

Plate 4.3 Jami' al-Nuri,
window-frame in sanctuary,
566-8/1170-3, Mosul, Iraq

Jihad Propaganda in the Time of Saladin

When Saladin succeeded Nur al-Din as the supreme *jihad* warrior and the architect of Muslim unity he continued to exploit the wide range of propaganda methods which had proved so successful in the time of Nur al-Din. The early Merits of Jerusalem work of al-Raba'i was read out in public in April 1187,⁶ at the time when Saladin's forces were preparing for the campaign which culminated in their taking Jerusalem. This is a clear indication of the emotional impact which the Merits of Jerusalem works now exerted on their audience.

Saladin's triumphant capture of Jerusalem, the climax of his career,

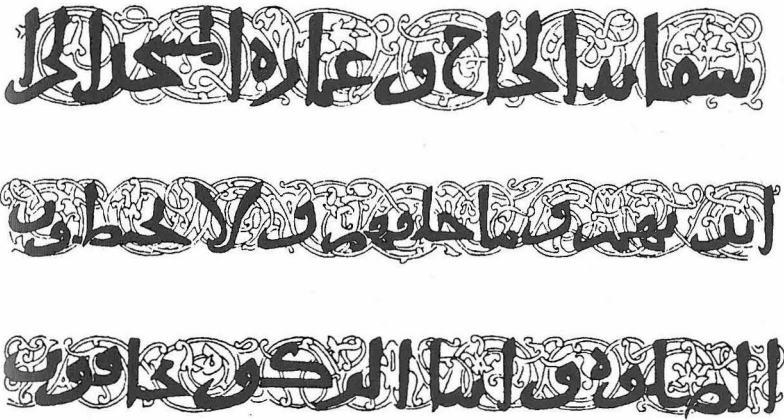


Figure 4.3 *Jami' al-Nuri*, inscriptions on columns, 566-8/1170-3, Mosul, Iraq

was not heralded by jubilation in Palestine and Syria alone. For once, a writer not in the immediate vicinity of Palestine was moved to compose a Merits of Jerusalem work. The famous Baghdad preacher, lawyer and historian Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 597/1200) wrote such a work, in which the shame of the Crusaders' conquest of Jerusalem is emphasised and the glory of Saladin's crowning achievement in recapturing it is extolled.⁷

Saladin was accompanied on campaign by prominent representatives of the '*ulama*' class. The Hanbalite legist Ibn Qudama (d. 620/1223), for example, was with Saladin when he made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem and he and his cousin 'Abd al-Ghani had been in Saladin's army in the campaigns of the 1180s. The work entitled *The Profession of Faith* of the Hanbalite scholar Ibn Batta was read out publicly by Ibn Qudama in 582/1186 on the eve of Saladin's decisive campaign against the Franks.⁸ In the time of Saladin, 'Abd al-Ghani wrote a work praising *jihad* which was read out in Damascene religious circles.⁹

As in the time of Nur al-Din, the poets in Saladin's entourage also emphasised the religious aspects of his career, stressing his prosecution of *jihad* and his role as an ideal Sunni ruler. The poet Ibn Sana' al-Mulk (d. 608/1211) addressed a rapturous panegyric to Saladin after his glorious victory at Hattin in 583/1187:¹⁰

You took possession of Paradises (*jinan*) palace by palace, when
 you conquered Syria fortress by fortress.
 Indeed, the religion of Islam has spread its blessings over
 created beings.
 But it is you who have glorified it . . .
 You have risen up in the darkness of the battle like the moon
 when it climbs slowly in the night.
 You have never shown yourself in battles without appearing,
 o Joseph, as beautiful as Joseph [in the Qur'an].

They attacked *en masse* like mountains, but the assaults of
 your chivalry have turned them into wool . . .
 Syria is not the only object of the congratulations addressed to
 you, but it is also every region and country.
 You have possessed the lands from east to west.
 You have embraced the horizons, plain and steppe . . .
 God has said: Obey him;
 We have heard Our Lord and obeyed.¹¹

These lines are permeated with Qur'anic allusions, not only from Sura 12 which tells the story of Joseph (a pun on one of Saladin's own names) but also Sura 70: 9 ('And the hills became as flakes of wool').¹² Above all, these lines demonstrate how Saladin is viewed as the favoured one of God who is carrying out His divine will and purpose.

Saladin's Islamic credentials are fully recognised on a surviving gold coin, minted in his name in Syria and dated 583/1187. On this coin, which may well be celebrating Saladin's victories at Hattin and Jerusalem, he is called 'the sultan of Islam and the Muslims'. Here is a piece of irrefutably contemporary evidence: a small but expensive coin on whose limited space the title chosen to describe Saladin is a triumphantly Islamic one.¹³ Given the high value of gold, it was used for the minting of coins on important commemorative occasions: the climax of Saladin's career in religious terms is thus recorded at the very time it happened in the most precious metal available.¹⁴

Saladin's *Jihad*: The Evidence of the Medieval Muslim Chroniclers

The Muslim sources expend much energy in presenting Saladin as a model Muslim, the champion of the faith. A typical example is the biography of Ibn Shaddad, which is worth analysing in some detail. As Holt points out, this work is divided into three distinct parts, by far the largest part (c. 83 per cent) being devoted to the enumeration of Saladin's merits and an account of the last six years of his life.¹⁵ This is clearly, then, a deliberate tilting of the evidence towards the last phase of Saladin's career with a view to presenting him at the peak of his achievements as the ideal *mujahid*. Conversely, it glosses over his rise to power in the wake of what might be viewed by a less laudatory commentator as a series of extremely opportune deaths – notably those of his uncle Shirkuh, of the Fatimid caliph, and even those of Nur al-Din himself and his son al-Malik al-Salih.

Ibn Shaddad was writing his biography of Saladin in the afterglow of the victories at Hattin and Jerusalem: indeed, he entered Saladin's service in 584/1188 and remained with his master until his death five years later. Understandably, his work is infused with exultant pride in Saladin's achievements. He does not only wish to praise his patron – which is, of course, the task of any court biographer – but he aims



Figure 4.4 Combatants,
Blacas ewer, inlaid brass,
629/1232, Mosul, Iraq

also to expatiate on the reconquest of Jerusalem and the victory of Islam over Christianity.

There are various events in Saladin's career which are taken by Ibn Shaddad as significant milestones in Saladin's spiritual evolution into an ideal *mujahid*. As early as his seizure of power in Egypt after the death of Shirkuh in 564/1168, Saladin 'gave up wine and renounced pastimes, putting on the garment of serious endeavour'.¹⁶ Saladin has re-established Sunni Islam in Egypt and is now ready to fight the Franks. Ibn Shaddad does not mention Saladin's truces with the Franks and he interprets Saladin's efforts to seize the lands of Nur al-Din from the latter's family as part of his devotion to *jihad*. He thus puts the best possible construction on manœuvres which a more impartial historian might describe as opportunistic.

Similarly, Ibn Shaddad gives a warm, adulatory account of his master's religious merits: 'Saladin was a man of firm faith, one who often had God's name on his lips.'¹⁷

Saladin's religious orthodoxy is stressed and we are assured that 'speculation never led him into any theological error or heresy'.¹⁸ The fact that Saladin left an empty treasury when he died is attributed by Ibn Shaddad to the fact that he had given away his wealth, dying with only forty-seven Nasirite *dirhams* and a single piece of Tyrian gold in his treasury.¹⁹ Thus Saladin's lack of care with money, a target of criticism by others, is turned into a pious virtue by his devoted admirer Ibn Shaddad. The two of them, Saladin and Ibn Shaddad, prayed together when they heard that the Franks intended to besiege Jerusalem and shortly afterwards 'came the joyful news that they had withdrawn and were returning to the region of al-Ramla'.²⁰

Saladin's prayers had been answered. So, in his personal life, which was seen by only a small handful of followers, Saladin is shown to be

pious and God-fearing. These virtues are then extended by Ibn Shaddad into his role as ruler, the dispenser of justice: 'He never turned away anyone who had suffered injustice.'²¹

Saladin's role as army general and supreme *mujahid* is of course given pride of place. He would make himself known to the rank and file of the soldiers in his army, creating bonds of loyalty and solidarity and enhancing corporate morale: 'He would traverse the whole army from the right wing to the left, creating a sense of unity and urging them to advance and stand firm at the right time.'²²

Sections of the *hadith* were read out by the '*ulama*' to the army 'while we were all in the saddle'.²³ No doubt these were the *hadith* that had to do specifically with *jihad* and the rewards of martyrdom in the path of God.²⁴

Ibn Shaddad also points out that he himself was one of those who wrote a work on *jihad* for Saladin, to whom he presented it in 584/1188-9: 'I had collected for him a book on *jihad* in Damascus during my stay there, with all its [*jihad*] precepts and etiquette. I presented it to him and he liked it and used to study it constantly.'²⁵ As for Saladin's zeal in the pursuance of Holy War, he was, according to Ibn Shaddad, 'more assiduous and zealous in this than in anything else'.²⁶ In his description of Saladin's qualities as a *mujahid*, Ibn Shaddad indulges in full-blown hyperbole: 'For love of the Holy War and on God's path he left his family and his sons, his homeland, his home and all his estates, and chose out of all the world to live in the shade of his tent.'²⁷

Saladin's other contemporary biographer, 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, also writes about him in laudatory terms in his work entitled *The Eloquent Exposition of the Conquest of Jerusalem (Al-fath al-qussi fi'l-fath al-Qudsi)*. Recent research has suggested that the work was written in Saladin's lifetime and that part of it was actually read out to him in 588/1192.²⁸ It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that the work has a tone of such high rhetoric and that in its introduction Saladin's conquest of Jerusalem is likened to the Prophet's *hijra* to Medina in the year 1/622.²⁹

In these circumstances, the evidence of the pro-Zengid Ibn al-Athir, often a stern critic of Saladin, is of especial value as a corrective to the heights of panegyric reached by Saladin's two contemporary biographers. Yet even Ibn al-Athir sees Saladin as being full of zeal for waging *jihad*, and when describing Saladin on his death praises him: 'He was much given to good deeds and fine actions, a mighty warrior of the *jihad* against the infidels.'³⁰

There is also value in the contemporary account of Saladin given by Ibn Jubayr, an outsider from Spain. He describes the pious foundations established by Saladin in Alexandria – colleges, hostels, baths and a hospital.³¹ He also praises Saladin for his just administration of the taxes. He sums up Saladin's achievements as follows: 'The memorable acts of the Sultan, his efforts for justice, and his stands in defence of Islamic lands are too numerous to count.'³² Ibn Jubayr



Figure 4.5 Riders, one on a barded horse, the other shooting a cross-bow, inlaid bronze flask, early thirteenth century, Iraq

never fails to eulogise Saladin, speaking of 'his memorable deeds in the affairs of the world and of religion, and his zeal in waging holy war against the enemies of God'.³³

Even though Ibn Jubayr stayed only a short while in the Levant, he must have heard such favourable views of Saladin as these from the people whom he met there. Thus the testimony of outsiders satisfactorily corroborates the statements of those close to Saladin.

Saladin's Personal *Jihad*

Like Nur al-Din, Saladin is presented in the sources as having undergone a moment of religious awakening after which he prosecuted *jihad* with a genuine sense of purpose, *personally* as well as publicly. However, as already mentioned, such presentations of Muslim rulers were clichés in the writings of the chroniclers; Saladin's son, al-Afdal, is also recorded as having a change of heart after Saladin's death.³⁴

Yet there is some justification for the belief that Saladin did undergo a genuine religious conversion. Certain disturbing experiences may well have exercised a deep impact on Saladin's own personal religious stance. First, in the years immediately following the death of Nur al-Din, Saladin survived two attacks from the Assassins,³⁵ one in 571/1175–6 and another in 581/1185. He also fell seriously ill and must have had time then to reflect on the fragility of human affairs. His adviser and biographer, 'Imad al-Din al-Isfahani, certainly views Saladin's illness as a key moment in his religious development and this seems a much more plausible interpretation than Saladin's alleged moral transformation whilst still in Egypt in the early 1170s. During his illness Saladin is said to have vowed that he would devote himself to taking Jerusalem whatever the cost. According to 'Imad al-Din, the illness was sent by God to Saladin 'to wake him from the sleep of forgetfulness'.³⁶

During Saladin's convalescence 'Imad al-Din took the opportunity to arrange for preachers and lawyers to speak to Saladin during Ramadan.³⁷ Another close adviser of his, al-Qadi al-Fadil, also tried to make Saladin take a vow that he would never fight against fellow Muslims again and that he would devote himself to the *jihad*.³⁸ Saladin's illness came soon after Reynald's audacious and offensive campaigns in the Red Sea which seem to have affected Saladin personally in a

way which the conventional and familiar warfare with the Franks in Palestine and Syria did not. Thus, behind the rhetoric and panegyric of his biographers, one may detect key events in Saladin's life which may well have influenced him spiritually and thus have made his *jihād* a more meaningful personal one.

Despite the evidence cited so far, the sources leave little doubt that even in his own time or shortly thereafter Saladin was not immune from criticism. According to some, his policy of expansionism (1174–86), called *jihād* in the sources, was directed at creating a personal power base strong enough to take on the Franks. To this end he fought fellow Muslims in Syria and Mesopotamia (not merely Shi'ite 'heretics' but rival princes and commanders who would not submit to his overlordship) and he turned away for long periods from attacking the Franks.

Even his devoted scribe, the Qadi al-Fadil, reproached him, saying: 'How shall we turn aside to fight with Muslims, which is forbidden, when we are called to war against the people of war?'³⁹

Saladin's ambitions could, with a more critical eye, be viewed as those of an empire-builder with aspirations far beyond the confines of Jerusalem, the Holy Land and Syria. Jerusalem was not the unique focus of Saladin's efforts in the 1170s and the early 1180s. After the death of al-Malik al-Salih, the son of Nur al-Din, in 1181, Saladin is revealed as having a grand design of expansionism which embraced – as he writes in a letter to the caliph at Baghdad – Mosul, Jerusalem, Constantinople, Georgia and the lands of the Almohads in the west. This design is seen in the light of the ultimate triumph of Islam and more especially the 'Abbasid caliphate, whose servant Saladin allegedly is. Even if the undeniable rhetoric is ignored, the underlying grandiose military design is apparent and it is in marked contrast to the more modest and focused designs of Nur al-Din.

Saladin's expansionist plans *eastwards*, which are reported only by Ibn al-Athir, also reflect personal and family territorial ambitions and cannot be construed as *jihād*. In a conversation between Saladin, his son al-Afdal and his brother al-'Adil, shortly before Saladin's death, he is reported to have said: 'We have now finished with the Franks and have nothing to do in this country. In which direction shall we turn?'⁴⁰ After some discussion, Saladin proceeds as follows:

You [al-'Adil] take some of my sons and a part of the army and attack Akhlat [in present-day eastern Turkey], and when I have finished with the land of Rum [Byzantium], I will come to you and we will press on from there into Azarbayjan. Then we will have access to the land of Persia. There is nobody there who could prevent us from it.⁴¹

This may well be, of course, an attempt by Ibn al-Athir (with his known bias towards Nur al-Din) to besmirch Saladin's reputation as a *jihād* fighter in Palestine and Syria, especially since he places this

conversation in his obituary notice of Saladin. But this could also be a true reflection of the importance of what Saladin and his contemporaries still felt to be the *real* centre of Muslim power, Iraq and Iran, and the influence which those lands still exerted on the Seljuq successor-states in Syria and Palestine. Clearly, according to Ibn al-Athir at least, the Franks were only one part of Saladin's grandiose design for himself and his family. It must be remembered in this context that Saladin came of Kurdish, not of Syrian or Palestinian stock, and he had begun life further east. That heritage would naturally have predisposed him to focus on the Jazira, eastern Anatolia and Iran.

Saladin and *Jihad* in Modern Scholarship

A very favourable attitude to Saladin, based on the accounts of 'Imad al-Din, his private secretary, and Ibn Shaddad, his army judge, was adopted by the Western Orientalist scholars Lane-Poole and Gibb, who view Saladin as imbued with high moral standards and motivated by a desire to restore the *Shari'a* and to act in obedience to the caliph.⁴²

As Gibb writes: 'For a brief but decisive moment, by sheer goodness and firmness of character, he raised Islam out of the rut of political demoralization.'⁴³

A critical stance towards Saladin's *jihad* has also been adopted very vigorously by some modern scholars. They too point to the fact that many of Saladin's military activities were directed against rival fellow Muslims, not all of whom were 'heretics', although Saladin's propagandists might label them as such. Ehrenkreutz, for example, asks rhetorically whether Saladin would have been remembered for anything other than 'a record of unscrupulous schemes and campaigns aimed at personal and family aggrandizement', if he had died from his serious illness in 581/1185?⁴⁴

Lyons and Jackson share this view and they point out that if Saladin had died he would have been remembered as 'a dynast who used Islam for his own purposes'.⁴⁵

Köhler also cuts a swathe through the aura of ideological probity surrounding Saladin's activities. He stresses that Saladin made a number of treaties with the Christian states of Europe and the Levant.⁴⁶ Saladin and his official advisers used *jihad* propaganda to legitimise his power and to present their opponents as allies of infidels. In reality, Saladin had just as few scruples as Zengi or Nur al-Din about making alliances with the Franks. This contrasts markedly with Saladin's *jihad* claims which are proclaimed at length in letters written for him by his advisers and addressed to the caliph, as well as in monumental inscriptions.⁴⁷ Heavily loaded epithets of religious abuse are levelled against Saladin's political opponents (even though they are fellow Muslims). Al-Qadi al-Fadil, Saladin's scribe, labels them rebels and hypocrites.⁴⁸ Köhler concludes with the rhetorical flourish that the longer Saladin undertook nothing of significance



Figure 4.6 Horse with crouching groom, inlaid metal ewer, thirteenth century, probably Iraq

links with the Italian maritime states to make money – and peace. Great wealth came to the Ayyubids from Levantine ports, such as Jaffa, Acre and Tyre. They feared that any serious disturbance in the ‘Levantine peace’ could provoke the launching of yet another Crusade from western Europe. Conciliation with the Franks was therefore preferable to confrontation. A typical example of this approach was al-Kamil’s opting for a treaty with the Franks in 618/1221 rather than conquering Damietta. The contemporary chronicler Ibn Wasil mentions that al-Kamil realised that if the kings of the Franks in Europe and the Pope should come to hear of any aggression on his part, even stronger Frankish reinforcements would be sent against Egypt.⁷⁵ Humphreys argues convincingly that the Ayyubids were terrified of the Franks who ‘just kept coming back’.⁷⁶

Thus the Ayyubids allowed the emotionally charged atmosphere which had peaked with the conquest of Jerusalem to relax in favour of *détente* with the Franks, and whilst religious rhetoric still spoke in grandiose terms about *jihad*, this Islamic discourse bore little relation to the political realities of the Ayyubid period.

In this period Jerusalem was even handed back to the Franks for a while – a political accommodation unthinkable in the time of Saladin – and later sacked by the Khwarazmians from Central Asia, who were at least nominally Muslims. These two events, following relatively close on each other within a bare half-century of Saladin’s recapture of Jerusalem, are a silent commentary on the ephemeral nature of extreme religious fervour.

***Jihad* in the Ayyubid Period: A Hollow Sham?**

Ibn al-Athir complains bitterly that *jihad* has disappeared in his own time:

Amongst the rulers of Islam we see not one who desires to wage *jihad* or aid . . . religion. Each one devotes himself to his pastimes and amusements and to wronging his flock. This is more dreadful to me than the enemy.⁷⁷

Certainly the evidence points to the *Zeitgeist* of the post-Saladin era as being one of *détente* rather than *jihad*; indeed, the Islamic sources which catalogue the events of this period dwell much more on inter-familial Ayyubid strife than on the conflict with the Franks. This suggests that the lack of interest in *jihad* may even have extended to some members of the learned classes.

The old alliance between the religious classes and the military leadership which had been forged so successfully under Nur al-Din and Saladin was in fact still present in certain cities in Syria in the Ayyubid period (see plates 4.13, 4.14, 4.15, 4.16); but it had lost its edge. Whilst the propagandists and poets of the Ayyubids honoured them with *jihad* titles, their commitment to *jihad* against the Franks



Plate 4.14 *Great Mosque, sanctuary facade (1923 photograph), probably twelfth–thirteenth centuries, Hama, Syria*

(Creswell Photographic Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, neg. C. 6064)

was generally not strong. The Ayyubids, like other contemporary Islamic princes (plates 4.17 and 4.18), were given strings of grandiose titles described by Balog as 'long, sonorous, self-important protocols'.⁷⁸ The difference between this and other contemporary titulature lies in its emphasis on *jihad*. Yet some of these titles praising Ayyubid efforts in *jihad* sound clichéd and hollow and often bear little relation to their actual activities against the Franks. Such titles form part of the legitimisation discourse of military leaders who had usurped power and craved religious credentials.⁷⁹ Such titles, used in poetry and court historiography, aimed at enhancing the prestige of the Ayyubid princes in the eyes of the population they ruled and *vis-à-vis* their political rivals.

Two Ayyubid princes, Saladin's brother, al-Malik al-'Adil (d. 596/1200), and Saladin's son, al-Malik al-'Aziz 'Uthman (d. 595/1198) are mentioned in a prayer, the text of which has survived from the period.

It calls on God to: 'Assist the armies of the Muslims and the phalanxes of those who believe in the One God and the inhabitants of the frontiers in the east and west of the land.' These two Ayyubid princes are given full-blown *jihad* titles: 'the warrior of *jihad*, the fighter on the frontier, the tamer of infidels and polytheists, the conqueror of rebels and heretics'.⁸⁰

A typical example of *jihad* titulature is that of the commander Aybak (d. 646/1248-9), the major-domo of the Ayyubid prince al-Malik al-Mu'azzam, in an inscription dated 610/1213-14: 'The warrior of *jihad*, the fighter on the frontier,⁸¹ the one supported [by God], the victorious, the one who campaigns [in the path of God], the defender of the frontier on behalf of [true] religion, the pillar of Islam. . .'.⁸² Aybak and his master al-Malik al-Mu'azzam were,⁸³ as it happens, keen opponents of the Franks, but often in the Ayyubid period there was a gulf between titulature and actual performance on the battlefield against the Franks.

Plate 4.15 Great Mosque, courtyard arcades (1923 photograph), probably twelfth-thirteenth centuries, Hama, Syria

(Creswell Photographic Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, neg. C. 6070)



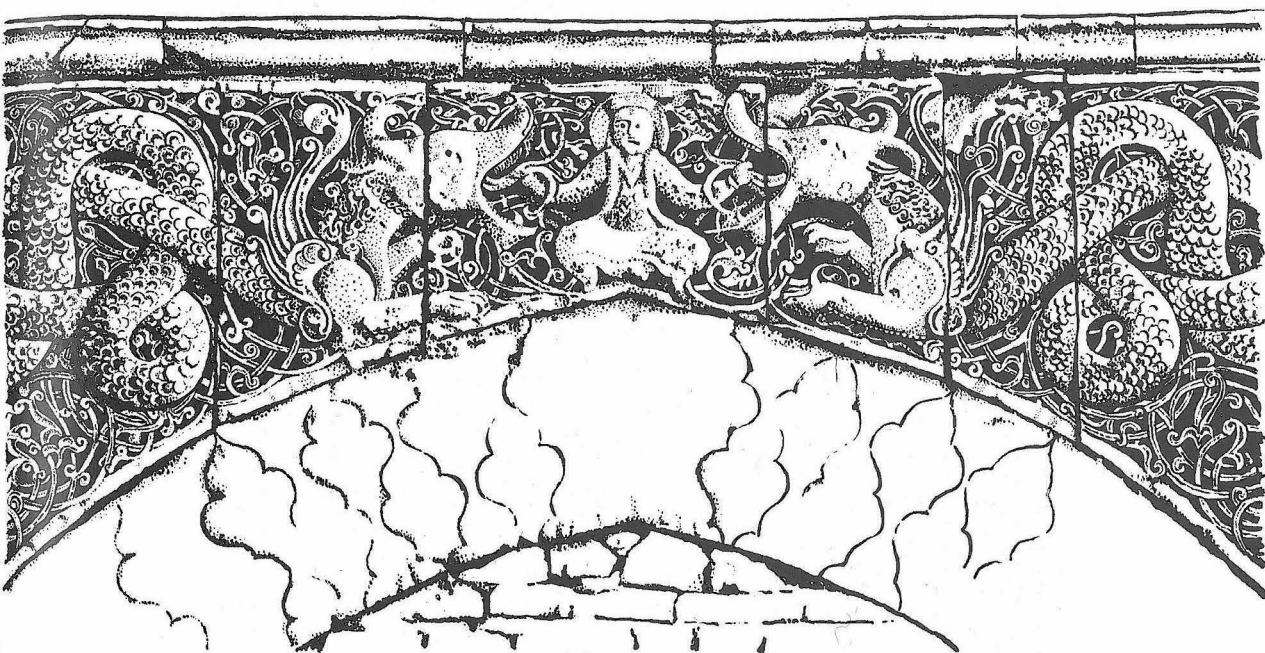


Figure 4.15 Ruler and two dragons, apotropaic sculpture, Talisman Gate, 618/1221, Baghdad, Iraq

But *jihad* could and was interpreted more widely than fighting the infidel on the borders of Islam (figure 4.15). We have already stressed the spiritual dimensions of *jihad* for individual Muslims and especially the military leaders. There were other activities too which formed part of the overall *jihad* impulse from the period of Nur al-Din onwards. It was understood that the ruler who fought *jihad* did so within his realm as well as outside it: it was his pious duty to combat heresy and laxity of religious practice and to promote 'sound religion' and Islamic justice. In this respect, the Ayyubid princes' record is more impressive. They were responsible for the founding of sixty-three religious colleges (*madrasas*) in Damascus alone (figures 4.9-4.12, 4.16). The Jazira too saw an outburst of building activity in this period (plates 4.17-4.25; cf. plates 4.2-4.6, 4.11-4.12 and figure 4.3).⁸⁴

The Fate of Jerusalem in the Ayyubid Period

The fate of Jerusalem in the Ayyubid period is a clear illustration of the dynasty's pragmatic attitude to the Franks, and despite their loud protestations the religious classes could do nothing.

Some of the Ayyubid rulers seem to have shared Saladin's reverence for Jerusalem and its sacred places and his desire to contribute towards its religious life by endowing Islamic monuments. Saladin's son, al-Afdal (d. 622/1225), endowed a religious college (*al-Madrasa*

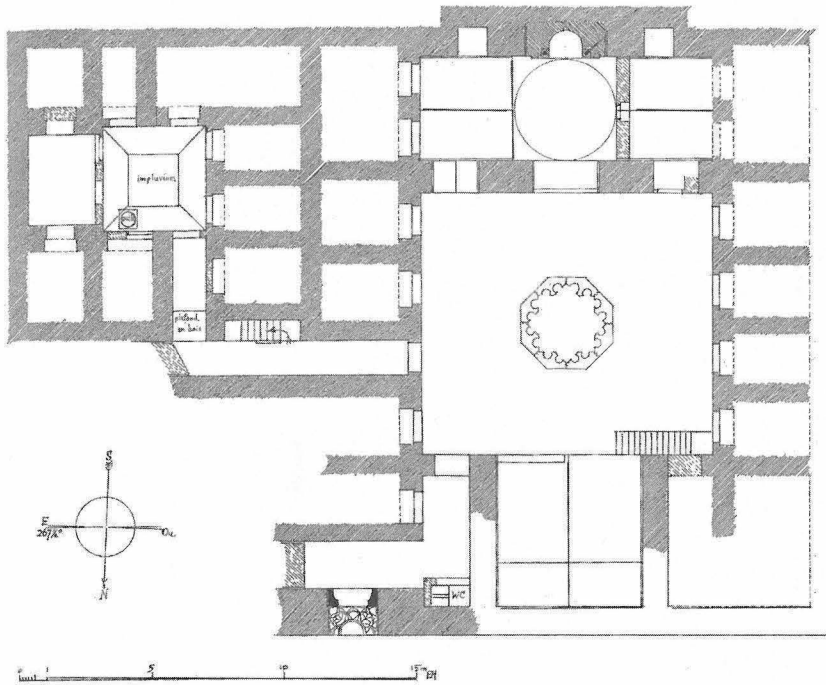


Figure 4.16 *Khanqah fi'l-Farafra, Sufi 'convent', plan, 635/1237-8, Aleppo, Syria*

al-Afdaliyya) for the Malikis in Jerusalem c. 590/1194.⁸⁵ Saladin's brother, al-'Adil (d. 615/1217) built fountains for ablutions as well as for drinking purposes within the *haram* area. Another Ayyubid prince, al-Mu'azzam (d. 624/1226), sponsored the rebuilding of the arcades of the Haram al-Sharif (the sacred precinct in Jerusalem), parts of the Aqsa mosque and other monuments, as a number of inscriptions testify. His building activities on the *haram* do suggest an awareness of the special religious importance of the site (cf. plate 4.26). Al-Mu'azzam built two *madrasas*, one for the Hanafis called al-Mu'azzamiyya in 606/1209 and the other for the teaching of Arabic called *al-Madrassa al-Nahwiyya* ('the Grammatical School') in 604/1207.⁸⁶

Yet despite their concern to beautify and sanctify Jerusalem, Saladin's successors showed no interest in settling in the city and making it their capital. In this respect they were following the example of rulers of preceding dynasties, none of whom since the advent of Islam had made Jerusalem their political centre. And indeed Saladin himself even after his glorious conquest of the city showed no inclination to settle there. He remained at Damascus in so far as he was not on campaign, a tacit acknowledgement of the geophysical, political and demographic realities of the time. For all its sanctity and propaganda value, Jerusalem was not, to use modern parlance, a suitable capital city for the Ayyubids. Thus when the religious fervour of the late 1180s had subsided, the way was open for it to revert to its more natural secondary and provincial political role.

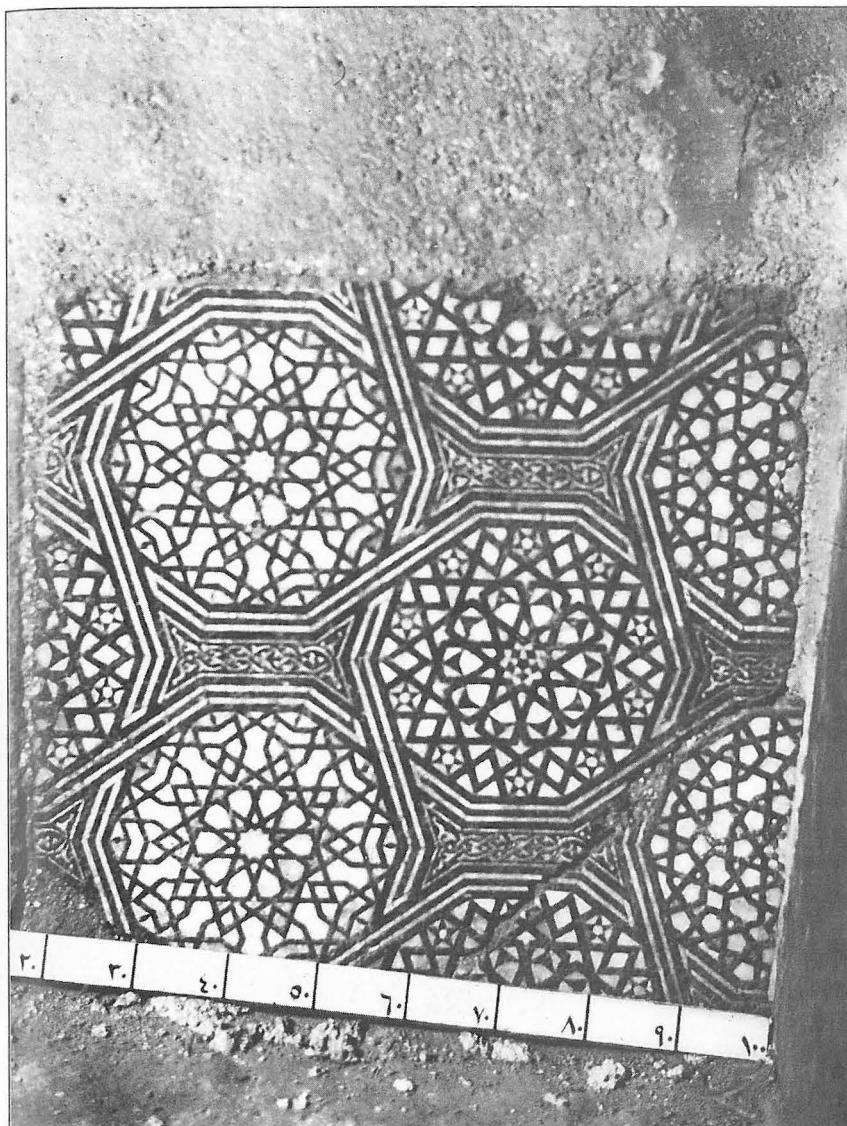


Plate 4.20 Jami' of Imam Muhsin (formerly al-Madrassa al-Nuriyya), marble intarsia work, 589-607/1193-1211, Mosul, Iraq

Jerusalem remained securely in Muslim hands until the coming of the Fifth Crusade in 616/1219, the avowed aim of which was to attack the centre of Muslim power in Egypt as a prelude to taking back the Holy City. On hearing that the Franks did indeed have designs on Jerusalem, al-Mu'azzam, the very same Ayyubid sultan who had patronised building projects in the city, found himself reluctantly obliged to dismantle its fortifications lest it should fall again into the hands of the Franks. According to Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī (d. 654/1257), al-Mu'azzam justified this very unpopular action by saying: 'If they [the Franks] were to take it [Jerusalem], they would kill those in it and rule over Damascus and the countries of Islam. Necessity demands its destruction.'⁸⁷

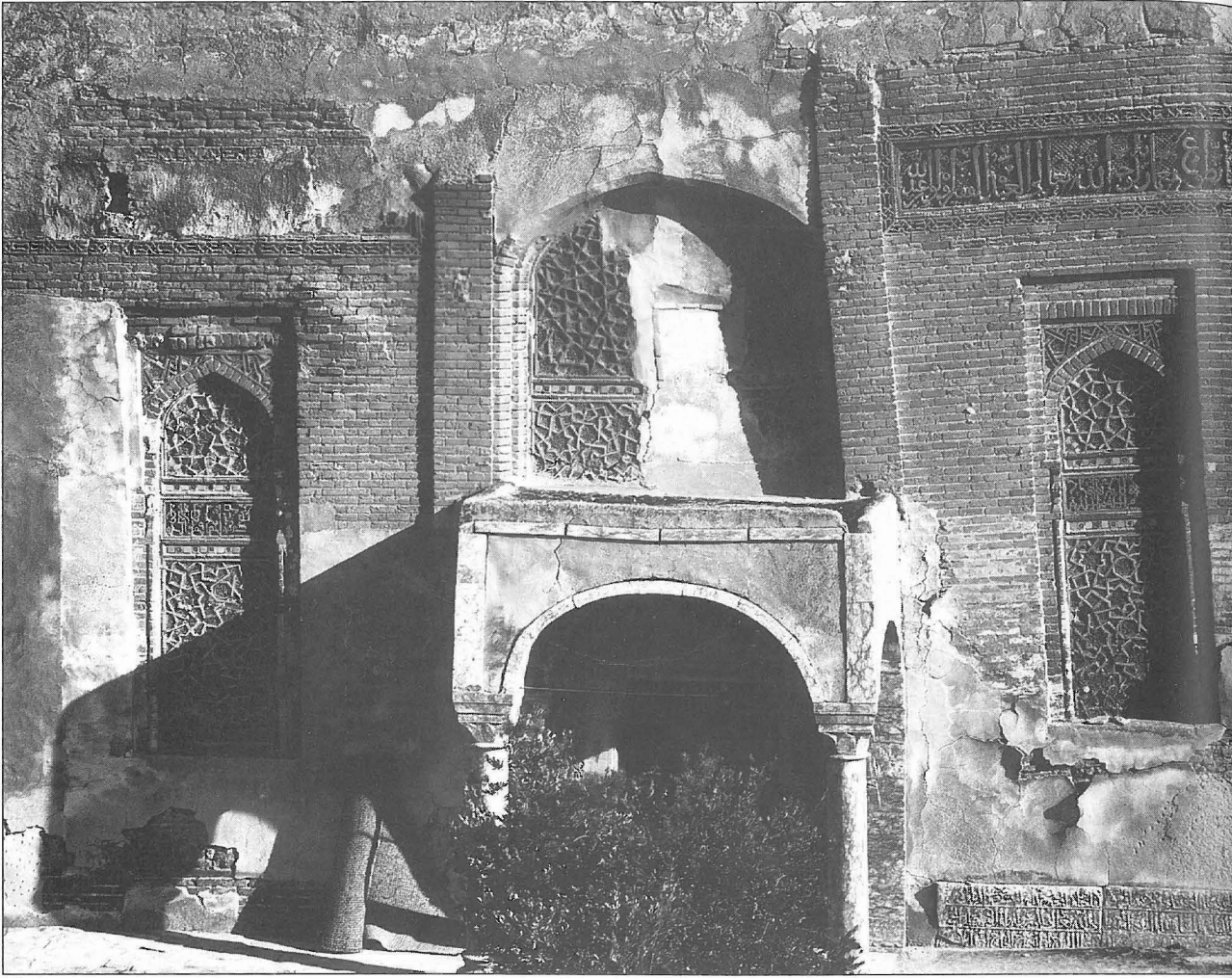


Plate 4.21 *Mashhad Imam Yahya ibn al-Qasim, facade, detail, 637/1239–40, Mosul, Iraq*

The reaction to this demolition of Jerusalem's defences amongst the local Muslim population was one of profound distress:

They began on the walls on the first day of Muharram and there occurred in the city an outcry like [that of] the Day of Resurrection. Secluded women and girls, old men and women, and young men and boys went out to the [Dome of the] Rock and the Aqsa and they cut their hair and ripped their clothing to such an extent that the Rock and the Aqsa *mihrab* were filled with hair.⁸⁸

There then followed widespread abandoning of the city by the Muslim population.

Ten years later worse was to follow with the actual ceding of Jerusalem in 626/1229 to the Frankish emperor Frederick II by the Ayyubid sultan al-Kamil.⁸⁹ In the treaty they signed, al-Kamil agreed

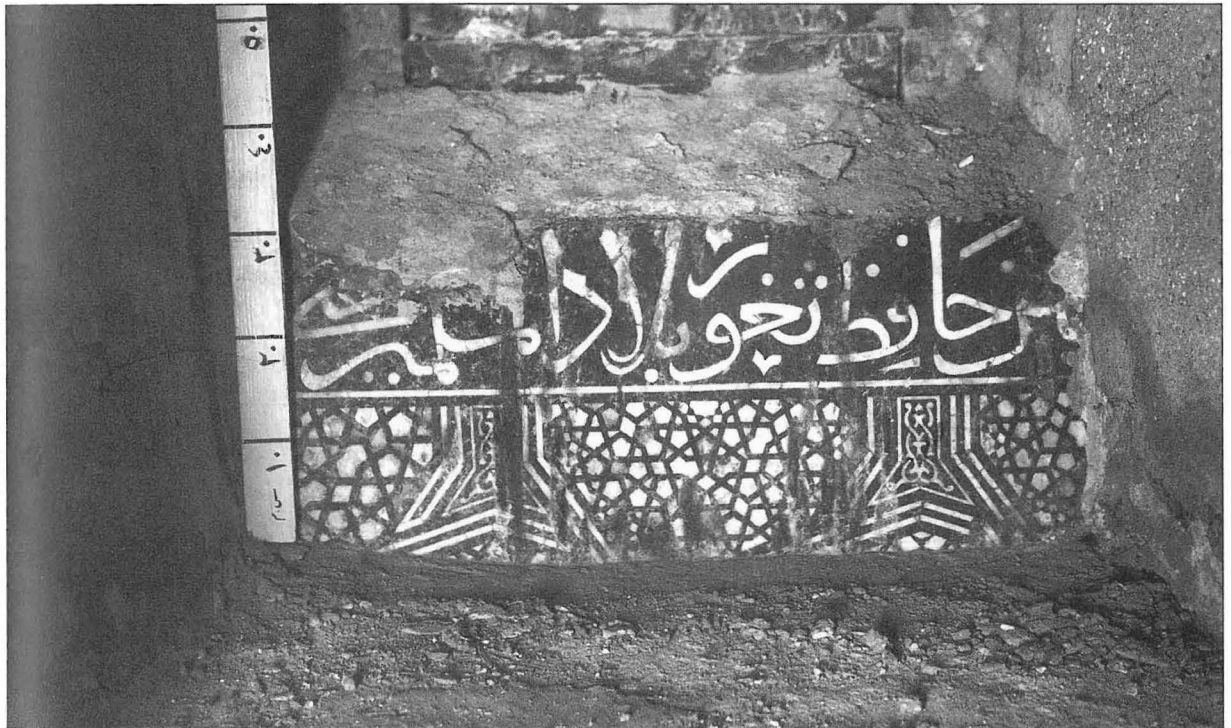
to hand over the city of Jerusalem for ten years. Muslims (and Jews) were not allowed access to the city except to the sacred area (*al-haram al-sharif*), which was to remain in Muslim hands, and it was agreed that Muslim religious observances there should continue unhindered.

One of the two chroniclers closest to the events, Ibn Wasil, tries to justify al-Kamil's conduct:

The sultan al-Kamil said: 'We have allowed only ruined churches and monasteries. The *haram* and what is in it consisting of the sacred Rock and the rest of the shrines are in the hands of the Muslims as before and the sign of Islam is on what is there [on the *haram*].⁹⁰

In his view, such a defenceless city could easily be reconquered for Islam later on. Al-Kamil's power base lay in Egypt and a Jerusalem bereft of its defences would present no threat to him: it could be handed over to the Franks who desired it as part of a treaty ensuring that they would leave Egypt alone. In reality, al-Kamil had perpetrated this act out of political expediency, since he feared hostilities from his Syrian relatives, and above all his brother al-Mu'azzam, and he needed Frederick's military support. Jerusalem formed part of the deal and its religious status was far from uppermost in his mind.⁹¹ Thus Saladin's own descendant handed Jerusalem back to the Franks.

Plate 4.22 Jami' of Imam Muhsin (formerly al-Madrasa al-Nuriyya), marble intarsia work, 589-607/1193-1211, Mosul, Iraq



The fact of the matter was that strategically Jerusalem was not crucial to Ayyubid rulers whose power base was in Egypt or Syria. Jerusalem always had its political price so long as the Franks still desired to possess it. However much individual Ayyubid rulers may have embellished the city of Jerusalem with new monuments and pious foundations, in the end this counted for less than political expediency.

Predictably there was widespread indignation and outrage amongst Muslims at al-Kamil's handing over of Jerusalem to Frederick. For the year 626/1229, the chronicler Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī writes: 'In it [this year] al-Kamil gave Jerusalem to the emperor . . . The news of the handing over of Jerusalem to the Franks arrived and all hell broke loose in all the lands of Islam.'⁹²

Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, himself a renowned preacher, then reports that the

Plate 4.26 Aqsa Mosque, facade showing both the central gable (formerly bearing Fatimid inscription, second half of eleventh century), and Ayyubid porch (note incorporation of Frankish elements, perhaps as references to Muslim victory), 615/1218-19, Jerusalem

[Creswell Photographic Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, neg. C. 4993]



Ayyubid ruler of Damascus, al-Malik Da'ud, asked him to speak in the Great Mosque about what had happened to Jerusalem and he waxed lyrical about the recent indignities the city had suffered.⁹³ Apart from this chronicler and Ibn Wasil, another contemporary witness, the other Islamic sources (probably out of justified feelings of corporate shame) tend to gloss over this rather ignominious episode.⁹⁴

The fortunes of Jerusalem went from bad to worse. The city remained in Frankish hands until after al-Kamil's death in 635/1238. It then reverted briefly to Ayyubid control in 636/1239 under al-Nasir Da'ud, the ruler of Kerak, but again as a result of internal rivalries amongst the Ayyubids it was handed back to the Franks in 641/1243–4 in exchange for the promise of Frankish help to al-Nasir Da'ud and his allies against the Ayyubid ruler in Egypt, al-Malik al-Salih Ayyub.⁹⁵ Thus once again the Muslim world suffered the humiliation of the Dome of the Rock being in the possession of the Franks.⁹⁶ Truly Saladin and his propagandists must have turned in their graves at this betrayal.

Jerusalem's fortunes reached their lowest ebb in 642/1244. In order to destroy his enemies, the Ayyubid sultan Najm al-Din Ayyub called in the Khwarazmians, dispossessed nomadic troops (originally Kipchak Turks) who had been forced westwards from their Central Asian homeland, displaced by the invasions of the Mongols. The Khwarazmians fell upon Syria and Palestine and sacked Jerusalem in Rabi' I 642/August 1244,⁹⁷ slaughtering the Christians and desecrating the Holy Sepulchre and other Christian churches. Thereafter, in an alliance typical of the time, in Jumada I 642/October 1244, the Khwarazmians and the Egyptian Ayyubids fought at Harbiyya against the Syrian Ayyubids who had joined forces with the Crusaders, an encounter in which the Khwarazmian–Ayyubid coalition emerged victorious.

Sibt b. al-Jawzi is outraged by this Muslim–Frankish collaboration and yearns for the halcyon days of Islamic unity. Bemoaning the fact that Muslim troops fought under the banners of the Franks, with crosses over their heads, ministered to by Christian priests, he continues: 'It was a calamitous day, the like of which had not happened in [early] Islam nor in the time of Nur al-Din and Saladin.'⁹⁸

Jerusalem henceforth was to be ruled from Egypt.⁹⁹ The hard-headed attitude of the later Ayyubids towards Jerusalem and their preference for Egypt as a power base continued until the very end of the dynasty. Indeed, al-Salih Ayyub advised his son Turanshah, the last Ayyubid sultan of Egypt: 'If they [the Franks] demand the coast and Jerusalem from you, give them these places without delay on condition that they have no foothold in Egypt.'¹⁰⁰

This dismal picture of Ayyubid *Realpolitik* coupled with indifference to *jihad* and the fate of Jerusalem was occasionally modified by individual Ayyubid rulers in Syria. The alliance between the religious classes in the Ayyubid period and the military leadership remained stronger there than in Palestine. The modern scholars Sivan and



Figure 4.18

(above and opposite)

Foot soldiers, stone relief,
Bab al-'Amadiyya, between
631/1233 and 657/1259, Iraq

Pouzet argue that two Ayyubid princes, al-Mu'azzam 'Isa and his son al-Nasir Da'ud, showed a real spirit of *jihād*, thus salvaging the reputation of the dynasty at least to some extent.¹⁰¹ The city of Damascus and especially its Hanbalite quarter, al-Salihyya, remained a milieu impregnated with the spirit of *jihād*. Here were produced at least two treaties on *jihād* in the Ayyubid period, one by Ibn Qudama (d. 620/1223) and the other by Diya' al-Din al-Maqqisi (d. 643/1245).

Generally speaking, however, the impulse of the religious classes towards the propagation of *jihād* against the Franks, which had sustained and strengthened Saladin's activities – certainly in the years immediately preceding the reconquest of Jerusalem – was an embarrassment rather than a stimulus to these sultans. They preferred pragmatism to piety and worked towards an accommodation with the Franks. Occasionally the sources refer to explicit pressure from the religious classes aimed at making the ruler prosecute *jihād*. One example is an episode which occurred as early as 601/1204, when Ibn Qudama openly accused the Ayyubid sultan al-'Adil of occupying himself with wars against his fellow Muslims and of neglecting the fight against the infidel.¹⁰²

The Power of the Preacher to Rouse the Populace to *Jihad*

The contemporary chronicler Sibṭ b. al-Jawzi describes the prelude to a military campaign conducted by the Ayyubid prince al-Mu'azzam 'Isa in the year 607/1210-11. The author himself was one of the greatest preachers of the day and he used his skills to mobilise the population on behalf of the ruler:

I sat in the congregational mosque on Saturday 5 Rabi 'I and the [throng of] people stretched from the gate of the shrine of Zayn al-'Abidin to the gate of al-Natifanin and the gate of the clocks. The [number of people] standing in the courtyard¹⁰³ was more than what would fill the Damascus mosque [for the Friday prayer]. They estimated 30,000 [people] and it was a day the like of which had not been seen in Damascus or anywhere else.

Such was his fame as a preacher that he had drawn crowds more numerous than those who came to pray on Fridays: certainly, the Great Mosque in Damascus could house a vast number of worshippers.¹⁰⁴

Sibṭ b. al-Jawzi relates that many strands of hair had come into his possession and he recalled a story of a woman who had cut her hair and sent it to him, saying: 'Make it into a hobble for your horse in the path of God.'

This example of devotional piety shows women's participation in the corporate *jihād* activities of the community and is used to powerful effect in the rest of the story told by Sibṭ b. al-Jawzi:

So I made fetters and hobbles for the horses of the *jihād* warriors



(*mujahidun*) from the hairs which had come into my possession. When I climbed into the pulpit, I ordered them to be brought and they were put round the men's necks. There were 300 fetters. When the people saw them they let out a great cry and cut [their hair] likewise.¹⁰⁵

Scenes like this demonstrate the power of the eloquent preacher to move the citizens to join the *jihad*.

Occasionally in the Ayyubid period a serious external crisis could cause the rulers to act in concert against the Franks. The fall of Damietta in 616/1219 was one such rare occurrence when the Ayyubids showed solidarity. On this occasion Sibte b. al-Jawzi read out in the Great Mosque in Damascus a letter which al-Mu'azzam 'Isa had written to him with the aim of rousing the people to fight *jihad*.¹⁰⁶



Figure 4.19 Horseman, glazed ceramic bowl, thirteenth century, Aleppo region, Syria

An Overview of *Jihad* in the Ayyubid Period

The conflicting pressures of political expediency and *jihad* against the Franks, so apparent in the Ayyubid period, had, of course, manifested themselves since the very beginning of the Crusades. Yet the conduct of the Ayyubids – their lacklustre performance in *jihad* and their handing back of Jerusalem to the Franks – was castigated at the time and has since been roundly condemned as a betrayal of the aims and achievements of their illustrious predecessor Saladin.

It is worth examining whether this is a just assessment. The emphasis on *jihad* which was the hallmark of Saladin's later years until he captured Jerusalem should probably be viewed as an exception, a rare emotional peak for the Muslims, even within the context of his own career. For most of his adult life Saladin operated within the usual contemporary framework of shifting alliances, truces and petty territorial warfare, as other rulers and military barons did. This *modus operandi* was consistently the norm for the later Ayyubids too. As we have seen, it was in Saladin's career, and perhaps partially also as a result of his charismatic personality, that the religious classes managed to carry with them the military leadership and the populace at large in a rare and focused campaign against the Franks. For a brief while *jihad* transcended the rhetoric of the propagandists and realised its full potential for the Muslims of Syria and Palestine in the conquest of Jerusalem. For the later Ayyubids, however, Jerusalem was a dispensable commodity: occasionally it could be the focus of displays of public piety on their part but more frequently it would fall victim to their hard-headed military realism.

Various factors contributed to the lack of a single-minded focus by the Ayyubids on *jihad* against the Franks. They were enthusiastic about the benefits of trade with the Franks and the wider world, using the Frankish ports. A common interest in the local defence of Syria and Palestine no doubt motivated both Ayyubids and Franks to

unite on occasion against external aggressors, be they the Khwarazmians, Franks from Europe or even Ayyubid rivals from Egypt. Certainly, in the early Ayyubid period, in the years immediately following Saladin's death, there must have been an inevitable emotional anticlimax after the recapture of Jerusalem. Once Saladin, the charismatic military leader, had gone and the perfect focus provided for *jihad* in Saladin's time, namely that of the recapture of Jerusalem, had disappeared, there was no longer a common will amongst the Ayyubid elite to finish off the job and remove the Franks definitively. Each Ayyubid ruler within the confederacy could adopt his own negotiating position with the Franks.¹⁰⁷ In the time-honoured way of their ancestors the individual Ayyubids defended their portion of territory against all comers, Muslim or Frank, and united against outsiders with other local rulers in times of external crisis.¹⁰⁸

The Mamluk Period until the Fall of Acre, 648-690/1250-1291

Saladin did not, of course, oust the Crusaders definitively from the Near East. Acre and most of the Syrian coast remained in Crusader hands for another century and it was left to the Mamluk dynasty of Egypt, carrying on the traditions of Saladin's family, to achieve the fall of Acre in 690/1291 and thereby to remove the Crusader presence once and for all from Muslim territory. *Jihad* played an important part in underpinning and inspiring the Mamluk military achievement.

With the accession of the Mamluks in 648/1250 a new dynasty was established which was to survive until the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 922/1516-17. The new rulers, the commanders of Mamluk regiments, were well equipped for the difficult decades ahead. Indeed, the early Mamluk period witnessed the last great Mongol attacks on the Middle East as well as continuing Crusading activity and occupation. The Mongol forces under Hülegü swept through Syria and threatened Egypt. The Mamluk army under the command of the future sultan Baybars confronted a depleted Mongol army now led by Kitbugha Noyan and defeated them at the battle of 'Ayn Jalut in Ramadan 658/September 1260. Shortly afterwards, in a bloody coup

Figure 4.20 Animated inscription on candlestick of Kitbugha, inlaid metal, early 1290s, probably Egypt



d'état which put an end to the early instability at the heart of the Mamluk state, Baybars claimed the sultanate for himself. Under the firm hand of Baybars, the Mamluk state wiped out the Ayyubids in Egypt, extended its power towards Syria and continued to tackle the much-dreaded Mongols from the east. The Mamluks' military successes against the Mongols went side by side with vigorous attempts to remove the Franks from Muslim soil. Unlike their predecessors the Ayyubids, the Mamluk sultans had to contend with the Mongols on their very doorstep and this moulded their international policies in a very significant way. As Berkey argues:

The European Crusaders were in some ways the least of the problems faced by contemporary Muslims: more threatening to the social and political order were the repeated waves of Turkic and Mongol invasion and settlement, culminating in the continual stream of immigrating Mamluks themselves.¹⁰⁹

An enthusiastic and romanticised view of the Mamluks is given by the famous North African Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun (d. 808/1406) who describes them as possessing:

the firm resolve of true believers and yet with nomadic virtues unsullied by debased nature, unadulterated with the filth of pleasure, undefiled by the ways of civilized living, and with their ardour unbroken by the profusion of luxury.¹¹⁰

Despite this romanticisation of 'nomadic peoples', presaging the ideal of the Noble Savage, Ibn Khaldun's praise for the way in which the Mamluks revitalised the Islamic Near East is in many ways justified. Ruling from Cairo rather than Syria and holding themselves formally aloof from the indigenous peoples whom they ruled, the Mamluks formed a highly centralised state, normally known in the Arabic sources as the 'state of the Turks' (*dawlat al-Atrak*), which showed remarkable cohesion and could mount a unified front against the Crusaders. Although they had usurped power, their victories against both Mongols and Franks enhanced their prestige.

Under Baybars, the Mamluk state inaugurated an era of 'increasing aggression' against the Franks.¹¹¹ The religious classes who wrote their history present a curiously impenetrable, uniform and generally favourable image of this dynasty. But this favourable image seems to hold true. Abroad, the Mamluk sultans were seen as the supreme warriors of *jihad*, whilst inside the state they dispensed true justice and eradicated rebellion and heresy. They were interested in the public face of religion and readily donned the mantle of leaders of the Sunni world. They patronised the religious classes, performed the pilgrimage and built many monuments in the service of Islam, not just for political reasons but out of genuine interest and piety (plate 4.27). Many members of the Mamluk military cadres were

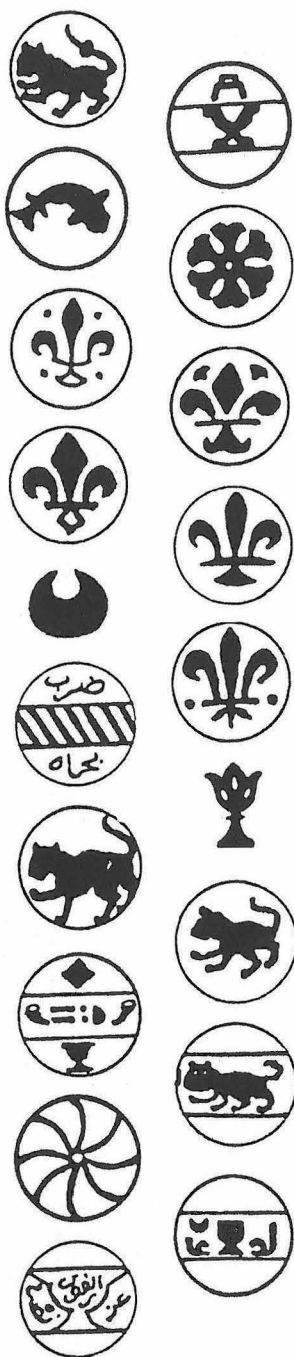


Figure 4.21 Blazons on Mamluk coins, thirteenth–fifteenth centuries, Egypt and Syria

actually religious scholars in their own right. Berkey argues convincingly that Islam had never been a static and monolithic entity and that the Mamluks helped to mould from within the Islam of their own day¹¹² – religion, civilisation and society – more than has previously been recognised.

The Mamluks were at pains to have their activities legitimised and prosecuted *jihad* with a public display of vigour and determination. Some of the spiritual inheritance of the 'Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad which had been snuffed out by the Mongols in 656/1258 was revived by the establishment of a puppet 'Abbasid caliphate in Cairo in 659/1261. This move was typical of the ostentatious piety of the new dynasty, as was the reinvigorated ideal of *jihad*, with a greater emphasis on the military aspects of that concept – war against the infidel.

Baybars was the key figure who began the process of finally eradicating the Frankish presence from the Near East. He began a series of successful campaigns in the 1260s. Pressures from the new enemy, the Mongols, and the continuing presence of the Franks formed a powerful focus for channelling the energies of the new dynasty.

The Career of Baybars, 648-676/1260-1277

Whilst Baybars' military skills were undoubtedly remarkable, he was also favoured by unusually good luck in the timing of his accession. The Mongols were disunited after their withdrawal from Syria in 1260 and in his wars against the Franks he was able to utilise the numerous Muslim refugees who poured into Syria and Egypt from Iraq, still held by the Mongols. Nevertheless Baybars was a brilliant and ruthless sultan and an unusually energetic military leader who stayed in power for a long time. His numerous campaigns were extremely well planned. Before taking on the Franks, Baybars aimed at extinguishing all remaining opposition to his overall authority on the part of the Ayyubid princes. In other words, in a familiar pattern, he wished to achieve Muslim unity in Egypt and Syria and to secure his power base.

In 663/1265 he began a series of offensives against the Franks which continued until 670/1271. In these years important Frankish citadels fell into Muslim hands and Antioch, which had been ruled uninterruptedly by the Franks since 1097, was also conquered. At the same time Baybars fought against the pagan Mongols,¹¹³ Christians in Little Armenia, fellow Muslims in Anatolia and Isma'ili 'heretics'. Out of a total of thirty-eight campaigns which he led into Syria, however, twenty-one were conducted against the Franks, and by the time of his death in 676/1277 he had inflicted very serious damage on them. His aim may be seen primarily as defensive – to secure the frontiers of the Mamluk state against the infidels from both east and west. His activities against the Franks formed a key part of the image created of him by his propagandists, that of a mighty warrior of *jihad*

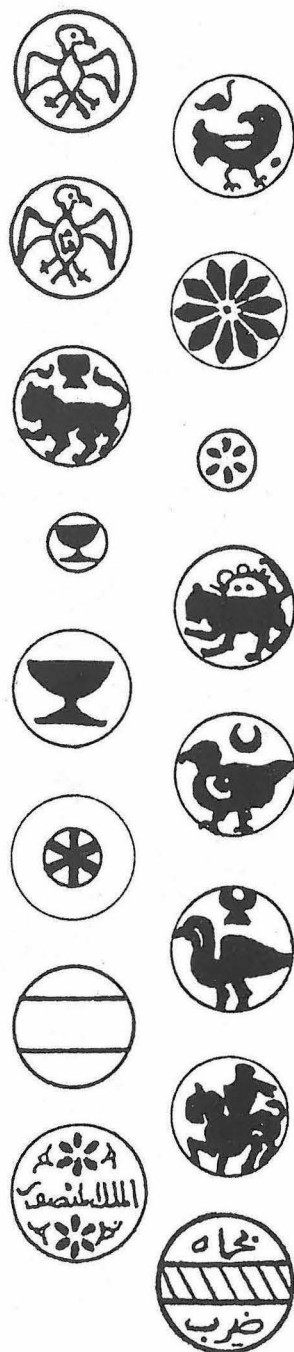


Figure 4.22 Blazons on Mamluk coins, thirteenth-fifteenth centuries, Egypt and Syria

and defender of the Islamic world. His legendary exploits lived on in the popular folk epic *Sirat Baybars*.

The *Jihad* Titulature of the Mamluks – Evidence of Monumental Inscriptions and Chancellery Documents

Predictably enough, the Mamluk sultans, with their military achievements against the infidel, Christian Frank and pagan Mongol alike, were accorded grandiloquent *jihad* titles by their epigraphers and chroniclers.

In three inscriptions dated Dhu'l-hijja 664/September 1266 on a mausoleum in Hims in Syria, Baybars is described in the most glowing terms as a supreme *jihad* warrior. One of them calls him:

The sultan, the victorious prince, the pillar of the world and religion, the sultan of Islam and the Muslims, the killer of infidels and polytheists, the tamer of rebels and heretics, the reviver of justice in the two worlds, the possessor of the two seas, the lord of the two *qiblas*, the servant of the two noble sanctuaries, the heir of the kingdom, the sultan of the Arabs and the Persians and the Turks, the Alexander of the age, the lord of the fortunate conjunction, Baybars al-Salihi, the associate of the Commander of the Faithful.¹¹⁴

The inscription also records that it was engraved 'on the occasion of his [Baybars] passing through [Hims] to fight (*ghaza*) in the land of Sis [Armenia]'.¹¹⁵

This inscription is a valuable contemporary historical document. The occasion is right: Baybars is on his way to conduct *jihad* against the Christians of Armenia. The titulature is elaborate; in it Baybars is accorded the role of defender of Islam, just ruler and fighter against the infidel. The careful antithetical patterning of the words and the use of such devices as antiphonal pairing of words, or rhymed endings, adds a formal and sonorous note to these ceremonial, proclamatory words. Baybars is shown to be the defender of the most holy sanctuaries of Islam in the Hijaz. Like Tamerlane after him, Baybars is called the Alexander of the age, the one favoured by auspicious astrological signs to lead the whole Muslim world – Arab, Persian, Turk. Such fanciful rhetoric (the Mamluks did not and never would rule in the east) is accompanied by a clear view of the publicity value of the location of the inscription. This is no ordinary monument on which to carve an inscription as Baybars and his army passed through Hims. After all, this is the mausoleum of the most famous of all Arab Muslim generals, 'the Sword of Islam, the Companion of the Messenger of God, Khalid b. al-Walid', the great architect of the first Muslim conquests in the seventh century. Thus Baybars is seen by his propagandists as forging a lasting link between the glorious days of Islam and his own achievements on behalf of the faith.



Figure 4.24 Soldiers wearing Mongol armour, Rashid al-Din, *Jami' al-Tawarikh* ('World History'), 714/1314, Tabriz, Iran



Figure 4.25 Kufic inscription stating 'this is the mosque of Khalid ibn al-Walid, the Companion of the Prophet, blessings' and quoting Qur'an 2: 256 and 3: 17. Shrine of Khalid ibn al-Walid, eleventh century, Hims, Syria

A more explicit association with the Franks is made in an extant inscription in the name of Baybars on the citadel of Safad dated 666/1267-8:

He ordered the renovation of this citadel and its fortification and the completion of its building and its embellishment after he had delivered it from the hands of the accursed Franks and he gave it back to the hand of the Muslims after having removed it from the possession of the Templars to the possession of the Muslims.

This inscription praises Baybars' efforts in the *jihad*: 'He made efforts and struggled (*jahada*) until he exchanged unbelief for faith, church bell for the call to prayer, and the Gospel for the Qur'an.'¹¹⁶ This inscription rejoices in Baybars' recapture of Safad which Ibn al-Furat graphically describes as 'an obstruction in the throat of Syria and a blockage in the chest of Islam'.¹¹⁷

The practice of recording the glorious achievements of the Mamluk sultans in monumental inscriptions continued apace throughout their rule. In the first fifty years of the dynasty the emphasis on *jihad* and related themes is marked. A revealing example of such Mamluk titlature is an inscription on the citadel of Aleppo dated 691/1292 in the name of Khalil b. Qalawun, who is called:

tamer of the worshippers of crosses, the Alexander of the age, . . . the ruler of the armies of the Franks, the Armenians and the Tartars, the destroyer of Acre and the coastal regions, the reviver of the illustrious 'Abbasid state.¹¹⁸

This is a more elaborate and ambitious set of titles than ever Nur al-Din had enjoyed in an earlier period. The inscription encapsulates the triumphant Mamluk achievement against the Franks. It specifically highlights the Franks in the pejorative term 'worshippers of crosses' (which is unusual phrasing on a monument) and refers clearly to the Mamluk policy of razing the Levantine ports to the ground in the phrase 'the destroyer of Acre and the coastal regions'. The

inscription then places the Mamluk realm firmly under the banner of Sunni Islam with the reminder that it is they who have revived the fortunes of the 'Abbasid caliphate.

Quoting an earlier work by al-'Umari (d. 749/1349), the chancellery manual of al-Qalqashandi (d. 821/1418), in which scribes are told of appropriate modes of address, lists among the noble titles which should be given to the Mamluk sultan:

the warrior of *jihad*, the one who dwells in a *ribat*, the defender of the frontier, . . . the sultan of Islam and the Muslims, the reviver of justice in the two worlds, the one who dispenses equity to those who have been wronged by wrongdoers, . . . the sultan of the Arabs and Persians and Turks . . . the Alexander of the age . . . the prince of the two seas, . . . the servant of the two noble sanctuaries . . . the one who is close to the Commander of the Faithful.¹¹⁹

These titles are very similar indeed to those attributed to Baybars on the mausoleum of Khalid b. al-Walid. Obviously, by the time of al-'Umari they were already enshrined in government practice as the official titles of the Mamluk sultan to be used on chancellery documents. It was these grandiloquent protocols, strings of titles emphasising again and again the religious credentials of the sultan, which were transferred on to selected monuments in inscriptions carved at key moments of Mamluk victory against the Franks, Armenians or Mongols. No doubt it was the government clerks who gave the precise instructions to the engravers as to what should be carved on the monuments.

After the conquest of Arsuf in 663/1265, Baybars distributed decrees to his commanders authorising them to own some of the conquered lands. Each commander was issued with a certificate of ownership, the text of which is quoted by the chronicler Ibn al-Furat. It is an example of panegyric chancellery prose in praise of Baybars' achievements so far. Baybars' reign, according to these texts, compares most favourably to that of the Ayyubid dynasty:

The best favour is that which follows despair, coming after a period when kings have been feeble and the people negligent. How excellent a favour it was to the religion of Mohammad which brought it unity, opening the doors to conquest when the two enemies, Frank and Tartar, were routed.¹²⁰

The document rises to a climax in praise of Baybars, and describes him in the following terms:

All this has been achieved by one appointed by God, to whom He gave a drawn sword with which he struck. The winds of divine aid were made to serve him and bore up his stirrup as he travelled to the home of Victory, journeying day and night. After seeing him in

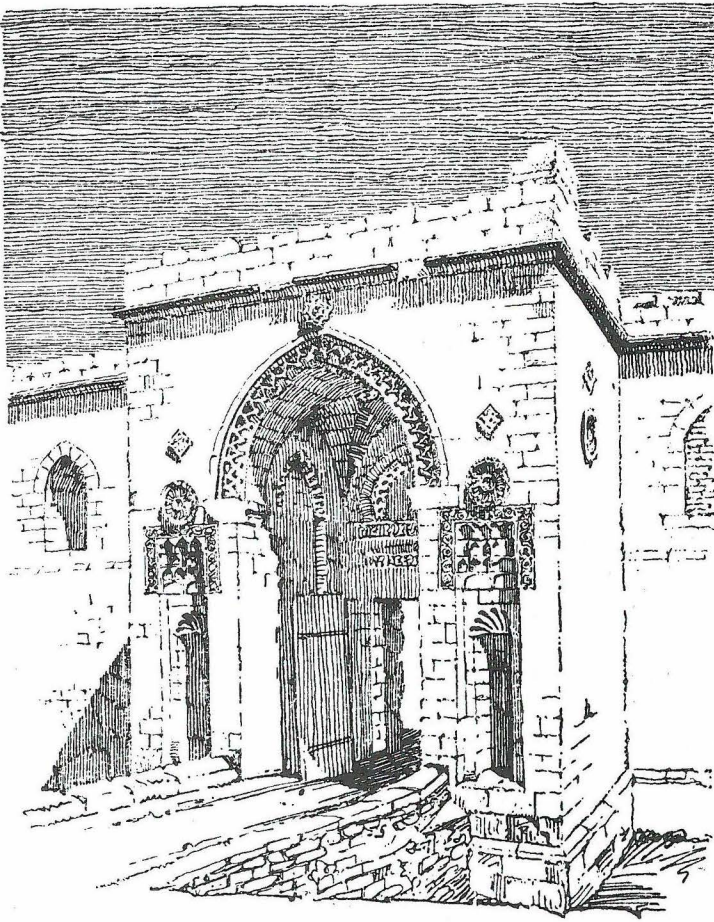


Figure 4.26 Mosque of Baybars, south-west porch, 665-7/1266-9, Cairo, Egypt

her court, Fortune made him King: extolling him, she exclaimed: 'This is no mortal'.¹²¹

Thus we see Baybars' court scribes depicting him as the chosen one of God, the conqueror of Mongol and Frank, the munificent sultan who shares his conquered territories with those who have helped him towards his God-ordained victories.

Al-Maqrizi (d. 845/1442) quotes from the diploma written by the chief secretary of the chancellery, Ibn Lukman, solemnising the ceremony of the investiture of Baybars as sultan by the puppet caliph whom Baybars himself had installed. In the course of this high-flown text, proclaimed before his assembled courtiers, Baybars is described as having shown unparalleled zeal in the defence of religion (plates 4.28-4.29 and figures 4.26-4.27).¹²² Turning specifically to the *jihād*, Ibn Lukman declares:

As regards Holy War, you have distinguished yourself by brilliant deeds . . . Through you God has protected the ramparts of Islam and

has preserved them from the profanations of the enemy; your courage has maintained for the Muslims the integrity of their empire.¹²³

Baybars and *Jihad*: The Evidence of the Chroniclers

Baybars' highly successful career is recorded by a number of contemporary and near-contemporary biographers. Ibn 'Abd al-Zahir, who states that he actually accompanied the Sultan on his various campaigns,¹²⁴ (d. 692/1292) presents Baybars as the spiritual heir of the last Ayyubid sultan (although Baybars was a first-generation convert to Islam, recruited from the Kipchak Turks) and his acts of murder and usurpation are glossed over.¹²⁵ The warrior from the steppes with blood on

Plate 4.29 *Mosque of Baybars, portal, 665-7/1266-9, Cairo, Egypt*

(Creswell Photographic Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, neg. C. 4503)



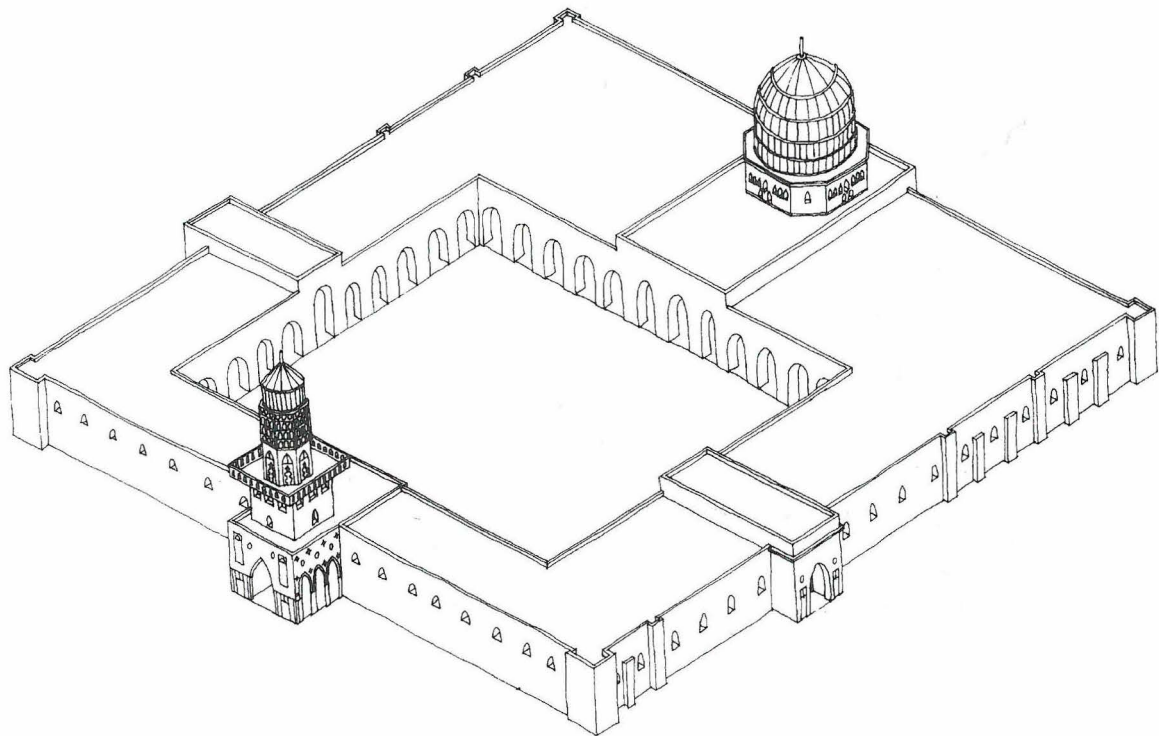
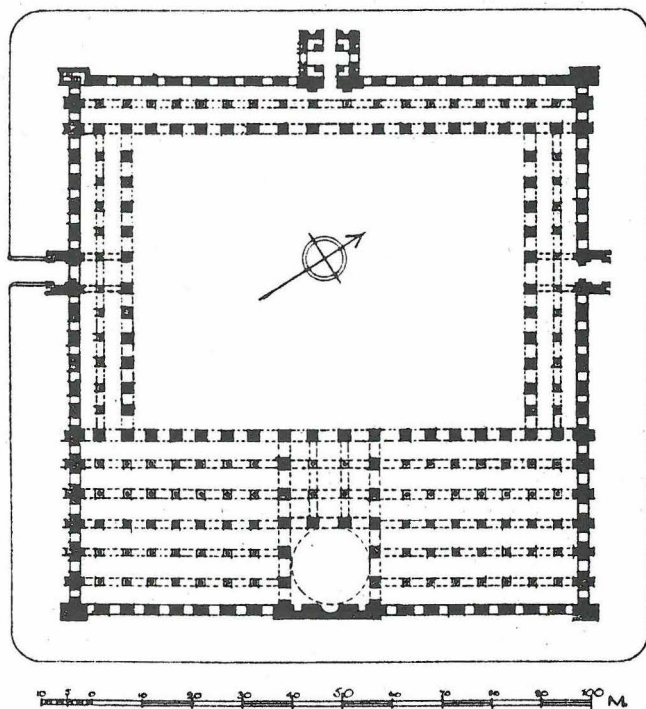


Figure 4.27 Mosque of Baybars, plan and perspective view, 665–7/1266–9, Cairo, Egypt



his hands is transformed by the pen of his panegyrist into the ideal *mujahid*, repelling the pagan Mongols and continuing with distinction the *jihad* against the Franks: 'He prosecuted the *jihad* with the utmost zeal and fought against the unbelievers, for which God rewarded him.'¹²⁶

Ibn 'Abd al-Zahir made strenuous attempts to portray his master as a worthy successor to Saladin: indeed, in his view, Baybars outdid Saladin. As Holt points out in his book on the Crusades, Baybars was a better soldier than Saladin and more single-minded in his military aims.¹²⁷ Thus there was a good basis on which to build up the image of Baybars as an ideal *mujahid*. The nephew of Ibn 'Abd al-Zahir, Shafi' b. 'Ali al-'Asqalani (d. 730/1330), wrote a somewhat revisionist biography of Baybars after the deaths of both the sultan and his own uncle.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, as Holt remarks, the Baybars of Shafi' is still an impressive figure with great achievements.¹²⁹ Another contemporary biographer of Baybars, Ibn Shaddad (d. 684/1285), also sees Baybars as the real hero of the Islamic reconquest of Frankish lands.¹³⁰

As early as 663/1265 Shafi' b. 'Ali proclaims that his master Baybars will fight 'until no more Franks remain on the surface of the earth'.¹³¹ This war is a reconquest depicted as 'a lost ewe which is brought back to the flock of Islam'.¹³² Baybars is depicted as a puritanical and uncompromising Muslim general. The texts mention that he imposed the strictest discipline on his troops. According to Ibn al-Furat, 'The army brought no wine in its train nor were there any lewd practices: there were only virtuous women who brought the soldiers water to drink in the middle of the fighting'.¹³³ At the siege of Safad in 664/1265-6 Baybars went so far as to proclaim that anyone in the army who brought in and drank wine would be hanged.¹³⁴

Through the panegyrics of his contemporary chroniclers and the works of later medieval historians Baybars emerges as a truly formidable figure, full of hatred towards those who dared to attack the House of Islam, uncompromisingly severe on malefactors, razing monuments to the ground with a barely suppressed zeal and anger of a kind seldom shown by Saladin (except in the latter's treatment of Reynald of Chatillon). As Thorau points out, Baybars was an exceptional military commander who managed to convey to his subordinates 'a sense of his omnipresence'.¹³⁵ Baybars' army was obviously controlled by a reign of terror and an iron discipline reminiscent of the extraordinary cohesion of the Mongol troops under Genghis Khan. Baybars would on occasion move around his territories incognito to pick up information on the conduct of his officials.¹³⁶ The Muslim world had indeed found in Baybars a worthy leader to protect it against all comers.

The Attitude to *Jihad* amongst the Military and Religious Classes in the Early Mamluk Period

The public attitude to *jihad* displayed by the Mamluk sultans is also