



# Political and Diplomatic Networks of Nuruddin Zanki in The Middle East: A Historical Review/ Historiography

Lydia Megawati <sup>a,1,\*</sup> Nuraeni <sup>b,2</sup>, Jusmiati <sup>b,3</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Alauddin State Islamic University of Makassar, Bontonompo, Gowa Regency and 92153, Indonesia

<sup>b</sup> Alauddin State Islamic University of Makassar, Tidung, Makassar and 90222, Indonesia

<sup>c</sup> Alauddin State Islamic University of Makassar, BTN Minasa Upa Blok AB, Makassar and 90221, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup> [djodyegha@gmail.com](mailto:djodyegha@gmail.com); <sup>2</sup> [nuraenialauddin@gmail.com](mailto:nuraenialauddin@gmail.com); <sup>3</sup> [jusmiati569@gmail.com](mailto:jusmiati569@gmail.com)

\* corresponding author

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## ABSTRACT

*The study seeks to determine the political and diplomatic network of Nuruddin Zanki in the Middle East through a historical/historiographic review. Adopting a historical approach, the study was divided into several methods, including heuristic, critical, and historiography. The findings of this study conclude that Nuruddin Zanki was a prominent Islamic figure who consistently fought in the Second Crusade, as indicated by his success in reclaiming Islamic territory from the hands of the Christians, including the cities of Artah and Harene and other regions. He was also a leader who succeeded in unifying and strengthening Islamic power in the Middle East, particularly in facing the Second Crusade. He strategically administered political and military networks, including unifying Muslim territory, securing borders, and forging alliances with other Islamic forces. Furthermore, he was renowned for his just, firm, and wise characters which were able to inspire his people to fight as one. His Islamic diplomatic initiatives were successful in uniting Muslims and strengthening their resilience, allowing them to withstand the invasion of the crusaders and pave the way for Salahuddin Ayyubi in supporting Jerusalem. Nuruddin Zanki's Islamic diplomacy was successful in uniting Muslims and strengthening them so that they were able to battle the attacks of the crusaders and paved the way for Salahudin Ayyubi to assist Jerusalem. His focus was not only on battle but also on investing in infrastructure as well as the economic and military development of his region.*

## 1. Introduction

Since ages past, the Middle East (Near East) has always been a disputed location for many different nations in the world, aiming to take its natural resources and to maintain the presence based on race, ethnicity, and religion. It is regarded as an important site because it is where the messengers of the divine message of the prophets and apostles were sent down. Various phases and dynamics occurred there, beginning with the religious conflict of the Crusades, where Pope Benedict successfully persuaded the European kings



Author correspondence email: [djodyegha@gmail.com](mailto:djodyegha@gmail.com)



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to conquer the Middle East, leading to an invasion led by the King of Franks and his allies. This resulted in the formation of a colonial kingdom in Jerusalem with King Amalric I and the taking over of several Muslim cities, including Tripoli and Acre. The events disclosed the turmoil within the Muslim community and the emergence of the governor of Mosul, Imaduddin Zanki, who was superseded by his son Nuruddin Zanki, who became the successor of the resistance.

In the early of Islamic era, the religion had already obtained a strong footing in the Arab and Persian worlds, but it was not as favored as in the Jewish world. Its influence not only spread throughout the Arab world but also extended to Europe under the ruling of the Umayyad II dynasty. Islam started when the Umayyads were deposed by the Abbasids, and Baghdad, the Abbasid capital, was built and later emerged as one of the few cities with significant and lasting impact in the Middle East and the rest of the world.

Nuruddin Zanki was a Muslim figure who was renowned for his unfaltering resistance to the Second Crusade, as marked by his success in retrieving Islamic territories such as Artah, Harene, and several other areas from the grasp of the Christians (Abdullah, 2016). The Crusades were wars centered on the holy city of Jerusalem (Baitul Maqdis), involving three beliefs: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, and are among the most significant wars archived in history (DAN, n.d.). In addition to being a formidable combatant in battle, Zanki was a noteworthy figure in Sham (greater Syria), as he was one of the Amirs (leaders) of the Abbasid dynasty. In view of this, the Abbasid Caliph al-Muqtafi established him an honorary title, al-Malik al-Adil (the just ruler), in 549 Hijriyah. His accomplishment in leading armies and upholding Muslim territories was strongly connected to the strategies he employed, including guerrilla warfare, lightning attacks, active defense, and joint forces with other Islamic rulers (As-Suyuthi, 2000).

Zanki's leadership during the Islamic revival was realized when he ascended the throne at the age of 28 after his father's death. Similarly, many Seljuk rulers were driven by this situation to lead and form a formidable squad. Numerous leaders, like Nuruddin Zanki, initiated their careers with greater precision (Alatas, 2012).

One of Zanki's strategies was in the information-sharing system between his army commanders. He made an advance by utilizing pre-existing pigeons to obtain information from his troops. He was the first Muslim to use this technique in an information-collecting context, according to Francesco Gabrieli. Gabrieli stated that he believed that Nuruddin Zanki may have been the first person in the world to use this technique, indicating that Islam is now the most commonly practiced religion in the world. Finally, according to Amin Maalouf, individuals like Franks were assisted in the information-gathering process.

Zanki combined vigorous religious propagation with armed politics. He, slowly but surely, surveyed Syria and Egypt and accompanied the Franks, who originated from Edessa. The reigns of the German Emperor (Conrad III), the French King (Louis VII), Edessa, Antioch of the Islamic world, and the executions and trials of the Second Crusade took place between 1147 and 1148 CE. The difficulties faced in the Second Crusade, however, failed to bring Edessa back to peace (Hillenbrand, 2005).

In 1154 CE, Nuruddin Zanki founded Damascus and established it as the capital of Syria. He also described himself as the most prominent Muslim scholar in Syria. The Crusaders and Zanki focused their attention on Egypt and the Fatimid dynasty, which was

experiencing hardships and more vulnerable to internal divisions. Ascalon was accompanied by Franks and some allies from the Fatimid Court who provided assistance in the form of accommodation. Such help was also provided by Zanki. According to the orders of the Shirkuh (the Kurdish mercenary commander) in 1168–1169 CE, the faith of Muslims was destroyed by the Crusaders when they attempted to take over Egypt. After his death, Salahuddin Ayyubi, Shirkuh's nephew, documented the leadership of the Muslim forces in Egypt in 1169 CE. As Zanki's aide, Salahuddin endeavored to establish the Fatimid dynasty in 1171 CE. Zanki had laid the foundations for strengthening the Muslim faith and would reinstate the legitimacy of the sole Sunni Abbasid Caliph.

After successfully completing the Second Crusade and the establishment of Egypt to run the Abbasid Caliphate, Muslims continued to increase their dominance under Zanki's leadership. They grew increasingly confident in sustaining their Islamic practices, especially in Syria, which was established by the Crusaders. Having people with noble and devout characters, Zanki was able to enforce that every Muslim should strive to affirm the Crusaders' adherence to Islamic teachings. Muslims had defined the Islamic world, including Mesopotamia, Syria, the majority of Africa, and Arab regions. This distinguished Nuruddin Zanki from his predecessors.

## 2. Research Method

This study employed qualitative research with a descriptive analysis approach. The data were obtained through library research, which requires analyzing data obtained from library sources. The sources utilized in this study included written materials, such as books, journals, documents, or archives. This research was focused on historical inquiry. Such research is conducted through a historical method, a method specifically used in historical research and requiring certain stages. The stages include collecting sources related to research (*heuristic*), conducting evaluation on the sources obtained, interpreting the evaluated sources (to ensure comparison can be done to describe historical events), and finally compiling historical facts based on selected sources that are chronological (historiographic) (Sulasman, 2014).

## 3. Results and Discussion

### a. Nuruddin Zanki

Nuruddin Zanki was a significant historical figure from the Zanki dynasty, governing Syria during the years 1146-1174 CE. He was notable for his endeavors in uniting the Muslim forces and fighting the Crusaders, as well as for his major role in the history of the Crusades. Nuruddin Mahmud bin Atabik Qasim Ad-Daulah Abi Said Zanki bin Al Amir Al-Kabir Aq Sunqur was born in the month of Shawwal in the year of 1118 CE. He and his family were linked to a tribe called Sabayo in Turkey. Historical sources do not provide any information concerning his upbringing and teenage years. However, all the available records agree that Nuruddin Zanki's education was handled by his father, Imaduddin Zanki bin Aq Sunqur.

Nuruddin Zanki's grandfather, Aq Sunqur Al-Hajib (Qasim ad-Dawla Aksungur Al-Hajib), and his father, Imaduddin Zanki, was the only son of Aq Sunqur. In 1127 CE, Imaduddin Zanki had officially become the governor of Mosul, and in 1128 CE Imaduddin

Zanki succeeded in ruling over Aleppo. Nuruddin Zanki was the second son of Imaduddin and had three brothers: the eldest brother named Saifudin Ghazi and his younger brothers named Quthbuddin and Nusratuddin. Given his father's position as a military commander, Nuruddin Zanki's life was in relatively modest conditions of sufficiency and safety. The education provided by his father encompassed the Arabic language, religious knowledge, as well as warfare sciences comprising archery, horsemanship, and other related skills (Nur et al., 2022).

After his father died when Nuruddin Zanki was 28, he succeeded him and continued the responsibilities his father had left unfinished and sat in the ranks of government in the month of Rabiul Akhir in 1146 CE. Nuruddin Zanki started focusing on taking most of Northern Syria under his control (Alatas, 2012). His achievements at the beginning of his reign included his success in seizing the city of Aleppo and in conquering the Harran region in 1159 CE. Zanki also continued the mission that his father had set, which was conquering the Ja'bar fortress and succeeded in occupying the Baalbek region. His conquest of the Baalbek and Mosul regions made it easier for him to unite Muslims in the fight against the Crusaders (Pamungkas, 2018).

Nuruddin Zanki was pious, ascetic, and strongly adherent to the Sunnah. Although the jurisprudence he used was the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, or Hanafism, he was not fanatical about others. He always performed congregational prayers, regularly read the Qur'an, and never missed attending assemblies of knowledge. In these studies, he listened to the narration of hadith and later also narrated it to others. The knowledge he received was not only restricted to his personal practice but also passed on to his soldiers, the government, and the people under his ruling. Furthermore, he strictly safeguarded his body from forbidden materials and always maintained his purity. As a ruler, he was known as a just man, leading him to be honored with the title al-Malik al-Adil (Alatas, 2012).

The acts of upholding justice during Nuruddin Zanki's reign, including the justice system, the justice process, and the selection of judges and qadis (Muslim judges who make decisions according to the Shari'ah (Islamic law)), were carried out firmly and transparently, providing no room for fraud and bribery between judges and defendants. It is said that Nuruddin Zanki would openly discharge individuals from their positions to protect the public from his maltreatment. Everyone was equal before the law, and he was no exception. In maintaining justice, Nuruddin Zanki abided by Sharia, believing that Sharia was the source of justice, no more and no less.

#### ***b. Nuruddin Zanki's Political Networks***

Nuruddin Zanki (1146–1174 CE) was a political leader celebrated for his continuous efforts to consolidate Islamic forces in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia in defiance of the Crusades. Using political and diplomatic maneuvers, he built a network of alliances with several Islamic leaders and with the Byzantine Empire (Anggoro, 2014).

In one of his political speeches, Zanki stated that the Muslim community in Syria and Egypt needed to return due to several varying interconnected factors. He, who had lived for nearly three decades and who was known as a strong, just, and wise leader, was successfully able to maintain a peaceful lifestyle unaffected by problems and suffering despite facing various difficulties and sufferings in uniting Muslim forces between the Euphrates and the Nile River located in Egypt. Additionally, he would in time be able to

help guide and accompany the scholars. His ability to lead and delegate to scholars was a reflection of Islamic teaching practice and communal governance. The principles extended to the way he managed his government administration. His duties included ensuring the country and its people stayed mindful of God's revelations to them and establishing the enforcement of the Shari'a-rooted government so that the country and its people remain obedient to Allah swt. (Alatas, 2012).

Zanki made a discovery in the information exchange system between his army commanders by utilizing pre-existing pigeons. As perceived by Francesco Gabrieli, Zanki was the first Muslim, even the first person in the world, to use this technique in information sharing. This suggests that Islam is currently the most broadly practiced religion in the world. Moreover, according to Amin Maalouf and Nuruddin Zanki, people of Franks needed help in the process of disseminating information.

Zanki fused several strong religious proselytizing actions with armed politics. He undertook surveys of Syria and Egypt and accompanied the Franks, who came from Edessa. In 1147–1148 CE, Edessa and Antioch were vulnerable. However, the Second Crusade under the leadership of Conrad III of Germany and Louis VII of France was conquered and defeated. The crusade experienced difficulties and failed to return to Edessa, as Edessa was reunited with Nuruddin (Hillenbrand, 2005).

In 1154 CE, Zanki established Damascus as his government capital. As Zanki was the most prominent cleric in Syria, the attention was focused on Egypt and the Fatimid dynasty, which was more sympathetic and understanding towards the internal issues of Nuruddin and the Crusaders. Ascalon was accompanied by Franks and several members of the Fatimid dynasty who provided accommodation for them. Others also mentioned that Zanki also provided the same assistance to them. Based on the orders of the Kurdish soldier Shirkuh, in 1168–1169 CE, the faith of Muslims was devoured by the Crusaders in their venture to overpower Egypt. Salahudin Ayyubi, the ruler of Shirkuh, was the one who narrated the leadership of the Muslim army in Egypt in 1169 CE. As Zanki's aide, Salahuddin acted in the founding of the Fatimid dynasty in 1171 CE. Thus, it can be concluded that Nuruddin had laid the groundwork of the faith of Muslims and recovered the legality of the Abbasid Caliph, namely the Sunni.

Following the success in confronting the Second Crusade and fortifying Egypt's power in running the Abbasid Caliphate, Muslims continued to showcase their dominance under the reign of Nuruddin Zanki. Muslims became more assured in their ways of upholding Islam, specifically in the regions of Sham, which had suffered from the Crusaders' invasion. Zanki had the ability and charisma to persuade all Muslims to repel the Crusaders from Islamic countries, strengthening Islamic influence throughout Mesopotamia, Sham, most of Africa, and the Arab lands. This is what sets Nuruddin Zanki apart from previous leaders.

It was believed that the Fall of Ar-Ruha (Edessa) had a profound effect on the European community and prompted Islam to immediately start a new Crusaders' campaign to the European community. The Crusade attacked Damascus under the order of the European authority, and at that time, Damascus was led by Mu'inuddin Unur, an appeasing Muslim leader who often collaborated with Europe. It is uncertain that the primary target of the Crusaders was Damascus given a close diplomatic connection between the Ethiopian people and the Damascus government. However, as the Crusaders

were advancing to Damascus, Mu'inuddin Unur could understand how it was perceived by the European community. To safeguard Damascus, he sent messages requesting support and urging assistance from Nuruddin Zanki and Saifuddin Ghazi.

In general, Nuruddin Zanki was an expert in war strategy, and one of the military strategies he employed involved identifying the enemy in handling his enemies. The following are the literary strategies he used in analyzing works of the Crusade:

As a ruler of the Islamic state, Zanki called on his people to wage jihad in the path of Allah. He expressed that the purpose of the war was to uphold Islamic norms and the sacred customs practiced by the Europeans. This message was conveyed to all Muslims living in Syria and northern Iraq so that they would understand the purpose of this war. Despite having diverse views and beliefs, Zanki managed to gain the trust and earn high regard from Muslims in Syria, Iraq, and the Arabian Peninsula. They perceived him as the leader of the jihad against the Crusaders, and they were ready to fight for Islam in times that the Crusaders referred to (Abdullah, 2016).

The jihad led by Zanki encouraged many Muslims to fight with him in protecting lives seized by the Crusades. Using this opportunity, he launched military operations by building strong public opinion and advising the ulama to respect Nuruddin Zanki's life. He planted the idea that failure to participate in jihad would bring public criticism and questions against their nationalism, benefiting the government from their efforts (El-Azhari, 2016). His decision was a primary factor that drove people to work hard and make Egypt more cooperative as well as obtain the necessary help in dealing with the situation they were facing.

Zanki's strategic political actions in the religious sphere included establishing madrasahs (Islamic schools), writing scholarly works, and mentoring Shia Muslims. The assemblies of Islamic studies set out by Zanki were aimed to promote understanding of the strong religious beliefs of the community. He stated that he would be pleased to share the knowledge he obtained with the general public. He also added that once people had finished reading it, they could use it for self-improvement. Furthermore, he said that Islamic teachings cannot be accurately explained by referring to any unverified sources or from the perspective of the teaching of the Cross.

#### a. Establishing Islamic Assemblies

In establishing the Islamic Assemblies, Zanki's conviction in knowledge and in religion was utterly strong; thus, he established madrasahs to educate the coming generation. His steadfast efforts in providing religious knowledge to children were aimed at making them excel both in worldly knowledge and in Islamic teachings. The madrasahs founded by Zanki were not simply teaching Hanafism but also serving as a guide for their way of life. On this, he said that he also referred to other schools of thought such as the Maliki, Hanbali, and Shafi'i and stated that although there were differences between current views, propositions, and *hujjah* (reasoning/legal proof), he remained willing to uphold the Islamic faith (Ash-Shallabi, 2016).

The first person to build Dar al-Hadith (House of Hadith) was Nuruddin Zanki. This institution was used to strengthen and weaken the hadith. Zanki said that his focus was on hadith education because he wished to study the life of the Prophet. In addition, he practiced the Sunnah of the Prophet SAW and likened his actions to the narrated hadith.

With mosques functioning as places to worship and learn, Zanki's purpose was to assert religious values in every community through extensive knowledge taught by pious scholars through activities such as attending assemblies, sitting with the people, and gathering with qadis, fuqaha (Islamic jurists), and muftis (Muslim legal experts), which were parts of the study of the Qur'an, hadith, and other religious books. Zanki gave substantial attention and respect to the scholars and they often asked for Zanki's help in solving various governmental-related problems.

During his reign, Zanki placed significance on the scholars' comprehension of stability in Syria. He explained that there was no evidence showing that any sword strikes or spear thrusts done by his troops were never without the approval of the scholars, thus, he tended to respect the scholars more than the leaders of his troops.

#### b. The Suppression of Shiah Islam

The Abbasid dynasty, recognized as the most influential figure in the Islamic realm at that time, was humble and unsuspecting of the political situation surfacing within the Islamic community as a whole. This resulted in the emergence of the Fatimid dynasty, designed by Shias with the aim of overpowering the Abbasid dynasty. Nuruddin Zanki who was born in Syria began his endeavors by expanding Islam through the Zanki dynasty he was leading. He would explain all the Islamic teachings carried out and the prayers offered to ease the hardships endured by the Abbasid dynasty.

The first confrontation between Sunnis and Shias is associated with Imanuddin Zanki and the Assassins, a traitor to Shia Islam. This implies that the most fitting leader of the Fatimid dynasty was Nizar Imam. The Assassins' mission was adhering to Abbasid principles by supporting political leaders. Some of their cover tactics were living with ordinary people or Sufis, spreading to several locations, and attacking using poisoned knives. They preferred their working relationship with their Christian colleagues, and they supported the missions in relation to the Sunni community. Their consistent success in their missions instilled fear among Sunni Islamic leaders.

In every region under his rule, Zanki consistently carried out an eviction of the Shia community. Shirkuh, the military general who replaced Zanki, established Egypt as the center of the Fatimid dynasty government in 1169 CE. Until 1171 CE, attempts to eradicate the Shia people were methodically carried out through Salahuddin Ayyubi. Meanwhile, Zanki succeeded in emphasizing the significance of the Fatimid dynasty. According to him, were Muslims to return to the path given by the intended sign, then they would return to the true teachings encompassed in the core values of Islamic education.

In the economic sphere, Zanki issuing the tax abolition policy was a crucial aspect of his administration. Such a policy boosted trade and the economy of the people, significantly benefiting them. In addition, Zanki also exhibited his strong commitment to Islam by facilitating Muslims in understanding Islam, thus achieving their ultimate goal of excluding the Cross and its influence in the Muslim community. In the social context, his establishment of institutions was a fundamental pillar of his policy. He cared deeply for the community, and it is shown in the numerous hospitals that he built. One of the hospitals he had built in Syria was the Damascus Hospital, marking his contribution to medicine and medical science. At that time, Islamic development was reflected in its hospitals, which were far more advanced than those in Europe. They were built in the Damascus neighborhood, where anyone treated was not allowed to stay there alone and had to be

accompanied by family members and friends. Should no other location providing treatment be available, it would be found in the Damascus neighborhood.

Furthermore, Zanki established orphanages to take care of his people without specifically handling the core issues that needed immediate attention. A great number of children in Syria and its neighboring areas were in anguish due to the ongoing conflict between Muslims and the Crusaders. Legal policies that made use of the Sharia officer were responsible under Zanki's administration, laying the foundation for sustainable justice and peace.

Sharia law was first established during the visit to Mosul. Zanki reflected the principles of Sharia, set to improve people's well-being by enforcing laws in adherence to Islamic law. He strongly urged the nation to refrain from doing things despised and prohibited in Islamic teachings. Furthermore, according to Islamic law, Zanki counseled that no punishment should be given to those who belong to the qadi community without offering support or even lessening the consequences.

Zanki was also one of the first to establish Dar al-'Adl, the House of Justice. Originally, the House of Justice in Damascus was a judicial organization meant to handle matters that were unmanageable by most people. This was carried out by Zanki to follow Islamic law in order to oversee a special judiciary. He stated that this was done to ensure that the organization he led could effectively apply the principles of justice, without comparing Islam with other religions or comparing the poor with the rich, and rise alongside those with higher positions or even leaders who were above the commoners.

### c. Islamic Diplomacy

The Crusades caused Zanki's struggle and evoked his resistance against the Crusaders, which was also widely abhorred by Muslims. Despite only playing a minor role in this war, due to his relatively short reign, Zanki planned to implement new strategies against the Crusaders, who were still in control in the Muslim community after the events of the Second Crusade. One of his most famous speeches is his encouragement to return and resettle in Jerusalem following the Crusaders' loss. After the Second Crusade, several incidents between Muslims and Franks caused tension. However, one of the most momentous Islamic events during the Crusade era was the conversion of some of the Jews to Islam, or more precisely, the Jews' release from the Crusader rulers by Salahuddin Ayyubi in 1187 CE.

In November of 1148 CE, Mas'ud, an Amir of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum who resided in Konya, agreed to travel to the city of Marash, which was under the leadership of Raymond, who was part of the Crusader power in Antioch. Raymond immediately sent an order to protect Marash, and in response to that, Mas'ud requested assistance to pacify the enemy from Zanki. Zanki agreed and planned strategies to help the Amir (leader). However, when Nuruddin encountered Raymond and his army in an area called Afamiya, Nuruddin decided to withdraw from the battlefield. Several months after the incident, precisely in June of 1149 CE, Zanki resumed his journey to Antioch and traveled to the fortress of Inab.

Zanki's diplomatic strategies in the Middle East were focused on fortifying Islamic authority to fight against the Crusaders. The strategies included strengthening alliances with other Muslim rulers, defending Islamic territories, and establishing relations with the

Byzantine Empire to ensure their uninvolvedness with the Crusaders. As part of his efforts to uphold Islamic values in the surrounding region, Zanki forged a brief alliance with the Byzantine Emperor. Due to Zanki's efforts to weaken the Crusader movement, he spent a great amount of his time in Jerusalem, the center of Crusader rulers. Under his leadership, Jerusalem was thriving. In fighting the Crusaders, he requested assistance from the Muslim rulers he had unified, and troops from Syria, the Arabian Peninsula, and Iraq, along with their weaponry, were immediately deployed to attack the Crusaders in the conquering Islamic territories along the coast of Jerusalem (Ash-Shallabi, 2016).

This event left a profound impact on reinforcing relations between Islamic kings and rulers as it provided a firm foundation of trust as well as unity and collaboration in fighting the opposing parties (Nur et al., 2022). In addition to building alliances with Islamic rulers, Zanki also expanded relationships with religious leaders. As a result, Zanki's image goes beyond just being a military fighter (Hillenbrand, 2005).

Zanki showcased outstanding military skills in the many battles Zanki had fought, prompting him to lead his armies on numerous occasions. He was highly skilled at horse riding, appearing as though he and the horse were one being. He and his troops also effectively suppressed enemy soldiers using horses as their vehicles (SYAMAL, 2017). During the Crusades under Salahuddin's leadership, the division of troops was decided on the basis of the types of weapons used. Salahuddin formed a cavalry group, assigned for combat, investigation, and stakeout. This cavalry was also tasked to assess the enemy's weaknesses and locate their whereabouts. These horse-riding troopers had notable advantages, such as strong physical strength, knowledge of spearmanship, and other masteries in the art of warfare (Shallabi, 2021).

During Zanki's reign, the focus of the fight was on the Second Crusade and avoiding conflict with fellow Muslims by attempting to create united Islamic territories in Syria through compelling and compassionate measures. Unfortunately, Zanki died in 1174 CE, approximately 13 years before the reconquest of Jerusalem. Although failing in conquering Jerusalem (al-Quds), he did in some measure succeed in freeing Jerusalem through the liberation of Islamic territories from the hands of the Crusaders. In this regard, Zanki established diplomacy, which led to creating a framework for a stronger coalition (Alatas, 2012).

Furthermore, Zanki provided guidance on tactics in ensuring the Crusaders were at the right time and location, showing the extent of his sacrifice in fighting the Crusaders. This phenomenon contributed to the stronger bond between the Muslim rulers and their people, progressively boosting shared understanding, teamwork, and coordination in defeating a common opponent. It is certain that the sole conflict in the region was the one between the Muslims and the Crusaders (Dkk, 2012). Zanki's goal in power was to expand Islamic faith teachings in the surrounding territories the Crusaders contested. Despite Zanki's vigorous efforts, Crusader movements became increasingly prominent, and Zanki would have to spend more time in Jerusalem.

### *c. Discussion*

Zanki is recognized as one of the key figures in the Islamic history of the 12th century, particularly in connection to the Crusades. As the leader of the Zanki dynasty, he was known for his efforts to unite Muslims in the regions of Syria, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia to confront terror from the Crusaders. Through political strategy and diplomacy

treated with caution, Zanki successfully created a solid network of alliances with many Muslim leaders and even established relations, albeit briefly, with the Byzantine Empire (Abdullah, 2016). Zanki employed diplomatic approaches to consolidate his position in the Middle East regions. Through forging alliances with various Muslim rulers, such as those of Damascus and Egypt, he was able to form a united front against the Crusaders. Furthermore, his notable achievements included creating policies to strengthen Sunni institutions and spreading Sunni teachings in an effort to counter Shia influence in his domain, leading to the establishment of madrasahs in many areas.

One of Zanki's greatest contributions was his efforts to unify the disunited Muslim communities due to internal conflict and differences in mazhab (a school of Islamic jurisprudence). He recognized that unity was essential in dealing with external dangers. Ultimately, he succeeded in mitigating tensions among Islamic groups and cultivating solidarity among them through employing inclusive political approaches and executing strategic diplomacy (Anggoro, 2014).

#### 4. Conclusion

Nuruddin Zanki was an important historical figure from the Zanki dynasty, ruling Syria from 1146 to 1174. He was a distinguished leader and known for his achievements in uniting Muslim forces and fighting the Crusaders and for his substantial role in the historical occurrence of the Crusades.

Zanki's diplomacy in the Near East was centered on exerting Islamic dominance to confront the Crusades. Among his diplomatic endeavors are uniting Muslim rulers, protecting territories of Islam, and building a connection with the Byzantines, all of which are aimed at battling their shared enemy, the Crusaders. Seeking assistance from Muslim rulers of Syria, the Arabian Peninsula, and Iraq, he succeeded in mobilizing the combined troops to attack the opposing forces. He also ensured absolute devotion towards Islamic principles to fulfill his mission, and as a result, Muslims became increasingly dedicated and faithful in their pursuit of victory.

In his leadership, Zanki cultivated an extensive and strategic political network in facing the Second Crusade by building alliances with Islamic leaders in the Sham, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia regions. Through the negotiations and agreements with these aforementioned parties, a unified stance in politics and military between the leaders boosted Islamic power against the Crusaders, maintaining the security and stability of his country. Some of the policies he implemented during his rule included military, religious, economic, social, and legal policies. Additionally, the political system formed by Zanki was exclusively focused on instilling Islamic laws and enhancing the well-being of his Amirs while disseminating the principles of Islam and jihad to the people.

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