him for the supreme sultanate and defeated him in 1119 in Iran.²³ As a result, Sanjar became the supreme Seljuq sultan and retired to the eastern parts of the empire, mainly the Khurasan, Khwarazm and Transoxanian areas, while Mahmud became ruler of Iraq, Syria and the Jazira, in addition to the Hijaz.

Mas'ud, the younger brother of Mahmud, did not wait long before he rebelled against his authority, supported not only by various Turkmen and Kurdish leaders, but also by Arab leaders such as Dubays b. Sadaqa of the Mazyad tribe of the Hilla area of Iraq. This took place in 1120 following a period of relative calm in Mosul (there is little coverage of this in the sources).²⁴ During this turbulent time, Zengi departed from Mosul, leaving the service of Juyush Beg and declaring his absolute loyalty to Mahmud, not Mas'ud; this was reported to the sultan, who was very pleased with such strength of loyalty. In the summer of 1120 al-Bursuqi, a commander of Mahmud, defeated Mas'ud in Azerbaijan, and Zengi, who was involved in the victory, went with his lord al-Bursuqi to meet Sultan Mahmud. In 1121, al-Bursuqi became lord of Mosul, the Jazira, Sanjar, Nasibin and other areas of southern Azerbaijan and eastern Anatolia. What is more important is that at the age of thirty-seven, Sultan Mahmud ordered al-Bursuqi to take good care of Zengi and to follow his advice, placing him in an advanced rank.²⁵ This is clear evidence of the indisputable confidence and admiration that Zengi had earned during this civil war and his commandership in Mosul in general.

Most probably upon the sultan's order to al-Bursuqi, in 1122 Zengi was given the *iqta'* of the city of Wasit in central Iraq, in addition to the post of *shihna* (commander of police) of Basra in the south.²⁶ Needless to say, such promotion was due not only to Zengi's loyalty, but also to his excellent leadership. One should also add that his first *iqta'* was in an area mostly populated by Arabs, not Turkmen, where he would command as a prefect of the police in a strategic economic, political and Shi'ite city under Sunni administration.

In the same year, the 'Abbasid Caliphate, represented by al-Mustarshid (d. 1135), experienced a strained relationship with Dubays and his Turkmen pact, as a result of their looting in central Iraq. Al-Bursuqi was installed as *shihna* of Iraq and Baghdad.²⁷ Here it is necessary to examine carefully how he could be prefect of a city police force and a country, and why he was not given the title of *wali* or emir instead. One may assume that Iraq, according to al-Hamawi and Abu'l Fida, did not extend from Mosul to Basra, but rather covered the central and southern areas of today's Iraq, especially considering that none of these famous geographers mentions modern northern Iraq – what is referred to as *Iraq al-Arab wa Iraq al-Ajam* – in their writings.²⁸ As a result, al-Bursuqi's authority was confined to a smaller area than widely believed by scholars which, as will be seen, reflected on Zengi. In the summer of 1122, al-Bursuqi, the new *shihna*, was defeated by Dubays and his Turkmen followers, mainly the Artuqids. The caliph al-Mustarshid, clearly not appeased by such an outcome, with Baghdad under threat, called for jihad, not against the Byzantines or the Crusaders, but against the Dubays pact.²⁹ The emirs who were called by al-Mustarshid included Zengi, under the authority of al-Bursuqi. Zengi was based in Wasit and his city came under attack from Dubays.

In March 1123 near Hilla, the caliph, wearing the mantle of the Prophet, and all his emirs in his company, marched against Dubays. Al-Bursuqi organised the caliph's army, making Zengi the leader of the right wing due to his military

capability. Such was his success that he managed to turn the primary victory over Dubays into a final victory for the caliph and al-Bursuqi.³⁰

During the same period, Syria, which was also under Turkmen Artuqid rule, was suffering not only from war between the sons of Il-Ghazi, who had died in 1122, and his nephew Balak (d. 1124), but also between Balak and the Crusaders. The latter war resulted in a humiliating defeat for the Crusaders when Joscelin, lord of Edessa, was captured by Balak near Saruj, and nearly six months later, in April 1123, Balak captured Baldwin II, King of Jerusalem and regent of Edessa and Antioch. How did the Muslim leadership, represented here by the caliph and sultan, drown in minor affairs and how were they unable to control the Turkmen of Syria and al-Jazira who were also under their authority? A comparison between Il-Ghazi, Balak, Zengi and Tughtegin would illuminate many aspects of this period of history.

Zengi retired to Basra after the battle, to discover that his lord had been relieved of the post of *shihna* of Baghdad to Yarankash by Sultan Mahmud, who had commissioned al-Bursuqi to return to Mosul and march for jihad against the Franks in 1124.³¹

Al-Bursuqi called Zengi in Basra to march to Mosul in preparation for jihad. Zengi revealed his discomfort with his lord's order, and collected his commanders, saying:

We are discontented with the conditions and military situation in Basra. Another time, we are fighting and making pacts with Mosul. A third time, we regroup at the Jazira. A fourth time, we are dispatched to Sham. What is your opinion? Ibn Begtegin, his closest companion and friend, had said: 'Oh our lord, the Turkmen had an old saying: if someone wished to put a stone on his head, it is better to have it from a huge mountain.'³²

However, although this vision of Zengi reflects the disorder under which the Turkmen powers lived, he was lured to higher posts under the Seljuqs. As a result, Zengi turned down his lord's order and headed directly to Isfahan to take refuge at the sultan's court. There he was badly received by the court officials, and afterwards Sultan Mahmud summoned him to play polo with him. Publicly the sultan blamed his officials, staff and commanders for mistreating Zengi upon his arrival, shamefully ignoring his and his father's previous status in the state. He also told them that he had deliberately ignored Zengi initially to see how his courtiers would behave. As a reward, the sultan allowed Zengi to marry the wealthy widow of Emir Kindaghdi, one of the grand emirs of the sultan.³³ What is interesting here is not only the exceptional welcome of Zengi by the sultan, but also why he ignored Zengi's rebellion against his lord al-Bursuqi in Mosul and avoided his call for jihad. The sources mention that the new wife of Zengi 'spent on him what only sultans have the capacity to spend'.

That was not all. We also find Sultan Mahmud allocating Zengi the *iqta'* of Basra in 1125 after news reached him of many Arab tribes looting the area. The sultan probably wanted to take advantage of Zengi's previous experience before

as *shihna*. Furthermore, the sultan ordered Zengi to be his eyes against the challenges of Caliph al-Mustarshid, who was seeking to restore Iraq under his direct authority. Zengi had a clear order to confront the caliph over Iraq.³⁴ Thus, Zengi, who had defended the 'Abbasid caliph the previous year, was now to fight against him upon the orders of the sultan, and he welcomed this in a fashion of realpolitik. As a consequence, Zengi had two *iqta'* – Wasit first, then Basra.

The newly appointed *shihna* of Baghdad, as mentioned earlier, quarrelled increasingly with the caliph, who became more confident in his growing military ability, and the mounting support for him from different Arab and Kurdish tribes. Such news alerted the sultan, who went from Iran to try to contain the caliph and keep Baghdad under his authority, despite the famine and economic crisis from which central Iraq was suffering.³⁵

Caliph al-Mustarshid tried through all possible means to persuade the sultan not to march on Baghdad, but in vain. The caliph left the eastern bank of Baghdad with all his harem and relatives and headed towards the western side. Then, in a hopeless attempt, the caliph dispatched an army led by a eunuch named Afif. Zengi headed swiftly from Basra to his other *iqta'*, Wasit in the northwest, and sent an envoy to Afif, advising him to withdraw to Baghdad, on the strength of an old friendship between the two men. The commander of the caliph's army turned down Zengi's request, and the two armies engaged in battle in which Zengi devastated Afif's army; however, he allowed Afif to escape.³⁶

Zengi became a direct threat to Caliph al-Mustarshid in Baghdad. Zengi besieged and defeated him in 1126 and the institution of the caliphate was placed under tremendous pressure, a situation similar to the entry of Muizz al-Dawla Ahmad the Buwayhid (d. 949) into Baghdad some 150 years earlier. Al-Mustarshid gathered all the ships and boats under his command in order to prevent hostile forces reaching him in Baghdad, mainly from the eastern side of the city.³⁷

By January 1126, the caliph was under siege from the sultanate army and Zengi in the south. The forces of the sultan managed to build several bridges to the caliph's palace and looted it. The caliph, with some 30,000 fighters of non-regular troops from among the locals of Baghdad, managed to cross to the eastern side of Baghdad, causing some alarm to the sultan. At once, Sultan Mahmud summoned Zengi for help and asked him to attend in person with his forces, accompanied by a naval fleet.³⁸ There is no doubt as to the high esteem in which Zengi was held, as shown by the sultan asking him for assistance to the exclusion of other commanders. Despite his early years both in Wasit and Basra, Zengi's military genius made him capable of amassing all military and fishing boats in southern Iraq – some were even carried using camels – in addition to the thousands of Turkmen troops under his command. He made his way from south to central Iraq in a short space of time. The view of a huge fleet in the Tigris, accompanied by a colossal army on the eastern bank, was much admired by the sultan, who marched to meet Zengi in person. As a result, the sultan was eager to continue the fight, especially now that he had the service of a Kurdish commander, Abu'l-Haija of Erbil, who had deserted the caliph's camp. Due to

Zengi's military presence, the caliph surrendered to the sultan, most probably a few weeks after the siege, and Baghdad was restored to the sultan, who humiliated and abused the caliph.³⁹

The excellent skills of Zengi greatly impressed the sultan. In May 1126 the sultan wanted to depart from Baghdad to his capital Isfahan. In the meantime, he could not trust the rebellious caliph who might revolt again. Therefore, the sultan summoned his advisers, commanders and courtiers for one reason. Who should be the *shihna* of Baghdad? They replied unanimously that no one would be capable of such a task but Zengi. Zengi was appointed in May 1126 as *shihna* of Baghdad and Iraq with all executive powers – *fawwada ilayhi* – in addition to the previous *iqta* 'he already governed'.⁴⁰

As argued earlier, the term '*shihna* of Iraq' is in all respects deceptive, and scholars have not examined why Zengi was not appointed emir, *naib* or *wali* of Iraq, or why Baghdad and Iraq seemed synonymous and always mentioned together. It is possible that *shihna*, the Turkmen military post of commander of police, was equivalent to governor of Iraq, with full powers over the whole area except northern Iraq and the upper Euphrates region (mainly Mosul and its surroundings).

Later the same year, al-Bursuqi of Mosul was murdered by the Assassins. His mamluk, Jawali, became *atabeg* for his son Mas'ud, and he sent to sultan Mahmud for the official diploma of the appointment of Mas'ud, replacing his father. A few months later, under mysterious circumstances, Mas'ud died and Jawali installed his younger brother, while he sent to the sultan for a new diploma.⁴¹ The envoys, which were sent from Mosul to Isfahan, were Qadi 'Ali al-Shahrazuri and Hajib Salah al-Din Amir, of the late al-Bursuqi. They were both on bad terms with Jawali, who seemed to monopolise power in Mosul and to marginalise them. The two men convinced the courtiers of the sultan that in this critical situation the only suitable candidate for the post was Zengi.⁴² It appears that they offered a large bribe in order to get the sultanate diploma for Zengi.

The Mosul envoys convinced Anu Shurwan, the vizier of the sultan, that the state of Mosul was fragile because al-Bursuqi had struggled to confront the Crusaders who were in control from Mardin in the Jazira to Arish in Egypt to the south. In addition, their raids were reaching as far as Diyar Bakr, as well as attacks on Raqqa and the frequent looting of Aleppo and Damascus, which disturbed commercial activities in this region. Thus, Mosul was in desperate need of strong leadership to protect and defend it, and to defend the Muslims.

Finally, the vizier recommended the proposal to the sultan, who received a huge sum of money for his treasury, and soon issued a diploma installing Zengi as emir of Mosul and its dominions in the autumn of 1127.⁴³ There is a strong suggestion that Zengi's previous service and clear loyalty to the sultan, even against the caliph of all Muslims, had paid off. In addition, Zengi, as Ibn al-'Adim describes him, was '*jabbaran aziman*', a giant oppressor, of the calibre needed to govern Mosul. Such a resilient person was honoured by becoming *atabeg* to the sultan's son Alp Arslan, to raise him according to the Turkmen

tradition.⁴⁴ One may argue that in addition to the military and administrative skills Zengi enjoyed, he possessed diplomatic skills that enabled him to infiltrate the sultanate court.

Nicholson's opinion about the investiture of Zengi to rule over all Syria and the adjacent dominions is not valid; nor, to the best of my knowledge, is it supported by medieval sources. Indeed, Ibn al-Athir in *al-Bahir*, and *al-Kamil* and Ibn Wasil both state that Zengi was only invested with Mosul and its dominions – *amaliha*.⁴⁵ Even Mosul did not surrender peacefully to Zengi, let alone others' dominions. Ibn al-ʿAdim mentions that only in 1129, when Zengi travelled to Iran, do we hear of the diploma relating to the entire West (*al-gharb kulluhu*). Even that term is not clear, especially considering that Tughtegin of Damascus had a sultanate diploma in 1115 for Damascus, and central Syria for himself and his dynasty after him.

When Zengi left his post as *shihna* in Baghdad to assume his new *atabegate* of Mosul in 1127, he knew about Jawali's opposition to him. Zengi captured the town of Bawazij, near Tikrit, in order to guard his back in his confrontation with Jawali. Despite the military preparations made to fight Zengi, Jawali feared confrontation and thus surrendered Mosul. Zengi took up his new post and installed Jawali as his deputy at Rahba on the Euphrates.⁴⁶ The opposition to Zengi in the Mosul area did not end here; although he enjoyed the sultan's support, he had to earn his dominions by force. Jazirat b. ʿUmar witnessed a very fierce siege and fight, where a river fleet was used by Zengi to capture the city from the rebellious deputies of al-Bursuqi. In the Jazira, the conditions were no different; Artuqid Turkmen in Nasibin, under Timurtash (son of Il-Ghazi), asked for help from other relatives in the area. Timurtash went to his cousin Daʿud of Hisn Kayfa in the Jazira to urge him to form a pact against Zengi. When Timurtash secured such help, he sent several messages by pigeon to his city, Nasibin, asking the forces there to continue their resistance, as military aid was on its way.⁴⁷ The messages, however, were discovered by Zengi's camp, who probably shot one of the birds, and they masterfully changed the words, informing the locals and deputy of Nasibin that the military assistance would take much longer than they could withstand the siege. As a result, Zengi captured the city and granted the locals security for themselves and their properties. As Ibn al-Athir points out, Zengi's supreme goal was to capture Aleppo and the Jazira. We find him contacting Joscelin, lord of Edessa, offering to hold a truce with him after capturing Harran, which was in his vicinity, in order to concentrate on his master plan.⁴⁸

This *modus vivendi* with the Franks was a *realpolitik* move by Zengi, who could not fight several Turkmen lords in the area and, at the same time, confront the Crusaders. This leads us to further question the real value of the sultanate diploma, since Zengi had to fight to implement the sultan's mandate.

With his eyes on the primary target Zengi marched to capture Aleppo, a city, which by all accounts, had descended into chaos following the murder of al-Bursuqi, and had not had a long-lasting political leadership for a decade. Masʿud, his son, had installed Emir Quman as his deputy there, then replaced him with Emir Khutlugh in 1126.

Khutlugh marched to assume his post in Aleppo, to find Quman refusing to implement such a mandate, accusing Khutlugh of forging the decree.⁴⁹ During the summer of 1127 Khutlugh returned to Mas'ud at Rahba to discover that he had suddenly died. Swiftly, he returned to capture Aleppo in June 1127, with help from the leader of the *ahdath* of the city, Ibn Badi, who was in conflict with Quman.

The inadequate policies of Khutlugh in Aleppo resulted in the locals and nobles helping Sulayman the Artuqid, who was living in the city, to resume power in October 1127.⁵⁰ At this time, Joscelin of Edessa and later Bohemond II of Antioch tried to take advantage of the situation by attacking Aleppo and besieging the city for a few weeks leading up to December 1127, aided by Hassan, lord of Minbaj. Thus, we find Zengi sending his leading military commanders, Sunqur Deraz and Hasan Qaraqush, and a large army to take over Aleppo, and to protect it from inner disorder and external threats.⁵¹

In this regard, we find confusion raised by Ibn al-Athir concerning the real authority invested in Zengi by the sultan. He mentions that the two emirs, Deraz and Qaraqush, brought with them the sultanate diploma given to Zengi for Mosul, the Jazira and Sham (the last province was not mentioned previously by the writer).⁵² One believes that the biased historian, Ibn al-Athir, writes of the events of 1129 occurring as early as 1127 in order to add to the glory of Zengi. Ibn al-'Adim mentions it only in 1129, when Zengi travelled to the sultan in Iran, where he was given the diploma to rule all western provinces – *al-gharb kulluhu* – as mentioned above.



Figure 1.1 Aleppo Citadel: headquarters of Zengi's rule in Syria.

Zengi sent his *hajib*, al-Yaghsiyani, to be his deputy in Aleppo, while he marched as part of a large force to capture Minbij. Zengi entered Aleppo in June 1128 and was greeted by the locals of the city. He restored law and order in the area and distributed different *iqta'* to his commanders and assistants.⁵³

The remaining question concerns the ability of Zengi to mobilise such enormous armies in under two years – from his appointment in Baghdad as *shihna* to controlling Mosul, the Jazira and then Aleppo. In other words, how could he achieve these targets with the relatively limited resources of Mosul at his disposal?

The definition of Zengi

Despite the large number of books written about the history of the Crusades, and covering Zengid history, none has attempted to explain the literal meaning of his name. Even the articles on Zengi by Heidemann, in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, and Christie, in *Crusades, An Encyclopedia*, do not do so. Alptekin's book on Zengi is no exception. Most, if not all researchers and scholars, including myself, depend on Bosworth's *The Islamic Dynasties* (1967) and *The New Islamic Dynasties* (2004). In addition, we have the pioneering works: Lane-Poole's *The Mohammadan Dynasties* (1894) and de Zambaur's *Manuel de généalogie et de chronologie pour l'histoire de l'Islam* (1927). All of these works refer to Zengi as Zangi, and his dynasty, which continued after him to the mid-thirteenth century, as the Zangids. However, all contemporary Muslim sources refer to Zanki, spelt with the Arabic and Persian *kaf* (ك). Given that the Turkish language was only written for the first time in the mid-eleventh century, by Mahmud al-Kashghari in Eastern Turkestan (Western China today), we have no Turkish sources covering the period to unravel this problem.

Bosworth states in *The New Islamic Dynasties* that the origin of the name Zangi is unclear, although a possible meaning was 'black African', relating to his swarthy complexion. However, this would be unusual for a Turk.⁵⁴ Indeed, the coins minted under the Zengid dynasty (for example, the copper fils and the dirham struck in Mosul by Mawdud b. Zengi (d. 1170), use an Arabic-Persian *kaf* and not *gim* (ج) as pronounced in Iraqi or Persian dialect, or *jim* (ج), also pronounced by these two dialects.⁵⁵

If Zengi means 'negro', because he had black skin, why was the same name given to Zengi II (d. 1183) and Zengi III (d. 1233)? There is also Zengi b. Jekirmish, lord of Mosul, 1106 to 1108, and the Salghurids had a king named Muzaffar al-Din Zengi (1161–75). In addition, it could not have been a matter of colour, since his father was named Aq Sunqur ('White Falcon'). It would have been more suitable to name him Qara for 'black', following the Turkmen tradition, like Qara Qoyunlu, or 'black sheep'. In addition, Kamur, 'black', was used for such meaning. Moreover, 'black African' would be pronounced Zanj, Zangi or Zenci, according to the Ottoman form, not with a *kaf*. There was also the famous African slave revolt against the 'Abbasids in the mid-ninth century in southern Iraq, written as Zanj.⁵⁶ One should not forget that Ibn al-Athir describes Zengi as brown, not black.⁵⁷

Finally, in terms of the Persian language, which the Seljuqs, among many other Turkmen, were heavily influenced by, there are two possible interpretations of the name. Zengi meant 'rays', and also 'to cut through', which signified courage and ingenuity.⁵⁸ The latter meanings were the closest to the nomadic Turkmen mentality and traditions that often used names associated with nature, or descriptions revolving around military ability. Finally, the title '*Imad al-Din*' is Arabic-Persian for 'pillar of religion', while *al-Shahid* is Arabic for 'martyr'. The sources do not mention when or who conferred on him the honorific title '*Imad al-Din*', but such an honour is usually given only by sultans and caliphs; this probably occurred following his capture of Edessa in 1144. As for *al-Shahid*, this title was given to him by the Zengid historian Ibn al-Athir (d. 1233). The only dated title we have is *atabeg*, which is Turkmen for 'father-prince', bestowed on him in 1127 when, as mentioned above, he was allocated Mosul, and given Prince Alp Arslan ('Hero Lion'), son of Sultan Mahmud, to raise. This period was the beginning of Zengi's long career against the Crusaders, the caliphate and the diverse Turkmen powers in the Middle East, which are discussed in the following chapters.

In this chapter we have explored the early years of Zengi, from his father's death in 1094, and the different Turkmen lords of Mosul who cared for him, such as Kerbogha, Mawdud and al-Bursuqi. However, although one cannot totally understand this sympathy that was shown to him in memory of his father Aq Suncur, we see evidence that human nature and pragmatism always take over, even between brothers or between brothers and uncles, as, for example, the civil wars following Malik Shah's death in 1092 between his brothers and sons. It was also noted that Zengi was born a few years earlier than widely believed.

In addition, the Turkmen military and political context in which Zengi grew up in Mosul left its mark and made him an unequalled commander. He participated in different campaigns in the Jazira and Syria against the Crusaders, with either Jekermish or Mawdud, and in the siege of Edessa on several occasions; he also proved his jihad calibre in 1113 in Tabariyya. Zengi's successful involvement in the civil war that followed the death of Sultan Muhammad in 1118 earned him a distinguished reputation, especially against Dubays. As a result, Zengi assumed his first post in 1122 in Wasit, then a second in Basra.

Importantly, Zengi did not attach himself to any religious bonds or influence. He opposed the caliph al-Mustarshid in 1125, following a clash with the Seljuq sultan – the same Zengi who defended the caliphate a few years later in realpolitik fashion. The post of *shihna* of Baghdad and Iraq, which was first granted to al-Bursuqi, lord of Zengi, and then passed to Zengi, has also been discussed. Between 1126 and 1128, Zengi made a leap forward in his career, becoming ruler of Iraq, guarding Sultan Mahmud's interests against the caliph, and then assuming his *atabegate* in Mosul, with the duty of raising a royal emir. Between 1127 and 1128, using great agility, he had to force his way into northern Iraq, the Jazira and then Aleppo, commanding a large number of Turkmen forces working under his authority either for the short or long term. In addition, his infiltration into the sultanate court reflected the cunning of a Turkmen commander who had nothing other than his father's reputation and his own skills.

Notes

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- 2 H. Zayyan, 'Halab fi 'asr al-Zanki, 1095–1183', unpublished M.Ph., Cairo University, 1970; R. al-Jumaili, *Dawlat al-Atabeka fi'l Mosul*, Beirut, 1970; I. Khalil, *Zanki*, published M.Ph., Beirut, 2002; C. Alptekin, *The Reign of Zangi, 1127–1146*, Ph.D., University of London, Erzurum, 1978.
- 3 S. Heidemann, art., *EI2*, 'Zangi'; N. Christie, 'Zangi', *Encyclopedia of the Crusades*, ed. A. Murray, Santa Barbara, 2006.
- 4 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 27.
- 5 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil fi'l-ta'rikh*, vol. 10, Beirut, 1979, p. 162; A. Sevim, *Suriyya ve Filastin Seljuklulari tarihi*, Ankara, 1983, p. 70.
- 6 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, ed. S. al-Dahan, Damascus, 1954, p. 106.
- 7 Ibid., p. 110; C. E. Bosworth, 'The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World', in *Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 5, ed. J. Boyle, 1968, p. 79.
- 8 T. Al-'Azimi, 'La Chronique Abrégée d'al-'Azimi', in *Journal Asiatique*, ed. C. Cahen, 1938, p. 367.
- 9 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 155; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij al-kurub*, vol. 1, ed. J. al-Shayyal, Cairo, 1953–7, p. 28.
- 10 R. Jumaili, *Dawlat al-Atabeka fi'l-Mosul*, Beirut, 1970, p. 37. Jekirmish also had a son named Zengi.
- 11 H. S. Fink, 'The Foundation of the Latin States 1099–1118', in *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 1, ed. K. M. Setton, Madison, 1969, p. 389.
- 12 Alptekin, *Reign of Zangi*, p. 33.
- 13 Abu Shama, *al-Rawdatayn fi akhbar al-Dawlatayn*, vol. 1, Cairo, 1899, p. 27.
- 14 Ibid., p. 28.
- 15 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Dhail Ta'rikh Dimashq*, ed. S. Zakkar, Damascus, 1983, p. 270; H. S. Fink, 'Mawdud I of Mosul', *MW*, vol. 43, 1953, p. 20.
- 16 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, pp. 486–7.
- 17 H. A. R. Gibb, *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades*, London, 1932, p. 113; A. Sabra, *Amir Mawdud, al-Dara*, vol. 12, Riyadh, 1986, p. 74.
- 18 Fulcher of Chartres, *The Expedition to Jerusalem*, trans. Z. Al-Asali, Amman, 1990, p. 153.
- 19 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 24; Abu Shama, *al-Rawdatayn*, p. 28; Ibn al-'Adim, *Bughyat al-talab fi ta'rikh Halab*, ed. A. Sevim, Ankara, 1976, p. 267.
- 20 Ibn al-'Adim, *Bughyat*, p. 266.
- 21 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 24; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 500.
- 22 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 25; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 501.
- 23 Bosworth, 'Political and Dynastic History', p. 114; D. Morgan, *Medieval Persia*, London, 1988, p. 36.
- 24 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 30; Abu Shama, *al-Rawdatayn*, p. 29.
- 25 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, pp. 31–2.
- 26 Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzi, *Mir'at al-zaman (1101–1193)*, vol. 8, Hyderabad, 1951, pp. 52–3.
- 27 Ibid., pp. 55–6.
- 28 Yaḥyā al-Hamawī, *Mu'jam al-buldan*, vol. 4, Beirut, 1982, pp. 93–5; Abū'l-Fida Ismā'il, *Taqwīm al-buldan*, Paris, 1850, pp. 298–309.
- 29 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, pp. 32–3.
- 30 Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzi, *Mir'at al-zaman*, vol. 8, p. 109; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 32.
- 31 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 440.
- 32 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 40.
- 33 Ibid., pp. 41–2.
- 34 'Alī Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam fi ta'rikh al-muluk*, vol. 10, Hyderabad, 1940, p. 3.

- 35 Abu Shama, *al-Rawdatayn*, vol. 1, p. 75; Ibn Wasil, *Muffarrij*, vol. 1, p. 30.
- 36 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, pp. 635–7.
- 37 Ibid., vol. 10, p. 637; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 42.
- 38 Abu Shama, *al-Rawdatayn*, p. 75; A. Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, vol. 10, pp. 3–4. Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, pp. 344–5.
- 39 Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, vol. 10, p. 11; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 638.
- 40 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 641; Abu Shama, *al-Rawdatayn*, vol. 1, p. 75.
- 41 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat*, vol. 2, p. 235; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 45.
- 42 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 644.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 S. Heidemann, 'Zangi'; Ibn al-'Adim, *Bughyat*, p. 252; Bosworth, 'Political and Dynastic History', p. 127.
- 45 L. Nicholson, 'The Growth of the Latin States 1118–1144', in *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 1, ed. K. M. Setton, Madison, 1958, p. 340; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, pp. 643–4; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 46; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, pp. 31–3.
- 46 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 34.
- 47 Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 35–6; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, pp. 645–6.
- 48 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 647; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 36.
- 49 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat*, vol. 2, p. 237.
- 50 Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 237–8; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, pp. 649–50.
- 51 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 650; Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat*, vol. 2, p. 238.
- 52 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 650.
- 53 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat*, vol. 2, pp. 241–3.
- 54 C. E. Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*, Edinburgh, 2004, pp. 190–1.
- 55 The Arab Bank Limited, *Al-Maskokat al-Islamiyya*, Beirut, 1980, pp. 6–9.
- 56 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 7, pp. 206–15; *Redhouse Dictionary – Turkish/Ottoman–English Dictionary*, Istanbul, 2000, p. 1279.
- 57 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 76.
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2 Zengi and his hostile policy towards the Seljuq sultanate and the 'Abbasid caliphate in Iran and Iraq

The art of pragmatism, 1127 to 1146

Zengi was trying very hard to gather all of the information he could get about the remote lords of the Muslim lands and what was happening to them even when they were hidden away, especially what took place in the palaces of the Seljuqs, and he spent lavishly on this. He was kept well informed and he received endless letters reporting every single move the sultans made, night and day, in times of war and peace, both serious matters and frivolous matters. Zengi received several reports like that every day from his spies. He used to say: 'If the smallest things are not known about and dealt with, they will grow and get out of hand.'¹

This is the opinion of Ibn al-Athir, which was shared by Ibn al-Adim in *Bughyat*, and Ibn Khallikan in *Wafayat*, their biographies of Zengi.

From start to finish Zengi's career was a long, perplexing relationship with the Seljuq sultanate. In the Iranian world, Supreme Seljuq Sultan Sanjar b. Malik Shah ruled from 1118 to 1157, while his grip over Khurasan was being weakened by different Turkmen slave commanders. In Iraq, western Iran and Azerbaijan, Zengi had made vassalage relationships with four different Seljuq *maliks*, sons and grandsons of Muhammad I b. Malik Shah (d. 1118).²

Then there is his relationship with the 'Abbasid caliphate. Although Zengi is considered a *mujahid* due to his legendary victory in Edessa in 1144, he had followed a realpolitik policy all through his career which seriously affected his jihad policy; for example, in 1132 to 1133 when the 'Abbasid caliph al-Mustarshid besieged him in his own principality Mosul, and when al-Mustarshid sent for Zengi, who was outside the walls of Damascus in March 1135, ordering him to withdraw to Iraq and join him against the Seljuq sultan Mas'ud.³

It is difficult to comprehend the failure of Zengi to capture Damascus between 1128 and 1140 or his hesitation in launching a full attack on the Crusaders without understanding his rebellious, changing relationship with the Seljuq sultans and the 'Abbasid caliphate, during which time Zengi claimed to carry the banner of jihad under their names to get legitimacy from them. In addition, one should bear in mind the geopolitical weight of the East on Zengid policy.

In June 1128 Zengi entered Aleppo after his commanders had seized it in January of the same year. During that summer the Supreme Seljuq Sultan Sanjar ('Fort') had ordered his nephew and son-in-law Malik Mahmud II b. Muhammad

of western Iran and Iraq to oust Zengi from Mosul and to appoint Dubays b. Sadaqa in his place.⁴ Zengi did not have time to establish himself in Mosul and its vicinity, or in Aleppo, and he therefore had to pay the price both of the *rap-prochement* between Sanjar and Mahmud II, and of the instruction of Sanjar to his nephew to reconcile with the caliph al-Mustarshid. In addition, Dubays was supported by Mahmud's wife, the daughter of Sanjar.⁵

In January 1129 Mahmud II wrote to Zengi ordering him to surrender Mosul to Dubays. As soon as Zengi learned this he marched swiftly to Mahmud II, who was astounded by his sudden presence. After making the oath of allegiance again and paying 100,000 dinars, in addition to giving magnificent presents, Zengi received the robes of honour and was reinstated in Mosul. In addition (as mentioned in Chapter 1), Zengi was also invested in *al-gharb kulluhu*, or the entire West, according to Ibn al-'Adim.⁶ This ambiguous diploma by the sultan did not clarify exactly what the West meant here; in addition, it contradicted the diploma of 1115 by Sultan Muhammad I, who granted the rule of Damascus, Hims and Hama to Tughtegin of Damascus (d. 1128) and to his dynasty afterwards.⁷ It should be noted that Zengi never used this diploma in his expansion in Syria against the Seljuqs of Damascus.

It has already been mentioned that the caliph stood with Zengi against Dubays, as the latter was accused of making a pact with the Crusaders in 1123 at the walls of Aleppo. Meanwhile, the caliph ignored Zengi's *modus vivendi* with Joscelin of Edessa in 1127 and the truce for two years between him and Edessa, as well as his attempt to make a pact with Princess Alice, the widow of Bohemond II of Antioch, against her father in Jerusalem in 1130 (see Chapter 4).⁸

For the next two years, until the death of Sultan Mahmud II in 1131, Zengi had harmonious relations with the sultanate and the caliphate, especially since he had been expanding his zone of influence in 1129/30 in the Jazira against the Turkmen Artuqids, against the Crusaders of Antioch at al-Atharib and Harem, and against the Seljuqs of Syria, capturing Hama and attacking Hims.

On 28 August 1131 the Seljuq sultan of western Iran and Iraq, Mahmud II, died. For nearly four years Zengi had been heavily involved in the politics of Iraq, which had witnessed devastating civil war between five different Seljuq kings to dominate the realm. This was in addition to the involvement of al-Mustarshid the 'Abbasid, who was very ambitious politically, and who was trying to use his status as a religious leader to influence current affairs in Iraq. All of this reflected on Zengi, who had neglected his Syrian affairs and focused on this civil war in order to protect his power base in Mosul from any harm. He left his deputy in Aleppo to maintain the *modus operandi* with the Crusaders. The only activities that Zengi could afford to carry out outside of this area were a few campaigns against the Artuqids and other Turkmen in Upper Euphrates and Armenia in 1133/4, mainly to secure Mosul and his line of commercial-military communications (see Chapter 3).

Although the nature of the military history of the Turkmen led by the Seljuqs is very confusing and not the main aim here, I will try to cover the career of Zengi during these civil wars. It should be mentioned that the Seljuq fighting

kings were Tughril b. Muhammad I (d. 1134), Seljuq Shah b. Muhammad I (d. 1143), Mas'ud b. Muhammad I (d. 1152) and Alp Arslan b. Mahmud II. One should not forget Sanjar (d. 1157) in Central Asia, the Supreme Sultan of the Seljuq dynasty.

After the death of Mahmud II his son Da'ud declared the *khutba* (the Friday sermon) for himself in Azerbaijan and Armenia, and then fought his uncle, Mas'ud, in Tabriz in the autumn of 1131. Both fighting lords had sent separate requests to al-Mustarshid in Baghdad, each asking him to declare the *khutba* in his name.⁹ At the same time Zengi had sent a message to the 'Abbasid caliph requesting him to give the *khutba* to Alp Arslan b. Mahmud II, as Zengi was his *atabeg* and the emir who had raised him according to the Turkmen tradition.¹⁰ Zengi tried to use this situation to gain more power, prestige and legitimacy. Ibn Wasil and Ibn al-Athir mention that al-Mustarshid had replied to the three messengers that only Supreme Sultan Sanjar could decide as to whom the *khutba* would be given. They wrote to him and were still waiting for his diploma.¹¹

It seems that in the case of Zengi, al-Mustarshid did not want to give the ambitious lord more legitimacy which would work against the caliph's advantage in Iraq, especially as Zengi had spied on al-Mustarshid on behalf of Mahmud II for years and had defeated and humiliated al-Mustarshid, as mentioned in Chapter 1.

Another Seljuq candidate for the sultanate, Seljuq Shah b. Muhammad I, lord of Khuzistan in western Iran, the closest to Iraq, arrived suddenly in Baghdad with his *atabeg* Qaraja al-Saqi and a large army. This show of force made the caliph submit to Seljuq Shah, who occupied Dar al-Sultan, the sultanate compound in Baghdad. In addition, al-Mustarshid resisted the threatening request by Mas'ud to declare the *khutba* for him.¹² During the chaos, Sultan Sanjar declared his support for the insignificant Tughril b. Muhammad I and appointed Zengi as the *shihna* of Baghdad. In addition, Mas'ud had surrendered the strategic city of Erbil, east of Mosul, to the deputies of Zengi in return for a political-military pact against al-Mustarshid and Seljuq Shah.¹³ What is striking here is the appointment of Zengi as *shihna* by the far-away Sanjar, which reflects the supreme sultan's full trust in and need of Zengi's ability and loyalty to help impose his candidate Tughril in 1131/2.

Bosworth goes even further on the subject in his unparalleled study, 'The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World' (1968), by stating that Sanjar came to Jibal in person and put Tughril on the throne. He then invited Dubays b. Sadaqa and Zengi to invade Iraq.¹⁴ The sources do not furnish us with any more information on how Zengi was cooperating at the same time with two Seljuq sultans, Sanjar and Mas'ud. The only interpretation is that Zengi was taking a risk with the remote Sanjar and the nearby Mas'ud at the same time.

Very complex warfare followed. By way of a summary, Zengi tried to advance south of Mosul, marching on Baghdad in 1132, but he was heavily defeated near Samarra by Seljuq Shah, his *atabeg* Qaraja, and al-Mustarshid, who led a force of tens of thousands of Turkmen cavalry. Zengi managed to save his own life by taking refuge in the town of Tikrit, which was under the

command of Saladin's father Najm al-Din Ayyub,¹⁵ and then he returned to Mosul.

Mas'ud attempted a confrontation with the army of Seljuq Shah, but no clear winner came out of that. Mas'ud sent to the caliph asking for détente, trying to form a new pact against Sanjar, who had just arrived at Rayy in northern Iran. Al-Mustarshid, who had claimed before that Sanjar was commander of the whole empire, turned against him and struck a deal with Mas'ud. Ibn al-Athir writes: 'They agreed that Iraq will be governed by the deputy of the caliph, Mas'ud will be declared sultan, and Seljuq Shah *wali* 'ahd [their apparent].'¹⁶

The three men met in Baghdad in April 1132. One understands that this nominal authority of the Seljuqs over Iraq and the de facto caliph's rule of it was a turning point in giving more secular power from the divided Seljuq institution to the caliph's.¹⁷ In June 1132 Sanjar confronted and heavily defeated Mas'ud the Seljuq Shah near Hamadhan.

The caliph did not take part with his allies, afraid of leaving Iraq to Zengi in Mosul, who had been told by Sanjar to attack Baghdad again.¹⁸ After the battle Sanjar made peace with Mas'ud, as he had to return to Nishapur to confront the Qarakhanid, Ahmad Khan, in Transoxania. It has been claimed that, before his departure, Sanjar had declared the *khutba* for his original candidate Tughril, and imposed upon him his own men in the administration, with the agreement of Mas'ud.¹⁹

Zengi followed his own interests and Sanjar's order to march on Baghdad with Dubays during the same month, confronting al-Mustarshid on 20 June 1132 at Hisn al-Baramika, north of Baghdad. According to Ibn al-Athir and Ibn Wasil, Zengi's troops were larger than the caliph's, yet they were defeated due to the recklessness and over-confidence of Zengi and the bravery of al-Mustarshid. Al-Mustarshid resumed the glory of the 'Abbasid caliphate, which had been lost since the Buwayhids' domination of the caliphate in the tenth century AD.²⁰ As a result, the expansionist dreams of Zengi were halted, and as Dubays, his long-time ally, had also been defeated, he was forced to return to his home city of Mosul.

As mentioned earlier, due to Sanjar's departure to Central Asia to reassert his authority in Khurasan and Khwarazm, his imposed candidate, Tughril, lost power in July 1132 in Wahan near Hamadhan to Da'ud b. Mahmud II.²¹ A few months later, in November 1132, Mas'ud entered Iraq and forced his way into Baghdad the following month, where he was declared by the caliph as the legitimate sultan of the West, and Da'ud (his nephew) as his *wali* 'ahd. Mas'ud managed to declare the *khutba* in Isfahan, Hamadhan, Azerbaijan, Iraq and Hijaz by mid-1133.²² This outcome reflected negatively on Zengi. Mas'ud was busy reorganising Iran and al-Mustarshid had a free hand in Iraq to avenge and subdue Zengi, especially as several Seljuq commanders had resorted to the 'Abbasid court in the military confusion taking place in the Middle East. Al-Mustarshid did not waste his chance to subdue Zengi in February 1133. The caliph marched north of Baghdad with a large army and sent his envoy al-Isfra'ini to Zengi in Mosul, reprimanding him and submitting him to his authority. Zengi refused the

caliph's demands and hugely insulted his personal envoy.²³ In June 1133 al-Mustarshid was approaching Mosul. Zengi left the city to have free movement and left his deputy Nasir al-Din Jaqar to defend Mosul. Zengi was in the vicinity of Sanjar, in the open field, following the situation. The colossal army of 30,000 soldiers under al-Mustarshid besieged Mosul for eighty days and managed to gain the support of some local chiefs, such as 'Isa, commander of the Hamidiyya Kurds (see Chapter 3). Ibn al-Athir reports in *Al-Bahir*: 'Jaqar had defended the city bravely, while Zengi kept dispatching scouts to cut the line of communications and supplies of the caliph.' Finally, al-Mustarshid lost hope due to the formidable defence of Mosul and returned to Baghdad after sending a message to Zengi asking for peace.²⁴

If one examines and evaluates the outcome of this arduous military activity in 1132/3 and how it influenced Zengi's career, one will see the following:

- Zengi was a key figure in Iraqi-Iranian politics for more than one Seljuq sultan.
- Zengi lacked any strategy for jihad against the Crusaders, as he was trying to expand in a very bold manner against several Muslim powers in Iraq, the Jazira, Iran and Azerbaijan.

Ironically, while al-Mustarshid was besieging Zengi's base in Mosul in July 1133, Isma'il b. Buri, the Seljuq King of Damascus, was besieging Hama, which had been under Zengi's control since 1129, and he managed to recapture it for Damascus.²⁵ Zengi's deputy in Aleppo, Sawar ('Knight'), could do nothing to save Hama and he maintained the *modus vivendi* with the Crusaders of Antioch and Edessa due to their lord's diffused policy. In fact, Aleppo did not respond to King Fulk of Jerusalem when he attacked Zengid Qinnasrin to the south in the spring of 1133.²⁶

Since the start of his career, Zengi had not found any irony and conflict in being a Sunni Muslim and he continued to fight the 'Abbasid caliph, head of the Sunni world, in order to survive politically.

At the end of the caliph's unsuccessful campaign in Mosul al-Mustarshid sought conciliation with Zengi, especially when Sultan Mas'ud was on his way back to Baghdad in November 1133. Zengi warmly welcomed such a request and he sent an important envoy to Baghdad to give an oath of obedience, and to offer a huge sum of money and a collection of extravagant presents to al-Mustarshid. In return, the caliph sent his chief *qadi* to Mosul with a positive reply to this gesture.²⁷

Relations between the two men reached a pinnacle when in October 1134 Zengi dispatched his son Sayf al-Din Ghazi to the court of the caliph as a sign of full loyalty, following medieval tradition. The caliph ordered a special welcome for this distinguished envoy, accompanying the young prince in a parade across Baghdad.²⁸ Such expected steps, only by pragmatic logic, were for two reasons. At the same time, Sultan Mas'ud was consolidating his power in central Iraq and western Iran, assuming a new title, *Ghiyath al-Dunya wa'l-Din* ('reliever of

religion and the secular world’); he managed to stay a relatively undisputed lord until his death in 1152. As a result, al-Mustarshid and Zengi tried to make a pact to preserve their interests, especially since, according to Ibn al-Athir in *al-Ta’rikh al-Bahir*, Mas‘ud was ‘the most powerful sultan, owned the largest number of troops and was the one who despised Zengi most’.²⁹ Second, after this long Seljuq civil war Zengi was aiming to consolidate his power outside Iraq, mainly in Syria and the Jazira, so he wanted to safeguard his *iqta’* in Iraq while campaigning elsewhere.

During most of 1134 Damascus witnessed the bizarre political conduct of its Seljuq ruler Isma‘il, leading to his murder by his mother Zumurrud in February 1135. During that time Ibn al-‘Adim, Ibn al-Qalanisi and Ibn ‘Asakir, among other Muslim sources, reported that Isma‘il had, strangely enough, contacted Zengi, inviting him to march and take Damascus (see Chapter 4).³⁰ As a result of this unexpected event, Zengi turned his focus to Syria. Thus, we see him in late 1134 in Aleppo preparing for his campaign on Damascus, which was subsequently attacked and besieged by him in February 1135.

On 15 March 1135, while fiercely attacking Damascus, al-Mustarshid’s envoy, Abu Bakr al-Jazri, arrived in Damascus, ordered Zengi to make peace with the new Seljuq lord of Damascus, Shihab al-Din Mahmud, and to return to Iraq at once to assist him against Sultan Mas‘ud.³¹ The question that should be asked here is what made Zengi leave his prize, Damascus, with a weak new king in power and withdraw to Iraq? His pact with the caliph was not enough for Zengi politically. For this reason we see al-Mustarshid cancel the *khutba* in Iraq for Mas‘ud and declare it for Alp Arslan, who was put forward by Zengi and was still in his company. Zengi also managed to force the Seljuqs of Damascus to give the *khutba* to his candidate too, the new sultan Alp Arslan, before leaving the walls of Damascus.³²

Now, for the first time, Zengi could act in full confidence supported by the legitimacy as the *atabeg* of the sultan, in whose name the *khutba* was declared not only in Iraq and parts of the Jazira, but also in Syria, from Aleppo in the north to Damascus in the south. None of the sources explains why Zengi sent the reinforcements needed to the caliph, but he himself retired to northern Syria first. It seems that the Zengid forces continued to be highly disciplined, even in the absence of their leader.

On 24 June 1135 at Day Marg near Hamadhan, al-Mustarshid, together with many Seljuq princes and Turkmen cavalry, confronted Mas‘ud. A large part of the caliph’s army deserted him and he was captured with his entire entourage without a fight.³³ This was bad news for Zengi’s camp and meant that Mas‘ud could install his own *shihna* in Baghdad, Boz Aba, who arrived in the same month and swiftly confiscated all of the wealth and treasures of al-Mustarshid. Due to the massive extent of the Seljuq Empire we see that the Supreme Sultan Sanjar did not interfere in this war, since he was busy securing Ghazna from a domestic rebellion.³⁴

Al-Mustarshid, who remained in captivity for nearly two months, accepted an agreement imposed upon him by Mas‘ud stating that he had to return to Baghdad

and pay a large sum of money of 400,000 dinars annually to the sultanate treasury. In addition, al-Mustarshid could never have, or try to muster, an army again, and he would be confined to his palace. As if this was not enough humiliation and punishment for the caliph both as an individual and an institution, to challenge the Seljuq sultanate politically, Mas'ud changed his mind and allowed twenty-four Batiniyya Assassins to infiltrate the unprotected tent of the captive caliph in the city of Maragha and brutally mutilate his body.³⁵

It is fair to say that it was not normal for a very large group of Assassins to carry out such a murder and that for the majority of their murders they did not move in groups of more than four or five men in order not to draw attention and suspicion. This added to the accusation made openly by many sources that Mas'ud was the one who hired them and that the locals lost respect for the sultan.³⁶

Two outcomes of al-Mustarshid's defeat that affected Zengi should be mentioned here. One is that Zengi's relationship with Mas'ud became one of extreme suspicion, since Zengi had supported the caliph militarily in this confrontation. Second, Zengi lost his chance to keep the *khutba* in Iraq and Syria for his candidate Alp Arslan.

As a result of his victory, in the same month, June 1135, Mas'ud swiftly ordered his new *shihna* in Baghdad to declare the *khutba* for al-Rashid, son of al-Mustarshid.³⁷ This move strongly asserted Mas'ud's position in Iraq against Zengi. In addition, Mas'ud summoned Zengi to Isfahan for a consultation. The real goal was to kill him; however, Zengi refused to go, and, according to Ibn al-'Adim, he made a new pact with the caliph.³⁸

Following the same strategy of subduing Iraq, Mas'ud dispatched al-Zakawi to al-Rashid in Baghdad in October 1135 to collect the 400,000 dinars that his father had agreed to pay. Al-Rashid declined and denied the sultan's forces entry to search the caliph's palace. After defending his palace with help from the locals of Baghdad, al-Rashid sent for Zengi in Mosul, urging him to come to Baghdad at once to help him against Mas'ud. To guarantee this, al-Rashid agreed with Zengi that the *khutba* in Iraq, the Jazira and Syria would be given to his candidate Alp Arslan, who was in his custody. Zengi would be in charge of the sultanate and the caliphate.³⁹ At the same time, many Seljuq lords, mainly from western Iran, Isfahan and Qazwin, including Da'ud b. Mahmud II, agreed to rebel against the authority of Mas'ud and they marched to Baghdad to make a pact with al-Rashid and Zengi, who arrived in Baghdad in November 1135 to receive a very prestigious welcome from the caliph in person, as well as his vizier and the chief *qadi* of Baghdad, who all attended the reception ceremony.⁴⁰ Surely this reflects the status of Zengi, and the need for him at such a time, as the chief player in Iraq who owned enough troops to confront Mas'ud.

Between 1135 and 1137 many military clashes took place, not only between these two camps but also among other Turkmen Seljuq factions, which added to the tribal divisions. Our focus here is how Zengi's relations with the caliph and the sultanate affected his policy in Syria against the Crusaders and the Seljuqs at the same time.

Zengi and al-Rashid spent most of 1135/6 defending Baghdad. In December 1135, when Da'ud's request to declare the *khutba* in his name was refused, he started to attack and plunder different areas of Baghdad, which caused the locals to flee with their treasures and money to the caliph's palace. Following a show of military strength by Da'ud, Zengi, together with the caliph, reconciled with him and agreed to declare the *khutba* for Da'ud.⁴¹ Although Zengi had promised earlier to give it to Alp Arslan, we discover that he agreed to unite against the bigger danger that Sultan Mas'ud represented. In addition, Da'ud installed his own *shihna* in Baghdad, while the caliph paid Zengi 30,000 dinars to spend on the city's fortifications.⁴²

In February 1136 another candidate for the sultanate, Seljuq Shah b. Muhammad I, who commanded a large army, forced his way into Wasit in central Iraq. The 'Abbasid caliph paid Zengi military expenses to march and fight Seljuq Shah. Zengi contacted the *atabeg* of Seljuq Shah, al-Baqsh, and paid him to desert his master and join Zengi's side. Seljuq Shah was then forced to welcome peace with Zengi: 'The martyr Zengi returned to Baghdad. In his company was *atabeg* al-Baqsh, among other commanders. Zengi's reputation and prestige increased immensely in the eyes of everyone. No one in Baghdad conducted any matter without his order or consultation.'⁴³

It is very probable that this move managed to eliminate Seljuq Shah from the sultanate race and his threat to Baghdad, and it united al-Rashid's camp in focusing on fighting the arch-enemy Mas'ud. Looking panoramically at the Middle East, one will see that the Zengid dominions in Syria were not fully paralysed by their master's engagement on the Iraqi front. Ibn al-Qalanisi tells us that Sawar, the Zengid deputy in Aleppo, led a few thousand seasonal Turkmen mercenaries and attacked the Crusaders in Lattakia, plundering its countryside completely. He also attacked Hims in an economic war to force the sons of Ibn Qaraja, its Turkmen lord, to surrender the city, which had been a target of Zengi for a long time.⁴⁴

It could be argued that Zengi had to give priority to Iraq, so his jihadist policy of uniting Syria under his banner to fight the Franks came second. At the same time his *iqta'*, mainly Aleppo and Hama, recaptured by Zengi in March 1135, could act on his remote orders from Mosul or Baghdad – not to have a full-scale war against the Franks, but to use such a seasonal attack politically in Iraq and Iran against his enemies and to look like a *mujahid* against the Crusaders.

At the same time as the Byzantine emperor John II Comnenus (d. 1143) was crossing Anatolia heading for northern Syria in July 1136 in his wish to restore the long-lost Byzantine dominions, Zengi was leading a coalition of the caliph and Sultan Da'ud from Baghdad to march to fight Mas'ud in Iran.⁴⁵ A few days after leaving Baghdad Zengi was informed that sultan Mas'ud had left Hamadhan to fight the caliph in Baghdad. The caliph's troops returned at once to the Iraqi capital to reorganise their defences and fight behind the city's walls. Mas'ud arrived in August 1136 and sent a threatening message to his enemies in Baghdad – either they surrendered and declared the *khutba* in his name or his forces would besiege and storm the city. For more than fifty days Mas'ud

surrounded all of his enemies inside Baghdad and managed to bribe a large number of the *'ayyarun* (local corps) inside the city to start a rebellion and loot the capital. In addition to the task of organising the resistance of the capital, Zengi met with several elite merchants who came to him complaining about the looting of the city.⁴⁶ This demonstrates the status of Zengi in Baghdad at that time. When Mas'ud was about to lose hope and depart to Iran, he received huge military aid from the Turkmen lord, Tarantay of nearby Wasit, who offered the necessary land supplies and a flotilla to attack the city in September 1136.

Mas'ud's forces managed to penetrate Baghdad from both the land and river sides. His nephew, Da'ud, left the opposition and departed to his dominions, as Mas'ud's success had led to disagreement among the fighting commanders about the strategy they should follow to resist Mas'ud.⁴⁷ Zengi, who proved very skilful in organising and leading the defence of Baghdad for nearly two months, thought up a daring plan, which was to ask Caliph al-Rashid to desert Baghdad and travel back to Mosul with him. The caliph, who was weak, agreed to Zengi's plan and left for Mosul with his vizier and the rest of his entourage. By October 1136 Mas'ud had gained full control of Baghdad and installed his own 'Abbasid caliph, al-Muqtadi, brother of the murdered al-Mustarshid.⁴⁸

Here one should consider Zengi's daring attempt as a step towards controlling the caliphate, thus gaining supreme legitimacy despite the declining political power of the 'Abbasid caliphate, which still represented an immense spiritual religious power in the Muslim community. If a comparison is made here, one has to mention that the first Turkish Mamluk commander in Egypt, Ahmad Ibn Tulun (d. 884), tried the same thing by inviting the 'Abbasid caliph al-Mutamid from Iraq to Egypt as Ibn Tulun was fighting the caliph's brother al-Muwaffaq.⁴⁹

Ibn Tulun also wanted to look like a *mujahid* in northern Syria against the Byzantine Empire. The situation did not differ or change at the end of the twelfth century, where we see that the prestige of the 'Abbasid caliphate still represented the cornerstone of any legitimacy; for example, when Saladin invaded Syria following the death of his master Nur al-Din. In 1174, Saladin wrote to the caliph al-Mustadi informing him of his jihad against the Crusaders and requesting that the caliph recognise Saladin's authority over the Zengid dominions in Syria, but the caliph refused and acknowledged his power only over what he already governed, thus giving indirect political support to Zengi's grandson in Aleppo.⁵⁰

The Middle East witnessed two *khutbas*: one for al-Rashid in northern Iraq, the Jazira and Syria, and the other for al-Muqtafi in Baghdad, southern Iraq and western Iran. This was, of course, in addition to the Shi'ite Fatimid caliph in Egypt. Zengi and al-Rashid realised the superior power of Mas'ud and each sent his envoy to the new caliph in Baghdad requesting the cessation of hostilities. Al-Rashid's messenger was denied entry, but Zengi's envoy, Qadi Kamal al-Din al-Shahrazuri, was warmly welcomed by the caliph, which reflects the political-military position of Zengi. According to Ibn Wasil and Ibn al-Athir, Zengi's envoy was asked: 'Do you give the *bay'a* (recognition) to the new caliph?' Al-Shahrazuri replied: 'How can I do that if I have just left the caliph in Mosul and we already gave the oath to him?' (as Ibn Wasil mentions in *Mufarrij*). After

secret contacts with the envoy al-Shahrazuri changed his mind and asked the caliph and the sultan for a prize in return for dropping the *khutba* of al-Rashid. Qadi al-Shahrazuri was free to negotiate, especially as Zengi was the one who had asked for peace and knew that Mas'ud was the master of the situation, and as Zengi had other duties in northern Syria, such as protecting his dominions from the Byzantine campaign and the Crusaders.⁵¹

The new caliph, al-Muqtafi, gave a few small villages as *iqta'* to Zengi in different places in Iraq. This *iqta'* was from the private lands of the caliph (*khas al-khalifa*), and al-Muqtafi had commented that this was the first time an emir had been granted *iqta'* from the caliph's private lands; he ordered that Zengi should be granted a new title as well.⁵² The sources do not mention this new title bestowed upon Zengi. It should be noted, however, that these few villages allocated to Zengi had no strategic advantage since they were not all in northern Iraq, closer to Zengi's base, but they had more of a honorary prestigious effect on the Turkmen commander.

In April 1137 Zengi declared the *khutba* for al-Muqtafi in his dominions, and the deposed al-Rashid was forced to leave Mosul upon orders from Sultan Sanjar and Mas'ud to Zengi. Al-Rashid left Zengi's base and was killed by Batiniyya Assassins in Isfahan the following year.⁵³

Ibn al-Athir gives us a fascinating account of Zengid military importance at this stage:

In this year Sultan Mas'ud had permitted his forces in Baghdad to return to their lands or dominions in the east for rest, only after he was informed that the deposed caliph al-Rashid had left Zengi and departed from Mosul completely. Sultan Mas'ud had been gathering all of his armies up to that moment out of the fear that Zengi could march southwards and attack and seize Baghdad.⁵⁴

These lines, even with slight exaggeration, reflect the continuous mistrust between the two men, even though Zengi's envoy had recognised the new caliph, but Mas'ud had to wait for practical moves on the ground.

Between 15 March 1135 and May 1137 Zengi was totally influenced by the Iraq-Iran civil war and absented himself from Syrian affairs, even if that meant pitching one caliph against the other while the Byzantine emperor was threatening his dominions in northern Syria.

From May to September 1137 Zengi resumed his pragmatic expansionist unionist policy against the Seljuqs of Syria in Hims and Damascus. He proved very capable at confronting different powers in Syria up until the beginning of the following year. On 9 April 1138 Emperor John II Comnenus, backed by a colossal army, made a pact with the Crusaders of Jerusalem, Tripoli, Edessa and Antioch. He marched to capture Buza'a, only a day and a half's march to the northeast of Zengid Aleppo.⁵⁵

Zengi received a plea from his deputies in Aleppo while he was besieging Hims. Such a Byzantine pact was beyond their capacity. One finds that Zengi

had to send an envoy to Sultan Mas'ud requesting urgent substantial help. The envoy, Qadi al-Shahrazuri, who had skilfully negotiated the problem of al-Rashid previously, had clear orders from Zengi to explain to Mas'ud that if the Byzantine–Crusader alliance managed to capture Aleppo, the road would be wide open for them to march across the Euphrates and attack him personally in Baghdad.⁵⁶ Sultan Mas'ud was pleased to offer any assistance to Zengi. As a result, al-Shahrazuri orchestrated a very careful deceptive plan against the sultan. He agreed with some of his friends to hire and bribe some ruffians (*awbash*) from Baghdad, planting them in both the sultanate and the caliphate mosques for the coming Friday prayers. These mobs were ordered to wait for the Imam to start delivering his Friday sermon and then to start shouting '*wa Islamah*' ('alas Islam'). The trick went as planned and the leaders of the mobs threw their turbans on the floor. The public started to shout and called off the prayer, and they demanded to march to the sultan's palace. There they found another angry crowd doing the same thing.⁵⁷ The locals of Baghdad then condemned the sultan for not sending troops for a jihad.

Sultan Mas'ud feared that the matter could get out of control and he summoned al-Shahrazuri to his palace, where he asked him about the cause of this rebellion. Al-Shahrazuri replied: 'I have nothing to do with this crisis. The public is zealous for Islam, and fears the consequences of such delay.' Sultan Mas'ud answered: 'Get out to the crowd and try to pacify them away from the palace, and return tomorrow and take as much as you want from the forces and supplies.'⁵⁸

Al-Shahrazuri managed to round up 20,000 knights. He immediately wrote to Jaqar b. Ya'qub, Zengi's deputy in Mosul, warning him that the movement of such a huge army might get out of control and seize the dominions of Zengi. Jaqar ('Grey Eyes') replied that it was better to have the dominions fall into Muslim hands than under the control of the infidels – the Crusaders.⁵⁹ Such doubts by the chief *qadi* in the Zengid realm reflect the reality of the Zengid political aims, which used jihad to achieve their realpolitik goals. Al-Shahrazuri dispatched a messenger to his master Zengi in Syria to obtain his final permission for the advance of the troops on Syria. Zengi approved and the army crossed to the western side of Baghdad, to find that a special messenger had arrived in Baghdad, urging Zengi to call off the march as the Byzantine emperor had lifted his siege of Aleppo and withdrawn empty-handed. Sultan Mas'ud refused to cancel the campaign and insisted on a jihad against the Franks and the recapture of all of the dominions they had occupied. Following the vizier's diplomatic negotiations with the sultan and other leading men in his administration, he was finally convinced to cancel the campaign.

Ibn al-Athir and Ibn Wasil both accuse Sultan Mas'ud of trying to send such a huge army to Syria, not to perform a jihad, but to subdue Zengi or to strip him of his power. They both elevate Zengi to the level of a saint for his successful attempt to manipulate the sultanate through al-Shahrazuri.⁶⁰

Two related matters should be raised as a result of these developments. First, why did Sultan Mas'ud not fully support the dispatch of such an army for a

jihad, since it had been assembled in a relatively short time? One sees that at the same time news started to gather at Mas'ud's palace that rebellions and challengers to his throne were appearing again in Iran, Azerbaijan and Khuzistan, led mainly by Da'ud and Seljuq Shah. Thus, Mas'ud was preoccupied with his eastern front from May to June 1138.⁶¹ Second, Zengi had been brought up at one time by Mawdud, lord of Mosul (as outlined in Chapter 1), who commanded a large army in Syria and at Sinnabra in Tiberias in June 1113, which resulted in the Seljuq lord of Damascus hiring Batiniyya Assassins to kill Mawdud weeks later. Mawdud represented a political-military threat to the Syrian dominions and their independence.⁶² The Muslim rulers of Syria realised that a *modus vivendi* with the Crusaders was better for them than allowing the geopolitical influence of the Iraqi-Persian world to dictate them.

Despite the ongoing mistrust between Mas'ud and Zengi, Mas'ud and his installed caliph, al-Muqtafi, sent two envoys, as a gesture of goodwill, to Zengi while he was besieging Seljuq Hims at the end of May 1138. They also sent robes of honour, which Zengi gladly wore in public as a sign of full trust and legitimacy from these two institutions in his fight against fellow Sunni Muslim Seljuq powers and not the Crusaders, as was mentioned by the sources.⁶³

Between 1138 and 1143 there was a long period of composure in Zengi's relations with the Seljuq sultanate and the caliphate. Zengi was occupied by expanding his realm in Syria in the Jazira against the Turkmen, the Kurds and the Arabs. Concurrently, Sultan Mas'ud was engaged in endless skirmishes in Iran, while the Supreme Sultan Sanjar was busy in Khwarazm in Central Asia.⁶⁴

In 1143 Sultan Mas'ud finally had the chance to impose his authority over his state and he decided to march with a large army from Iraq to punish Zengi for the old hostilities between the two men. Mas'ud was going to start with Mosul, before moving on to the rest of the Zengid lands. Ibn al-Athir, who greatly influenced other medieval sources, proudly writes in *al-Kamil* and *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*:

Since Mas'ud had come to the sultanate, he faced endless counts of revolts by the commanders of the provinces, especially those in the remote ones. Each time Mas'ud was faced by such a case, he attributed or blamed Zengi for orchestrating such a plot. Sultan Mas'ud always had a suspicion that different commanders resorted to Zengi and collaborated with him because of his wisdom, his long experience and his possession of vast lands and huge forces. Well, his suspicion was correct. Zengi always resorted to such methods to keep the sultan occupied in order to have the chance to expand and consolidate his power.⁶⁵

Such a description by the most pro-Zengid historian shows that Zengi, and Saladin after him, especially between 1171 and 1186, were following their own personal plan in which a jihad was just one element among many. Following the same pattern of behaviour, al-Isfahani writes that Mas'ud wanted to punish Zengi, as he accused him of hiring assassins to murder Da'ud b. Mahmud II, his

nephew, and his son-in-law, lord of Tabriz. That took place when Zengi heard that Da'ud was going to be appointed King of Syria.⁶⁶

Zengi tried hard through several envoys to restore such lost confidence with Mas'ud, even though Zengi's son Ghazi was living in Mas'ud's court as a sign of submission following medieval tradition. Finally, Zengi agreed under the following conditions that:

- he would pay an annual tribute of 100,000 dinars to the sultanate;
- he should travel to Baghdad in person to make an oath of allegiance to Sultan Mas'ud.

Zengi was fearful of the second condition and managed to represent himself as a *mujahid* against the Crusaders; thus he could not leave his duty. Mas'ud accepted this excuse but instructed him to capture Edessa.⁶⁷ In 1143 the Byzantine emperor died, as did King Fulk of Jerusalem, so Zengi exploited the relative vacuum of power in the area and started to attack a few castles in the vicinity of Edessa, which was in Crusader hands, where a pact had been made with the anti-Zengid Artuqids of Hisn Kayfa.⁶⁸

Ibn al-Athir, in *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, grossly exaggerates the notion that Mas'ud did not fight Zengi because he was deeply convinced that Zengi was the sole Turkmen commander capable of defending his lands against the Crusaders without requiring any aid from the sultanate, unlike the previous Turkmen lords of Mosul, including Mawdud and al-Bursuqi. One can easily compare Zengi with Mawdud of Mosul, Tughtegin of Damascus (d. 1128), Il-Ghazi of Aleppo (d. 1122) and Balak the Artuqid (d. 1124),⁶⁹ who are all mentioned by Ibn al-Athir as great achievers, but in the more balanced book *al-Kamil*.

In a show of full submission to Sultan Mas'ud, Zengi secretly ordered his eldest son, Ghazi, who was serving in the entourage of Mas'ud, to escape from Baghdad to Mosul. Zengi ordered his deputy in Mosul, Jaqar, to prohibit Ghazi from entering. Then Zengi sent an escort to accompany his son back to the sultan's court, saying: 'My son left your service without permission. I refused to meet him, and here I am sending him back to your doorstep.' This gentlemanly deed was well received by the sultan, who pardoned the father and the son. He also abolished most of the annual tributes he had ordered previously.⁷⁰

One cannot agree with the opinion of Alptekin in his study *The Reign of Zengi*, which states that Zengi was loyal to the Seljuq sultans most of the time, especially when he realised that 'any government of an independent state would inevitably be given a member of the Seljuq family'.⁷¹ It could be argued that Zengi, like Tughtegin of Damascus, was given a sultanate diploma to rule Damascus and central Syria from 1115 with full sole rights of inheritance.⁷²

When relations between Zengi and Sultan Mas'ud were about to improve, as we have discussed in the events of 1143, there was an unexpected shift in May 1145 by the Seljuq *malik* (king), Alp Arslan b. Mahmud II, who had been raised by Zengi in Mosul. The young boy Alp Arslan had turned into a mature man and decided to seize the opportunity of Zengi's absence in the Jazira by ordering the

murder of his deputy, Jaqar, in Mosul. Some of Alp Arslan's entourage had advised him, saying: 'If you murder Jaqar, you seize Mosul and other territories. Zengi then will not be able to challenge you, and will not have one single knight on his side.'⁷³ This action or manoeuvre failed due to the courage of Zengi's forces in Mosul, who immediately fought off Alp Arslan's forces. Alp Arslan was captured and jailed in the citadel while Zengi was fighting the Crusaders of al-Bira.⁷⁴

By examining such events, one will see the following scenario. First, Zengi never hesitated to turn against his own Seljuq candidate, to whom he should have submitted as a Seljuq royal. Second, the timing of Alp Arslan's move was unwise, especially as it came a few months after Zengi had captured Edessa and had become a hero across large parts of the Muslim world. The move also shows us how Zengi was in full command of his principality even when he was away from it, and demonstrates how loyal his deputies and forces there were, even if that meant arresting a Seljuq *malik* and putting him in prison.

From 1127, when he became lord of Mosul, to his murder in 1146, Zengi skilfully challenged five Seljuq sultans in addition to defying three different 'Abbasid caliphs, all of which was in order to remain independent and to expand into Iraq, Syria and the Jazira.

One can confidently state that the politics of jihad carried out by Zengi against the Crusaders was a tool, and that most of his life and career was influenced by focusing on his other jihad campaigns against both the Seljuq sultanate and the 'Abbasid caliphate. It may be said that Zengi was over-ambitious, moving on three or four fronts at the same time, or within a short period of time, against the Seljuqs of Iran and Syria, the Crusaders, the caliphate, the Turkmen and the Kurds, which consumed most of his time and resources away from the Frankish front.

Notes

- 1 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 78.
- 2 C. E. Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties*, pp. 185, 191.
- 3 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 392.
- 4 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, pp. 651–2.
- 5 Ibid., vol. 10, pp. 654–5. Dubays was lord of Hilla (near Baghdad); he rebelled against the authority of the 'Abbasid caliph.
- 6 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 242.
- 7 T. K. el-Azhari, *The Seljuqs of Syria*, Berlin, 1997, p. 207.
- 8 S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Cambridge, 1981, vol. 2, pp. 182–3.
- 9 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 674.
- 10 T. K. el-Azhari, art. 'Atabeg', in *Crusades, An Encyclopedia*, ed. A. Murray, California, 2006.
- 11 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 46.
- 12 Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 4–8.
- 13 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 675; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 48.
- 14 Bosworth, 'Political and Dynastic History', p. 124.
- 15 Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, vol. 10, p. 25.
- 16 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 676. The post of the caliph's deputy here is not clear, and is not often mentioned.

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- 17 Bosworth, 'Political and Dynastic History', p. 121.
- 18 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, pp. 49–50.
- 19 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, pp. 676–7.
- 20 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 46; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, pp. 50–1.
- 21 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, pp. 681–2.
- 22 Ibid., vol. 10, pp. 686–7.
- 23 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 47.
- 24 Ibid., pp. 47–8. Ibn Wasil, in *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, pp. 52–3, reports that Zengi's deputy had those who collaborated with al-Mustarshid to surrender Mosul during the siege crucified.
- 25 El-Azhari, *The Seljuqs*, p. 240.
- 26 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 685.
- 27 Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, vol. 10, pp. 34–5.
- 28 Ibid., vol. 10, pp. 41–2.
- 29 Bosworth, 'Political and Dynastic History', p. 125; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 80.
- 30 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 256; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 390.
- 31 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 391.
- 32 Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, vol. 10, p. 45.
- 33 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 15; Ibn al-Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 250.
- 34 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 16; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 60.
- 35 Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, vol. 10, p. 47; Ibn al-Athir, in *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 50, reports that they were fourteen Batinis, while in *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 22, he reports that they were twenty-four.
- 36 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Ta'rikh dawlat al-Seljuq*, Beirut, 1978, p. 166; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 61.
- 37 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Ta'rikh dawlat al-Seljuq*, pp. 166–7.
- 38 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 251.
- 39 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, pp. 62–3.
- 40 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 23.
- 41 Ibid., vol. 11, p. 23.
- 42 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 64.
- 43 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 52.
- 44 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 402; Abu'l-Fida, *al-Mukhtasar fi akhbar al-Bashar*, vol. 3, n.d., p. 10.
- 45 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 262; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 65.
- 46 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, pp. 41–2.
- 47 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 403; Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, vol. 10, p. 57.
- 48 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, pp. 402–3; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 53.
- 49 'Abd Allah b. Muhammad Balawi, *Sirat Ahmad Ibn Tulun*, Beirut, 2001, p. 290.
- 50 Abu Shama, *al-Rawdatayn*, vol. 1, p. 24.
- 51 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 68.
- 52 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 70; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 45.
- 53 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 54.
- 54 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 48.
- 55 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 265; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 56.
- 56 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, pp. 56–7.
- 57 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 80.
- 58 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 80.
- 59 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, pp. 59–60. Khalil attributed that to Zengi himself; however, this is not mentioned in either *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir* or *al-Kamil*, which he cites. Ibn Wasil put the force at only 10,000.
- 60 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 60; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 81.

- 61 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 65; Bosworth, 'Political and Dynastic History', pp. 127–8. Sultan Sanjar of Khurasan was always preoccupied with Transoxania.
- 62 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 295; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 497.
- 63 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 83.
- 64 Bosworth, 'Political and Dynastic History', pp. 130–1; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 90; 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Ta'rikh dawlat al-Seljuq*, p. 179.
- 65 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 94; *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 65.
- 66 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Ta'rikh dawlat al-Seljuq*, p. 179.
- 67 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 65.
- 68 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 92; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 95.
- 69 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 65; T. K. el-Azhari, art. 'Balak', in *Crusades, An Encyclopedia*, ed. A. Murray, Santa Barbara, 2006.
- 70 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 91.
- 71 Alptekin, *Reign of Zangi*, pp. 76–7.
- 72 El-Azhari, *The Seljuqs*, p. 208.
- 73 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 101.
- 74 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, pp. 72–3.

3 Fragmented pacts

Wars in the Jazira and Anatolia to dominate the Turkmen, the Kurds and the Arab tribes

At the time Zengi came to the throne of Mosul, the Crusaders' territories were greatly extended. Their forces increased, and their reputation brought much fear. They plundered the land of Islam, and the Muslims were too weak to deter them.

At that time, the realm of the Crusaders extended from the vicinity of Mardin to Arish in Egypt. In this entire area, the Muslims held only Aleppo, Hama and Damascus. The Frankish detachments were used to reach Diyar Bakr, Amid, Nasibin and other towns in the Jazira. The people of Raqqa and Harran were living in humiliating conditions because of their raids. All the routes to Damascus were cut off, except the one at Rahba. Aleppo, too, had to surrender half of its countryside to them, and as a result they held places dangerously close to the city. The rest of the Syrian cities suffered harder conditions than these two cities.

When Almighty God saw the disastrous conditions, in which the kings and emirs of the Syrian land suffered with the Crusaders, he sent Zengi to avenge Islam and confront the infidels, in the Jazira and Syria.¹

These lines not only reflect on the situation in the Jazira when Zengi came to power in 1127, but also on later conflicts between him and the Crusaders, which lasted for most of his life. Due to the complexity of the area under discussion, one whose history has been particularly influenced by its geography, it seems suitable here to give a brief introduction to this area, which is located between Syria, Iraq, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Anatolia and Iran.

Most Muslim sources agree that the Jazira ('island') province consists of the land between the two rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, or Mesopotamia east to west, and that it stretches from the sources of the two rivers in the north in Anatolia and Armenia to central Iraq in the south.² The area is sometimes said to end in Mosul or further south near Tikrit, depending on the judgement and opinions of various geographers, such as Ibn Hawqal (d. 990), Ibn Shaddad (d. 1285), Yaqut al-Hamawi (d. 1225) and their successors, right up until the Ottoman era.³

One of the most authoritative sources on the area is Ali Ibn al-Azraq al-Fariqi (d. 1181), who wrote *Ta'rikh Mayyafariqin wa-Amid: A Narrative History of the Jazira* between the tenth and twelfth centuries. He states that the Jazira province contains the following districts: Diyar Bakr (Diyar meaning homes or dwellings), which is the land to the west of the river Tigris to the mountains of



Figure 3.1 The walls of Diyar Bakr and its countryside.

Nasibin, consisting of Hisn Kayfa, Amid, Mayyafariqin, Arden and Mardin.⁴ Diyar Mudar is in the heart of the province and contains the valleys of the eastern Euphrates, including Raqqa, Harran, Edessa and Saruj, which form the main cities and towns of that area.⁵

Diyar Rabi'a lies to the east of Diyar Mudar and to the south of the Jazira. The area includes the valleys that lie east of the river al-Khabur al-Kabir to Ras al-Ayn, and east of the river Nasibin, west of the Tigris. The towns of Jazirat b. 'Umar, Sanjar and Nasibin are the main centres.⁶ These are the three units forming the Jazira province.

To the northeast of Diyar Bakr lies the border with Armenia, while to the east of Diyar Bakr and Diyar Rabi'a lies the border with Azerbaijan. To the west of Diyar Mudar is Sham or northern Syria, and the southeast of Anatolia. Al-Qazwini (d. 1283) was one of many who recorded that most of the cities mentioned above enjoyed plentiful water resources, due to the large network of springs, canals, and small and large rivers, which was reflected in the agricultural activity of the locals.⁷ The area was also excellent for pasture, which suited the Turkmen's nomadic pattern of living.

The northern parts of Diyar Bakr around Mayyafariqin, Amid, Hisn Kayfa and the eastern parts, down to Diyar Rabi'a, comprise different levels of mountain areas, some of which are very daunting, even with twenty-first-century technology. There has been an endless confrontation here between the Kurdish separatists and the Turkish army, and between the Kurdish separatists in northern Iraq

against Iran.⁸ So how could the situation under the *iqta* system in medieval times be described?

In order to understand the role and influence of the Jazira in Zengi's policy, it is necessary to begin by examining the political history of the area prior to the arrival of the Turkmen Seljuqs in the second half of the eleventh century. Four different political powers struggled to dominate parts of the Jazira. The Hamdanids ruled in Mosul, Diyar Bakr, parts of Diyar Rabi'a, and Aleppo in northern Syria between 906 and 1004.⁹ They were Arabs from the tribe of Taghlib and managed to enjoy some independence from the Sunni 'Abbasids in Baghdad, especially as they began their rule as Shi'i followers, while some of their rulers were loyal to the Fatimids in Cairo.¹⁰ In 944 the Hamdanids split into two branches in Mosul and Aleppo, and in 989 Mosul was invaded by the Arab Uqaylids, while Diyar Bakr was invaded by the Kurdish Marwanids.¹¹ As Ibn al-Azraq al-Fariqi explains, Badh al-Kurdi (d. 990), who took over most of Diyar Bakr, was the first king with Kurdish ethnicity to rule there.¹² The tribe of Marwanid Kurds, one of twenty-two other Kurdish tribes in the area, extended their zone of influence to Manzikert in eastern Anatolia. Most of the Marwanids recognised the 'Abbasids' nominal authority in Baghdad. In some areas of the Jazira, they paid tribute to the Arab Uqaylids in Mosul. In 1056 the Marwanids submitted to Sultan Tughril the Seljuq and became vassals to the new empire until their downfall in 1085.¹³

On the other hand, the Uqaylids had two main branches: one in Mosul, Nasibin, Jazirat b. 'Umar, and another in Tikrit. They originated from the tribe of Amir b. Sa'sa' in the Iraqi desert. Although they were Shi'i followers, they supported the Sunni Seljuqs and the 'Abbasid caliphate in dominating northern Syria. The power of the Uqaylids had come to an end at the hands of the Seljuqs by 1093, while their limited branch in Raqqa, Qal'at Ja'bar, survived until Nur al-Din b. Zengi took over the area in 1169.¹⁴ This was where Zengi fought his final battle in 1146.

The last of these powers, the Numayrids, came from the Arabs of Banu Kilab in the Syrian desert. They ruled between 990 and 1081 in Harran, Saruj, Raqqa, and briefly in Edessa. Their loyalty changed from the Fatimids to the 'Abbasids and they sometimes paid tribute to the Byzantines.¹⁵

During these relatively short-lived dynasties, while it is certainly likely that warfare and rapid changes in political loyalty had negative socio-cultural effects, we have no evidence of any distinct administration or military and economic order which may be said to characterise the Jazira prior to the Seljuq Turkmen. The only thing one should assert here is that the Jazira was a very suitable habitat with excellent pasture lands, similar to several areas of central Asia in Khurasan, Khwarazm and Transoxania from where most Turkmen originated. Thus we see how the Turkmen, led by the Seljuqs who did not practise any agricultural activity, but were nomads herding camels, sheep and horses, clashed with the local lords of the Jazira when they swept westward from Iran and Iraq.¹⁶

The Turkification process began on an ethnic, cultural and political level under the Seljuqs, Artuqids and Zengids, and continued until the fifteenth and

sixteenth centuries under diverse Turkmen groups like Artuqids, Qara and Aq Qoyunlu, Qaramanids, Safavids and Ottomans, creating an identity crisis in the Jazira and other parts of the Middle East.¹⁷ As mentioned in the Introduction to this book, the Seljuqs led a 'human tsunami' of Turkmen to the Middle East, resulting in the formation and creation of many Turkmen dynasties, and sometimes Kurdish local dynasties, submitting to the Seljuqs as vassals with different levels of dependence.

During his long career, 'Imad al-Din Zengi had confronted and tried vigorously to make the three main powers in the Jazira – the Turkmen Artuqids in Diyar Bakr, Diyar Rabi'a and Diyar Mudar, the Kurdish tribes around Mosul and Diyar Rabi'a, and the Arabs in Diyar Mudar, in addition to certain seasonal warlords – submit to him.

Zengi's campaign against the Artuqids: an anatomy of tribalism

The Artuqids followed their leader, Artuq b. Ekseb (d. 1091) from the Doger ('short') Turkmen tribe, one of the leading members of the Oghuz larger tribe who had been serving under the Seljuqs.¹⁸ Artuq himself was one of the Mamluk commanders under Sultan Malik Shah (d. 1092). His loyalty to the Seljuqs caused him to lead various campaigns in western Iran, Bahrain in the Arabian peninsula, Iraq, and also against the Byzantines. He joined Malik Tutush in Syria in 1079, and was allocated Jerusalem as his *iqta'* in 1086, due to his military ability and his ability to make use of the large number of Turkmen soldiers he was leading.¹⁹ In 1091, his two sons Suqman b. Artuq (d. 1104) and Il-Ghazi (d. 1122) inherited his *iqta'* of Jerusalem, and then lost it to the Fatimids in 1098 with the arrival of the Crusaders in Syria and their capture of Antioch, also in 1098.

During the fierce civil war in Iran following the death of Sultan Malik Shah in 1092, and the civil war in Syria and Iraq following the death of Tutush in 1095, Suqman b. Artuq captured Saruj around 1098, while Ridwan the Seljuq was in control of Aleppo, Antioch, Ma'arrat al-Nu'man and Hims in 1095/6. At the same time, his brother and enemy, Duqaq the Seljuq of Damascus, tried to assert his authority in Mayyafariqin and Rahba.²⁰ The Jazira represented to the newly arrived Turkmen a strategic link with the East, especially Central Asia from where they had originated, and from where they recruited new Turkmen soldiers for their armies.

At the same time, Il-Ghazi had joined the service of the Seljuqs in Iraq in 1099. Three years later, in 1102, Suqman captured the strategic city of Mardin, while his nephews Yaquti and 'Ali captured Ras al-Ayn.²¹ After Suqman's death in 1104, Il-Ghazi left Iraq and hurried to capture Mardin for himself from his nephews, in order to establish a principality for himself and his dynasty. Da'ud b. Suqman (d. 1144) managed to rule from Hisn Kayfa, Amid and the surrounding area, and to keep it for his line.²² The Artuqids never experienced any political unity, despite defeating many enemies such as the Crusaders, the Seljuqs of

Rum, and Seljuqs of Syria and Iraq. In addition, they ruled over the large Syriac Jacobite Christian population in Diyar Bakr and many Kurdish tribes.²³

The Artuqids managed to make very good use of their strategic geographical position in the Jazira, which became a gathering place for Turkmen mercenaries. On two occasions they expanded their territory into northern Syria, the first under Il-Ghazi in 1117, defeating the declining Seljuq Aleppo from his strong base at Mardin.²⁴ The same thing happened with his nephew Balak who used Mardin and Kharput as his power base to seize Aleppo from his cousin in 1123 and inflict a heavy defeat upon King Baldwin II of Jerusalem (d. 1131). After Balak's death in 1124, Aleppo was handed over by the Artuqids to Aq Sunqur al-Bursuqi, lord of Zengi, in Mosul in order to help the defence against the Crusaders of Antioch and Edessa.²⁵ This was one of the rare situations when local chieftains from Mardin could dominate a large metropolis like Aleppo and submit to their overlordship, and not the other way around. These two events were contemporary to Zengi, who knew the Jazira well, and must have increased the amount of attention being paid to the area. This was the political and military situation of the area when Zengi was installed as lord and *atabeg* of Mosul in 1127. Between the autumn of 1127 and June 1128, when Zengi personally made his entry into Aleppo, he tried to assert his power in key towns in the Jazira and around Mosul, before moving into northern Syria to take full power. In 1127 he marched to the north of Mosul with his army to take Jazirat b. 'Umar, a town three days' march from Mosul according to Yaqut al-Hamawi. This town belonged to the Mosul authority, and was ruled by the *mamluk* of al-Bursuqi.²⁶ The former lord of this town resisted the siege of Zengi, who was determined to capture it rapidly.

In a show of power and absolute loyalty, Zengi ordered many of his troops to swim across the river Tigris to the town, while many ships and small boats (*aklak*) were provided for his other forces. When the besieged deputies realised that they were no match for Zengi, they finally surrendered once their safety was assured.²⁷

Although Ibn al-Athir writes that Zengi's most important goal was to cross the Euphrates and capture Aleppo, Zengi then opened up a hostile front by intimidating and attacking the city of Nasibin, to the west of Jazirat b. 'Umar. This city belonged to Hussam al-Din Timurtash ('Hard Stone') b. Il-Ghazi, lord of Mardin and Mayyafariqin.²⁸ Zengi gave priority to the provinces of the Jazira, rather than Aleppo, although the latter was in a state of collapsing political-economic conditions.

Timurtash then went to his cousin, Da'ud b. Suqman, lord of Hisn Kayfa, urging him for military help against Zengi at Nasibin. Such help was promised, and Timurtash returned to his base in Mardin. From there, he sent a message to his deputies in Nasibin by pigeon, assuring them that military assistance was on the way and that they should resist for five more days.²⁹ The message was intercepted by Zengi's forces, and when Zengi discovered its content he changed the message to read 'twenty days' before any Artuqid help would arrive. This was very disappointing for the Artuqid resistance at Nasibin since they could not

afford to fight the Zengids for such a long period, and so surrendered the city to Zengi.³⁰

Zengi was therefore fighting on two fronts, as well as guarding Mosul. The first front was in the Jazira, while the second was in Aleppo, which was in a state of total disorder due to the death of Mas'ud b. al-Bursuqi and the various candidates struggling to take over the city, including the Crusaders. Zengi dispatched two of his best commanders, Deraz and Qaraqush ('Black Falcon'), to take over Aleppo in January 1128,³¹ while he proceeded to the city of Sanjar. This was three days' march to the south of Nasibin on the Tharthar river. None of the sources states who was in command of the town, but one assumes it was under a vassalage relationship to the Artuqids of Mardin. Zengi managed to take over the town after some limited resistance, and from there he sent multiple forces to dominate and subdue the basin of the Khabur down to the Euphrates. He sent forces to Khabur from Sanjar, who then submitted.³²

Zengi himself marched northwest to attack Harran in the vicinity of Frankish Edessa. It is not clear who ruled this area, but the locals quickly surrendered to him, especially as they had been suffering great hardship at the hands of the nearby Crusaders. According to Ibn Wasil,³³ the Crusaders then held Edessa, Saruj, al-Bira and its surrounding area. As soon as Harran submitted, Zengi sent a message to Joscelin, the lord of Edessa, offering a truce. This allowed him time to reorganise, fortify his new territories, recruit new soldiers and move to Syria.³⁴

Therefore, one can see that Zengi was over-ambitious, creating hostilities among the Artuqids while he was still engaged in securing Mosul's countryside. In addition, he did not try to cooperate with the Artuqids or the commanders of Aleppo in the name of jihad, but rather offered the Crusaders a truce – a model followed by Saladin in 1174, when he contacted King Baldwin IV of Jerusalem offering sincere friendship, in order to focus on the Zengids of Syria after Nur al-Din.

Due to his long military experience in his early years in Mosul, one can see that Zengi followed a very similar pattern to another Turkmen chief, Balak the Artuqid (d. 1124), who created a huge and sophisticated network of more than seventeen towns and citadels in the Jazira in order to achieve better communications between his territories.³⁵ Only then did he feel confident enough to cross into the Syrian heartland, while his military and commercial interests were protected from Muslim and Crusader powers alike.

When Zengi finally marched to Aleppo in the summer of 1128, he stopped in Manbij to the west of the Euphrates, then at Buza'a to the northeast of Aleppo, and forced the local people to submit to his rule in order to widen and boost his communications network.³⁶

Ibn al-Athir presents us with a very gloomy situation in Aleppo:

The Franks, may God defeat them, had enfeebled Islamic Syrian lands and dispatched continuous raids on its people, as there was no leader who could confront them. The Franks became so close to the city of Aleppo, to the

extent that they divided the revenues of a hand mill at Bab al-Jinan, a few arms' length from Aleppo, amongst themselves and the local people.³⁷

Despite this situation, Zengi departed from Aleppo and Syria during the same year, after he was informed of Sultan Mahmud's decision to dismiss him from Mosul and install Dubays (as mentioned in Chapter 2). After travelling to Baghdad in an attempt to improve his relationship with the Seljuq sultanate, Zengi was reinstated in Mosul and was granted a diploma as ruler of the entire West.³⁸ This did not change the political situation in the Jazira for Zengi, in that the Turkmen and Kurdish forces in the area did not recognise the Seljuq sultanate as they had previously done, so Zengi had to strive for supremacy in the Jazira and Syria.

In 1129/30 Zengi was campaigning in Syria against the Seljuqs in Hama and against the Crusaders around al-Atharib, which endangered Aleppo from the western side. During this time Zengi was informed that the Artuqids in the Jazira, led by Timurtash of Mardin, Da'ud of Hisn Kayfa and their cousin, Ilaldi of Amid, had created a massive Turkmen alliance of more than 20,000 cavalry; Da'ud was able to amass these Turkmen nomads due to their huge respect for him.³⁹ Zengi's forces, at only 4,000 strong, confronted them near Dara, a fortress between Nasibin and Mardin, which was under their authority. Despite Zengi's small army compared to that of the Artuqids he managed to defeat them and take Dara in 1130. He followed that by besieging and capturing Sarja, a fortress near Dara,⁴⁰ which it may be assumed was also under Artuqid rule. One can imagine that the discipline and training of Zengi's army was far superior to that of the seasonally recruited Turkmen on the Artuqid side.

Zengi had to move swiftly to defend Jazirat b. 'Umar from Da'ud's forces, which had sacked the area as revenge for his defeat. Zengi failed to follow Da'ud, who took refuge in the high mountains of Diyar Bakr and feared being tracked by him in the narrow routes, which were controlled by the Artuqids.⁴¹ It is worth mentioning here that the Artuqids retained the nomadic Turkmen traditions they had followed in Central Asia. Tughril Beg (d. 1063) used arrows as his sign in his correspondence and would dispatch them to Turkmen tribes calling them to war. Here we see Da'ud the Artuqid in preparation for his confrontation with Zengi, sending his arrow to the Turkmen, which they considered a kind of blessing among men and women according to Turkmen rituals.⁴² This was probably a pre-Islamic Shamanist tradition.

Again, one may ask why Zengi did not attempt to form some kind of pact with these large Artuqid Turkmen forces. The Turkmen simply suffered an identity crisis, from the Seljuqs in the eleventh century, to Aq Qoyunlu and other groups in the sixteenth century, resulting in a power struggle among tribal chiefs and mistrust of the political-economic settlements following any joint campaign. Due to the long and bitter civil war in Iraq, in which Zengi was heavily involved, the medieval historians do not report his movements accurately in the Jazira. They do not distinguish between his personal command of the forces and that of his deputies, which, as with Aleppo, will be discussed below.

After Zengi had reconciled with Caliph al-Mustarshid in Baghdad, we find the sources reporting in the spring of 1134 that a military–political pact was formed between Zengi and Timurtash of Mardin against the rest of the Artuqid chiefs in the area.⁴³ What the goals, limits and duration of such a pact were is difficult to say. The only thing one notices is that these were strengthened over the following eight to ten years and that the pact did not extend outside the area of the Jazira on a regional level.

Zengi united with Timurtash, and they marched together to attack and besiege the city of Amid and its lord, Ilaldı (d. 1141). The defenders then sent an urgent message to Da'ud of Hisn Kayfa, the old enemy of Zengi, on a Friday at the end of April 1134, and the two armies engaged in open battle at the gates of Amid. Da'ud lost a great number of his knights and some of his sons were captured, so he returned to his home.⁴⁴ Zengi's forces achieved victory and continued their siege of Amid, which proved to be impregnable despite the huge damage caused by Zengi to its countryside in an economic war he had carried out in the hope that it would submit to him.⁴⁵ Zengi finally accepted a sum of money in return for lifting his siege. He continued his campaign with Timurtash in that area, attacking and besieging the fortress of al-Sur in Diyar Bakr, which belonged to Da'ud, in May 1134. Zengi was ruthless in dealing with the Turkmen shooters of the *jorkh* (a large crossbow), who fired at his troops during the siege. The first thing he did when he captured the castle was to summon all the crossbow shooters (*jorkhiyya*) to line up before him. He then ordered that their thumbs be cut off so that they could never be able to shoot a crossbow again, since they suffered some kind of paralysis in their hands as the nerves were impaired.⁴⁶ According to Ibn al-'Adim, he then conquered the towns of al-Bariyya, Jabal Jur, the Armenian areas east of Diyar Bakr and the towns of Dhu'l-Qarnayn, and Tanza.⁴⁷

Zengi rewarded his ally Timurtash for his military help by giving him four of the five captured towns while keeping Tanza for himself. This was the closest town to his *iqta'* in Jazirat b. 'Umar,⁴⁸ although Zengi had come out of a fierce civil war in Iraq which had consumed a large part of his financial and human resources. However, he was not content with the outcome of his campaign against the Artuqid chiefs. He also campaigned against various Kurdish tribes in the area, while his deputy in Aleppo, Sawar ('Knight'), attacked several Crusader castles under Antioch's authority.⁴⁹

One of the most important outcomes of the Zengi–Timurtash campaign was that it kept Zengid dominions in the Jazira under Zengi's control during 1134 to 1137/8, when Zengi was busy fighting on two fronts: in Iraq and Iran, as mentioned above, and in central Syria against the Seljuqs. Thanks to his loyal ally and agent in the area, Timurtash, Zengi benefited greatly from his network of dominions and defences in the Jazira to provide safe and quick communication between his Syrian and Iraqi dominions via the Jazira.

A sudden change of fate in politics for Zengi came by way of his long-time enemy, Da'ud the Artuqid. In the summer of 1138, while the huge Byzantine army was campaigning in Syria and after John II Comnenus, Raymond of

Antioch and Joscelin of Edessa were campaigning against Zengi in central Syria in April/May 1138, Qara Arslan ('Black Lion') b. Da'ud crossed the Euphrates with an enormous Turkmen force, estimated at 50,000 by Ibn al-'Adim, to support Zengi.⁵⁰ Although there is no evidence that Zengi had asked Da'ud for military assistance, Da'ud wanted to show some solidarity against the enemies of Islam and to look like a *mujahid*. Such support may be seen as a favour that was expected to be repaid later to his cousin Timurtash.

The irony here is that, as Zengi had done his best to return the sultanate army sent from Iraq and Iran to perform the jihad against the Frankish-Byzantine alliance, we once again see Zengi ignoring the presence of Qara Arslan b. Da'ud completely by refusing to meet him or to coordinate military efforts with him.⁵¹ On the contrary, Zengi had sent a message to Qara Arslan to 'get back to your father, your service is not needed'.⁵² Zengi wished to monopolise the image of *mujahid* in the eyes of the Seljuq sultanate and the caliph. In addition, he feared that this large, undisciplined force might plunder the area, as was the Turkmen habit. Moreover, Zengi was preoccupied with his political marriage in the same month to Zumurrud Khatun (mother of Mahmud b. Buri of Damascus), hoping to win Hims as a prize for this marriage.⁵³ There were frequent and sometimes severe earthquakes in the Jazira and northern Syria (for example, those in October 1138 and throughout 1139), with countless tremors that surely damaged the defences of the area, including the walls of Aleppo. Such earthquakes were terrifying to the extent that at one point Zengi escaped Aleppo's citadel barefoot. Ibn al-'Adim counted more than eighty tremors during one night, which shows the severe effect the earthquakes had on the lives of the people there,⁵⁴ and the authority of Zengi in the area.

One can see the continuation of the political alliance between Zengi and Timurtash, which led to a political marriage between Zengi and Dayfa Khatun, daughter of Timurtash, in 1139.⁵⁵ As a result of this marriage Zengi's power over the Jazira declined. He offered help to his ally and father-in-law Timurtash against Da'ud of Hisn Kayfa, who had started sacking the areas around Mayyafariqin in a continuous test of will and power. Zengi's help materialised by opening another front, attacking Amid and looting its dominions in the autumn of 1140. Zengi managed to defeat Qara Arslan b. Da'ud and return to Mosul. As a result, the *khutba* in Amid was declared to Zengi by Ilaldī after he lost any hope of an Artuqid victory against Zengi.⁵⁶

The balance of power remained in Zengi's favour in the Jazira against the Artuqid powers until the summer of 1143. Zengi was busy fighting different Kurdish tribes and overturning an unknown Turkmen lord named al-Ahmar, mainly in the vicinities of Harran, Ras al-Ayn and the upper Tigris, as well as Frankish strongholds under Edessa's control. Ibn al-'Adim wrote: 'In these years the Artuqids and *atabeg* Zengi concluded peace between them, and the sons of Artuqid lords started arriving at the Zengid court to serve Zengi as a sign of submission.'⁵⁷ This medieval manner of sending sons of different emirs or lords to the sultan's court was a form of full homage and recognition of a stronger superior power. This was an unexpected conclusion to a very long military campaign

by Zengi. An overall analysis of Zengi's rule in the Jazira may be described as follows:

Between 1127 and 1146 Zengi did not have a strategic vision for the Jazira, as he was busy fighting in Iraq to the east and Syria to the west, and in many cases we find him attacking and capturing different fortresses on his way to Syria or while returning to Mosul.

Through his early pact with Timurtash the Artuqid, who died in 1144, Zengi managed to create a strong alliance to deter and impede other Artuqid chieftains in the area. Zengi must have benefited from ruling parts of the Jazira, as he could then muster and recruit seasonal Turkmen forces for his wars in Iraq, which needed larger numbers than those that Mosul could offer, which totalled around 10,000. Ibn al-Athir, commenting on the military ability of Mosul, wrote: 'I wish that Mosul and its dominions could really supply 20,000 cavalry.'⁵⁸

Through his control of Jazirat b. 'Umar, Nasibin, Harran, Mardin, Sanjar and the Khabur basin, Zengi managed to secure his communication lines between his dominions in Iraq and Syria, although only Aleppo, which he captured in 1128, continued to remain under his authority, while Hama, Ma'arrat al-Nu'man and Hims stood between him and the Seljuqs of Damascus. Damascus itself was the prize of which Zengi always dreamed of capturing, and though he had attacked it vigorously he had never succeeded in capturing it. In addition to curbing the power of the Crusaders to expand into the Jazira, Zengi was also close by in Edessa, monitoring and learning about their activities and war tactics.

Zengi's policy against the Turkmen of Armenia

Artuqid-Zengi relations had occupied most of Zengi's policy directed at the Turkmen in the Jazira. The sources are very unreliable when they cover such events, and they give very few details, which does not help in forming an overall picture of the period. However, Zengi was very ambitious to extend his frontiers and dominions to the Turkmen of Armenia, around Lake Van and Akhlat. In 1133, probably following his campaign against the Hamidiyya Kurds to the north of Jazirat b. 'Umar in Uqr and Shush,⁵⁹ we find Zengi marching to subdue Akhlat and the Armenian dominions which had belonged to Suqman al-Qutbi (d. 1111), lord of Tabriz and the far northern parts of Diyar Bakr, and who was one of the Turkmen Mamluk lords of the Seljuq sultanate.⁶⁰

Since 1111, Suqman's dominions had been governed by his widow, as regent of his principality for their daughter. Usama b. Munqidh, who was taking part in this campaign, reported that Zengi was marching at an unusual speed without using tents for sleep and rest in order to get to Akhlat before another candidate, Ibn Dimlaj, the Turkmen lord of Badlis, who wanted to marry his son to Suqman's daughter.⁶¹

Zengi chose to use a mountainous route in order to avoid an attack from Badlis and to surprise Akhlat. He appeared suddenly in front of its walls and

made his camp. Zengi was welcomed inside its citadel and concluded the marriage.⁶² Zengi ordered his commander, Ibn Ayyub al-Ghasyani, to take the majority of the army and head to Badlis in a show of strength. Badlis was only a day's march away. When Ibn Dimlaj saw the Zengid army, he avoided a confrontation by offering a large tribute to the Zengid commander, who accepted it and withdrew his forces.⁶³

This political marriage was one of five that Zengi had concluded in his life as far as one is able to count. The questions here are: Was Zengi keen to expand during that time into Armenia? Did he open up further fronts? Akhlat had become a base for warfare against the Armenians and Georgians, and overlooked the western fringes of the great Seljuq Empire in Azerbaijan.⁶⁴ Along with his thinly stretched dominions and forces, his role in the undecided military-political situation in Iraq, and in the Jazira against the Artuqids, one can see this as a very good example of Zengi's risk taking.

Zengi's campaign against Pash al-Turkmani of Shahrazur

Shahr or *shih*r is Persian for town, and the dominions of Shahrazur extended from east of Erbil to west of Hamadhan in Iran. Most, if not all, of the population of the area were Kurds, but one can classify it here according to the ethnicity of its leadership.⁶⁵ It has already been mentioned that the Seljuqid sultan, Mas'ud, had surrendered Erbil to Zengi in 1132 in order to win him over to his side during the civil war in Iraq. In 1139 this area was governed by Qipchaq b. Arslan Tash the Turkman. He ruled this mountainous area and his orders and laws were undisputed by the Turkmen. They gave him their full obedience.⁶⁶ In this vast and harsh mountainous area, he managed to gather around him a huge number of aimless Turkmen warriors, and became a threat to the eastern area of Erbil under Zengi.⁶⁷

Many of Zengi's advisers had warned him of the consequences of his attack on Qipchaq, not only because he had mustered a lot of troops but because if he lost hope with Zengi, he would surrender his dominions to Sultan Mas'ud and this would create an even a greater threat to Zengi's authority and dominions. Zengi did not pay attention to such opinions and, while campaigning in Syria against Damascus in the autumn and winter of 1139 through to the spring of 1140,⁶⁸ he sent a large army (*askaran kathifan*) to confront the Turkman Qipchaq. This situation was one of many during Zengi's career that showed his great ability to act with full military power on two fronts. One has to bear in mind that Damascus was the largest inhabited city in Syria, with a population of 500,000 inhabitants in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, and was very close to the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. In addition to this, leading and controlling a large, besieging force in winter was an extraordinary job. The risk-taking persona of Zengi was clear here, despite the warning of his commanders. He was able to use his dominions to supply more than one army at the same time.

After a very fierce campaign, the Zengid forces managed to inflict a severe defeat on Qipchaq and capture Shahrazur, adding it to the Zengid realm.⁶⁹ The

period of composure between Zengi and the sultanate and caliphate (1138–43) had enabled him to expand into the Jazira, Syria and Azerbaijan. Maintaining such a long line of communication and supplies to western Iran and managing to defeat such a major Turkmen chieftain may be attributed to his high degree of restraint and his well-disciplined cavalry being ranged against semi-seasonal troops.

This was Zengi's policy towards the major Turkmen powers in the Jazira. The sources contain a few lines with fragmented information about other Turkmen commanders who may have been present in the area, such as Lajja, who left Damascus to join Zengi's service in 1141 and who sacked the Crusaders' countryside. The Turkmen attacked the vicinity of the Crusaders of Antioch the same year, and the Crusaders urged Zengi to curb them, although the Turkmen had no known leader and no evidence that Zengi was their commander.⁷⁰ In 1142/3 Zengi attacked Ibn al-Ahmar and captured seven different forts, most of them in remote upper Armenia or by the Tigris river.⁷¹ Such activities were a common practice with regard to the endless renewal of authority in the area and allowed seasonal Turkmen nomads to look for pasture in these rich areas, as previously mentioned.

Zengid policy towards the Kurds

According to Minorsky, the Kurds were a diverse nomadic people who lived in Iran, the Caucasus, Turkey and Iraq from the fifth century BC to the coming of the Seljuqs to the Middle East in the eleventh century. The Kurds created semi-independent areas, but mainly they orbited the incoming powers in the area for various reasons, including their own disunity.⁷²

Following the fateful battle of Manzikert in 1071, and the Seljuq victory over the Byzantine Empire in eastern Anatolia, the Turkmen Seljuqs had taken over Kurdish areas such as the local principality of the Marwanids in the Jazira and the Akhlat area.⁷³ We have no evidence that the term 'Kurdistan' or the province of the Kurds had been used before in Islamic administration until the time of Sultan Sanjar (d. 1157) when we see Kurdistan appear as a name given to the areas of Hamadhan, Kermanshah and the western area near Sanjar in Iraq.⁷⁴ Most if not all Kurdish areas were governed by ethnic Turkmen lords, such as Suqman al-Qutbi in Tabriz and parts of Diyar Bakr, Ahmad II, lord of Maragha in Azerbaijan, and Bursuq b. Bursuq, lord of Hamadhan.⁷⁵

It was in the best interests of Zengi to defeat the Kurdish elements in the vicinity of Mosul and the Jazira in order to provide security to his dominions, especially as the mountain area of the Kurds could represent a real threat to his communication lines. He thus needed to share a *modus operandi* with them. Zengi also wished to use some of the Kurdish elements to fight in his campaigns. The Egyptian historian al-Qalqashandi (d. 1418), in his valuable book *Subh al-'asha fi sina'at al-insha'*, lists more than twenty Kurdish tribes living in the Jazira, Iran, Iraq, Anatolia and Azerbaijan, along with their population count during the age of Zengi. These tribes include the Kuraniyya, Jalaliyya, Suliyya,

Mazinjaniyya, Hakkariyya, Humaydiyya, Mahraniyya and Bashnawiyya, and one can read more details about them in his book.⁷⁶ What interests us here is that most of these Kurdish tribes were from a small population of between 3,000 and 8,000, and most took refuge in the high mountains covered with snow for maximum protection and probably to preserve their culture. Their economy depended on pasture and collecting taxes from caravans crossing their lands in return for protection and safe passage.⁷⁷

Due to their relative isolation, Zengi came into contact with only four groups of them, namely the Humaydiyya, Hakkariyya, Mahraniyya and Bashnawiyya, unlike the Turkmen groups who were in frequent contact with his realm. It should be pointed out that the Kurds were not united for much of the time, and Zengi confronted them separately.

Zengi's policy towards the Humaydiyya Kurds

The Humaydiyya Kurds were a clan of Mazinjaniyya living in the area of the castle of Uqr, east of Mosul, and the castle of Shush in the same area. They had a fighting force of 1,000 soldiers.⁷⁸ Due to the remoteness and high altitude of the two castles, when Zengi came to power in Mosul in 1127, he reinstated their leader, 'Isa al-Humaydi, as his vassal. When the 'Abbasid caliph al-Mustarshid besieged Mosul for eighty days to punish Zengi during July 1133, 'Isa al-Humaydi and his forces joined al-Mustarshid outside Mosul and offered various supplies needed during the siege for the caliph.⁷⁹ After the siege of Mosul had failed and the caliph returned to Baghdad, Zengi dispatched an army to punish and capture the castle of Humaydiyya. After a long fight the Zengid forces managed to subdue Uqr and Shush, as well as the surrounding areas.⁸⁰ The question that needs to be asked here is why the leader of the Kurds rebelled against Zengi after seven years of stability. Perhaps he was not happy with the rigid Zengid control of the area and was hoping for more freedom of movement to increase his revenues. It is astonishing to find Zengi organising three different military campaigns and tasks at the same time: (1) rebuilding Mosul's fortifications, a very costly task; (2) sending an army to punish the Kurds, and (3) fighting Ilaldi, the Artuqid of Amid, before heading to Syria.⁸¹

One can evaluate three outcomes of this campaign. First, the Humaydiyya Kurds are never reported again in the sources as rebels against Zengid authority. The Zengid forces had taken very harsh measures against them, such as forcing them to evacuate their land and move to relocate elsewhere.⁸² Second, the peasants or farmers of Mosul were much safer in their fields once these Kurds, who had been sacking and looting the countryside, had been punished. Third, Kurdish leaders in the area feared the influence of Zengi. One such leader was Abu'l-Hayja al-Hakkary. One of the al-Hakkariyya leaders arrived in Mosul to pay his tribute to Zengi in the same year and gave his oath of submission. He was lord of Asheb, Tushi and Judayda castles, and Jabal Luhayja to the north of Mosul (in the direction of Nasibin).⁸³

Zengi's policy towards the Hakkariyya Kurds

According to al-Qalqashandi, the Hakkariyya Kurds lived in the area of the 'Imadiyya mountain between the northeast of Iraq and the foothills of the Azerbaijan mountains near the Gulmarkiyya Kurdish tribe. They had a fighting force of around 4,000 soldiers and their influence extended to neighbouring areas.⁸⁴ Out of the three major castles in the area, Asheb was the headquarters or the capital, which included several villages with well-developed agricultural activities, such as Luhayja, Tushi, Jullab, Sur, Harur, Malasi, Babukha, Bakza and Neshaz.⁸⁵

Since these areas are remote and very steep, we do not have any records of Zengi's association with them until 1133, when their leader Abu'l-Hayja came down from Asheb to Mosul to meet Zengi. The sources do not provide us with any more information until 1142 when we hear of Zengi marching to conquer the land of the Hakkariyya.⁸⁶ It adds to the confusion that Abu'l-Hayja had remained in Mosul throughout this decade, leaving behind his son Ahmad and his deputy Baw al-Arjy to run the dominions, until he died in 1142. Why the leader remained ten years in Zengid Mosul, one cannot answer. It seems probable that the Hakkariyya Kurds remained loyal up until that year when the Mamluk deputy in Asheb, al-Arjy, who was entrusted to rule Asheb, decided to govern it in the name of another son of the late leader, a young boy named 'Ali, in favour of Ahmad, his older brother.⁸⁷ Until 1140 Zengi tried to subdue Damascus in addition to his campaigns in Iraq and against the Artuqids, but his priorities had now changed and by the summer of 1142 he was eager to march with a large force to attack the castle of Asheb. Zengi managed to alert the Kurdish force to a confrontation in the open fields away from their main castle. In the heat of battle he pretended to withdraw so that the Kurds would initiate a chase – a typical Turkmen tactic – then he suddenly turned back and encircled them. They managed to nullify most of the army and captured Asheb after killing al-Arjy. While he was there, Zengi had demolished the castle Jullab and rebuilt another one carrying his name, al-'Imaddiyya.⁸⁸ It is probable that Zengi wanted to assert his power and expand into the Jazira after he lost hope of dominating all of Syria and using this area as a base for any future fight or confrontation with the Seljuqs. Upon his return to Mosul, Zengi commissioned his trusted commander and deputy Jaqar to march and capture the rest of the Hakkariyya dominions and reorganise its fortifications, a task he executed successfully.⁸⁹

Zengi's policy towards the Mahraniyya Kurds

In the same year, 1142, after the Zengid commander Jaqar had accomplished his mission in subduing the Hakkariyya, Zengi instructed him to remain in the dominions of the Mahraniyya until the end of the fighting season. Ibn al-Athir mentions the two events together, which suggests that both areas were connected geographically. Unfortunately, neither Yaqut al-Hamawi nor al-Qalqashandi provide any information about these Kurds, but they seemed to have had a very

limited amount of power in the area. Jaqar had managed to capture their castles at Shabaani, Farah, Kusher, Zafaraan and Alqi, and had restored law and order around the mountainous area of Zozan and the area between the Armenian mountains and Azerbaijan down to the north of Mosul.⁹⁰ It seems that Zengi did not focus his attention on this mountainous area, which was protected by local Kurdish commanders leading small numbers of soldiers.

Zengi's policy towards the Bashnawiyya Kurds

The last Zengid warfare against the Kurds took place in Zengi's final year, 1146, against the Bashnawiyya. They also shared the area of Zozan, north of Jazirat b. 'Umar, and controlled the castle of Fanak. This castle remained independent for 300 years under the rule of this Kurdish tribe.⁹¹ Why and how had Zengi ignored their submission for such a long time, despite it being so close to his dominions? Al-Hamawi states: 'Fanak is one of the most challenging and mighty places and no one can conquer it as it has a water spring to supply its needs and no force can cut this supply.'⁹²

However, Zengi probably did not face any danger from continuing to fight on many fronts. What confirmed this was that Zengi did not attack this isolated Kurdish place himself but commissioned his new deputy in Mosul, Zayn al-Din b. Begtegin, to dispatch a force to attack and capture Fanak.⁹³ This was unlike the case of the Mahraniyya Kurds where Zengi commissioned his deputy Jaqar to personally march and subdue them in 1142. In addition, Zengi besieged the Arab lord of Qal'at Ja'bar in Diyar Mudar on the Euphrates, which meant that Fanak castle was only second on his list of priorities. The siege of Fanak was long, but its lord, Husam al-Din, put up a very brave and stern resistance to the Zengid army until 14 September 1146, when Zengi was murdered and the whole campaign came to an end. The Zengid forces failed to capture Fanak but succeeded in taking over lesser forts like Sharwa, Jadidat Nasibin, Haytham and others in the area.⁹⁴

If one evaluates Zengid-Kurdish relations, one may find that:

- First, Zengi did not initiate hostilities against the Kurdish areas at the beginning of his career, apart from that of the Humaydiyya, who in 1133 had made a pact with the 'Abbasid caliph against him. The other three groups entered his agenda fifteen years after taking Mosul and Aleppo. One of the causes of this late encounter was their geographical isolation and their small numbers, which would not be a major threat to his cities, although they could harm his countryside by looting the crops.
- Second, there was no cooperation between the Kurdish tribes and the Turkmen tribes in the Jazira against their common enemy, Zengi. This lack of unity between the Kurdish and Turkmen tribes reflected their loss or confusion of identity.
- Third, there was a lack of coordination or unity among these four Kurdish tribes in confronting Zengi, and other Kurdish tribes did not come to their aid. Such divisions among the diverse Kurdish groups in the Middle East

are evident today among those living in Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria. The Kurds in Iraq witnessed several civil wars between the Talabani and the Barzani until 2000. In Iran, Azerbaijan and Turkey the divisions remain. The struggle between the Kurds and the Turkmen to dominate Mosul and now Kirkuk to the southeast still carries a strong reminder of the medieval struggle for independence.

- Fourth, Ibn al-Athir mentions that Zengi attacked this area, as he 'did not like to have foreign elements between his territories'.⁹⁵ This is an unconvincing argument, since he waited for more than fifteen years to react against the Kurds. Moreover, he launched several military campaigns against the Arabs of Qal'at Ja'bar and the Seljuq sultan before 1143. He rapidly penetrated Syria and captured Aleppo in 1128, only one year after his allocation of Mosul, which shows that he had an overwhelming economic superiority. If Ibn al-Athir's opinion is valid, Zengi should have moved after Edessa in 1144 to capture many castles belonging to the Crusaders in the Jazira, such as Saruj, Tell Bashir, Daluk and Sumaysat, and not fought for the Kurdish and Arab strongholds. It is worth pointing out here that Zengi did not call upon Najm al-Din Ayyub, father of Saladin, who saved Zengi's life and gave him refuge in Tikrit during the civil war in Iraq in 1132; nor is there mention of him having any clear policy towards the Kurdish tribes, including the Ayyubids, who were Ruwadiyya Kurds from Dvin near Tiflis in the upper Caucasus. Saladin's father was appointed by Zengi only as Baalbak's deputy in Syria. The same applied to his chief *qadi*, al-Shahrazuri (see Chapters 4 and 6).

The remaining ethnic element in the Jazira after the Turkmen and the Kurds are the Arabs. Due to the Turkmen's domination of the Middle East under the Seljuqs following the battle of Manzikert in 1071, we do not notice a significant or dominant role for the Arabs in the Jazira. One can say that Zengi succeeded in capturing one Arab city and failed in the other, due to his over-ambitious policy of campaigning in more than one place at the same time. In late 1134, while marching into Syria, he crossed the Euphrates at Raqqa, Diyar Mudar (the summer capital of the 'Abbasids under al-Rashid (d. 809)). This was under Ibn Malik of the Arab tribe of Numayrids.⁹⁶ Zengi managed to trick its lord into open Raqqa's gates to him as a guest who would respect his oath, but he captured the town swiftly without a fight and installed a Turkmen Mamluk commander as a Zengid deputy in the town.⁹⁷ One cannot blame Ibn Malik for allowing Zengi into his town in the first place, since he could not afford to initiate hostilities with a commander of Zengi's calibre.

Following the same strategy of attacking different places in the Jazira while crossing between his Iraqi and Syrian dominions, there is a very short line in the sources mentioning that in 1142 Zengi captured the towns of Haditha and 'Ana on the lower Euphrates opposite Samarra.⁹⁸ Unfortunately it is not stated which Arab lord or power was ruling these two areas. This took place in the same year that Zengi had attacked the Hakkariyya Kurds and the Turkmen Artuqids of

Amid, reflecting the existence of great military resources on the Zengid side, but also a lack of planning, as mentioned above.

Perhaps Zengi's attack in his final year on Qal'at Ja'bar, west of Raqqa on the Euphrates, summarises Turkish Zengid–Arab relations. In the summer of 1146, Zengi led his forces to besiege the Uqaylid Arabs who governed Qal'at Ja'bar as an *iqta'* from the Seljuq sultan Malik Shah in 1085/6. At the same time, Zengi dispatched another army to attack the Kurds of Fanak.⁹⁹

The lord of Qal'at Ja'bar, Salim b. Malik, showed bravery and distinguished military skill in resisting Zengi, who resorted to his old friend Hassan al-Baalbaki, the Arab lord of Minbaj, west of upper Euphrates. Hassan became the envoy of Zengi to the Uqaylids, carrying the message: 'I guarantee Salim b. Malik lavish *iqta'* and grants in return for surrendering Qal'at Ja'bar, otherwise I swear to Almighty God that I will camp and besiege the place until I capture it, and end your life. Who can keep you from me?'¹⁰⁰ Hassan of Minbaj tried to persuade the Uqaylids to surrender in order to avoid Zengi's revenge. Salim the Uqaylid refused, and sent Zengi a clearly cynical reply: 'What keeps me from you is what kept Hassan from Balak.'¹⁰¹ Balak was the Artuqid chief of parts of Diyar Bakr and Aleppo, who captured Prince Joscelin I of Edessa in 1122 and Baldwin II in 1123. He was killed in 1124 by an arrow while besieging Hassan in Minbaj.¹⁰² Zengi received a negative reply and continued his siege until 14 September 1146, when he was killed while sleeping in his tent during the night by his *mamluk* eunuch Yaranqash. According to 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, Yaranqash beheaded Zengi after Zengi, while drunk, had threatened to kill his *mamluks* the following morning. A different account is given by Ibn al-Athir, who only mentioned Zengi's killing and Yaranqash' escape. The siege ended after six months.¹⁰³

Due to the long and hard siege of this area, Zengi had been about to accept 30,000 dinars after long negotiations to end the siege. However, when the Uqaylid ambassador left Qal'at Ja'bar to pay the ransom to Zengi, the latter ordered one of his commanders to lead the envoy's horse close to a bowl of *yakhni*, a meat and vegetable soup, which had been cooked for the camp. 'If the horse tries to drink from it tell me at once', Zengi instructed his commander. The latter returned with news that the horse did drink from the soup. Zengi realised that Qal'at Ja'bar, after six months of siege, was suffering from a severe water shortage. Out of greed he refused the ransom and asked again for the surrender of the place.¹⁰⁴ This story illustrates how Zengi, even after capturing the Crusader Edessa in 1144, wasted time and military effort by fighting his jihad against fellow Muslims, Turkmen, Kurds and Arabs rather than attempting to incorporate them through diplomacy, or directing his efforts towards the Frankish areas in the Jazira such as Marash and Tell Bashir, especially as there was no strategic reason for attacking the Uqaylids in the first place.

The death of Zengi and the details of his military administration will be discussed in Chapter 6. One can say, however, that Zengi's campaign in the Jazira secured the eastern hub of the area where the Khabur river runs from Mardin to meet the Euphrates at Qarqisia. This was achieved through a combination of

imposing direct military control or creating political alliances, leaving the western side of the Khabur to the Crusaders' influence in Edessa.

Zengi managed to secure important key crossing points between Iraq and Syria, keeping Raqqa and Haditha away from the Frankish threat. These areas were vitally important for sending Turkmen troops to his dominions in Syria, which the Seljuq King of Damascus, Duqaq, had realised when the first Crusades captured his *iqta'* Jerusalem in 1099. Hence the locals marched to Baghdad to seek help, while he marched to secure his *iqta'* in the Jazira as his main link to Iran and the East, just as the Crusaders established themselves in Edessa and Antioch, and Jerusalem.¹⁰⁵ Through controlling key crossing points to the East, Zengi was able to secure his communication with the East as well as the annual recruitment of Turkmen troops for his army.

Zengi's policy against the Crusaders and the Seljuqs of Syria will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Notes

- 1 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, pp. 32–4.
- 2 M. al-Qazwini, *Athar al-bilad wa-akhbar al-ibad*, Beirut, 1976, p. 351; Ibn Hawqal, *Surat al-ard*, Beirut, 1988, p. 210.
- 3 Ibn Hawqal, *Surat al-ard*; Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-buldan*, vol. 2; 'Izz al-Din Ibn Shaddad, *al-'Alaq al-khatira fi dhikr umara' al-Sham wa'l-Jazira*, vol. 3, ed. S. al-Dahan, Damascus, 1956; Ibn al-Azraq al-Fariqi, *Ta'rikh Mayyafariqin wa-Amid*, ed. A. Badawi, Beirut, 1974, pp. 28–30.
- 4 Ibn Shaddad, *al-'Alaq*, vol. 3, p. 4. Ibn al-Azraq al-Fariqi, *Ta'rikh Mayyafariqin*, pp. 28–30.
- 5 Ibn Hawqal, *Surat al-ard*, p. 210; al-Qazwini, *Athar al-bilad*, p. 368.
- 6 Ibn Hawqal, *Surat al-ard*, pp. 210–11; Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam*, vol. 2, p. 493.
- 7 al-Qazwini, *Athar al-bilad*, pp. 393, 467, 491, 494, 565.
- 8 The author has visited the Diyar Bakr area several times since the 1990s, and has witnessed the great challenges of movement during the winter season. On 18 August 2011 the Turkish air force bombed the Kurdish separatists inside Iraq, but had little success on the ground against the Kurds, who, according to CNN, sustained only four casualties in Diyar Bakr inside Turkey.
- 9 Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties*, p. 85.
- 10 Ibid., p. 85.
- 11 Ibn Shaddad, *al-'Alaq*, vol. 3, p. 551.
- 12 Ibn al-Azraq al-Fariqi, *Ta'rikh Mayyafariqin*, pp. 51–2.
- 13 Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties*, p. 89; Ibn al-Azraq al-Fariqi, *Ta'rikh Mayyafariqin*, pp. 211–12.
- 14 Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties*, pp. 91–2.
- 15 Ibid., p. 93.
- 16 C. E. Bosworth, 'Barbarian Invasion; The Coming of the Turks into the Islamic World', in *Islamic Civilisation 950–1150*, ed. S. Richards, Oxford, 1973, p. 13.
- 17 T. K. el-Azhari, 'The Turkmen Identity Crisis in the Fifteenth-century Middle East', in *Chronica*, ed. L. Marjanucz, vol. 5, 2005, pp. 97–107.
- 18 C. Cahen, art., EI2, 'Artukids'; Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat al-a'yan*, Beirut, 1985, vol. 1, pp. 60–1.
- 19 Abu Shama, *al-Rawdatayn*, vol. 1, p. 24; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 49; C. Hillenbrand, art., 'Artuqids', in *Crusades, An Encyclopedia*, ed. A. Murray, Santa Barbara, 2006.

- 20 Ibn al-‘Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, pp. 488–9.
- 21 Abu’l-Fida, *al-Mukhtasar*, vol. 2, pp. 226–30; Cahen, ‘Artukids’.
- 22 Abu’l-Fida, *al-Mukhtasar*, vol. 2, p. 230; C. Hillenbrand, ‘The Career of Najm al-Din Il-Ghazi’, in *Der Islam*, vol. 58, no. 2, 1981, pp. 250–92.
- 23 Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties*, pp. 194–5; Cahen, ‘Artukids’.
- 24 Ibn al-‘Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 533.
- 25 El-Azhari, ‘Balak’.
- 26 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Bahir*, p. 36; Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu‘jam al-buldan*, vol. 2, p. 138.
- 27 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, pp. 34–5. None of the sources mentioned the date of capture.
- 28 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta’rikh al-Bahir*, p. 37; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 35.
- 29 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, pp. 35–6.
- 30 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta’rikh al-Bahir*, p. 37.
- 31 Ibn al-‘Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 238.
- 32 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta’rikh al-Bahir*, p. 37.
- 33 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 36.
- 34 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 36.
- 35 T. K. el-Azhari, ‘The Policy of Balak the Artukid against Muslim and Crusaders: A Turkmen Identity Dilemma in the Middle East, 1090–1124’, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, vol. 4, Los Angeles, 2014, pp. 286–93.
- 36 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 651. ‘Imad Khalil is not correct when he writes that Zengi moved directly from Mosul to Aleppo, disregarding the Jazira (*Zanki*, pp. 70–1). Zengi stopped and captured Harran, and other towns in the Jazira between the two cities.
- 37 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta’rikh al-Bahir*, pp. 37–8.
- 38 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 655.
- 39 *Ibid.*, vol. 10, pp. 659–64; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta’rikh al-Bahir*, pp. 38–9.
- 40 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta’rikh al-Bahir*, p. 39.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- 42 Ibn al-Nizam al-Husaini, *al-Irada fi’l-hikaya al-Saljuqiyya*, trans. A. Hassanin, Baghdad, 1979, pp. 24–5; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta’rikh al-Bahir*, p. 38.
- 43 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 54. Alptekin puts the date two years earlier, which is not accurate (*Reign of Zangi*, p. 132).
- 44 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 14; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta’rikh Dimashq*, p. 385.
- 45 Ibn al-‘Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 253.
- 46 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta’rikh Dimashq*, p. 385; Usama ibn Munqidh, *al-I’tibar*, Beirut, 2008, pp. 250–1.
- 47 Ibn al-‘Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 254.
- 48 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 254. There is no mention in any source about who had previously controlled these towns, but one assumes that they were under a vassalage relationship between Da’ud and Ilaldi.
- 49 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, pp. 15–17.
- 50 Ibn al-‘Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, pp. 267–8. Although the Turkmen military tradition is capable of mustering a large number of mounted horsemen or cavalry in a very short time, it is believed that such numbers are exaggerated, and that there would actually be no more than 30,000.
- 51 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 268.
- 52 *Ibid.*
- 53 El-Azhari, *The Seljuqs*, p. 249.
- 54 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, pp. 67–72; Ibn al-‘Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, pp. 269–70.
- 55 Alptekin, *Reign of Zangi*, p. 133.
- 56 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, pp. 89–90; Ibn al-‘Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, pp. 275–6; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta’rikh al-Bahir*, pp. 47 and 64. Alptekin mentions that

Timurtash had declared himself a vassal to Zengi the following year, but he does not cite any source (*Reign of Zangi*, p. 135).

- 57 Ibn al-ʿAdim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, pp. 276–7; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Taʾrikh al-Bahir*, p. 66.
- 58 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 430.
- 59 Usama Ibn Munqidh, *al-Iʿtibar*, p. 166; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Taʾrikh al-Bahir*, p. 48.
- 60 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Taʾrikh Dimashq*, p. 279; Ibn al-ʿAdim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 254.
- 61 Usama Ibn Munqidh, *al-Iʿtibar*, p. 167.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties*, p. 197.
- 65 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 84.
- 66 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Taʾrikh al-Bahir*, p. 57.
- 67 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 84.
- 68 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Taʾrikh Dimashq*, p. 425.
- 69 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Taʾrikh al-Bahir*, p. 56. Alptekin mentions that Zengi skilfully manoeuvred the Qipchaq Turks to desert him during battle, resulting in a victory for Zengi, but no citation is given (*Reign of Zangi*, p. 134).
- 70 Ibn al-ʿAdim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 275.
- 71 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Taʾrikh al-Bahir*, p. 66.
- 72 V. Minorsky, art., EI2, 'Kurd'.
- 73 Ibid.; Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties*, p. 89.
- 74 Sharaf Khan al-Bidlisi, *Sharaf Nameh*, Beirut, 2002, p. 32.
- 75 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Taʾrikh Dimashq*, p. 279.
- 76 al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-aʾsha fi sinaʾat al-inshaʾ*, ed. M. Husayn, Beirut, 1987, vol. 4, pp. 373–9.
- 77 Ibid., vol. 4, pp. 375–7.
- 78 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Taʾrikh al-Bahir*, p. 48; al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-aʾsha*, vol. 4, p. 375.
- 79 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 55.
- 80 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Taʾrikh al-Bahir*, p. 48.
- 81 Ibid.
- 82 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 15.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-aʾsha*, vol. 4, p. 378. The author visited the Hakkariyya area in Turkey in 1991; it remains a challenging place for Kurdish separatists opposed to the Turkish state.
- 85 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, pp. 15–16.
- 86 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Taʾrikh Dimashq*, p. 432; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 16.
- 87 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 16.
- 88 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, pp. 55–7.
- 89 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 56.
- 90 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 16. Ibn Wasil is mistaken in referring to the Muhraniyya as the Hadhbaniyya, which is another remote Kurdish group.
- 91 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Taʾrikh al-Bahir*, p. 73.
- 92 Yaquṭ al-Hamawī, *Muʾjam al-buldan*, vol. 4, p. 125. Yaquṭ al-Hamawī lists six other castles in the area, but they belong to another Kurdish tribe named al-Bakhtiyya, which Zengi did not confront.
- 93 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 98.
- 94 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Taʾrikh al-Bahir*, pp. 73–4.
- 95 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 110.
- 96 Ibn al-ʿAdim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 257.
- 97 Ibid.

- 98 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 64. One should not confuse Haditha, on the Middle Euphrates, with another Haditha, east of Mosul on the Tigris river inhabited by Arabs of the al-Muharish tribe (Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 89).
- 99 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 98; 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Ta'rikh dawlat al-Seljuq*, p. 189.
- 100 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 74.
- 101 Ibid.
- 102 El-Azhari, 'Balak'.
- 103 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Ta'rikh dawlat al-Seljuq*, p. 190; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 74; Ibn al-'Adim, *Bughyat*, p. 267.
- 104 Ibn al-'Adim, *Bughyat*, p. 270.
- 105 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 289; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 223.

4 Confronting the Crusaders and the Seljuqs in Syria

Holy and unholy war, 1127 to 1140

Be cautious, but how can caution keep you away
From our fatal destructive swords?

Where can the kings of polytheism take refuge?
From a king whose forces are the fate

‘Imad al-Din had crippled them with his stormy army
The flash of which causes eyes to be open with confusion

Even if they escape to incapacious corridors
No excuse from death which became inescapable

Islam became no more afraid of spies nor power
While atheism became neither a body nor a trace

So never fear the Franks’ unity again
If they attack us, a small force will defeat them

If they contend or fight or chase or besiege
They will be contended, fought, chased, and besieged

Till joy return to the Thughurs of Syria
As if ‘Umar came and dwelled among them.¹

This poem was written by a contemporary of Zengi, Ibn al-Qaysarani (1085–1153), who was born in Acre and lived in Caesarea, before he was forced to flee to Aleppo in 1101 after the Crusaders captured it.² It reflects the common Muslim view of jihad in the first half of the twelfth century when severe strife took place between Western Christianity and Islam. In her remarkable work *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*, Carole Hillenbrand draws attention to the fact that the evolution of the phenomenon of jihad at the time of the Crusades progressed through different stages, starting with *Kitab al-Jihad* by the Damascene judge al-Sulami (d. 1106),³ who called for holy war against al-Ifranj or the Franks for the first time. One should add that different strata of society – rulers,

commanders, merchants and peasants – had different approaches towards such an idea.

This chapter will examine Zengi's policy against the Crusaders and Turkmen Seljuqs of Syria from 1127 up until 1140 when he finally gave up on attacking Syria, just before his attack and capture of Edessa. One cannot agree more with Carole Hillenbrand in stating: 'The serious mobilisation of jihad as an instrument in the war against the Crusaders began in the time of Zengi.'⁴ In addition to the sultanate armies commissioned to march for jihad from Iran, Azerbaijan, Iraq and the Jazira, upon the plea of the locals in Syria between 1110 and 1115 three massive armies turned out, directed against the Franks; the use of the instrument of jihad started in 1110 and continued until 1119 and beyond.

Turkmen commanders included Mawdud (d. 1113), commander at the Battle of Sinnabra against King Baldwin I of Jerusalem,⁵ and Il-Ghazi (d. 1122), commander at the Battle of Ager Sanguinis against Roger of Antioch (d. 1119), among others. This war instrument was used by Zengi more often throughout his career against the Seljuq sultan, 'Abbasid caliphate and various Muslim powers until the eve of the capture of Edessa in 1144 (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3), which does not make Zengi a dedicated *mujahid* or an ideal Muslim, since he killed fellow Muslims even after Edessa. His realpolitik towards certain Frankish powers does not reflect a *mujahid* like his son Nur Al-Din (d. 1174), for example, but rather a ruthless pragmatic leader such as Saladin (d. 1193). One should also take into account the Fatimid Shi'ite jihad commissioned between 1099 and 1105 by the de facto ruler of Egypt, al-Afdal (d. 1121), against the Crusaders of Jerusalem. Despite his early embassy to the Crusaders when they arrived at the walls of Antioch in the autumn of 1097, we see him leading, then dispatching, five colossal armies after the capture of Jerusalem in July 1099 to fight the Franks.

Between 1127 and 1143 Zengi had to confront the Crusaders of Edessa, the Crusaders of Antioch, the Crusaders of Jerusalem, and the Seljuqs of Damascus, Hims, Hama and parts of central and northern Syria. This was in addition to the Byzantine army which invaded Syria in 1137/8. As soon as Zengi had seized Mosul in 1127 as an *iqta'* from the Seljuq sultan, he started to expand into the Jazira.

After subduing the various Artuqid powers in Nasibin, Sanjar and the Khabur basin, Zengi attacked Harran in the vicinity of the principality of Edessa, which comprised Edessa, Saruj, al-Bira, Kaysun, Sumaysat, Bahsana, Qal'at al-Rum and Raban. The latter two areas were west of the Euphrates. Zengi feared that Joscelin of Edessa might see this as an imminent threat to his dominions. As a result, we learn that Zengi sent an envoy to the Crusader prince assuring him that he had no interest in his dominions and reached a seasonal peace with him. That peace lasted until 1129.⁶ Most sources interpret this peace as a tactful temporary move by Zengi, since his priority was to capture Aleppo which was in political and economic crisis. Ibn al-'Adim supplies us with plenty of details regarding the vacuum of power there. One of the most revealing signs of the weakness of Aleppo was the frequent shutdown of its main market. Thus we see Zengi avoiding having two

fronts at the same time. As a matter of fact, if one adds in the Artuqids and the commanders of Iraq he would have multiple fronts.

News reached Zengi from more than one source, including Shihab al-Din Malik Ibn Salim, lord of Qal'at Ja'bar on the Euphrates, urging him to save Aleppo from the ailing conditions⁷ that might result in a takeover by the Crusaders of nearby Antioch, or Antioch and Edessa together, since they had immediate access to the countryside. Zengi attempted to inherit the dominions of his former lord al-Bursuqi, lord of Mosul and Aleppo, who had died in 1126. It is apparent that al-Bursuqi's son, Mas'ud, had installed Emir Quman as his deputy there for a short time, then replaced him with Emir Khutlugh in 1126. Khutlugh marched to assume his post in Aleppo to find Quman refusing to implement such a mandate and accusing Khutlugh of forging the decree.⁸ By the time Khutlugh returned to Mas'ud at Rahba on the Euphrates, the latter had mysteriously died. Joscelin of Edessa and Bohemond II of Antioch tried to seize this opportunity and attack Aleppo. Some of the Frankish forces besieged the city for a few weeks, despite the harsh winter of December 1127. Thus Zengi dispatched his leading commanders, Sunqur Deraz and Qaraqush (sunqur and qush both mean 'falcon'), backed by a large army to take over Aleppo and to protect it from inner disorder and external threats.⁹

Here, one point of confusion is raised by Ibn al-Athir concerning the real authority or power invested in Zengi by the sultan, as he mentioned that the two emirs, Deraz and Qaraqush, brought with them the sultanate diploma given to Zengi, which included Mosul, the Jazira and Sham. Ibn al-Athir had mentioned the Jazira previously, but this was the first time that Sham or Syria was included.¹⁰ It is strongly argued that the historian, who was biased towards Zengi, anticipated what could happen in the future and mentioned it earlier in his chronology, especially given that Ibn al-'Adim had touched on this story only in 1129 when Zengi travelled to the sultan in Iran, where he was given a diploma to rule all Western provinces (*al-gharb kulluhu*).¹¹ In addition to the two ceremonial diplomas, here we have another problem: when Tughtegin, lord of Damascus and central Syria, died on 11 February 1128, his son Buri ('Wolf') had the right to inherit from his father all his dominions according to the sultanate diploma issued in 1115. Not only that, but Sultan Mahmud did not raise any objections to such developments. Even when Buri himself travelled to Baghdad to pay personal homage to the sultanate and the caliphate in 1128,¹² we still see Buri recognised over what he governed in Syria, which creates confusion and a dilemma over Zengi's diploma issued at the same time. Thus one cannot agree with Nicholson in his study, which states that Zengi was granted a royal diploma to govern all of Syria and the adjacent countries, due to the reasons given above.¹³

While Zengi was totally secure from any Crusader attack from Edessa, he directed his military power at parts of the Jazira in the winter of 1128, while sending his *hajib* (chamberlain), al-Yaghisiyani, to his deputy in Aleppo. Zengi himself entered Aleppo in June 1128, cheered and greeted by the locals of the city as their saviour from disorder. Zengi restored law and order, and allocated

his leading commanders different *iqta* ' around the city.¹⁴ It seems that the reputation of Zengi's father as a former lord of Aleppo paved the way for his son's smooth entry into this challenging city.

Here one has to depart from chronological narrative to discuss the geopolitical-economic weight of Aleppo and the success of Zengi's additions to this city. In ancient and medieval times Aleppo was the end station of the Silk Road; thus it represented a vital commercial centre, not only to Syria but to Iraq, Anatolia, and leading on to Constantinople.¹⁵ Such economic commercial weight continued during and after the Crusades, and it was called Little India in the fifteenth century under the Mamluk administration. This was due to the diverse spice products it provided from Southeast Asia and the Persian silk trade in its markets, which were received with great interest, especially by the Italian merchants.¹⁶

Aleppo was the second largest city in Muslim Syria, and as Brett states: 'The survival of Aleppo and its function as a city state among other factors was because of its defences and the strength of its mighty citadel, and the *ahdath*, or the local militia of the city who defended it.'¹⁷

After the coming of Muslim rule to Syria in the early seventh century, Aleppo was ruled as an emirate or *wilaya* (principality) within the Muslim administration, with the governor appointed from Damascus, capital of the Umayyads, or Baghdad, capital of the 'Abbasids. The Arab dynasty of the Hamdanids of Mosul (906–1004) was the first to add Aleppo to its dominions, in 944, in a semi-political union up until 1004.¹⁸

When the Seljuq Turkmen captured Aleppo and Jerusalem in 1070, and Damascus in 1075, they retained the former Mirdasid Arab lords of Aleppo as their deputies until December 1086, when Malik Shah came personally from Iran to install one of his leading Turkmen commanders, Aq Sunqur, as his new deputy.¹⁹ That commander was Zengi's father, under whose rule the Turkification of the administration began, and continued for many centuries afterwards. Aleppo was always ruled as a city-state, except during 1094/5, when King Tutush (d. 1095) united Syria in his attempt to gain the Seljuq sultanate in Iran. After his death Aleppo returned to being a city-state with many dominions, such as Antioch, Hama and Hims in Syria, until the arrival of the Crusaders in the Levant in 1097. The collapse of the Seljuq rule in 1117²⁰ was followed by Artuqid rule up until 1125 when al-Bursuqi, lord of Mosul, and Zengi took over the city. During this time Aleppo's control over its dominions kept changing from one season to another and from one lord to another, depending on many military, political and economic conditions.

One has to keep in mind here that the geopolitical influence of Mosul over Aleppo in the early Crusading period was immense. In 1098, Lord Kerbogha of Mosul besieged the Crusaders of Antioch. In addition, Lord Mawdud, in 1113, made a pact with Damascus in Sinnabra against the Kingdom of Jerusalem. In between we have such cases as the victory of Gumushtegin in 1104 at Harran over Bohemond of Antioch and Baldwin of Edessa.²¹ Neither of these lords managed to dominate Aleppo directly but always interfered in its political

affairs, using their great ability to muster Turkmen warriors from Iraq, Azerbaijan, Armenia, the Jazira and western Iran.

To understand the military power of Aleppo, one may cite a case from the year 1111 when the Seljuq king of the city, Ridwan (d. 1113), resisted a colossal army dispatched for jihad led by the sultan's son Mas'ud, who included in his company Lord Mawdud of Mosul and the lords of Azerbaijan, Hamadhan and Diyar Bakr. Ridwan successfully deterred them from breaking into the city despite the severe siege and destruction they caused in the countryside.²²

This was the geographical–historical dimension of Aleppo–Mosul relations when Zengi took it over in 1128. The question one should ask here is: Why did Zengi not march in person in January to take Aleppo in such a chaotic situation, instead dispatching some of his trusted commanders? As mentioned in Chapter 3, Zengi was campaigning at Sanjar, then at the Khabur basin, then at Harran in order to secure a solid communication line between his base in Mosul and Aleppo. On 18 June 1128 Zengi made his entry into Aleppo's citadel after his commanders had paved the way for him politically.²³ The first thing he did was to move his father's remains (grave) to a new place. He chose the building of the first *madrasa* in Aleppo, al-Zujajiyya, started by the Seljuqs in 1116/17 and completed by the Artuqids in 1123, and decided that this place would be the official burial place for his dynasty.²⁴ Some of the former commanders of the Artuqids made their way to the Jazira. In addition, we see that Ibrahim b. Ridwan the Seljuq also preferred to leave Aleppo to the East.²⁵

Ibn al-Athir exaggerates the story or degree of Zengi's interference in Syrian affairs, narrating it as a blessing from God that his leader appeared in Muslim Syria while another Turkmen lord of Damascus passed away in the same year, namely Tughtegin, who died in 1128. Ibn al-Athir writes that Zengi seized the banner of jihad, which was transferred from one commander who used to curb the Crusaders to another,²⁶ although both were very pragmatic and one cannot ignore the fact that Tughtegin's son Buri, who succeeded him in Syria, was a very capable and experienced ruler.

After organising his administration in Aleppo, Zengi had no time to stay in Syria, neither to attack the Crusaders nor to establish contact with the Seljuqs. This was because in January 1129 he was dismissed by the Seljuq sultan Mahmud from his rule of Mosul, as previously mentioned. After Zengi had managed to reverse this decree, he returned to Syria at the end of the year to find that the Crusaders had failed to capture Damascus following a plot they had orchestrated with the Isma'ilis and the vizier of the Seljuqs there in September 1129.²⁷ Not only that, but he also discovered that the Crusaders, led by King Baldwin II (d. 1131), had failed in their attack and siege of Damascus after sacking its countryside in an economic attrition in November/December 1129.²⁸ Zengi wanted to appear like a *mujahid* in the eyes of the Seljuq sultan in Iraq and Iran, and at the same time was disturbed by the first-ever Frankish attack on Damascus itself, aiming to capture it. Thus he decided to expand from Aleppo southward.

In January/February 1130, Zengi wanted to gain political legitimacy in Syria, so he married the daughter of Ridwan, the former King of Aleppo (which will be

discussed separately under political marriage). Such a move may have given him prestige over the lord of Damascus whose father was *atabeg* to the Seljuq dynasty in Syria. Zengi sent several messages to Buri inviting him to join in a pact for jihad against the Crusaders.²⁹ When Buri finally overcame his doubts about Zengi's intentions and agreed to such a vague request with no clear target, he dispatched 500 of his elite knights from Damascus commanded by his son Sawinj, lord of Hama. Sawinj headed north to meet Zengi near Aleppo. Zengi's warm welcome and hospitality towards the Damascene force banished any doubts and mistrust from the mind of Sawinj and his commanders. Three days later, Zengi completed his plot by arresting Sawinj and his leading commanders, and he sent them at once to be imprisoned in Aleppo.³⁰

Due to this unexpected act of betrayal, Zengi managed to loot the camp of Sawinj and confiscate all his weapons, then proceeded to attack and capture Hama soon after, in October 1130.³¹ The sources do not mention any details about the negotiations of Zengi and Buri regarding which Frankish side they were going to attack, but it seems that the failed Crusader siege of Damascus had encouraged Buri to welcome and believe in the Zengid intentions, and perhaps use the Mosuli influence in Syria as before. Zengi's ambitions did not stop there, but he awarded Hama to Ibn Qaraja, Turkmen lord of Hims, who rebelled against Damascus' authority and joined Zengi in his Hama campaign.

After a week, Zengi completed his plot by arresting Ibn Qaraja and his force and marching to besiege and capture Hims. Zengi was determined to capture Hims and he besieged it for forty days. The son of Ibn Qaraja put up a strong defence and refused to surrender, despite seeing his father paraded outside the city walls in Zengi's camp in a humiliating manner.³² In December 1130, after plundering the Hims countryside, Zengi left for Aleppo and went back to Mosul, taking with him Sawinj and his leading commanders, having turned down a ransom of 50,000 dinars from his father to set him free.³³

Zengi's realpolitik manner, especially against Hama, was never criticised by contemporary sources, especially as regards someone calling for jihad, then turning against fellow Turkmen Sunni lords. It is believed that Zengi, after he was about to lose Mosul, wanted to expand into Syria to create an alternative realm and dominions to his Iraqi one. He aimed to create his own political unity but not to cooperate with the existing Muslim powers and form an alliance with them. That is exactly what Saladin did against Nur al-Din b. Zengi when Saladin invaded Yemen as an alternative to Egypt, anticipating that Nur al-Din would eventually march to Cairo to end Saladin's rebellion (in 1171/2); after 1174, the year Nur al-Din died, he launched a lengthy civil war against his successor. In other words, his jihad was against fellow Sunni Muslims.

The question that should be asked here is: Why did Zengi choose to attack the Seljuqs of Syria and not the Crusaders of Antioch, who were suffering a political crisis at the same time following the death of Bohemond II in February 1130? The Aleppan historian Ibn al-'Adim mentions that Emir Sawar b. Aytegin deserted his lord, Buri of Damascus, for unknown reasons and joined Zengi in Aleppo, who warmly welcomed him and installed him as his deputy in the city

and its dominions.³⁴ It is likely that Sawar had provided Zengi with internal military information about the capability of the Damascene realm and its dominions, which encouraged Zengi to attack. At the same time, the Crusaders' principality of Antioch was suffering a vacuum of power when Alice, the widow of Bohemond II, wanted to seize the rule for herself in the name of her daughter Constance. Alice rebelled against her father, King Baldwin II of Jerusalem, and sent a messenger to Zengi urging him to provide help and protection.³⁵ Due to the swift march of Baldwin II to the north to save Antioch from a Muslim–Frankish pact, he was successful in catching and killing the messenger before his arrival in Aleppo.

King Baldwin removed his daughter Alice from Antioch and appointed Joscelin of Edessa as regent for Princess Constance. He also rewarded Alice with the fief of Lattakia on the coast.³⁶ During that period Zengi was in central Syria campaigning against the Seljuqs, wasting a rare opportunity for cooperation between Mosul and Damascus, similar to what took place earlier between Mawdud and Tughtegin in 1113 or between Il-Ghazi of Aleppo and Tughtegin in 1119, among another examples.

Ibn al-Athir and Abu Shama, in *al-Rawdatayn*, are the only chroniclers to mention a major battle between Zengi himself and the Crusaders in 1130 at al-Atharib, two days' march west of Aleppo, which resulted in a great victory for him and the capture of its fortified citadel, thus creating a *mujahid* out of Zengi.³⁷ Ibn al-Athir contradicts himself, as he mentions that Zengi captured al-Atharib again in 1135, without giving an account of whether Zengi had lost it between 1130 and 1135. If one looks at other sources, such as Ibn al-'Adim's *Zubdat*, Ibn Wasil's *Mufarrij* and Ibn al-Qalanisi's *Ta'rikh*, one finds that they do not mention anything about this story. They do mention a few skirmishes between Zengi's deputy in Aleppo at Ma'arrat Misrin and the countryside of al-Atharib without a decisive outcome, probably to deter Baldwin II who was reorganising Antioch at the same time.³⁸ It should be noted that Zengi left Syria when he heard that a huge Artuqid force had gathered to attack his dominions in the Jazira, led by Timurtash and Da'ud (as mentioned in Chapter 3).

One has to draw a line or distinguish between Zengi's campaign led by him in person and others led by his deputies, either through direct orders from him with precise targets, or by deputies who were capable of defending their dominions without engaging in a serious confrontation with Crusader powers. That is what took place as the capable Zengid deputy of Aleppo, Sawar, attacked al-Atharib twice in 1130/1, the second time after Joscelin of Edessa, regent of Antioch, had sacked some Aleppan dominions, causing minor casualties.³⁹

After staying in Iraq to fight the Artuqids and giving a rest to some of his forces, Zengi crossed the Euphrates back into Syria, not to fight the Crusaders but to capture Hims, on 14 August 1131. During this time he managed to exchange Sawinj b. Buri for Dubays, enemy of the caliph, who was taken captive by Buri during the same year. Having said that, the political relations and mistrust between Zengi and the Seljuqs of Damascus did not change.⁴⁰

The year 1131 was an *annus horribilis* for both the Frankish and Muslim sides. On 21 August, King Baldwin II of Jerusalem died. The following week, Sultan Mahmud II of Iraq and western Iran died, followed shortly afterwards by Joscelin I of Edessa and Antioch.⁴¹ Their deaths created a chain of changes on both the Muslim and Frankish sides. Baldwin II was succeeded by the relatively weaker Fulk of Anjou. One finds that Princess Alice tried to get back to Antioch again, especially after the death of Joscelin I, who was succeeded by Joscelin II. This political crisis was not settled until 1136 when Raymond of Poitiers married Constance and became Prince of Antioch.

On the Muslim side, the Fatimid Shi'ite caliphate controlling Egypt and Ascalon in Palestine was in a dilemma following the assassination of Caliph al-Amir, who had no son to succeed him according to the Shi'ite doctrine. Problems erupted due to the succession of his cousin against the core principle of the Shi'ite faith,⁴² and when the Seljuq Sultan Mahmud II of Iraq and western Iran died on 29 August 1131, resulting in a calamitous civil war in the empire among five different Seljuq kings, in which Zengi was heavily involved until the end of 1134, as mentioned in Chapter 2. While Zengi had given priority to the civil war in Iraq between 1131 and 1134, one sees two political-military tracks to his dominions in Syria: first, Aleppo under Sawar and his confrontation with the Crusaders of Edessa and Antioch; second, Hama, and how it was attacked and recaptured by Damascus from Zengid deputies, reducing and countering Zengi's expansionist strategy in central Syria.

If one starts with the situation in northern Syria one will see that the Aleppan front was threatened by Antioch and Edessa at the same time. The Crusaders too had their civil wars, after the first generation of their pioneers had disappeared by 1131, succeeded by more conflicting lords such as Joscelin II and Fulk of Anjou. In addition, Princess Alice formed a pact in northern Syria against Jerusalem, which led the Crusader states in the Levant up until 1131. After that date this juridical status was in great doubt.⁴³ King Fulk was forced to march from Jerusalem to Antioch in 1132 to fight Alice's pact, especially given the fact that Antioch had always been claimed by the Byzantine Empire, and he needed to put a quick end to this strife on his way to the north. Pons of Tripoli refused to grant him passage through his dominions and he had to sail from Beirut to St Symeon. As a result of this,⁴⁴ Ibn al-'Adim comments on this Frankish affair, saying: 'Many afflictions and confrontations took place among the Franks.'⁴⁵ This was a missed or wasted opportunity for Zengi to act, especially as he was in control of Aleppo in Syria. As a result of that, sources furnish us with a few minor skirmishes and confrontations between Zengi's deputy and the Crusaders, only aiming to win a few minor military posts and castles, but not to eliminate or end the political rule on either side.

In November 1132, while Sultan Mas'ud was invading Iraq and Zengi was trying to show loyalty to both him and Sanjar, King Fulk of Jerusalem gathered forces and headed north to attack Aleppo's countryside at a place called Nawaz in the Summaq mountain area. It seems that the Isma'ili Assassins who had just bought the castle of Qadmus, west of Masyaf in the same area, made a pact with the forces of Antioch and joined King Fulk.⁴⁶

The Zengid deputy of Aleppo, Sawar, came out in full force, supported by many Aleppan *ahdath*, to confront the Crusaders, while the Zengid deputy of Hama in central Syria did not engage in this campaign despite being close to events. The warfare between Sawar and King Fulk lasted a few days around the southern area of Aleppo's countryside at Qinnasrin, Naqra, and other small villages and towns. During this confrontation, both sides suffered substantial casualties exceeding 100 knights each; then each side withdrew to its own dominion, especially when Sawar offered a sum of money for such a truce.⁴⁷

A few months later Sawar had to leave for the northeast of Aleppo with his force to confront the Crusaders of Edessa who were on their way to join King Fulk in his campaign in northern Syria. These Crusaders from Tell Bashir had looted the cultivated area on the eastern side of Aleppo in May 1133. Sawar managed to confront and defeat them; the sources exaggerate in estimating the Frankish casualties at 1,000 knights.⁴⁸

Ironically, this took place at the same time as 'Abbasid caliph was besieging Zengid Mosul, as mentioned above.

Here one has to evaluate certain facts. There was no coordination between Zengid Aleppo and Zengid Hama, especially in 1132, despite their common danger. Moreover, the long period of operation and military activity did not bring Zengi to Syria and he gave full priority to Iraq and Iran. One should also mention that Jerusalem, Antioch and Edessa, with new leaderships, did not attempt to capture Aleppo or Hama, which were not so well fortified, but they were testing the Aleppans. It seems also that Sawar was entrusted as deputy with full powers to act according to the situation, and not to stay inside his city and wait for the siege and orders from his lord.

Finally, one should add that Sawar, although he had a free hand to move between defence and offence, did not risk launching a full-scale war, even though he had the opportunity. Sawar depended mostly on the service of the Turkmen under his authority. This is affirmed by events that took place a few months later in November 1133. We do not even know the name of their lord or commander but they attacked and looted the dominions of Crusader Tripoli. Bons, son of Badran (which is how the sources refer to Pons of Tripoli), tried to defend his vicinity but was heavily defeated and his countryside sacked.⁴⁹ The Turkmen forces besieged him in the citadel of Barin, forcing him to send a message of distress to the Kingdom of Jerusalem.⁵⁰ Such aimless Turkmen could be used by Aleppo or Hama but one can find no mention in the sources of any coordination between them and the Zengid dominions.

With regard to southern Syria, one finds that a vacuum of power affected Seljuq Damascus on 6 June 1132 when Buri b. Tughtegin, lord of Damascus and central Syria, died following an assassination attempt on him by the Isma'ilis.⁵¹ With the death of Buri, the first Seljuq generation in Syria came to an end.

Buri's father Tughtegin was the *de facto* ruler of Damascus and *atabeg* between 1095 and 1115, and was then recognised by the Seljuq sultan as emir of Damascus until he died in 1128, with the right of inheritance passing to his

children. One can see no reason for historians to refer to this dynasty as the Burids, since it was supposed to be called Tughteginids, especially given that Buri ruled for only four years, while Tughtegin ruled for thirty years.⁵²

Buri, the experienced groomed ruler, who was the same age as Zengi and who deterred the Crusaders in their first attempt to invade Damascus in 1129, left a turbulent realm governed by three successive sons, mainly dominated by one Turkmen commander, Unur, which led to the fall of Damascus to Nur al-Din b. Zengi some twenty years later.

Buri was succeeded not by his eldest son Sawinj, but by Isma'il (d. 1134), a very bad-tempered, rampant and violent individual who turned against his brothers, the Crusaders, the Arabs of Shayzar and Zengi. Isma'il seized the opportunity that Zengi had not taken advantage of, namely the departure of King Fulk to northern Syria and his attempt to confront the rebellious Count of Jaffa, a vassal of Jerusalem, in December 1132. As a result, Isma'il attacked and restored key castles on the Golan Heights.⁵³

Since Zengi is our main concern here, one sees Isma'il planning to march and recapture Hama from Zengi's deputies in August 1133, despite the advice of the majority of his commanders that it was difficult to conduct war during the month of fasting and one should wait until the fast had ended. Isma'il refused; he wanted to take advantage of Zengi's absence (he was involved in the Iraqi civil war) and also the unpreparedness of Zengi's deputy in Hama.⁵⁴

In August 1133, while the caliph al-Mustarshid was besieging Zengid Mosul, Isma'il marched with a large force and besieged Zengid Hama. Sunqur, the Zengid deputy of the city, had received news of the Damascene march on his city, so he started to boost his supplies and prepare his fortifications.⁵⁵ On the day of 'Eid, Isma'il began his attack upon Hama from all sides, resulting in a wave of fear across the city, which surrendered quickly. The citadel, which was not strongly fortified like the one in Aleppo, also surrendered. Sunqur was allowed to depart unharmed to the Arab lord of Shayzar.⁵⁶

Here one should ask the following questions. Why did Zengi, who had Hama as his dominion for five years, not invest in the fortification of its core defence, the citadel, like Aleppo? It was the later Ayyubids who reconstructed the citadel of Hama. Moreover, where was Sawar, the Zengid deputy of Aleppo, during this crisis? One should mention that Sunqur knew from his scouts that an army from Damascus was marching on him and he had some time to send to Aleppo for assistance. One could say that the over-ambition of Zengi, fighting on many fronts, and the lack of coordination of his Syrian dominions, resulted in such a loss in central Syria. Zengi did not just lose on the military side, but on the political side as well. His enemy, the 'Abbasid caliph al-Mustarshid, sent a special envoy from Baghdad in March 1134 with robes of honour to Isma'il as King of Damascus and central Syria.⁵⁷

This represented a clear challenge to Zengid policy in Syria and a continuation of al-Mustarshid's policy of confronting Zengi. This was not the only recognition of Isma'il as lord of southern and central Syria. The previous year, in September 1133, the Fatimid caliph al-Hafiz sent his own robes of honour to

Isma‘il.⁵⁸ Such recognition was a boost for Isma‘il, encouraging him to form a front against Zengi even if it included a Shi‘ite power.

If one looks at the situation panoramically, one can see that while Zengi had started to reconcile with the caliph in 1133, and fully achieved this aim in the summer of 1134, he ignored the political crisis in Damascus. He gave priority to starting a long military campaign with his Artuqid ally Timurtash against Ilaldi of Amid, the Humaydiyya Kurds and the Turkmen of Armenia around Lake Van, as previously discussed. He only started to consider returning to Syria from Diyar Bakr at the end of 1134 and did not make it to the walls of Damascus until February 1135.⁵⁹

Were Diyar Bakr and the citadels which Zengi captured from the Kurds, such as Sur, Shush, Asheb and Tushi (as mentioned in Chapter 3), more important geopolitically than restoring Hama from Damascus and using his military power for jihad against the Crusaders? The main reason for Zengi’s return to Syria was a distraught letter he received from Isma‘il b. Buri, lord of Damascus, in early 1135, urging him to march to take over the city from him.⁶⁰

This dramatic change by Isma‘il towards Zengi may be interpreted by looking at the domestic political situation in Damascus. Between February 1134 and February 1135 Isma‘il started to unleash his aggressiveness against his commanders after one of them, Iylba, tried to assassinate him. Isma‘il became extremely suspicious of his elder brother Sawinj and starved him to death.⁶¹ He then turned against his *hajib* and leading military commander Yusef b. Fairuz, who was also the lover of Isma‘il’s mother, Zumurrud Khatun. Yusef managed to escape to Tadmur in the desert to the east of Damascus.⁶²

Ibn al-Qalanisi describes Isma‘il’s behaviour during this period as disturbed and evil, tyrannical and full of decadent deeds towards different people in his administration, both civil and military. The commanders of the realm could not afford to wait for Zengi to come and take over the city and so referred the matter to Zumurrud Khatun, who was trying to save her own life, since she had been accused of committing an act of adultery. She commissioned her own *mamluks* to murder her son in the seat of government, Damascus citadel, in February 1135. She was merciless to the extent that she witnessed the assassination herself while Isma‘il screamed for clemency in Turkish, ‘*zanhar zanhar*’ (peace).⁶³ Upon her orders, and in a show of her strength, his body was left for a few days in a corridor in the citadel for everyone to see and learn. Zumurrud quickly installed her other son Mahmud (d. 1139), lord of Tadmur, as the new king of Damascus to defend the city against Zengi.⁶⁴

Ibn al-Qalanisi, who was in his forties and living inside Damascus at the time, writes:

Isma‘il wrote to Zengi, as he knew his intention and wished to capture Damascus. He urged him to march at once to take it over, in order to help him – Isma‘il – to avenge all the commanders, emirs, nobles he hated in the city and to confiscate them then get rid of them. Isma‘il the disturbed, who had illusions, continued his messages to Zengi, some of which were in his

own handwriting, urging him to attend at once to Damascus, otherwise he would invite the Crusaders and surrender Damascus to them.⁶⁵

As soon as Zengi had crossed the Euphrates in February 1135, he sent an envoy to Damascus to organise how Isma'il would surrender the city. It was too late, as the envoy, who was well received by the commanders of the new King Mahmud and his powerful mother, returned to Zengi with the news of the political change in Damascus.⁶⁶ Zengi did not lose hope and continued his march with a large army and camped at 'Adhara, half a day's march from the northern side of the city.

For days, the forces of Zengi attacked the city, but were met with heroic resistance, not only from the Seljuq Turkmen force but also from the *ahdath* of the city.⁶⁷ The *ahdath*, who were local Syrians and not Turks, preferred to ally themselves with the ruling class to defend their common interest, which was to keep Zengi's rule as remote as possible from their realm. Zengi's forces, which were divided into different divisions, continued to attack the city from all sides, hoping that when the Damascenes saw for themselves the huge size of the forces they would lose hope, but the skirmishes continued until mid-March 1135. Ibn al-Qalanisi describes the warfare:

Zengi camped in a huge force outside Damascus, and the locals of Damascus fearing his news, yet, getting ready to resist him. Zengi divided his battalions in different spots like ships in the sea till it became close to the city. The locals, civilians and *ahdath*, in addition to the military, gathered and went out of the walls to defend the city in a heroic manner. Zengi had to hesitate against such confrontation.⁶⁸

These lines reflect the stern resistance of Damascus, Turks, Syrians and Arabs as well as the great will and determination of Zengi to take the city.

Zengi decided to withdraw and sent to Mahmud asking for negotiations. Zengid chief *qadi* Baha al-Din al-Shahrazuri entered Damascus on 15 March 1135 and agreed with the Damascene authority that the *khutba* would be declared in the city for Sultan Alp Arslan b. Mahmud II, who had been raised by Zengi. Mahmud b. Buri should have marched out of the city to pay homage to Alp Arslan in Zengi's camp, but he sent his brother Bahram Shah instead.⁶⁹

When Bahram Shah arrived in Zengi's camp, he coincided with the arrival of the caliph's envoy, Bisher b. Karim, who had an urgent order from al-Mustarshid to leave at once for Iraq to assist him against Sultan Mas'ud. In return, the *khutba* to Alp Arslan would be declared in all of Zengi's dominions in Syria,⁷⁰ the Jazira and Iraq.

Zengi left the following day, on 16 March 1135, and recaptured Hama on his way to Iraq. This explains why there was always mistrust between Damascus and Zengi, and why Mahmud b. Buri did not attend the Zengid camp in person. One may add that the memory of Sawinj's capture in 1129 may have contributed to this lack of trust. Zengi retired to northern Syria.

At this point we have conflicting information about how long Zengi remained in northern Syria before returning to Iraq. Ibn al-‘Adim asserts that he remained in Syria until September 1136 and personally led several attacks against the Crusaders in al-Atharib, Zaradna and Ma‘arrat al-Nu‘man, and seized a significant amount of valuables,⁷¹ but with no intention of a full-scale attack to eliminate them. Others, like Ibn al-Qalanisi and Ibn Wasil, write that Zengi appeared in Iraq between October/November 1135 and the summer/autumn of 1136 as he was defending Baghdad during the Seljuq civil war, as mentioned in Chapter 2.⁷² One has to clearly distinguish between the presence of Zengi in a campaign in person and his deputies in Syria or Mosul acting on his behalf, mentioned in the sources as Zengid forces, which is not an easy thing to do in medieval manuscripts. It should be noted that one does not hear of any extraordinary activity by Zengi in the summer of 1135 and one is not sure whether he stayed in Syria or the Jazira. We only know that in May 1137 he resumed his activities in Syria against the Crusaders, Byzantines and Seljuqs. Alptekin counts Zengi as being in Syria until May 1136, which is unrealistic, since Zengi was in Iraq during this period.

Meanwhile, away from Syria we see some important challenges on the ground affecting Zengi’s interests. The central Syrian city of Hims, the long-held dream of Zengi, was captured by Mahmud, lord of Damascus, in January 1136. The Turkmen sons of its former lord Khir-Khan were exhausted by the continuous raids of Zengid troops on the city and its dominions, and thus decided to contact Mahmud in Damascus to surrender in return for giving them Tadmur further to the east, to which he agreed.⁷³ This Turkmen identity crisis was a typical pattern introduced by the Seljuqs in the eleventh century into the Middle East and continued until the sixteenth century under the Ottomans. Why did the Turkmen of Hims reject a Turkish leader like Zengi in favour of another Turkish leader of Damascus? This will never be definitively answered. Ibn al-Athir writes:

When the forces of Zengi in Aleppo and Hama realised that Hims was out of their hands, they continued their raids to its vicinity looting and damaging it. After many skirmishes and confrontations, Mahmud of Damascus wrote to Zengi for a truce, which was achieved between the two sides.⁷⁴

This story confirms that only the deputies of Zengi were in command of Syrian territories with instructions to expand the goals outlined earlier by Zengi. This is confirmed by various different stories that Sawar, the Zengid deputy in Aleppo, marched in June 1136 with regular and seasonal Turkmen of 3,000 soldiers and raided the vicinity of Frankish Lattakia, taking the Crusader population by surprise. They managed to loot a great deal and take captive 7,000 men, women and children in addition to thousands of animals, such as horses, cows and sheep.⁷⁵

Latin sources furnish us with details of the vacuum of power in Antioch to defend Lattakia against Sawar or retaliate later. This is due to the struggle

between Fulk of Jerusalem and Alice of Lattakia, his daughter, who for a long time had had her eye on Antioch and sought the help of the Byzantines, offering political marriage between her daughter Constance and Manuel, son of Emperor John II, which was not welcomed by a large number of the Frankish commanders.⁷⁶

The most important thing here is that Zengi's well-administered resources could function in Iraq and Syria at the same time despite his absence, and his agenda was carried out even in the harsh wintertime by his very loyal and capable commanders. The raids on the Crusader side, despite its inflated numbers, had no ambitions for a major political-military victory but it was an economic and perhaps even a psychological one, proving to the Franks that Zengi's dominions were in good hands and on alert. Yet we do not see a major or direct attack on Edessa during this time.

Two other points should be mentioned here. If Hims were to fall into the hands of the Zengid forces led by Sawar, who would be appointed lord of the city while Zengi was occupied in Iraq? In addition, the agreement between Zengi and Mahmud the Seljuq in March 1135 to declare the *khutba* for Alp Arslan did not carry too much weight in practice due to Zengid raids in central Syria against Seljuq dominions.

In late May 1137 Zengi marched from Mosul and crossed the Euphrates, heading for Hims with the full determination to capture it.⁷⁷ He first dispatched his commander Salah al-Din al-Yaghsiyani with some forces to the city. His aim was to give diplomacy and negotiation a chance, hoping that Hims would surrender to him. Salah al-Din failed to persuade Unur, lord of the city, to give up the city, so Zengi arrived with his army and besieged Hims until 15 July 1137. Zengi, who laid a very strong siege to the city, was met with skilful resistance from Unur, keeper of this *iqta'* and the same commander who had saved Damascus from Zengi previously.⁷⁸

During the two long months while Zengi was campaigning in central Syria, his dominions in the north were witnessing a new threat: that of Emperor John II Comnenus, who was invading Armenia, Cilicia and Antioch with a huge army numbering tens of thousands with mighty siege engines and mangonels.⁷⁹

It appears that Zengi was not concerned with the Byzantine presence and focused on the Crusaders of central Syria. In an unexpected move, Zengi crossed the Orontes river aiming to attack the Crusader castle of Barin – Montferrand – to the southwest of his city, Hama. Although Barin formed an important post in the communication line between Aleppo, Antioch and central Syria, it also controlled part of the commercial activities between Hama, Hims and Tripoli on the coast among other posts such as the early post of Krak des Chevaliers and Arab Shayzar.

Barin belonged to Prince Raymond II of Tripoli, who sent an urgent message for help to King Fulk of Jerusalem against the formidable Zengi as soon as he monitored his approach.⁸⁰ Asbridge believes that Zengi's attack on Barin was only to use it as a staging post for his operations against Seljuq Hims, but would the Crusaders of Tripoli have allowed him to be so close to their dominions?

Zengi managed to divide his forces into two parts and tricked the Crusader forces into an ambush. They defeated the first Turkmen force, and after they returned to their camps in the countryside of Barin, Zengi appeared with the larger part of his forces and took them completely by surprise. King Fulk escaped to Barin for safety; most of the Frankish weapons and supplies were seized by Zengi, who inflicted a large number of casualties among the Franks and took Raymond II captive.

While Zengi was besieging Barin, King Fulk ('Kindajor' in Arabic) and other leading commanders, such as Baldwin of Ramla and Humphrey of Toron, decided to send an urgent message for help to Antioch and Edessa.⁸¹ Ibn al-Athir writes that Zengi confirmed his siege on Barin to the extent that the Crusaders were totally cut off from any news from outside. That shows the power of Zengi despite the exaggeration of the sources. King Fulk called for help to get through. While Zengi was at Barin in August, the Byzantine Emperor John Comnenus was besieging Antioch; thus the Crusaders there could not offer any help, while Joscelin of Edessa responded positively to the rescue of Barin.⁸²

Zengi turned down any negotiations for the surrender of King Fulk in return for his safety, despite the famine which the Crusaders were facing inside. However, when the forces of Edessa came close and Zengi realised the extent of their power, he agreed to grant them safety in addition to the payment of 50,000 dinars. After King Fulk left Barin he found out about the forces of Edessa and rejected the surrender, but it seems that Zengi was successful in cutting all communications between the Crusaders in Barin and the outside world, especially as he used ten mangonels, which bombarded the castle day and night.⁸³

One has to ask: What was on Zengi's agenda after Barin – to attack more Crusader dominions? With no control of either Hims or Damascus by other Muslim powers and a relatively weak grip of power over Hama, one does not see too many goals after the campaign at Barin, unless one believes fully in Ibn al-'Adim's story, namely that while Zengi was besieging Hims the Crusaders of central Syria, probably commanded by Raymond II of Tripoli, were about to march out to rescue Hims, so Zengi would have wanted to avenge this act. One should add that in April 1137 the Zengid lord of Hama, Salah al-Din, seized the castle of Khirba in the vicinity of Hama to the north of Barin.⁸⁴ As a result, Zengi was confident of his offensive against the Crusaders in the area. It is clear from this campaign how over-ambitious a commander and risk taker Zengi was. This campaign by Zengi was glorified by Muslim Arab poets, perhaps due to the religious enthusiasm to counter the Crusader side. The patriarch of Jerusalem, William, collected all the militia he could gather in the kingdom and marched to save his besieged king carrying the holy cross in front of his forces.⁸⁵ Such spirit did not go unnoticed by Muslim poets; Ibn al-Qaysarani (d. 1153) of Acre and Damascus wrote these lines dedicated to the victory of Barin:

To where can the kings of polytheism escape?
From a King one of whose knights is victory, fate is his army

When Zengi exhausted them by his swift running horse
The flash of which causes eyes to be opened with surprise

Death did not become a burden anymore, nor escapable.⁸⁶

These few lines from a lengthy poem reflect how Zengi was portrayed as the hero of Islam, a true *mujahid*, while the Fatimid caliphate was suffering a domestic political-religious crisis, and Seljuq Damascus was chasing minor seasonal gains in the countryside around Crusader Jerusalem; neither of them offered help to Zengi, who appeared to be the unmatched lion of Syria.⁸⁷

The astonishing thing here is that Zengi, who was a great risk taker, as explained before, was fighting in central Syria at Hims and Barin and had in his company Emir Sawar, his deputy of Aleppo.⁸⁸ How was Zengi confident enough to have the Byzantine armies so close to Aleppo and at the same time have his deputy of Aleppo join him in his warfare at Barin? Not only that, but he became over-confident to say the least, and attacked and captured Crusader Kafr Tab and Ma'arrat al-Nu'man to the north of his city of Hama, all this while he was besieging King Fulk in Barin.⁸⁹ One cannot agree more with Runciman, who writes, describing the Barin campaign: 'Indeed, Zengi's forbearance has never ceased to astonish historians.'⁹⁰

Zengi, who seems to have been knowledgeable about the history of Syria during the First Crusade, took an unusual step after his forces captured Ma'arrat al-Nu'man by receiving some of the survivors and their children from the towns captured in 1098. They asked him to give them back their lost homes and properties seized earlier by the Crusaders. Zengi asked them for their documents. The locals replied: 'The Franks took all our belongings including any documents.' Zengi was patient and very keen to help; he consulted a Hanafi creed jurist that Zengi personally followed. Afterwards, he said to the locals: 'Seek the archive of Aleppo; you will find your properties mentioned there. Everyone should have their property back.' The locals did so, and this turned out to be one of Zengi's best deals.⁹¹

Why was Zengi so keen to help the locals of Ma'arrat al-Nu'man in this way? If one goes back to the events of the First Crusade and its expansion into northern Syria, one will see that Ma'arrat was an *iqta'* under Aleppo's authority of the Seljuqs, and after the Crusaders captured Antioch in June 1098 they captured Ma'arrat with the help of the local Armenians and Syrian Christians. Guibert of Nogent and Fulcher of Chartres, who were eyewitnesses to the events, mention that some of the Crusaders 'tore flesh from the buttocks of the Saracens who died or were killed in Ma'arrat, which they cooked and ate'. The capture of Ma'arrat was followed by a massacre of a great number of its locals.⁹² One believes that Zengi heard and kept this story in mind as a young man in Mosul and tried to compensate the locals for decades afterwards.

At the end of the summer of 1137 Zengi retired to Aleppo for a rest and started to reorganise its fortifications, since the Byzantine Emperor was so close to his dominions. Such a tense situation resulted in a few skirmishes between the

Aleppan forces headed by Sawar and certain of the Byzantine forces, resulting in some Byzantine prisoners being taken back to Aleppo.⁹³ John Comnenus was keen to avoid Zengi at this stage and swiftly sent a messenger to Zengi assuring him that he was after the Armenian dominions only. Zengi welcomed the envoy and sent his *hajib*, Hassan, back with the messenger armed with presents, including tigers and falcons, for the emperor.⁹⁴

Such positive diplomatic contacts were what Zengi needed to resume his activities against the Seljuqs of Syria. Zengi arrived on 20 October 1137 at Hama, and besieged the walls of his long-held dream, Hims, after a few days. Sources do not tell us of the duration of that siege, but it appears to have been a short one. Zengi tried to penetrate the mountain area of Biqa where he captured the castle of Majdal to the south of Baalbak, which belonged to the Seljuqs of Damascus. He welcomed the voluntary submission of Ibn Turghat, lord of Banias, to the west of Damascus, to Zengi's authority. Ibn Turghat was the deputy of Damascus there.⁹⁵

Suddenly we see Zengi controlling the countryside west of Damascus, especially the commercial routes to Tyre, which was the major outlet to Damascene trade in medieval times before Beirut replaced it in the nineteenth century. It is clear that his aim was to exhaust Damascus economically. Despite Zengi's presence in the vicinity of Damascus until January/February 1138, he did not try to attack the city despite the political strike between Bazwaj, the commander of the army in Damascus on the one side, and the King of Damascus, Mahmud, who was supported by Unur of Hims, on the other. The latter had his eye on the Bazwaj post.⁹⁶ Over the next few weeks Zengi returned to the walls of Hims, and, despite his strong attack with large forces, failed to take the city. Sultan Mas'ud and Caliph al-Muqtafi sent him robes of honour at Hims, giving him more prestige and legitimacy among Muslims, but Hims' resistance proved unbreakable.⁹⁷ The robes of honour were probably a reward to Zengi following his victory over the Crusaders at Barin.

While Zengi was leading his operation at the walls of Hims, the sources write about the Rum or Byzantine emergence into Aleppo's vicinity and the march of the king of the Rum – Emperor Comnenus – to Sham or Syria.⁹⁸

Before discussing how Zengi confronted the Frankish–Byzantine alliance, which resulted in a massive campaign in central Syria, one has to leave the chronological narrative and briefly explain Byzantine ambitions in the Levant before and during the early period of the Crusaders.

The Byzantine Empire, following the early Muslim conquest of its Syrian territories in 634 to 637, never lost hope of regaining these dominions. The Umayyad caliphate in Syria until 749, and the early 'Abbasid caliphate based in Iraq, had launched countless seasonal raids across the Taurus Mountains to counter the Byzantine expansion into eastern Anatolia. The Taurus Mountains, with their Armenian population, remained more or less the main buffer zone between Islam and Byzantium.

With the decline of the 'Abbasid Empire after 847 and with the rise of independent and semi-independent Arab, Kurdish and Turkish dynasties in Syria,

Egypt, and parts of northern Iraq, such as the Hamdanids, Marwanids, Tulunids and Mirdasids, among others, one can see that the Byzantine Empire tried several times to invade Syria.

Emperor Nikephorus Phocas of the Macedonian dynasty (d. 969) invaded and sacked Aleppo in 962 against the Hamdanids.⁹⁹ In 968/9, he attacked Aleppo and captured Antioch, Hama, Hims and Shayzar in addition to sacking the vicinity of Tripoli.¹⁰⁰ There were also active raids on the Byzantine fleet in the Mediterranean against Muslim territories in Crete and Sicily. Emperor John Tzimiskes (d. 976), who succeeded Nikephorus, followed the same nationalist expansionist policy against the Muslims. In 972 he sacked the upper Euphrates against the Hamdanids, threatening Baghdad itself, and in 975 he succeeded in penetrating Syria, marching all the way from Constantinople and capturing Antioch, Hims down to Damascus, and Acre, aiming for Jerusalem, which had recently come under Fatimid control.¹⁰¹ The emperor managed to subdue most of Syria on the coast and inland in the year 975/6.

This short-lived Byzantine supremacy reflected an uncompromising long dream to gain back Syria. With the heavy catastrophic blow of Manzikert in 1071 at the hands of the Turkish Muslim sultan Alp Arslan, Emperor Romanus was taken into captivity and Asia Minor was drowned by a Turkmen tsunami of permanent immigrants by the 1080s. Here we have Emperor Alexius I (d. 1118) who sent a plea for help to Western Europe inviting the First Crusade, hoping to rekindle this Byzantine wish by making a pact with the Franks. He would provide the Crusaders with supplies and money in return for their surrender back to Byzantine control of some of the cities they would capture.¹⁰² Alexius tried to march out of Constantinople in the summer of 1098 to head for Antioch, but retreated due to more pressing matters back home.

Alexius' chance to avenge the Crusaders who betrayed him came in 1104 after they were defeated in Harran at the hands of the Turkish lord of Mosul. Alexius swiftly sent his fleet to capture Lattakia on the coast. Emperor John Comnenus was the first Byzantine ruler to invade Syria in a century and a half, renewing his ancestors' long-held ambition. During 1136/7, Emperor John was keen to assert his grip of power in the Cilician areas of Leo the Armenian, in addition to uniting the Crusaders of northern Syria under his authority.¹⁰³ Raymond of Antioch and Joscelin II of Edessa would join him in a campaign to capture Aleppo, Hama and Hims, which would be given to Raymond in return for the surrender of Antioch to the Byzantines.¹⁰⁴ In February 1138, before the Byzantine–Frankish pact moved out to attack Zengi's dominions, we find that battalions from Crusader Antioch had arrested all Muslim merchants in the city and caravans moving between Aleppo and Crusader territories.¹⁰⁵ This move was to stop any news, which was usually transmitted by commercial activities, about the intention of the Byzantine pact.

On Sunday, 17 April 1138, John Comnenus laid siege to Buza'a to the north-east of Aleppo after capturing Balat, west of Aleppo, on his way. He also sacked parts of Aleppo's countryside. Muslim sources emphasise that this attack took place during the Byzantine celebration of Easter, which gave it a more religious-political significance and made it appear like a holy war.¹⁰⁶

Why John Comnenus and his pact attacked Buza'a in the Batnan valley so close to the Euphrates is unclear. Was it a smokescreen to mislead Zengi? It remains a possibility. Buza'a resisted for seven days led by a Turkmen woman while her husband, lord of the Buza'a, was absent from the town. Finally, Buza'a surrendered and 1,000 inhabitants were taken captive after their lives were assured. The Crusader-Byzantine force spent ten days eliminating any resistance and smoking out those who escaped to caves and grottoes in the valley.¹⁰⁷

The locals of Aleppo heard about the activity of the pact from the Turkmen mercenaries who used to serve in the Byzantine army and, following this pact, marched into Aleppo's dominions by mistake. Immediately they sent an urgent message for help to Zengi at the wall of Hims. He dispatched Sawar and another four leading commanders who gathered a foot soldier force in addition to 500 cavalry to defend Aleppo. They also included long- and short-range archers. They entered the city on 23 April 1138, which improved the locals' spirits.¹⁰⁸

The military activity in northern Syria in the hands of the Byzantine-Crusader alliance was gaining momentum. John Comnenus, Raymond of Antioch and Joscelin of Edessa suddenly appeared before Zengid Aleppo on 2 May 1138. They built their camps on the Quweiq river and started to attack the city from its southern and western sides at a place named Burj al-Ghanam.¹⁰⁹

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Zengi sent his important skilful envoy, Qadi al-Shahrazuri, to Baghdad to urge Sultan Mas'ud for help to save northern Syria. Zengi's envoy had to orchestrate a plan to gain public sympathy and pressure in both the sultanate and caliphate mosques. Such pressure would be used against Sultan Mas'ud to send forces to assist Zengi.¹¹⁰

Despite the resistance of the Aleppan *ahdath* for two days against the invaders, one sees that fear spread into other areas in the Aleppan dominions. This was the second time the Crusaders had come so close to Aleppo with a huge army aiming to capture the city. The first was after Balak the Artuqid died, and King Baldwin marched to Aleppo and camped by the river Quweiq, before reaching one of Aleppo's gates in October 1124, while Joscelin of Edessa was attacking the northern dominions of Aleppo.¹¹¹ Apart from that, most, if not all, Frankish-Muslim relations since 1097 and the arrival of the Crusaders to the East could be described as *modus operandi*, of attacks and skirmishes in the countryside without serious intention of capturing the other's city, Aleppo or Antioch, even during a great military victory or political vacuum.

This siege was echoed in other places, such as al-Atharib, northwest of Aleppo, where we find the Muslim garrisons fleeing the town, which was soon captured by the Byzantine pact on 3 May 1138.¹¹² As for Zengi, he moved at the same time from Hims to Hama, then to Salamiyya between the two to the east of the Euphrates. Strangely enough, he dispatched all of his heavy fighting equipment to Raqqa on the Euphrates and remained with only a small number of cavalry.¹¹³ Was Zengi fighting half-heartedly in Syria, giving priority to his dominions in Mosul and the Jazira? Or was he counting more on the help he sent for from the Seljuq Sultan Mas'ud? He was probably counting on the invincible

fortification of Aleppo, which had survived many invasions before, such as that of the great Seljuq Sultan Alp Arslan in 1070.

Meanwhile, John Comnenus and his Crusader allies were attacking Ma'arrat al-Nu'man, capturing it on 6 May 1138 from the Zengid garrisons. Zengi was monitoring the situation from remote Salamiyya, confident in his deputy of Aleppo, Sawar, who was behind the rear of enemy lines, kidnapping some of their soldiers and disturbing their lines of communication.¹¹⁴

What took place in al-Atharib, as an echo to the siege of Aleppo, took place at Kafr Tab and Jisr to the south of Ma'arrat. Its garrison surrendered on 9 May 1138 to the Byzantine emperor due to Zengi's absence and the lack of any substantial Muslim power on the ground to defend them against a colossal army of 100,000 soldiers.¹¹⁵

Ibn al-Athir, who tried to defend Zengi, contradicts himself in *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir* and *al-Kamil*. In the first, he writes that Zengi could not leave Mosul to defend Syria against John Comnenus, while in *al-Kamil* he says that Zengi was besieging Hims. Not only that, but one finds in *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir* that he started the Byzantine campaign in Syria at Buza'a, then expanded his attack on other minor Zengid dominions, and suddenly we find Emperor John at Shayzar because the Franks advised him to attack it, since it did not fall under Zengi's authority.¹¹⁶

Such writings give the impression that the Byzantine–Crusader pact feared launching any hostility towards Zengi, which is not accurate. Between 10 May and 2 June 1138, the Byzantine force used eighteen large mangonels to bombard the city of Shayzar, which belonged to the semi-independent Arab dynasty of Banu Munqidh. Prince Sultan b. Munqidh wrote to Zengi asking for his immediate help. Zengi based his light forces north of Hama on the Orontes river and rode every day to Shayzar, not to engage in any confrontation but to let the Crusader pact know of his presence as a deterrent.¹¹⁷ This small Arab principality, which maintained good relations with the Fatimid, 'Abbasid, Zengid and Seljuq powers, as well as the Crusaders, was unable to defend itself against such an enemy, and Zengi's communication line between north and central Syria would be deeply threatened and affected by such an attack. He wrote to the Byzantine emperor: 'You did fortify yourself by these hills and mountains. Leave to the open deserts for confrontation. If victory is mine I will have saved the Muslims from you and if victory is yours you will have Shayzar and other places.'¹¹⁸ Muslim sources, including the pro-Zengid ones, clearly state that Zengi was no match for the Byzantine forces and he was just trying to dissuade them.

Suddenly, after twenty-three days of siege, John Comnenus and the Crusader princes left and returned to Antioch. As soon as Zengi heard about this, he dispatched an urgent envoy to Baghdad, to Sultan Mas'ud, asking him to take back the military assistance that Zengi had originally asked for (see Chapter 2).

Zengi did not wish the geopolitical influence of Iran and Iraq to cross the Euphrates into Syria, preferring a *modus vivendi* with the Franks, thus showing a clear example of the politics of jihad. The question that should be raised here is why this huge force suddenly abandoned its goal and returned to Antioch. It

seems that the Seljuqs and Danishmends of Asia Minor renewed their attacks on the Byzantine areas, affecting the communication lines of the emperor.¹¹⁹ Moreover, the strife between Raymond and Joscelin, and between the two leaders and the emperor, had affected the unity of the alliance and their zeal to fight, despite the huge advanced military weapons the Byzantines had used against Shayzar. The contemporary Arab prince of Shayzar, Usama b. Munqidh, had mentioned that the Byzantine army fired mangonels carrying 12 to 13 kg of stones that could demolish the floor of a house with one hit.¹²⁰ In addition to the mistrust between John and the Crusaders, it seems that the emperor was pleased by the offer made to him by the lord of Shayzar to present him with magnificent gifts, including a table studded with jewels and a cross that had been taken from Emperor Romanus Diogenes at Manzikert in 1071.¹²¹ In addition, Shayzar would pay an annual tribute.

When Zengi was certain of the total departure of the pact, he dispatched some of his forces to seize the siege engines left behind and took them back to Aleppo. The failure of the campaign was represented in Arabic sources in general as a great victory for Zengi, who deterred the enemies by standing close to Shayzar, thus protecting the land of Islam. Al-Musallam al-Hamawi (d. 1139) commemorates Zengi's act of heroism in these long lines:

By your strong will O great King
Difficulties are made humble by you
Do you not see that the dog of the Rum – the Emperor –
Though that he became a merciful King¹²²
He came filling the lands with his horses
His army looked like a long gloomy night
Life yielded for him
And all great challenges submitted to his will
But when he looked and saw your army
He hesitated and stopped. Neither moving further nor siege for long
You Zengi were like a blazing star
And he was like a cursed devil.¹²³

Such lines are mentioned in full by Ibn al-Athir, glorifying Zengi in the absence of any other Muslim ruler who remained and faced such colossal forces. The Seljuqs of Iran were occupied with their domestic disputes and the Fatimids of Egypt were in political and economic decline, as were the Seljuqs of Damascus. As a result, Zengi was represented in the majority of Arabic medieval sources as a *mujahid*. Ibn al-Athir mentions that the panelling of the Ka'aba was not sent to Mecca that year by any political power and an Iranian merchant was the one to supply it individually.¹²⁴ That piece of information shows the political decline and fragmentation in the Middle East and the status of Zengi as a pioneer and capable commander. It should be noted that Zengi had strongly refused the military assistance offered by the Turkmen lord Qara Arslan, who crossed the Euphrates with thousands of cavalry (see Chapter 3). One has to say that the

Byzantine political concerns and their ambitions in Syria declined and faded quite severely following this campaign, especially after the unenthusiastic reception they had experienced from the Crusaders.

After the Byzantine–Frankish campaign had ended, Zengi’s forces soon recaptured Kafr Tab, al-Atharib and Buza’a. Zengi himself went back to his long-held ambition Hims, which was the key to central Syria, the gate to Damascus and the link to the East and the Euphrates. Zengi had proposed the previous year (1137) to marry Zumurrud Khatun, mother of Mahmud b. Buri, lord of Damascus, but his request was refused – not by Zumurrud herself but by the *isfahsalar*, Bazwaj, commander of the Damascus army, who feared Zengi’s influence, saying: ‘Why should we agree to destroy the state of our master Mahmud b. Buri with our own hands?’¹²⁵

Bazwaj, the influential military commander, was assassinated in May 1138. The following month Zengi married Zumurrud Khatun. This took place in Hims, which was handed over to Zengi, who compensated Unur, the previous lord of the city, with the castle of Barin. Barin was of less political-economic importance than Hims, in addition to being too close to the Crusaders’ vicinities, and the newly founded settlements of the Assassins. Zengi, who tried for years to capture Hims and waged relentless military operations against it in 1137/8, besieging it twice, as well as stripping Damascus of key military forts in Biqa and Golan, forced Unur, who succeeded Bazwaj in the Damascus army, to realise the futility of resisting him.¹²⁶

We will now leave the chronological narrative to discuss the political marriage of Zengi and its effects, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. In 1124, Sultan Mahmud the Seljuq married Zengi to the widow of Prince Kindaghdi, one of the leading Seljuq commanders to Sultan Muhammad (d. 1118) and Mahmud. The prince was extremely wealthy and this marriage was considered an honour, and had been prestigious for Zengi in his early political career. The prince enjoyed the wealth of a sultan, according to Ibn al-Athir in *al-Ta’rikh al-Bahir*, and his widow lavished money on Zengi’s projects after the marriage.¹²⁷ It is believed that Zengi benefited from this marriage, mainly on economic and military sides.

In February 1130 Zengi married the daughter of Ridwan, King of Aleppo and northern Syria. This marriage did not last long and one really wonders what kind of legitimacy Zengi needed after his father’s reputation in the city as ruler between 1086 and 1095 and after two years of ruling Aleppo. Within a year Zengi had deserted his wife after seeing the blood-stained gown worn by his father when he was murdered by King Tutush, father of Ridwan, in 1095. Zengi divorced her after she complained in person to the *qadi* of Aleppo, Abu Ghanim.¹²⁸ It seems that this case was the exception rather than the norm in Zengi’s political career, as Ridwan’s daughter did not have very much to offer and, despite the bloody past, he loved her for herself.

In 1133, during his campaign in Akhlat and Armenian territories against other Turkmen forces, Zengi married the daughter of Suqman and de facto ruler and regent of the principality since 1111 when her father died. This marriage was not

mentioned in detail but one can see that at least a nominal authority of Zengi was recognised in her territories. Sources decline to inform us about the duration of this marriage.

The marriage to Zumurrud Khatun in 1138 was his fourth, but that does not necessarily mean that Zengi had four wives at the same time, which is permitted by the Shari'a according to most classic interpretations. Most probably, Zengi saw in Zumurrud a strong woman who had killed her son Isma'il in 1134, though she was in charge together with her Mamluk commanders of Damascene affairs. This belief or judgement by Zengi was not wholly correct, and his project and ambition to rule all of Syria did not go beyond Hims, as Damascus proved to be extremely intractable. His marriage to Zumurrud gave him a certain limited legitimacy to interfere in the politics of Damascus, as will be discussed below. Zengi's fifth marriage – the daughter of Ridwan was already divorced – took place the following year in 1139 when he wanted to consolidate his military pact, as mentioned in Chapter 3, with Timurtash, the Artuqid lord of Mardin, and marry his daughter, Dayfa Khatun. One could say that this marriage in the final years of Zengi's life added greater trust to Zengid–Artuqid relations, and was relatively successful. Ibn al-'Adim mentions that Zengi agreed to marry his only daughter at the same time to the King of Damascus, but no details are given about the conclusion of that marriage or the daughter's name. It is worth mentioning that, like the norm of contemporary sources, there was very little mention of the women and some of their names were not mentioned at all, which added to the difficulty of understanding the age. It is worth noting that Zengi also had concubines, which was normal at that time, some in Mosul and others in Aleppo and Baalbak.¹²⁹ Such marriages during key political events, or steps, had surely aided Zengi to rise and boost his influence among other leaders.

Zengi did not wait long to hunt for his long-awaited goal, Damascus. Later in the month after he married Zumurrud we find him orchestrating a plot to kill Mahmud while sleeping, at the hands of his servants. Ibn al-Athir writes that Zengi's reason for marrying Zumurrud was because he thought she was in command of her son's dominions, but when he discovered otherwise he decided to create political-military disorder in Damascus in his favour.¹³⁰ Zengi realised too late that the *de facto* ruler of Damascus was Emir Muin al-Din Unur, who had led successful resistance against him before, both in Damascus and Hims.

As soon as Mahmud was killed, Unur contacted Jamal al-Din b. Muhammad b. Buri, lord of Baalbak, and pleaded with him to attend at once in Damascus, where he was made the new king of the city, and Unur secured to him loyalty of the Seljuq forces and the nobles of society. Unur was empowered with all affairs of the realm. Unur also married Muhammad's mother, who gave him political legitimacy as an *atabeg*, in addition to the powers he already had.¹³¹ Zumurrud, now wife of Zengi and mother of the assassinated king, contacted her husband while he was on his way back to Mosul. She urged him to avenge the murder of her son, which Zengi certainly welcomed. Zengi prepared a massive army according to Ibn al-Qalanisi, in his determination to seize Damascus. He began by appearing at the walls of Baalbak on 29 August 1139. Zengi used fourteen

mangonels in his siege of Baalbak, the last stronghold to Damascus in southern Syria and the summer resort for the kings of Damascus. For two weeks Zengi bombarded the town, showing no mercy. When the Turkish garrison there realised that neither Unur nor the new King of Damascus was able to save them, they negotiated surrender in return for their safety. Zengi agreed, but when they surrendered he crucified most of the garrison, showing no mercy. Zengi kidnapped the concubine of Unur, who had been sent to live in Baalbak after Unur married Muhammad's mother, and took her back to Aleppo. Following the murder of Zengi in 1146, Nur al-Din sent the concubine back to her old master, Unur, in Damascus, in a humanitarian gesture, which Unur valued deeply.¹³²

Zengi remained in Baalbak until the beginning of autumn 1139, reorganising the defences of the town, which had been badly affected during his fierce siege. Zengi gave his troops time to rest before commanding them, unusually, in the harsh winter season, towards Damascus. In addition, he wanted to give diplomacy with Damascus a chance. He wrote to Muhammad b. Buri, King of Damascus, requesting the surrender of his city in return for compensating him with any other city or realm he demanded, which reflects how determined he was to seize the city. This was generous of Zengi at that stage; the blood of the murdered Mahmud was completely ignored. When Zengi's request was turned down he marched on the city and besieged it on 6 December 1139.¹³³ For two full weeks Zengi commanded a very fierce attack on the city from the western and southern sides. The Seljuq forces, together with the *ahdath* of Damascus, were very brave in their final stand against such organised and mobilised Zengid forces. Zengi halted the attack for a few days and again used diplomacy. He offered Baalbak and Hims to Muhammad, in addition to any other city of his choice, in return for the surrender of Damascus.¹³⁴ Muhammad was keen to accept this offer, not, as sources mention, to save the blood of Muslims, but in the realisation that this was his last chance to accept a generous offer from Zengi, who was engaging in an uncompromising battle in the heart of the harsh snowy winter season. While Muhammad was willing to accept this proposal, his commanders, led by Unur, refused, since they saw no future should Zengi take Damascus. Strangely enough, the following month King Muhammad of Damascus started to suffer from an unexplained or diagnosed illness, for which no cure could be found. He died on 29 March 1140. The de facto ruler of the city, Unur, who may have had a hand in this possible plot, found no difficulty in installing Abi Said Abaq b. Muhammad on the throne, after securing the loyalty of the army.¹³⁵

When Zengi heard the news of this smooth transition of power, he stepped up his attack on Damascus, hoping that some of the commanders would rebel against or desert Unur under such military-economic pressure; however, the *ahdath* of Damascus, together with the Seljuq forces, put up a very united front against the invaders. When the commanders, led by Unur, realised how determined Zengi was to capture their city, besieging it for four months, they decided to contact King Fulk of Jerusalem to ask for his urgent military help against Zengi. Unur appealed to King Fulk, who believed that if Damascus were to be taken by Zengi he would unite Syria, and the Crusaders' presence in the Levant

would be under severe threat,¹³⁶ which Fulk had already grasped from his long experience.

King Fulk welcomed such an appeal for help. He demanded that a certain number of hostages from the families of the Seljuq commanders be sent to the Crusaders' side in order to guarantee the completion of the campaign, in addition to a sum of money to finance his preparations. This was agreed by Unur, who offered King Fulk 20,000 dinars for every month of the campaign, and to attack and seize the castle of Banias from the deputies of Zengi and surrender it to the Crusaders.¹³⁷ Such a castle on the Golan Heights was a strategic post, threatening the countryside of the Crusader Kingdom and the coast.

King Fulk sent for all Crusaders in the East, requesting them to unite in arms against Zengi. While such forces would take weeks to arrive, on 4 May 1140 one finds Zengi marching from the walls of Damascus to Hawran in the south, trying to intercept the Crusaders before they could unite and move towards Damascus. For nearly five weeks Zengi remained in Hawran, and when he received the news from his scouts of the Crusaders' approach on Damascus in large numbers, he withdrew to Ghouta, south of the city, burning and sacking villages on the way. Upon the approach of the Crusaders much closer to the city, he left on 19 June 1140 with his entire force and retired to Baalbak, where he had installed Najm al-Din Ayyub, father of Saladin, as commander of Baalbak citadel.¹³⁸ Why had a pragmatic and battle-hardened commander like Zengi withdrawn like this? Damascus, being the largest city in Syria, proved hard to capture, although it contained a humble citadel built only in the 1070s, as compared to the gigantic one in Aleppo. The local Syrians, represented by their *ahdath*, had united previously with the Seljuq forces against King Baldwin II when he attacked the city in 1129; they proved again how brave they were against Zengi, and later against the Second Crusade in July 1148. One should add that the unity between the Seljuqs and the Crusaders, and the presence of King Fulk, had affected Zengi's calculations, since he had hoped to meet the Seljuqs alone, and commanded by a weak king, not by the tactful, skilful Unur. Panoratically, Zengi was involved with another front at the same time he was besieging Damascus. As mentioned in Chapter 3, he was fighting the Turkmen lord, Qipchaq of Shahrazur, and he sent colossal forces (*askaran kathifan*) to fight him. Thus he was not keen to confront the Crusaders.

King Fulk arrived in the city of Damascus and united with Unur. When he realised that his Frankish forces had accomplished the mission and saved Seljuq Damascus from Zengi, he returned to Jerusalem. Unur honoured his word with Fulk, and sent a force to seized the castle of Banias and hand it back to the Crusaders.¹³⁹

Why did King Fulk not use such an opportunity to attack the weakened Damascus? It seems that he preferred to have it as an ally and buffer zone against other hostile Muslim powers from Iraq and Iran. The ambassador of Unur to King Fulk who concluded the deal in this crisis was the Arab lord of Shayzar, the famous Usama b. Munqidh. He furnishes us with details of trust and amicable friendship between the two lords. Unur visited Acre in the

kingdom of Jerusalem, as an honoured guest of King Fulk, and they went hunting together. They also exchanged gifts. Unur later visited Jerusalem and Nablus and became a friend of William of Bures, lord of Tiberias, who invited him to his dominions.¹⁴⁰ Unur was defending his political career by building trust with the Crusaders in order to form a pact with them in the future against Zengi, who had been targeting Damascus for a decade.

Unur's calculation was correct. Zengi moved most of his forces from Baalbak in early July to plunder Hawran, south of Damascus, in retaliation for the capture of his castle, Banias. However, he himself, as Ibn Wasil writes:

marched in a small battalion and appeared at dawn before the city walls of Damascus. No one had expected that. When the Damascenes woke up, they grossly feared his presence and the city was as though it had been hit by an earthquake. Locals and soldiers mounted the walls, the gates were opened, and the Damascenes went out to fight him.¹⁴¹

Since most of his army was away, Zengi avoided any confrontation (as mentioned above). He remained in the countryside waiting for his army. When it arrived, and his soldiers' hands were full of incalculable booty, Zengi decided to leave for his dominions in the East and to give up completely his dream of uniting Syria under his banner.

The relations between the Zengid dominions in northern Syria and the Crusaders of Antioch, Tripoli and Edessa were a *modus vivendi*, with no serious hostilities and few skirmishes in the countryside of Aleppo, which was taken care of by the deputy of Zengi in the city, namely Emir Sawar.

Carole Hillenbrand eloquently describes the jihad of Zengi, saying: 'He was a warrior with sprawling ambitions that straddled both the arena of Crusader activity in Syria and Palestine and also Seljuq power politics further east in Baghdad and Mosul.'¹⁴² One should add that Zengi, as was discussed in this chapter, ruled Aleppo and Hama in central Syria, in addition to Hims for a period of time, yet he avoided launching serious hostilities on the Crusaders' dominions, including those of his immediate neighbours, in Antioch or Edessa. He tried to avoid direct confrontation with the massive armies of the Crusader-Byzantine pact in 1138. He wasted a golden opportunity of seizing Damascus in 1135, and again in 1140, because he was engaged in other military activities in Iraq and Iran, which he always prioritised. He also never tried to enter into a pact with other Muslim powers in Syria to confront the Crusaders in the full spirit of jihad.

Notes

- 1 Abu Shama, *al-Rawdatayn*, vol. 1, pp. 34–5. These lines are written by Ibn al-Qaysarani (d. 1153), who lived for most of his life in Aleppo. The word '*thoughur*' refers to frontier areas/towns separating Muslims and non-Muslims, especially within the Byzantine Empire. 'Umar is the second rightly guided caliph (d. 644). '*Thoughur*' is also plural for mouth, so they were full of joy.
- 2 Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat*, vol. 2, p. 17.

- 3 C. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*, Edinburgh, 1999, pp. 103–6. The remaining four volumes of the *Kitab al-Jihad* are translated by N. Christie, 2015 (not yet published).
- 4 C. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 103.
- 5 Bosworth, 'Political and Dynastic History', p. 141; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 277; Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 522.
- 6 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 37.
- 7 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 241. Ironically, Salem, who advised Zengi to take Aleppo, was the one besieged by him in 1146, when Zengi was killed.
- 8 Ibid., vol. 2, p. 237.
- 9 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 650.
- 10 Ibid., vol. 10, p. 650.
- 11 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 243.
- 12 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 349.
- 13 L. Nicholson, 'The Growth of the Latin State 1118–1144', in *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 1, ed. K. M. Setton, Madison, 1958, p. 430.
- 14 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, pp. 241–3.
- 15 I. Franck and D. Brownstone, *The Silk Road: A History*, New York, 1986, pp. 46–7.
- 16 E. Eldem, D. Goffman and B. Masters, *The Ottoman City between East and West*, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 73–5.
- 17 M. Brett, art. 'Aleppo', in *Crusades, An Encyclopedia*, ed. A. Murray, Santa Barbara, 2006.
- 18 Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties*, p. 85.
- 19 El-Azhari, *The Saljuqs*, p. 65.
- 20 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 531.
- 21 Ibid., vol. 10, p. 373.
- 22 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 279.
- 23 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 242.
- 24 Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 242–3; Ibn Shihna, *al-durr al-muntakhab fi ta'rikh mamlakat halab*, ed. Y. Sarkis, Beirut, n.d., p. 109.
- 25 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, pp. 242–3.
- 26 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 38.
- 27 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 354.
- 28 William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, vol. 2, trans. E. A. Babcock and A. C. Krey, New York, 1976, pp. 40–1.
- 29 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 361.
- 30 Ibid., p. 362; Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, pp. 245–6.
- 31 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 659; Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 246.
- 32 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 246.
- 33 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 659.
- 34 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 245. Sawar's father, Aytakin, was the former *atabeg* of Ridwan, Seljuq King of Aleppo (d.1113). Aytakin ruled Hims as his *iqta* until his death in 1103.
- 35 William of Tyre, *History of Deeds*, vol. 2, pp. 43–4.
- 36 Ibid., vol. 2, p. 45.
- 37 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 663; Abu Shama, *al-Rawdatayn*, vol. 1, p. 31; Alptekin, *Reign of Zangi*, p. 84, repeats the same mistake.
- 38 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 247; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, pp. 42–3; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, pp. 364–5.
- 39 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 247. The posts of deputy and keeper of the citadel will be discussed in Chapter 6.
- 40 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, pp. 43–5; I. Demirkent, *Urfa Haçlı Kontlugu Tarihi (1118–1146)*, Ankara, 1994, pp. 94–5.

- 41 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 46; William of Tyre, *History of Deeds*, vol. 2, p. 47.
- 42 Ibn al- Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 665; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 383.
- 43 Runciman, *Crusades*, vol. 2, pp. 186–7.
- 44 William of Tyre, *History of Deeds*, vol. 1, p. 611.
- 45 Ibn al-‘Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 251.
- 46 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 381; Ibn al-‘Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, pp. 251–2.
- 47 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 381; Ibn al-‘Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 252; William of Tyre, *History of Deeds*, vol. 1, p. 615.
- 48 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 374.
- 49 Ibid., p. 380.
- 50 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 8. Ibn al-Athir gives the date as 1133. Runciman believes that these Turkmen were under the authority of Sawar, but cites no source: *Crusades*, vol. 2, p. 195.
- 51 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 680.
- 52 T. K. el-Azhari, art. ‘Tughtegin’, in *Crusades, An Encyclopedia*, ed. A. Murray, Santa Barbara, 2006.
- 53 William of Tyre, *History of Deeds*, vol. 2, p. 74; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 685.
- 54 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 378.
- 55 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 53.
- 56 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 53.
- 57 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 383.
- 58 Al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az al-hunafa'*, vol. 3, ed. M. Ahmad, Cairo, 1973, pp. 146–7.
- 59 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 22.
- 60 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, pp. 385–90.
- 61 Ibid., pp. 282–3.
- 62 Ibn al-‘Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 256.
- 63 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 390; Ibn ‘Asakir, *Tahdhib ta'rikh Dimashq al-kabir*, 7 vols, ed. A. Badran, Beirut, 1979, vol. 3, p. 18; T. K. el-Azhari, ‘The Role of Saljuq Women in Medieval Syria’, in *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, vol. 4, ed. U. Vermeulen, Leuven, 2005, p. 115.
- 64 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 389; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 57.
- 65 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, pp. 388–9; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 57.
- 66 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 22.
- 67 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 391.
- 68 Ibid., p. 425.
- 69 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, pp. 21–2; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 391.
- 70 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 58.
- 71 Ibn al-‘Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 259.
- 72 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, pp. 392–6; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, pp. 63–5.
- 73 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 38.
- 74 Ibid., vol. 11, p. 38.
- 75 Ibn al-‘Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, pp. 260–1; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 40; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 406. A letter was sent from the Arab rulers of Shayzar to Seljuq Damascus with the good news.
- 76 William of Tyre, *History of Deeds*, vol. 1, pp. 59–60.
- 77 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 407.
- 78 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, pp. 50–1.
- 79 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 406.
- 80 Ibn al-‘Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 261; William of Tyre, *History of Deeds*, vol. 1, p. 61; T. Asbridge, *The Crusades: The War for the Holy Land*, London, 2010, p. 193.
- 81 Ibn al-‘Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 262; William of Tyre, *History of Deeds*, vol. 1, pp. 70–3.

- 82 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, pp. 51–2.
- 83 Ibid., vol. 11, p. 52; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 408; Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 262; 'Michael the Syrian', in *Al-Mawsua al-Shamiyya*, Damascus, trans. S. Zakkar, 1995, vol. 5, p. 159.
- 84 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 261; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 407.
- 85 Runciman, *Crusades*, vol. 2, p. 204.
- 86 Abu Shama, *al-Rawdatayn*, vol. 1, p. 34.
- 87 Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 34–5.
- 88 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 261.
- 89 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 52.
- 90 Runciman, *Crusades*, vol. 2, p. 205.
- 91 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, pp. 52–3; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, pp. 74–5. This story was told by the father of Ibn Wasil to al-Muazzam, the Ayyubid King of Jerusalem, in 1226. It shows how some of the events that took place were narrated to Turkmen-Kurdish lords.
- 92 E. Hallam, *Chronicles of the Crusades*, London, 1989, p. 85.
- 93 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 263.
- 94 Ibid.; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 412.
- 95 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 413.
- 96 El-Azhari, *The Saljuqs*, p. 248. Beirut only became connected by road to Damascus in the nineteenth century.
- 97 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 264.
- 98 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 55; Ibn Nazif al-Hamawi, *al-Ta'rikh al-Mansuri*, Damascus, 1990; Zakkar, *al-Mawsua*, vol. 21, p. 305.
- 99 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 8, p. 406.
- 100 Ibid., vol. 8, pp. 440–2.
- 101 al-Maqrizi, *Itti'az*, vol. 1, pp. 168–71.
- 102 R. Morris, art. 'Alexios', in *Crusades, An Encyclopedia*, ed. A. Murray, Santa Barbara, 2006.
- 103 William of Tyre, *History of Deeds*, vol. 1, p. 84.
- 104 Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 92–3.
- 105 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 264.
- 106 Ibid.; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 416. Balat is a small place, mentioned by Yaqut al-Hamawi in *Mu'jam al-buldan*, vol. 1, p. 477.
- 107 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 265.
- 108 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 416; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 55. Ibn al-Qalanisi mentions that the *qadi* of the town (with 400 inhabitants) converted to Christianity during these events.
- 109 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 265.
- 110 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 80.
- 111 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 223.
- 112 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 78.
- 113 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 417.
- 114 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 267.
- 115 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 417.
- 116 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 55; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 55.
- 117 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 81.
- 118 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, pp. 55–6.
- 119 H. A. R. Gibb, 'Zengi and the Fall of Edessa', in *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 1, ed. K. Setton, Madison, 1958, p. 459.
- 120 Usama ibn Munqidh, *al-I'tibar*, p. 196; Ibn Nazif al-Hamawi, *al-Ta'rikh al-Mansuri*, p. 305.
- 121 Runciman, *Crusades*, vol. 2, p. 217.

- 122 Merciful here is compared to Almighty God, symbolising invincibility; God is called the Merciful in the Qur'an.
- 123 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 56; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 59.
- 124 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 65.
- 125 Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zaman*, vol. 8b, p. 165.
- 126 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 55.
- 127 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 28.
- 128 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 244.
- 129 Ibn al-'Adim, *Bughyat*, p. 265; Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 269.
- 130 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 55.
- 131 Ibid., vol. 11, p. 68; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 86.
- 132 Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'at al-zaman*, vol. 8b, p. 172; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, pp. 422–3; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 86. It is mentioned in the original manuscript that he left her, and did not marry her in Aleppo. The editor changed the wording.
- 133 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 73.
- 134 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 425.
- 135 Ibid.
- 136 William of Tyre, *History of Deeds*, vol. 2, p. 105; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 74.
- 137 William of Tyre, *History of Deeds*, vol. 2, p. 105; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 426.
- 138 William of Tyre, *History of Deeds*, vol. 2, p. 106; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 75; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 59.
- 139 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 75.
- 140 Usama b. Munqidh, *al-I'tibar*, pp. 139, 196, 300.
- 141 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 89.
- 142 C. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, pp. 110–11.

5 The fall of Edessa

Jihad at the end of a career

When Zengi seized Edessa, he doomed the city, inverted the crosses, killed priests and monks. He annihilated its knights and most brave heroes. They were all either murdered or taken captive, either injured or broken. Zengi's forces filled their hands with booty, taking people, precious items or charming boys and beautiful virgins.

The Franks had what they deserved. Zengi exorcised the Jazira of their shame and evil. Islam returned to these lands, with its supporters as the Almighty promised in the Qur'an [God will make good believers, his successors on earth]. It was a grand conquest, and Muslims had not witnessed or benefited from anything like it before. The news filled the horizons with such victory that people everywhere were celebrating and preaching this divine conquest.¹

These are the lines written by the chief Zengid historian, Ibn al-Athir, expressing great joy at the defeat of the Crusaders of Edessa and other Christians at the hands of his hero, Zengi, in 1144. Since his failure to capture Damascus in 1140, Zengi had never crossed to the west of the Euphrates or returned to Syria again. He left his capable and loyal deputy in Aleppo, Emir Sawar, to take care of Zengid territories from there.

Sawar also had not engaged in an offensive against the Crusaders of Antioch or Edessa, but in 1141 had defended the Aleppan countryside from Frankish attacks from Antioch, as a reaction to an attack by a Turkmen seasonal emir called Luja, who moved from southern Syria and penetrated the countryside of Tripoli and Antioch aimlessly for quick booty. The Crusaders of Antioch thought that he represented the Zengid dominions, and the matter ended quickly after a limited confrontation.²

As for Zengi, until his march at the end of 1144 to seize Edessa he focused on wars of expansion against the Kurds, Artuqids and Arabs in the Jazira, as mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3. He was also concerned about his relationship with the Seljuq sultanate, which was a continuous source of threat and conflict for him.

In the summer of 1142 Zengi marched to punish the Hakkariyya Kurds in the far northeast of Iraq and the foothills of Azerbaijan. Local chiefs at Asheb and Jullab, who had been his vassals for a decade, revolted. Zengi succeeded in

subduing them and built the castle of 'Imadiyya in place of Jullab, which was demolished. Zengi returned to his capital Mosul but ordered his loyal and capable deputy there, Emir Jaqar, to pacify the rest of the arduous mountains of the Hakkariyya and proceed to the Mahraniyya Kurdish areas from northern Iraq to the mountains of Armenia. Ibn Wasil mentions that Jaqar successfully captured six of the main towns.³

At the same time Zengi had dispatched a force to capture the small towns of Haditha and 'Ana on the lower Euphrates from unknown Arab chiefs. Later that year and into 1143 Zengi attacked the vicinity of Diyar Bakr and the upper Euphrates to deter the mysterious Turkmen lord, Yaqub b. al-Ahmar, and captured seven castles from him.⁴ Most of these activities were routine practice to keep the local Kurds and newly arrived Turkmen intruders in the area around him restrained. The great challenge for Zengi came in 1143. The Seljuq sultan, Mas'ud, decided to end five years of amicable relations between the two, during which time Mas'ud had been occupied with other affairs in Iran, but he now turned his attention to his old enemy Zengi. Mas'ud, who thought all along that Zengi was conspiring against the sultanate's interests, decided to assemble a large army and march to capture Mosul. Zengi resorted to skilled diplomacy to save Mosul (see Chapter 2) and negotiated an agreement with the sultan. Zengi would pay 100,000 dinars annually to Mas'ud and would submit to the sultan's order to declare jihad and capture Edessa from the Franks.⁵ It should be noted that Zengi's relationship with the supreme Seljuq sultan of the empire, Sanjar, did not experience any negativity for a decade, as the latter was in remote Khurasan in Central Asia and consistently occupied with the attacks of the Turkmen from across the river Oxus.

Before we examine the direct and indirect reasons and motives for Zengi's march on Edessa and its impact, it seems apt to briefly discuss the history of Edessa and its changed position both with the entrance of the Seljuqs into the Middle East and the Frankish arrival in the area. Similarly, the relationship of Edessa with its immediate neighbours, and Zengi's encounters with the principality prior to 1144, will be considered.

Al-Ruha (the Syriac name for Edessa) was one of the major cities in the Jazira which played a vital cultural role under the early Muslim 'Abbasids in the eighth century. Many Edessans took part in the massive translation movement from Syriac and Greek languages to Arabic. When the Seljuq Turks came to the Middle East in the second half of the eleventh century, especially after their victory at Manzikert over the Byzantine Empire in 1071, there was a huge movement of immigration into the area of the Jazira and eastern Anatolia of Kurds, Syriacs, Arabs and Armenians. The latter were concentrated around Lake Van and the Caucasus, and many moved down to Cilicia and the Taurus mountains, founding an Armenian principality there. The majority of the population of the large city of Antioch was also Armenian. Between 1077 and 1086 Edessa witnessed an Armenian principality connected to other Armenians in Aintab, Marash and Tell Bashir (Turbessel). In 1086 the great Seljuq sultan, Malik Shah, marched from Iraq into Syria and seized Edessa from Thoros, allocating it to his Turkmen commander, Buzan.⁶

When Malik Shah died in 1092, all the provinces of the Seljuq sultanate descended into a bitter civil war, which continued well into the early years of the twelfth century. As a result, Thoros recaptured Edessa with ease, helped by the Armenian majority in the population, and stayed until Baldwin of Boulogne deserted the First Crusade and established the first Crusader principality at Edessa on 10 March 1098.⁷ Baldwin captured Tell Bashir in February 1098 when he was invited by Thoros to come to Edessa. The Armenian feared the coming of the Turkmen emir of Mosul, Kerbogha, to relieve Antioch from the Frankish siege there. Despite the differences of creed between the Armenians and Crusaders it seems that a large number of the locals in Edessa collaborated with the Frankish force.

The city of Edessa had several potential vulnerabilities or weak points that could threaten its independence and even its existence; first, the diversity of ethnic groups living in the city, which included Syrians, Armenians, Kurds, Arabs, Turks and Franks. Consequently, a second potential weakness was the religious differences between these elements. From the eleventh century onward successive waves of Turkish immigration from Central Asia to the area intensified the process of 'Turkification', and contributed to the isolation of Edessa from other Armenian centres, a vulnerability exacerbated by the lack of natural protective features in the area of the Jazira.

After the foundation of Edessa as the first Crusader principality in March 1098, followed in June by the second in Antioch, the two Frankish principalities traced an inconsistent pattern in their political relations, ranging from collaboration to pragmatism, rivalry and open hostility. This was not supposed to be the case for zealous Crusaders arriving from Western Europe united in the name of Christ.

While the two Seljuq sultans, Barkyaruk and Muhammad (the sons of Malik Shah), were engaged in a bitter civil war for supremacy in Iran between 1097 and 1105⁸ using tens of thousands of soldiers, the Turkmen ruler of Mosul, Gumushtegin, and the Artuqid lord of Mardin, Suqman, joined forces and defeated Bohemond, Tancred of Antioch, Joscelin of Tell Bashir and Baldwin of Bourg, lord of Edessa, near Harran in the vicinity of Edessa. The Crusader armies suffered a humiliating defeat and the lords of Edessa and Tell Bashir were taken captive.⁹ One should mention here that Zengi was living in Mosul, then under the protection of successive Turkmen lords of the city. He was twenty years old, but although no source mentioned any participation in this battle he was most probably aware of the victory, especially as Baldwin was held captive in Mosul for four long years. The question here is why the two Turkmen Muslim lords did not seize this moment of grand victory to march on and attack fragile Edessa. The large number of Turkmen seasonal cavalry who took part in these confrontations and the lack of trust between the lords, in addition to the lack of a coherent strategy for jihad, prevented any political gains from the military victory.

Four years later, in 1108, the situation had changed, and we find two military alliances ranged against each other. Baldwin of Bourg, Prince of Edessa, with

his vassal Joscelin of Tell Bashir, were locked in rivalry with Tancred of Antioch and made a pact with the Turkmen emir Chavli, lord of Mosul in Iraq and one of the closer emirs to Sultan Muhammad, against Ridwan of Aleppo who, in turn, had made an alliance with Tancred. The two sides were engaged in an open confrontation near Tell Bashir and the latter pact proved victorious, but with few casualties on either side.¹⁰ In the years 1110 and 1111 the Seljuq sultan Muhammad, who had become politically well established in Iran and Iraq, had commissioned a group of his senior emirs from around the sultanate to march for jihad against the Crusaders. In 1110 the colossal sultanate armies besieged Edessa for two months during April and May but failed to capture it. Even when the lords of Jerusalem, Antioch and Tripoli arrived in the area, and were defeated by the sultanate armies in the Jazira,¹¹ the Seljuq forces neglected Edessa and marched to Aleppo, despite the great risk to its lines of communication from the Franks remaining in the Jazira.

In the second campaign, Mawdud, Turkmen lord of Mosul, was in command of several emirs, holders of *iqta'* from Iran, Azerbaijan, Iraq and the Jazira. The sultan's son, Prince Mas'ud, took part in this massive campaign, which reflected the zeal and determination for jihad.

Despite all of these resources they failed to capture Edessa after besieging it twice in July 1111. The armies marched to Tell Bashir and were unable to capture it either following a long siege of forty-five days.¹² The very fact that they had to lift the siege on Edessa the first time without a clear reason, then return to the city again, reflected the absence of any plan or strategy for the Muslim armies. Furthermore, despite their huge forces they failed to take Tell Bashir. This was not only because Emir Ahmad Yel of Maragha in Azerbaijan was bribed by Joscelin of Tell Bashir and deserted the jihad campaign, but was also due to disharmony and jealousy between the leaders of the multi-ethnic Muslim army who were not sure who would govern the territories they were attacking once captured, although Ibn al-Athir in *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir* mentions that Zengi was always in the company of Chavli, and then Mawdud. Ibn al-Athir gives details of Zengi's involvement in Syria against the Crusaders from 1113, as reported in Chapter 1, when Zengi marched with Mawdud and fought bravely in the Sinnabra battle. He subsequently marched with a small force to the town of Tabariyya (Tiberias), and showed remarkable bravery in attacking the Crusader town.¹³ The following year, in 1114, while Zengi's lord, al-Bursuqi (the new emir of Mosul) was besieging Edessa, he was contacted by the widow of Vasil Dgha, the Armenian lord of Raban, Marash and other Armenian towns, who expressed solidarity against the Crusaders of Antioch.¹⁴ The fact that the Armenians were not always united with the Franks, therefore, probably reached the ears of Zengi. As soon as Zengi was installed as emir of Mosul his priority was Aleppo rather than Edessa, so he contacted Joscelin and made peace with him, as mentioned in Chapter 4.

Although Ibn al-Athir in *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir* always mentions that Zengi did not want to have a hostile element between his territories, Zengi continued to avoid any confrontation with Edessa despite its location between his two major

cities of Mosul and Aleppo. On one of his frequent crossings to Aleppo in 1134 he besieged two small forts to the east of Edessa: one which used to belong to an Arab chief called Mani b. 'Utayr and the other most likely belonging to a Turkmen chief. He sent a personal envoy to the Crusaders in Edessa assuring them that he was not seeking a confrontation with them, but peace. According to Matthew of Edessa the Franks sent back the envoy with many gifts of food and drink from the city.¹⁵

The local political reasons behind Zengi's march on Edessa

There are several Crusader, Byzantine and Turkish motives which encouraged Zengi to attack Edessa in 1144. On the Byzantine side, on 8 April 1143 Emperor John of Byzantium died. He was the grand ally and protector of the Crusaders in northern Syria, and as such he always insisted on his right to a nominal authority over dominions under Antioch and Edessa. John had invaded northern and central Syria in 1138 and Zengi had avoided any direct confrontation with him, as discussed above. According to William of Tyre, John had never lost hope in demanding the territories of Antioch and Edessa. In 1142 he appeared with his army in the county of Edessa, besieging Tell Bashir; he demanded full submission from Joscelin of Edessa. As a guarantee, he demanded the surrender of hostages from Edessa to him. Joscelin could find no way out but to surrender his daughter, Isabella.¹⁶ The chief Latin historian continued to report with suspicion the demands of John for the surrender of Antioch to him, which was a long-held dream of Byzantium. To show his strength, he wrote to King Fulk in Jerusalem in the autumn of 1142, requesting to undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy City. King Fulk, who was less than enthusiastic about the idea, placed restrictions on the numbers of the imperial army that would be allowed to enter Jerusalem.¹⁷ Thus Zengi realised that with John's death, the Franks had lost a significant protector and supporter, while an obstacle had been removed from his path.

On the Crusader side, on 10 November 1143 King Fulk of Jerusalem died. The kingdom witnessed a domestic political struggle between his widow, Queen Melisende, and their young son, King Baldwin III, which lasted for years to come. With King Fulk's death the hostilities and rivalry between the Crusaders of the north, in Edessa and Antioch, went unrestrained.¹⁸ The Crusaders of Jerusalem could no longer afford to intervene between the two lords of the north, Joscelin II of Edessa and Raymond II of Antioch, who were fighting one another over the right of regency in the two principalities. As for Zengi, finally the last capable leader of the Crusaders in the Latin East who could galvanise the Crusaders around him disappeared.

On the Seljuq side, in 1143 Zengi averted the invasion of Mosul by the Seljuq sultan, Mas'ud, in return for his commitment to jihad and to capture Edessa, upon the orders of Mas'ud. Here one has to examine why Edessa was targeted and not any other of the Crusaders' cities. If Zengi attacked Antioch from his city, Aleppo, he would be cut off by Edessa and he could not attack Jerusalem without subduing Damascus. Edessa, in the heart of the Jazira, was an ideal

target, especially since Zengi had alerted Sultan Mas'ud in 1138 as to how close the Franks had come to his dominions in Iraq.

On the Artuqid side, two developments took place in 1144. First, Zengi had lost his chief ally and father-in-law, Timurtash of Mardin. Immediately after that their common long-time enemy, Qara Arslan of Hisn Kayfa, had a free hand due to Timurtash's death and made a pact with Joscelin. Second, Qara Arslan had led a few Artuqid leaders with him and agreed to surrender the fort of Babola, near Sumaysat in the Gargar area of Edessa, as a sign of goodwill and in return for Crusader support against Zengi.¹⁹ Zengi could not afford to stand still and watch this alliance grow, and so had to act against them.

Finally, on a personal level, Zengi, who had begun his military career nearly twenty years earlier, had never aimed for jihad directly against the Franks, or won a serious victory over them with regional impact. Apart from his victory over Fulk in Barin, Zengi had refrained from any serious offensive in the name of Islam and had spent his entire career to date fighting Muslim powers for his own expansionist interests. So he wanted to seize the moment of political power vacuum in the area mentioned above and win glory for himself, especially as he had given up on returning to southern Syria and subdued most of the Kurds and Turkmen chiefs around him. He also had in his service a large number of soldiers who could be used in the name of jihad.

Zengi and his march on Edessa

Zengi tried to mislead the Crusaders of Edessa as to the timing and place of his attack. Normally, most military movements took place in the spring and summer seasons, since during autumn and winter mobility was virtually impossible due to harsh snowy and rainy conditions; even the huge sultanate armies could not march for jihad in wintertime. So Zengi marched in autumn, not to Edessa but to the dominions of Qara Arslan, the Artuqid lord of Hisn Kayfa, and camped in the open hills without attacking the town itself.²⁰ Joscelin of Edessa was under the impression that this was a typical Muslim domestic affair and Zengi might spend his time aimlessly pursuing local Kurdish or Turkmen chiefs, as was his habit. Joscelin decided to leave Edessa, believing that his territories were safe for the coming season and he crossed the Euphrates to the West. As soon as he had left, reports from different spies and scouts informed Zengi of Joscelin's departure. Michael the Syrian and the continuation of Matthew of Edessa both reported that locals in nearby Harran had also sent an urgent message to Zengi informing him of the absence of Joscelin from the city and that there were no Frankish forces in Edessa to defend it.²¹ Despite having enough forces in his army, Zengi ordered the call for jihad to be sent to his vassals in the area, threatening them that he would not accept any excuse for their non-appearance. He also invited all the seasonal Turkmen fighters to join him to perform the duty of jihad. The result was overwhelming and thousands entered his service.²² One should add here that Zengi had in his company Alp Arslan, son of Sultan Mas'ud, which represented a significant level of determination.

Ibn al-Athir gives a much exaggerated story about Zengi in which he invited his emirs for dinner and said to them: 'No one should eat with me, unless he joins me in clapping on Edessa's gate tomorrow.' Only one emir and a young man came forward.²³ The same historian does not mention how Zengi dealt with those who were reluctant to follow him and how he convinced them, or indeed why they joined him in the first place. Throughout Zengi's career one does not come across any commanders who dared to disagree or argue with him, even if the campaign took place during the winter season; this contributed to the legend of Zengi's military prowess in medieval sources.

Zengi had dispatched a force at once to Edessa under the leading commander, Salah al-Din al-Yaghsiyani, with orders not to attack the city in full force but to present a psychological shock for the Edessans and test the defences of the city until Zengi arrived with the main army. For that reason Salah al-Din used young camels (*najaib*), which could run at greater speed, for the task. Salah al-Din ironically lost his way in the direction of Harran due to the heavy rains that affected the roads. He marched at speed that day and the following night, and he made it to the walls of Edessa at dawn on Tuesday, 28 November 1144.²⁴ At once he sent a message by pigeon to Zengi describing the Crusaders' vulnerable situation. Zengi appeared at the walls of Edessa at dawn on Thursday, 30 November, which made the Edessans tremble with shock. All Arabic, Armenian and Syriac sources agree that the Zengid forces turned out in huge numbers. Ibn al-Qalanisi writes that birds would not dare fly near the sky of Edessa due to the sheer numbers of the Turkmen archers and the mangonels besieging the city. The continuer of Matthew writes that Zengid forces filled the plains around the city as stars filled the sky.²⁵

While Zengi was directing his mangonels at the defences of the city, Joscelin camped at his town, Tell Bashir, west of the Euphrates, watching the situation helplessly. He sent for urgent help from Antioch and from Jerusalem. His old enemy, Raymond of Antioch, was happy to see his rival suffering, while Queen Melisende dispatched an army led by Constable Manasses and Philip of Nablus. Runciman believed that Joscelin's position at Tell Bashir would enable him to cut any reinforcements coming to Zengi from Aleppo.²⁶ One disagrees with this point of view, because although Zengi had a huge army, he would not use his Aleppan forces in order to protect Aleppo from the threat of nearby Antioch. The duty of defending Edessa fell on the shoulders of Hugh II, the Latin Archbishop of the principality, who was not well versed in military tactics; he did at least enjoy the support of the Armenian and Jacobite bishops in addition to the rest of the locals.

Zengi, who wanted to save time before any Frankish help might arrive to protect the city, began negotiations with the besieged. He sent them a message, offering them peace for themselves, their property and the city in return for the surrender of Edessa. Muslim and Syriac chronicles wrote of how Zengi was not only concerned with the cost of attacking the substantial fortifications, but also wanted to avoid destroying the beautiful city.²⁷ Hugh II refused to surrender, hoping for Frankish help from the other crusader territories; he could not

imagine that Joscelin would not react to the crisis. Zengi ordered the Aleppan and Khurasani (from the east of Iran) engineers to dig tunnels under the foundations of the city walls from the northern side. The Muslim engineers managed to dig a few tunnels and fill them with special types of wood and naphtha; these ignited at once, causing huge blasts which brought about the collapse of the fortifications.²⁸

The locals in the city bravely resisted, despite limited resources against such a large Muslim army. When signs of weakness started to appear, Zengi again attempted diplomacy. He sent a message to the besieged asking them to surrender, as they stood no chance of keeping the city. In order to show his good intentions he offered them two Muslim hostages to be taken by the Crusaders in return for two men from inside the city who would go out and inspect for themselves the tunnels under the foundations and recognise how well placed the Muslims were to capture the city. Zengi was keen to give them peace and avoid a doomed fate for Edessa.²⁹ Ethnic differences began to appear around the level of negotiation. The Franks were determined not to surrender, while the Syriac bishop asked for a brief halt in military operations. Other groups were undecided about the situation, but they were more confused than when the siege had begun.³⁰

When no clear answer was given to his offer, Zengi visited the tunnels for the final time and issued orders to ignite them. Immediately afterwards, the walls collapsed and the Muslims stormed their way into the city on Saturday, 24 December 1144.³¹ Ibn al-ʿAdim, in his manuscript *Bughyat al-Talab*, collected more accounts and details in his biography of Zengi (see the translation in Appendix 1).

For three days Edessa was sacked by the Turkmen forces, who were permitted by Zengi to behave in this way. Thousands were taken by the sword and thousands of women and children were taken as slaves. In addition to that, thousands were injured and lost their lives when they were crushed under the feet of those who rushed to take refuge in the citadel of the city, which was closed to them.³²

Apart from the quotation at the opening of this chapter, which reflects the carnage brought to the city by the invasion, Muslim sources shy away and avoid giving accounts of the sacking of the city, focusing instead on the glory of Zengi as a hero. On the other hand, Syriac and Armenian chronicles are saturated with calamity as to what took place. The Syrian chronicler writes:

How can a person describe the calamities which took place? It was a carnage in which the Turks had drunk the blood of old men, women, children, brides, and priests, male and female monks. Oh Lord, the Assyrian [Mosuli] pig [Zengi] had seized Edessa. It is a disaster caused by the Lord, because of our sins, when the enemy killed the monks and destroyed churches and monasteries.³³

Another eulogy by Saint Nerses Shnorhali read:

Disaster and calamity fallen upon us
When the heroes failed to stop the attack

The enemy's leader, the infernal [Zengi] with his massive forces
Gave them orders to devour everything
The Edessenes hurried to take refuge at the citadel
But the traitorous guards closed the doors before the locals
Swords of the enemy took them from behind
High piles of dead bodies are what became of them.³⁴

One can only add here that Ibn al-Athir, in *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, reminds the Muslims with a verse from the Qur'an, drawing a parallel with what took place, saying: 'When Almighty God destroys a sinful town, a severe pain from him is inflicted upon it' (Qur'an 11:102).³⁵ What is important here is the mentality of a leading Muslim chronicler who saw what took place as a divine punishment, well deserved, which also matched what the Christian chroniclers had written, as shown above.

Zengi entered Edessa while the citadel was still besieged. Hugh II was killed by an arrow on his way from the walls of the city to the citadel. When Zengi saw the carnage committed by his forces on the city and the amount of destruction and casualties, he ordered his troops to stop. He summoned the Syrian bishop Basil, who came to meet Zengi semi-naked and barefoot, pulled along on a rope by a Turkmen soldier. Zengi started to blame the bishop angrily for not surrendering Edessa earlier to avoid such a calamity, but instead waiting for Frankish help which never came. Basil replied in a proud manner that the Edessans respected their oath of loyalty to the Franks and now that they were defeated



Figure 5.1 Edessa Citadel.

they would honour their oath to Zengi as his enslaved people. He added that the Edessans should be respected for that loyalty. Zengi was convinced and admired the logic of the Bishop. He invited him into his tent, treated him well, and appointed him as his chancellor for the affairs of rebuilding the city.³⁶

As a result of that encounter, Zengi ordered a man to announce in the city that all survivors should return to their homes with their safety assured by him. The people in the citadel asked for clemency as well. It was granted only to Syrians and Armenians, but the Franks were denied peace. The citadel surrendered on 26 December and only the Crusaders were slaughtered, while the Eastern Christians were allowed to return to their homes.³⁷ It is understood that the Franks in the city were not killed, but were expelled from Edessa to the west of the Euphrates. Others were enslaved or taken as prisoners to other Zengid cities.³⁸ Zengi ordered all those who were taken as slaves from among the Syrians and Armenians to be freed. Such measures assured the locals of their safety and contributed to the rapid reconstruction of the city.

Zengi installed his deputy of Erbil in Iraq, Zayn al-Din ‘Ali Kuchuk, as his deputy in Edessa. He had strict orders from Zengi to treat the local Christians with justice and kindness, for which he was praised in the local chronicles. Additionally, he had the task of reconstructing the fortifications of the city, which had been badly damaged by the long and bitter siege. Zengi then deployed a large garrison to protect Edessa.³⁹

Why had Zengi turned into a merciful man regarding the Eastern Christians after the damage his armies had inflicted on them and on the city? One should



Figure 5.2 General view of the city of Edessa and the citadel.

bear in mind that he was anticipating a strong reaction from the Frankish forces in the Levant and from Europe, so he wanted to use the religious differences among the Syrians, Armenians and Franks to his advantage. In addition, his dominions, including Mosul and Aleppo, had a substantial population of Eastern Christians numbering tens of thousands who would be affected by the bloody stories they heard about their fellow Christians in Edessa; Zengi wanted to show respect in order to keep his dominions united.

Zengi wanted to use his victory in Edessa to clear the Frankish population from east of the Euphrates, which was an ambitious goal. In early January 1145 he marched to Saruj, which he managed to capture without a fight. The Frankish population in the vicinity took refuge at al-Bira.⁴⁰ Zengi continued to besiege this well-fortified city for three months, cutting off all food supplies into it. The problem for Zengi was that al-Bira was on the Euphrates and therefore suffered no shortage of water. While Joscelin, the former lord of Edessa, was visiting Jerusalem to ask for help, the Crusaders of al-Bira, the last Frankish stronghold east of the Euphrates, quickly lost hope and did not want to face the fate of Edessa. At a critical moment a messenger arrived for Zengi while he was at al-Bira, and told him of the revolt of the Seljuq king, Alp Arslan, in Mosul, who had killed Jaqar, the Zengid deputy in the city.⁴¹ In the appendix of Matthew of Edessa it is reported that the messenger arrived like a storm at an extraordinary speed on the back of a camel. Strangely enough, Zengi was so confident of his military capability and his commanders that he lifted the siege of al-Bira but did not go in person to Mosul. He ordered his newly appointed deputy of Edessa, 'Ali Kuchuk, to march to Mosul and take care of the situation, and replaced him with 'Ayn al-Dawla.⁴² Although Alp Arslan was in the company of Zengi on his way to Edessa it is not clear when he left him to return to Mosul while Zengi continued his campaign in the county of Edessa. Muslim and non-Muslim sources give contradicting information about the fate of al-Bira. While Ibn al-Athir and others write that as the Franks in al-Bira were fearing the return and confrontation with Zengi, they contacted his ally, the Artuqid lord of Mardin, Najm al-Din, and surrendered the town to him. Matthew and Michael the Syrian do not mention any surrender; Bar Hebraeus, however, supports the Muslim view.⁴³

Zengi was content with the result of his campaign on Edessa and did not attempt to attack the territories west of the Euphrates. He preferred to attack the Kurdish region of Bashnawiyya, north of Mosul, and to create a united Zengid dominion in the Jazira. It was there that he received news of the putting down of the revolt in Mosul.⁴⁴ At the same time, Joscelin still held Tell Bashir, Samosata, Marash, 'Ayn Tab, A'zaz and Ravendal. When no serious help came from the politically divided Jerusalem, one finds Joscelin in mid-1145 travelling to his old rival, the Byzantine Empire, to ask the new Emperor Manuel for help.⁴⁵

It is important here to discuss the different reactions and outcomes to the fall of Edessa by Zengi from both Muslim and Christian perspectives.

From the Sunni Muslim side, Zengi was elevated to a hero of jihad in the Muslim world. The caliph, al-Muqtafi, head of Sunni Islam, bestowed on him a six-line title:

Grand Emir Isfahsalar [Persian for commander of the army] the just, the victorious, the champion, the supporter [of the caliph], the unique ‘Imad al-Din, supporter of Islam, adherent of the people, partner of the state [with the sultan] advocate of the creed, glory of the *umma*, honour of kings, dean of sultans, vanquisher of infidels and rebels, suppressor of apostates and heretics, leader of Muslim armies, king of emirs, sun of eminence, emir of the two Iraqs [north and south] and Syria, *Pahlavan Jahan* [Persian for hero of the world] *Alp Ghazi* Iran [Turkish for brave *mujahid* of Iran], *inang qatlagh Tughrelbek* [Turkish for head of the people, emir of the banner – *atabeg*] Abu Said Zengi Ibn Aq Sunqur, champion of the commander of the faithful.

Such a long title was bestowed with full approval of the Seljuq sultan, and all the chroniclers, such as Ibn al-Qalanisi Abu Shama, Ibn al-‘Adim, Ibn Wasil and the Zengid historian Ibn al-Athir report parts of it. Not only that, but the social media of the time, Arabic poetry, attributed honourable titles and qualities to Zengi. Such poetry was a very old oratorical tradition, used in various events and places, and which would easily gain access to different social classes. One should mention here that there was as yet no written Turkish language, as it was first written down by Kashghari in the second half of the eleventh century. Similarly, the Kurdish language was as yet undocumented and the Persian poets were concerned more with the affairs of the Iranian world.

The famous poet Ibn al-Qaysarani (d. 1153) was in Aleppo at the time and wrote a long poem, of which the following is an extract:

In the conquest of Edessa there is a sign
 Contrary to what the evil Franks used to believe
 They expect the rebirth of the son of Mary to save them
 While they did not make much use of his first
 A city of fiction lasted for fifty years
 Stubbornly refusing to be captured by many kings
 Till Zengi finally humiliated and seized it;
 Tell the kings of infidels, their kingdoms will not be safe
 After such victory, all realms will become his
 He who has angels as his troops
 Will be able to send his horses to seize any areas
 Extending from Syrdaria river to Constantinople his goal.⁴⁶

Ibn al-Qaysarani also wrote other lines reflecting the same spirit, dedicated to the chief *qadi* of the Zengids, al-Shahrazuri. More than one piece of poetry composed by Ibn al-Qaysarani celebrated the Muslim victory over the Crusaders in Edessa and encouraged Zengi to march forward to capture Jerusalem.

The other prominent poet, Ibn Munir al-Tarabulsi, was born in Tripoli, Lebanon, but he lived in Zengid Aleppo until the capture of Edessa. He wrote several poems for that occasion, but a few lines will reflect the spirit of the age:

The victory of Edessa had outshone all other victories
It crowned the vocal and written traditions
You will be rewarded for that on behalf of the Prophet
You were the only Muslim king to come forward
To wash the humility and disgrace.⁴⁷

In another poem he wrote:

By the deeds of Zengi, Islam became reliant on you
A king never tasted sleepiness till he dispersed the settlers
If justice is done to his titles, he should be called the caliph
Tomorrow he will invade Jerusalem
And will walk over the enemies like stepping on dried fallen leaves.⁴⁸

Ibn al-Athir, despite being born long after the capture of Edessa in 1160, was enthusiastic about his lord and composed these lines describing the army of Zengi:

With an army swollen with knights to the degree
We imagined the land became like a sea full of arms
Zengi, sometimes forgave despite his might
But he seldom avoided a confrontation with the enemy.⁴⁹

One cannot, of course, translate fully the rhyme of medieval poetry, full of puns, but the aim here is to extract the flavour and meaning of the age from these lines. Clearly Zengi was elevated to a saint while all other Muslim leaders were blamed for their passiveness. Even a chief Persian historian like 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani (d. 1201), who was usually anti-Zengi, confessed that such a victory had washed away any guilt accrued before. If one looked panoramically, beyond the Middle East, it may be seen that the Muslims of al-Andalus (Spain), admired Zengi while they conducted what they believed to be a jihad against the Reconquista from the Christian North. The leading Andalusian historian, al-Maqqari al-Tilimsani (d. 1631), in his *Nafh al-Tib*, mentions earlier Andalusian poets, such as Abu'l-Hakam al-Maghribi (d. 1146), who lamented Zengi as the hero of Islam.⁵⁰

On the other Muslim side, that of the Fatimid Shi'a caliphate, one sees no reaction in the sources, possibly due to differences of creed, although the vizier and de facto ruler of Egypt, Talai'i b. Ruzayk (d. 1160), wrote several poems praising and encouraging Nur al-Din b. Zengi to continue the jihad. Ruzayk sent all such poems to their common friend Usama b. Munqidh; few other Shia poets did the same.⁵¹ But the focus here is the reaction to Zengi's victory. Notably, the mentality of Muslim chroniclers in the East who celebrated the Muslim capture of Edessa from Christian Frankish forces did not make a clear distinction between their feelings towards the Latin and native Oriental Christians. We see Ibn al-Athir, in the same year that he glorified the Muslim capture of Edessa,

report his sadness over the Frankish (Norman) fleet which sailed from Sicily to attack the city of Barshak in Tunisia, sacking the city and taking many Muslim women back with them to Italy to be sold as slaves. He also lamented the capture of five different Muslim towns in al-Andalus in 1145 by the Frankish enemy⁵² while still writing about the impact of Zengi, which makes one believe that some Muslim chroniclers who represented the intellectual educated elite looked at the land of Islam in a maximalist way.

Moving on to examine the diversity of Christian reactions, we will start with the Eastern Christians and their shock at the capture of Edessa. Michael the Syrian expressed his horror, writing:

The enemy had tramped over Edessa, because of our sins. The Turks killed the priests and churches and monasteries were demolished. It was a calamity which made parents forgets about their sons. It made mothers forget their infants before the swords took every one. Priests were praying: 'I take the anger of Almighty because I sinned.' Their prayers stopped only when they were taken by the sword.⁵³

Bar Hebraus the Syrian wrote:

The Turks stormed the city of Abgar, apostle of Christ, with their swords thirsty for blood. They killed old men, young men and women, even monks and infants were not spared. The pen cannot describe what a catastrophe it was. They tramped over Edessa because of our sins.⁵⁴

Finally, Saint Nerses, the Armenian, wrote a long elegy, directing his words on behalf of Edessa to those major Christian cities such as Jerusalem, Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria and Antioch seeking help. A few selected lines illustrate the Christian perspective on the loss of Edessa:

Oh Jerusalem, City of the Lord
Listen to my cries and weep
Share my pains and send your condolences
Oh Rome, mother of all cities
Seat of Peter the great
Hurry and offer help; I'm in captivity
Come and revenge those who enslaved me
Oh Constantinople, who became a second Jerusalem
To you I plea for help, collect your forces and stab the enemies.⁵⁵

On the political side, an Armenian embassy headed for Rome in November 1145 while a subsequent delegation was led by Hugh, Bishop of Jabla and one of the leading bishops in the principality of Antioch. He sought urgent help from the new Pope Eugene III and put to him the idea of a new crusade to salvage Edessa.⁵⁶

Furthermore, on the Crusaders' side, the army of Jerusalem arrived in northern Syria too late, and there were unconfirmed reports of a limited confrontation north of Antioch in late April 1145 between Turkmen forces sent by Zengi and the Frankish forces. Joscelin replaced Edessa with Tell Bashir as his new capital west of the Euphrates, without any collaboration with Raymond II of Antioch.⁵⁷ As for Raymond, he travelled to Constantinople seeking help from Emperor Manuel. The Byzantine emperor did not hide his discomfort at first but agreed in principle to help, although he faced military threats from the Seljuqs of Anatolia, which ultimately prevented him from implementing his promises to Raymond.

Finally, a second Crusade was called in Europe. In his distinguished book *The Second Crusade*, Phillips mentions that several embassies were sent from Jerusalem and Antioch seeking help from the Pope, especially as the new queen of Jerusalem, Melisende, was half-Armenian.⁵⁸ This last reaction will be discussed shortly after the end of Zengi's career.

Gibb, Alptekin and other historians believed that in his final year Zengi was planning to march again to attack his old objective, Damascus. There is no concrete evidence in the sources to support such a theory. They depend on a brief speculation by Ibn al-Qalanisi, who wrote that Zengi undertook many military activities in 1146 and could have been planning something for the Damascene dominions, not specifically the city itself.⁵⁹

In fact Zengi remained in Aleppo and commissioned his deputy in Mosul to march in the spring and attack the Kurdish castle of Fanak, north of Mosul, which belonged to the Bashnawiyya Kurds. Another force dispatched by him was sent to attack the Arab Uqaylids of Qal'at Ja'bar on the Euphrates from March 1146, as mentioned in Chapter 3. Zengi himself, after hearing of a minor conspiracy to revolt against his rule in Edessa by a small number of Armenians in the springtime, marched confidently towards the city and ordered the larger part of his army to stay outside while he entered Edessa with only his leading commanders and close advisers.⁶⁰ The continuation of Matthew furnishes us with great detail of how Zengi behaved benevolently towards the local Syrian Christians, inspected several of their churches and allowed bells to be installed in church towers. He met with the Syrian bishop and listened to the needs of his community. He even slept one night inside the Church of Saint John as a sign of respect, while his entourage slept in tents outside. Zengi also inspected the fortifications of the city and left after staying a few days in the settlement.⁶¹

The question here is: Why did Zengi not consolidate his victory over Edessa and ask for major assistance from the sultanate, instead of wasting time attacking insignificant Kurdish areas which represented no threat to him? The same question applies for the attack on the Arab castle of Ja'bar. In other words, why did Zengi not have a strategy to carry on his jihad, either on his own or by assembling a large alliance? It seems that at the age of sixty, Zengi was satisfied with what he had achieved in clearing the Jazira and his lines of communication between Mosul and Aleppo from Artuqid and Kurdish enemies, in addition to the Crusaders of Edessa.

For six long months, from March to September 1146, Zengi besieged Qal'at Ja'bar, as mentioned in Chapter 3. When it was about to surrender, the Uqaylid lord Salem sent an envoy to Zengi's camp outside the castle to seek terms. Zengi asked one of his assistants to lead the envoy's horse to a bowl of *yakhni*, a dish of meat and vegetable soup, prepared for the camp. The assistant came to Zengi during the meeting and told him that the horse had devoured the dish. Immediately Zengi realised that Ja'bar was suffering from severe shortage of water supplies, so he cancelled the negotiations and demanded the surrender of the castle.⁶²

Zengi's murder and the impact on the Zengid house

On Sunday, 14 September 1146, when returning drunk to his tent to sleep, Zengi was angered by some trivial behaviour from one of the three *ghulam* (eunuch servants) who attended him day and night. Zengi warned this servant, Yaranqash, that in the morning he would be killed for his bad behaviour. Several stories circulated, with minor differences.⁶³ Poor Yaranqash, terrified by his master's attitude, thought that if he assassinated Zengi while he was asleep he would save himself. He stabbed him several times, then beheaded him. In one of the stories he took Zengi's insignia ring in order to leave the tent without being stopped by the guards in the camp. He went to the castle at Ja'bar and asked the tower guards to lower a rope so that he could climb in. Salem, the Uqaylid lord of Ja'bar, did not believe the story at first, but finally he accepted such an unexpected turn of fate and rewarded Yaranqash with many gifts. Cobb comments on this situation brilliantly in *The Race for Paradise*.⁶⁴

Zengi was buried at nearby Raqqa. The garrison of Ja'bar attempted to seize the opportunity to attack and loot the Zengid camp, but Nur al-Din b. Zengi, who was at the camp with the leading Zengid commanders, Salah al-Din al-Yaghisiyani, Sawar, Asad al-Din Shirkuh (the uncle of Saladin) and the vizier, Jamal al-Din, stopped any disorder in the camp and managed to secure a smooth transition of power during such a delicate time.⁶⁵

The Zengid house did not suffer from the vacuum of power or disorder that usually accompanied the sudden disappearance of a tyrannical leader such as Zengi. According to the tribal Turkmen tradition, the eldest son should have been the master or king of all the territories, but the pressing military situation and the scattered nature of Zengid dominions, in addition to the political interests of the close advisers of Zengi, imposed an alternative solution.

Imad al-Din Zengi had four sons and one daughter. The eldest, Sayf al-Din Ghazi, was in the service of the Seljuq sultan Mas'ud. The vizier Jamal al-Din al-Isfahani wrote to Kuchuk in Mosul and asked him to write to Sayf al-Din, ordering him to come to Mosul. He was permitted to leave the Seljuq court and arrived in Mosul at great speed. Kuchuk and Jamal al-Din secured the oath of allegiance of the Mosuli forces and the two men continued to serve him as they had served his father.⁶⁶

Sayf al-Din met with Nur al-Din in 1147 to declare a nominal hierarchy to the Zengid house, as well as solidarity between the two brothers. In fact, Sayf al-Din

did not use the resources of his dominions for jihad much of the time. He focused on Seljuq and Artuqid relations, especially when Diyar Bakr witnessed Artuqid revolts against Mosul after 1146.

Nur al-Din, who had been at Ja'bar with Zengi, returned to Aleppo in the company of Emir Salah al-Din and Sawar, who secured for him not only a smooth entry to the city but also succession from his father. After a short time Salah al-Din retired to his *iqta'*, the city of Hama.⁶⁷ The other sons, Qutb al-Din Mawdud and Nusrat al-Din Amir Amiran, were young and did not hold any *iqta'*. Qutb al-Din inherited his brother Sayf al-Din's *iqta'* in 1149 after the latter died suddenly. The sources, as usual, avoid mentioning the name of Zengi's daughter or whom she lived with. One should add here that Nur al-Din was deprived of the military resources of Iraq, which made him focus more on Damascus and Egypt, as Yaacov Lev has stated, and avoided a serious aggressive policy against the Crusaders for a long time.⁶⁸

As soon as Unur, ruler of Damascus, heard of these sudden developments, he besieged and attacked Ayyub b. Shadi (father of Saladin, d. 1193), the Zengid deputy of Baalbak. In November 1146 Ayyub surrendered the town and was compensated with a few villages in the countryside around Damascus. Unur avoided doing the same thing again and attacked neither Hims nor Hama but contacted their Zengid lords and reached a peaceful political agreement which is not detailed in the sources.⁶⁹ Most probably, Unur was waiting to see who would be in charge of the Zengid state before attacking such a large *iqta'* as Hims or Hama. However, he did make a conciliatory gesture to improve his relationship with the new lord of Zengid of central Syria. Zengi's assassin, Yaranqash, who had not been able to stay for long at Ja'bar, took refuge in Damascus, the old enemy of his lord. Unur received him, then arrested him and sent him under military escort to Nur al-Din in Aleppo.⁷⁰

This led to a vast improvement in the trust between the two leaders. Nur al-Din set free from Aleppo a beloved concubine of Unur who Zengi had held when he captured Baalbak. In April 1147 the relationship became more concrete when Nur al-Din married the daughter of Unur.⁷¹ Against the norm of the Turkmen tribal tradition the two leading Zengid sons in Mosul and Aleppo were happy with the arrangement they had, aided by the leading figures of their father's reign. Sayf al-Din became lord of Mosul and the Jazira east of the Euphrates while Nur al-Din became lord of Aleppo and northern Syria.⁷² They did not form a close political or military collaboration, apart from their assumed role during the Second Crusade, which would follow shortly.

The sources do not state to whom Edessa would belong and probably neither of them addressed the matter. As a result, the Crusaders forced the matter upon them. Raymond of Antioch tried to test the will of Nur al-Din in Aleppo by sacking a few villages in the nearby countryside later in 1146, but withdrew soon after with no victory.⁷³ Such a small, limited incursion was without coordination with any other Frankish powers. As for Joscelin, he contacted some Armenian inhabitants in Edessa from his base in Tell Bashir and orchestrated a rebellion in the city in October 1146. On 27 October, Joscelin bravely managed to enter

Edessa and recapture it, but without capturing the citadel. Such an attack was his sole effort, without any help from Antioch, Jerusalem or Byzantium.

Although it was in the vicinity of Sayf al-Din in Mosul, Nur al-Din marched from Aleppo with his forces at admirable speed and entered Edessa on 2 November 1146.⁷⁴ Joscelin's spies notified him of the Muslim enemy's approach and he decided to desert Edessa, especially as he was aware of the huge number of the Turkmen army (around 10,000 soldiers).⁷⁵ Furthermore, he could not defend Edessa without capturing the heavily fortified citadel first. In Matthew of Edessa and Bar Hebraeus one finds details of how Joscelin escaped with the Crusaders during the night and left the locals of Edessa to their fate. On 3 November Nur al-Din entered Edessa and punished all Christian sects by means of a massive massacre due to their act of treason. He also wanted to prove to the Edessans and the Crusaders in the Levant that Zengid rule had not been affected by the death of the founding father.⁷⁶ Nur al-Din defeated Joscelin near Samosata and returned to Aleppo with the Armenian bishop, John, who was jailed in the city. Ibn al-'Adim writes: 'Nur al-Din sacked and looted Edessa. [He] took the inhabitants as slaves and many women were sent as concubines to different Muslim lords in the Middle East. Edessa became nearly empty of people, and only few remained.'⁷⁷ This is a Muslim chronicler's testimony, so one can imagine how the Christian testimonies reflected the situation.

As a result of the quick action of Nur al-Din, his elder brother in Mosul, Sayf al-Din, yielded to the facts on the ground and agreed to the extension of Nurid authority over Edessa.⁷⁸ The Western perspective on the fall of Edessa to Muslim hands may best be seen in the lines of Runciman, who writes: 'The oldest Christian commonwealth in the world was left empty and desolate, and has never recovered to this day.'⁷⁹ Clearly, Runciman avoided mentioning the Franco-British occupation of the city at the end of the First World War in 1918, which caused the Turks to call it *Shanli Urfa* ('dignity of Urfa'), as the Turks under Atatürk resisted the British forces there and in Constantinople, which was under the same occupation. While some Western scholars regret the loss of such grand Christian cities, one sees a large crowd of Eastern Muslim scholars share the same mentality by lamenting the loss of al-Ferdaws, or paradise, referring to al-Andalus.

The final reaction to the capture of Edessa by Zengi was the famous Second Crusade. Pope Eugenius III issued a papal bull calling for a Crusade in response to several embassies and pleas for help to the West from Eastern and Latin Christians in the Levant. King Louis VII of France and King Conrad III of Germany responded to such calls. They were the main forces to march to the Levant, but not the only ones to respond to the papal bull. A massive English fleet from Dartmouth in southern England, together with King Alfonso of Portugal, captured the city of Lisbon from Muslim rule. As Phillips puts it: 'The conquest of Lisbon was one of the prime achievements of the Second Crusade.'⁸⁰

One should add here that it may have been the only achievement. Yes, the European spirit was ripe for vengeance; in the song 'Chevalier, mult estes guariz', it says, 'The troops of cruel Sanguin [Zengi] have played many a wicked trick upon Christ. The time has come to pay them back for it.'⁸¹

The main aim here is not to discuss the details of the Second Crusade but to observe the mood in Europe in response to the fall of Edessa and how jihad in the East affected the Reconquista in al-Andalus. In addition to that, there will be a brief discussion of the type of solidarity of the Zengid house in confronting that Crusade and the huge exaggeration of it by the prime Zengid chronicler, Ibn al-Athir.

The French and German kings, in addition to the Crusaders of Jerusalem, had mustered an estimated 50,000 soldiers and besieged Damascus for fewer than five days from Saturday, 24 July 1148 until the dawn of Wednesday, 28 July 1148. The chief Damascene historian, the head of administration and those present in Damascus during the siege reported nothing about Unur of Damascus sending a plea for help to the two Zengid brothers in Aleppo and Mosul.⁸² On the other hand, the influential Ibn al-Athir reported the arrival of Sayf al-Din and Nur al-Din at Hims in central Syria in response to Unur's request. They wrote to Unur asking him to surrender Damascus to them so that they could defend it against the Crusaders. As a result, Unur used the nearby presence of the massive Zengid force by writing to the leaders of the Second Crusade threatening to surrender Damascus to the Zengids if they did not lift the siege and go back to the coast. He also offered them Banias on Golan as a price for the Frankish withdrawal.⁸³ One can believe that Ibn al-Athir invented this story to make Zengi's sons appear to be *mujahid* the way he did with their father. It would have been impossible for Sayf al-Din to arrive at Hims from Mosul, which was a three-week journey, and for Nur al-Din to make it from Aleppo to Hims, which took five days according to most Muslim geographers.⁸⁴ This is assuming that the Zengid forces moved the moment they received Unur's plea, without the necessary preparations. As for Banias, it had already been surrendered by Unur to the Crusaders in 1140, as mentioned, in return for King Fulk's collaboration with him against Zengi.

Nur al-Din in fact arrived near Damascus in September, which is much more logical to accept.⁸⁵ Thus the failure of the Second Crusade was not because of the presence of the Zengid forces near Damascus, as Ibn al-Athir and other Muslim chroniclers try to portray, but for other reasons, such as Damascene resistance and domestic Frankish division, which is well detailed in the studies by Phillips and Runciman, among others.⁸⁶ But they are beyond the focus of this research.

Notes

1 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 69.

2 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 429.

3 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, pp. 55–9.

4 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 66.

5 Ibid., p. 65.

6 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, pp. 464–5; A. Stewart, art. 'Armenian Sources', in *Crusades, An Encyclopedia*, ed. A. Murray, Santa Barbara, 2006.

7 C. MacEvitt, art. 'Edessa', in *Crusades, An Encyclopedia*, ed. A. Murray, Santa Barbara, 2006.

8 Bosworth, 'Political and Dynastic Histories', p. 108.

- 9 Ibn al-Azraq al-Fariqi, *Ta'rikh Mayyafariqin*, p. 274; Fink, *Latin States*, p. 389.
- 10 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 465; El-Azhari, *The Saljuqs*, p. 128.
- 11 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 518.
- 12 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 486.
- 13 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 18.
- 14 A. al-Janzuri, *Imarat al-Ruha*, Cairo, 2001, p. 249.
- 15 'Matthew of Edessa', in *al-Mawsua al-Shamiyya*, trans. S. Zakkar, Damascus, 1990, vol. 5, p. 154.
- 16 William of Tyre, *History of Deeds*, vol. 2, pp. 123–4; C. MacEvitt, art. 'Joscelin II', in *Crusades, An Encyclopedia*, ed. A. Murray, Santa Barbara, 2006.
- 17 William of Tyre, *History of Deeds*, vol. 2, p. 126.
- 18 J. Phillips, *Holy Warriors: A Modern History of the Crusades*, New York, 2009, pp. 51–2; Runciman, *Crusades*, vol. 2, p. 233.
- 19 'Matthew of Edessa', p. 61; 'Michael the Syrian', in *al-Mawsua*, vol. 5, p. 169; Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-buldan*, vol. 5, p. 453; P. M. Cobb, *The Race for Paradise: An Islamic History of the Crusades*, Oxford, 2014, p. 134.
- 20 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, pp. 98–9; 'Matthew of Edessa', p. 61.
- 21 'Michael the Syrian', p. 169; 'Matthew of Edessa', p. 62.
- 22 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 99; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 68; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 436.
- 23 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 99.
- 24 'Matthew of Edessa', p. 62; 'Michael the Syrian', p. 169; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 68.
- 25 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 436; 'Matthew of Edessa', p. 62.
- 26 Runciman, *Crusades*, vol. 2, pp. 235–6.
- 27 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 169.
- 28 'Matthew of Edessa', p. 64; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 69; 'Michael the Syrian', p. 170.
- 29 'Michael the Syrian', p. 170; 'Matthew of Edessa', p. 64.
- 30 'Matthew of Edessa', p. 64.
- 31 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 436; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 99; Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 279.
- 32 'Michael the Syrian', p. 170.
- 33 Ibid., p. 170.
- 34 Nerses Shnorhali, 'Lamentation of Edessa', in A. al-Janzuri, *Imarat*, Cairo, 2001, pp. 392–9.
- 35 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 69; Y. Lev, 'The Jihad of Sultan Nur al-Din of Syria', in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 35, 2008, p. 247.
- 36 'Michael the Syrian', p. 171; 'Matthew of Edessa', p. 66; Hallam, *Chronicles*, p. 121.
- 37 'Michael the Syrian', p. 172; 'Matthew of Edessa', p. 67; MacEvitt, 'Joscelin II'; Runciman, *Crusades*, vol. 2, p. 236.
- 38 'Matthew of Edessa', p. 67.
- 39 Ibid.; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 99; M. al-Naqib, 'Imad al-Din Zengi wa siyasat al-jihad tijah al-salibiyyun', in *al-Mawrid*, part 16, vol. 4, 1987, Baghdad, p. 100.
- 40 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 70; 'Michael the Syrian', p. 173; M. D. Yusuf, 'The Economic History of Syria during the 4/10th–5/11th Centuries', Ph.D., Princeton University, 1982, pp. 40–4; Demirkent, *Urfa*, p. 152.
- 41 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 70; 'Matthew of Edessa', p. 69.
- 42 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, pp. 100–1; 'Matthew of Edessa', p. 72; 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Ta'rikh dawlat al-Seljuq*, p. 187. The use of camels is discussed in Chapter 6.
- 43 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 102; 'Matthew of Edessa', p. 69; 'Michael the Syrian', p. 173; 'Bar Hebraeus, *Tarikh*', in *Mawsua*, ed. S. Zakkar, vol. 5, pp. 362–3.

- 44 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 72.
- 45 Runciman, *Crusades*, vol. 2, p. 238.
- 46 Abu Shama, *al-Rawdatayn*, vol. 1, p. 38; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 443.
- 47 Abu Shama, *al-Rawdatayn*, vol. 1, p. 39.
- 48 Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 39–40.
- 49 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 68.
- 50 A. al-Maqarri al-Tilimsani, *Nafh al-Tib*, vol. 2, ed. I. Abbas, Beirut, 2004, pp. 133–4; 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Ta'rikh dawlat al-Seljuq*, p. 187.
- 51 M. Kilani, *al-Hurub al-salibiyya wa atharuha fi'l-adab*, London, 1985, pp. 368–75.
- 52 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, pp. 102–6.
- 53 'Michael the Syrian', pp. 170–1; Demirkent, *Urfa*, p. 126.
- 54 'Bar Hebraus', vol. 5, p. 360.
- 55 Nerses Shnorhali, 'Lamentation', pp. 392–3.
- 56 al-Janzuri, *Imarat*, p. 317; J. Phillips, *The Second Crusade: Extending the Frontiers of Christendom*, New Haven, 2007, p. 47.
- 57 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 438; Runciman, *Crusades*, vol. 2, p. 238.
- 58 Phillips, *Second Crusade*, pp. 38–48.
- 59 Gibb, 'Zengi', p. 462; Alptekin, *Reign of Zangi*, p. 143.
- 60 'Matthew of Edessa', p. 70; Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 281.
- 61 'Matthew of Edessa', pp. 71–2.
- 62 Ibn al-'Adim, *Bughyat*, p. 270.
- 63 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 74; Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, pp. 281–2.
- 64 Cobb, *Race for Paradise*, p. 134.
- 65 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 444; Ibn al-'Adim, *Bughyat*, p. 271; Cobb, *Race for Paradise*, p. 134.
- 66 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Ta'rikh dawlat al-Seljuq*, p. 65.
- 67 Ibid., pp. 191–2; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 76; Y. Lev, 'The Jihad', p. 253.
- 68 Lev, 'The Jihad', pp. 261–2.
- 69 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 289; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 445.
- 70 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 449.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 Ibid., p. 450.
- 73 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 86.
- 74 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 291.
- 75 Ibid., vol. 2, p. 290; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 450; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 86.
- 76 Bar Hebraus, pp. 364–5; 'Matthew of Edessa', p. 75.
- 77 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 290.
- 78 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 87.
- 79 Runciman, *Crusades*, vol. 2, p. 240.
- 80 Phillips, *Second Crusade*, pp. 37, 136, 166.
- 81 Ibid., p. 283.
- 82 Sibt Ibn al-Jawzi, *Mir'at al-zaman*, vol. 8, p. 197; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Tarikh Dimashq*, p. 463; William of Tyre, *History of Deeds*, vol. 2, p. 442.
- 83 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 130.
- 84 Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-buldan*, vol. 2, p. 284.
- 85 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 466.
- 86 Phillips, *Second Crusade*, pp. 213–27; Runciman, *Crusades*, vol. 2, pp. 281–8.

6 Zengid administration and institutions

‘Turkification’ continued

The *diwan* [court of administration] of Zengi matches the *diwans* of the Seljuq sultans due to its sophistication, efficiency, number of staff and wealth. When a person comes to his court, he does not feel a foreigner. If he were a soldier joining his service, the Zengid soldiers would welcome him and accommodate all his needs due to the wealth of the *diwan*. If he was a civilian, who came for a certain task, he would be met by officials who would look into his request as if he were among his own family. If that comer were a scholar, he would be directed to the tents of chief *qadi*, al-Shahrazuri who, with his sons and his group, look after the judicial system of the lands. They would graciously welcome him and make him feel like one of them.

The reason for all his successes was that Zengi used to hire only highly talented and skilful men, who were willing to work limitlessly. In return, he rewarded all of them generously, so they offered their best. He never changed one of his high advisors or assistants from the time he governed Mosul until he was killed, unless there was a mistake committed and a change was due. All his commanders were in his service most of his career, unless they were killed in battle. This is why they sacrificed themselves for him.¹

This is the opinion of Ibn al-Athir, which was mostly narrated to him by his father; such an opinion was echoed by almost all other Muslim chroniclers. The career of Zengi was, relatively, too short to develop its own distinctive style or character. To a certain extent this appeared in the Zengid dynasty after him, which continued in Mosul and parts of the Jazira until 1251, and in Aleppo until 1181.² It could be that the main reason for not producing its own distinct character was Zengi’s continuous military mobility, on several fronts, without dwelling for a long time in a confined region or city. Furthermore, Zengi was a Seljuq commander who was installed and supervised by the Seljuq sultans; as a result he was an integral part of the Seljuq Turkmen administration, which included his father, Aq Sunqur, who ruled Aleppo under the Seljuqs from 1086 to 1094. One should add here that the Ayyubid dynasty which was created in Syria under the Zengids had contributed to the introduction of Turkish administration to Egypt, leading, in turn, to the Mamluks.³

The Seljuqs, who came from the steppes of Mongolia and Central Asia, established their main empire in Iran and Iraq between 1038 and 1194, with two more

branches, one in Anatolia after Manzikert in 1071, which was totally separate from Iran until 1307, and the other in Syria. This consisted of dominions in Aleppo and northern Syria (1070–1117) and in Damascus (1075–1154). The Seljuq Turks used an unwritten Turkish – or Turkic – language which Mahmud al-Kashghari from Kashghar in western China (eastern Turkistan) tried to write down in the 1060s/70s using Persian–Arabic letters. The Seljuq administration, therefore, drew heavily on Persian forms of administration in addition to the much superior, older Persian court structure (*diwan*).

The Seljuq administration had two sides: the military, since the people of the steppes were excellent horseback warriors, and the sophisticated Persian civil administration they had inherited from the 'Abbasids. In addition to this was the contribution of the genius of their Persian vizier, Nizam al-Mulk, who served for thirty years until his assassination in 1092. He had kept the Seljuq administration centralised and civil in character and had written a magisterial work, *Siyasat Nameh* ('Book of Governance'). Despite the Persian influence, the nomadic character of the Turks prevailed and the Seljuqs changed their capital five times in a century and a half. That is why the sultanate tent, *kharkah*, was de facto the mobile court which moved with the sultan around the empire.

When Nizam al-Mulk and the last capable Seljuq sultan, Malik Shah, died in 1092 there was a chain of civil wars of varying intensity across the empire.⁴ The power of the *iqta*' system increased and local dynasties under the Seljuqs started to appear in large numbers; one of these was the Zengid dynasty. *Siyasat Nameh* for the most part became an under-appreciated piece of literature, while the military aspects dominated the Seljuq administration, adopting different styles depending on the political circumstances in particular times and places.

Under the rule of Zengi, the administration could be divided into military and civil arms. There are also certain institutions that are mentioned in the sources, such as the *iqta*' and *madrasa*, which will be discussed later in this chapter, and will describe the anatomy of the Zengid system as far as possible. At the same time, there are not enough materials to discuss in detail or to form an idea about Zengi's army, such as recruitment, divisions, tactics and budgets, and only certain aspects of the military administration.

Military administration under Zengi

atabeg – naib – hajib – wali al-qala – shihna

Since Zengi was given the *iqta*' of Mosul to govern in 1127 by the Seljuq sultan Mahmud II, and at the same time appointed as *atabeg* of the sultan's son Alp Arslan, the office of *atabeg* became the most important and dominant one in his realm. Even Muslim sources refer to the dynasty as *al-dawla al-atabekiyya*, or the *atabegate* state.

The post of atabeg

Atabeg is originally a Turkish word formed from *ata* (father) and *beg* (emir or prince).⁵ As early as the eighth century the term *ata* was used by the Oghuz tribe in Mongolia where the Seljuqs originated – it was applied to the tutor who taught a young tribal prince. The Seljuqs, who had emigrated from Mongolia and Central Asia to the Middle East, wanted to preserve their identity and so kept this post in their administration. Sultan Alp Arslan (1063–72) used to have an *atabeg* as his tutor.⁶ The post was revived under Sultan Malik Shah b. Alp Arslan (1072–92), who made the *atabeg* a military person who was given one of the young sons of the sultan to raise for a number of years. The young prince was allocated a distinguished *iqta'* to govern and the *atabeg* would have the task of assisting him.⁷ The rare exception was Malik Shah, who bestowed on his vizier, Nizam al-Mulk, the honorary title of *atabeg* and from that time onward the post was reserved for Turkish emirs who would be capable of passing on the Turkish language and military traditions to the one being groomed as a potential sultan or king.⁸

It is not clear in the sources as to the age of the young Alp Arslan who would be raised by Zengi, or the length of time he was to remain in his court. Having said that, the young sons generally had *atabegs* appointed for them between the ages of nine and twelve in order for the *atabeg* to wield influence over them. Zengi had achieved several gains from this *atabegate*. First, it gave him prestige and honour to be the tutor of the sultan's son. Second, it kept him in close contact and coordination with the court of the sultan. Third, and most importantly, Zengi ruled in the name of the young *malik*, Alp Arslan, and declared the *khutba* for him in Zengid dominions. Zengi tried to have most of his deeds covered by the legitimacy he possessed having the young *malik* in his court. All Zengi's correspondence with other Muslim lords was in the name of this boy. In 1131 when Sultan Mahmud II, father of Alp Arslan, died in western Iran, we find Zengi seizing an opportunity and writing to the 'Abbasid caliph, al-Mustarshid, requesting to have the *khutba* in Iraq and in western Iran under Alp Arslan.⁹ Due to the competition among five different Seljuq *maliks* fighting one another, Zengi failed to have his request met. Although the whole idea and power of the *atabeg* came from a son succeeding his father, as in Seljuq Syria with Malik Duqaq (d. 1104) and Tughtegin (d. 1128), one sees Zengi using the boy *malik* to his political advantage. Crucially, the new sultan could not summon the young boy from Zengi's court or cancel the title of *atabeg*.

In March 1135, while besieging Damascus and causing great hardship to the city, Zengi received an urgent message from the 'Abbasid caliph al-Mustarshid who needed Zengid military help against Sultan Mas'ud. In order for Zengi to lift the siege of Damascus and agree to the appeal of the caliph, he demanded that his tutored *malik* Alp Arslan be declared the official *malik* in Syria and Iraq.¹⁰ Nominal legitimacy and recognition here was a great boost to the military expansion of Zengi.

Due to the swinging and ever-changing relationship between the sultanate and the caliphate, one sees several times the cancellation of the *khutba* for Zengi's

candidate outside his direct dominions. In October 1135 when the new caliph, al-Rashid, came to office and was in open hostility with Sultan Mas'ud, he appealed to Zengi for help in Iraq and agreed to declare the *khutba* for Alp Arslan.¹¹

Following his legendary victory in Edessa in 1144 and while Zengi was besieging al-Bira for a few months in the spring of 1145, he received the news that a coup had taken place in Mosul led by Alp Arslan, who, with a small group of servants and soldiers, had been encouraged to attack and kill Emir Jaqar, Zengi's capable deputy in the city. Alp Arslan had taken part with Zengi in the attack on Edessa and had then returned to Mosul, and he believed that the time had come to declare his independence along with certain ambitious commanders in his entourage.

Thanks to their unrivalled loyalty to Zengi and their courage and swift reactions, the rest of the commanders besieged Alp Arslan while Qadi Taj al-Din al-Shahrazuri tricked the rebellious king into heading for the citadel to seize it. When Alp Arslan took this advice he was immediately arrested and those who conspired with him executed. Zengi was notified and was so confident in the capability of his administration that he did not return to Mosul to deal with the matter in person.¹²

Ironically, the *atabegate* system was intended to prepare a young *malik* for the sultanate. Although, as explained above, Zengi had wished for years to govern in the name of this young boy, when it came to losing his city he did not hesitate to rectify the coup with another and did not apologise for the deed. There was no reaction from the Seljuq sultanate, represented by Mas'ud in the west and Sanjar in the east, to what Zengi had done, which was a clear expression of the rapid decline of the sultanate.

As a result, the Zengid *atabegate* was de facto transformed into a hereditary possession when Zengi suddenly disappeared from power in 1146. The original grant of Sultan Mahmud II to Zengi in 1127 did not mention anything regarding Zengi's sons succeeding their father and during his career the sources did not record the addition of any new conditions. Nevertheless, of the two eldest sons of Zengi, Sayf al-Din Ghazi inherited Mosul and part of the Jazira, aided by Zengi's vizier Jamal al-Din, while Nur al-Din inherited Aleppo and central Syria, aided by Zengi's deputy Sawar and Zengi's *hajib*, al-Yaghsiyani.¹³

The notion that this was the first hereditary *atabegate* under the Seljuqs, found especially in modern Arabic studies, is not accurate. The first *atabegate* with such rights was founded in Damascus and southern Syria in 1115. In 1093, the Seljuq King of Syria, Tutush I, appointed his distinguished commander Tughtegin as *atabeg* for his young boy, Duqaq. In 1095, Tutush was killed in civil war for the sultanate in Iran, and Tughtegin became the ruler of Damascus and its dominions. In 1104 he took part in a plot to murder the young king whom he was supposed to raise. In 1115 Seljuq Sultan Muhammad issued from Iran a very long and detailed decree recognising Tughtegin as lord of Damascus with the title of *atabeg* and with the full right of his family to succeed him, so long as they declared the *khutba* for the Seljuq sultan.¹⁴ This *atabegate* lasted until 1154

and resisted Zengi's constant attacks on their realm; it also paved the way for other *atabegates* around the same period, like those of the Zengids and Salghurids in Iran (1148–1270).

Did the post of *atabeg* remain influential in the Zengid administration after 1146? The sources do not mention Zengi appointing an *atabeg* for any of his four sons, but the concept was employed; we see his eldest son, Sayf al-Din Ghazi, being groomed in Sultan Mas'ud's court for years, probably with other sons of leading Turkish emirs. However, in Syria Nur al-Din (1146–74) never used the title *atabeg* in his administration or held the title himself. His sudden death in 1174 however caused three of his commanders to fight for the *atabegate* of his only surviving son, al-Salih Isma'il, to give them legitimacy. One of those three was Saladin (d. 1193), who rebelled against Nur al-Din's authority after 1169 in Egypt.¹⁵ One should add that the post continued under the Ayyubid administration, with various developments. In Iraq the title and post continued to be used in a different capacity. Qutb al-Din Mawdud b. Zengi did hold the title, but as an honorary office without actually acting as regent for any child. In the last few years of Zengid administration Badr al-Din Lu'Lu was *atabeg* for the last Zengid ruler in Mosul, Mahmud b. Mas'ud II, starting in 1233.¹⁶

The post of naib

Naib, or deputy of Zengi, was a military post in the Seljuq administration in both halves of the Zengid realm, in Mosul and in Aleppo. It was second in importance and rank to the ruler, thus surpassing the traditional influence of the vizier. In Mosul Zengi appointed Nusayr al-Din Jaqar, the highest ranked emir or officer in the Zengid state. Jaqar had played a vital role with two leading men, Qadi Baha al-Din al-Shahrazuri and Salah al-Din al-Yaghisiyani, vizier of the previous lord of Mosul, al-Bursuqi, in negotiations at the sultanate court in 1127 recommending Zengi for the rule of Mosul. When Sultan Mahmud II agreed, Zengi rewarded Jaqar by installing him as his deputy in Mosul. In addition, Jaqar was also appointed as *dozdar* ('keeper of the citadel') of Mosul and was in charge of all other citadels in Zengi's dominions in Iraq and the Jazira.¹⁷

Jaqar enjoyed the full and unlimited confidence of his lord Zengi due to his skills and loyalty. As a result, he remained in the same capacity in his post until his murder in Mosul in 1145. Due to Zengi's frequent absences from Mosul on a nearly annual basis, it was Jaqar who ran the administration. It seems he had the power to make any decision needed to secure Mosul for Zengi. He was in charge of law and order, keeping the *khutba*, collecting revenues of the state, and appointing and dismissing local governors of the city serving under his authority. There were two *walis* (local governors) who are mentioned briefly as having been appointed and dismissed by him in Mosul.

Jaqar showed great talent in his post. In June 1133 when the 'Abbasid caliph, al-Mustarshid, marched on Mosul to besiege Zengi we find that the latter left and remained in the open countryside around the city. The task of protecting Mosul for eighty days against the aggressive siege of an 'Abbasid army of 30,000 was

left to Jaqar, who carried out the job excellently.¹⁸ Jaqar exercised great liberty in evaluating and coordinating with the chief *qadi*, al-Shahrazuri, when in the spring of 1138 the Zengids appealed to Sultan Ma'sud for help against the Byzantine army invading northern Syria. He was also alert to the possible consequences of 20,000 sultanate soldiers crossing Zengid dominions.¹⁹

Zengi's ongoing military campaigns in the Jazira could not have been so well maintained without the efficiency of Jaqar in mustering more Turkmen warriors and keeping lines of communication and supply open. This applied to both the Artuqids in the Jazira and to the Turkmen nomads of the vast Shahrazur area. Not only that, but Jaqar was commissioned several times to subdue different Kurdish tribes north of Mosul. In 1133 Zengi ordered him to march and punish the Hakkariyya Kurds north of Mosul, in a very rugged, mountainous area. He not only succeeded in that task, but was subsequently given the duty of rebuilding new fortifications for the several castles he captured and appointing keepers for them.²⁰ Such trust continued and in 1142, for example, Zengi ordered Jaqar to march and pacify the Mahraniyya Kurds between the Armenian and Azerbaijan mountains down to Mosul. All the castles he seized from them had been rebuilt by Jaqar and were administrated under his authority.²¹

The assassination of Jaqar in Mosul by a small number of soldiers conspiring with Alp Arslan in the spring of 1145 resulted in his replacement with the deputy of Edessa and Erbil, 'Ali Kuchuk. The process of such change was not easy. The keeper of the citadel asked Kuchuk for the written decree with the insignia of Zengi. He then sent a special envoy to Zengi to ask for the authenticity of the decree and final permission to surrender the castle. Until the envoy returned, Kuchuk was only allowed inside the citadel with a very limited number of soldiers in order to prevent any act of treason.²² The new deputy, a Turkmen, was a childhood friend of Zengi's in Mosul and they had remained lifelong friends. As a result of Kuchuk's military skills he held, with very few others, the military title of *isfahsalar* (commander of the army). In other administrations there was usually only one *isfahsalar*, but in this case it was a rank awarded to several high commanders. We do not know when he was given Erbil to govern but we do know that four *isfahsalar*s entered Aleppo in 1138 during the Byzantine attack and managed to make significant changes to the city – and the same was done following the sacking of Edessa.²³ The quick change of lordship in Mosul from Zengi to his son, Sayf al-Din, owed much to the military capability of Kuchuk, who continued in his post under the new emir, and to Zengi's vizier.

In the western wing of the Zengid state, Syria, one observes a similarly military administration. The difference here was that when Zengi seized Aleppo in 1128 he did not appoint a deputy until 1129 when Sawar b. Aytegin ('Fighting Crescent') joined him from Damascus. It is not clear why Zengi waited for a year, especially as Aleppo was close to Crusader Antioch, and the economy of Aleppo had been suffering for the previous few years and was in dire need of political stability.

When Sawar became deputy, Zengi allocated to him several rich *iqta'* and delegated all powers to him, according to Ibn al-'Adim, who writes:

Sawar came to the service of the *atabeg* in 1129. He bestowed on him robes of honour, several *iqta'* and graciously welcomed him. Zengi gave him – *Halab wa Amalaha* – Aleppo and its dominions. He depended on him for fighting the Franks.²⁴

The same Muslim chronicler praised Sawar later for his great zeal and experience in confronting the Crusaders. Sawar remained in his post as deputy until 1146. He was with Zengi for the long siege of Ja'bar and was partly responsible for the smooth succession of Nur al-Din in Aleppo. As we have seen in Chapter 4, Sawar was in charge of Aleppo for a very long period while Zengi was engaged in Iraqi-Persian affairs, especially between 1131 and 1135. Having said that, he had full authority to attack, defend, negotiate and conclude truces with the Crusaders. For example, in November 1132 while Zengi was in Iraq, Sawar marched out of Aleppo and confronted King Fulk of Jerusalem who was joined by the Muslim Isma'ili Assassins of Qadmus. Conflicts in Nawaz, Qinnasrin and other areas proved to the Crusaders his fighting ability; he then offered a sum of money and negotiated a truce.²⁵ The following year, in May 1133, while the 'Abbasid caliph was besieging Mosul, Sawar fought the Crusaders of Edessa near Tell Bashir, who had attacked the environs of Aleppo. Sawar defeated them, thereby deterring them from further attacks.²⁶

It is not clear how far into central Syria Zengi's deputy enjoyed power. When Zengi seized Hama from the Seljuqs of Damascus in 1129 nothing was mentioned about who had been deputy there.

Due to the changing situation in Syria regarding the capture and recapture of certain towns and cities by Zengi and his opponents, records are very confusing regarding the appointment or change of rulers in such places. It has been mentioned that Hama was given as an *iqta'* by Zengi to his emir *hajib* al-Yaghisiyani; the latter then installed a deputy named Sunqur ('Falcon'). In August 1133, while Zengi was in Iraq, Isma'il, the Seljuq King of Damascus, attacked and recaptured Hama from the mysterious Sunqur.²⁷ Here we discover that Sawar of Aleppo did not interfere and had no jurisdiction over central Syria, as the deputy of Mosul had jurisdiction over northern Iraq and the Jazira. Furthermore, Sawar never had permission to launch an attack that would aim to eliminate any crusading body, but only to defend against them or deter any other power.

Other smaller aspects of the military administration were cases like Baalbak, Majdal and Banias²⁸ in southern Syria, very close to Zengi's enemies – the Seljuqs of Damascus and the Crusaders of Jerusalem. The first two areas were captured by Zengi, while Banias rebelled against the authority of Damascus and declared its loyalty to him. How were such remote places, away from any major Zengid city, controlled? The answer is not clear. There were around fifty Zengid cities, towns, forts, castles and citadels in Iraq, and in Syria there were around twenty, as understood mainly from Ibn al-Athir's *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir* and the *Zubdat* of Ibn al-'Adim.

The post of hajib

Hajib, or chamberlain, was a civil post in several Muslim dynasties before the Seljuqs. The *hajib*'s main duty was to organise and admit high officials to the caliphs and kings. Under the Seljuqs it was transformed into a military post and became a department consisting of several officers headed by the *hajib al-hujjab*, or chief *hajib*. On more than one occasion under the Seljuqs one finds a chief *hajib* elevated to the commander of an army or to the position of vizier, even though he was a military person and vizier was a civil post. He could also be rewarded with prestigious *iqta*;²⁹ Zengi's father, Aq Sunqur, was *hajib* to Sultan Malik Shah who allocated him Aleppo in 1086.²⁹

Under the Zengid administration, one man enjoyed the title of emir *hajib*, namely Salah al-Din al-Yaghisiyani, during the whole of Zengi's career. The same title was used in Seljuq Iran and Syria simultaneously. In the previous administration of Mosul, in which Zengi served under al-Bursuqi, one finds that al-Bursuqi's *hajib* was al-Yaghisiyani. The latter was one of two men, along with Qadi Baha al-Din al-Shahrazuri, who formed an envoy in 1127 to the sultan's court to meet the Seljuq vizier, Anu Shurwan. The reason for the envoy was to try to strongly convince the sultan that Zengi was a suitable leader who could succeed in the governorship of Mosul. When the sultan agreed to the envoy's request, Zengi rewarded the two capable men generously. With regard to al-Yaghisiyani, he was kept in the same position he held before but was given the title of emir *hajib*, which meant that there were others under his command.³⁰

The tasks and duties of al-Yaghisiyani were diverse, from heading the *diwan* to commanding military campaigns, negotiations and diplomacy, especially highly trusted missions. On the military side, al-Yaghisiyani was given the *iqta* of Hama in Syria and other villages around it such as Kafr Tab and Khirba.³¹ He did not reside in any of these, but appointed *walis*, or governors, to rule the areas. One of them was his son, Shihab al-Din, in Hama. In Khirba he appointed one of his *hajib*, named 'Isa, as a keeper. Usama b. Munqidh, who was a close friend of al-Yaghisiyani, supplies us with some useful details about his character and duties. He writes that Zengi said: 'Three of my men enjoy that description: Kuchuk fears God and does not fear me. Jaqar fears me, but not God. Al-Yaghisiyani fears neither.'³² If this saying is accurate, it shows how Zengi made use of his commanders despite their personal behaviour, although it is apparent that the emir *hajib* held great respect and loyalty for his lord.

Al-Yaghisiyani took part in many of Zengi's campaigns, such as in 1133 against Badlis in Armenia. He was the one who negotiated the marriage of the daughter of Suqman, regent of the principality there, to his lord Zengi. He was at the walls of Damascus in 1135 and showed great courage. In addition, he was with his lord in 1137 in the campaign against the Byzantines. He was also dispatched on separate military missions, for example, against the Qipchaq Turkmen in 1139.³³ One of the most trusted military tasks commissioned by Zengi was against the fortified citadel of Jazirat b. 'Umar, to the north of Mosul.

Zengi was always keen to protect his soldiers' wives while they were on campaigns with him and to offer protection to all their families so that his troops could stay with him longer knowing that their families were safe. Reports came to Zengi that Hasan, the keeper of the citadel Thiqat al-Din (which ironically means 'the trust of religion'), had sexually harassed some of the wives of his soldiers. Zengi ordered al-Yaghisiyani to march at speed to that citadel and surprise Hasan in order to avoid any rebellion. He was to arrest him, castrate him, gouge out his eyes and then crucify him for daring to commit such acts. Al-Yaghisiyani, with his skills of negotiation, surprised Hasan and informed him that he would be promoted to keeper of Aleppo's citadel and all Syrian dominions. He was asked to collect all his wealth and then march to Zengi. When that was done, al-Yaghisiyani arrested the man and did to him what Zengi had ordered. As a result, the families of his troops were afforded greater protection from any menace.³⁴

As may be seen, for most of his career the emir *hajib* of Zengi acted as a military commander and ambassador, certainly more than just a chamberlain at court. Al-Yaghisiyani played a key role with the vizier Salah al-Din in securing an unproblematic succession to power of Zengi's son in Mosul and its vicinity in 1146. A few lines mention two other *hajibs*, one the keeper of Khirba castle as mentioned above. The other, Hasan, was sent by Zengi in 1137 to take several gifts to the Byzantine emperor in return for the latter's support of Zengi.³⁵ One can see that the task of the *hajib* here was more of a diplomatic one. In general, the *hajib* fulfilled several roles from military to diplomatic, including running *iqta'*. If one looks panoramically at the same time as Zengi, Sultan Mas'ud, for example, depended on emir *hajib kabir*, Tughaireg, in his administration, and allocated him a grand *iqta'*. In Seljuq Damascus the emir *hajib* was a military emir, but was involved more in court administration than military duties.³⁶

The post of wali al-qala

The post referred to in the sources as *dozdar* (Persian for 'keeper of the citadel', or *wali al-qala* in Arabic) was one of the most important military and political posts in the Seljuq Zengid state. Large cities like Mosul, Aleppo, Hama and Diyar Bakr, among others, could not be considered fully captured by any invading force without the seizure of the citadel which accommodated a large number of forces and supplies. Thus, it could pose a real threat to a hostile force trying to seize the city. In addition to that, in many major and medium-sized cities of the age the citadel incorporated the palace or the house of the lord of that city and his family.

Another type of citadel could be found overlooking major routes of communication and commercial activities. Forts such as Harran in the Jazira, Nasibin, Sur, or al-'Imadiyya in the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq thus functioned as early-warning positions and provided ideal locations for monitoring civil and military movements.

Under Zengid administration there were two levels and ranks of *dozdar*. The first included Jaqar in Mosul, who was a *naib* to Zengi and *dozdar* of Mosul and

the Iraqi dominions,³⁷ with the duty of supervising all other citadel keepers in the regions allocated to him. Having said that, Jaqar himself had a deputy for the citadel of Mosul, Hasan, who kept the citadel for Zengi in 1145 after Jaqar was murdered; Hasan managed to imprison Malik Alp Arslan who had orchestrated the coup against Zengi inside the citadel, thus securing the city for Zengi in his absence. Hasan, who enjoyed the title of chief *naqib*, did not surrender the citadel to Zengi's new deputy of Mosul, 'Ali Kuchuk, until he sent word to Zengi to get his personal permission and decree for such a step.³⁸

On the other side of the state, one finds that the emir Sawar, Zengi's deputy in Aleppo, enjoyed the supervision of the citadel of the city as well as most of the castles in his vicinity, which numbered around fifteen. Thus, the citadel of Aleppo, which the colossal army led by Sultan Alp Arslan failed to capture in 1070, surrendered to Nur al-Din b. Zengi due to the presence of Sawar in his company in 1146, who was in command of the area and the rest of the northern Syrian dominions. The same post could alter the fate of the state of Aleppo, as in 1174 when Nur al-Din died in Damascus and the *wali al-qala* in Aleppo conspired with an army commander named Gumushtegin and arrested the highest ranked officer in the Nurid state, Ibn al-Day'a, ruling in the name of al-Salih b. Nur al-Din, to further their own political interests.³⁹ It took Saladin ten years to capture Aleppo and its citadel. In the citadels of both Mosul and Aleppo Zengi entrusted his keepers to imprison and watch very carefully his political enemies: Sawinj, son of Buri, king of Damascus, imprisoned in 1129 in Aleppo's citadel, and Alp Arslan, son of Sultan Mahmud II, imprisoned in Mosul's citadel in 1145, are among many such cases. This practice was continued by Zengi's sons – Nur al-Din imprisoned Reynald of Châtillon (d. 1187) for fifteen years inside the citadel. The grand vizier of Zengi, Jamal al-Din al-Isfahani, was arrested in 1162 by Qutb al-Din, grandson of Zengi, who found no safer place to keep him than in Mosul's citadel. The same fate befell the Zengid vizier of Aleppo, al-'Ajami, in 1136, but in Aleppo's citadel.

The lesser ranks of *dozdars* were in charge of key posts in mountain areas and little towns overlooking major communication routes. Due to their strategic positions Zengi feared their rebellion if they were replaced by their lord. This is why one sees in Jazirat b. 'Umar that Zengi wanted to topple and kill the keeper, Thiqa al-Din Hasan, for his poor policy but had to trick him by sending his *hajib*, al-Yaghisiyani, to handle the situation without losing the citadel.⁴⁰ In certain situations these keepers could contribute to the fate and stability of the realm. In 1126, when Zengi was defeated by Caliph al-Mustarshid, he took refuge at Tikrit's citadel, which was under the command of Najm al-Din Ayyub, father of Saladin. If Ayyub had handed Zengi to the caliph, that might well have been the end of his career.⁴¹ As a reward for that favour, Zengi appointed Ayyub *dozdar* of Baalbak in Lebanon in 1139. Baalbak was a key logistical station for Zengi in his attacks on Damascus.

Due to the skills of Zengi's men, such as his vizier Jamal al-Din, and 'Ali Kuchuk, many citadel keepers collaborated in a smooth transition of power from Zengi to Sayf al-Din; an example being the *dozdar* of Sanjar in northern Iraq.⁴²

The same style of *dozdar* continued under the later Zengid dynasty in Iraq and Syria. Due to the importance of the post, one sees Nur al-Din remove the commander 'Abd al-Masih from the citadel post when he captured Mosul in 1170/1 because he was the de facto ruler under Sayf al-Din Ghazi II. He instead installed Gumushtegin, one of the trusted Nurid commanders.⁴³ The citadels in major cities in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Iraq remained the headquarters for the ruler of the city under the Ayyubids and Mamluks, influenced by the Seljuq and Zengid pattern. One should point out here that, among others, Ibn al-'Adim in *Zubdat* and Ibn al-Athir in *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir* continued to reiterate the determination and keenness of Zengi to rebuild and refortify walls of cities, forts and citadels with more towers all over his realm from Azerbaijan to Syria, in order to restore and secure strong economic and social life to the areas under his control. Yet these same sources fail to supply us with any details regarding civil buildings, such as hospitals, schools or even mosques, as will be discussed below.

The post of shihna

Shihna is Turkish for the prefect of police of a town or city. This post was introduced to the Middle East under Seljuq administration in order to maintain a solid grip of power over newly captured cities. The grand vizier and theoretician of the Seljuq empire, Nizam al-Mulk, wrote in his *Siyasat Nameh* that constant supervision and enquiry should be made to evaluate the performance of the *shihna*, due to the delicate duties he performed.⁴⁴

Under the rule of Zengi (1127–46) one does not see in the sources related materials regarding the post of *shihna* in any of his governed towns, with duties related to keeping law and order, peacekeeping or supervision of marketplaces. Having said that, Zengi himself was appointed *shihna* of Baghdad by Supreme Sultan Sanjar in 1131 and he remained in that post until Sultan Mas'ud installed his own *shihna*, Boz Aba, in his place during the civil war, as mentioned in Chapter 2. Despite this, one sees that Zengi was in control of Baghdad as *shihna*.⁴⁵ The dilemma here is how could Zengi be *shihna* of a city like Baghdad in addition to, and concurrent with, his post as *atabeg* and governor of various cities in Iraq, the Jazira and Syria? Such positions carried more precise duties under the later Zengids, similar to the other posts discussed above such as *naib* and *hajib*. One should add here that Zengi was appointed *shihna* of Basra for the first time in 1122 but without any other responsibilities or duties. In addition to that, he was appointed *shihna* of Iraq in 1126 – all before he was made ruler of Mosul.⁴⁶ It seems that the term *shihna* here was not only applicable to police work, but also referred to a military governor of a certain city with multiple responsibilities. One can say confidently that Zengi would have had to delegate some of his duties as *shihna*, as he did as governor, simply due to the sheer size of his realm, in the 1130s. This military role continued under the later Zengids, such as Nur al-Din, who maintained the post in Damascus in order to confront the power of the *ahdath* and locals of the city.⁴⁷

These five military posts under Zengi contributed significantly to the Turkification and militarisation of society from that period until the coming of the Ottomans to Syria and Iraq in the sixteenth century, who also included very similar posts in their administration.

Civil administration under Zengi

diwan – vizier – qadi – rais – ghulman and eunuchs – mint

The diwan

A Persian term, which meant royal court, tribunal and place of administration in Islamic societies was first introduced by the second caliph 'Umar (d. 644) in a very basic form. Morgan states: 'The steppe tradition which the Seljuqs brought with them to Persia found its chief expression in one of the two halves of the administrative machine: the *dargah*, the court. It was essentially itinerant.'⁴⁸ The Zengid *diwan* was a prime example of such a description, albeit on a minor scale. The nomadic style of the *diwan* may be seen at the beginning of this chapter in Ibn al-Athir's description of the tents of the *diwan* in the Zengid camp.

The Seljuq sultanate *diwan* had four departments: *al-insha*, the chancery; *al-zamam*, the accounts; *al-ishraf*, the audit; and finally *al-'ard*, the military department which kept records of the *iqta*.⁴⁹ The *diwan* of the Zengid administration, however, was one place with different tasks, where civil and military administration was very difficult to separate or distinguish but where the military needs were met from the same institution headed by the vizier. It seems from a brief and rare account mentioned by Ibn al-Athir in *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir* that there was a solid hierarchy in that institution. He writes:

There were many high ranked Khurasani commanders in his inner circle. They used to receive a large amount of pay, which the *diwan* collected from different places and distributed among them every three months. In one of the years their pay was delayed for a short period of time. They stood collectively in a place where they could be seen by Zengi. He immediately recognised that there was something out of order, summoned some of them and was briefed on the matter. He asked them: 'Did you submit a complaint to the *diwan*?' They said no. He replied: 'Did you report your case to Amir Hajib al-Yaghsiyani?' They said no. He replied: 'Why then do I spend 100,000 dinars [every year] and more than that on the Emir Hajib if I have to deal with every matter, minor or major, personally?'

'You should have submitted a complaint in the *diwan*; if they ignore you, complain to Emir Hajib; if he fails to solve it, then notify me, and I will correct them for their neglect of your case.' Zengi summoned the head of the *diwan* and Emir Hajib and said: 'If you dare to neglect those who are in my company and close to me and in need of such expenses, as you well know, how is it with ordinary people?'⁵⁰

Here one can see a thin line between the military and civil financial matters in the *diwan* and how there were other officials who would come before the emir *hajib*, but not the deputy. In addition, this illustrates how tax collection by the employees of the *diwan* was distributed between military and civilian matters. The question here is: Who headed and ran the Zengid *diwan*? A direct answer would be the vizier, but what kind of vizier, civil or military, and how many were there for Mosul, the Jazira and Aleppo, and what power did they enjoy?

Zengid viziers

Nizam al-Mulk, the grand Seljuq vizier (d. 1092), wrote in his book *Siyasat Nameh*: 'The good or ill of the realm depends on the vizier.'⁵¹ One has to briefly return to the 'Abbasid administration preceding the Seljuqs to appreciate the development and power of the post. From the golden age of the 'Abbasids (749–847) to the Buwayhids in the tenth century, there were two kinds of vizier. The *tanfidh* executed the orders of the caliph when the ruler was powerful and experienced. The second was a more powerful and independent ruler, called *tafwid*, the one who had delegated power from the caliph or the king. In both cases, the vizier used to come second in the hierarchy of most Muslim states or dynasties after the ruler himself. Most viziers were from civilian backgrounds.⁵²

Under Seljuq administrations up until the murder of vizier Nizam al-Mulk in 1092, that pattern did not change. Nizam al-Mulk, a Persian, even had his own private force, but later on in most Seljuq dominions, including the Zengid dominion, one sees that military commanders such as the *naib* or deputy came second to the ruler or king, and the vizier came third due to his civilian background, the growing size of the *iqta'* system and the decentralisation of the empire. His main functions were to keep the realm in a good fiscal condition, to ensure that taxes were collected efficiently, and that the treasury had enough money for expenditures and salaries.⁵³

In most Seljuq administrations there was only one vizier at one time, as in Syria, Iraq and Iran. Under the Zengid administration, however, there was a chief vizier for the whole realm (literally: a prime minister) and then others with the same title but with less power and responsibility under his authority – especially, for example, in Mosul and Aleppo. This was a rare situation not seen in other Turkish dynasties of medieval Islam.

The sources mention only five viziers during the reign of Zengi. The leading vizier, and the most influential in his entire realm and in the realms of Zengi's sons, was Jamal al-Din al-Isfahani. He was born in Isfahan and knew Zengi from very early on – they became close friends. Al-Isfahani's father was from the elite commanders of the Seljuq house, working as *hajib* for vizier Shams al-Mulk b. Nizam al-Mulk.⁵⁴

When Zengi captured Nasibin in 1128 he appointed al-Isfahani as governor there, which proved to be a very good choice due to his distinguished administrative skills. Around 1130 he appointed him as vizier of his *diwan* (Zengi installed him as supervisor of his entire realm, and his decisions and judgments

were final and unquestioned).⁵⁵ He continued to enjoy the full trust of Zengi in his post and also showed great ability in maintaining the financial side of the *diwan* to cover Zengi's costly campaigns, including the recruitment of fresh Turkmen troops into the army. He remained in power until 1162. Due to his constant travel with Zengi he appears in the sources; there is also brief and fragmented information about others carrying the same title in Mosul and Aleppo.

Dya'l-Din Abu Sad al-Kafratuthi, from the upper Khabur river in the Jazira, was a vizier serving between 1133 and 1141 in both Mosul and Aleppo. During the same period, a vizier called Abu'l-Mahasin al-Ajami was serving in Aleppo and was arrested for misconduct in 1136, but how long he held the post we do not know.⁵⁶ The tone of the sources which record the dismissal of this Aleppan vizier, or the replacement of al-Kafratuthi, leads us to believe that the rank of al-Isfahani was superior to all of them, almost untouchable or beyond accountability. Here we have three men in the same *diwan* enjoying the title of vizier simultaneously.

Still under al-Isfahani, one sees the vizier Abu'l-Rida Sadaqa serving between 1142 and 1143 in Mosul, to be replaced by Abu'l-Ghanaym Habashi between 1143 and 1146 in Mosul. Loyalty was not the only qualification in hiring a vizier. Sadaqa had notified Zengi early on that the 'Abbasid caliph, al-Rashid, was plotting to assassinate him during the civil war in Iraq; yet he was only employed for a short period of time.⁵⁷ Perhaps similar to the rare use of more than one *isfahsalar* in the Zengid army, here we have more than one vizier not only due to the geographic needs of Aleppo and Mosul but also because the administration had not developed sufficiently to have distinct titles. Having said that, they all reported to one man: al-Isfahani. Almost all the administrators serving in the Zengid *diwan*, whether employed in accounting, judicial professions such as local *qadis* and *nazar al-mazalim*, or correspondents, reported to the chief vizier.

Unfortunately, nothing is mentioned about the conditions for recruitment of the vizier or other officials, or of their education. One cannot assume that they completed their education in the *madrasa*, as Nizam al-Mulk was the one who introduced the first *madrasa* in Baghdad in the second half of the twelfth century. The first *madrasa* built in Aleppo was in 1117 and such institutions needed decades to flourish and impact upon society.

Qadi (judge)

The first *qadi* in Islamic administration was introduced by the second caliph, 'Umar. Originally, the caliph was the leader of secular and religious affairs but due to the overwhelming conquests of 'Umar he had to delegate the power of tribunals to the *qadi*. The position of the *qadi* within the Zengid realm was one of great significance and the role of the '*ulama*' (clergy) was influential, especially in giving Zengi legitimacy in the eyes of those he ruled as well as his army as he fought against his diverse enemies, both Muslims and Crusaders.

Due to the long history of civil wars between Zengi and the different Seljuq sultans, in addition to the caliphate, he had his own trusted circle of '*ulama*' who

would not necessarily follow the Shari'a (Islamic law) but would tailor the law to fit the deeds of Zengi, as they did through the ages of Muslim rule, especially in fragile political situations in order to keep their posts and perks. Many '*ulama*' maintained their silence under the 'Abbasid or Fatimid caliphates when infants and young children aged five and eight came to power, not to mention supporting different sides in long, bloody Muslim civil wars strongly condemned by Islamic law.

There was one chief *qadi* of the Zengid realm and many of his assistants were appointed directly by him. Sometimes Zengi would appoint a few on his travels, but it was not considered an intervention within his authority. Chief *qadi*, Baha al-Din al-Shahrazuri, was serving in Mosul before Zengi's rise to power. He was one of the two men entrusted by Zengi in 1127 to travel to Baghdad to offer a bribe to the Seljuq vizier, Anu Shurwan, after they themselves were promised handsome *iqta'* and rewards. The latter in turn was to do his best to convince the sultan that Zengi was the best candidate to be installed in Mosul.⁵⁸ Following the success of this mission, Qadi Baha al-Din al-Shahrazuri enjoyed great trust through his long career with Zengi. He appointed other members of his family to assist him in the judicial work both in Mosul and with Zengi during his travels. Al-Shahrazuri was not just a *qadi* but was also a personal representative of Zengi and his trusted negotiator.

In October 1136, during the civil war between Zengi and Sultan Mas'ud, Mas'ud installed a new caliph, al-Muqtafi, in Baghdad after the caliph in office, al-Rashid, had allied with Zengi. Zengi took his caliph to Mosul and sent his *qadi*, al-Shahrazuri, to Baghdad to negotiate a compromise. In Zengid territories where *khutba* was made to Zengi and his caliph, the chief *qadi* had supreme authority. In Baghdad the representative of the sultan needed al-Shahrazuri's recognition of the sultan's caliph to end the confrontation. He replied: 'How can I do that [in Baghdad] if I have just left the caliph in Mosul and we have already given the oath to him?'⁵⁹ Here the *qadi* was a real politician, not only a man of religion.

By April 1137, due to this judicial-diplomatic mission, Zengi reconciled with the sultanate. The same man was sent again to Baghdad when Emperor John Comnenus of Byzantium invaded Syria in 1137. He was ordered by Zengi to obtain substantial military aid at any price to confront the Crusader-Byzantine pact. Anticipating that Sultan Mas'ud would not fully offer aid to his old enemy Zengi, the *qadi*, with his hired followers in Baghdad, bribed many *awbash* (ruffians) to interrupt the Friday prayers in both the sultan's and caliph's mosques. They shouted '*wa Islamah*' ('alas Islam'), and managed to attract thousands of the locals of Baghdad to their side. The sultan feared such a disturbance and consequently contacted the Zengid *qadi* to conclude a deal in Zengi's favour for military aid.

These are just a few examples of the influence and diverse roles of the chief *qadi* in the Zengid administration. The sources never mention any incident where al-Shahrazuri objected to or condemned any of Zengi's violent deeds. When he died in 1138 he was replaced by another member of his family, Taj al-Din Yahya al-Shahrazuri, but he did not enjoy the same level of power as his predecessor.⁶⁰

There were *qadis* in every Zengid city and town. Their main work was to perform *nazar al-mazalim*, to sit for tribunals, to keep the *khutba* and to give some limited teaching in the mosques. In Aleppo, Zengi's other main centre, one sees some of the exceptional influence of the *qadi* regarding Zengi's personal affairs. For example, Qadi Abu Ghanim, grandfather of Ibn al-'Adim and the chief *qadi* of Aleppo under the Ayyubids, had written about how Zengi could yield to pressure regarding his own life despite his tyrannical character. In 1130 Zengi married the daughter of Ridwan (d. 1113), Seljuq King of Aleppo. Of course, he knew well how her grandfather Tutush had killed his own father, Aq Sunqur, in 1095. Despite that, when Zengi saw the blood-stained gown of his father after capturing Aleppo, he deserted her for a long period of time and the Seljuq princess complained to Qadi Abu Ghanim, saying: 'Atabeg Zengi has deserted me for a long time, and I seek the rule of the Shari'a. Do I count as married or divorced?'⁶¹

The *qadi* promised to resolve the matter with Zengi. Abu Ghanim went to see him at the citadel and found him about to leave. He raised the matter with him, reporting the grievance of the *khatun* (princess) to his lord. Zengi listened and was about to march away without comment. The *qadi* held the bridle of Zengi's horse, obstructing his movement, which was a courageous thing to do to someone with the temperament of Zengi, let alone his lord. The *qadi* said: 'My lord, this is the purified Shari'a and one cannot disregard it.' Zengi replied: 'I make you my witness that she is divorced from this moment.' Only then did the *qadi* let go of the bridle.⁶²

Zengi was not angered by such a deed and appointed the *qadi*'s son, Abu'l-Fadl, in his place following the death of the father. Here one sees Zengi appoint the *qadi* directly, without consulting al-Shahrazuri. In addition to that, he was keen to convey to the new *qadi* how he should be fair and just in his realm and that the *qadi* would enjoy Zengi's full support over and against any objection to his rule, so long as he followed the Shari'a.⁶³ This reflected his idea of keeping law and order in his realm by supporting the authority of the men of his administration. Most of the recruitment for the post of *qadi* came from non-Turkish elements, such as local Arabs, Syrians and Persians, but they followed the *Hanafi* school of law which the Seljuqs took as the official one from among the four main Sunni schools.

The education of the *qadi* and his preparation for public service depended heavily on the private education given to him by his family. That is why one sees many generations from al-Shahrazuri's family or Ibn al-'Adim's family in Mosul and Aleppo respectively succeed one another. In a few cases, some former officials of the judicial department in the caliph's *diwan* joined the Zengid one, especially in Mosul.

The rais and the ahdath

The *rais* is Arabic for chief, while *ahdath* is Arabic for young men; the *ahdath* were local militia created in Syrian, Iraqi and Iranian cities but were not found in urban areas. In Iraq they were called 'ayyarun and shuttar.

This vigilante force was responsible for keeping public order and fire-fighting. Between the tenth and twelfth centuries they played an active role in representing the interests of the local Syrians and Iraqis before the non-native ruling powers, such as the Fatimids and Seljuqs.⁶⁴ The *rais* in that period was applied to the mayor of the town or city and leader of the *ahdath*, who represented them before the ruler or king. According to Havemann, the relationship between the *rais* and the authority was always reversible. The *rais* gained more power when the political leadership was weak.⁶⁵ Notably during his reign in Syria, Zengi personally appointed the *rais* of the city, Sayf al-Din Abu'l-Hasan al-Balisi, in 1128.⁶⁶ As the new ruler of the city he had to use all the tools at his disposal to control the city – especially as the *rais* of Aleppo was the most powerful among all the Syrian cities. Since 1085 the *rais* had resided in a citadel inside Aleppo's walls, built by the then *rais* al-Sharif al-Hatiti.⁶⁷ This reflected the socio-political weight of the *rais* under Zengid rule, though the Zengids worked systematically to end that influence.

The *rais* and the *ahdath* played a very positive (and sometimes heroic) role in joining the Zengid deputy and his Turkmen forces during attacks on Aleppo. For example, in November 1132 while Zengi was engaged in Iraq, the Crusaders, led by King Fulk, attacked the southern area of Aleppo's countryside. Zengi's deputy, Sawar, marched out and confronted them at Qinnasrin. For a few days a military confrontation took place and the *ahdath* of Aleppo represented a significant part of this fight.⁶⁸ This situation was repeated when the *ahdath* defended Aleppo with Sawar in the spring of 1138 when the Crusader–Byzantine alliance attacked the city.

In southern Syria, the situation was reversed. The *ahdath* frequently combined with the Seljuq rulers against the Zengid sieges. Examples include when, in the winter of 1139/40 Zengi himself led a fierce attack on the western defences of Damascus, and again in the spring of 1140 during his final assault on the city.⁶⁹ Despite the semi-military performance of the *ahdath* they were by nature civilian groups with non-regular training, their duty to attend mainly domestic emergencies. This is why they are dealt with under the examination of civilian administration rather than under the military administration.

In Zengid Mosul one observes the same style and influence of the *'ayyarun* and locals. In 1133 they defended the city against the long siege of the 'Abbasid caliph, al-Mustarshid, who led his forces in person. Zengi preferred to remain out of Mosul in order to have freedom of movement. The *'ayyarun* joined Zengi again in 1136, against the armies of Sultan Mas'ud attacking their city.⁷⁰

Despite their contribution in time of need, Zengi and his successors in Syria and Iraq (mainly Nur al-Din) tried to recruit more Turkmen into their forces and the role of the *rais* and *ahdath* was greatly marginalised, as with the vizier, against the influence of the military commanders; one hears nothing about them under the Ayyubids or the Mamluks.

Ghulman and eunuchs

Nicolle, in his book *Crusader Warfare*, states: 'The soldiers with the highest prestige in Ayyubid armies were those of slave-recruited origins; namely the

ghulams or *mamluks*. Their training and organisation was based upon both Seljuq–Zengid and Fatimid systems.⁷¹ *Ghulam* literally means youth in Arabic and could also be used for servant. Although the argument here is about military personnel, as shown by Nicolle, *ghulman* (plural of *ghulam*) during the life of Zengi were civilian in nature and worked as domestic servants in his tents and homes and guarded him in his sleep. The sources relate that their military use came under the later Zengids. Medieval Muslim sources have a diversity of meanings for the use of the word *ghulam*, which vary according to context, age and place; similarly *khasi*, or eunuch, is open to different interpretations. A further noun derived from *ghulam* is *ghulumiyya*, which means libido or lust in different areas of the medieval Muslim world from Iran to Spain, and will be discussed below. In addition, many *ghulman* were eunuchs at the same time fulfilling different civil and military needs. From the tenth century onward, according to Pillat and Ayalon, there were other terms used for eunuchs: these included *khadim*, Arabic for servant; *shaykh*, or chief; *ustadh*, Persian for teacher; and *muallim*, the Arabic form of the same word. There is also *tawashi*, from the Turkish *tabushi*, meaning servant.⁷² More terms are found in Iran and Syria down to the Ottoman period, such as *agha*, Turkish for master or lord, and *fata*, the Arabic word for youth, especially in North Africa.

Under the reign of Zengi the word *ghulam* had two different uses: for domestic servants during the day and night; and those who provided some kind of sexual pleasure, following the pattern of the Seljuq court of Sultan Sanjar. Regarding the lifestyle of Zengi, Al-Isfahani writes:

When Zengi sleeps, a few of his servants sleep around his bed. They attend to his care while awake or asleep. They protect and defend him like lions in battle and almost visit him in his dreams. They are fresh and extremely beautiful, like a morning at sunrise. He loves them as they love him and, despite their loyalty to him, he is sometimes harsh with them. They are the children of the stallions from Turkish, Armenian and Byzantine lords.

It was Zengi's habit, if he wanted to punish a leading commander, to dismiss or kill him, while keeping his young son under his authority, and castrate him. If he liked the look of a certain *ghulam*, he castrated him, in order to prevent him from growing a beard and looking masculine.⁷³

It seems that al-Isfahani, who was not a supporter of Zengi and was loyal to Saladin, was implying a certain sexual attraction of Zengi towards some of his *ghulman*. The night of Zengi's murder by one of them is mentioned in almost all sources, with few differences. While Zengi was besieging Qal'at Ja'bar on the Euphrates in the summer of 1146, he returned to his tent at night. He consumed some alcohol and fell asleep. While he was sleeping some of the *ghulman* made some noise, which woke him. He looked out and saw his servant Yaranqash and other *ghulman* drinking the remainder of his alcohol. He threatened them and fell asleep again. They were terrified about the kind of punishment Zengi would apply to them in the morning and decided to murder him. Yaranqash

assassinated him and fled the camp, taking with him Zengi's insignia ring in order to get past the guards without raising suspicion. Yaranqash was also a eunuch.⁷⁴

The mention of *ghulam* in the sources in the Zengid administration does not expand beyond such references and one does not see them performing military duties in the army or holding high administrative positions. One strongly believes that Zengi was influenced by the manner and structure of the Seljuq court of his time. The same al-Isfahani, who cannot be accused of demonstrating any hostility towards the Seljuqs, mentions very interesting details about the lustful desires of Seljuq Sultan Sanjar (d. 1157) for different *ghulman* over the years. In one case, he writes:

It was the habit of Sanjar to buy a *ghulam* of his selection and to make love to him; his adoration of this *ghulam* became public. Sanjar offered him his soul, wealth, to keep him with him day and night and to make him the de facto ruler of the sultanate. When he had had enough, he ended his life.

One of these *ghulam* was called Sunqur. Sanjar ordered his chamberlain to obey Sunqur, saying: 'Here is my *mamluk* Sunqur, delight of my eyes, fruit of my heart, scent of my soul.'⁷⁵ The same source has given ten reasons for the decay and decline of the Seljuqs; number nine was the ownership of *mamluks* (beautiful like full moons and the endless times of debauchery with them).⁷⁶

This kind of Turkish-led socio-political environment was never publicly condemned by the chief *qadi* of the sultanate and one can see that Zengi started to develop his own style of rule, which in turn influenced his descendants.

The other kinds of servants under this administration were the *tawashi* eunuchs. From the early 'Abbasid rule in the eighth century, *tawashi*, or *khasi*, were used especially in the harem section of the palace along with polygamy and increasing numbers of concubines.⁷⁷ Soon they were incorporated into military service and held very high positions, such as the personal bodyguard of Caliph Harun al-Rashid (d. 809).

The Fatimid, Seljuq and Zengid administrations had all used eunuchs in civil and military capacities at different levels and passed the practice down to the Ayyubids.⁷⁸ During the age of Zengi the deputy of Sultan Mahmud II in Baghdad was Behruz the *khasi*. Furthermore, in 1126 the commander of the caliph's army who confronted Zengi was a eunuch called Afif, who was defeated by Zengi but was set free due to an old friendship between the two men.⁷⁹

As a result of this, one sees a continuation of such patterns, but on a limited scale. Most of the *ghulman* serving Zengi were also called *khadim*, which was a common term for eunuch. The only contemporary political instance was when Zengi had a close assistant called Fakhr al-Din 'Abd al-Masih, a white eunuch. He is mentioned in the last three years of Zengi's career but is not ascribed a post or rank. Having said that, his impact was much more noticeable later, as a deputy in Mosul to Qutb al-Din b. Zengi.⁸⁰ When Nur al-Din took over Mosul in 1070 he dismissed him and appointed emir Gumushtegin ('Silver Prince') as his deputy. He too was a eunuch and in 1174 he seized the rule of Aleppo following

the death of Nur al-Din and became *atabeg* for Isma'il b. Nur al-Din. Saladin, who founded the Ayyubid dynasty in Egypt out of the Turkish womb, had as his first deputy a white Rumi eunuch called Qaraqush.⁸¹

The Zengid mint

The coins struck by Zengi and his dynasty after him in Iraq and Syria developed a remarkable and distinctive character of their own. The leading authority on Islamic art, Robert Hillenbrand, writes:

In no area of the visual arts is the flux of cultures represented in the Jazira and neighbouring areas in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries more apparent than the coinage. Here a decisive break was made with the long-established Muslim tradition that coins should bear inscriptions only, and not images. The Artuqids and Zengid rulers minted literally scores of different figural types drawn from a bewildering farrago of sources. This phenomenon remains basically unexplained.⁸²

Zengi himself did mint gold dinars and (unusually) copper dirhams, but no silver dirhams have been found.⁸³ The thin gold dinar of his administration bore Kufic writing on both the obverse and reverse, including the name of Sultan Alp Arslan, who was in Zengi's company as Zengi was his *atabeg*, and some Quranic writings. Zengi's name was never mentioned; neither was the name of the 'Abbasid caliph. The National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad had some of these dinars dated 1145 and minted in Mosul.⁸⁴

Here a few questions should be put forward. Why did Zengi not follow the tradition of writing the name of the caliph on his coins, as was the habit of his masters, the Seljuq sultans? In Alptekin's book, *Selçuklu paraları*, one finds that from Sultan Tughril Beg I and Alp Arslan I down to Sultan Sanjar, all wrote the names of their different 'Abbasid caliph with their titles on their dinars as a sign of nominal recognition and submission, with the sultan's name on the other side.⁸⁵ The *khutba* and coins were the two most official and public recognition of authority, especially as coins circulated on a large scale. Second, despite the honorific titles which the caliph had bestowed upon Zengi during the same year (see Chapter 5), Zengi still did not include him on the dinar, indicating some level of independence. Finally, 1145 was the same year Alp Arslan tried to seize Mosul for himself, yet his name was still kept on the dinar. It was probably better for Zengi, who imprisoned his sultan, to keep using his name rather than submitting himself to his long-time enemy Sultan Mas'ud.

After Zengi, the Zengid mint in both branches of the state followed a rare style, like the Artuqids of the Jazira (1102–1408), who exhibited human figures on the coins in a variety of styles. Angels and other tribal motifs were also found on the bronze dirhams minted in Mosul or Aleppo. The coin in Figures 6.1 and 6.2 bears the image of Qutb al-Din b. Zengi; it is a minted dirham dated 1160 from Mosul, with the obverse a portrait of a Central Asian face, above it two



Figure 6.1 Obverse of Zengid dirham, minted in 1160 under his son Mawdud: portrait of a Turkmen face with two winged angels above it; margin: on the right, the year 500, and on the left, the year 55.



Figure 6.2 Reverse of Zengid dirham: 'the just and learned king of the emirs of the east and west, Tughriltegin atabeg'; margin: Mawdud b. Zengi b. Aq Sunqur.

winged angels and on the margin the date 555 AH. Such a style has no precedent in the history of Islamic coinage, apart from the Artuqids who, according to Robert Hillenbrand, followed the same tradition.⁸⁶ The reverse has the following at the centre: al-Malik al-‘Adil al-‘Alim, Malik Amr al-Sharq wa’l-Gharb Tughrultegin *atabeg*, and on the margin, Mawdud Ibn Zengi Ibn Aq Sunqur (‘the just savant king, king of the affairs of east and west, Tughrultegin’).⁸⁷ It is worth mentioning here that al-‘Adil and Tughrul were titles given to Zengi by the caliph. In addition, Qutb al-Din was never an *atabeg*, but used the title of his father to extend his legitimacy.

This study will trace the evolution of the Turkish influence and examine how such human faces, strictly avoided in Islamic art according to Islamic law in previous dynasties, appeared for decades in the Middle East as well as during the Crusades, in an age when the Zengids claimed to be *mujahids* representing Islam. The use of such styles continued until the end of the Zengid dynasty, but the Ayyubids and Mamluks did not follow this style.

It is not clear why Zengi and his line after him, especially Nur al-Din, did not produce silver dirhams. It seems that the massive economic burden of Zengi’s military campaigns affected his financial ability, which is why he produced a thinner dinar of less than the usual 4.2 g of gold, according to Marsden.⁸⁸ This was also reflected in the cultural institutions and urbanism under Zengi’s reign as will be discussed below. Having said that, the question of why a capable king, like Nur al-Din in Syria and later in Egypt in 1169, or Qutb al-Din in Iraq, with good financial resources, refrained from producing silver coins, remains unanswered.

The Zengid institutions

iqta’ – barid – madrasa – khanqah

Not every institution under the rule of Zengi developed equally and he had neither the time nor the tools to assimilate what his masters, the Seljuqs, had. Zengi gave priority to institutions that could boost his military activities, while civil ones, such as educational and even religious institutions like basic mosques, were left to his line of successors. One finds details regarding military institutions such as *iqta’* and *barid* in addition to civil ones like the *madrasa* and *khanqah* which really only developed after Zengi’s rule.

The iqta’

The institution of *iqta’* (literally: ‘a piece of land’ in Arabic) was recognised in the Islamic administration from the ninth century when the ‘Abbasid caliphate started to fall under the influence of Turkish slave commanders. A *muqta’*, or keeper of the *iqta’*, had different duties in his *iqta’* regarding tax collection, military power and service.⁸⁹ The coming of the Seljuqs to the Middle East and to Baghdad in 1055 made this institution the pillar of the

government that ran a huge empire. Nearly all the dynasties that followed used such an institution.

There were two main kinds of *iqta'*. *Iqta' al-tamlik* was an assignment of ownership, which allowed for the possibility of passing the *iqta'* down a line of successors. The other was *iqta' al-istighlal*, or an assignment of usufruct, where the *muqta'* had no right to inherit the *iqta'*. Both of these had different responsibilities in collecting land revenues and performing military duties for the sultan.⁹⁰ *Iqta'* were given by the sultan to members of his family, such as brothers or sons. In addition, high-ranking commanders were also allocated different sizes of *iqta'* ranging from one city to a whole province. The sultan had the ability to dismiss and replace the *muqta'* if he wished; however, as the Seljuqs started to decline in the early twelfth century it became harder to do so. The sultan's grant became less valuable in the hands of the new *muqta'* and he had to fight to seize his *iqta'*, as in 1127 when Zengi captured Mosul and its dominions. The emir of the *iqta'* would profit from his allocated land through taxation and could allocate smaller *iqta'* to his own emirs who were under his command. In return they would all be, at least in theory, loyal to the sultanate, demonstrated by performing military duties, declaring the *khutba* to the sultan and using his mint.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Zengi was given his first *iqta'* in 1122 in the city of Wasit. Due to his distinguished military performance he was allocated the *iqta'* of Basra in 1125, as the sultan wanted to control the Arab tribes of southern Iraq and to have Zengi spy on the 'Abbasid caliph.⁹¹

In both of these cases the *iqta'* was just *istighlal* and Zengi was an executive, administering the revenues and maintaining the military of the province. When Zengi was allocated Mosul as an *iqta'* in 1127 he also had the honour of raising one of the sultan's sons in his court; here we see a shift to *iqta' al-tamlik* but without a right of inheritance. Between 1127 and 1129 Zengi also had *iqta'* in a large number of towns and cities in the Jazira, as well as Aleppo in Syria. Sultan Mahmud II issued him an ambiguous decree entitling him to the rule of *al-gharb kulluhu*, the entire West, as discussed in Chapter 1.⁹²

It appears that while the *iqta'* of Mosul was a *tamlik*, the rest of what Zengi had was *istighlal*. While the endless civil wars in Iran and Central Asia reflected negatively upon the decline of the Seljuqs, Zengi managed to keep his *iqta'* as *tamlik* and passed them to his sons without a clear sultanate decree, like the detailed one issued to Atabek Tughtegin of Damascus in 1115.

Zengi's dispensation of *iqta'* was mainly to allocate different *iqta'* to his leading commanders as *tafwid* – a delegation of financial and military administration without ownership of any piece of land. He used to say to his commanders:

What are your needs for ownership of properties? The *iqta'* compensate for that need. If we lose the *iqta'* all properties will be lost as well. Properties owned by followers of the sultan lead to unjust policies towards the locals, as the followers concentrate on expanding their ownership at the expense of the locals unjustly.⁹³

This policy protected the stability of the agricultural community and contributed to more revenue for the Zengid treasury. One sees Zengi following the theory of Nizam al-Mulk regarding the recommended methods of running an *iqta'*. Nizam had written: 'Officers who hold assignments must know that they have no authority over the peasants except to take from them the due amount of revenues. When they have taken that, peasants have security for their persons, properties, wives, and children.'⁹⁴ In practice, it was often mentioned that when Zengi's forces crossed Zengid dominions they did not dare to take even a handful of straw without paying for it instantly or having written permission to do so. Anyone who violated that principle would be crucified.⁹⁵ Although this may have been an exaggeration, it came from the Aleppan historian Ibn al-'Adim and not from the pro-Zengid Ibn al-Athir.

Zengi used to allocate different *iqta'* to his leading commanders and they had the liberty in turn of allocating smaller, minor *iqta'*, such as villages or towns, to their supporters. For example, emir Hajib al-Yaghisiyani was given the city of Hama in Syria and, due to his frequent travel with Zengi, he gave it to his son, Ahmad. Jaqar, Zengi's top commander, was given various *iqta'* in northern Iraq and the Jazira, and he too gave them to others as he was the Zengid deputy in Mosul.⁹⁶ Having said that, one sees an exception in the allocation of an *iqta'* to a *qadi*, here Baha al-Din al-Shahrazuri, due to his diplomatic skill in acquiring for Zengi the rule of Mosul in 1127; however, the name of the place is not mentioned.⁹⁷

It is likely that the limited experience of running an *iqta'* and the constant travel in Zengi's company required the *qadi* to delegate power to some of his followers and enjoy the financial reward of the *iqta'*. One should mention here that it was a rare case for a *muqta'* to rebel against Zengi's authority. Zengi could replace any *muqta'* without much of a challenge. As the Seljuq and Zengid regimes were essentially military regimes geared for expansion and depending on Turkmen regular and seasonal nomads, Zengi resorted to a special kind of *iqta'*. He had transferred a Turkmen tribe called the Iwaniyya, led by emir al-Yaruq, from the Jazira to the vicinity of Aleppo. Zengi allowed them to own any territories they could seize from the Crusaders in the name of jihad,⁹⁸ and they managed to capture a few territories in the countryside between Aleppo and Edessa.

Due to the nomadic nature and high mobility of the Turkmen, Zengi tried to create a pattern of settlement for them instead of their loose style of pasturing across the Middle East, and to make more use of their force without burdening his treasury. Ibn al-Athir's analysis of the anatomy of the Turkmen behaviour relates various stories about their great mobility, quick assembly and even quicker dispersals. These included Da'ud of Hisn Kayfa in the Jazira, whose arrow was considered to be an object of blessing among many Turkmen tribes of the area; when he sent it to any of them he could assemble 20,000 men at one time. The same kind of behaviour was mentioned in 1119 when Il-Ghazi of Aleppo defeated Roger of Salerno and of Antioch, but he could not capitalise on his military victory, since the Turkmen in his company quickly dispersed.⁹⁹

Zengi had the same problem and the sources are full of phrases such as 'he marched to the Jazira to assemble the Turkmen', or to 'call the Turkmen', who were clearly not part of his regular army.

It was Nur al-Din who allowed the system of hereditary *iqta* ' in his dominions among his leading commanders to encourage them to remain loyal to him; the Ayyubids followed the same system.¹⁰⁰

The barid

Barid is a Persian word meaning a certain distance between two stations for delivering and passing messages and information for government, measuring nearly twelve miles. The person who carried the message was also sometimes called a *barid* in early Muslim administrations.¹⁰¹ It was known from the time of the Umayyad dynasty, but the 'Abbasids used it on a wider scale. The founder of Baghdad, Caliph al-Mansour (d. 775), said: 'The pillars of the state are four, like the four legs of the throne; a just judge, a fair prefect of police, a skilful tax collector, and the *sahib* [head of] *barid* reports to me about the conduct of those three.'¹⁰²

The institution of the *barid* developed under the 'Abbasids and the Seljuqs into a full intelligence service, regarding all military, social and economic affairs of the state, with the use of animals such as horses and birds such as pigeons. Both were also used under the Fatimids from the tenth century onward,¹⁰³ but the speed and mobility of the Turkmen from the eleventh century onward made it faster and more powerful.

Under Zengi, the *barid* ranged from spying on sultans to denying access to messengers of other powers to cross Zengid territories. Zengi spent lavishly on gathering daily reports about the different Seljuq sultans in order to keep his dominions safe from any attack.¹⁰⁴ When a messenger wanted to cross through Zengid dominions, he had to ask for permission first and then he was accompanied by a Zengid agent throughout the Zengid territories, without any contact with the locals.

In addition to this, Zengi banned his own employees from leaving their territories without permission, like a kind of iron curtain. He used to say: 'Our lands are like a garden, they should be protected by a fence. Those outside will fear to enter and if any one leaves they might expose its secrets and enemies will attempt to attack.'¹⁰⁵ Sources loyal to Zengi exaggerated his ability to rule and administrate but he was generally capable of keeping tight control over his dominions.

Speed was also a distinguishing feature of the *barid* of Zengi, who used young camels who were capable of extraordinary speed and in some cases in conjunction with pigeons. While Zengi was besieging Crusader al-Bira after Edessa in 1145, a messenger came to him riding a camel, speeding like a storm, to tell him about the conspiracy against his rule in Mosul. Zengi immediately sent a message by pigeon to his deputy in Erbil, urging him to march at once to secure Mosul.¹⁰⁶ The same method was used in 1129 when Zengi knew that the

sultan wanted to replace him with someone else in Mosul – he appeared in Baghdad much sooner than expected, which astonished the sultan himself.¹⁰⁷ This reflected his knowledge of inside information in the sultan's court through his agents, as well as his use of fast animals such as young camels for his travels.

The pigeons were also hunted and shot and sometimes replaced if they came from an enemy. This is why in some cases the same message was sent by more than one bird to the same destination to prevent it from being hunted by a falcon, or shot by an archer, as in the event of 1127, when Zengi sent his forces ahead of him to besiege Artuqid Nasibin, which belonged to Timurtash, the lord of Mardin (referred to in Chapter 3).¹⁰⁸

Zengi's *barid* system was expanded under his son Nur al-Din, especially the use of the pigeon, a system known as *hawadi*, with certain towers used to house them all over the Nurid Empire. This influenced the Ayyubids to follow the same system and develop it further, using thousands of birds in Saladin's citadel alone during the thirteenth century and introducing codes into the messages to conceal the meaning of the contents.¹⁰⁹ These two military institutions in the Zengid administration were mentioned in some detail in the sources and formed a vital part of his activities through the two decades of his rule.

The madrasa

Zengi's rule was geared for war and expansion into a wide area of land, propelled by an extremely ambitious personality. One sees the urbanism and buildings in his age confined largely to military use with no contribution to civil or religious aspects, although Zengi claimed to be a pious Muslim and commander for jihad. In that context he missed an opportunity to follow the example of the Seljuqs of Syria or Iraq and Iran, to commission *madrasa* and *khanqah*, or even mosques, to use as tools in his jihadi policy, especially following the victory over Edessa in 1144. Why he failed to do this is a question that remains unanswered. This is especially perplexing given the mood of the Turks of the age to revive and expand Sunni Islam after the Shi'a Buwayhid rule that had dominated the 'Abbasid Sunni caliphate between 932 and 1062.

Here the entourage of Zengi will be examined and how they tried to follow the Seljuq pattern, including the line of Zengi's successors in introducing such institutions.

The *madrasa*, Persian for school of mainly regular religious teaching, was introduced to Baghdad in the 1060s by Nizam al-Mulk, after the prototype in Nishapur, Khurasan in the tenth century. The *madrasa* used *waqf*, or endowments, to maintain it financially. The Seljuqs of Damascus introduced their first *madrasa* in 1097 and in Aleppo in 1117.¹¹⁰

Despite the praise for Zengi in the sources that he restored law and order to Mosul and brought back urbanism to central Mosul, one does not see a single mosque commissioned by Zengi in the city. Furthermore, not a single renovation of a mosque is mentioned throughout his entire career in his vast realm, despite the detailed accounts by the same sources about his other activities.

The first *madrasa* in Mosul was commissioned by Nizam al-Mulk, one of ten *madrasa* built by him in Iraq and Iran, and it was operational during Zengi's rule of the city. Zengi's son, Sayf al-Din Ghazi I, who ruled between 1146 and 1149, built the second *madrasa* in Mosul and dedicated it for the *Hanafi* and *Shafi'i* schools of law; it was named the Atabegiyya. The name may be misleading, since it carried the title of Zengi himself. It is worth mentioning that while the Nizamiyya was for one school of law, the Atabegiyya added another. When Nur al-Din took over Mosul in 1170, he built the Nuriyya *madrasa* next to his mosque there.¹¹¹ Some of Zengi's entourage had contributed to religious buildings in Mosul, but under his successors. His friend and grand emir, Zayn al-Din 'Ali Kuchuk, had built several *madrasas* and *ribats* in Mosul. His vizier, al-Isfahani, had built several *ribats* in Mosul, Nasibin and Sanjar, and in other areas in the Jazira. In addition, Qadi Kamal al-Shahrazuri (d. 1176) commissioned a *madrasa* called the Kamaliyya. One can say that by the end of the Zengid rule in Mosul there were seven known *madrasas* with sufficient endowment built after Zengi. One of them was built by 'Ismat al-Din,¹¹² the wife of Nur al-Din, which reflected the Seljuq influence on the Zengid culture, and the stability which the city enjoyed after Zengi's death. This gave culture a chance to flourish, not just for Muslims, but also for several synagogues of the large Jewish community, according to Benjamin of Tudela who visited Mosul at that time.¹¹³

In Zengid Aleppo, Zengi did not commission any *madrasas* during his rule of the city. All he did was to move the remains of his father, Aq Sunqur, the former ruler of Aleppo (1086–95), in a somewhat Shamanist tradition, from an unidentifiable place called Qaranbia outside the city to the east, to be buried next to the first *madrasa*. Named the Zujajiyya, it had been commissioned by the Seljuqs in 1117 and was completed under the Artuqids. Zengi gave a few *waqf* to the *madrasa* to commemorate his father's name.¹¹⁴ While the Umayyad mosque of Aleppo witnessed the building of a unique minaret during Aq Sunqur's rule and carried his name until 1089 (sadly destroyed in 2013 during the Syrian war), we do not see Zengi influenced here even by his father (see Figure 6.3).

Rather, it was his son Nur al-Din who built a similar minaret in a mosque carrying his name inside Aleppo's citadel (see Figure 6.4).

Unlike his father, Nur al-Din was keen to commission *madrasas* in Aleppo, numbering around eight during his rule, which helped give the Sunni creed more roots in an environment dominated by the Shi'a, until the collapse of the Seljuqs in 1117.¹¹⁵ The Zengid influence here is detected in the Mosuli scholar, Sharaf al-Din b. Abi Asrun (d. 1189), who was teaching in the Nizamiyya *madrasa* of Mosul during Zengi's lifetime and who, after Zengi's murder, moved to Aleppo in 1150 and started teaching there. As a result, one sees the appearance of six *madrasas* called Asruniyya in Aleppo, Damascus, Hims, Hama, Manbij and Rahba commissioned by Nur al-Din.¹¹⁶ The longer reign of Nur al-Din and his focus on establishing his rule in Syria and expansion into Fatimid Egypt made him more capable of producing such culture, unlike his father, and the same could be said for Mosul after Zengi. It is worth mentioning here that Zengi himself never selected or commissioned a particular place for his burial, as many



Figure 6.3 Minaret of the Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo, built in 1089 during the rule of Zengi's father, Aq Sunqur.



Figure 6.4 Minaret of Nur al-Din b. Zengi inside Aleppo Citadel.

Muslim leaders had done. It was very humbly left for the locals to bury him near Raqqa on the Euphrates, without a dome to distinguish the place, while he himself had been keen to erase the tomb of King Ridwan in Aleppo, in revenge for Ridwan's father's killing of Aq Sunqur.¹¹⁷

The sources contain conflicting descriptions of Zengi regarding his relationship to the 'ulama' of his age. On the one hand, they describe him as *jabbaran aziman* ('grand tyrant'), while, on the other, he is seen as a follower of the Islamic Shari'a and as one who honoured the scholars of his age.¹¹⁸ One cannot detect any relationship between Zengi and certain scholars, apart from his *qadi*, 'Ali al-Shahrazuri, who was an agent of realpolitik like his master and held regular scientific debates in his court. No evidence of a relationship comparable to that between Sultan Malik Shah and Omar Khayyam (d. 1122) exists among others in the Seljuq court. Sources narrating the biography of a Muslim leader after his death generally attempt to improve his image by mentioning stories of his piety, but rarely is one classified as a great oppressor with the temperament of a tiger.

Despite his frequent brutality towards Muslim powers and individuals, as discussed in the previous five chapters, one can see some situations which, if not exaggerated by his admiring historians, do reflect a certain level of changing attitude in certain situations – for example, protecting even the *dhimmis*, like the Jews of the Jazira. In the winter of 1127/8, while expanding into the Jazira, one of his leading commanders occupied the house of a Jewish man and evicted him. The man appealed to Zengi, who summoned his commander in the presence of the Jewish man. It seems that the angry look which Zengi directed towards his commander made him instantly withdraw from the meeting and leave the house. The Zengid troops of the commander had to erect his tent in a muddy area and use straw to ease their harsh conditions.¹¹⁹ There are other situations mentioned at Ma'arrat al-Nu'man, Aleppo and Edessa which talk about his respect for the Shari'a, but they seem to depend on his moods and needs.

With regard to non-religious teaching, there was a new medical school attached to a hospital in Jerusalem from 1045 and Nur al-Din was the first to introduce a medical *madrasa* to Damascus in 1154.¹²⁰ A question remains to be addressed here: Why did Zengi, despite his constant need for medical care and service for his forces, not commission a medical school or hospital himself? Perhaps he followed the Seljuq tradition, like Sultan Mahmud II, who had a field hospital carried by over forty camels.¹²¹ What about the care of the locals in Mosul and Aleppo, among other cities? One can conclude that the mobility of Zengi affected his cultural contribution to a large extent.

The khanqah

A Persian word, meaning 'the place of the soul', was a building dedicated to the Sufis, the mystic order. Bosworth wrote that the first *khanqah* appeared in Khurasan in the tenth century and the institution mushroomed in Merv, Samarqand and the upper Oxus, among other areas in Central Asia dominated by the

Turks.¹²² The Seljuqs introduced the first *khanqah* into Aleppo in 1115, named al-Balat and built by a eunuch *atabeg*, Lu'Lu'. He was probably imitating the one in Damascus commissioned by Princess Safwat al-Mulk in 1110.¹²³

Following the Turkish tradition, in 1136 in Aleppo the teacher of the Zujajyya *madrassa* in the city, Sharaf al-Din b. al-'Ajami, transformed the house of his brother Shams al-Din into a place for Sufis after the latter's death and granted a *waqf* as well.¹²⁴ Aside from these examples it was Nur al-Din whose age witnessed six *khanqahs* in the city, according to 'Izz al-Din b. Shaddad (d. 1285).¹²⁵ Not a single *khanqah* was built in Mosul during that age, or in the Jazira, where a strong pre-Islamic tradition of mysticism existed in the area and remained throughout Zengi's rule. When Sayf al-Din Ghazi I b. Zengi succeeded his father he commissioned the first one in Mosul under the name of *ribat*, not *khanqah*, by following the same philosophy for Sufis with numerous *awqaf* dedicated to it.¹²⁶

These were originally Persian institutions from Khurasan, adopted by the Turks and passed on to the Ayyubids and Mamluks. They managed to put down roots in Sunni Islam, while Shi'ism lacked such institutions; the Ottomans followed the same pattern, spreading cultural Turkification through the Middle East from 1331.¹²⁷

Zengi's only contribution to urbanism in his realm was the military fortifications, which the sources could not afford to ignore. Ibn al-Athir exaggerated the poor condition of urban Mosul before the coming of Zengi in 1127, especially regarding the centre of the city and the weak condition of the city walls, which had been renovated by Emir Jekirmish in the early twelfth century. This contradicted Zengi's habit of starting to renovate and fortify a place as soon as he took it over. The same author reported Zengi adding to the walls of the city only in 1132, after the caliph had besieged Mosul for eighty days.¹²⁸ In addition, how would Zengi have been able to pay the sultan a 100,000-dinar bribe to keep him in Mosul in 1129 without having collected sufficient taxes from flourishing commercial activity in the city, maintained by law and order and a high level of protection, let alone control his constant new Turkmen recruits without having the proper defences to protect a city from any undisciplined behaviour by them?

Zengid Mosul kept a palace for the Seljuq sultan, in case he decided to visit the city. Zengi had built a palace for himself called *Dar al-Mamlaka* ('house of the realm') near the Tigris on the northern side of Mosul, and he allowed some of his elite Turkmen commanders to build their homes around it. Zengi was the one who designed the palace and ordered it to be so close to Mosul's citadel.¹²⁹ In addition to his renovation of the citadel of Mosul, where his deputy resided, Zengi rebuilt a second wall around the city in 1132; the first was built by the Hamdanids in the tenth century. He built a gate, called al-'Imadi, to facilitate his exit from his palace to evacuate the city swiftly to the north in times of emergency.¹³⁰ The Zengid palace overlooked the main *maydan* (square) where Zengid troops trained and staged their parades. Five decades later the Andalusian Muslim traveller Ibn Jubayr, while visiting the Middle East, paid a visit to Mosul in 1182 and described in detail the immense amount of sophisticated fortification of the city and its citadel.¹³¹ As mentioned before, Zengi did not show interest in

building mosques in the city. Moreover, he did not even renovate the first mosque of the city, the Umayyad Mosque, and left that to his son, Sayf al-Din. As Ibn Jubayr had noticed, Mosul had only two mosques; the second was al-Nuri, built by Nur al-Din b. Zengi.¹³² This strongly reflects the priorities and character of Zengi, who did not care much about religious affairs even during the height of jihad.

Moving to Aleppo, Nicolle has argued that the eastern side of Aleppo was not seriously fortified prior to the twelfth century.¹³³ One may add that Zengi probably contributed to these defences because Aleppo was situated between Crusader Antioch and Edessa, and the countryside of Antioch extended close to Aleppo's city walls during some periods, as discussed in Chapter 4. While Zengi resided in a palace outside Mosul's citadel, in Aleppo he stayed in a palace within Aleppo's citadel, following the Seljuqs before him and influencing the subsequent Zengids, the Ayyubids and the Mamluks after him. This reflected his orientation towards the East, especially since he used the citadels in other areas of his realm as places to stay, but kept only one palace for his realm in Mosul.

Ibn al-'Adim and Ibn al-Athir, among others, frequently mention that Zengi had renovated, refortified (*rattaba al-umur*) and put in order several places which he seized during his career, including Aleppo and Hama in Syria, Tanza and Hizan in Diyar Bakr, as well as Edessa. When he foresaw the capture of an area by the Crusaders and was unable to defend it, he destroyed its fortifications so that it did not appeal to them, as he did with al-Atharib and Raqqa in Syria.¹³⁴

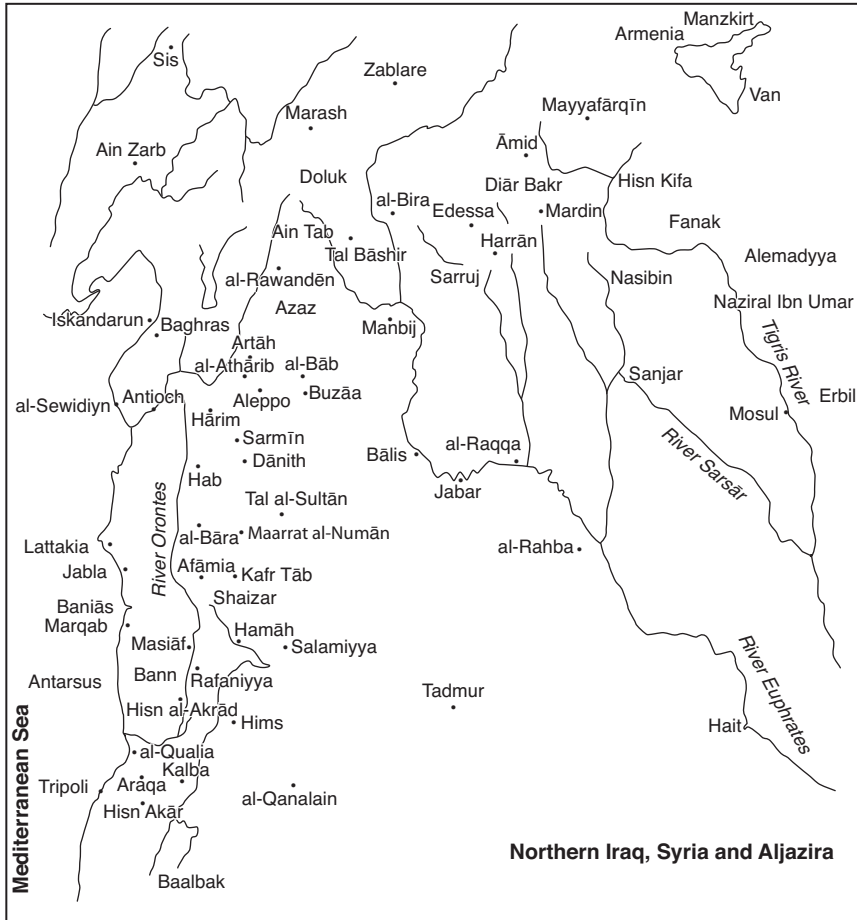
Notes

- 1 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 83.
- 2 Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties*, p. 190.
- 3 Al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-a'sha*, vol. 4, p. 5.
- 4 Morgan, *Medieval Persia*, p. 35.
- 5 M. Kashghari, *Diwan lughat al-Turk*, ed. K. Rifat, 3 vols, Istanbul, 1916, vol. 1, pp. 50, 81.
- 6 S. al-Husayni, *Zubdat al-Tawarikh, Akhbar al-umara wa'l-muluk al-saljuqiyya*, ed. M. Nur al-Din, Beirut, 1985, p. 75. There is some confusion between the names and titles of Alp Arslan. Few chroniclers believe that Zengi was given two of the sultan's sons to raise. What is very clear from the majority of sources is that there was only one son raised by Zengi, Alp Arslan; his *atabeg* used him for political purposes.
- 7 C. Klausner, 'The Seljuk Vezirate', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1973, p. 84; A. Lambton, 'Contributions to the Study of Seljuq Institutions', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1939, pp. 185–92.
- 8 El-Azhari, *The Saljuqs*, p. 283; el-Azhari, 'Atabeg'.
- 9 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 49; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 71.
- 10 Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Muntazam*, vol. 10, p. 45.
- 11 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, pp. 62–3.
- 12 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, pp. 70–2.
- 13 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Ta'rikh dawlat al-Seljuq*, p. 65.
- 14 El-Azhari, *The Saljuqs*, pp. 283–5.
- 15 T. el-Azhari, 'The Office of the Atabeg in Syria under the Nurids and the Ayyubids', in *Al-Masaq*, vol. 11, 1999, p. 49.
- 16 Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties*, p. 191.

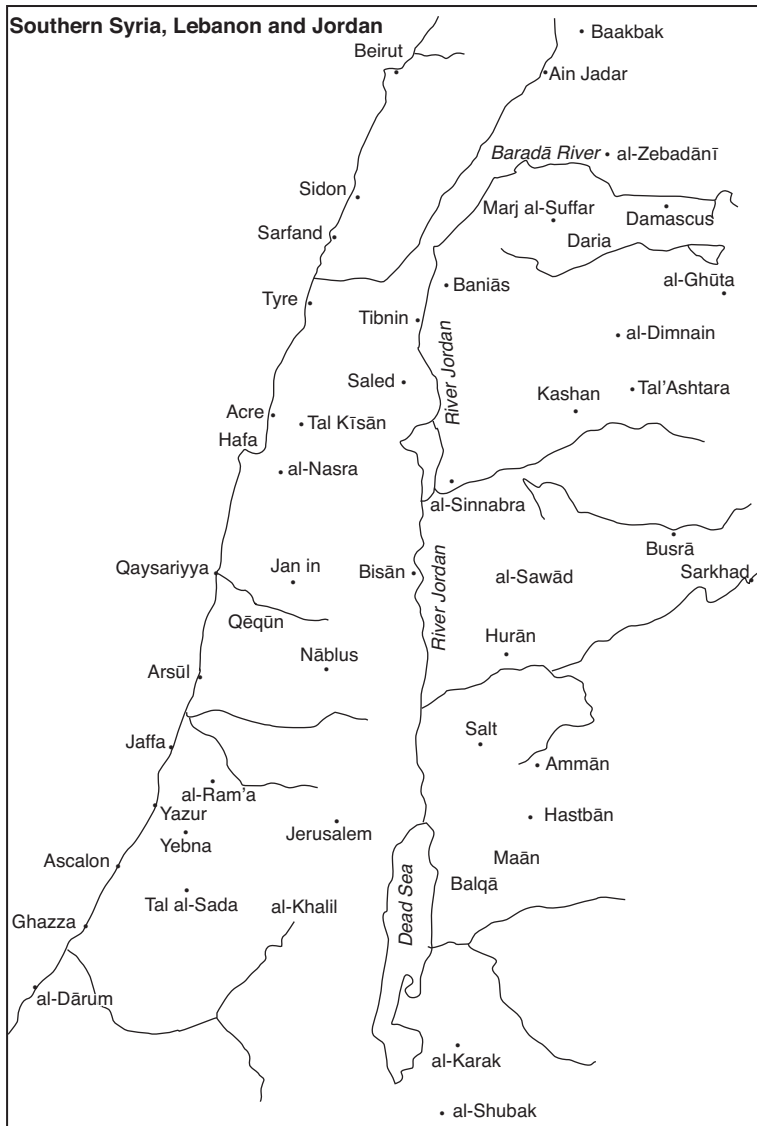
- 17 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, pp. 34–5.
- 18 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 80; Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat*, vol. 4, p. 80.
- 19 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 80.
- 20 Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 55–7.
- 21 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 16.
- 22 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 15; Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 265.
- 23 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 72.
- 24 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 245.
- 25 William of Tyre, *History of Deeds*, vol. 1, p. 615; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 381.
- 26 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 374.
- 27 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 53.
- 28 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 263.
- 29 S. Al-Husayni, *Zubdat al-tawarikh, Akhbar al-umara wa'l-muluk al-saljuqiyya*, ed. M. Nur al-Din, Beirut, 1985, p. 67; Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 19.
- 30 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Bahir*, pp. 34–5.
- 31 Usama ibn Munqidh, *al-I'tibar*, pp. 109, 153.
- 32 Ibid., p. 252.
- 33 Ibid., pp. 54–5, 109, 167, 174, 178, 180–1, 243, 254–5.
- 34 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 84.
- 35 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 412.
- 36 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Ta'rikh dawlat al-Seljuq*, p. 196; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 415.
- 37 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 35.
- 38 Ibid., p. 72.
- 39 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 415.
- 40 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, pp. 84, 118–19; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 263.
- 41 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 8.
- 42 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, pp. 85–6.
- 43 Ibid., p. 154.
- 44 Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyasat-nama*, trans. H. Darke, London, 1978, p. 47.
- 45 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, pp. 48, 60–4.
- 46 Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzi, *Mir'at al-zaman*, vol. 8, p. 52; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 641.
- 47 N. Elisséeff, *Nur al-Din, un grand prince musulman de Syrie au temps des Croisades*, vol. 3, Damascus, 1967, p. 834.
- 48 Morgan, *Medieval Persia*, p. 35.
- 49 Ibid., p. 47; H. al-Pash, *al-Alqab al-Islamiyya*, Cairo, 1978, p. 291; E. al-Fiqi, 'al-Haya al-siyasiyya wa'l-tanzimat al-idariyya wa'l-maliyya fi duwal atabekiyat al-Mosul wa'l-Jazirah', unpublished Ph.D., Cairo University, 1971, p. 70. This thesis focuses on the successors of Zengi more than the man himself; although several studies carry the name Zengi or Zengids, they focus on the period after Zengi, and ignore his age.
- 50 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 83.
- 51 Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyasat-nama*, p. 23.
- 52 Abu'l-Hasan al-Mawardi, *Qawanin al-Wizara*, Beirut, 1979, p. 138.
- 53 Klausner, *Seljuk Vezirate*, p. 39.
- 54 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Ta'rikh dawlat al-Seljuq*, p. 193.
- 55 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 118.
- 56 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, pp. 254–78.
- 57 Ibid., vol. 2, p. 278; Ibn al-'Adim, *Bughyat*, p. 259.
- 58 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, pp. 34–5.

- 59 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 68.
- 60 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 80; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 72.
- 61 Ibn al-'Adim, *Bughyat*, p. 264.
- 62 Ibid., p. 264.
- 63 Ibid., p. 265.
- 64 C. Cahen, art. EI2, 'Ahdath'; C. E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids, Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran 994–1040*, Edinburgh, 1963, p. 261.
- 65 A. Havemann, art. EI2, 'Rais'; D. Nicolle, *Crusader Warfare*, vol. 2, London, 2007, p. 88.
- 66 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 243.
- 67 El-Azhari, *The Saljuqs*, p. 305.
- 68 Ibn al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 381.
- 69 Ibid., p. 425.
- 70 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 47; *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, pp. 41–2.
- 71 Nicolle, *Warfare*, p. 67.
- 72 Ch. Pellat, art. EI2, 'Khasi'; D. Ayalon, *Outsiders in the Lands of Islam: Mamluks, Mongols and Eunuchs*, London, 1988, p. 68.
- 73 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Ta'rikh dawlat al-Seljuq*, p. 190.
- 74 Ibn al-'Adim, *Bughyat*, p. 268; 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Ta'rikh dawlat al-Seljuq*, p. 190.
- 75 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Ta'rikh dawlat al-Seljuq*, pp. 248–9.
- 76 Ibid., pp. 117–18.
- 77 Pellat, 'Khasi'.
- 78 T. el-Azhari, 'The Influence of Eunuchs in the Ayyubid Kingdom', in *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, vol. 4, ed. U. Vermeulen, Leuven, 2005, pp. 127–42; Nicolle, *Warfare*, p. 67.
- 79 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Ta'rikh dawlat al-Seljuq*, p. 115; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, pp. 635–6.
- 80 D. Ayalon, *Eunuchs, Caliphs and Sultans: A Study in Power Relationships*, Jerusalem, 1999, pp. 167–8; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, pp. 146–54.
- 81 El-Azhari, *The Office of the Atabeg*, pp. 50–1, 56.
- 82 R. Hillenbrand, *Islamic Art and Architecture*, London, 2005, p. 133.
- 83 S. Album, *Marsden's Numismata Orientalia illustrata*, New York, 1977, p. 110.
- 84 M. Baqir, *al-Umla al-Islamiyya fi'l-'ahd al-atabiki*, Baghdad, 1985, p. 28. The National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad was looted in April 2003 when it was under the protection of the American forces which had invaded Baghdad that month.
- 85 C. Alptekin, *Selçuklu paraları*, Ankara, 1971, pp. 449, 471, 489, 539.
- 86 R. Hillenbrand, *Islamic Art*, p. 133.
- 87 From the personal collection of T. el-Azhari. Some of the coins of Barkyaruk and Muhammad, two of Malik Shah's sons, contained tribal insignia; Alptekin, *Selçuklu paraları*, pp. 503, 518, 530.
- 88 Album, *Marsden's Numismata*, p. 110.
- 89 C. Cahen, art. EI2, 'Ikta'.
- 90 A. Lambton, *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia*, New York, 1987, p. 100.
- 91 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, pp. 24–8.
- 92 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, pp. 31–3.
- 93 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 77.
- 94 Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyasat-nama*, p. 32.
- 95 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 284.
- 96 Al-Qalanisi, *Ta'rikh Dimashq*, p. 258; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 35.
- 97 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 35.
- 98 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 103.
- 99 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 569; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 38.
- 100 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 280.

- 101 Ibn Tabataba, *al-Milal wa'l-Nihal*, vol. 1, Cairo, 1900, p. 101.
- 102 Al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh al-umam wa'l-muluk*, vol. 9, Cairo, 1926, p. 298.
- 103 Al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-a'sha*, vol. 8, p. 41.
- 104 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 78.
- 105 Ibn Wasil, *Mufarrij*, vol. 1, p. 103.
- 106 'Matthew of Edessa', p. 69.
- 107 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 10, p. 654.
- 108 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, pp. 36–7. Pigeons can fly at 35 to 40 km per hour for ten hours in one day.
- 109 M. Husayn, *al-Jaysh al-Ayyubi fi 'ahd Salah al-Din*, Baghdad, 1987, pp. 186–8; Nicolle, *Warfare*, p. 248.
- 110 El-Azhari, *The Saljuqs*, pp. 316–22.
- 111 I. Muzaini, *al-Hayat al-Ilmiyya fi'l-'ahd al-Zengi*, Riyadh, 2003, pp. 258–60; al-Jumaili, *Dawlat Mosul*, pp. 314–15.
- 112 Muzaini, *al-Hayah*, p. 364; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, pp. 77, 129, 136.
- 113 E. Adler, *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages*, New York, 1987, pp. 42–3.
- 114 Ibn al-'Adim, *Bughyat*, pp. 105–7.
- 115 El-Azhari, *The Saljuqs*, p. 322; Muzaini, *al-Hayat*, pp. 393–406.
- 116 J. Sadiq, *al-Madaris al-Asruniyya fi bilad al-Sham*, Beirut, 1986, pp. 162–82.
- 117 Abu Shama, *al-Rawdatayn*, vol. 1, p. 269; Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 244.
- 118 Ibn al-'Adim, *Bughyat*, p. 252; 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, *Ta'rikh dawlat al-Seljuq*, p. 187.
- 119 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kamil*, vol. 11, p. 111.
- 120 Ibn Abi Usaybi'a, *Uyun al-Anba*, Cairo, 1985, p. 758; Abu Shama, *al-Rawdatayn*, vol. 1, p. 269.
- 121 J. al-Din ibn al-Qifti, *Akhbar al-'Ulama'*, Beirut, 2001, p. 265. The Ph.D. thesis by E. al-Fiqi focuses entirely on political life after Zengi and not as the title suggests.
- 122 C. E. Bosworth, 'The Rise of the Karamiyya in Khurasan', in *MW*, vol. 1, 1960, p. 5; J. Chabbi, art. EI2, 'Khankah'.
- 123 El-Azhari, *The Saljuqs*, p. 325.
- 124 Muzaini, *al-Hayat*, p. 409.
- 125 Ibn Shaddad, *'Izz al-Din, al-'Ala al-khatira fi dhikr umara' al-sham wa'l-Jazira*, vol. 1, 'Aleppo', ed. D. Sourdell, Damascus, 1953.
- 126 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 92.
- 127 H. Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age*, London, 2004, p. 250.
- 128 Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, p. 77.
- 129 Ibid.; S. al-Diwaji, *al-Mosul fi'l-'ahd al-Atabeki*, Baghdad, 1958, p. 116.
- 130 Nicolle, *Warfare*, p. 214; al-Diwaji, *al-Mosul*, p. 117.
- 131 Ibn Jubair, *Rihlah*, Beirut, 1986, p. 188.
- 132 Al-Jumaili, *Dawlat Mosul*, p. 271.
- 133 Nicolle, *Warfare*, p. 204.
- 134 Ibn al-'Adim, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, p. 280; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Ta'rikh al-Bahir*, pp. 40, 57, 66, 70, 78.



Map 1 Northern Iraq, Syria and the Jazira.



Map 2 Southern Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.

Appendix 1

Selected medieval Muslim texts in translation

The biography of Zengi from *Bughyat al-talab*, by Ibn al-‘Adim¹

Zengi b. Aq Sunqur

Zengi b. Aq Sunqur Abu’l-Muzaffar al-Turki was also known as Aq Sunqur b. Turghan from the tribe of Sabyo. Aq Sunqur was a *mamluk* to Sultan Malik Shah.

Zengi was known as ‘Atabeg b. Qasim al-Dawla’, because he had two of Sultan Mahmud’s sons with him in Mosul to bring up.² He was born in Aleppo in 1087 while his father was the Seljuq ruler and grew up there.³ In the early years of his career Zengi was counted as one of the followers of Aq Sunqur al-Bursuqi,⁴ prefect of Baghdad. Al-Bursuqi appointed Zengi ruler of Basra, but when al-Bursuqi was dismissed from Baghdad, Zengi left Basra and headed to Sultan Mahmud, who received him warmly and sent him back to Basra to govern it as an *iqta’* in 518 [1124]. His career progressed until 521 [1127] when he captured Mosul.

In Aleppo, Khutlugh Aba mistreated the locals who, as a result, besieged him. Badr al-Dawla Sulayman b. Abd al-Jabbar b. Artuq was also in the city, and he opposed Khutlugh. Both men agreed that Zengi should be their arbiter and marched to him, but he refused to assign the rule of Aleppo to either of them.⁵ Zengi advanced to take Aleppo for himself, since he had connections with certain commanders there from his childhood days who were in favour of his rule. These commanders surrendered Aleppo to Zengi’s deputy in Ramadan 521 [September 1127], and Zengi himself went there in 522 [1128].

After this Zengi visited Sultan Mahmud, returning in 523 [1129] with a renewed grant to govern the Jazira, Sham, Aleppo, Shatt [literally: the shore], Hims, Hama, Baalbak, Raqqa, Dara, Harran and Ras al-Ayn. Zengi enjoyed independence of policy in his war with the Franks. He captured from them Ma‘arrat al-Nu‘man, Kafr Tab, Barin, al-Atharib, Zaradna, Tell Aghdi, Buza‘a, Saruj and Edessa. Zengi made tremendous efforts to see Islam victorious and halt the assault of the Franks. He paved the way for those who ruled after him to conquer the lands [from the Franks] after they threatened Aleppo itself, seized

some of its castles up to the city's gate, and divided everything in half with the local Muslims; but Almighty God relieved them afterwards through Zengi and his son.

Zengi was a very great and courageous but oppressive king, who often behaved in a tyrannical manner. Despite this, he carefully followed the Shari'a, obeying its rules and honouring the scholars of Islam. I was told that when one of them asked him: 'Do you not fear Allah?' he instantly showed respect and great modesty. Almighty God revealed his secret through Zengi's son, Nur al-Din Mahmud.

I was told by Abu'l-Yumn al-Kindi, who was said to have copied from the manuscript of al-'Azimi in the chronicles of 1127, the following. The Aleppans Badr al-Dawla b. Artuq and Ibrahim b. al-Malik Ridwan besieged Khutlugh Aba, *mamluk* of Sultan Mahmud, and this matter took a long time. They dug a trench around the citadel and any person getting in or out of the citadel was captured by them. This situation lasted until mid-Dhu al-Hijja 521 [January 1128] when emir Sunqur Deraz and emir Hasan Qaraqush, with a group of other emirs leading a mighty force, arrived at the gate of Aleppo. They agreed to send Badr al-Dawla and Khutlugh to Zengi Qasim al-Dawla b. Aq Sunqur to decide which one should rule the city.⁶ Emir Hasan Qaraqush remained in the city with the *rais*, Ibn Badi, until the matter was resolved. Zengi reconciled the two men, who went to Mosul, but declined to appoint either of them to rule Aleppo; he became eager to have Aleppo for himself. He dispatched a battalion to Aleppo with emir Salah al-Din al-'Imadi who arrived in Aleppo and sent one of his commanders to seize the citadel. Salah al-Din succeeded in his mission and arranged all the necessary measures to secure the city.

Al-'Azimi also wrote:

In Jumada II 522 [June 1128] Emir 'Imad al-Din Qasim al-Dawla Abu Said Zengi b. Aq Sunqur arrived in Aleppo and seized it. He went up to the citadel and spent the night there, then returned to Naqra Bani Asad [a place outside the city] and arrested Khutlugh Aba, brought him to the city and surrendered him to Ibn Badi, Khutlugh's enemy. Ibn Badi blinded Khutlugh in his house in Rajab 522 [July 1128].

Al-'Azimi also wrote: 'In Jumada II 523 [June 1129] Emir 'Imad al-Din Qasim al-Dawla Zengi returned to Mosul from a visit to the sultan. He was given a new *tughra* [sultanate grant] with the renewal of the Jazira, Sham, Aleppo, Shatt and other adjacent dominions after Zengi had paid 120,000 dinars at the sultanate court.' He continued:

at the beginning of Rajab 524 [July 1130] Zengi arrived in the vicinity of the Euphrates and invaded the citadel of al-Sin; he dispatched a battalion with the main armour and supplies of the army to Aleppo. Some forces raided the countryside of Azaz and plundered the countryside of Joscelin. That was in revenge for what he did in the absence of Zengi.⁷

Zengi crossed the Euphrates on Rajab 524 [July 1130] and camped outside Aleppo. Several ambassadors were sent between him and Joscelin to conclude peace between the two sides, which lasted for one year. Before that Zengi had razed the countryside of Edessa on his way and also defeated the Turkmen. He wrote: 'During this period, Atabeg Zengi married Khatun, daughter of King Ridwan⁸ in Shabaan 524 [August 1130].'

Al-'Azimi wrote:

On Monday 10 Shawwal 524 [5 September 1130] Atabeg Zengi took over the city of Hama. He also captured Khir-Khan, lord of Hims, looted his camp and marched to the countryside near Hims where he camped. Zengi requested that the sons of Khir-Khan surrender the city but they declined. The two sides engaged in combat and the Zengid forces made a hole in the citadel of Hims before they halted the attack. Although mangonels were erected, they were not used and when winter arrived, Zengi's forces returned to Aleppo in Dhu al-Hijja 524 [November 1130].

Al-'Azimi also wrote:

On the first day of Muharram 525 [December 1130] Zengi headed to the east. Sultan Mahmud was spending the winter in Baghdad. In Rabi II 525 [March 1131] he marched eastward to Isfahan, where he knew that the sultan's brother had rebelled against him. Mahmud had appointed Zengi to take charge of the Iraqi affairs in addition to his possessions in the Jazira and Sham. At the time Dubays was living in the desert, threatening Baghdad with destruction.

Zengi heard of the death of Sultan Mahmud b. Muhammad Tabar while he was at al-Qaryatayn, so he marched to Mosul in Shawwal 525 [September 1131]. This sultan had two sons who were with Zengi. The one whose mother was living at the residence of Aq Sunqur al-Bursuqi had died. Her son was named Alp Arslan Abu Talib. The other son was at Dubays. Zengi sent dispatches to Caliph al-Mustarshid persuading him to declare the *khutba* for Alp Arslan, but the caliph declined because of the young age of the boy, and explained: Mahmud had already appointed his son Da'ud while he was in Isfahan as his successor. Messengers from around the empire asked the caliph to give the *khutba* for Da'ud. I'm awaiting the answer of Sultan Sanjar, the grand leader of the Seljuqs, in that matter.

As a result, Zengi attacked the envoy of the caliph, Ibn al-Anbari, while returning from Damascus after he had received Dubays, who had been captured by King Buri of Damascus.

Dubays [the arch-enemy of the caliph] was set free and Zengi, in a provocative act, looted the caliph's caravan which contained a huge amount of money brought with the envoy, and gave it all to his friend Dubays. After that, Da'ud b. Mahmud b. Muhammad b. Malik Shah arrived in Baghdad and stayed in the

sultanate palace there on the western side of the city, aided by Zengi. Al-Rashid was then the new caliph.⁹ At that time Sultan Mas'ud b. Muhammad arrived in Baghdad and besieged the two there. Mas'ud's army was hit by a plague while camping in Wasit. Zengi used this opportunity to march to Mosul, while Da'ud marched to Maragha. When it became known that Mas'ud had resumed his military action, Caliph al-Rashid fled to Zengi in Mosul. Mas'ud entered Baghdad and installed Muhammad al-Muqtafi as the new caliph and the *khutba* was given to him in dominions under Mas'ud's control. In Sham and Mosul the *khutba* was declared for al-Rashid in coordination with Zengi. Afterwards, Zengi and Mas'ud were reconciled and the *khutba* was made to Mas'ud and al-Muqtafi in Mosul. Al-Rashid departed Mosul as a result and headed to Khurasan.¹⁰

In 530 [1135] the chief *qadi* of Caliph al-Rashid had followed him to Mosul, but he now returned. While al-Rashid was with Zengi in Mosul, he was joined by his vizier, Jalal al-Din b. Sadaqa, and his relative, Qiwan al-Din b. Sadaqa. When Zengi made peace with Mas'ud and the new caliph, al-Muqtafi, al-Rashid was afraid and requested to leave for Hamadhan. Zengi marched in his company to the boat at the bank of the Tigris. Al-Rashid crossed, while the Sadaqa family remained at Zengi's court. Qiwan al-Dawla had mentioned that before departing al-Rashid had confessed to Abu'l-Rida b. Sadaqa: 'I want to kill Zengi.' Abu'l-Rida reported to his cousin Qiwan al-Din: 'Tell Zengi to distance himself completely from al-Rashid.' Al-Rashid went to Isfahan, where he was assassinated.

On 15 Jumada II 539 [14 December 1144] Zengi conquered Edessa. He was camping at Amid where he was contacted by the *rais* of Harran, informing him that the lord of Edessa had departed to Syria. Zengi marched with great speed until he reached Edessa and besieged it rigorously, cutting it off from Joscelin. He conquered it by the sword and Muslims won plenty of booty from it.¹¹ When Zengi captured it, he ordered his troops not to harm its inhabitants; he did not enslave any of the locals, and intended to renovate its buildings.

After Edessa, in 539 [1140] he besieged the Franks inside al-Bira. During that time he received news from Mosul that Jaqar [his deputy] had been assassinated. He feared that he might lose control of the city and marched at once for Mosul. He arrested Farkhanshah b. Mahmud, the Seljuq sultan, as it was he who had conspired against Zengi's deputy. I heard from our sheikh, Chief Qadi Abu'l-Mahasin Yusuf b. Rafi' of Aleppo, who said: 'We had in Mosul a man called Musa, who used to call the prayers at the *madrassa*. He was a blonde man who looks similar to the Armenians and had a loud voice. He owned a village as his *iqta'*, allocated by Atabeg Zengi.' I asked him about the reason that he was allocated this *iqta'* and he said:

I was in the company of the Atabeg when he besieged Edessa. I went to the market, bought Armenian garments and made myself look like one of them. I returned to the Edessan countryside and kept examining the weakest points of the city. Then I entered a mosque in the area and saw its minaret. I said to myself then, I should ascend the minaret and call for prayer, and face the outcome no matter what it could be. I climbed the minaret and shouted: *Allah*

Akbar, Allah Akbar [God is great] to the end of the call. The infidels [Crusaders] were mounting the walls of Edessa. A huge clamour and outcry took place in the city, as the Edessans thought that the Muslims had attacked the city from the other side. The infidels deserted their posts on the wall and the Muslims climbed it and attacked the city. As a result, Zengi allocated me this village.

I read in the book, *The History of Harran* – a collection of Abu'l-Mahasin b. Salama al-Harrani – that when Atabeg Zengi used to march in a campaign his troops followed him in a rigid manner as if they were marching between two threads, out of fear that one of them would trample over a planted area. Due to their profound reverence of him, none of them dared to trample over a single root or limb of a plant, or make his horse do the same. None of the troops could take a handful of straw from a peasant unless he paid for it, or unless he showed a written permission from the Zengid *diwan* to the head of the village for that matter. If a soldier violated these rules, and Zengi discovered that he had attacked a peasant, he would give the order to emasculate that soldier and dismiss him from his service. As a result of this policy his dominions prospered after they had been in ruins and he took care of the citizens of his realm. Zengi never tolerated an aggressor in his lands. He implemented the punishments of Shari'a in his lands and ordered his deputies to be kind to their locals and not to burden them, or use them in forced labour – God bless him.

I [Ibn al-'Adim] heard from a group of peasants from Aleppo that they suffered great injustice during his reign. The most frequently mentioned case was his order to gather the locals for military campaigns or for siege affairs. If that was for the cause of jihad against the infidels, he was right in his policy and they had to follow him.

It reached my ears that not one of his subjects dared to commit any act of injustice against another one. Zengi used to say: 'No two oppressors live in the same place and time.' He was pointing to himself.

I was told that Atabeg Zengi married Khatun, daughter of King Ridwan, and consummated the marriage in a place called Dayr al-Zabib outside Aleppo. She remained with him in Aleppo until one day he opened a closet in the palace and saw the gown of his father Aq Sunqur, who was murdered by Tutush [grandfather of his wife], with stains of blood covering it. Zengi was told: 'This is the gown of your late father in which he was killed.' He was disturbed and took it in his hands, rushed back to his wife and thrust the bloodstained gown into her hands, saying to her: 'Is this a deed of a person who will not deserve the mercy of God?' meaning her grandfather Tutush. He deserted her from that moment and never lived with her again.

My uncle told me the following, which he was told from his father: Atabeg Zengi was married to King Ridwan's daughter; then he deserted her. After a long time of separation from her, she came to my father, Qadi Abu Ghanim, who was *qadi* of Aleppo, and complained: 'O Qadi, a women is seeking your urgent help and asking the protection of the purified Shari'a. Regarding the Atabeg, I do not know if I'm divorced or not; he deserted me a long time ago.'

The *qadi* promised to meet with Zengi about the matter. He went to see him in the citadel and found him mounting his horse at the gate. The *qadi* said to him: 'My lord, Khatun came to me and complained about her situation.' Zengi did not reply, and was about to leave on the horse. My father held the bridle of the horse, prevented it from moving and said: 'My lord, this is the purified Shari'a, and one cannot ignore it.' Then Zengi said: 'Be my witness that she is divorced.' My father then let the bridle free and said: 'Now the matter is settled.'

When Qadi Abu Ghanim died, Zengi appointed his son in his place for Aleppo and its dominions. He summoned me to his council and said: 'O Qadi, this is a matter that you should be responsible for. Look into the cases and fear God when you judge between two litigants. Do not favour one more than the other. If someone ignores your position, I will be on your side.'

I was told by a man from Sanjar, called Abd al-Latif:

There was a man in Mosul who was pious and denounced wrong deeds wherever they might occur. If he saw alcohol, he would spill it, and if he saw a lute, he would break it. As a result, he would be beaten up by the locals and had to remain in his home until he had recovered, only to do the same thing again and again. One day he was standing at the bank of Tigris while Zengi was in a boat, drinking. In his company was a singer singing to him and a group of his friends. This man took off his clothes and swam until he reached the boat of Zengi and put his hand on it to climb in. One of Zengi's followers said: 'Shall I cut his hand with a sword?' Zengi said: 'No, leave him.' The man climbed in and sat down. The same follower of Zengi repeated the request to beat him up, but Zengi refused. The man took the lute and cut its strings, then took the drinking cups and poured the contents into the Tigris, then washed them with water and left them in the boat. He got rid of all the alcohol with them and washed all the pans and put them back. He then took off the waistcloth of the singer and covered her with it. Then he jumped into the Tigris and swam back to the shore. Zengi did not say one word to the man while he was on the boat, but afterwards said: 'We had better return to our homes. We have had no luck in what we intended to do this evening.' He ordered the sailors to go back, whereupon he went off to his home. From this moment no one beat up the pious man. When he denounced any wrongdoing or if the locals saw him approach them to blame them for a certain matter, they would avoid this man. When this man died the markets of Mosul closed down to attend his funeral – God had mercy on him.

I was told that Zengi b. Aq Sunqur entered Damascus in the company of Mawdud, lord of Mosul who was assassinated in Damascus [after the Battle of Sinnabra in the summer of 1113]. Zengi was one of his close commanders; then he was promoted until he became lord of Mosul, Aleppo, Hama and Hims. He besieged Damascus until it was agreed that the *khutba* would be declared for him in its mosque. Zengi seized Baalbak and other dominions in Syria and the Jazira. He recaptured castles from the Franks, such as Ma'arrat al-Nu'man, Kafr Tab

and Barin, and he conquered Edessa. He enjoyed a good reputation for his resistance to the king of the Byzantines when the latter besieged Shayzar. Zengi captured some of the enemy's leading heroes. He was a gallant and violent person who was murdered while besieging the castle of Ibn Malik [Ja'bar] in 541 [1146] at Raqqa.

I read in the history of Abi Shuja al-Faradi of the events of 541: Zengi was killed on Sunday night, 6 Rabi II 541 [14 September 1146] at Ja'bar castle. He was murdered by his servant, Yaranqash, who fled afterwards to Ja'bar.¹² It was said that he drank and slept. When he awoke for a moment, he saw Yaranqash al-Khadim [the eunuch servant] among the other *ghulman* drinking the leftovers of Zengi's drink. He threatened them with punishment when morning came and went back to sleep. They unanimously agreed to kill him, so Yaranqash did it.

I heard from my father that Zengi's guard was reciting these two lines of poetry while guarding him that night:

You who are cheerful while sleeping at the beginning of night, Accidents
might knock at dawn;
Do not trust a night starting peacefully, At the end of night, fires might glow
and shine.¹³

I read the history of Haran, by Abu'l-Mahasin al-Harrani, who wrote:

In the year 540 [1145] Zengi besieged Ja'bar citadel from the eastern countryside from Dhu'l-Hijja until Sunday night, 6 Rabi II 541 [14 September 1146], when he was murdered by his *khadim*, Yaranqash. Zengi had threatened him during the day, so Yaranqash feared punishment from Zengi and killed him during the night in his bed. Yaranqash escaped to Ja'bar citadel and shouted to the garrison inside: 'Lift me inside your citadel, as I have killed the sultan [Zengi].' They replied: 'Depart from here to the damnation of God for your killing of him, as if you killed all Muslims.' The troops of Zengi scattered as a result. Al-Daya's sons welcomed Nur al-Din al-Malik al-'Adil b. Zengi in Aleppo. He controlled Aleppo and Syria.¹⁴ 'Imad al-Isfahani, vizier of Zengi, marched with Sayf al-Din Ghazi b. Zengi to Mosul and its dominions. Sayf al-Din managed to control Mosul and the Jazira. Zengi's body was abandoned, so the locals of Raqqa came out and washed him with a limited amount of water from a little jar and buried him at the door of Imam 'Ali's shrine, next to the martyrs among the friends of the Prophet.¹⁵ A dome was built on Zengi's tomb and it is still standing to the present day.

I was told by Emir Badran b. Janah al-Dawla Husayn b. Malik b. Salim al-Uqayli:

When my uncle 'Ali b. Malik, lord of Ja'bar, was besieged by Zengi, the lord of Minbaj, Hasan al-Baalbaki, came to my uncle and called to him from

below the citadel, saying: ‘Emir ‘Ali, who can save you from the Atabeg?’ ‘Ali replied: ‘What will save me from him is what saved you from Balak of Khartbert.’¹⁶ The Atabeg was murdered during the night. Regarding Hasan, he was captured by Balak b. Bahram b. Artuq and the latter ordered him to surrender Minbaj. Hasan refused and Balak sent him to Khartbert, imprisoned him in a deep pit, then besieged Minbaj. He was hit by an arrow and died, and so Hasan was set free and went back to his town.

Emir Badran also told me:

One of the most extraordinary situations took place during the siege of Ja‘bar by Zengi, as some of our slaves and elderly friends narrated to us. Zengi kept besieging Ja‘bar with Uncle ‘Ali inside, until they suffered a severe water shortage. My uncle offered Zengi 30,000 dinars in return for Zengi’s withdrawal. Zengi accepted the offer. The messenger of my uncle came out of the citadel, carrying what my uncle had collected in gold. He even took the gold earrings from my aunts, his sisters, as reported to me by our seniors. When the messenger came out, Zengi had ordered some of his close guards: ‘Take the messenger’s horse and get it close to the bowl of *yakhni* [a Turkish meat and vegetable soup]. If the horse drinks from it, come and report it to me.’

The horse was led to the food, and the soup was made available. The horse drank it. The guard reported what happened to Zengi, who said: ‘Then they suffer a severe water shortage.’ He said to the messenger: ‘Get back to the citadel. There will be no agreement between us unless you surrender the citadel.’ The messenger said: ‘Do not do this.’ Zengi replied: ‘I will do this. You do not have enough water to resist.’ The messenger went back to the citadel and relayed what had taken place to my uncle, who was shocked.

There was an ox in the citadel that was suffering from thirst. It went a few steps up the minaret, raised its head up to the sky and made a loud cry that was heard across the entire valley. Almighty God sent a cloud that shaded the minaret and it rained until everyone had had enough. That evening they went to sleep and Zengi was killed in the heart of night – God relieved them. The *qadi* of Raqqa, Abu Muslim, was the person who came out of town with some of the locals to wash Zengi and carry him to Raqqa. Later, Nur al-Din Mahmud b. Zengi rewarded him by allocating a rich village in Aleppo’s countryside as an *iqta‘* for him and his descendants after him.

I was told by Shihab al-Din Abu Abd Allah Muhammad b. Ali b. Abi Muslim, *qadi* of Raqqa, this story: ‘When Atabeg Zengi was killed and carried to Raqqa, he was buried inside the shrine of ‘Ali b. Abi Talib [the fourth rightly guided caliph, killed in Kufa in 661], next to the gate on the right hand side.’ The place is well known and he showed it to me when he told me this story. He told me the shrine had a Persian servant named Bebnar, and he was a pious man.

It coincided that in the middle of the month of Shaban he dreamt of visiting the shrine and saw three horses with a black slave. He said:

I came into the shrine to find three men there, and asked: 'Who are you?' One of them answered: 'I am 'Ali b. Abi Talib, and these are Hasan and Husain [his two sons].' 'Ali asked me about the tomb of Zengi. Bebnar replied: 'This is the tomb of a great sultan.' 'Ali said in denial: 'What? The Great Sultan is Almighty God!' Bebnar said: 'This is the tomb of the martyr Atabeg Zengi.' 'Ali said: 'You march to his son Nur al-Din and tell him that we made this place a temple, not a tomb. Tell him to remove Zengi from here. Oh Bebnar, tell him this is not your opinion but it is our opinion.'

In the morning, Bebnar came to my grandfather, the *qadi*, and told him what he had seen in his dream while he had a group of guests who listened to the story. The *qadi* wrote a letter to Nur al-Din, reporting the dream. Before the letter was delivered, Nur al-Din sent a letter to the same *qadi*, saying: 'In mid-Shaban I saw in a dream, 'Ali b. Abi Talib and his two sons, Hasan and Husain – peace be upon them. They told me: "You remove your father from the shrine as we made it a temple, not a tomb."' Nur al-Din sent 4,000 *qaratis* [literally: pieces of paper] and ordered the *qadi* to build a new tomb for Zengi, not like those built for kings and sultans, but like those built for the poor and impoverished and move him there. The *qadi* built a very humble place near the shrine and moved Zengi there. Ibn al-'Adim said that he witnessed it at Raqqa.

I heard Chief Qadi Abu'l-Mahasin b. Tamim say: 'I saw Zengi after his murder in a dream. He was asked: "What did Almighty God do to you?" He replied: "Almighty forgave me because of my conquest of Edessa."'

This long biography of Zengi, collected by Ibn al-'Adim, reflects the harsh nature of Zengi's character, and his pragmatic policy. Ibn al-'Adim tries to authenticate his stories through long lines of names. In addition, it uses fiction and dreams to indirectly criticise him more freely, and at the same time link him illogically to leading caliphs and imams in early Islamic history, which elevates Zengi's status spiritually, leading to his forgiveness in heaven.

Stories and events from *Al-Bahir*, by Ibn Al-Athir

The coming of Sultan Mas'ud to power and the warfare that took place at this time

When Sultan Mahmud died [1131AD], his vizier, al-Ansabadhi, and *atabeg*, Sunqur al-Ahmadily, agreed together to install his son, Da'ud b. Mahmud as successor and declared the *khutba* for him in the Jibal area and Azerbaijan, then marched to Zangan.¹⁷ At that time, Sultan Mas'ud was at Kanga¹⁸ which was his *iqta'*. When he received the news that his brother Mahmud had died, he marched to Tabriz and seized it. Malik Da'ud marched to Tabriz and besieged his uncle

Mas'ud there. After a while Da'ud ended the siege and Mas'ud headed to the dominions of Emir Qipchaq,¹⁹ where he collected a large number of soldiers in 526 [1131/2], then marched to Baghdad. Mas'ud was leading 10,000 knights.

King Seljuq Shah b. Muhammad marched with his *atabeg* Qaraja al-Saqi, lord of Khuzistan and Fars [Iran], to Baghdad where he arrived before his brother Mas'ud and stayed in the sultanate palace in Baghdad. His *atabeg*, Qaraja, was commanding a huge army and was joined by some elite commanders, such as Yusuf Jawish among others. The aim of Atabeg Qaraja was to secure the sultanate for his lord, Seljuq Shah.²⁰ Sultan Mas'ud had sent for the martyr Zengi, God sanctify his soul, urging him to join him and requesting his military support. Zengi agreed at once and marched out of Mosul heading for Baghdad. He arrived in Tikrit to meet Sultan Mas'ud, but the latter was already in 'Abbasiyyat al-Khalis, near Baghdad.

When Qaraja and Seljuq Shah heard of the arrival of the martyr Zengi in Tikrit, Qaraja crossed to the western side and marched at speed to Tikrit with his entire army. He left Seljuq Shah in Baghdad with a very modest number of troops. Qaraja arrived in Tikrit after one day and night of fast marching and confronted Zengi in battle. Qaraja defeated Zengi, took most of his close commanders as prisoners and returned to Baghdad. Regarding the martyr, he returned to Mosul after the defeat. He mustered the soldiers and built up his force; as a result he resumed his earlier power as if he had not been harmed.²¹

The arrival of the martyr Zengi at Baghdad and his defeat

When Caliph al-Mustarshid b. Allah marched from Baghdad in the company of Sultan Mas'ud, he stayed at Khanaqin awaiting the outcome of Mas'ud's battles. When he heard about Mas'ud's defeat and the death of Qaraja,²² he returned to Daskara where he was informed about the arrival of Zengi and Dubays at Baghdad. Al-Mustarshid returned at speed to confront them and crossed to the western side with a large number of soldiers. Both sides engaged in armed confrontation in Rajab 526 [June 1132].

My father narrated to me what he was told by some of Zengi's followers who attended the battle:

The battle became fierce but we had the advantage over the caliph's soldiers, and their defeat was only a matter of time. Then, out of a black tent, which was pitched on the battlefield, came al-Mustarshid b. Allah, mounted on a horse and dressed in his traditional black with a drawn sword in his hand. We were all shocked when we saw him, and trembled – astonished by the sight – to the extent that our weapons were about to fall out of our hands. We could not bear to continue fighting and were defeated while we were out of our minds with fear. The defeat began with Dubays' forces; Zengi retreated back to Mosul while al-Mustarshid went back to Baghdad.²³

Account of the siege of Mosul by al-Mustarshid b. Allah, Commander of the Faithful

In Rabi I 527 [January 1133] Caliph al-Mustarshid marched with his army from Baghdad to Ramla²⁴ where he camped and gathered more troops. Due to the civil wars that were raging between the sultans, he was joined by several emirs from various sultanate armies at that time. Al-Mustarshid's military power was boosted by their presence in his camp, and he became the bane of Iraq. He unjustly collected money from the locals and dispatched the imam preacher, Aba al-Futuh al-Isfra'ini, to Zengi with a message. Aba al-Futuh was harsh in his manner with Zengi and as a result Zengi badly humiliated him and sent him back to the caliph. At that moment al-Mustarshid marched to Mosul commanding an army of 30,000 soldiers to fight Zengi. When Zengi heard of the caliph's plan he left Mosul with part of his force, and left the rest of the army with his deputy, Jaqar, in the city. Zengi camped in the countryside around Sanjar.

My father told me:

Al-Mustarshid besieged Mosul with a huge force, while Jaqar led a heroic defence of the city. Meanwhile, Zengi dispatched battalions to attack and cut the supply lines of the caliph's forces from every direction. As a result, the caliph's camp suffered food shortages, which developed into a crisis; the caliph's forces looked like they were the besieged, and not the besiegers. The caliph remained, besieging Mosul for around three months, but achieved nothing. He also did not observe any sign of weakness from the Zengid resistance in the city, so he returned to Baghdad without achieving his aim.

It was said that the reason behind his return to Baghdad was that Sultan Mas'ud sent him Nazar al-Khadim, chief of the Hajj department, asking him to return, and the caliph obeyed. It was also said that the caliph was fearful of Sultan Mas'ud's intention to march to Iraq, so he preferred to go back to Baghdad. Other explanations were also proposed. In conclusion, if the caliph had seen a sign of weakness from the Zengids he would not have lifted the siege. He returned on a ship on the Tigris back to Baghdad and sent messages to Zengi asking for reconciliation. Zengi welcomed that and sent the caliph several gifts and slaves as presents.²⁵

The account of the march to Mosul of the Commander of the Faithful, al-Rashid b. Allah, with Zengi

In 530 [1135] Caliph al-Rashid b. Allah marched to Mosul in the company of Zengi, seeking refuge in his city.²⁶ The reason for such an act was because many sultans, sultanate emirs and commanders (including those who were far from the centre of events) disputed the legitimacy of Sultan Mas'ud. They all communicated with one another and agreed to fight him and replace him with another sultan they could all agree on. They chose to gather in Baghdad.

The martyr Atabeg Zengi arrived at Baghdad from Mosul. Baghdad had also witnessed the arrival of Malik Da'ud b. Mahmud leading the army of Azerbaijan. With Da'ud, there was Emir Antar b. Abi al-Askar al-Jawani, who was running his affairs. In addition, Emir Yaranqash Bazdar arrived, leading an army from Qazwin. When they had all gathered in Baghdad, they convinced Caliph al-Rashid to march with them to fight Sultan Mas'ud, and he joined them. The caliph's vizier at the time was Jalal al-Din Aba al-Rida Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Sadaqa, who served as a vizier for Zengi later on.

They all agreed to this in Safar 530 [November 1135]. Meanwhile, al-Rashid showed some contradictory behaviour and had a change of heart. He arrested some of his leading assistants, among them the *ustadh dar* [chief of staff of the caliph's palace], Abu Abd Allah al-Husayn b. Juhayr, and Jamal al-Dawla Iqbal al-Mustarshidi, and he wanted to arrest his vizier, Ibn Sadaqa, but he moved with his retinue to Zengi's tents. Zengi granted him refuge and pacified him. Zengi marched with a force and stood outside the Taj [literally: crown name of the caliph's palace]. Zengi sent a messenger to the caliph, asking in a threatening tone for clemency for those who had been arrested; the caliph could not afford to refuse. They were released and Iqbal al-Mustarshidi was given to Zengi, as Zengi was keen to know about his affairs. When Iqbal arrived at Zengi's tents, he was well received by him and Zengi showed him respect and generosity, and did not blame him for his old enmity. The chief *qadi* of the caliph, al-Zaynabi, feared his master as well and took refuge in Zengi's tents. He received him well and gave him refuge. Zengi agreed with Malik Da'ud the Seljuq to install Ibn Sadaqa as vizier for the Seljuq king (who had been serving the caliph before).

News came that Malik Seljuq Shah b. Muhammad had arrived at Wasit [central Iraq] in Jumada I 530 [February 1136] leading a colossal force. Zengi marched south of Baghdad to fight him. A dispute took place between Seljuq Shah and his *atabeg*, al-Baqsh. Meanwhile, Zengi sent to al-Baqsh, inviting him to his side and warning him against serving Seljuq Shah. Al-Baqsh followed the advice of Zengi and deserted his sultan, taking with him a group of emirs to Zengi's side. Zengi returned to Baghdad in the company of al-Baqsh and other emirs. As a result of this, Zengi's status and reputation became even greater. All decisions made by leaders of the pact were taken only after consultation with Zengi and upon his orders.

After a while the martyr Zengi mediated between al-Rashid and his former vizier, Ibn Sadaqa, and managed to return him to his office in Baghdad. Sultan Mas'ud marched towards Iraq and reached a place called Shammasiyya with a massive force. The kings and commanders in Baghdad wanted to fight him but feared the changeable moods of the caliph, upon whom they all relied as a symbol. Sultan Mas'ud besieged them in Baghdad for some fifty days, then his troops started to reduce in number due to their desertion of the sultanate camp. Mas'ud withdrew to Nahrawan²⁷ intending to return to Iran. During this time, he was joined by Emir Tarantay, lord of Wasit, who told the sultan about the large amounts of ships and naval forces he had. Mas'ud led this force back to Baghdad, while the caliphate-Zengid pact crossed to the west of the city to

control it before Mas'ud; but the latter was faster than them and he occupied it. His enemies realised his massive power and every emir went back to his dominions.

Caliph al-Rashid b. Allah left the caliph's palace and took refuge at Zengi's camp. The vizier of the caliph, Ibn Sadaqa, was among some Turkish commanders and servants who were in al-Rashid's company and together marched to Mosul. Sultan Mas'ud stayed in Baghdad in Dhu al-Qida 530 [August 1136]. Zengi delivered to the caliph whatever he wished for and spent lavishly. Zengi delivered to him in Mosul an unlimited amount of money and the equipment needed for the prestige of the caliph.

The account of the dismissal of al-Rashid and the appointment of al-Muqtafi

When Caliph al-Rashid fled from Baghdad to Mosul with Zengi, Sultan Mas'ud decided to depose al-Rashid from the caliphate and take the *bay'a* [oath] for another person. All emirs and chiefs of the *diwan* agreed. All judges, witnesses and scholars were summoned and wrote a report explaining why al-Rashid must be replaced. Scholars issued a *fatwa* [religious order] stating that due to the behaviour of al-Rashid, he was no longer fit to be a caliph and was thus deposed. A new caliph was installed in Baghdad named al-Muqtafi li-'Amr Allah.²⁸

The account of the march of the king of the Rum [the Byzantine emperor] to Sham and the reaction of Zengi

In 532 [1138] the king of the Rum [Emperor John Comnenus, 1118–43] marched out of Constantinople with a colossal force, containing Byzantines, Franks and other types of Christians, who were too large in numbers to be counted. He aimed for Syria, and the locals there feared him and were in great reverence. During that time Zengi was preoccupied with affairs in the east and could not leave Mosul, as mentioned earlier.²⁹ The King of the Byzantines headed for the town of Buza'a, which was one day's march from Aleppo, and he besieged it. He seized the town by force, killed the garrisoned troops and enslaved the children in Shabaan 532 [May 1138].

Afterwards, the emperor headed to the town of Shayzar. It is an impregnable castle, about a day's march from Hama.³⁰ He besieged it on mid-Shabaan 532 [10 May 1138], together with the Franks of Syria, who advised him to attack Shayzar.³¹ They told him: 'Shayzar does not belong to Zengi, so he will not come to defend it or care for its loss.' Shayzar then belonged to Emir Abi al-'Asakir Sultan b. Ali b. Maqlid b. Nasr b. Munqidh al-Kinani al-Munqidhi. The Byzantine forces besieged it and erected eighteen mangonels to attack it. Sultan b. Munqidh sent a message to Zengi urging him for help. Zengi was planning to march to Syria when he heard about the Byzantine march to Syria.³² Zengi speeded up his march and reached Hama. From there he marched out with his force to Shayzar so that the King of the Byzantines could see him. Meanwhile,

Zengi dispatched battalions to try to kidnap some of the Byzantine–Frankish forces who were sufficiently remote from the main camp, looking for booty or supplies. At the end of the day Zengi would return to Hama. The Byzantines and the Franks had camped on a hill east of Shayzar, so Zengi sent a message to them, saying: ‘You have protected yourselves with these hills. Leave them and come out to the open desert so we can confront each other. If you win, you will have Shayzar and other places, but if I win then I will have saved the Muslims from your evils.’ Zengi did not have enough forces to confront them, as their numbers were greater, but he behaved like that to make them hesitate.

The Franks in the company of the emperor had advised him to march and confront Zengi and played down the prospect of a fight. The King of Byzantium replied:

Do you think he only has the soldiers you see in his company at the moment? He has vast dominions – he shows you his small forces to lure you to march to confront him in the desert. Only then will you discover his massive army which will overwhelm our side.

At the same time, Zengi was corresponding with the Franks of Syria, warning them of the King of Byzantium by telling them that if he seized only one citadel in Syrian lands then he would capture all dominions under Frankish control in Syria. Meanwhile, he was also corresponding with the King of Byzantium, threatening him and giving him the impression that the Franks were really on Zengi’s side. As a result of this, both Frankish and Byzantine sides became suspicious of one another and the king of Byzantium lifted the siege and departed in Ramadan 532 [June 1138]. His entire stay at Shayzar was twenty-four days. He left behind intact all the mangonels and siege engines. When Zengi heard about their departure he marched behind them and captured some of those who were serving the Frankish–Byzantine armies; some he killed and a few he took as prisoners. Zengi captured all of the equipment and other materials that were left behind and sent it to Aleppo’s citadel. The Almighty saved the faithful the burden of a fight.

The Muslims in Syria were very fearful, knowing that if the Byzantine army managed to capture Shayzar no other Muslim would be able to stay in the area, especially as it was so close to the city of Hama. When Almighty God granted the Muslims this conquest one found many poets praising Zengi for his conduct to a great extent. Among those poets was al-Musallam b. al-Khidr b. Qasim al-Hamawi who wrote in a poem:

By your strong will O great king
Difficulties are made low;
Do you not see that the dog of the Rum
Thought that he had become a merciful king?
He came, filling the lands with his horses,
His army looked like a long gloomy night;

Life yielded for him,
 And all great challenges submitted to his will.
 But when he looked and saw your army
 He hesitated and stopped. Neither moving further nor besieging for long;
 You Zengi were like a blazing star,
 And he was like a cursed devil.³³

One of the stunning stories related to these events was that of Emir Murshid b. 'Ali, brother of the lord of Shayzar. When he heard about the march of the Byzantines towards Shayzar, he was sitting copying a manuscript of the Qur'an. He raised it with his hands towards the skies and said: 'O Almighty, as you descended this on the Prophet and decided that the Byzantines should attack us, capture my soul back to you.' He died a few days later, before their arrival.

When the Byzantine forces left to go back to their territories, Zengi marched to the Frankish castle of 'Araqa, in the dominions of the principality of Tripoli. He besieged it until he seized it by force and looted it. He took the Frankish population inside as prisoners, destroyed the place and withdrew safely with many spoils.³⁴

The account of the capture of Shahrazur citadel by Zengi

The citadel of Shahrazur, its dominions and surrounding mountains³⁵ was under the authority of Qipchaq b. Arslan Tash al-Turkmani. He owned it, and he enjoyed undisputed authority over the Turkmen of the area and those who lived in remote districts as well. The Turkmen considered their submission to Qipchaq an obligation and a duty. As a result, kings had avoided targeting his dominions and did not attempt to attack it because of its invincibility. As a result, his reputation became even greater, his forces increased and many Turkmen joined his service from every remote and deep valley.

In the year 534 [1139] Zengi was informed about the status of Qipchaq, which made it necessary for Zengi to invade his dominions. The advisers and followers around Zengi had advised him not to launch any hostile act against Qipchaq, knowing how committed his forces were to defend his lands. They also warned Zengi that if he formed a threat to Qipchaq, the latter would surrender his dominions to Sultan Mas'ud, and then Mas'ud would directly neighbour the eastern dominions of Zengi.³⁶ Zengi did not listen to these advisers and dispatched a colossal force to attack Shahrazur.³⁷

Qipchaq gathered all the Turkmen who could carry arms and assembled a large force that could block out the horizon. The forces of Zengi confronted the Turkmen and were engaged in a bitter fight; the Zengid forces displayed great determination and repeatedly attacked the Turkmen until they had defeated them and plundered their troops. The defeated Turkmen withdrew, in a very bad condition, while the Zengid forces followed them into their territories, seized Shahrazur, and other cities in the area, and annexed it to the realm of Zengi. Zengi improved the conditions of the locals of the area and eased the suffering they had faced from the Turkmen.³⁸

Then Zengi intended to march to Syria;³⁹ he never wished to remain in one place but preferred to carry on military campaigns – either to deter an enemy from attacking him, or for him to invade an enemy's lands, or to attack the Franks and secure the boundaries of Islam. The comfort of the saddle was more attractive to him than the luxury of beds, and keeping his vigil over the defence of the kingdom was dearer than the resting of his head on the best of pillows. The sounds of armour in battle were sweeter to his ears than the voices of singers and his confrontation with his rivals more desirable than sleeping with prostitutes. What I have already mentioned and will go on to mention show proof of that.

The account of the siege of Damascus and Baalbak

In this year too, namely 534 [1139], Zengi marched to attack Damascus and besiege it after he had subdued Shahrazur. He besieged Damascus which was under the rule of Jamal al-Din Muhammad b. Buri b. Tughtegin. This ruler was weak and was dominated by Muin al-Din Unur, the *mamluk* of his grandfather, Tughtegin. Zengi had already instructed Kamal al-Din Abu'l-Fadl b. al-Shahrazuri⁴⁰ to write to a group of commanders of the *ahdath* and locals of the city,⁴¹ enticing and alluring them to join Zengi's side. Kamal al-Din did so and a large number of those commanders agreed to his offer and to surrender the city. They came out of Damascus in little groups to meet Kamal al-Din and again he assured them of his reward for them. They and Zengi's representative had agreed that on the day when Zengi marched to seize the city, they would open one of the gates of Damascus and surrender the city to him.

Kamal al-Din had reported the plan to Zengi, who replied:

I do not agree to such a plan. The city is full of narrow streets and lanes and when our forces storm in they will not be able to fight due to its overcrowded and narrow quarters. Maybe the number of fighters against us will increase and we would be unable to confront them because they will fight us on the ground and from the rooftops of the buildings. If we enter Damascus in such a way we will be compelled to divide our forces due to the narrow streets of the city and then the locals will be encouraged to attack us.

Zengi declined such a plan due to his caution and wisdom. It was astonishing that the lord of Damascus, Jamal al-Din b. Buri, died inside the city while Zengi was besieging it. Unur, the *de facto* ruler of the city, controlled the situation and the locals were not affected. Unur sent an envoy to Baalbak to bring Mujir al-Din Abaq b. Muhammad b. Buri⁴² and installed him as the new king, succeeding his father. Abaq was a young man and had no experience, so Unur continued to dominate the kingdom. When Abaq arrived in Damascus, he allocated Baalbak as an *iqta'* to Unur, who dispatched a force to arrange its fortifications.

When Zengi heard of this development he marched to Baalbak and besieged it for a few months, until he seized the city by force and installed Najm al-Din

Ayyub⁴³ as keeper of the citadel there. Zengi intended to return to fight against Damascus, but he received an envoy from the lord of Damascus offering to declare the *khutba* to Zengi and giving him an oath of allegiance. Zengi accepted and called off his march on Damascus after the *khutba* was declared in his name and the lords of Damascus had submitted to his authority.

The account of the siege of Aleppo by the Byzantines and the Franks

When the Rum [the Byzantines] and the Franks arrived in Syria to end the Zengi's siege of Barin and relieve the Crusader kings who were besieged there by him, they realised they were too late.⁴⁴ They did not want to go back empty-handed, having not defended their religion. So they decided to attack and besiege some of the Muslim lands, thinking that maybe they would achieve some victory which might ease their catastrophe and their defeat. They marched on Aleppo and besieged it. They were in a very large force, unseen before by the locals. Despite that, they were tense.

Zengi decided not to risk the confrontation with them and chose to stay close to them and cut their line of supplies. Furthermore, this enabled him to defend the remote areas from enemy attacks or raids. He dispatched Qadi Kamal al-Din b. al-Shahrazuri to Sultan Mas'ud informing him of the situation and the might of his enemies. He urged him for help and asked him to dispatch an army.

My father told me, quoting Kamal al-Din:

I said to Zengi, when he decided to dispatch me: 'I fear that lands will get out of our control with the coming of a sultanate armies. Sultan Mas'ud will use this excuse and when his forces arrive, he will seize the territories.' Zengi replied: 'This enemy is hungry for our lands, and if they capture Aleppo, there will be no Islam in Syria. Anyway, Muslims deserve to have it, rather than the Saracens.'

The *qadi* said:

When I arrived in Baghdad and delivered the message, I was promised by the sultan that forces would be dispatched; he then neglected the matter and nothing happened. Meanwhile, Zengi's messages were consistently coming to me, urging me to work on dispatching the forces. I kept requesting them from the sultan and only received promises.

When I realised the little attention the sultan gave to this grand matter, I summoned one of the jurists, who replaced me as a judge, and said to him: 'Take these dinars⁴⁵ and distribute them among the ruffians of Baghdad and outsiders too. When Friday comes and the preacher ascends to the pulpit at the caliph's mosque to deliver his sermon, the rabble together with you will stand and shout in one voice, "alas Islam, alas religion of Muhammad." Then they will march out of the mosque and head toward the sultanate palace asking for help. I placed another person at the sultan's mosque to

conduct the same deed. When the preacher there was about to ascend the pulpit, my hired jurist stood up and threw his turban while shouting, followed by his group who were weeping and shouting. All the people at the mosque followed them and Friday sermons were cancelled.

All the crowds marched to the sultan's palace where they were united with the other group and the rest of the locals of Baghdad, especially from the eastern quarter of Baghdad⁴⁶ – all of them shouting and asking for help. The situation got out of control and the sultan became fearful inside his palace. The sultan inquired about the matter and was informed: "The locals have revolted as you did not dispatch the armies to confront the invaders." He said: "Summon the son of al-Shahrazuri."

Al-Shahrazuri said:

I arrived before the sultan; while I had fear of him, I intended to tell him the truth. When I entered his chamber, he said: 'O Qadi, what is the cause of this riot?' I replied: 'The people did this out of fear that they will be attacked and killed. Does the sultan not know for sure how far he is from the enemy? You are only one week from the enemy, and if they capture Aleppo they will head down to you by sailing on the Euphrates and over land. Also, there are no cities or forts to stop them on their way to Baghdad.' I made the matter serious to him, as if he was looking at the enemies. The sultan said: 'Get back to the locals from here and take as many soldiers as you wish and march with them. The supplies will follow you.' I went out to the locals and those who had joined them, informed them about the outcome and ordered them to go back to their places. They did and dispersed.

I selected 20,000 knights from the sultanate forces and dispatched a message to Zengi informing him about the situation and that we were about to march out of Baghdad. I was seeking his final permission. He gave me the order and urged me to do so. The forces crossed to the western bank of the Euphrates and were about to start the march, when a special envoy arrived at speed riding a young camel⁴⁷ sent by Zengi. He told me that the Byzantines and the Franks had departed from Aleppo empty-handed and had not achieved any of their aims, and instructed me to desert the sultanate armies and to contact the sultan in order to cancel the campaign. When Sultan Mas'ud was contacted regarding the matter, he insisted on sending the armies for jihad to invade the Frankish lands, seize them from them and evict them from there.⁴⁸ The sultan's true intention was to have his forces get to the Zengid territories to seize them. Kamal al-Din, the envoy of Zengi, kept negotiating with the vizier of the sultan and the political leader of the sultanate until he managed to get the sultanate forces to cross back to the eastern banks of the Euphrates and Kamal al-Din returned to Zengi.⁴⁹

The account of resentment between Sultan Mas‘ud and Zengi, God bless them both

When Mas‘ud ascended the sultanate,⁵⁰ he encountered several revolts from leading commanders in the sultanate, especially those at the remote and border areas of the state. They sometimes coordinated themselves or rebelled individually against the authority of the sultan and we have explained this. Whenever a rift took place in the sultanate, one found that Sultan Mas‘ud accused Zengi of orchestrating it or having some role in it, due to his belief that the rebel commanders knew the political and military status of Zengi and his realpolitik policy, in addition to his possession of large forces and immense wealth.

Sultan Mas‘ud was correct in his suspicions and accusations.⁵¹ Zengi was conducting such deeds in order to keep the sultan distracted so that Zengi would have a free hand in expanding his frontiers and consolidating his power. When the year 538 [starting 16 July 1143] came, Sultan Mas‘ud had already resolved all matters occupying his agenda and had a free mind. So he intended to gather his force, which turned out to be a colossal one, and revealed to his entourage that he intended to march out to Mosul and the lands of Zengi. Several envoys were sent between the two men to resolve the matter, until they reached an agreement: Zengi would pay the sultan 100,000 dinars. In addition, the sultan had requested that Zengi should travel to attend the sultanate court,⁵² but Zengi refused on the justification that he was occupied with the Franks, who were mighty and dominating territories close to the Zengid realm. The sultan accepted his excuse on the condition that Zengi would conquer Edessa.

This was one of the main reasons for keeping the sultan from attacking Mosul. The sultan was told that no one else managed to keep the lands under Zengi from the harm of the Franks except Zengi. It had been ruled before by other commanders, such as Chavli Saqawa, Mawdud,⁵³ Juyush Beg and al-Bursuqi, among other princes. Previous sultans had sent large armies to aid them, but they failed to protect those lands. The Franks kept capturing one town after another until Zengi was installed. He had never had a single knight as a military aid, nor any financial support, yet he had conquered the enemy's lands and seized many citadels and provinces. He defeated them more than once, made them weak and glorified Islam.

One other reason for Zengi not to attend the sultanate court was the following: Zengi's older son Sayf al-Din Ghazi was in the service of Sultan Mas‘ud, upon the order of Zengi. Mas‘ud had admired him, and trusted and relied on him. Zengi had written to his son, telling him to secretly escape the service and head to Mosul. At the same time he wrote to his deputy in Mosul, Jaqar, instructing him to deny Sayf al-Din entry into Mosul and to prevent him from heading to Zengi.

Sayf al-Din did as his father told him, but was denied entry to Mosul. Jaqar banned him from travelling to Zengi and told Sayf al-Din: ‘You contact your father and seek his permission in what you should do.’ Sayf al-Din did, and received the following from Zengi: ‘I do not want you, no matter how angry the

sultan is with you.' Zengi instructed him to go back to the sultan and sent a messenger with him to the sultan saying: 'I was informed that my son had deserted your service without your permission. I did not meet with him and sent him back to your door.' The sultan greatly admired such an act of loyalty from Zengi and agreed to what Zengi wished. Zengi sent 20,000 dinars out of the 100,000 previously agreed, but Mas'ud acquitted Zengi from paying the rest, especially as the sultan was again occupied with rebels in other areas of the realm, but also in order to keep good relations with Zengi.

The account of the conquest of Edessa by the martyr Zengi

In Jumada II 539 [December 1144] martyr Zengi, God bless him, had conquered the city of Edessa and captured it from the Franks. It belonged to Joscelin,⁵⁴ their devil tyrant, the commander of their knights and soldiers. All of the Franks recognised his courage and submitted to his authority.

It was besieged for twenty-eight days and Zengi restored it to the rule of Islam; the laws of the believers were re-established in it. Thus, Edessa is one of the most honourable and great cities to the Christians. To them it is one of the leading episcopal seats. The most honourable is Jerusalem, then Antioch, then Rome, then Constantinople, then Edessa.

This was indeed the conquest of all conquests, similar to Badr in its sincerity.⁵⁵ Those who witnessed it had performed the true jihad, and if al-Tai was alive then⁵⁶ he would have recognised that it deserved his poetry, 'the sword is more truthful than the books', because the Frankish population of Edessa had inflicted great harm on the Muslims around it – due to their proximity, their evil to them was grand. Edessa was like the eye of the territories of the Jazira and a fort to all Muslim lands. There were dominions that were added to it so that the Frankish realm expanded and the locals suffered because of that. The Franks seized and ruled from the vicinity of Mardin to the Euphrates, including several castles such as Saruj, al-Bira, Jamlin, al-Mu'azzar,⁵⁷ Quradi⁵⁸ and Sin Ibn 'Utayr among others. Their incursions used to reach the town of Amid in Diyar Bakr area, Mardin, Nasibin, Ras al-Ayn and Raqqa.⁵⁹

Regarding the town of Harran, it was included in some of their raids and every morning it suffered a new raid.⁶⁰ When martyr Zengi recognised such conditions, he scorned that his realm should ignore the infidels of Edessa who attacked freely the kingdom of Islam and penetrated the houses and dwellings. Zengi knew well that he would not achieve his aim by seizing Edessa and end the infidels' presence there while Joscelin and his knights, soldiers and supporters remained inside it. Zengi knew that if he marched to besiege it, the Franks would gather and come to rescue Edessa from him. So he adopted methods of deception and trickery as they were, in this case, more advantageous than confrontation and came before the courage of fighters.

Zengi avoided attacking Edessa but instead attacked Muslim territories in its neighbourhood in Diyar Bakr, such as Hani, Jabal Jur⁶¹ and Amid, as mentioned earlier. Zengi was fighting but with no intention of seizure and at a slow pace

and with a subdued manner. He was attacking these areas, but his true goal was Edessa, and he had deputies there to instantly inform him when the lions [Joscelin and his commanders] left their den and when its citadel was empty of its garrison and keepers. When Joscelin saw that Zengi was occupied with a campaign in another area of Diyar Bakr and had no intention to attack him, nor had the capacity to do so, Joscelin departed from Edessa to his Syrian dominions to follow up on his administration there and inspect his defences and finances.

At once Zengi's agents came to him, informing him that Joscelin and his army had left Edessa and that the city was now empty of its garrison and keepers. Immediately he ordered the call of his entire forces to prepare to march for battle. Zengi threatened all his commanders and allies if they were late to meet this call and strictly informed them that he would not accept any excuse from anyone. He moved forward fast, like an arrow leaving its bow or like a flood running its course, and was followed by brigades of troops following one another.

They were all determined to perform the duty of jihad for Islam and follow the tradition [of the Prophet in his jihad]. They moved forward, full of enthusiasm, like pieces of clouds moved by winds, and in order to travel faster they used young camels. When the enemy inside Edessa heard about Zengi's coming, fear ran into their bodies and mixed with their blood. They did not know what to do and they realised that they had left the path of God, like those mentioned in the Qur'an, for example ['If Almighty God does not forgive and grant us pardon, we will be among those who failed'].

Almighty God saved up vengeance for them at the sword of Zengi, and gathered in Hell those who were absent outside Edessa and those who were killed inside the city as a reward for their ugly injustice and brutal murders. God sent Zengi to them like poured-out punishment and torture; they had no escape on this earth and their heads were down out of fear.

Zengi reached Edessa with his fullest complement of arms and weapons, with numerous forces and triumphant parades, and the historians had praised him with this poetry [Ibn al-Athir himself]:

He came with a colossal army, brimming with knights
 You thought the lands they were standing on were like a sea full of arms
 He sometimes offers forgiveness despite his might,
 But rarely does when battle starts.⁶²

Zengi moved on to attack the city, and one could imagine that an earthquake had happened, that daylight had disappeared by a sudden attack of night. The Franks, despite their full awareness of their annihilation, were eager to fight like moths drawn to a flame. When Zengi saw Edessa he saw a city of both beauty and awe, so he sent a message to the besieged, offering to spare their lives in return for its surrender. He wanted to take the city intact, without any damage to its fortifications or houses, as he would regret having a city like this destroyed and its grandeur fallen to the ground. The locals refused his offer for peace and refused to

submit to him. Zengi, with the will of God, decided to attack, so he erected the mangonels and put forward brave men for the fight. In addition, he brought forward excavators and urged them to fight as hard as they could before the Franks could collect their forces and arrive to save the city from him and push him back.

The news reached the Franks. They were shocked and started to talk about a thundering revenge. They gathered every knight and foot soldier, young and old, and were keen to march to save Edessa before it was too late. Joscelin returned when he heard the news and crossed to the east of the Euphrates, hoping that he would find a chance to enter Edessa or send reinforcements to the besieged inside, but he was prevented from doing either. How could he achieve such a goal when his rival was Zengi?

Zengi kept attacking Edessa, time after time, until the excavators managed to reach its walls and make a hole in it. They threw torches inside and managed to burn it down. Zengi seized Edessa by force and subdued it. He crushed and afflicted everyone inside with evil. He captured the city and damned it. He crushed its semen, inverted its crosses, exterminated its monks and priests, killed its knights and heroes.⁶³ They were all either taken captive or killed, broken or injured. The people [Muslims] filled their hands with booty and captives, taking precious items, beautiful boys or attractive virgins. The locals of Edessa were inflicted with gross agony, 'like the seizure of God when he inflicts his punishment on oppressive places, then his punishment is severe'.⁶⁴

Zengi entered the city of Edessa and admired its glory; he felt sorry for any destruction that might occur under his authority. He did not want that the destruction and evacuation of its locals should happen under his rule, so Zengi ordered his troops to return what they had looted and taken – wealth, money, furniture, captivated men, women, slave women and children. His troops returned almost everything, with few exceptions.

Edessa flourished again after it had become a dwelling to wolves and hyenas [the Franks]; it was re-populated and safe after having been obliterated. Zengi organised its garrison and defences, and marched out and captured what the Franks had held in that vicinity – towns, castles and villages. He seized Saruj and others, and removed the shame of the Franks and their evils from the homes of the Jazira. He rescued its people from the harm and deceptions of the Franks and the locals became safe after they were fearful; the party of atheism fled from the presence of the believers and followers of the faith. The Franks were deserting – evacuating their homes and running away. The infidels were escaping out of fear, and nearly lost their minds due to their horror.

The caller of monotheism was calling: 'The truth came and deceit had perished.' Islam returned to these lands and sent its followers and supporters there. The saying of Almighty God from the Qur'an was manifested here: 'God promised to make the believers and doers of good his successors on earth.'⁶⁵ They will rule it to the day of judgment.'

This conquest was great and Muslims benefited from it like no others. The good news flowed across the horizon and companions shared it. Assemblies and

councils everywhere across the countries were encouraged by it and a great number of pious and righteous men bore witness to it. Many of them drew good omens from it.

I was told by one of the most knowledgeable experts of history and genealogy, who said:

The king of Sicily at the time of the capture of Edessa was one of the Franks. At his court there was a Muslim scholar from the Maghreb [Morocco] who was in his service, but I have forgotten his name.⁶⁶ The king invited him to his councils and honoured him. The king believed in his advice and put him ahead of other advisers, whether monks or priests, in his court. At the same time that Edessa was conquered, that Frankish king had sent his fleet to raid North Africa. They looted, sacked and captured several prisoners. The news of the raid on North Africa came to the king while this Maghrebi scholar was sitting there, with his eyes closed as though sleeping. The king woke him up and said to him: 'Oh jurist, our people did to the Muslims this and that during the raid. Where was the Prophet Muhammad to give them victory?' The jurist said: 'Muhammad was attending the capture of Edessa.' All the Franks at the council laughed, but the king said: 'Do not laugh, I swear by the Almighty that this man does not speak without knowledge.' The king was made anxious by the situation. Soon after, news came of the capture of Edessa which made them forget their victory in North Africa, because of the status of Edessa to all Christians.⁶⁷

Notes

- 1 Ibn al-ʿAdim, *Bughyat al-talab fi taʾrikh Halab* [Biography of the Seljuq History], ed. ʿAli Sevīm, Ankara, 1976, pp. 251–72.
- 2 Ibn al-ʿAdim does not mention their names, but as one can see from all the chapters, only one son named Alp Arslan appeared in the sources during most events.
- 3 The author is mistaken, as Zengi was born in 1084 (see Chapter 1).
- 4 Aq Sunqur al-Bursuqi was one of the leading commanders of Sultan Mahmud II, and was installed as governor to Mosul in 1121.
- 5 Khutlugh Aba was a commander of Sultan Mahmud II, and was sent by the sultan to govern Aleppo in 1127, when al-Bursuqi of Mosul and Aleppo was killed. Ibn al-ʿAdim exaggerates the power of Zengi, as Zengi had no power as yet over Aleppo which was in a severe state of disorder, as detailed in the other book by the author, *Zubdat al-Halab*, vol. 2, pp. 236–7.
- 6 Qasim al-Dawla or 'partner of the state' (with the sultan) was a title bestowed upon Zengi only after he seized Edessa in 1144 (see Chapter 5).
- 7 This contradicts what we know about the truce between Zengi and Joscelin.
- 8 Seljuq king of Aleppo, 1095 to 1113.
- 9 One understands that it was Zengi who was referred to in that context, despite the briefing of the author.
- 10 Ibn al-ʿAdim repeats the story of Zengi's capture of Aleppo from another source, written by Qadi Baha al-Din al-Hasan; there is no need to repeat it here.
- 11 Ibn al-ʿAdim repeats the same story from another source, so there is no need to translate it here.

- 12 Ibn al-‘Adim repeats the same story from another source, so there is no need to translate it here. He tries to authenticate his writings to the readers.
- 13 One strongly doubts this fictitious narrative, as Zengi’s inner circle hardly used any language other than Turkmen. In addition, how could a Turkish *ghulam* like Yaranqash have such knowledge of Arabic?
- 14 There were three sons in Aleppo; the oldest, Majd al-Din, was the leading emir in the Nurid state afterwards.
- 15 ‘Ali was the fourth rightly guided caliph after Muhammad, and was also his cousin and son-in-law. He fought in the Battle of Siffin, very close to Raqqa, in 657 in a civil war with Mu‘awiya, who became the first Umayyad caliph four years later. Hundreds of the Prophet’s close friends lost their lives in that battle.
- 16 Balak was the Artuqid lord of Aleppo, and parts of the Jazira. Despite his victory and capture of King Baldwin II in 1123, he besieged Arab Minbaj in 1124 and was killed by an arrow during the siege. Like Zengi, he won remarkable victories over the Crusaders but spent most of his time fighting marginal wars against different Muslim powers.
- 17 A large town between Azerbaijan and the Caspian Sea; pronounced Zankan, like the name of Zengi. Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu‘jam*, vol. 3, p. 152.
- 18 A large town in the Arran province in the west of Iran. Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu‘jam*, vol. 4, p. 482.
- 19 Qipchaq b. Arslan Tash, a Turkmen chief lord of Shahrazur and its dominions.
- 20 At the same time, Zengi requested the caliph to declare the *khutba* to Alp Arslan, who was raised in the Zengid court.
- 21 Ibn al-Athir avoids mentioning the details of Zengi’s injuries in battle, and the medication he received in Tikrit from Saladin’s father, Ayyub, for two weeks.
- 22 Qaraja was executed by Sultan Sanjar at Kanga for challenging him.
- 23 First, Zengi did not hesitate to fight the Sunni leader of the Muslims to further his political interests. Second, Buri, the last capable Seljuq king of Damascus, died on 6 June 1132, two weeks before Zengi’s confrontation with the caliph, yet one sees Zengi waste a golden opportunity to seize Damascus, instead occupying himself with Iraqi-Iranian affairs.
- 24 Near Baghdad on the Tigris.
- 25 While the caliph was besieging Zengid Mosul, one finds Zengid Hama in Syria being besieged by the Seljuq king of Damascus, Isma‘il b. Buri, who managed to capture the city.
- 26 Caliph al-Mustarshid was captured by Sultan Mas‘ud in June 1135, and was killed upon Mas‘ud’s orders in August 1135. Zengi had supported al-Mustarshid in this final confrontation against Mas‘ud. The sultan installed al-Rashid, son of al-Mustarshid, as the new caliph.
- 27 Between Baghdad and Wasit.
- 28 Iraq had two Sunni ‘Abbasid caliphs in 1136. One was allied to Zengi, and he tried to use his religious symbol and status to the best of his political advantage. Zengi claimed Mosul as the headquarters of the ‘Abbasid caliphate, against the other one in Baghdad.
- 29 Ibn al-Athir does not give any reasons beforehand as to why Zengi was preoccupied with Mosul. In fact, during late October 1137, Zengi was in Syria besieging Seljuq Hims and was not in Mosul.
- 30 Hama was under Zengi’s authority at the time.
- 31 Ibn al-Athir totally fails to mention that on 2 May 1138 John Comnenus, Raymond of Antioch and Joscelin of Edessa besieged Zengid Aleppo.
- 32 Emperor John had sent a message to Zengi assuring him that he came only to attack Armenian dominions, and not Syria. Zengi responded by dispatching one of his leading commanders to the emperor with precious gifts.
- 33 ‘Dog of the Byzantine’ was a classical term from the early ‘Abbasid era, when they

- had confrontations with the Byzantine Empire in the ninth century. Thus, here Zengi is being compared to the heroic deeds of the 'Abbasid caliph beforehand. The word 'merciful' is a symbol of invincibility, as God's name in Qur'an is 'the merciful'.
- 34 Zengi refused the military presence of the Artuqid emir, Qara Arslan b. Da'ud of Hisn Kayfa, who came leading tens of thousands of Turkmen mounted horsemen to perform the duty of jihad with Zengi. Zengi realised that such a heavy military presence in the area would pose a future threat and challenge to his authority, although jihad should have come before any realpolitik calculations.
 - 35 Shahrzur extends from the east of Erbil in northern Iraq to the west of Hamadhan in western Iran. Nearly all the population of the area were of Kurdish ethnicity.
 - 36 In the year 1132 Mas'ud allocated Zengi the city of Erbil when he needed his help during the Seljuq civil war in Iran and Iraq.
 - 37 Zengi was besieging Damascus in the winter of 1139 and the spring of 1140. Despite this, he opened up another front for no clear reason.
 - 38 Qipchaq himself is not mentioned in the confrontation, or his fate afterwards, despite his might, which was expressed earlier by Ibn al-Athir.
 - 39 Zengi was already in Syria besieging Damascus, but carried out his usual over-ambitious activities by opening up another front in the remote Shahrzur.
 - 40 *Qadi* ('judge') of Zengi.
 - 41 *Ahdath* were local militia formed from the citizens of the city to protect themselves against foreign powers.
 - 42 Abaq was the last Seljuq Turkmen king of Damascus, before Nur al-Din took over the city in 1154.
 - 43 Zengi withdrew from Damascus to attack Baalbak, only after King Fulk of Jerusalem marched to aid Unur, the de facto ruler of Damascus. Zengi seized Baalbak in June 1140 and installed the father of Saladin as keeper of the town and Zengi's deputy there.
 - 44 Emperor John Comnenus invaded northern Syria in April 1138, and was joined by Raymond of Antioch and Joscelin of Edessa. They attacked Zengid Aleppo on 2 May 1138. Barin (Montrerrand) is a Crusader castle, west of the Orontes River, and it belonged to Raymond II of Tripoli. In July 1137, while besieging Seljuq Hims, Zengi suddenly attacked Barin, only for King Fulk to arrive to rescue Raymond. King Fulk was defeated by Zengi in battle and took refuge inside Barin, where he was besieged by Zengi.
 - 45 Gold coins, 4.2 to 4.5 g.
 - 46 Where the palace is.
 - 47 *Najjab* is the express mail envoy which uses *nujubs* (young camels that can travel at extraordinary speeds and have the ability to travel long distances with minimum rest).
 - 48 John Comnenus and the Crusaders departed on 4 May and headed southward to besiege Shayzar in central Syria, from 10 May to 2 June 1138.
 - 49 The politics of jihad is clear here, as the mistrust between Zengi and Mas'ud resulted in them declining the chance to gather huge forces for jihad.
 - 50 Ruled 1134 to 1152.
 - 51 Zengi formed a pact against Mas'ud several times in the 1130s, for example, in 1134/5 with the caliph against the sultan. Zengi was keen to act as regent to Seljuq King Alp Arslan, son of late Sultan Mahmud II.
 - 52 As a sign of submission.
 - 53 All were Turkmen lords of Mosul and other areas in the Jazira. Mawdud was commander of the Muslim forces of Mosul and Damascus at the Battle of Sinnabra in Palestine in 1113. He defeated King Baldwin I of Jerusalem.
 - 54 Joscelin II of Courtenay 1131 to 1159, last lord of Edessa.
 - 55 Badr was the battle where for the first time the Prophet Muhammad defeated the people of Mecca in 623, a landmark victory for the Muslims over the non-believers in the Hijaz, Arabia.

- 56 The Arab poet who commemorated the Muslim victory of the 'Abbasid caliph al-Mu'tasim over the Byzantine army in 837.
- 57 Near Nasibin.
- 58 Dominion of Mardin.
- 59 Mardin, Amid and its vicinities were under the rule of the Turkmen Artuqids, who often formed pacts with Zengi. Raqqa, on the Euphrates, was too far to the south, and was most probably under Arab local tribes.
- 60 It belonged to the Artuqids of Mardin.
- 61 A place containing several villages and castles, with a majority Armenian population, in Diyar Bakr. Zengi attacked it in 1143 to explore and examine the vigilance of Crusader Edessa.
- 62 Although Ibn al-Athir was born in 1160, some sixteen years after the capture of Edessa by Zengi, he was enthusiastic about composing some lines of poetry in support of Zengi.
- 63 The Arabic here is written in a rhyming style which is not easy to translate, so one should focus on getting the meaning more than the articulation.
- 64 Qur'an, 11:102. It talks about the different prophets who warned their people about the punishment of God, such as Noah, Moses and Hud. Here Ibn al-Athir elevates Zengi to such a rank with this comparison from the selected text of the Qur'an. He also refers to the Frankish Crusaders as the infidels in the same text.
- 65 Qur'an, 24:55.
- 66 There were many Muslim scholars who were working and living at the Norman court at that time. The most famous is the geographer al-Idrisi (d. 1165), who drew a map of the Earth for King Roger II.
- 67 Throughout the twelfth century, many Muslims from North Africa were in the service of several Norman kings. Some of those kings mastered Arabic and used Arabic words on their coins. This fictitious story reflects the jealousy of the chronicler, despite the cohabitation between Muslims and Christians in Sicily and also in his own city, Mosul. He also tries to give the event a hallowed quality.

Appendix 2

List of contemporary Muslim rulers of the age

The Seljuqs of Iran and Iraq

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| Malik Shah I b. Alp Arslan | 1073–92 |
| Mahmud b. Malik Shah | 1092–4 |
| Barkyaruk b. Malik Shah | 1094–1105 |
| Malik Shah II b. Barkyaruk | 1105 |
| Muhammad I b. Malik Shah | 1105–18 |
| Sanjar b. Malik Shah | 1118–57 |

The Seljuqs of Western Iran and Iraq

| | |
|--------------------------|---------|
| Mahmud II b. Muhammad I | 1118–31 |
| Da'ud b. Mahmud II | 1131–2 |
| Tughril II b. Muhammad I | 1132–4 |
| Mas'ud b. Muhammad I | 1134–52 |

The Seljuqs of Syria

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Tutush I b. Alp Arslan | 1087–95 |
| Ridwan b. Tutush (Aleppo and northern Syria) | 1095–1113 |
| Alp Arslan b. Ridwan | 1113–14 |
| Sultan Shah b. Ridwan | 1114–23 |
| Lu'Lu' al-Khadim (<i>atabeg</i> regent) | 1114–17 |
| Amena Khatun b. Ridwan (assisted by two <i>atabegs</i>) | 1117–18 |
| Il-Ghazi the Artuqid took over Aleppo | |

The Seljuqs of Damascus

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Duqaq b. Tutush I | 1095–1104 |
| Tutush II b. Duqaq | 1104–5 |
| Tughtegin (<i>atabeg</i>) | 1105–28 |
| Buri b. Tughtegin | 1128–32 |
| Isma'il b. Buri | 1132–4 |

| | |
|--|---------|
| Mahmud b. Buri (Unur <i>atabeg</i>) | 1134–9 |
| Muhammad b. Buri (Unur <i>atabeg</i>) | 1139–40 |
| Abaq b. Muhammad (Unur <i>atabeg</i> until 1149) | 1140–54 |

The Seljuqs of Mosul

| | |
|----------------------|-----------|
| Kerbogha | 1094–1101 |
| Gumushtegin | 1101–6 |
| Chavli | 1106–8 |
| Mawdud | 1108–13 |
| Aq Sunqur al-Bursuqi | 1114–15 |
| Juyush Beg | 1115–21 |
| Aq Sunqur al-Bursuqi | 1121–6 |
| Mas‘ud | 1126–7 |
| Zengi | 1127–46 |
| Saif al-Din b. Zengi | 1146–9 |

The Artuqids of Mardin and Mayyafariqin

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------|
| Yaquti b. Alp Yaruq b. Artuq | 1101–4 |
| Ali b. Alp Yaruq | 1104 |
| Suqman I b. Artuq | 1104–15 |
| Il-Ghazi I b. Artuq (Aleppo in 1118) | 1115–22 |
| Timurtash b. Il-Ghazi I | 1122–54 |

The Artuqids of Amid and Hisn Kayfa

| | |
|----------------------|---------|
| Suqman I b. Artuq | 1102–4 |
| Ibrahim b. Suqman | 1104–9 |
| Da‘ud b. Suqman | 1109–44 |
| Qara Arslan b. Da‘ud | 1144–67 |

The ‘Abbasid Caliphs

| | |
|---------------|-----------|
| al-Muqtadi | 1075–94 |
| al-Mustazhir | 1094–1118 |
| al-Mustarshid | 1118–35 |
| al-Rashid | 1135–6 |
| al-Muqtafi | 1136–60 |

With the exception of the Seljuqs of Syria and Mosul, all other Muslim powers are from *The New Islamic Dynasties* by C. E. Bosworth, Edinburgh, 2004.

The Crusaders of Jerusalem

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Godfrey of Bouillon | 1099–1100 |
| Baldwin I | 1100–18 |
| Baldwin II | 1118–31 |
| Fulk of Anjou | 1131–43 |
| Queen Melisende and son Baldwin III | 1143–51 |
| Baldwin III | 1151–63 |

The Crusaders of Edessa

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| Baldwin I of Boulogne | 1098–1100 |
| Baldwin II of Bourg | 1100–18 |
| Joscelin I | 1118–31 |
| Joscelin II | 1131–44 |

The Crusaders of Antioch

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Bohemond I | 1098–1100 |
| Tancred (as regent) | 1101–3 |
| Bohemond I | 1103–4 |
| Tancred (as regent) | 1104–12 |
| Roger of Salerno | 1112–19 |
| Baldwin II of Jerusalem (as regent) | 1119–26 |
| Bohemond II | 1126–30 |
| Princess Constance | 1130–6 |
| Raymond of Poitiers | 1136–49 |

The Crusaders of Tripoli

| | |
|------------|---------|
| Bertrand | 1109–12 |
| Pons | 1112–37 |
| Raymond II | 1137–52 |

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