AN ANALYSIS OF AYYUBID MILITARY MANOEUVRES DURING THE BATTLE OF HATTIN BASED ON HISTORICAL SOURCES

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Abstract

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The Ayyubid forces, under the leadership of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi, had successfully liberated Bayt al-Maqdis after the Battle of Hattin, which witnessed the defeat of the Crusaders led by the Guy of Lusignan, and this proved to be a significant event in the history of the Ayyubid Sultanate. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the discourse on Ayyubid military manoeuvres during the Battle of Hattin based on historical literary works, as well as the war strategies employed by Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi during the battle. This qualitative study adopted historical methods and content analysis by examining primary and secondary sources that discuss the Ayyubid military campaigns implemented during the Battle of Hattin. Findings reveal that historical literary works authored by classical historians and modern scholars, such as Ibn al-Athir, Ibn Shaddad, Karen Armstrong and Carole Hillenbrand, provide discussions on the Ayyubid military's background and the strategies employed during the Battle of Hattin, which ultimately led to the liberation of Bayt al-Maqdis. These discussions highlight the Ayyubid military operations during the Battle of Hattin and Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi's leadership prowess in commanding the Ayyubid forces to reclaim Bayt al-Maqdis

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Introduction:-
The liberation of Bayt al-Maqdis was a complex military mission. According to Altan (2014), one of Nur al-Din Zanki's aspirations and objectives during his rule in Syria was to expel and eliminate the Crusaders from Bayt al-Maqdis. Based on this statement, it is clear that efforts to liberate Bayt al-Maqdis had already been undertaken by Muslim dynasties prior to the reign of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi. One these dynasties was the Zengid (Zangid or Zankid) dynasty, led by Imad al-Din al-Zanki and Nur al-Din Mahmud al-Zanki. The Zengid military's main strategy was to first capture cities ruled by the Crusaders around Bayt al-Maqdis. However, the military operations launched by the Zengid dynasty did not succeed in liberating Bayt al-Maqdis due to the death of Nur al-Din Mahmud al-Zanki in 1174.

Every mission launched by the Muslim armies was thwarted by the Crusaders, who were determined to seize Muslim-controlled cities through counteroffensives. Indirectly, the conquest of enemy-controlled cities became a method of warfare applied by both Muslim and Crusader forces. Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi, who was a trusted confidant of Nur al-Din Mahmud al-Zanki, also employed the strategy of recapturing cities under Crusader control throughout his military campaigns to liberate Bayt al-Maqdis. However, the Battle of Hattin became the turning point in the liberation of Bayt al-Maqdis when the combined Crusader forces were defeated by the Ayyubid army under the command of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi. This present study had examined the Ayyubid military manoeuvres during the Battle of Hattin and the liberation of Bayt al-Maqdis as presented by historical sources.

Scope of the Study:-
According to Noh (2011), Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi succeeded in uniting the Muslim community, which had previously been fragmented and vulnerable to enemy invasions. The Ayyubid military reached a level of achievement under the leadership of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi that later became a source of great pride for the Muslims, and its strength was greatly feared by the Crusaders. Abu-munshar (2019) further stated that the Battle of

Hattin in 1187 became the decisive turning point in the conquest of Bayt al-Maqdis, as the Ayyubid army succeeded in defeating the combined Crusader forces led by Guy de Lusignan, the ruler of the Crusaders in Bayt al-Maqdis. Based on these accounts, this study aimed to examine the Ayyubid military's manoeuvres during the Battle of Hattin and the liberation of Bayt al-Maqdis as recorded in historical texts.

This study's research design comprised a combination of historical research and content analysis. This approach entails the systematic collection of data and the objective evaluation of relevant materials. The data and factual evidence obtained were subjected to analytical examination and subsequently presented in narrative form. Data collection involved multiple sources, including books, articles and academic journals. Both primary and secondary sources pertinent to the Ayyubid military campaign during the Battle of Hattin were utilized. Primary sources included al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh by Ibn al-Athir and the literary works of Ibn Shaddad. The collected materials were critically examined and organized during the data analysis process into specific thematic categories.

A Background of the Ayyubid Military:-
The Ayyubid military system originated with the establishment of the Ayyubid dynasty itself under its military commander, Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi. His full name was Salah al-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub, also known as al-Malik al-Nasir I Yusuf ibn Najm al-Din Ayyub ibn Shadi Abu al-Muzaffar Salah al-Din. According to Ibn Khallikan (1971), his given name was Abu al-Muzaffar Yusuf ibn Ayyub ibn Shadhi, and he was popularly known as Salah al-Din. The title al-Malik was conferred upon him by the Abbasid Caliph following his successful overthrow of the Shi'ite Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt, thereby restoring the allegiance of the Egyptian Muslims to the Abbasid Caliphate. The title al-Nasir was later awarded to him after successfully restoring Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) to Muslim control. Nevertheless, he became more widely recognized due to his popular appellation, Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi, rather than by his full given name. European historians, however, referred to him as Saladin (Noh, 2011).

According to al-Sallabi (2010), Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi was initially entrusted by Nur al-Din Mahmud al-Zanki, the ruler of Sham at that time, with the responsibility of assisting the Fatimid Caliphate in deterring the incursions by Crusaders. At that time, the Fatimid Caliph al-'Adid, ruler of Egypt, was aged and infirm. Before al-'Adid's death, Salah al-Din had already initiated efforts to restore Egypt's loyalty to the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad by ordering the Friday khutbah to be delivered in the name of the Abbasid Caliph rather than the Fatimid ruler (al-'Amiri, 2021). Hamka (2018) noted that Salah al-Din relocated his family to Egypt following al-'Adid's death in order to further consolidate his political authority in the region. The strengthening of his political position in Egypt however, aroused jealousy and resentment in some quarters, and this dissatisfaction created tension between Nur al-Din Mahmud al-Zanki and Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi. Nonetheless, these tensions did not persist, as Nur al-Din's death provided Salah al-Din the opportunity to declare himself the ruler of both Egypt and Sham.

During Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi's reign, the Ayyubid army emerged as a formidable force due to its effective warfare strategies. It comprised diverse ethnic groups, including Kurds, Turks and Arabs, that not only enhanced the army's tactical capabilities but also instilled unity among its ranks. Salah al-Din played a decisive role in consolidating the Ayyubid military's strength through his charismatic leadership. He believed that the cavalry was the backbone of the Ayyubid forces on the battlefield. Among the strategies he employed was psychological warfare and the use of deception against enemies. In addition, he maximized the military's strength by forging alliances with local tribes and incorporating them into the Ayyubid army (Humphreys, 1977).

The superiority and strength of the Ayyubid army were clearly demonstrated in the Battle of Hattin in 1187, during which the forces led by Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi achieved a decisive victory over the Crusaders and successfully recaptured Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem). The military excellence of the Ayyubid forces under Salah al-Din thus stands not only as evidence of his remarkable leadership but also a reflection of a well-organized and highly efficient military force capable of formulating and executing sophisticated warfare strategies.

The Ayyubid Military Campaign during the Battle of Hattin:-
The Battle of Hattin in 1187 was one of the most significant conflicts extensively recorded by historians specializing in the War of the Crusades. This event has been studied in depth by Muslim scholars, such as Ibn Khallikan and al-Sallabi, as well as Western scholars, such as Hillenbrand and Armstrong. 'Ulwan (2010) referred to Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi as the 'Hero of the Battle of Hattin' and the 'Liberator of Jerusalem', owing to the Muslim army's success in reclaiming Bayt al-Maqdis following the battle.

Salah al-Din's plan to retake Bayt al-Maqdis gained momentum after the victory at the Battle of Hattin in 1187. One of the major causative factors of the battle was the aggressive nature of Reynald of Chatillon, the Ruler of the Kingdom of Karak, who launched an attack on a caravan of Muslim merchants and pilgrims. The provocation became even more serious as one of Salah al-Din's own relative was among those traveling in the caravan (Ibn al-Athir, 1965).

According to al-Sallabi (2008), the Kingdom of Karak had previously entered into a peace treaty and truce with Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi. This agreement was largely motivated by Karak's strategic location between Egypt and Syria, and it had guaranteed the safe passage of Muslim caravans through its territory. However, Reynald of Châtillon violated this treaty by instructing his soldiers to plunder the Muslim caravan and take its members as prisoners.

According to Armstrong (2001), Reynald of Châtillon had repeatedly violated the truce, thereby bringing disgrace upon Islam. During the assault and robbery on the Muslim caravan, one of Reynald's men reportedly reminded him of the existing peace agreement and truce. Nevertheless, Reynald openly mocked the Prophet Muḥammad PBUHwhile arrogantly declaring to the Muslims that, "Let Muḥammad come and save you". This act of arrogance further inflamed Muslim sentiments and reinforced the justification for the Islamic forces to wage war against Reynald of Châtillon.

Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi sought counsel from his advisors and resolved to assemble his army. The Muslims' mission at that time was to reclaim the city of Bayt al-Maqdis and to defend the honour of Islam. The Ayyubid army began their campaign by marching from Damascus towards Ra's al-Ma'. A historian from that period, Ibn Shaddad, personally accompanied the battle march. In his literary work, Ibn Shaddad (1897) had recorded his own sentiments during the events of the Battle of Hattin in 1187, noting that the struggle was not only filled with supplications but was also accompanied by the recitation of the tasbīḥ and performance of prayers on the battlefield.

When news spread that Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi had completed preparations for military engagement, the Crusaders had made preparations to cross the Tiber River in anticipation of confronting the Ayyubid army. The Muslims won the opening encounter with relative ease, as Salah al-Din exploited the extreme hot weather to his advantage. As a result, the Crusaders soon suffered from a severe shortage of water supplies. This strategy of utilizing climatic conditions weakened the physical endurance and morale of the Crusaders (Richards, 2016). According to al-Balushi and 'Iwad (2022), the strategies employed by Salah al-Din during the Battle of Hattin in 1187 were the product of his skill and experience in assessing the strategic position of the Crusaders during warfare. In addition to the psychological and physical pressure arising from limited access to water, Salah al-Din deliberately sought to fragment the unity of the Crusader alliance while simultaneously capitalizing on their tactical errors. This was evident in his initial strategy of crossing Tiber Straits (al-Sallabi, 2008).

Salah al-Din's efforts ultimately led to fruition, as many of the Crusader forces began to withdraw due to acute thirst and exhaustion. The Ayyubid army succeeded in killing approximately 10,000 soldiers, including several prominent Crusader commanders. As for the Crusaders, this marked one of the most devastating defeats in their history. Salah al-Din's forces advanced toward 'Akka following the victory at the Battle of Hattin, and capturing nearly all the towns surrounding Bayt al-Maqdis. The Muslim army then consolidated their ranks before proceeding to achieve Salah al-Din's principal objective, namely the liberation of Bayt al-Maqdis itself ('Ulwan, 2010).

The Conquest of Bayt al-Maqdis by Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi:-
The state of Bayt al-Maqdis began to change following the decisive victory by Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi at the Battle of Hattin in 1187. Ibn al-Athir (1965) stated that Reynald of Châtillon and the Guy of Lusignan were brought before Salah al-Din in a state of dire thirst and Salah al-Din instructed his attendants to provide them with water. According to Nor and Noor (2012), as mentioned by Ibn al-Athir, this gesture merely reflected the Arab tradition of hospitality and courtesy toward guests.

Salah al-Din then executed Reynald of Châtillon for his actions that had grievously affronted as well as tarnished the honour of Islam. This act instilled fear in the Guy of Lusignan. However, Salah al-Din clarified that the killing of a fellow monarch was not a permissible tradition, but the execution of Reynald was justified due to his transgressions and violations of agreed norms. The Guy of Lusignan was later sent to Damascus (al-Sallabi, 2007).

The conquest of Bayt al-Maqdis by Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi occurred on 2 October 1187. The Kingdom of Jerusalem, which had once triumphed during the First Crusade, now faced its decline. According to Lane-Poole (1964), after successfully capturing the city, Salah al-Din offered the Crusaders in Bayt al-Maqdis the option of withdrawing and surrendering peacefully. Hence, the Crusaders ultimately submitted and retreated in an orderly manner following their devastating defeat. Taqqush (2011) described how Salah al-Din strove to ensure that the sanctity of Bayt al-Maqdis was not desecrated by further bloodshed, which reflected the precedent set by 'Umar ibn al-Khattab centuries earlier. According to al-Zaydi (2011), Salah al-Din granted the Crusaders forty days to evacuate the city and those who resisted were required to pay a specified amount of dinars to the Islamic authorities. The wealth acquired, which was deemed as spoils of war, was then allocated to support the Crusader captives who were ill, as well as their elderly or children.

Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi invited al-Qadi Muhyi al-Din ibn al-Zaki to deliver the first Friday sermon at al-Aqsa Mosque in celebration of the liberation of Bayt al-Maqdis ('Ulwan, 2010). The sermon emphasised several key themes, such as (al-Sallabi, 2007):
- A reminder of Allah's pleasure upon the mujahidin.
- The role, history and virtues of the al-Aqsa Mosque and Bayt al-Maqdis for the Muslim ummah.
- Words of congratulation to Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi and his army for the liberation of Bayt al-Maqdis.
- Expressions of gratitude to Allah for the victory of the Muslims.
- A call to jihad in the cause of Islam and the liberation of other cities into Islamic rule.

According to al-Sallabi (2007), Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi undertook several initiatives to restore Bayt al-Maqdis, which had long been under the Crusaders' control. Among these efforts was the removal of buildings that displayed overtly Christian-Crusader characteristics and replacing them with features symbolizing Islamic grandeur. With regard to the al-Aqsa Mosque, Taqi al-Din 'Umar is reported to have cleansed the Dome of the Rock (Qubbat al-Sakhrah) with rosewater. Christians were said to have wept in sorrow during this process of renewal, while Muslims embraced the changes with enthusiasm and joy.

Conclusion:-
The recapture of Bayt al-Maqdis stands as a monumental event in Islamic and Western history. The military genius and leadership of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi were not merely products of strategic calculation but deeply rooted in his unwavering commitment to defending the honour of Islam. Nevertheless, it was his military tactical brilliance in planning and executing the liberation that served as the decisive factor in the Muslims' victory. The wisdom of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi can also be traced to his upbringing, much of which was spent amongst the rulers and military elite and this moulded him into a formidable commander. His reliability and trustworthiness were evident in his close relationship with Nur al-Din Zanki, the ruler of Mosul, and these qualities ultimately paved the way for the establishment of the Ayyubid dynasty under his leadership and the formation of the Ayyubid military system. This study found that numerous sources had emphasized that the Battle of Hittin in 1187 was a defining moment associated with the might and excellence of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi. Both Western and Muslim scholars largely concur that Salah al-Din's triumph at Hittin had humiliated the Crusaders, and this had culminated in the liberation of Bayt al-Maqdis. Hence, Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi's strategies must be viewed as a consequence of his astute understanding of the Crusaders' political dynamics, mainly involving the Islamic and Crusader alliances.

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