



# Saladin and the Fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem

*Stanley Lane-Poole*

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## Saladin and the Fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem Stanley Lane-Poole

This work first published in 1898 has become almost an authoritative account of the era of the Crusades and the life of one of Muslim world's best known leaders, Salahuddin al-Ayyubi, or Saladin. The author's objective and unbiassed research on Saladin, as well as extensive consultation of books by Muslim and European historians on the subjects, makes the book one of the best sources on the Crusades even more than a hundred years after its first edition. This edition is the first time it has been subject to typographical revision and updates so that contemporary readers may be able to identify the names of persons and places as it is currently known.

## Saladin and the Fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem Details

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## From Reader Review Saladin and the Fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem for online ebook

### Helena Schrader says

#### Eulogy not Biography: A Disservice to Saladin

In his introduction to this book, Lane-Poole claims that “no complete Life of the celebrated adversary of Richard Coeur de Lion” is available in the English language. This may have been true at the time of publication, but it is no longer the case. At just \$.99, however, I decided to try it. Before others make the same mistake, I share my assessment here.

While understanding that every biographer is to some extent the captive of his sources, this book is far more than biased: it singularly fails to provide the analysis and context so vital to a good biography. Furthermore, it is based on two false assumptions. First, that Muslims have the right to all territory that was ever ruled by Muslims, and blindly denies both Jews and Christians any right to the territories that was theirs long before the Muslim invasion of the 7th Century AD. Second and more important, Lane-Poole ignores the fact the population of these lands – even at the end of the 12 century – was not predominantly Muslim, much less Sunni Muslim. The population was completely fragmented into Jews, Greek Orthodox Christians, Armenian Christians, Jacobites, Maronites, Coptic Christians, Nestorians and Shia Muslims as well as Sunni Muslims. The latter distinction is very important because Shiite leaders, both the Fatimid Caliphate and the Assassins, made repeated pacts and alliances with the Christians to fight the Sunnis – and Saladin himself -- and the Shiite population in Palestine probably opposed Saladin at least as much if not more than the Jews and some of the Christians. (For more information on the population of the crusader kingdoms and their relations to their rulers I recommend either Malcolm Barber’s book, “The Crusader States,” or to Professor Kenneth Harl’s excellent series of lectures in The Great Courses series.)

Lane-Poole, however, is clearly not interested in the facts. Instead, he slavishly follows his pro-Saladin sources without standing back to question or balance these sources with information drawn from other chronicles and historians or – indeed – simple common sense. For example, it gets very tedious to have every tactical defeat of a Christian force portrayed as a “humiliating retreat” with the Christians departing “with their tails between their legs” – in one case this was after just one week in the field! -- while every set back Saladin suffered (and he sometimes spent many months in pointless sieges!) is explained away as a wise decision not to pursue a time-consuming campaign or the need to let his troops go home to see their families. Indeed, Lane-Poole mentions several times how attached Muslims are to their wives and children, but does not credit Christians with the same feelings. As for Saladin’s defeat at Mont Gisard, where Saladin’s army of 20,000 was put to flight by roughly 500 knights led by a 16 year old king suffering from leprosy, it is glossed over as “inexplicable” and takes up less than two pages of the narrative. A real biographer would have been intent on explaining both how it happened – and what Saladin learned from it; as a historian, the latter point is particularly important as such a bitter defeat (Saladin had to escape on a pack camel and lost almost his entire body guard) surely left its scars on his psyche.

It is likewise the mark of a dilettante rather than a historian to claim that Richard I “was honeymooning” on Cyprus, when in fact he was conquering the island from a tyrant and by so doing secured the lines-of-communication and a breadbasket for the crusader states for the next hundred years. Indeed, the Latin Kingdom of Cyprus outlived the crusader kingdoms by more than 200 years.

About four fifths of the way through the book, Lane-Poole casts aside all pretense of being a historian and biographer and declares his partisanship in the statement: “But the students of the Crusades do not need to be told that in the struggle of civilization, magnanimity, toleration, real chivalry, and gentle culture were all on

the side of the Saracens.” (Chapter XIX) Now, students of the crusade know just the opposite: that there were atrocities, betrayals, cruelties, excesses and also magnanimity, generosity, courage and gentle culture on BOTH sides.

The greatest weakness of this book is that by its excessive bias it detracts from its hero. Saladin deserves our respect because he was exceptional, not because he was perfect. Saladin stands out as an impressive and attractive example of integrity, tenacity, leadership, piety and generosity – particularly when compared to his successors, such as Baibars. He was undoubtedly a more chivalrous figure than Guy de Lusignan, and even Christians despised and repudiated butchers like Ranaud de Chatillon. Saladin deserves a real biography that attempts to explain him as a statesman and a military leader; this book is not it. I hope one of the modern biographies will prove more useful to my research on Balian d'Ibelin.

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### **Rrlgrl says**

I randomly found this book at a library sale and discovered it was over 100 years old. The delicate maps and insert leaves make this book special, even though it has been rebound to look like a college text book. It is an intriguing read, particularly with the current events happening in the Middle East. Things really haven't changed since the First Crusade.

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### **Ahmad Hassam says**

This is a rare book that I happen to read many years back. I have read other books by Stanley Lane Poole and I found him to have a grip on the ancient Islamic history not found in the present historians. When he wrote these books in the 19th century, his audience must have been limited. Today his books are very good for reference and citation. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in serious work of history.

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### **Elliott Bignell says**

Salah ud-Din, which name translates as the title of this review, qualifies as one of the defining figures of the Crusades, of mediaeval Islam and of chivalry. Poole, of whom I am now very much a fan, approves of him in a writing style of his customary grace and ease and a historian's style which is probably not as objective as it ought to be. I am prepared to forgive Poole this foible, as his writing is a joy and his sympathy for his Muslim subjects very appealing. In any case, he was writing in the 19th Century when standards of objectivity had not quite reached their modern peak of obsessiveness. And finally, if you aren't a historian then you will probably take my position of just wanting to read about the time and pick up some learning without making it a drudge.

The reader ought to be warned that Poole comes from a time when it could be presumed that an educated reader would cope with untranslated quotes in Latin, Greek, French and Italian, and takes occasional advantage of this presumption. I find that it does not interrupt the flow of the book too much, and in any case I more-or-less get by in the last two languages, but it is perhaps a little much to ask in our day. I don't speak a word of the former two but didn't feel the loss too sharply. Fortunately he doesn't venture into Arabic or Turkish, which I can report from experience to be ferociously intractable unless you grew up with them or are a natural linguist.

It might come as a surprise to the modern reader that Poole's Victorian writing style is light and engaging. More so, perhaps, given the presumptions of national superiority typical of his contemporaries, that he finds such a glowing example among the Muslims of the Middle Ages. Saladin may go some way to explaining that.

Greatness was forced upon Salah ud-Din when he was dispatched to Egypt. Without the responsibilities of leadership being pressed into his hands, he might have remained a secluded and bookish scholar and deprived history of one of its shining figures. Without the sudden death of Nur ed-Din, he might have been put in his place and his ascent to the throne prevented. Such are the hinges of history. At any rate, the Muslim world received a leader of unique character whose brush with death at the hands of a fever left him with a compulsion to do right. The outcome was the end of the Crusader state of Outremer and the expulsion of Latin Christianity from all but a small coastal strip.

Even this might have been retrieved had it not been for Saladin's curious negligence at Tyre, where he abandoned the siege and left the Crusaders a staging post. This was a rare lapse, but a potentially catastrophic one, and may stem from pressure from his weary emirs. Saladin leaves few traces of character flaws, by-and-large, with one exception being the execution of a single Sufi mystic. He seems to have been an orthodox type, generous to a fault with enemies of other religions but with a blind spot for dissent and heresy within his own faith. Certainly the Catholicos of the Armenians and the Emperor of Constantinople regarded him as an ally and warned him of the approach of the Western Emperor through Asia Minor. His clemency has gone down in history, as his emirs vied to be gifted with slaves from the un-ransomed poor at Jerusalem that they might gain their sultan's approval by freeing them. And Saladin's word was truly his bond, and accepted as such even by his enemies. The contrast with the compulsive oath-breaking and the brutality of the Christians, typified by the slaughter of 2,700 Muslims prisoners at Acre by Richard, could not be more marked.

Saladin is a unique figure, and well-enough documented that much of this hagiography can be taken at face-value or close to it. Poole is not truly objective, but the sources all seem to agree with him. Aside from that, he is a joy to read. Highly recommended.

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### Faris says

Very detail and precise. but hard to absorb and digest. A lot of complicated jargons. dun really suit me as a 'beginner'... hehe.. well, juz give it a try. very nice book.

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### Mahmoud Elmosalamy says

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